

Coosawattee Can Can—Paddle Georgia 2016

June 21—Conasauga & Coosawattee River

Distance: 13 miles

Starting Elevation: 661 feet **Lat:** 34.6655°N **Lon:** -84.9384°W

Ending Elevation: 627 feet **Lat:** 34.5413°N **Lon:** -84.9006°W

Restroom Facilities:	Mile 0	Tilton Road Bridge Take Out (Private)
	Mile 4.9	Silver Shoe Ranch
	Mile 13	Ga. 225 Boat Ramp

Points of Interest:

Mile 0.2—Tilton Sawmill—On river right is a stone wall that marks the site of Wiley J. Ault’s dam and sawmill which was established in the years following the Civil War. During its operation, timber was floated downstream and steered into the mouth of Swamp Creek where it could be kept until ready for processing. During the late 1800s, it was not uncommon for the entire river to be filled, bank-to-bank with rafts of massive timbers. These rafts are to blame for Ault’s death. During a period of high water, Ault was on the river attempting to prevent his timber from washing downstream. Instead he was washed over the mill dam and drowned. In 1887, a steam boiler explosion killed several workers and destroyed much of the mill, bringing an end to the business. Another interesting note on Tilton lumber...during the Civil War, the Union Army dismantled the town’s Methodist church to use the wood to construct a pontoon bridge for crossing the Oostanaula River (the Confederate Army destroyed existing bridges during their retreat from the Battle of Resaca). The federal government later repaid the church for their loss.

Mile 0.4 Lhoist Limestone—On river right on the former site of the Tilton sawmill is the Lhoist limestone processing facility. Currently idle, in the past the facility has processed locally-quarried limestone. Limestone is a key ingredient in Portland cement and thus finds its way into construction projects everywhere, but it also used in the production of paint, paper and plastic.

Mile 3.6—Sloan Bridge—This steel truss bridge was built in 1912 and abandoned in the late 1970s. Today it is the site of a U.S. Geological Service river gauge.

Mile 3.9—Styron—On river right here is the wastewater discharge for Trinseo’s Styron manufacturing plant. The facility creates latex for carpet backings and STYROFOAM insulation used in residential and commercial building. According to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency records, the plant discharges more than 200 pounds of toxic chemicals to the river annually. Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division issues permits under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to manufacturing facilities that dictate how much of specific pollutants a facility is allowed to discharge to the state’s rivers. Contrary to the name, this permitting system doesn’t actually “eliminate” pollutants, but it does, thankfully, limit the pollutants. If facilities fail to meet the requirements of their NPDES permits, they can be subject to fines and other penalties. This system, created by the Clean Water Act, is largely responsible for cleaning up pollution from industrial and municipal wastewater treatment facilities during the past 40 years. This facility sits on 420 acres of land adjacent to the river, and in recent years the company has been recognized for its efforts in managing some 300 acres of natural areas to improve habitat for songbirds, waterfowl, wild turkey and deer.

Mile 4.4—Greens Ferry—This is the site of Greens Ferry. On river left, the cut left from the operation of the ferry is still visible. The ferry crossed the sprawling plantation of John F. Green that stretched from here south and west to the Oostanaula River. It was on this plantation that many a drama played out during the Civil War. A few hundred yards to the west of the river was the Western & Atlantic Railroad, which in 1862 was the scene of what would come to be known as The Great Locomotive Chase. Union soldiers led by James Andrews and disguised as civilians snuck behind Confederate lines and boldly stole the steam locomotive General at the town of Kennesaw directly adjacent to the Confederate Army’s Camp McDonald. The raiders were soon discovered and a 70-mile locomotive chase ensued. Andrews and his men stopped briefly at Green’s Wood Station, just downstream from this location, and frantically tried to fill their train with wood to stoke the fires of their steam engine, but the sight on the horizon of smoke from Confederate’s pursuing engine cut short their stop, forcing them further north with inadequate fuel reserves. They were ultimately captured near Ringgold, and their plan to destroy and disrupt Confederate supply lines to hasten the Union capture of Chattanooga failed. Three months later, Andrews and seven others were tried and hung. Another eight escaped their captors while others members of the raiding party were ultimately exchanged as prisoners of war in 1863. Six of these men became the first soldiers to receive the Army Medal of Honor, an award created in 1862 that would become the nation’s highest military honor. Later, in 1864 as the Union Army pushed further into Georgia during the Atlanta Campaign, it set fire to Green’s Wood Station and cut the telegraph wires in an attempt to disrupt Confederate communication lines. When the Union soldiers left, two local women, a Miss Carrie Simms and a Mrs. Buchanan, reportedly snuck back to the station to splice the severed wires back together.

Mile 4.9—Silver Shoe Ranch—On river right here, spreading over 400 acres, is this bobwhite quail hunting preserve operated by Gary Patton. A family farm since the early 1900s, Patton now guides quail hunts on the property from October through March, and regularly host groups for trap shooting. The property is bisected by the original Western & Atlantic railroad and up this unnamed tributary on river right about a half mile is one of the railroad’s original stone trestles dating to the 1840s.

Mile 6.5—Resaca Confederate Cemetery—A half mile due west of this location is this cemetery that holds the final resting place of 137 Confederate soldiers who fell during the Battle of Resaca. When Union General William T. Sherman flanked Gen. Joseph Johnston’s Confederate Army by crossing the Oostanaula miles to the west and threatening Confederate supply lines, Johnston beat a hasty retreat south of the river. The move was undertaken so fast that many of the fallen soldiers were never buried or were buried in shallow makeshift graves. When John F. Green and his family returned to their plantation, they were greeted with a grisly sight. And, here the story of John’s daughter, Mary Jane Green and the cemetery begins. Moved by the sight of the fallen soldiers, Mary Jane put out a call for donations, raised \$2000 and then went about reinterring the remains. She even spoke before the Georgia General Assembly to request funds and is believed to have been the first woman to address the chamber. The men of the assembly were apparently impressed. Not only did they give her \$500 to complete her Resaca project they provided an additional \$3500 and commissioned Green to reinter bodies from the Chickamauga battlefield. The efforts of Green illustrate the magnitude of the aftermath of the war. In the years following the Civil War, Green would have a hand in relocating to proper cemeteries the remains of hundreds of soldiers who were buried where they had fallen in battle...often in the farm fields of local residents.

Mile 7—Resaca Canal & Manufacturing Co.—In 1887 a group of local investors hatched a plan to dig a 2-mile canal from this location on the Conasauga south and west to the nearby Oostanaula. A story in the Aug. 15 edition of the Atlanta Constitution noted: “The canal will run along the side of the Western and Atlantic Railroad and being above all obstructions on these two rivers will give about sixty miles rafting privileges, thus affording an abundance of the finest timbers in north Georgia.” Such a canal would have eliminated nearly 10 miles of travel of the two rivers. Of course, nothing of this plan ever came to fruition.

Mile 7.3—Limestone & Cedar—This bluff on river right is home to numerous cedar trees. Cedar trees are common in northwest Georgia, in part because the trees tend to thrive in the limestone rich soil of the area. Cedar trees are known for their hardiness; they can live for 400 years or more, and for their aromatic wood, famed for driving off moths and used extensively in making chests for important clothes and keepsakes. During the winter months here, you might find the tree’s avian namesake, the cedar waxwing, a beautifully colored crested songbird, feasting on the berries of the cedar. Waxwings play a key role in the tree’s continued survival as after it eats the seeds, it defecates, spreading the seed and improving its chances of germination. One study showed that seeds digested by waxwings were three times more likely to germinate than those that simply fell to the ground. That same study somehow determined that the average time that it takes a cedar seed to pass through a waxwing is just 12 minutes. Of course, humans have also put the berries to use. Native Americans brewed teas and flavored meat with them.

