

Fish Weir Fandango—Paddle Georgia 2017

June 23—Etowah River

Distance: 22 miles

Starting Elevation: 620 feet **Lat:** 34.208341°N **Lon:** -84.978665°W

Ending Elevation: 590 feet **Lat:** 34.255306°N **Lon:** -85.178552°W

Restroom Facilities:	Mile 0	Macedonia Road Boat Ramp
	Mile 7.3	Knitnig Residence
	Mile 17	Grizzard Park Boat Ramp
	Mile 22	Heritage Park

Points of Interest:

Mile 1.1—Fish Weir & Two Run Creek—Upstream of the mouth of Two Run Creek is an intact fish dam, and between the creek and river is the site of a large Cherokee Indian village shown on circa 1755 maps.

Mile 2.4—Woolley’s Bridge—All that remains of this pre-Civil War covered bridge are the rock piers. Union troops camped on the Andrew F. Woolley plantation here in May 1864—a key location because the bridge crossed the river where the Rome to Kingston Railroad paralleled it. Before the Union invasion, Woolley had employed the bridge to carry and sell lumber to the Confederate saltpeter operation at Ravenel Cave (see below)

Mile 5—Ravenel Cave—On river left on a high bank overlooking the shoals here is Ravenel Cave. This ancient cave was likely used as shelter by Native Americans, but it was most notably employed as a “saltpeter mine” during the Civil War. The Confederate Nitre Bureau mined caves throughout this area to extract nitrates to be used in the production of gunpowder. Proximity to water—an essential ingredient in the extraction process—is the likely reason this cave was mined. Soil was removed from the cave floor and through an arduous process that involved soaking the soil in water, adding wood ash and boiling off the water, potassium nitrate was created. The miners were known as “peter monkeys.”

Mile 7—Rome to Kingston Railroad—Paralleling the river on the north bank from Kingston to Rome is the now abandoned Rome to Kingston Railroad. The line was originally chartered in 1839 as the Memphis Branch Railroad and Steamboat Co. of Georgia with a grand plan to connect Rome to Memphis, Tennessee. After the line was captured by Union troops in July 1864 it helped avert a Union military disaster during the Allatoona Pass Battle as the line was used to send additional soldiers from Rome into the battle. The railroad also played a part in the Great Locomotive Chase during the Civil War. The Rome mail train picked up the chase of the stolen “General” locomotive at Kingston. The railroad made its last run in October 1943. Remains of trestles can still be seen near the mouths of creeks like Toms and Dykes.

Mile 7.9—Young’s Mill Creek/Ft. Means—Near the mouth of Youngs Mill Creek in the spring of 1838, the U.S. Military constructed Fort Means where nearby Cherokee Indians were gathered before their removal to the west. The fort served as the collection point for 467 Cherokee prisoners, one of whom was shot and killed for trying to escape.

Mile 8.4—Atlanta Steeplechase—On river left here is the site of the Atlanta Steeplechase at Kingston Downs. An annual rite of Spring since 1966, the Steeplechase has been held at Kingston Downs since 1993. The horse race and high-style party attracts some 25,000 people each year to this little bend of the Etowah and is considered Georgia largest single horse racing event. Proceeds from the event benefit various charities each year. In June of this year, organizers announced that the 2017 event would be the last due to declining tickets sales and rising costs of producing the event.

Mile 10.8—Reynold’s Bend Rock Island—This rock island marks the start of a picturesque two-mile loop known as Reynolds Bend. High rock bluffs on the south side of the river are just around the bend.

Mile 11.8—Spring—Along the base of the cliffs here, a cold clear spring issues forth from a cleft in the rock. During the summer it serves a cold water refuge for striped bass.

Mile 16.2—Grizzard Park & Dixon Landing—Named for long-time Rome Assistant City Manager, Jim Dixon, this boat launch was completed in 2007. Dixon was instrumental in establishing the launch. At the time of its completion there was only one other boat launch between Allatoona Dam and Rome.

Mile 16.6—Spring—This unique spring carves a pocket from the river bank sending up a gusher of clear, cold water through sand and sediment. It is visible during low water on river left.

Mile 17.6—Callier Springs Country Club—Fore! On river left is this golf course that boasts of willow trees at the course’s water features that are offspring from a tree that grew on the gravesite of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Mile 17.9—Cattle Access—Mooo! This site is an example of the damage to stream banks that can be wrought by livestock: destroyed riparian plants, increased erosion and elevated bacteria levels in the river.

Mile 19.9—City of Rome Water Intake—On average, the City of Rome pumps a combined 6.2 million gallons per day from this location and its pump station on the Oostanaula River.

Mile 20.9—Rome Floathouses and Brothels—During the early 1900s, and especially during the Great Depression years of the late 20s and 30s, many of the destitute turned to the rivers for survival, taking up residences on shantyboats or floathouses. At the 2nd Avenue Bridge, one notable floathouse operated as a brothel, a line of business for which Rome became somewhat famous. About a mile upstream and just north of the river was a brothel called “Peggy’s” that achieved national acclaim. Peggy Snead operated what was considered a “clean house” and even paid city taxes on her services. City leaders looked the other way and the house operated for several decades. A 1963 Georgia Tech yearbook includes an ad for the establishment.

Mile 21.3—Battle of Hightower—On Oct. 17, 1793, somewhere near the confluence of the Etowah and Oostanaula rivers, a group of Creek/Cherokee Indians battled a U.S. force led by Gen. John Sevier. Sevier and his men pursued the natives from Tennessee after an attack on settlements there. In the brief Battle of Hightower, Sevier’s troops forded the Etowah and met resistance from the Indians led by the Cherokee chief, King Fisher. King Fisher was killed in the battle and the Indian force retreated east.

Mile 21.7—Myrtle Hill Cemetery—Rising above the South Broad Bridge in downtown Rome, Myrtle Hill and the cemetery on its flanks is the final resting place of 20,000 people, including some 370 Confederate and Union soldiers of the Civil War; Ellen Axson Wilson, the wife of President Woodrow Wilson; and, believe it or not, the great grandparents of rock n’ roll legend, Jim Morrison. Morrison’s forebears came to Rome around 1886 and operated the Morrison-Trammel Brick Company. Jim attended his great grandmother’s funeral at the cemetery in 1947.

Mile 21.9—Etowah, Oostanuala, Coosa & Rome—Founded in 1834, Rome was a thriving river town during the 1800s and early 1900s. The 100 block of Broad Street is referred to as the Cotton Block because this is where cotton was loaded on to steamboats bound down river. In 1873, six steamboats operated out of Rome. Between Rome and Gadsden, Alabama, there were some 140 landings. When within their banks and carrying cotton, the rivers were a blessing, but the rivers’ periodic freshets were a curse. The town’s most famous flood occurred in 1886 when parts of downtown were covered in more than 10 feet of water. During high water, the paddlewheeler “Mitchell” steamed up Broad Street, took a left on Fourth Avenue and crossed the Oostanaula in an effort to save a horse. That flood prompted the city to raise the level of Broad Street by eight feet. What are now recognized as the first floors of many historic downtown buildings are actually the former second floors.

Mile 21.9—The Dixie—Lying along the banks of the Etowah and Coosa rivers are the remains of this paddlewheeler. The wood structure of the boat can still be discerned in low water along with cribbing from the wharf where she once docked. The boat caught fire in 1914 while moored at the landing.