

Palisades Promenade—Paddle Georgia 2014

June 23—Chattahoochee River

Distance: 15 miles

Starting Elevation: 870 feet Lat: 33.9640°N Lon: -84.3828°W

Ending Elevation: 760 feet Lat: 33.8015°N Lon: -84.5014°W

Restroom Facilities: **Mile 1.8** Johnson Ferry Unit CRNRA **Mile 7** West Palisades Unit CRNRA
 Mile 6 Powers Island Unit CRNRA **Mile 8.6** Paces Mill Unit CRNRA

Points of Interest:

Mile 0—Hyde Farm—Surrounded for years by suburban sprawl, J.C. Hyde kept a promise he made to his father, Jesse Hyde, never to sell the family farm along the river. J.C. died in 2004 at the age of 94; having farmed the land until his dying year and before his death made arrangements to preserve the land. The 135-acre farm, including a 180-year-old log cabin originally occupied by the pioneering Power family, and several historic farm structures, are now part of the CRNRA.

Mile 1.8—Johnson Ferry Unit CRNRA & Cobb Water Intake—Located just upstream of Johnson Ferry Bridge, this facility pumps water to the Cobb-Marietta Water Authority's James E. Quarles treatment plant which can produce up to 86 million gallons a day. The Johnson Ferry Unit provides restrooms, picnic areas and recreational trails.

Mile 2.5—Sewer Line and Cliffs—On river left snaking down the high bluffs are long pipes. They are sewer lines, connecting some of the cliff-top homes with Fulton County's main trunk line, and they are a visual reminder of our modern sewage systems. Conveyed by gravity, sewage is often coursed to lines along our rivers and streams and on to riverside treatment facilities.

Mile 3.9—Sope Creek & Union Army—On July 8, 1864, portions of the Union Army crossed the Chattahoochee here and became some of the first Union soldiers to cross this strategic geographic obstacle, hastening the withdrawal of Confederate troops to the south side of the river in defense of Atlanta. Within a day, the Union Army had pontoon bridges erected.

Mile 5.5—Cochran Shoals & Col. Brownlow's Naked Dash—On July 7, 1864, Union Col. Jim Brownlow gathered ten of his best swimmers and led a naked crossing of the river here. He commandeered a canoe, loaded the soldiers' guns and clothes and swam across the river holding on to the canoe's gunwales. Upon reaching the south bank wearing nothing but their cartridge boxes, they charged a group of Rebel sentries. The end result: three captured Rebels. Brownlow's commanding officer wrote headquarters: "They would have gotten more but the rebels had the advantage in running through the bushes with their clothes on." Brownlow enjoyed his post here. He wrote: "There are five large fish traps in this ford and the river furnishes an abundance of fish. However, we can only get them by visiting the trap under cover of night." In fact, the remnants of a rock fish weir are still visible in the shoals here.

Mile 6—Powers Island Unit of CRNRA & John Power—In the 1820s the Chattahoochee here was the border between Georgia and Cherokee territory. James Power, for whom the island is now named, ran a ferry and blacksmith shop at this site. A path leads from the boat launch here across the island to restrooms and picnic areas.

Mile 6.8—Devil's Racecourse Shoals—For almost a quarter mile here the majority of the river's flow shoots through a narrow passage flanked by protruding shoals. During the 1800s these rugged shoals stretched shore to shore, but boatmen, tired of navigating the nettlesome obstacle, used dynamite to blast a friendlier course, creating the chute that moves paddlers today. Those same early river men lent the place its name as the shoals were a "devil" to get through.

Mile 7.1—Diving Rock & Ramblin' Raft Race, Thornton Shoals/Indian Cave—Jutting out of the Palisades about 20 feet above the water on river left is a popular spot for taking a plunge. During the 1970s the Diving Rock was a focal point of the annual Ramblin' Raft Race that in its heyday attracted some 300,000 rafters and spectators. What started in 1969 as a Georgia Tech fraternity party soon became Atlanta's equivalent of Woodstock. The event lasted through 1980. Opposite the Diving Rock, the National Park Service has constructed restroom facilities to minimize the impact of visitors to this popular location. Just downstream from the Diving Rock is Thornton Shoals and on river left at the top of the shoals, hiking trails lead to the "Indian Cave," an impressive overhanging rock that is believed to have sheltered Native Americans for thousands of years.

Mile 8.2—The River Rats—Rottenwood Creek, entering on river right here, is considered the rallying point of the fight to save the Chattahoochee from development. It was here in 1970 that river lovers first noticed zoning notices posted along the creek and river. Cobb County had plans to lay a sewer line along the river, and on the east bank, Fulton County had similar plans. The Fulton sewer line was designed to run through the Palisades and required blasting a shelf out of the outcroppings (including the Diving Rock) bordering the river. The "River Rats," who would later form the river protection group Friends of the River, were set into action. Three years later, Georgia's General Assembly passed the Metropolitan River Protection Act. Taking up where the Friends left off, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper formed in 1994, and since that time, the river has had a full-time advocate protecting and restoring it.

Mile 9.6—Paces Ferry & Sherman's Swim—In mid-July 1864 once the Confederate Army had retreated south of the Chattahoochee, there was a brief period where fighting ceased and the armies rested. Rebel bands on the south bank played for the Union; Union soldiers on the north bank sang for the Rebels. Southern tobacco was traded for newspapers, and both sides bathed in the river. In fact, even Union Gen. William Sherman took a swim near Paces Ferry. Days later, they killed one another again.

Mile 11.8—Atlanta Water Intake & Standing Peachtree—On river left here is a boat ramp and the City of Atlanta's water intake structure. Below the structure is a rock weir that is symbolic of Atlanta's 170-year struggle with water supply. With no reliable groundwater sources and only small streams flowing through the city center, Mayor W.A. Hemphill in 1893 put pipes in the river and began pumping it to town. Periodic droughts rendered that solution tenuous and necessitated the construction of the weir here. It wasn't until the construction of Buford Dam and Lake Lanier in 1956 that Atlanta was guaranteed flows even during drought. Beyond the water intake structure is the historic site of Ft. Peachtree, so named because the original Indian trading post here was distinguished by a large mound of earth topped by a peach tree. Atlanta's most recognized thoroughfare, Peachtree St., fittingly runs along the ridge separating the Chattahoochee River basin from the adjacent Altamaha River basin. Those not wishing to run the rapid here can portage—either at the head of the island that splits the river here or on far river right.

Mile 11.9—R.L. Sutton WRF—On river right is the discharge from Cobb County's primary sewage plant. This WRF treats up to 60 million gallons of sewage a day, and is on the receiving end of a giant 9.5-mile tunnel blasted 200-feet underground. The tunnel cost \$113 million to construct but prevents the release of raw sewage into the river.

Mile 12.5—R.M. Clayton WRF—On river left is the discharge from the South's largest sewage treatment plant. This City of Atlanta facility can treat up to 120 million gallons a day. During the 1960s before upgrades, the plant received more than twice its capacity each day and millions of gallons of untreated sewage were diverted to the river. In 1998, a Chattahoochee Riverkeeper lawsuit resulted in the City agreeing to upgrade its sewer infrastructure and now the river is recovering from years of neglect.

Mile 12.6—Western & Atlantic Railroad—A railroad bridge has crossed the river here since 1842.

Mile 13.7—Plant McDonough—The same droughts of the 1920s that forced the city of Atlanta to build a rock weir upstream at its water intake also forced Georgia Power Co. to rethink its reliance on hydropower. Construction of this power plant in 1930 marked the beginning of the company's long marriage with coal-fired power plants that continues today...except at this plant that started it all. In 2000 Georgia Power began an overhaul of the plant, installing a new water cooling system and replacing coal with natural gas. The result of the \$96 million investment: a healthier river and cleaner emissions.

Mile 15—Proctor Creek & Imhoff Tanks—Because Atlanta had no major water body close to the city center to receive and dilute its sewage, the city was forced to dump its sewer lines into tiny creeks like this one. During a dry spell in 1908, up to 30 percent of this creek's flow consisted of raw sewage. At that time, typhoid death rates in the city were among the highest in the nation. This environmental and public health crisis pushed the city to the cutting edge of wastewater treatment in 1914 when it installed Imhoff tanks, the forerunner to today's septic tanks, at the ends of its sewer lines. The tanks were the first of their kind in the country.