

## TVCC - The Early Years - Chattanooga History (Part 1 of 2)

by Jack Wright



Last month we saw 4 Boy Scout camp staff set out on the Hiwassee River in 1930, from Murphy, NC, paddling 133 miles to Chattanooga. All 4 young men did survive. They found places to camp beside the river each night. Their technique included each bowman having a ten-foot long pole to fend the boat off rocks in the river. The railroad on river left was built around 1910, so was right there where it is today.

Most of the 866 ft. elevation drop occurs in the first 50 miles on the upper half of the Hiwassee. Today, a 12 mile section below Appalachia Dam, is normally dry river-bottom gorge, where the water is piped underground to the powerhouse. After high rainfall, TVA releases surplus water down the gorge, unannounced. Only a few people have caught a water release and paddled this stretch (the "Upper-Upper" Hiwassee) in since the dams were built.

In one of those normally dry 12 miles (river mile 58 to 57) the river drops about 100 feet, beginning with the highest falls, at mile 58, named "Workman Rapid" to commemorate this trip in 1930. This rapid drops about 15 ft. in about a 50-ft. horizontal distance, and is rated at about a Class IV drop at a moderate-water level.

Just above Workman, there's a hole in the middle of the river where water flows in from 3 sides (and does not appear to flow out) dubbed "Black Hole" by Dave Sutton, who was almost sucked in it in 1993 (See Feb. '93 newsletter). Another place 2 miles down (mile 55), the whole river is only 15 feet wide, at "The Narrows," where the water is very deep and "squirrely." If you movers & shakers want a future challenge, negotiate a few hours of scheduled water release from Appalachia Dam and explore some steep Hiwassee gorge. There's a gravel road (F.S. 23A) to the put-in at Turtletown Creek (river mile 59), just above the steep section. See TVA topo maps "McFarland, 133-NW" and "Farner, 133-NE".

The following summer, in 1931, Irvine and Workman paddled UPSTREAM from Chattanooga to Camp Ocoee, on Ocoee (Parksville) Lake, a distance of 83+ river miles and 202 feet of elevation. They portaged the only dam in existence then, Ocoee #1.

## RIVER ISSUES

by Tyler Freeman

I was having trouble getting my head straight on what to write in this issue and, as if from Hell, inspiration came in the form of this alert sent by a paddling friend. (No way, would God be responsible for the insane destruction and waste that we humans inflict on this land.)

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Two years ago I got to paddle upper Whites Creek in Rhea County, TN. This is a high water run and starts at HWY. 68. I went up there today to do a little hiking and I had heard there was some land for sale. The current owners own the land on both sides on Whites Creek and have leased the rock "mining" rights to locals that have brought front end loaders in to cut roads in and across the creek. It looks like a bomb sight. This is one of the prettiest creeks I have ever seen. The current owners are Southern Pines Plantation. They buy and resell large tracts of land and are based in Florida. Is this just life? Is there anything that can be done? I guess I am just blowing off steam because it is sickening to look at what is being done.

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This is particularly agitating since I got my first chance to run Whites Creek this weekend (March 12th) with David DeHart and Tim Nichols. The water was a little low, at one foot, so I was able to take plenty of time soaking up the beauty of it all. To think we had discussed going on up to the 68 bridge but decided there was not enough water. How different my day would have been. Instead of soothing memories, they would have been seething memories. How easy it is to look at just that in front of us, and if it doesn't effect our immediate environment we ignore it. This one comes too close for me. What next?

See the picture included with this column, one of 17 taken on the trip. It shows a loaded canoe being hand-lowered through a rapid. Other pictures show riverside campsites, and a canoe upside-down, titled "Canoe repair." One strange aspect missing in the pictures is - NO life jackets! This was before safety and the now common PFD! For many years those two Old Town canoes were stored in Captain Gladish's boathouse under the Walnut Street Bridge. They were used by Boy Scouts on the Tennessee River. Later, when Bill was married, his wife Betty sewed together sails that were used on those canoes. Bill Workman (Dec. 89) was my uncle, and introduced me to the lure & lore of flatwater canoeing as a young boy, on Lake Ocoee, in a new 1956 Old Town Guide canvas canoe, virtually identical to the ones he paddled in the 30s. Don Hixson and I re-canvased and restored it to original condition in 1977, and it's now my proudest possession.

Next month we'll look at the birth of TVCC in 1967, and those who conspired to hold the first organizational meeting at the (old) Red Cross Chapter House, on McCallie Avenue, when it was across from Memorial Auditorium.