

## AUGUSTA CANAL

The city's first 100 years (beginning in 1735) saw it become a tobacco and cotton distribution center, with the adjacent Savannah River making Augusta one of the world's largest inland cotton centers. After the railroads came into the picture, river traffic diminished and one of the city leaders recommended a canal be constructed to provide hydropower for textile factories and a plentiful supply of water for the city. The canal was built in 1845 and enlarged 30 years later to meet high demand for hydropower needed by growing industries. The canal is essentially intact today.

## PETERSBURG BOATS

The 19th and early 20th century town of Petersburg existed at the confluence of the Savannah and Broad rivers in what is Elbert County, Ga., today. After Clarks Hill Lake was built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (it opened to the public in May 1952), the reservoir inundated what was left of Petersburg. The town's main claim to present day fame are the Petersburg Boats built by an unknown resident. The boats are 57 feet in length, seven feet in width and shallow in draft. They could carry up to 10 tons of merchandise, generally cotton, corn and other agricultural products. A huge wooden blade at the end of a sweep oar steered the boats which were propelled by the Savannah River current and by men walking atop the gunwales and pushing long, iron-shod poles into the river bottom. A reproduction boat was constructed by local folks in the early 1990s, launched with great ceremony into the Augusta Canal and, to everyone's surprise except the builders, floated upright.

## CONFEDERATE POWDER WORKS:

Early in the Civil War Confederate States President Jefferson Davis realized the Confederacy's need to supply its own gunpowder. He selected Col. George Washington Rains to build a powder works, arsenal and government foundry. Augusta, Georgia was chosen because of the city's central location, canal transportation, access to water power, railroads and relative security from attack. Today, a lone chimney along the canal stands as the only reminder of that munitions factory.

For those interested in reading about the factory, see "*Never for the Want of Powder, the Confederate Powder Works in Augusta, Georgia,*" by numerous authors and published in 2007 by the University of South Carolina Press.

*Canal Jug concept and background information by Bill Baab*



Recommended reading:

*The Brightest Arm of the Savannah, The Augusta Canal, 1845-2000*, by Dr. Edward J. Cashin, printed by the Augusta Canal Authority, 2002.

