

Hightower Trail

Already a well-established route in the 1700s, the Hightower Trail was a major Indian thoroughfare and part of a network of trails connecting Augusta with the Etowah River area and Alabama. The path crossed the Chattahoochee River at a shallow ford below Roswell, traveled in a west and northwest direction through Fulton County, crossing Willeo Creek to enter Cobb County. It traveled over land later developed as the Mountain Creek subdivision and connected with present-day Shallowford Road near its intersection with McPherson Road. Shallowford then closely follows the original path through East Cobb. Pioneers also followed the ancient trail into the region transforming the footpath into a wagon road, remnants of which were still visible to 20th century residents living here when the area was still rural.

Cobb County - 2009

Barbara Flack
March 29, 2009

Sources – Hightower Trail

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Hightower¹ Trail²

Already a well-established route in the 1700s³, the Hightower Trail was a major Indian thoroughfare⁴ and part of a network of trails connecting Augusta with the Etowah River area⁵ and Alabama.⁶ The path crossed the Chattahoochee River at a shallow ford⁷ below Roswell⁸, traveled in a west and northwest direction⁹ through Fulton County, crossing Willeo Creek to enter Cobb County.¹⁰ It traveled over

¹ Within the scope of attached references, the following theories were given to explain the origin of the name "Hightower": Brown, 26 - an Anglo-Saxon corruption of the word Etowah. Hemperley, 13 - derived from the English pronunciation of "I-ta-wa". He further clarified that Englishmen could not speak a word beginning with an "I" without placing an "H" before it, and added that years later Americans changed the name of the Itawa town and river to "Etowah". He further stated that some experts believe the word to be Creek and not Cherokee. Hitt (*River Crossings*), 2 - it might have been named for the Etowah Indian Mounds. Hitt/Brown (map) - it might have been named for the mounds or been an English corruption of "I-ta-wa". Walker, 79 - quoted a DeKalb County historic marker on US Hwy 78 east of Stone Mountain that stated the word is believed to come from the Cherokee I-ta-wa.

² Goff ("Trading Paths"), 122 compared the aboriginal trails in the Piedmont Region to a modern "highway system in that it consisted of both local and arterial routes." His subsequent use of the words "trading path" to describe the trails emanating from the Augusta area were written in the context of being important to whites because Augusta became an important early center of trade with the Indians. Brown, 26 also referred to it as a trading path prior to it becoming a road used by settlers, and Hitt (*River Crossings*), 2 stated it was an important trade route.

³ Brown, 26 stated the path dates "back to the first third of the 18th century", Georgia Archives map dated 1796 shows a trail leading from "SE of Appalatchee", crossing the Chattahoochee River and ending at High Tower on the High Tower River, but the trail itself is not named. Hemperley, 13 when talking about the origin of the name "Hightower" stated that "Itawa became Hightower when the English came into that area in the late 1600s or early 1700s." It is unclear whether he was talking about the town, the river, the trail, or about all three, but he was clearly referring to something that predates the arrival of the English colonists. Hitt (*River Crossings*), listed 1755 as being the approximate date when the Creeks lost a battle to the Cherokees resulting in the Hightower Trail in the area of the Shallow Ford becoming a boundary between the two nations. Temple, 505 mentions that the branch of the Hightower Path that ran to the Shallow Ford and into Cobb County was "well known to Indians and white men for many years before the organization of Cobb County."

⁴ Goff ("Indian Trading Paths"), 127 footnote 11, Hemperley, 12, Temple, 504 footnote 18.

⁵ Brown, 26, Cherokee Phoenix, Goff (*Placenames*), 64, 67, 254, 397, Hemperley, 13, Walker, 79.

⁶ Brown, 26, Goff ("Indian Trading Paths"), 124-5, 127, plus accompanying map, 128-9. Goff makes the distinction that the trail did not originate in Augusta, and illustrates its connection to the trails that did originate there. He also illustrates how the trail network continued from Bartow (formerly Cass) County on to Alabama.

⁷ Brown, 26.

⁸ Hemperley, 13, Hitt/Brown map, Hitt (*River Crossings*), 2, 8, Shadburn, 103, Temple, 505 footnote 18, Walker, 79, 96 note #4. (In Chattahoochee River Crossings, Hitt shows an 1829 map done by General John Coffee on P. 2 that shows the Old Hightower Trail leading up to the river at the shallow ford, and on P. 8 an 1831 map by John Bethune shows a trail leading from the shallow ford on the other side of the river. Shadburn's specific reference is to fractional lot 379½, which is in present day Fulton County.)

⁹ Hemperley, 12-3, Hitt/Brown map, Roth, 21. Directionality also confirmed by comparing the trail and land lots covered in the Georgia Archives Cobb County map with the land lots and road systems on modern maps. From the shallow ford on the Chattahoochee River in Fulton County, the trail travels through the following land lots in a west and northwest direction: 379-340-334-295-296-270-269-234-235-202-201 (LL234, 235, 202, and 201 are in a voided or blank section on the Georgia Archives Cobb County map), the trail crosses Willeo Creek into Cobb County at LL170 then continues through LL130-129 (Hitt/Brown map stops here)-100-101-53-52-27-468-467-466-399-400-401-402-391-390-389-388-387-386-385-336-337-(Archives Cobb County map damaged at this point).

¹⁰ ADC map, 22-23, Georgia Archives map, see land lot notations in footnote #5.

land later developed as the Mountain Creek subdivision¹¹ and connected with present-day Shallowford Road near its intersection with McPherson Road.¹² Shallowford then closely follows the original path through East Cobb.¹³ Pioneers also followed the ancient trail into the region¹⁴ transforming the footpath into a wagon road¹⁵, remnants of which were still visible to 20th century residents living here when the area was still rural.¹⁶

¹¹ Simpson described the boundaries of the Mountain Creek Subdivision as follows in an email dated 1/12/09: (From north to south) It fills the area between Shallowford Road through to Post Oak Tritt Road (excluding the Clary Lakes subdivision), with four entrances off of Shallowford Road, and one off of Post Oak Tritt. (From east to west) It runs from the Fulton/Cobb County line (Willeo Creek) almost to Childers Road (along the Shallowford side), with the farthest houses being behind the Shallowford Falls Shopping Center. The two sides of the subdivision are split by McPherson Road.

¹² ADC map, 22, Brown, 26, Georgia Archives Cobb County map. This occurs near the boundary between LL52 and LL53.

¹³ ADC map, 21, *Cobb County Times*, Cole, Garrow, Roth, 10, Temple, 505, Weikel. While Roth mentions that Shallowford Road follows the original trail through the county, my reference to East Cobb refers to that section of the trail visible on the Archives map up to LL337 where the map is damaged. LL337 lies in the vicinity of Harrison Park and Lassiter High School, both on Shallowford Road west of Sandy Plains Road (ADC map). East Cobb is further substantiated by the historic monument placed near the southwest corner of Sandy Plains and Shallowford in 1931 to commemorate the trail (*Cobb County Times* and Temple), and the subsequent movement of that monument as well as another one to Harrison Park to allow for construction at that intersection. (Cole, Garrow and Weikel.)

¹⁴ Hitt (*River Crossings*), 4-6, Temple, 505 footnote 18, Walker, 79 – reference to Jacob R. Brooks' ferry being established in 1824 at the shallow ford.

¹⁵ Goff (*Placenames*), 150, Goff ("Indian Trading Paths"), 126, Roth, 21. (In *Placenames* Goff was speaking about an area of the trail in eastern DeKalb County, but he mentions that wagons began to follow the trail in the early 1820s. In *Indian Trading Paths* he also mentions the 1820s as when whites began using the path for vehicular travel, but does not pin this activity down to a specific section.)

¹⁶ Fiveash, Temple, 505 footnote 18. (Charlotte Fiveash advised the following: That her side of the Mountain Creek subdivision was built between 1976 and 1978. She moved into her house in April of 1978 at which time the area behind her house was still wooded. Previous to the development of the subdivision, the land was owned by one family. There was an area of depressed earth about three feet below level ground that followed the contours of the land. Kids used to play in it, and old timers were familiar with the feature as part of a wagon road leading back toward a ford in the river. There was also a bubbling spring that was covered over approximately 15 years after the Fiveash family moved in. A house now sits on the former site of the spring.)

