

## HOW TO FIND *City of Hawkinsville*

The remains of *City of Hawkinsville* are located in shallow water on the western (Dixie County) bank of the Suwannee River, about 100 yards south of the railroad trestle at Old Town. Access to the site is by boat only. The wreck is marked by a series of buoys on her starboard side, and by two mooring buoys approximately 50 feet downstream from her stern. To avoid anchor damage to the shipwreck, please use mooring buoys; boats are not allowed over the wreckage shoreward of the marker buoys.



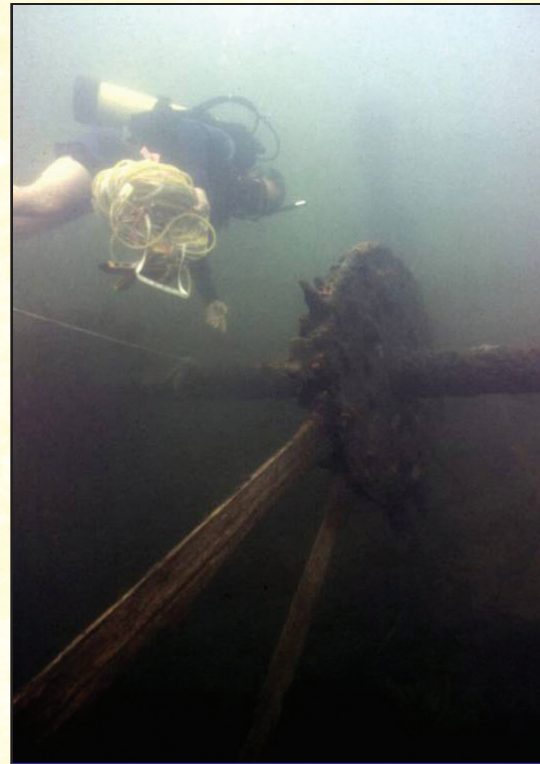
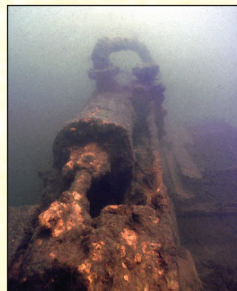
This is an Advanced-level dive due to high current and low visibility. Diving the steamer is not recommended for novices, or those uncomfortable with limited underwater visibility. Remember to display a “divers down” flag, do not dive into or under the hull, and beware of sharp edges and stray fishing line. A laminated underwater guide is available from local dive shops to orient divers on a self-guided tour of the preserve. Diving should not be attempted on *Hawkinsville* when the river is above 4 feet on the gauge at near-by Wilcox Station in Fanning Springs, or if water visibility is less than 3 feet. For information on the river’s elevation, call the Suwannee River Water Management District weekdays at 800.226.1066 and ask for the latest river gauge reading at Wilcox Station. Local dive shops can provide information on diving conditions.

As with all other historical and archaeological sites on public uplands and submerged bottomlands, *City of Hawkinsville* is protected by Florida laws prohibiting unauthorized disturbance, excavation, or removal of artifacts. Please help keep the site intact for others by taking care when visiting this well preserved but fragile piece of Florida’s history.

“Take only photos and leave only bubbles.”

## *City of Hawkinsville* State Underwater Archaeological Preserve

Today, *City of Hawkinsville* looks like a story-book ghost ship, lying in shallow water alongside the river’s bank. The hull of the sunken steamer is virtually intact with her bow pointing upstream. From the stempost, one can swim along the entire deck of the vessel to her stern paddlewheel, exploring numerous deck fittings and steam machinery along the way. Inside darkened hatches, mudfish and catfish make their homes. Tilting at an angle of 20° to starboard, the steamer rests on a series of limestone rocks that support the hull above the river bed. The port side of the vessel is partially buried in the river bank. Although the boat’s steam boiler has been removed, most of the steam piping remains in place. The main propulsion system, consisting of two enormous horizontal piston engines, each of which drove a long Pitman arm connected to the paddlewheel, is easily recognizable along with its rods and gears. Perhaps the most dramatic features of the wreckage are the four iron sprockets and their wooden spokes that comprised the large paddlewheel that pushed *Hawkinsville* up and down the Suwannee. Be sure to visit the bronze plaque located in the recessed boiler room.



For more information call  
850.245.6444  
Or visit  
[museumsinthesea.com](http://museumsinthesea.com)



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Division of Historical Resources  
Bureau of Archaeological Research  
500 South Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

# City of Hawkinsville

## UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVE Suwannee River, Florida



Painting Courtesy  
William Trotter

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Division of Historical Resources  
Bureau of Archaeological Research

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
Division of State Lands

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DIXIE COUNTY

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GULF MARINE FOUNDATION, INC.



# City of Hawkinsville

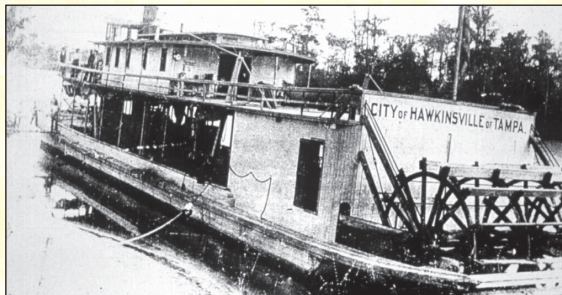
## Steamboating on the Suwannee River

From the 17th century, the Suwannee River played an important role in the development of central Florida. Waterborne transport helped to supply the needs of Spanish, British, and Americans. By 1834, an unnamed steamboat was said to be stationed at St. Mark's "for Suwaney" trade.

During the Second Seminole War, the steamer *American* unsuccessfully attempted to chase down a canoe full of Seminoles; the race ended only after the canoe overturned in the swift water of a rocky shoal. Traffic on the river during the war years, 1835-1843, centered along the lower river, mostly below present-day Branford. After the Second Seminole War, the need to navigate much farther up river was created by cotton growers around settlements such as the town of Columbus (near present Suwannee River State Park). The typical Suwannee River route included a stop at Cedar Key to allow the shallow draft coastal and river-going craft to dock alongside oceangoing vessels and exchange cargos.

At first the Suwannee settlements mainly were serviced by small sailing vessels but by October 25, 1845, the St. Augustine News reported that "it has been in contemplation for some time past to establish a mail route, by steamer, upon the Suwannee from Cedar Key to Fort White, to be connected thence with the St. Johns by stage... The steamboat *Orpheus* has arrived and taken her station on the route. We learned that she is a most beautiful vessel, 136 ft. in length, and is fitted up in fine style with 18 state-rooms. She will carry the U.S. Mail from Cedar Key up the Suwannee to the flourishing town of Columbus."

Along the upper Suwannee, steamers steered through dangerous rocky shoals to reach Columbus,



an area of the river today known for swift water canoeing. In 1847, *Orpheus* was lost at an unspecified location in the river, possibly due to a navigational error on rock shoals. By the 1850s, however, Captain Tucker, owner of the steamer *Madison*, went farther upriver to White Springs, in a successful attempt to have the Suwannee River declared navigable above Columbus.

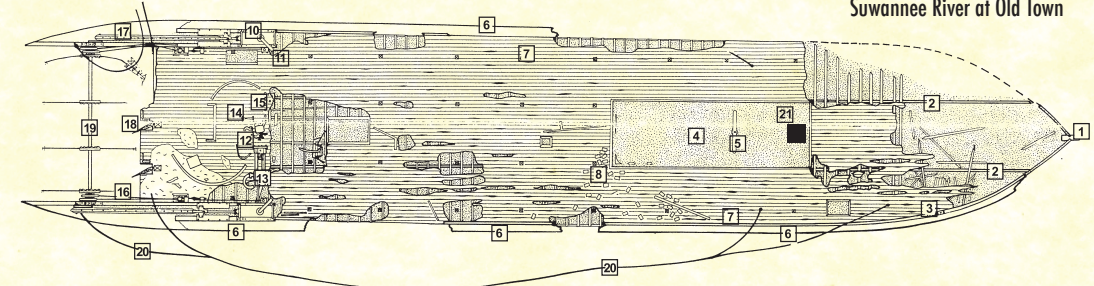
During the Civil War, the port at Cedar Key fell into Union hands, forcing blockade runners to come into the shallow water approaches of coastal rivers including the Suwannee. As the war dragged on, *Madison* was scuttled in Troy Spring to keep her from falling into Yankee hands and at least two Confederate oceangoing steamers were lost near the mouth of the Suwannee. After the war, there were no known steamboats on the river until the spring of 1872, when the steamer *Wawenock* began running from New Troy (near Troy Spring) to Cedar Key.

For the next two decades, steamboating flourished; tourist writer George Barbour noted in 1882 that "the Suwannee is navigable for small steamboats to the crossing of the Jacksonville, Pensacola and Mobile Railroad (at present-day Suwannee River State Park), and for large steamers to Rowland's Bluff." In the mid-1880s, Captain Bob Ivey moved to Rowland's Bluff, renamed it Branford, and established a steamboat landing adjacent to a new rail line which ran along the river's bank. By 1888, Ivey also had established a boatyard for the construction of a variety of watercraft, including steamboats, the most famous of which was *Belle of Suwannee*, a popular honeymoon cruise boat.

The hurricane of 1896 damaged shipping at Cedar Key, causing the Suwannee steamboat tourist trade to decline. Commercial trade continued to flourish with the growing export of local lumber for general construction, and especially cedar for pencil-making. Gradually, railroads began to replace waterborne transport; but, for almost a hundred years, from 1834 until the 1920s, more than 50 steamboats ran the Suwannee River. Today, the remains of perhaps a dozen steamboats can be found along the river's bottom.

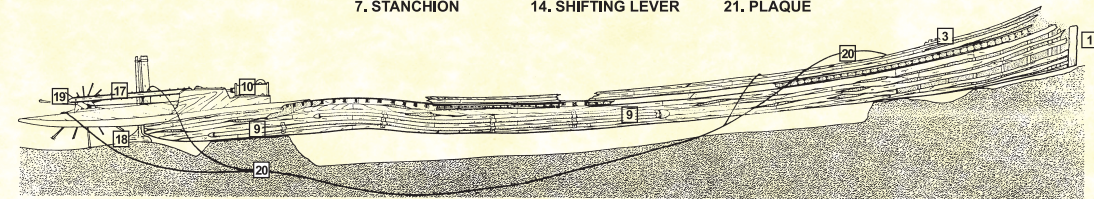
Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research

CITY OF HAWKINSVILLE  
Suwannee River at Old Town



SCALE 0 10 20 30  
FEET

- |                   |                    |                      |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. STEMPOST       | 8. BRICKS          | 15. STEAM PIPES      |
| 2. BULKHEAD       | 9. CONDENSER PIPE  | 16. SHIFTING LINKAGE |
| 3. FAIRLEAD       | 10. STEAM ENGINE   | 17. PITMAN ARM       |
| 4. BOILER ROOM    | 11. SLIDE VALVE    | 18. RUDDERS          |
| 5. BOILER BRACKET | 12. CONDENSER PUMP | 19. PADDLEWHEEL      |
| 6. GUARD          | 13. WATER PUMP     | 20. HOG CHAIN        |
| 7. STANCHION      | 14. SHIFTING LEVER | 21. PLAQUE           |



## Vessel History

*City of Hawkinsville* is a surprisingly intact survivor of late 19th-century coastal steamboat technology. She was the largest and the last steamboat to be stationed on the Suwannee River, serving a route that included Branford, Clay's Landing, Old Town, and Cedar Key. Originally built at Abbeville, Georgia, in 1896 for the Hawkinsville (Georgia) Deepwater Boat Lines, she was sold in June 1900 to the Gulf Transportation Company of Tampa for use on the Suwannee River. *City of Hawkinsville* was 141 feet long, with two decks, a single smoke stack, a square stern, and a molded bow. She was a post-hurricane newcomer, brought into the river to assist a booming lumber industry. Local accounts contend that *Hawkinsville* also was instrumental in the construction of the rail bridge at Old Town. In doing so, she quickened her own demise, since the moving of people and goods by rail eventually rendered steamboats obsolete. Although accounts of her last days vary, official registry records indicate that she was in service until May 19, 1922, when her last captain, Mr. Currie,

abandoned the vessel and the occupation that could no longer support him. Thus the steamboating era of the Suwannee River came to an end.

In 1991 the sunken steamboat was mapped by state archaeologists. *Hawkinsville* became Florida's third Underwater Archaeological Preserve in 1992 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.

