

Georgia's kissin' bridges provide nostalgic span into yesteryear



Lowry Covered Bridge

Georgia's picturesque "kissin bridges" provide a nostalgic glimpse of her past.

While they are swiftly vanishing from Georgia's countryside, these covered bridges, representing another bit of Americana on the way to oblivion, can still be found in sixteen counties in the state.

The colorful structure now standing in the Stone Mountain Memorial Park is launched on a new career-providing sightseers a chance to see and photograph an historic structure of yesteryear. After years of service bridging the Oconee River at Athens, the wooden structure was declared unsafe for modern traffic in 1965 and was given to the Stone Mountain Commission by the Clarke County commissioners.

The handsome old covered bridge which today leads to the Greenhouse at Callaway Gardens was originally located in Troup County. Built in 1870 it was given to the Gardens by the Troup County Commission of Roads and Revenue and was moved intact to the Gardens area.

An air of mystery has attached itself to the legends concerning the purpose of the covered bridge. Among the wild theories given is the one quickly believed

by the romantic - the "kissin' bridge" theory. After crossing over on one of these ancient spans it isn't hard to picture an amorous couple of another era enjoying a bit of osculating behind old Dobbin in the dark of the bridge. Few would claim that this was the real reason for building the bridges, but you have to admit that this makes a popular story especially in a unique region steeped in the romanticism of moonlight and magnolias.

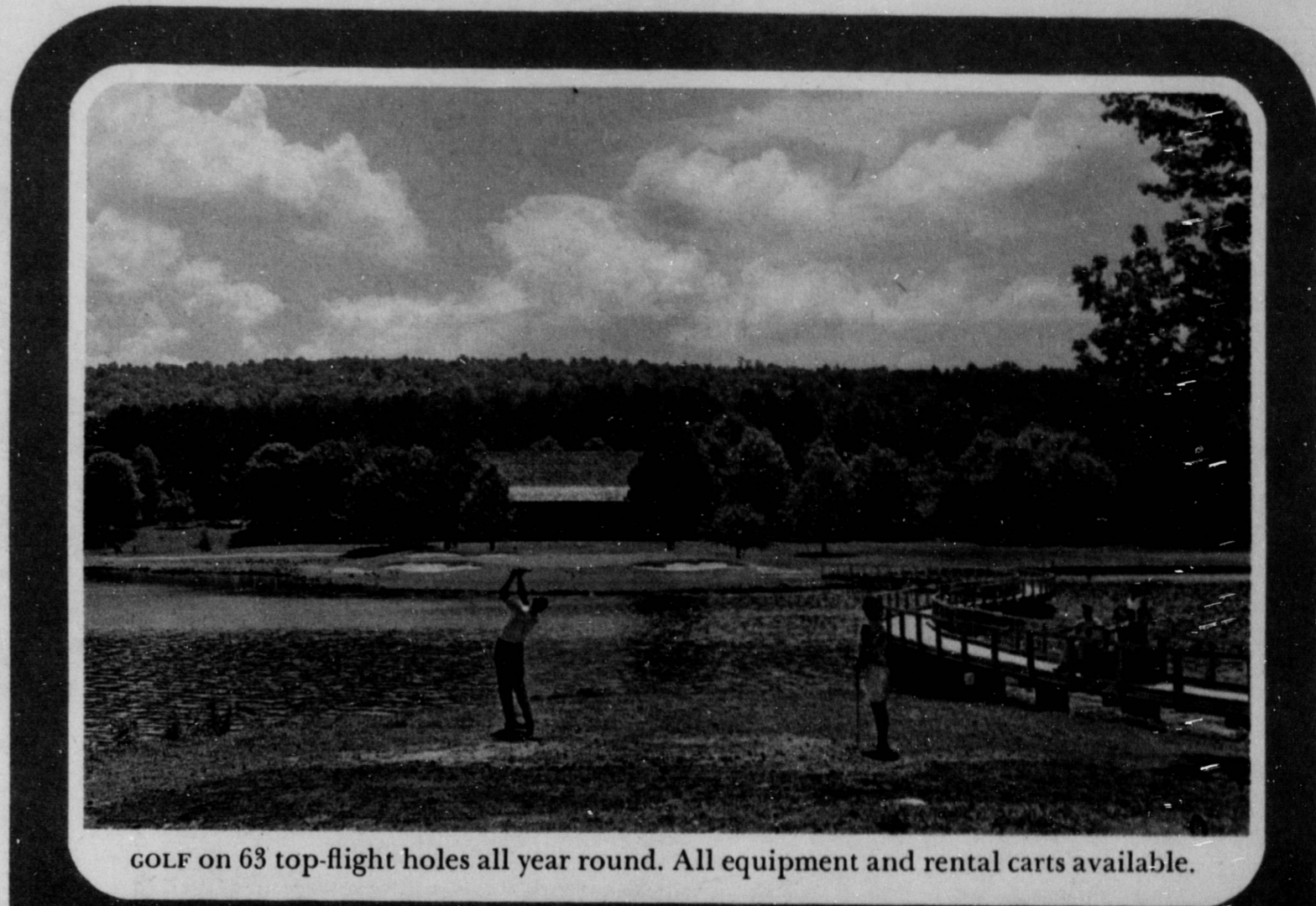
The majority of Georgia's covered bridges are in the northern part of the state, mainly in the mountains. At one time the state had 250 such bridges; today they've dwindled to an estimated 29, as flood, fire and modern highways have led to their demise.

Longest of the Georgia spans crosses Big Red Oak Creek in Meriwether County and measures some 412 feet. Only 149 feet are covered. Longest fully covered bridge is the 236-foot Broad River Bridge on a county road linking Madison and Oglethorpe counties.

Even the streams they span add flavor to the charm of the bridges with colorful names, some of Indian origin, such as Auchumpkee, Sawhatchee, Wehadkee, Euharlee, Amicalola, Nickajack, Setting Down, Snapping Shoals and Nails.

Some efforts have been made to preserve these intriguing mementos of another era. The Coheele Bridge, located in Early County, now has a county recreational area beside it on the banks of the creek. Early County Commissioners designated the Early Chapter of DAR, custodians of this bridge.

If you want a nostalgic link with a more peaceful era, visit some of Georgia's "kissin bridges." Despite the fact that their number is dwindling, they are fun to locate and photograph. Although they are vanishing, their appeal is growing.

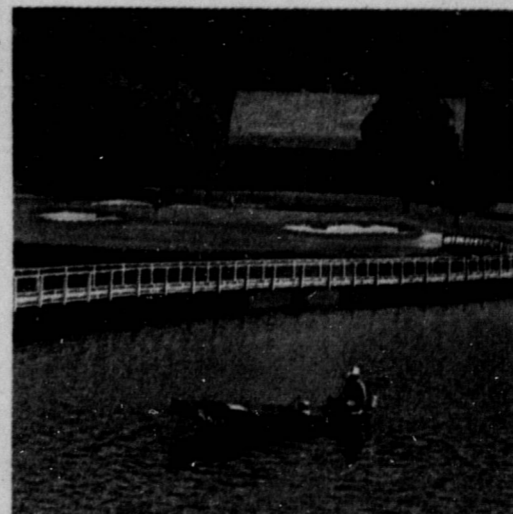


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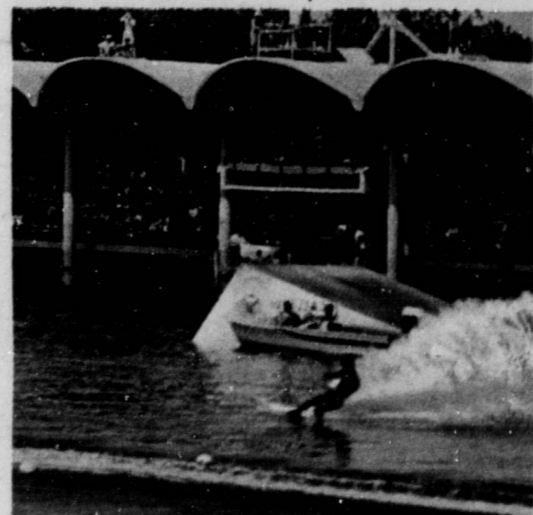
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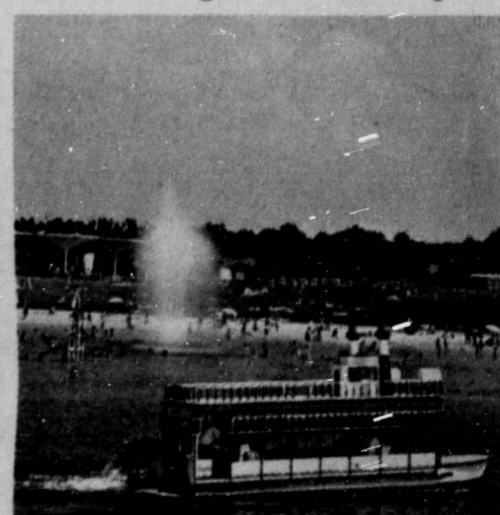
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