

Second Grade Lesson on the Savannah River by Sohyun An

Georgia Social Studies Standards

SS2G1 Locate and compare major topographical features of Georgia and describe how these features define Georgia's surface.

b. Locate on a physical map the major rivers: Savannah, Flint, and Chattahoochee.

Background Information

The Savannah River is a natural boundary between Georgia and South Carolina. It runs from the Blue Ridge Mountains and deposits into the Atlantic Ocean in Savannah, Georgia. The river is a rich resource as it serves as a source for water, transportation, and power.

The Augusta Canal is fed by the Savannah River and passes through suburban and urban Augusta before the water returns to Savannah River at various locations.

The Canal was originally constructed in 1845 to provide water to the city, power to textile mills and factories, and transportation for goods. The Canal is a National Heritage Area designated by the U.S. Congress in 1996.

How is Asian American history connected to the Augusta Canal and the Savannah River?

During the Reconstruction after the Civil War, 165 Chinese immigrant workers were recruited and brought to deepen and widen the Augusta Canal in the 1870s.

When the canal project was completed, most Chinese immigrant workers left to find jobs elsewhere. But some remained and opened grocery stores or hand laundries in Augusta.

The 1880 Census reported 10 Chinese living in Augusta (out of a total of 17 in Georgia) and 8 Chinese grocery stores. The 1940 Census reported a Chinese population of 224 and 63 grocery stores.

Although small, the Chinese American community in Augusta was the largest Chinese population in Georgia until the 1960s when the anti-Asian immigration laws were repealed and skilled workers from various Asian countries were allowed to immigrate to the US.

On May 19, 2023, the Georgia Historical Society dedicated the state's first-ever Asian American historical marker to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, the oldest Chinese organization in Georgia, to recognize the Augusta Chinese and their stories.



Instructional Suggestion

First, introduce students to the Savannah River by showing video clips, maps, photos, and facts about the river using websites below:

- [Savannah River | Physical Features of Georgia](#)
- [The Savannah River by UGA](#)
- [Savannah Riverkeeper](#)
- [Georgia River Network](#)

Next, introduce the Augusta Canal, its location and functions, and the Chinese migrant workers who built it by using websites below:

- [Augusta Canal](#)
- [Augusta Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association](#)
- [Augusta Chinese History](#)

By incorporating Chinese immigrants in teaching about the Savannah River and Augusta Canal, teachers can help 2nd graders understand the long history of Chinese and Asian migration to GA and beyond.

Do you want to include more stories of Asian America into your lessons? Check out this fabulous book, [*Teaching Asian America in Elementary Classrooms*](#) by Noreen Naseem Rodríguez, Sohyun An, & Ester June Kim.

