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Fixico Creek & Little Joe's Fishing Camp

By Chip Gates, H.O.B.O. Historian



The next time you're feeling adventurous and have a good solid keel underneath you, head up Hatchet (Ponchishatchee) Creek as if you are going to Barrett's Fish Camp. Go past the entrance to Pennamotley, round the east end of the big island (the western end can be a bit shallow), and as Hatchet turns back to the right towards Barrett's, hang a left into Weogufka Creek. After a short distance Weogufka starts to bend back to the left and there, on the right, is your goal, the entrance to **Fixico Creek**. After a dogleg to the right the first cabins will come into view and here you'll want to slow and take in a part of the world few folks have seen.

Fixico Creek and the Fixico Mines got their name from Chief Tallasse Fixico. In an 1855 U.S. Supreme Court document, Fixico was described by the government as a "friendly chief of the Creeks". Being a nice guy and in good standing with Washington, D.C., Chief Fixico was granted land east of the Coosa River. His certificate, No. 28, was recorded on April 12, 1820 at the U.S. Land Office. Chief Fixico, not knowing any better, sold the land in 1828 to a George Taylor. Six years later Taylor, also blissfully ignorant of the law (oh, if he had only had the Internet), sold a portion of the land, about 40 acres, and that's when the trouble started. An act of 1817 provided that no land reserved to a Creek warrior can be offered for sale unless directed by the Secretary of the Treasury. Both a treaty and act of congress declared "that if

the Indian abandoned the reserved land, it became forfeited to the United States". By selling the land without the approval of the Treasury Secretary, Chief Fixico unknowingly abandoned the property, and so it reverted to the U.S government. As public land, it was later offered up for sale, leaving poor Mr. Taylor without. As a side note, an 1832 census of town Chiefs of the Creek Nation indicates a Talasee Fixico (note slight spelling difference) as chief of Hickory Ground, which you know as Wetumpka. So it appears our good man Chief Fixico may have gone south and taken charge of a much more prominent village on the Coosa.

In the early 20th century the community of Fixico was known as Fixico Mining Camp, with the mines primarily producing graphite. Not trying to sound perverse, but that would literally put some lead in your pencil! Today graphite is a key component in the making of lithium ion batteries, but its uses back then were a little more mundane.

In 1910 the community of Fixico was in its heyday and had a population of 266. The 1920 census lists the town with 176 people, but by 1930 it was down to 120. Sometime in the early 1920's two of the folks that left Fixico were Mr. Elijah Green Caudle and his teenage son Joseph. *(Note: Elijah was one of 8 children, all easily found through a little research, but there are no records bearing his wife's name. As Joseph appears to be an only child, it is possible that Mrs. Caudle, Joe's mother, may have died giving birth to Joe or shortly thereafter.)*

Mr. Caudle sold his property to Alabama Power Company and moved to Gantt's Quarry, which is on the southwest edge of Sylacauga. Mr. Caudle sold his land because it would soon be inundated by the future Lake Mitchell, but he had laid down roots that would bring his son back to that area about 25 years later.

World War II was over and peace had been restored. Folks were in need of recreation, and in the late 1940's Fixico Creek would become one place to find it. The Caudle's son Joe, along with his wife Mildred, returned to Elijah's old stomping grounds and got to work building. Due to the nature of the terrain, the road that ran along the slough that still bears the name Fixico Creek was relatively close to the water. Soon several cabins were built, some sitting on posts extending out over the water. The place acquired the name **Little Joe's Fishing Camp**, although to look at Joe in a photo he doesn't appear little at all, not in stature anyway. Perhaps *Little Joe* was a nickname bestowed early in his life. However he came about his moniker, Little Joe's Fishing Camp would become known not just for cabins and fishing, but for a honkytonk as well. This addition to the Fixico camp, ostensibly built over the water to avoid problems with the law and alcohol, was no doubt an interesting place. Stories have come forth of numerous trap doors and hidden spaces, some for concealing alcoholic beverages and others for lowering the same into a waiting boat underneath. Rumor has it a formidable attorney local to the area frequented the place, and sometimes intervened when Little Joe ran afoul of the law. It is said this attorney was so respected and/or feared for his skill in the courtroom that no prosecutor wanted to tangle with him and hence, most of Little Joe's legal problems didn't amount to much.





If you are familiar with Fixico Creek or have looked at it on Google Earth, you know how remote it is. Imagine back in the day driving there or taking your little runabout with its 5 h.p. motor and sailing in from elsewhere on the lake. It must have been worth the trip, and chances are after what was probably a bit of a journey, it was easy to justify hanging out there for a while, having a drink or two. But you didn't want to overdo it. Word on the slough is that Mrs. C. (Mildred) would tend bar, and when a patron became rowdy, she would reach down, pull out a pistol, and point it right between their eyes. The click of the hammer being cocked was probably enough to quickly sober up

anyone. At this point it might have been best to rent one of the nearby cabins for an overnight stay. For anglers or others desiring to spend some time on the water, small wooden boats could also be rented, but it was strictly BYOM, as in Bring Your Own Motor. This was not out of the ordinary, as motors back then bore no resemblance to the high-tech and heavy engines of today.



Speaking of today, virtually nothing remains of the honkytonk. Towards the back of the slough are two wooden posts jutting up out of the water, the last remnants of the outermost roof supports, under which boats could be tied up out of the weather, or possibly out of sight. If you venture past these posts, way back on the left or northern shore you might spy an old stone chimney standing close to the water's edge. This is all that is left of Little Joe's parent's house, probably nothing more than a log cabin. Little Joe, born in 1904, left this world in 1966. His wife Mildred, born in 1909, passed on in 1983. They are buried side by side in the Moriah Cemetery in Coosa County. Fortunately, most of the fish camp's cabins remain, and they each have their own fascinating story to tell. If you decide to visit this out-of-the-way nook of Lake Mitchell by boat, be sure to check out Three Moose Lodge. One of the original cabins, it has received some additions over the years, but still sports a lot of history and character. If you come by land, bring a really good map, a full tank of gas, and a week's supply of food, just in case. Be alert, for this *is* Big Foot country, as the signs will tell you. Also be aware that Little Joe's Fishing Camp is a "cabled" (not "gated") community, so unless you're expected, your last quarter mile may be on foot. However you get there, stop and tune in to your senses while letting the mists of the past envelope you. You just might detect the smell of fish and small outboards, the clink of glass, the sounds of laughter or a beer being slid down the bar, and, if you listen very closely, you may still catch some strains of music from the old honkytonk echoing off the hills. Welcome to Little Joe's Fishing Camp!

Sources for this story include the 1940 U.S. Census, Ancestry.com, Findagrave.com, Chan Aldridge (area 1), but most of the credit is owed to Ray Petty (area 12). Thanks Ray! For questions, comments, or to share your own historical story, please contact me at gatesestate@bellsouth.net.

Area	Area Name	Representative	Phone
1	Blue Creek/ The Ridge	Bobby Lewis docx2@mindspring.com	205-212-1020 205-901-8307
2	Blue to Cargile	Jim & Johnye Woodrow ajwking@aol.com	205-425-9431 205-755-0055
3	Cargile South	Dan Murchison DanMurchison@gmail.com	205-408-7445
4	Cargile North	Connie Hampton Connie28fan@yahoo.com Susan Orr: soriii@bellsouth.net	205-755-6344 334-312-6131
5	Cargile to Bird	Sonny & Peggy Bullard pnsbullard@gmail.com	205 755-9514
6	Bird Creek	Leslie Miles lesliemiles0@gmail.com	205-755-6432 205-612-2172
7	Bird to Walnut	Becki & Mau McCallum beckmau@gmail.com	205 755-5334
8	Walnut SW	Beau Battaglia beauredsox@yahoo.com	504-909-6990
9	Walnut Creek Peninsula	Betty & Joel Elam Betty687@aol.com	205-807-9056 205 755-2775
10	Cove and Mountain	Roxanne Martin roxypmartin@gmail.com	205 755-0863
11	Mountain to Lay Dam	Stan Holt Stan-holt@att.net	205-980-1428
12	Upper Hatchet and Weogufka	VACANT	
13A	East Pennamotley	Jim & Wathan Hand jmhand@centurylink.net	256-377-1153
13B	West Pennamotley	Richard & Wendy Cruse wendycruse@gmail.com	205-253-8298
14	Hatchet to Big Airplane	Eric & Rose Green rosegreenlake14@yahoo.com	205-492-7151
15	Airplane/Finger to Big Y Slough	Tommy Carpenter rtcarpen@southernco.com	256-377-1046 205-586-1749
16	Big Y to Mitchell Dam	Nan & David Spivey davidaspivey@gmail.com nanspivey@gmail.com	256-377-1178 205-492-0375

Mark Your Calendars!

February 26	Board of Directors Meeting	Poplar Springs Baptist Church 6:00 PM
April 2	Renew Our Rivers Clean-up	Higgins Ferry 8:00 AM
April 17	Area Representatives Meeting	Lake Mitchell Marina 1:00 Eat 2:00 Meet



***From the President:
Steve Miles***

Hello everyone and Happy New Year. I hope all of you had a great Holiday. Needless to say we will have a lot to clean up when we meet April 2nd. After all this wet weather we have had, the cleanup can't come soon enough. Hopefully it will be warm and dry. I would like to thank all of the Lake Mitchell HOBO family for being so supportive last year. We had some great turnouts to all our HOBO events and I hope it is bigger and better this year. It really is nice to meet and have time with all the members and guests.

As always, if you have any suggestions you would like to see on the Lake contact your Area Representative or contact me with your suggestion. In closing, our next event will be the end of February or the first of March and that event will be the annual sinking of Christmas trees. As soon as I get a date on this event I will get it out to everyone. Look forward to seeing you on the lake (when it warms up some).

Be Safe
Steve Miles

Area Representative Reports:

Area 5-Peggy Bullard

Lake life in Area 5 has been quiet and that is good unless you people are not reporting in to us. One of the break ins that happened a few months ago was in our area. We are so grateful to the Austins for hearing the commotion at three in the morning and calling the sheriff. Due to all the rains there is much trash in the sloughs in our area and it might call for a neighborhood cleaning before time for the spring cleanup. Cindy Wallingford and Barbara Freeman both report large logs have floated up to their boathouses or piers. We were asked if we saw Santa skiing this year and I must say we did not but we did see him taking a break on Chuck & Carol Traetto's pier in Pennamotley. Have a blessed New Year.
Sonny & Peggy Bullard



Area 9 – Betty and Joel Elam

Fun on the lake does not have to stop at the end of summer. The fall and winter offer many opportunities to relax and visit with your neighbors. After the holidays, the lake gives us a chance to escape the hustle and bustle of the city and enjoy the lake and its wildlife. Please remember to observe the speed limit on our roads. There are many residents that walk with children, pets, or ride ATVs. Betty and I wish you all a happy 2016.



Area 11-Stan Holt

Lay Dam on December 27, 2015
Photo by Stan Holt

Area 13B-Richard and Wendy Cruse

We hope everyone had a great Christmas and New Year's Eve. We are getting into the cold time of the year for us. Let's all be aware of safety around home and docks. Watch for pipes and critters. And don't forget to feed your feathered friends; they are hungry!

The Cruses

Area 15 – Tommy Carpenter

I hope everyone had a safe and blessed holiday season. By the time you get this we should be well into the winter season. If you are not a full time resident, remember to winterize your cabin and boats. Cover your outside spickets and leave some heat on. I usually put some RV antifreeze in the sink traps and toilets just for good measure. Unfortunately, this is the time of year the thieves like to show up. Neighbors need to watch out for each other. Recently, someone in my area told me a story about leaving an "unfamiliar" car at their cabin. They got a call from a good neighbor. That is a good thing!!! Remember we all have "HOB0" phone books so let's use them. It contains the number for Coosa county sheriff's office and many others.

This year will be our 16th year of the Renew our Rivers project. It starts at 8:00 A.M. at Higgins Ferry on Saturday, April 2. Hope to see you there. Come join us for great fellowship and feel good about giving back to our beautiful lake.

Attention fishermen who are iPhone users! I saw an ad in the latest SHORELINS magazine that says you can download an "app" that tells all the fishing "hot spots" on every Alabama Power lake. Also, the generation times, maps, and, water levels.

Tommy Carpenter
rtcriver@gmail.com



***Mitchell Dam December 25, 2015
Photo taken by Melissa Nannini***

***Happy
New
Year !***

Don't Forget your HOB O Dues!

Join Lake Mitchell HOB O

Membership in the Lake Mitchell HOB O is open to all Lake Mitchell property owners. Annual dues for membership is only \$25 per family per year. In 1996 when the Lake Mitchell HOB O was formed, membership dues were established at \$25 and have continued at that level ever since! And during this time, your organization has never had a debt, a loan or a past due bill!

How are HOB O Dues Used?

We will start with the Lake Mitchell HOB O's mission statement, which is to "Preserve. Protect. Improve." Our lake would not be what it is today if we did not diligently work to preserve, protect and improve our water quality.

WATER TESTING - We have an Environmental Committee that works with Alabama Power Company, Alabama Water Watch and other organizations to monitor what our water shed is filtering into our Lake. Your H.O.B.O. dues purchase the water testing kits and supplies that our water monitor volunteers use to regularly test the water at various points along our lake.

LAKE CLEANUP - We spend about \$800 per year on our semi-annual lake cleanup events where many volunteers comb the lake cleaning hundreds of pounds of litter and trash from our shores. After depositing the bags of debris, workers celebrate at Higgins Ferry Park with a picnic provided by your \$25.

SCHOLARSHIP - Your HOB O. association is also civic minded. Each year we award two \$2000 scholarships to two local Coosa or Chilton County high school seniors. The HOB O Scholarship Committee accepts and reviews applications, works with school counselors and interviews each applicant to select the scholarship recipient.

WATER FESTIVAL - HOB O donates \$1000 each year to the county Water Festival. More than 600 children spend an entire day learning about the importance of protecting our valuable water sources. They do science experiments, water testing and other hands-on experiments to gain a better understanding of our impact on the environment and the delicate balance of our fresh water sources.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT - HOB O is also a dues-paying member of the Chamber of Commerce, and we make a donation to the local church in Clanton that allows us to use its facilities for H.O.B.O. board meetings.

Lake Mitchell HOBO
P.O. Box 1324
Clanton, Alabama 3504

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Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O. Membership Application

Annual Dues Homeowner \$25.00	Marine 9 - Donation Maintenance & Operation \$	Fireworks - Donation Purchase of Fireworks \$	Utility Boat - Donation Maintenance & Operation \$
Other Donation Boathouse Sign \$15____ Memorial ____ Education Fund ____ Scholarship ____ Other (specify) _____ Amount \$			
Name:		Check One: Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> New Member <input type="checkbox"/>	
Home Mailing Address:			
Lake 911 Address:			Lake Area:
Email:			
Home Phone:		Lake Phone:	Cell Phone

Detach and mail completed form along with your check to: Lake Mitchell H.O.B.O., PO Box 1324, Clanton, AL 35046