

THE INDIANS OF EAST ALABAMA
AND
THE PLACE NAMES THEY LEFT BEHIND

BY

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INTRODUCTION

When new folks move to Lake Wedowee, some of the first questions they ask are: “what is the meaning of names like Wedowee and Hajohatchee?” and “what Indian languages do the names Wehadkee and Fixico come from?” Many of us locals have been asked many times “how do you pronounce the name of (put in your own local town bearing an Indian name) town?” All of us have heard questions like these before, probably many times. It turns out that there is a good reason we east Alabama natives have heard such questions more often than the residents of other areas in Alabama. Of the total of 231 Indian place names listed for the state of Alabama in a modern publication, 135 of them are found in 18 counties of east Alabama. Put in other words, 58.4% of Alabama’s Indian place names are concentrated in only 26.8% of it’s counties! We indeed live in a region that is rich with American Indian history. In fact, the boundaries of the last lands assigned to the large and powerful Creek Indian tribe by the treaty at Fort Jackson after the Red Stick War of 1813-14, were almost identical to the borders of what is known as the "Sunrise Region" in east central Alabama.

These Indian names are relics, like the flint arrowheads and other artifacts we often find in our area. These names are traces of past peoples and their cultures; people discovered by foreign explorers, infiltrated by early American traders and settlers, and eventually forcefully moved from their lands. Fortunately, historians, social scientist, ethnolinguists, etymologists, along with toponymy and onomastics experts and interested citizens have worked together to preserve these interesting place names as a part of our modern culture.

When we identify a particular word as Indian in origin, we are hopefully not inferring that all Indians or their languages are the same. There is neither a single Indian people nor a single Indian language, but many different peoples, with vastly differing racial characteristics, cultures, and languages. In fact, the Indians of the Americas are as different from each other as are Spaniards, Irish, and Russians - or maybe more so. Some linguistic scholars believe that when the whites arrived in the New World, the native Indians were speaking some 2,200 different languages. Attempts to classify the various American Indian languages into related families and branches, as has been done for other world languages, have been numerous and full of problems. One of these classification systems for American Indian languages was made as early as 1891, and is still in use by some scholars of today. This system has the various Indian languages grouped into 56

separate linguistic families. However, some of the more recent scholars have made new attempts of grouping the various Indian languages under a smaller number of families, some with as few as four or six families. None of these simplified classifications has yet been fully accepted, however, it appears that in time, some satisfactory system will be devised that will link all world languages back to a minimum of common parental tongues. One commonly used, and more modern Indian language classification system, is that devised by Harold Driver in "Indians of North America," written in 1961. His system of classification is broken into 21 families, most of which have two or more branches. Using this system, we find that there were four Indian language families represented in the state of Alabama, as follows: Algonquian-Ritwan-Kutenai, Iroquois-Caddoan, Gulf, and Siouan-Yuchi. We will revisit these four language families later in this article.

WHO WERE THEY AND WHERE WERE THEY LOCATED?

It is widely accepted that the Native Americans came to the Americas between 10,000 and 20,000 years ago over the land bridge formed by the last ice age. Archeological studies of artifacts indicate these peoples had migrated southward into what is now Alabama by around 9,000 years ago.

The eras of these prehistoric native Americans have been academically divided into several periods; with the Paleo, Archaic, Woodland and Mississippi being the primary ones. The Paleo period began with the first known inhabitants of the Americas and the Mississippi period ended with the coming of the white man. Amateur artifact collectors have found Clovis arrowheads in this area. The Clovis point was the earliest used in the Paleo period. The Clovis is a distinctively shaped, fluted stone projectile point. It is the oldest recognized type of stone projectile point known to have existed in North America. Later in the Paleo Period, after the larger herbivores and carnivores disappeared following a major climate change, the Native Americans shifted primarily to the Folsom type points for the smaller animals now on the scene.

We know few specifics about these earlier prehistoric Indians in our state. Their tribal names and other facts have been lost in antiquity. However, because of the written records left by the first White Europeans into our region around 450 years ago, we do have many specifics about the more modern Native Americans. Accordingly, this brief article will discuss only those native Americans that came at the very end of the Mississippi period and thereafter.

The various tribes of Indians living in Alabama inhabited specific and identifiable areas of the state. However, there were exceptions and some degree of tribal movement over time. In general, during the period of 300 or so years between the Spanish Expeditions of Navarez and DeSoto and the great migration of white settlers into the area in the early 1800s, Alabama's more predominant Indian tribes, groups or nations were geographically distributed as discussed in the following paragraphs.

Coosa, Coushatta, or Koasata

This group of Alabama Indians seems to have inhabited most of the Coosa River valley from the Georgia state line down to about Selma, Alabama. Being in that part of

the state through which DeSoto's expedition passed, this group was discussed extensively in his chronicles. The Coushatta language is in the Gulf Family, Muskogean Branch. The remnants of the Coushatta Indians today, along with their Alibamo or Alabama kinsmen, can be found near Livingston, Texas on the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation, where most of them migrated in the late 1700s.

Maubilian or Mobile

The distribution of the Maubilian tribe started around Selma, and were scattered south and west throughout the lowlands of Alabama. The Maubilians may have evolved from the Moundville Indians of the earlier Hopewellian culture. As with the Cooshattas, many of the Maubilian Indians were annihilated by DeSoto when he engaged Chief Tuscaloosa in a major battle. The Maubilian language is in the Gulf Family, Muskogean Branch. When the French opened the Mobile area to trading and settlements in the early 1700s, the Maubilians became the most significant influence in the development of trade among the Indian tribes and nations of the entire southeast. In doing so, they developed the "Maubilian Trade Language," which was used among the linguistically diverse tribes and the White traders. The Maubilians eventually became a part of the Choctaw Nation.

Alibamo or Alabama

Prior to the coming of the Creek tribe, the Alibamo Indians were primarily located from the juncture of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers, downstream on the Alabama River to its confluence with the Cahaba River. The Alibamos were overrun by the Creeks when they migrated into Alabama, but they stayed in their home area by their own choice, and became a part of the Creek Confederacy. The Alibamo Indians language was in the Gulf Family, Muskogean Branch.

Creek or Muscogee

The Creeks were the largest and most powerful Indian tribe in the southeast. According to the most predominant legends, the Creeks emigrated first from Mexico to the Red River areas of Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas; and finally occupied large parts of what would become Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina, somewhere around the early to mid-1600s. In each case, the aggressive Creeks overran the local Indian tribes, but allowed them to remain in their homeland. As the price for remaining in their homeland area, these subordinated tribes were forced to become a part of the Creek Confederacy. In Alabama, the Creeks settled primarily in a large area bordered on the north by the southern Appalachian Mountains, on the west by the Cahaba and Alabama Rivers, on the south by the Florida border, and on the East by the Georgia border. What is now Clay and Randolph counties were in the midst of this Creek Confederacy. The Creek language was in the Gulf Family, Muskogean Branch. There were several other tribes or groups of Indians that were subordinated by the Creeks, and living within the boundaries of the Creek nation. These Indians were erroneously referred to as "Creeks" by the early settlers. Among these tribes were the Alibamos, which have already been discussed. Others were the Tookabatcha (Tuckabatchie) that

migrated from the Ohio River area and settled on the Tallapoosa River; the Tuskegees that settled near the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers; the Ozeailles that settled along Hatchee Chubbee Creek; the Hitchiti that settled in southeastern Alabama; the Natchez that settled around the confluence of Talladega Creek and the Coosa River; the Shawnee from Ohio that settled in east central Alabama, east of the Coosa River; and the Uchees (Yuchis) that settled along a few creeks emptying into the Chattahoochee River from the west. The languages of these subordinated Creek Confederacy tribes were all in the Gulf Family and the Muskogean Branch, except for the Shawnee and the Uchees. The Shawnee Language belongs to the Algonquian-Ritwan-Kutenai Family, Algonquian Branch. The Uchee or Yuchi Indian language is found in the Siouan-Yuchi Family and is the sole member of the Yuchi Branch. Today's Creek Indians can be found in several locations. The larger tribe, and the descendants of those forced to the west during the Removals, are headquartered in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. The descendants of those who somehow remained behind in Alabama, are today known as the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. The Poarch Creeks are headquartered at Poarch, near Atmore, Alabama. Of the seven Indian bands recognized by the Alabama Indian Affairs Commission, The Poarch Creeks are the only ones recognized by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs. Two other smaller bands of Creek Indians recognized by the Alabama Indian Affairs Commission are the Machis Lower Creeks of New Brockton, Alabama and the Star Clan of Muscogee Creeks in Goshen, Alabama. There are also small Creek Indian remnant bands in Florida and Georgia.

Seminole

The Seminole were formed in part by rebel elements of the Creek tribe and had part of their history in Alabama. In some treaties with the United States, the Seminole were included with the Creek Confederacy, at least up until the beginning of the Removal to the west. Outlaw and Refugee Creeks, along with other Indians from Alabama and Georgia, moved into Florida and some intermarried with runaway Negro slaves and the survivors of the original Florida tribes to give rise to the Seminoles. The word "Seminole" means "feral," "wild," or "runaway" in the Creek language. The Seminoles were primarily in the swamps of Florida and extreme south Georgia, although a few could be found in extreme southeast Alabama. Today's Seminole remnants are primarily in Oklahoma or Florida. In Oklahoma, the majority of the Seminoles are found in Seminole County and the city of Seminole, southeast of Oklahoma City. In Florida, the Seminoles are primarily located on Big Cypress Reservation in Henry County and on the Hollywood Reservation. Many confuse the Seminoles of Florida with the Miccosukee tribe which is located in Broward County. The Miccosukees are politically and linguistically, but not ethnically, separate from the Seminoles of Florida. The Miccosukee language is a dialect of Hitchiti and the Seminole is a dialect of Creek. However, since both Hitchiti and Creek belong to the Gulf family and Muskogean branch, the Miccosukee and Seminole languages are similar.

Choctaw

The Majority of the Choctaws were in southern Mississippi. Those in Alabama were in the southwest along the Tombigbee, Lower Warrior, Cahaba and Alabama, and the Mobile Rivers. One legend held that the Choctaws and the Chickasaw Indian tribes were once one tribe led by two brothers, Chahtah and Chikasah. The Choctaw and Chickasaw speak nearly the same language. Divergence's between the two are generally few and slight. Both languages belong to the Gulf Family and the Muskogean Branch. Today's Choctaw Indian remnants are primarily in Oklahoma, Mississippi and Alabama. In Oklahoma, the Choctaws are located in the southeastern part of the state, primarily in Choctaw County. In Mississippi, the Choctaws are mostly on the Philadelphia Reservation, which is scattered across eight counties in the east central part of the state. Alabama's Choctaw remnant is found in Washington and Mobile Counties, and is called the Mowa Band. This band is recognized by the Alabama Indian Affairs Commission and is headquartered at Mount Vernon, Alabama.

Chickasaw

The Chickasaw inhabited territory in northwest Alabama. The majority of the Chickasaws were in northern Mississippi and southwestern Tennessee. The Chickasaw language was discussed above with that of the Choctaw. Although a few of Today's Chickasaw Indians can be found in the corner area of Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi, most of the Chickasaws are in Oklahoma, in the vicinity of the city of Chickasha, which is located just southwest of Oklahoma City.

Cherokee

Although most remained in their native areas of the Carolinas, Tennessee and Georgia, many of the Cherokees moved into northeast Alabama during the late 1600s and early 1700s after being pushed out of their former homelands by the onrushing flood of White American settlers. The Cherokee adopted the white man's civilization much more readily than did other Alabama Indian tribes of this era. In 1821, a half-breed Cherokee named Sequoia (His white name was George Guess) invented an 86-character alphabet for his people, and it was the only written language among the Alabama Indian tribes in the pre-Removal era. The Cherokees published a newspaper, adopted a constitution and elected a legislature for their nation. The Cherokee language is in the Iroquois-Caddoan Family, and in the Iroquois Branch. Today's Cherokee Indian remnants can be found in Oklahoma, North Carolina, Alabama and other states. In Oklahoma, the Cherokees were settled in the eastern section around what is now Cherokee County. The North Carolina Cherokees are referred to as the Eastern Band of Cherokees, and are primarily located on the Cherokee Reservation which covers 5 counties in extreme western North Carolina. There are three bands of Cherokees in Alabama that are officially recognized by the Alabama Indian Affairs Commission. These are the Echota Cherokee Tribe headquartered in Sylacauga; The Cherokees of Northeast Alabama headquartered in Higdon, Alabama; and the Cherokees of Southeast Alabama headquartered in Dothan.

WHY SO MANY VARIANCES IN SPELLING AND ERRORS IN THE PLACE NAMES

Alabama's Indian place names came from those tribes, groups or nations discussed above, along with some minor ones (such as Chatot, Kasihta, Tawasa and Tensas) that were not discussed due to space considerations. Of Alabama's 231 Indian place names, 117 have been taken from the Creek language, 80 from Choctaw, 9 from Cherokee, 7 from Hitchiti, 4 from Chickasaw, and the remaining 14 names from 11 other tribes or groups.

Since none of the Indian place names were in writing when encountered by the white man for the first time, it would have been ideal had they initially been placed in black and white just like they sounded. However, because of the complex sounds of many of the Indian words, the best these early scribes could do was often not good enough to capture the correct phonetics. In many cases, the initial white person to write down and thus propagate an Indian place name, was only semiliterate in his or her own English language, which compounded the problem. Also, Some of these Indian place names were from ancient tribes and the names were simply handed down with no meanings attached. Because of these and other factors, many of today's Alabama Indian place names contain errors or variances in spelling, errors or variance in meaning, or have lost their meanings entirely over time. Another important point when considering Alabama's Indian place names, is the fact that many of them have been translated into English. This was usually done because of the difficulty the early Whites had in pronouncing and/or spelling the Indian words.

THEY TOOK THEIR PLACE NAMES WITH THEM

Many of Alabama's Indian place names can also be found in Oklahoma. Examples are Eufaula, Hillabee, Wewoka, Wetumpka, Tecumseh, Tuskegee, Okfuskee, and Broken Arrow. This should be no mystery, since the Five Civilized Tribes (Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole) had so much respect and reverence for their original homelands until they simply took their place names with them during their removal to Oklahoma in the mid-1800s.

A LISTING OF INDIAN PLACE NAMES IN EAST ALABAMA

From this brief overview of Alabama's Indian tribes and their languages, one can now quickly infer why the 18 counties of the Sunrise Region in east central Alabama have a predominance of Indian place names. Further, east Alabama is unique in that it contained tribes representing all four of the language families found in the state of Alabama. Although the list of east Alabama Indian place names that follows is not complete due to space constraints, it does represent most of the important Indian place names found in our 18-county area. In each case, much more could be said about the place names (including opposing arguments on meanings) that will follow, but again, space restraints do not allow a comprehensive overview of each name. The following list of place names is given alphabetically by county and by place name within each county. Each place name will be followed by the object given the name, a meaning (if known), and finally the specific Indian tribe that was the source of the name.

Autauga County

Alabama - state and river - "Thicket Clearers" - Choctaw

Autauga - County and creek - "Border" - Creek

Conchapita - old name for Bear Swamp - "Little Reeds" - Choctaw

Calhoun County

Chocolocco - creek and village - "Big Shoal" - Creek

Coosa - river - (see Coosa County)

Cottaquilla - creek and mountain - "Dead Honey Locusts (Trees)" - Creek

Egoniaga - creek - "Cave" - Creek

Ladiga - railroad station and Creek chief - possibly "Runner" - Creek

Ohatchee - creek and village - "Upper Creek" - Creek

Tallaseehatchee - creek and upper Creek town - "Old Town Creek" - Creek

Chambers County

Ceteahlustee - old name for Veazey Mill or Gaye Creek - "Black Persimmon Creek" - Creek

Chatakhospee - creek - "Rock Bluff" - Creek

Cusseta - small town - possibly "Coming from the sun" - Creek

High Pine - creek - probably translated from "Choli Chapko" - Creek

Loblockee - stream - "Big Cane (Creek)" - Creek

Oaktazaza - old name for South Sandy Creek - "Sand is There" - Creek

Ocelichee - creek - possibly "Yaupon (a ceremonial tea) Place" - Creek

Osanippa - creek and railroad station - "Moss Creek" - Creek

Cherokee County

Cherokee - county and tribe name - possibly derived from Tsaragi (Cave dwellers) - Cherokee

Coosa - river - (see Coosa County)

Culstigh - creek and old town - "Honey Locust Place" - Cherokee

Tecumseh - village and noted Shawnee chief - "One Who Springs" - Shawnee

Chilton County

Buxihatchee - creek - "Commander Creek" - Creek

Falakto - railroad station - "Forked Creek" - Choctaw

Coosa - river - (see Coosa County)

Waxahatchee - creek - possibly "Woksi Clan (a Creek Clan) Creek" - Creek

Clay County

Broken Arrow - creek - translated name from "Likachka" - Creek

Crooked Creek - creek - probably translated from "Canannehatchee" - Creek

Candutchkee - possibly old name for Enitachopko Creek - "boundary Creek" - Creek

Cheaha - Mountain and creek - probably "High (Place)" - Choctaw

Enitachopko - Creek and Indian village - "Long Hiding Place (Thicket)" - Creek

Fox Creek - creek - probably translated from "Chulahatchee" - Creek

Hatchet Creek - creek and village - translated name from "Pochuswuchi Hachi" -

Creek

Ketchepedrakee - creek - "Mortar and Spread Out area" - Creek

Little Hillabee - creek and ridge of hills - "quick" or "swift" - Creek

Mad Indian Creek - creek - probably translated from "Hachohatchee" (Hacho means "One who fights like a mad/crazy man" It is also a rank within the warrior sector of

the Creek Indian society. hatchee means a stream or creek) - Creek
Pinhoti - walking trail and Indian village - "Turkey Home" - Creek
Shinbone - valley and Creek Indian Chief - translated from "Huchifoone" - Creek
Wesobulga - creek - "Water by a Sassafras Tree Grove" - Creek

Cleburne County

Arbacoochee - village and upper Creek town - "Little Abihka" (an ancient Muskogean tribe) - Creek
Cahulga - creek - "Cane Clan" - Creek
Chulafinee - creek and village - "Pine Foot Log Crossing" - Creek
Cohabadiah - creek - "Cane Covered" - Creek
Lockchelooge - creek - probably "Bright Acorns" - Creek
Oakfuskee - Upper Creek town - (see Macon County)
Tallapoosa - river - (see Tallapoosa County)

Coosa County

Coagie - creek - "Noisy Cane" - Creek
Coosa - county, river, old Indian town - "probably "Canebrake" - Choctaw
Elkahatchee - creek - probably "Potato Creek" - Creek
Finikochika - creek - "Broken Foot Log" - Creek
Hachemedega - creek - "Border Creek" - Creek
Hatchet Creek - (see Clay County)
Huxagulbee - creek - possibly "Dry Hickory" - Creek
Oakachoy - creek and Muskogee tribe - possibly "Waters are there" - possibly

Choctaw

Peckerwood Creek - creek - translated from "Ochoccola" - Creek
Pennymottley - creek - possibly "Assistant to Turkey Chief" - Creek
Pinchoulee - creek - either "Old Turkey" or "Turkey Pine Tree (Roost)" - Creek
Socapatoy - creek and village - possibly "Waterlillies" - Creek
Swamp Creek - creek - translated from "Pinththlocko" - Creek
Weogufka - creek, town and Upper Creek town - "Muddy Water" - Creek
Weoka - creek, hamlet, and Upper creek town - "Barking" or "Roaring Water" -

Creek

Elmore County

Alabama - state and river - (see Autauga County)
Atoka - a railway station - "Ball Ground" - Choctaw
Channahatchee - creek and Upper Creek town - "Cedar Creek" - Creek
Chubbehatchee - creek and old Creek town - "Halfway Creek" - Creek
Coosa - river - (see Coosa County)
Coosada - creek, village and branch of the Alabama tribe - possibly "White Cane" -

Choctaw

Fusihatchi - creek and Upper Creek town - "Bird Creek" - Creek
Kowaligi - creek and village - "I kill (cut off) his head" - Creek
Kulumi - ancient Creek town - "Where there are White Oaks" - Creek
Oktamulke - railroad station - "Boiling Sand" or "All Sand" - Creek
Sofkahatchee - creek - "Hominy Creek" - Creek
Tallapoosa - river - (see Tallapoosa County)
Tallassee - town - probably "Old Town" - Creek

Tuckabatchie - railroad station and Upper Creek Town - meaning not certain, ancient name is Ispocogee which means "town or place of survivors" - source uncertain

Tumkeehatchee - creek - "Sounding Waters" - Creek

Wallahatchee - creek - "War Divider Creek" (Town that declares war) - Creek

Welona - creek and village - possibly "Yellow Water Creek" - Creek

Weoka - (see Coosa County)

Wetumpka - town - "Rumbling" of "Sounding" Water" - Creek

Etowah County

Atalla - city - "Mountain" - Cherokee

Citico - a railroad station - cannot be translated - Cherokee

Coosa - river - (see Coosa County)

Etowah - county - possibly "Tribe" - Cherokee

Lee County

Chattahoochee - river - "Marked Rocks" - Creek

Chelafaula - creek - meaning unknown - source unknown

Halawakee - creek and railroad station - "Bad" - Creek

Hospilika - creek - "Yaupon Tree Place (Grove)" - Creek

Loblockee (see Chambers County)

Lochapoka - village - (see Randolph County)

Naufaba - creek - "Beech Tree" - Hitchiti

Opelika - city - "Big Swamp" - Creek

Osanippa (see Chambers County)

Sawacklahatchee - creek and Lower Creek town - "Raccoon Creek" - Hitchiti

Wacooche - creek - "Little Calf" - Creek

Macon County

Calebee - creek and railroad station - "Overcup Oak" - Creek

Chelafaula - (see Lee County)

Chewakla - creek and railroad station - "Raccoon Town" - Hitchiti

Cubahatchee - creek and Upper Creek settlement - "Lye Drip Creek" or "Mulberry Tree Creek" - Creek

Euphaubee - creek - probably "Beech Tree" - Hitchiti

Notasulga - town - "Many Teeth" - Creek

Oakfuskee - old name for Line Creek - "point between streams" - Creek

Opintlocco - creek - a corruption of "Big Swamp" - Creek

Sawacklahatchee - (see Lee County)

Tallapoosa - river - (see Tallapoosa County)

Tuskegee - city, institute, old Indian town, name of an Indian tribe - "warriors" - Creek or any of several other Muskogean dialects.

Wauxamaka - creek - "Woksi Clan Chief" - Creek

Randolph County

Chickasanoxie - creek - probably corrupted from "Cane Ridge" - Creek

Cornhouse Creek - creek - translated from "Tohtokagihacha" - Creek

Fixico Creek - creek - "Heartless One" (A rank within the warrior section of the Creek society) - Creek

High Pine - creek - (see Chambers County)

Hillabeehago - creek - “Colonel Quick” (Hilikbi means “quick” and Hacho means “one who fights like a mad/crazy man.” this word is a rank within the warrior section of the Creek society) - Creek

Ketchepedrakee - creek - (see Clay County)

Loachapoka - Upper Creek town - “Turtle Killing Place” - Creek

Mad Indian Creek - creek - (see Clay County)

Tallapoosa - river - (see Tallapoosa County)

Wedowee - creek, town, Creek Chief and Upper Creek village - could be a corruption of either “Sumac Water,” (a stream with many Sumac bushes along it) “Old Water,” but most likely “Joining Water” (the confluence of two streams/creeks/streams) - Creek

Wehadkee - creek and village - “White Water” - Creek

Russell County

Broken Arrow - (see Clay County)

Chattahoochee - river - (see Lee County)

Cochgalechee - creek - a seriously distorted version of “Little Broken Arrow” - Creek

Hatchechubbee - creek, railroad station and Lower Creek village - “Halfway Creek” - Creek

Hiaggee - creek and Lower Creek town - “The Groaners” - Creek

Oakmulgee - Lower Creek town - “Boiling Water” - Creek

Oswichee - village and ancient Lower Creek town - several possibilities including “Little Pokeweed” - possibly Creek

Tickfaw - a railroad station - possibly “Pine Rest” - Possibly Choctaw

Tuskoona - creek - possibly a corruption of the name of an Upper Creek chief

“Tuskenaha” - Creek

Tutalosi - creek - “Chicken” - Creek

Uchee - creek, town and name of Indian tribe Uchee or Yuchi - Possibly “At a distance sitting down” - Uchee

Watula - creek and village - “Whooping Crane” - Creek

Weolustee - creek - “Black Water.” The name has been corrupted locally to “Will Lester Creek” - Creek

Shelby County

Cahaba - river, town and railroad station - “water (coming) from above” - Choctaw

Coosa - river - (see Coosa County)

Kewahatchie - village - probably “Mulberry Creek” - Creek

Tacoa - a railroad station - “Catawba (Indian) Place - Cherokee

Yellow Leaf Creek - creek and Upper Creek town - translated from “Asilanapihacha” - Creek

St. Clair County

Coosa - river - (see Coosa County)

Permita - creek - may not be Indian in origin, however it resembles “Pumita” which translates to “to give us” - if Indian, may be Creek

Ten Islands - shoals in Coosa River and Upper Creek Village - translated from “Otipalin” - Creek

Talladega County

Alcachuska - creek - obsolete name of Blue Eye Creek, could mean “Broken Kettles”
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 Creek
 Canchardee - village - “Red Earth” - Creek
 Chartee - creek - a corruption of “Red” - Creek
 Chinneby - railroad station and Indian chief - probably “Cedar Tree” - Creek
 Choccolocco - creek - (see Calhoun County)
 Cohabie - creek and mountain - probably “Cane Stalks” - Creek
 Coosa - river - (see Coosa County)
 Emauhee - creek - possibly “Father in Law” or a corruption of “Leader” - Creek
 Estaboga - creek and town - “People Dwelling Place” - Creek
 Kahatchee - creek, group of hills and an Upper Creek town - “Cane Creek” - Creek
 Katala - Mountains - probably “Dead Mulberries” - Creek
 Kentuck - Mountain - “Dwarfish” or “Scrubby” - Creek
 Kymulga - village, old Shawnee town, and cave - “All Mulberries” - Creek
 Natchez - Indian town - uncertain, but could signify “timber land” - Natchez
 Oakchihoola - creek - obsolete name of Silver Run Creek. possibly means “Okchai (an
 Upper Creek Tribe) Black Drink Hollower” - Creek
 Salt Creek - creek - translated from “Okchanwa” - Creek
 Shirtee - creek - probably derived from “Chati (Red)”, but could be corruption of
 “Chato (Rocks)” - Creek
 Shocco - resort - said to be derivative of “Chuko (House)” with “Big” understood -
 Creek
 Sylacauga - city - “Buzzards Roost” - Creek
 Talladega - county, city, creek and mountains - “Border Town” - Creek
 Tallaseehatchee - creek - (see Calhoun County)
 Tallapoosa County
 Candutchkee - creek - (see Clay County)
 Chatakhospee - creek - (see Chambers County)
 Cholocco Litabixee - bend in Tallapoosa River - an obsolete designation of
 Horseshoe Bend. Means “Horse’s Flat Foot” - Creek
 East Tallassee - town - (see Elmore County)
 Elkahatchee - creek - (see Coosa County)
 Emuckfaw - creek - a concave shell or metallic body ornament - Hitchiti
 Hillabee- creek and Upper Creek town - (see Clay County)
 Oaktazaza - creek - (see Chambers County)
 Sougahatchee - creek and Upper Creek village - “Rattle Creek” - Creek
 Tallapoosa - county, river and ancient Creek town - probably “Pulverized Rock
 (gravel)” or “Stranger”- Creek or Choctaw
 Tohopeka - village - “fort” - Creek
 Wauxamaka - creek - (see Macon County)

...AND IN CLOSING

A quick analysis of the above Indian place names reveals that they are consistent with the observations made earlier in this article. As we should expect, a predominant 75% of

the east Alabama Indian place names are Creek, and 16% are Choctaw. Rounding out the others, we find six Cherokee place names, six Hitchiti, and one each Uchee (Yuchi) and Shawnee.

Further, as expected, we find the Cherokee place names are in the most northern part of the Sunrise Region in Cherokee and Etowah Counties; the Choctaw names in the southwestern Autauga, Elmore and Coosa Counties; those from a Hitchiti source are in the southeastern Lee and Macon

Noting the significant concentration of tribes in the 18-county Sunrise Region of east Alabama, one cannot escape the notion that these early Alabamians obviously knew a good place to settle down when they saw it! We residents of the Lake Wedowee area seem to have had that same instinct when we put down roots here.

Now that a basic and broad discussion of the Native Americans of the area and their place names has been completed, future issues of the Lake Wedowee Magazine will bring you more specific articles on the Creeks, the predominant tribe of the area.