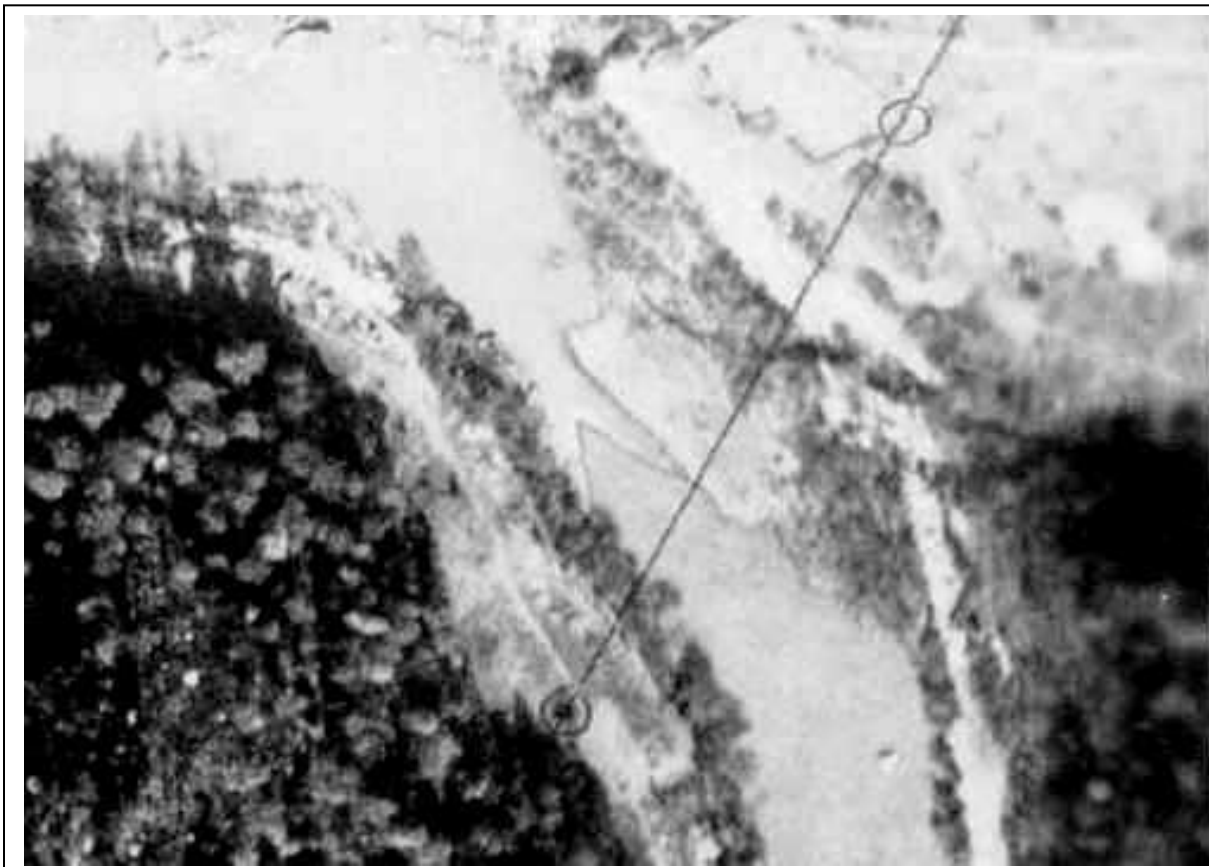


FISHTRAPS OF THE BIG SOUTH FORK OF THE CUMBERLAND RIVER

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**National Park Service
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By

Tom Des Jean, 2007

Fishtraps have been constructed and used in our southern rivers for centuries. These devices were constructed by prehistoric Native Americans and later, historically by pioneers and settlers. Fishtraps were operated in East Tennessee for small scale family subsistence and for commercial purposes on many of the large rivers and their tributaries. Eventually, commercial fishtraps became so large that they were a hazard for navigation and for the logging industry. They also effectively reduced the numbers of fish found in the waters below the large fishtraps and reduced spawning and reproduction. Legislative records for the state of Tennessee reveal that the State had defined construction requirements for fishtraps as early as 1799 (Brown n.d.; quoted in Cobb 1978:33) and by 1895 these constructions were outlawed completely. However, four years later, the act outlawing fishtraps was amended and “Fall” Fishtraps were allowed to be constructed (The expression “Fall Fishtraps” refers to the fish falling onto catchboards, not the Autumn season).

The problems persisted, though, and by the 1920s the Tennessee Department of State Game and Fish began to locate and destroy these fishtraps in earnest, using hand demolition and at times even dynamite to do the job (Cobb 1978; Clyde Reed 1979: See Appendix). This effort was helped by the formation of the Tennessee Valley Authority which built numerous dams that flooded out many of the large commercial operations as well as the smaller family fishtraps (Cobb 1978). These latter were usually located in smaller headwaters and tributary streams and they were often multi-generational, family run subsistence operations, after all, the fish from trapping offered a ready supply of protein (Payne 1991). Some of the families who lived along river bottoms in the ridge and valley areas of the Upper Cumberland Plateau would rely on fishtraps to supplement their own immediate subsistence needs. If these families caught more than they needed they would use the extra fish for trade or they would sell them. The families that constructed these fishtraps would also rent them out to others.

Most of the historic period fishtraps were located at riffles or rapids along a stream. These places were selected to take advantage of the shallow water and natural constrictions of the stream channel at these locations. Also, at these

locations are abundant, naturally occurring river cobbles used for construction. These areas also happen to be preferred spawning habitat for fish. The Big South Fork fishtraps were built following simple construction designs using stacked river cobbles to build walls into a “V”- shaped channel in the current of a river or smaller stream. In profile these “wing walls” were trapezoidal in shape, about four to five feet in width across the surface or top and spreading out to eight to nine feet or more across the base or bottom. This artificial channel constricts and conducts water flow until it passes through a large sieve-like, white oak basket or a wooden lattice made of branches or rough cut lumber that is placed at the downstream apex of the “V”. The lattice is angled at about a 30° incline that allows the water to pass through but keeps all fish too large for the slat spacing high and dry, where they are then collected. Side boards along the length of the incline keep these fish from flopping or falling off of the lattice and back into the water.

Another account of a fish trap was given by Oscar Blevins when he was asked if he knew of any fishtraps. He told of one in the Big South Fork right below the ford at the mouth of Station. He was asked how the fishtraps worked and he replied:

OB *Had rocks that tapered, pointing downstream, and a rock fence and the fish couldn't go over or under and then right where it was pointed they had a trap, had it fixed with fingers so water poured over it, and if it got so high water would pour over it. But up here where the fingers were at, they had it sloping up here, and built up like that. And they would lay right there where water pooled. Used gigs, bows and pikes, and catch them with hooks. These were bigger fish than now, and more of them.*

(Oscar Blevins interviewed by Humphrey 1982)

We are fortunate to have a description of the John Smith fishtrap that was provided by Mr. Noah Blevins (Marcum 1998). The construction details Mr. Blevins describes can be seen in the ground level photograph of Figure 11.

NB *That fish trap must have been five foot about the top, but it must have been eight or nine feet at the bottom. All the way across that river ...when the water was comin' in, when it come a rain, they take and put that fish trap back in there.*

See they had about a four or five foot water space through the center of that... you bring it up...about five (5) or four (4) feet to walk out across that. Across that fish trap... ...you set that fish trap down there... ... down in there, and all the water went right through it.

And all the fish was goin downstream; that fish trap was deep...fish couldn't flop out of it. ...when the river's a raisin' you can get all the fish you wanted.

I been down there with Albert and throw 'em out at night.

(Noah Blevins Interview, 1998: annotated for clarity by the author)

During this interview Noah Blevins also described another interesting local fishing technique. He told of a large open work woven basket 5 to 6 feet long that was attached to ropes that were in turn tied to a long 25 to 30 foot grape vine. This long basket had open work strands or weft on each end and these overlapping “fingers” allowed fish to pass inside but not to return outside. After sinking this device into a deep pool for 3 to 5 days it was removed and often contained many fish. And of course, as Noah relates, at this time there were no state hunting or fishing “seasons” in place.

Of course, there were many ways that people used to catch fish besides the regular fishing pole; These other means were recalled by Mr. Kenneth Payne:

KP: *We a'ways done our fishing with trotline. Lots of times we would stay all night with them. We would run those trotlines every two to three hours. I've come out with as many as catfish as you could carry. I've shot some fish, with a .30-.30.*

AM: Was that common?

KP: *That was common, a lot of people shot fish. For thirty cents, I shot and killed thirty pounds of fish. I killed a drum that weighed ten pounds, a bass that weighed ten pounds, and a walleye pike. I shot the drum and the walleye, just ka-pow, ka-pow, like that, and the next morning, I killed the large-mouth bass.*

The biggest fish I've ever seen was a drum.

...That drum was close to four feet long. You could put an eight pound lard bucket in its mouth. It was up above the John Smith place. I don't know whether it was old age...

Because the design of fishtraps is of relatively simple construction it is also easily demolished. Family fishtraps required annual maintenance, especially after the Spring floods. The wing walls of the “V” had to be constantly rebuilt after high water and the traps, if not removed before the high-water season, were severely damaged and had to be repaired or new ones constructed. According to Mrs. Nora Smith-Newport (Des Jean 2009) the maintenance of these traps was a family effort.

TDJ: Did everyone work to keep the fishtrap repaired?

NN: *Oh yes, everyone worked on the fishtrap.*

TDJ: Did everyone in the family do this work father, mother, brother and children?

NN: *Yes, we all worked, the whole family keeping it repaired.*

But damage and washouts from spring floods was not the only difficulty, on some occasions a “basket” type of fishtrap would wash away as Mr. Henley Waters relates (Howell 1979):

HW: *... one time we run pipes down th’ river, me an’ my brother, an’ uh, he’d uh, [unrecognizable text, a lot of static] basket layin’ thar, ‘bout filled up with sand where it’d washed it down thar. An’ uh, something [unrecognizable text] we lift it up thar an’ I ferget how many blue cats they was in it.*

BH: An it had gotten away from where the...

HW: *[an we’ int know (?)] how long they’d laid thar.*

BH: But they had washed away from where...[unrecognizable text]

HW: *[unrecognizable text] untellin’ how long it had been on its way of getting’ where it stopped.*

BH: Uh huh. So people used to do a lot of trapping fish, right? With either baskets or uh, a fish trap or a dam. Uh huh.

HW: *Dam an’ a fish trap.*

In 1925 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) flew over and photographed the entire length of the Cumberland River and its major tributaries. After spending fruitless decades trying to locate those original negatives for the Big South Fork tributary the positive black and white images were finally located at the Nashville District offices of the USACE in 2002. Unfortunately, all of the 90 photographs discovered in the USACE office in Nashville have ink marks and notations on them and several have scratches on them as well. But these black and white images show abundant detail including six fishtraps within the boundary of what would become the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. Four of the six fishtraps identified on the 1925 aerial photos were located at constricted areas of the river. These constriction areas were formed by alluvial levies created where tributary streams enter the main river, dump their gravel and narrow the river’s channel. Figure one is a map showing the locations of the fishtraps observed on the USACE aerial photographs.

No documentation is available for how well the fishtraps along the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River functioned in the early 20th Century but some evidence is available from studies done on the Holston River sixty miles to the

south. By extrapolation we may arrive at an estimate for the family fishtrap operations along the Big South Fork but there are significant differences that must be taken into account. The average annual flow rates between these two rivers is markedly different. Flow rates for the Holston River, based on the only data collected, 1934 and again in 1948 (before TVA built dams on the river), indicate that the annual volume of flow was around 180,000 Cubic Feet per Second (CFS). Reconstructing the annual flow rate for the Big South Fork around this time (again using the only data available 1946 to 1952), reveals a flow of about 239,000 CFS. And, while there is a lot more flow coursing through the BSF, the fertility of these two streams is much different. Big South Fork is channeled through low productivity sandstone rock while the Holston river channel runs through limestone. So on the one hand, the BSF has a greater volume of water through all seasons but low nutrient capacity for “growing” fish; the Holston has a lower flow rate but a much greater capacity for growing fish. Further research may show that these two variables cancel out any differences in numbers of fish caught and make a comparison possible.

Assuming then, that the differences in flow will cancel out, we can look at the available information from the Holston River fishtraps. In the early 1920s the average annual catch of fish from one of the Holston River fishtraps was about 1376 pounds of fish, which at thirty cents per pound would mean an added \$413.00 in income per year (\$4501.07 in 2005 dollars). The months of April through June were probably the best months for fishing but this wasn't true for the months in the early part of the year; during the Spring “tides” the rivers would be running high and the water would be over the traps. This happened throughout February and most of the month of March. The most frequently caught fish in the Holston River during the early 1920s, was the common carp, *Cyprinus carpio*, at 50 %. This fish is an exotic Asian fish that was introduced in the mid-19th Century and spread throughout all North American waters. Common carp can reach lengths of 70 inches and weigh up to 40 pounds but the largest ones caught in Tennessee rivers rarely exceed 55 inches long and weigh around 26 pounds. The next most frequently caught fish at, 33%, were sucker fish of the various species of *Moxostoma*, the red horse fish. These fish can reach lengths of 29 inches and weigh up to 10 pounds.

Fish traps built across streams “...produced a big return in a small investment” (Howell 2000:36). Mr. Edsel Blevins from McCreary County Kentucky stated that his father had a fishtrap on the BSF and that he would catch some red horse and carp but most often he would catch catfish (Edsel Blevins, Personal communication 2007). Ms. Poppie Blevins-Dishman also related that “*Grandpa*

Shade Blevins had a fishtrap with a watergate that would not let fish go through and he would go there every morning and get catfish, bluegills, and eels... never did like them... look like snakes. But yellow or blue cats were good (Blevins-Dishman 2005)." Nora Smith-Newport also relates that catfish were the principal catch: *"Mostly we caught catfish... ..we caught red-eye, and sometimes salmon."* This latter fish is most likely walleye (*Stizostedion* sp.) which is referred to locally by some as salmon. Mr. Noah Blevins described the types of fish that were most frequently caught in fishtraps and other devices, *"We'd get... ..walleye and sawbers (sauger) somthin' like that. They wa'dint (wasn't) usually no scale fish like bass or anything like that...they'd get a special fish... ..like walleye or somthin' like that in that river, and good channel fish.* Noah also related that back in the 1920s and 30s they did not have channel cat in the river but they had blue cat and apparently it was more plentiful then.

While most of the bounty caught at these fishtraps supplemented other food and subsistence resources some of the catch was at times marketed. An unidentified source stated that fish were gathered up and placed into barrels and shipped on the O & W Railroad to Jamestown where they were sold.

Kenneth Payne also related that harvest from the fishtraps was collected in barrels and sold in town markets.

AM: Did you know of any fishtraps?

KP: *I've used fishtraps; At John Smith Place.*

AM: Did you build them of rocks?

KP: *You built them out of rocks, and you only caught them at a certain time. You had fingers... (slats) They never caught no little fish. You had about an inch and a half crack and water went through. Small fish just went right through there. A large fish would come on down, and he'd just flop. And they had a place so he could flop on over to, and you'd go over pick him up. The Smith Place, they had a fishtrap down there, an people would go down and buy fish off them.*

AM: So it was a commercial activity?

KP: *Yes, they would take them to town on Saturday, keep them in water to keep them fresh...*

Ms. Nora Newport, John Smith's Granddaughter, noted that there was a marketing benefit from collecting fish from fishtraps. When asked about what her Grandad would catch Nora Smith-Newport also states this:

TDJ: Did you sell any (fish)?

NN: *Yes sometimes Granddad kept fish that were caught, took them to sell.*

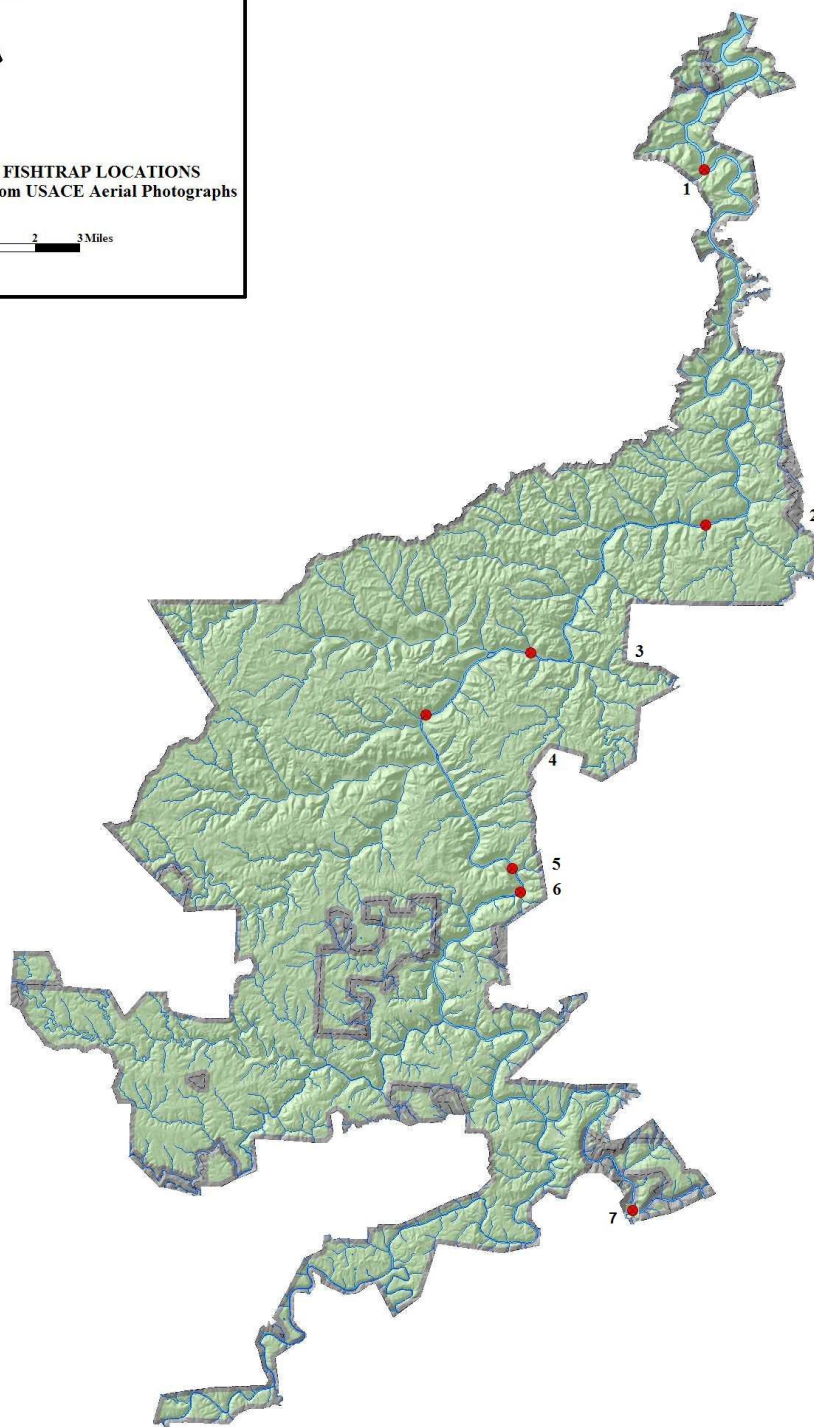
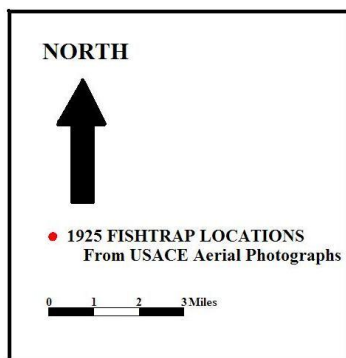
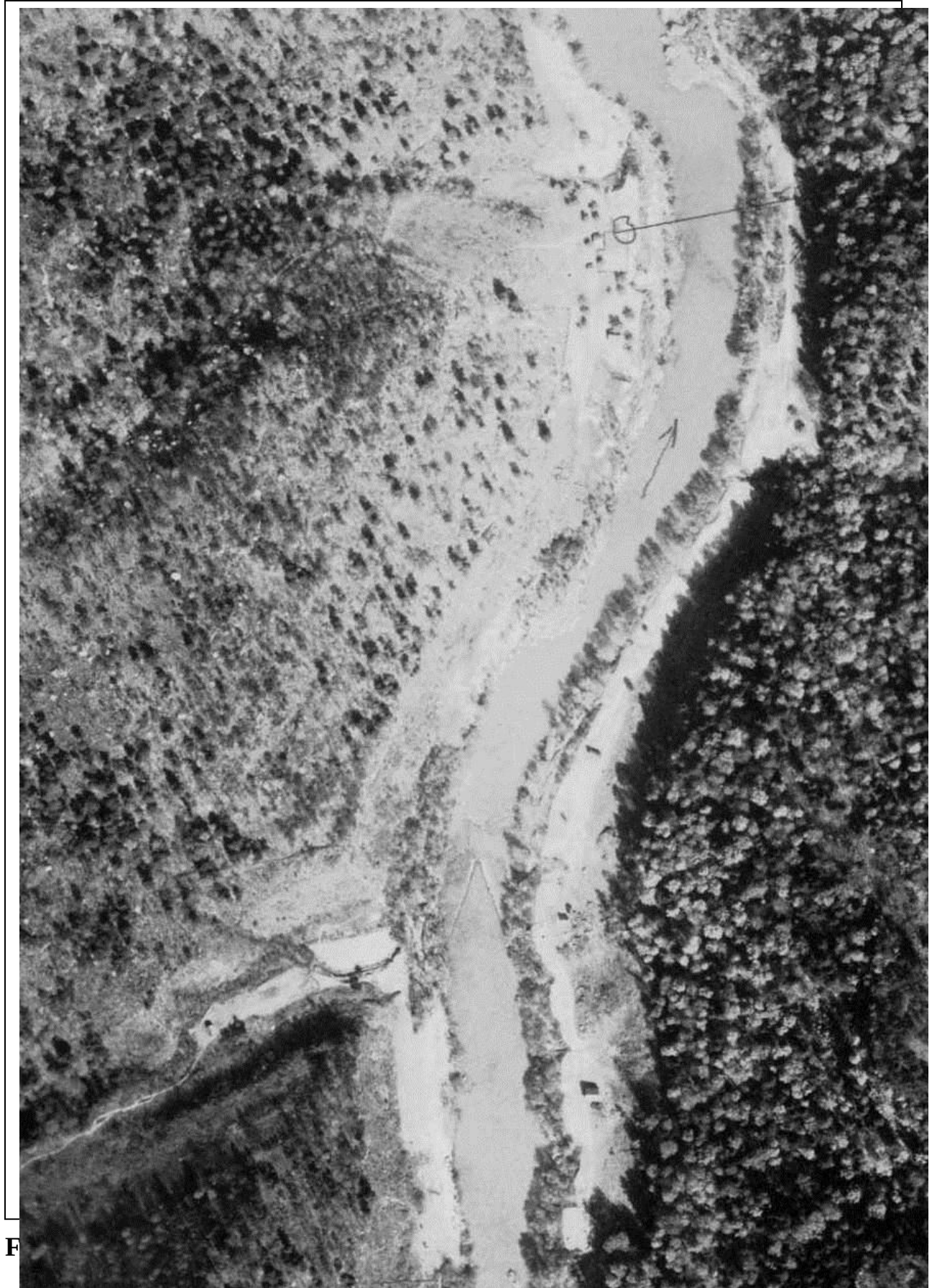


Figure 1. Fishtrap locations identified from USACE 1925 aerial photographs arbitrarily numbered 1 to 6, from North to South. Number “7” is an estimate for the location of the Reed Fishtrap.



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Figure 3. Detail of Figure 2, an abandoned or disintegrating fishtrap near Crooked Branch (USCOE Photo#85).



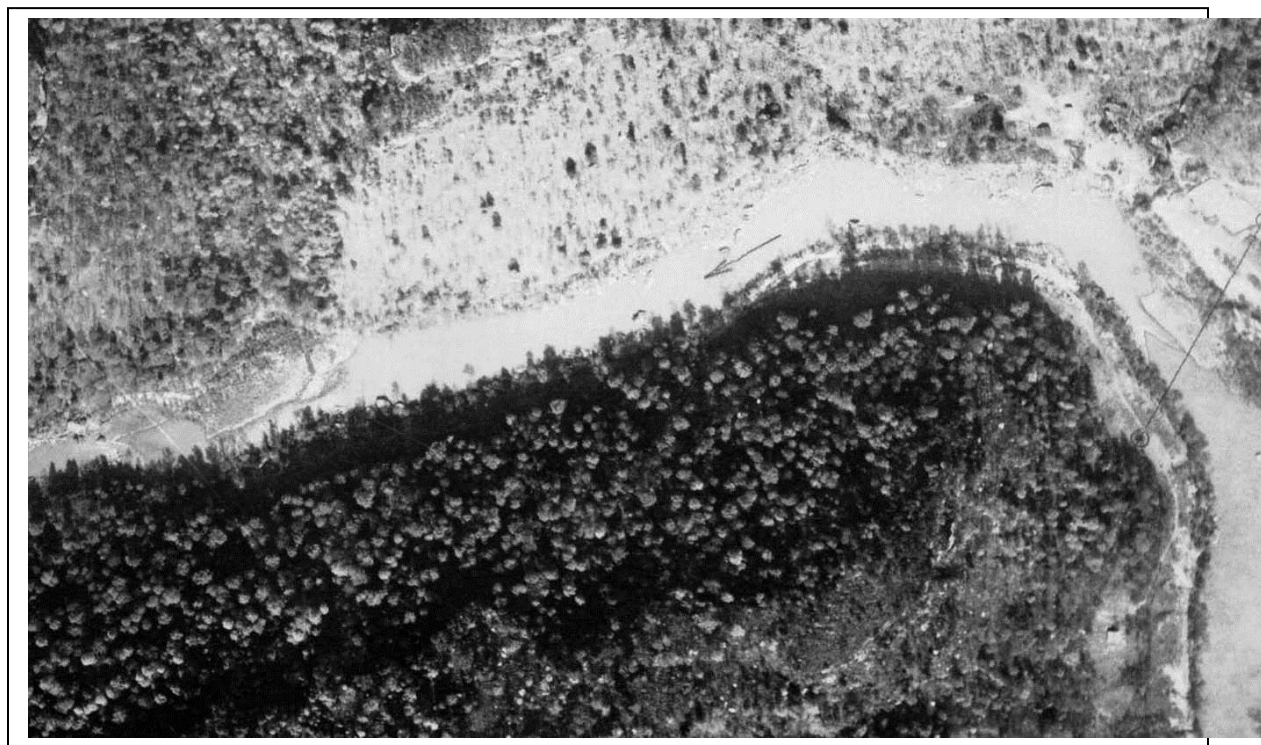


Figure 5. Two fishtraps (#5 & #6 on Map) near Bill Branch north of Angel Falls.



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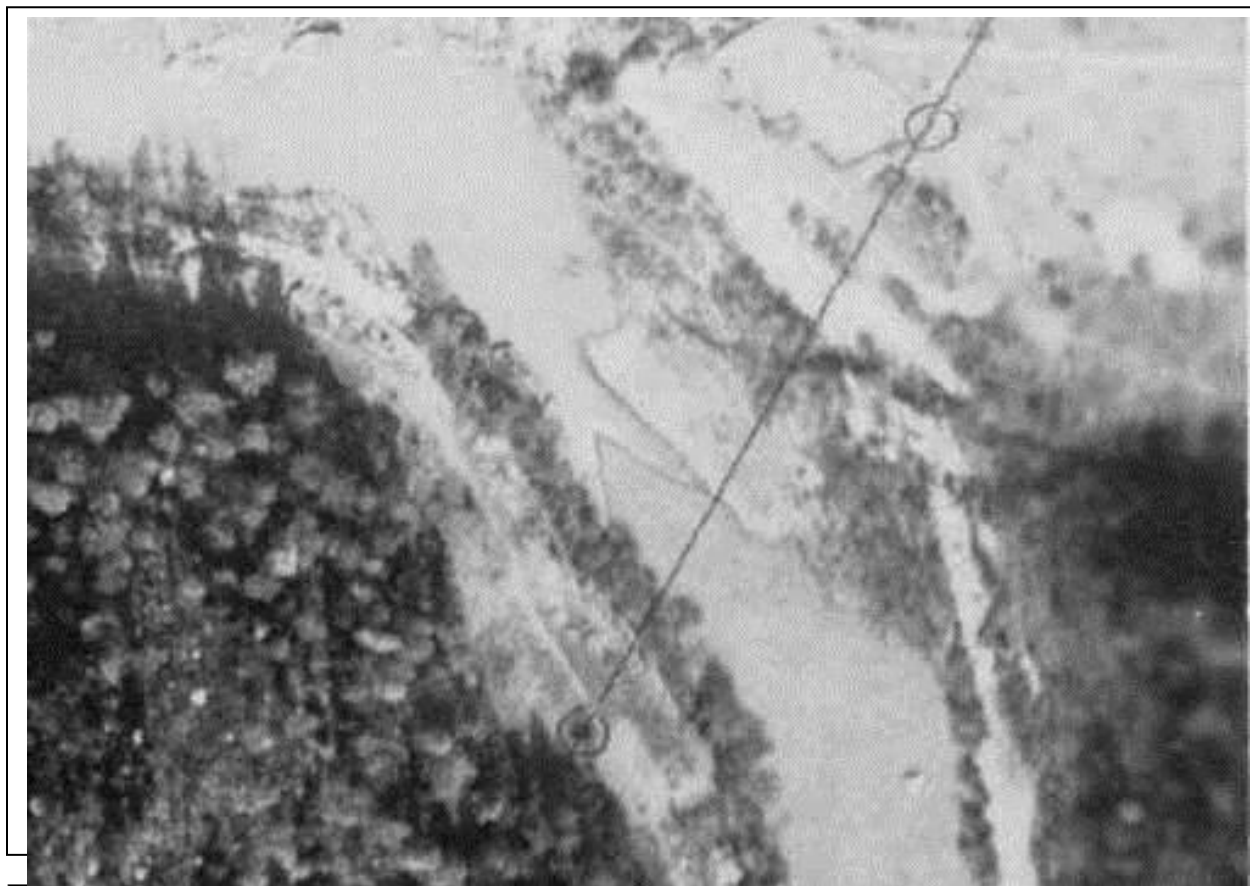


Figure 7. Detail of Figure 5, fishtrap (#6 on Map) in Bill Branch area (USCOE Photo#96).

NN: *Well he took them in a wagon, alive.*

TDJ: Did he use a barrel or a live well or tank?

NN: *Yes, he used barrels.*

Wallace and Charlie Marcum recounted that “The whole community caught fish that way, would collect them from traps and then haul them out, still alive in grass sacks.” (McBride 2005). Whether community members then sold the fish or kept them for home consumption is not stated but keeping the catch alive in burlap bags was one way to stretch the freshness.

Attempts were made to identify the features observed on the 1925 USACE aerials with local families known to have operated fishtraps on the Big South Fork in the 1920s but with limited success. Local families that can be associated with fishtraps in these locations are the family of Huse Blevins living around Williams Creek that may have operated the fishtraps at location #3 on Figure 1. Also, John Smith, was known to have had a fishtrap in the Big South Fork near Station Camp Creek,

possibly #4 on the Map. Mr. Smith would allow individuals to lease this out from time to time, according to one informant for one dollar. Nora Smith Newport also attests to this fact relating the following:

TDJ: Did your Granddad rent out his fishtrap?

NN: *Yes, he would rent it out for a night or so. They got to keep whatever they caught.*

TDJ: What if they didn't catch anything?

NN: *Well then they didn't get anything. Sometimes there'd be a lot that we would get but mostly just a few fish were caught.*

Other sources related that occasionally fishing claims or a lease agreement became violent or even proved fatal. Several individuals tell of a local fellow known to steal fish from peoples' traps (Newport 2004; Phillips-Houston 2008; J. Q. Linder 2007; Blevins-Dishman 2005). He was warned that if he continued to do this he would be shot.

As this story continues, the fellow was discovered in the act of stealing fish from one of the river fishtraps but the warning shot to frighten him bounced off of the water's surface and the alleged fish filcher was shot dead. His body was found floating adrift in a boat. The man that allegedly shot him left the region, and after asking to use the Phillips surname (Phillips-Houston 2009) changed his name and enlisted in the U.S. Army, and served in World War II. After many years this man returned to the area around Big South Fork and lived out the remainder of his life. When he eventually died he was buried under two tombstones; one has inscribed on it his given name and the other has inscribed on it his alias (Figure 8).

Several other descriptions of fishtraps and of their operation in the Big South Fork are recounted below. Benita Howell interviewed Mr. Crit King, Sr. on November 9, 1979 who supplied the following description of fishtrap operations near Bear Creek.

CK: *"...my grandpa when we lived at the mouth of Bear Creek, he had a fish trap there. And uh, he built the same kind of dam that he built for his water mill and then fish would get to that dam and they'd come right on around here and just go right in to that trap. And we'd go down there and get 'em.*

BH: But you got a lot of fish that way. How did you preserve 'em?



Figure 8. Photograph of gravesite with two grave monuments marking alleged location of individual with ties to a fishtrap related fatality (NPS Photos).

CK: *Oh, we didn't preserve 'em. Just try to keep and just eat what you could eat...*
BH: You just... ate it...
CK: *...then let the rest...*
BH: Let 'em out; I see.

The frequency of success in fishing with a fishtrap was seasonal and not always a fruitful business. Nora Smith-Newport stated that fact when asked...

TDJ: How often did your Granddad catch fish?
NN: *Every couple of days we would get a few.*
TDJ: What did you do with the fish that you caught?
NN: *Why, we'd eat 'em.*
TDJ: How did you prepare the fish, did you salt it or smoke it (pickle it or can it)?
NN: *We would skin it and cook it.*

The diversity of the fish that were collected is also related to the size of some of them. Crit King describes the size of some that they caught:

CK: *...we lived there at the mouth of Bear Creek where we moved from Worley up there and the trap was just down under hill and we'd go down there of the mornin' and get 'em. They'd come in of the night, you see, and go down...and they so big of ones, why, they put 'em on the porch...laid 'em on the porch and then drewed their pictures on the porch.*
BH: To prove how long they were. [chuckles]
CK: *Yeah, how long and how big a fish they caught, you see.*

Mr. Charlie Marcum relates that his grandfather had a fishtrap about one mile below Big Island (#3 on Figure 1?). He stated that the water poured over (a dam) into a basket. Statements about the involvement of the "whole community" is probably an overstatement for the use of fishtraps but does lend support to the idea that small river communities benefited from fishtraps during times of abundance.

National Park Service Historian, Steve Humphrey collected information from former inhabitants of the Big South Fork and produced a report (Humphrey 1981) documenting many historic activities including fishtrap operation. According to his report, traps were supposedly in the river when water levels were low, at both the Big Island and also at the Station Camp ford. The traps consisted of a very low rock barrier being placed across the channel in a V-shape with the vertex pointing downstream. At the center of the V-shaped structure would be an opening and just

downstream of this opening would be placed a large slatted box, which had finger-like projections pointing into the interior of the box. People would then go upstream of the trap and wade into the water. They would then continue downstream toward the box, thus herding the fish into the trap. The fish would be killed with gigs, spikes or large hooks. The fish were very large in comparison to those caught today if the stories that are told are true.

The fishtraps documented in the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River are all similar in topographic features and fit exactly with what Anne Frazer noted for the fishtraps found in North Carolina “All of these weirs are located in similar topographic situations. Each is in a shallow section of the river, at a depth which would allow unimpeded wading except in times of unusually high water. Banks tend to be low in these sections, permitting easy access to the river. In each case, there is a large, relatively flat terrace present on one or both sides of the river. A prehistoric archaeological site is adjacent to each weir. Unfortunately, these sites have not been scientifically investigated, so temporal assignment for their occupation is not available”. Any construction and use of fishtraps in these same locations along the Big South Fork by prehistoric North American Indians cannot be proven but the complete disappearance of all but one of the seven known fishtraps within a time frame of 84 years makes a prehistoric origin for these historic features extremely unlikely.

While the principle of the fishtraps remained the same, -the “V”-shaped constriction in the river with a trap at its apex- the technology of fishtraps varied. The trap or weir at its apex could be a slatted, woven, or of a net construction. Various examples of these are on display at the Museum of Appalachia (Figure 9). Each type of trap requires different aspects of technical knowledge from limited hammer and nail construction to basketry and net weaving skill.

Another description of two types of historic fishtraps set up on a tributary of the Big South of the Cumberland River was provided to this author by Dr. Charles Faulkner. The narrative was written by Mr. Clyde Reed and was published in the Tennessee Anthropological Association Newsletter, Volume 4, January-February 1979, No. 1. An excerpt of Mr. Reed’s narrative from that Newsletter is presented below. It has been amended for the sake of clarity in a few places by this author.



Slatted, Cylinder-Type Fishtraps



Slatted Type of Stacked or
Pyramid Fishtrap

Box Type of Slatted Fishtrap and a
Hoop-Net leaning on the right.

Figure 9. Assorted Fishtraps at the Museum of Appalachia (Photos courtesy
Museum of Appalachia).

A Night on New River at the Reed Fish Trap

By Mr. Clyde Reed

“As we get older, we tend to forget or push aside unpleasant experiences and bring up those we remember as being pleasant. This is what I am doing in relating my experience with a fish trap, ca. 1930.”

The fish trap which I have in mind was known as the Wiley Reed Trap or just the Reed Trap. It was located approximately 5 ½ miles upstream from the forks of Clear Fork Creek and New River in the New River stream. The Clear Fork and New River streams are tributaries of the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River. Actually there were two traps, one called a fall trap and the other a finger trap, but locally the site was referred to in the singular as the Reed Trap. The finger trap caught fish trying to go upstream, whereas the fall trap caught those coming downstream. These traps were placed on a shoal with river rock dams. The finger trap was about 4 feet wide and 8 feet long (*Several figures that were included in this article have had the numbers changed to conform to this document; FIGURE 10*). It was made from rough sawn boards. The sides and bottom were made solid. The back was made from 2” slats, fastened vertically, with 2” spaces between slats. The front or downstream end was made from the same type slats, constructed in two sections, with slats placed horizontally, forming a “V”, with the point of the “V” upstream. There was an opening at the point of the “V” of approximately 2 or 2 ½ inches. Fish trying to migrate upstream would enter at this opening. Due to the swift water running through the trap, the fish would keep their head upstream, but would be barred from going farther (downstream) due to the vertical slats at the rear of the trap. The fall trap (the name had no relation to the season) was constructed from two large logs placed lengthwise to the stream about 4 or 5 feet apart (*FIGURE 11*). Short logs were fastened crosswise between the two large logs. Slats were then placed under the upper cross log, and over the top of the next with 2” spacing. The cross logs were placed so the slats would form at about a 30 degree angle. The dam was constructed so there was quite a large flow of water over the trap. The first few sets of slats would have a solid flow of water over them, but the farther downstream the less the flow would be as it would have

gone through the openings between the slats. This trap derived its name from the fact that the fish would fall or flop from the upper set of slats onto the lower set.

At the time of my experience, the traps were for recreational purposes only, but in past years they had provided an additional source of food for my grandfather and great-grandfather's families. Neighboring families who did not have the facilities of a trap would ask permission from my grandparents to use the traps for a day and night, or a longer period of time, and legend is that none was ever denied and there was never a charge for their use. Some of the neighbors would help make repairs in the early spring after the dam had been damaged by flooding. Large river rocks would be maneuvered into place on the dams. They learned that by keeping the rocks under water their weight seemed to be much less, therefore easier to handle. The accusation that many fish were wasted due to the traps not being tended daily is not true. When fish realize they are trapped, they cease trying to migrate, and begin seeking a way out. Since they found the opening to get into the trap, they searched until they found a way out. It was common knowledge that once you found fish in the trap, and they were disturbed, they were to be taken out soon or they would escape. The variety of fish caught consisted of Suckers, Red Horse, Drum, Blue Cat, Walleye, and a few Bass. The early spring was the best time for catching Walleye.

These traps existed until the early 1930's. A game warden was appointed about that time and one of his duties was to clear the river of all fish traps. The easiest way to do this was by using charges of dynamite. The theory of removing the traps was to make the stream suitable for recreational fishing. I remember standing on the river bank with my father and uncle and listening to their discussion of the Reed Trap having been removed by the game warden. They definitely disapproved of this action. The traps had been part of the Reed heritage as far back as they could remember, and they couldn't accept the idea of it being taken away. Deep down, I believe they both expected that some day it would happen, and it would be best for all those who like to fish. My uncle made the remark to my father, "You can't stand in the way of progress, because you will get run over."

As Clyde Reed stated above, the use of fishtraps to supplement food resources seems to have peaked around the late 1930s. This was probably in a big part due to the more active effort by the State of Tennessee to demolish these traps (Cobb 1978). The reason for this effort by the Tennessee Fish and Game Agency may be related to information provided by Crit King who notes that the lumber mills were having difficulty getting their product to market:

BH: Was there any trouble with travel on the river, you know, having a mill dam (or a fishtrap) going across the river that way? Uh, what if, say, people were trying to send logs down to somewhere below there...

CK: *Well, they'd wait 'til the river got over them dams, you see, to,...they'd have to wait 'til the tide come, to put in their logs or staves. You see, I've seen 'em tryin' to catch staves at the mouth of Bear Creek and had 'em...some of 'em piled out on the bank and hauled 'em with wagons to Pine Knot.*

CK: *...Well, the logs they had put acrossed the river were catchin. (they) Broke loose and (we) just had to throw the rest back in the river and (they) went on to Burnside, of course..."*
(Clarification in parentheses by author)

When asked why the Smith family quit using their fishtrap another reason was given by Nora Smith-Newport:

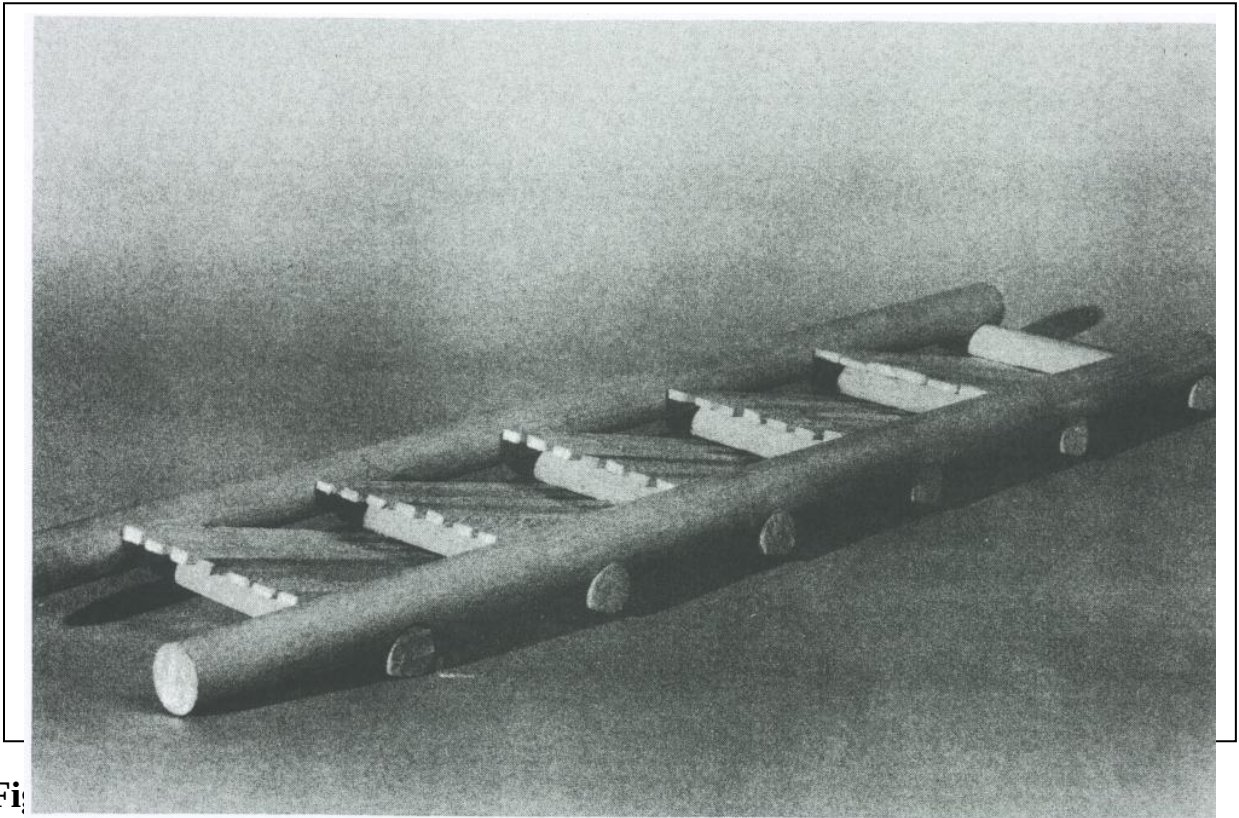
TDJ: When did the Smith family quit using the fishtraps?

NN: *When the fish kills started; When people started coal mining here.*

A number of large fish kills seem to bear this out; Kenneth Payne described the process to Anne Malanka this way:

AM: Have you noticed a real change in the fish populations in the Big South Fork? When you were a boy, you and your Uncle Poley pulled some big fish out of the river. Did you notice a change in the fish species, and the amount of fish you could catch?

KP: *The fish came in, and....I've seen this, and I know that it happened. These stripping mines, up in the headwaters; It would come these big rains, and this mine water in these strip pits, it would come a big*



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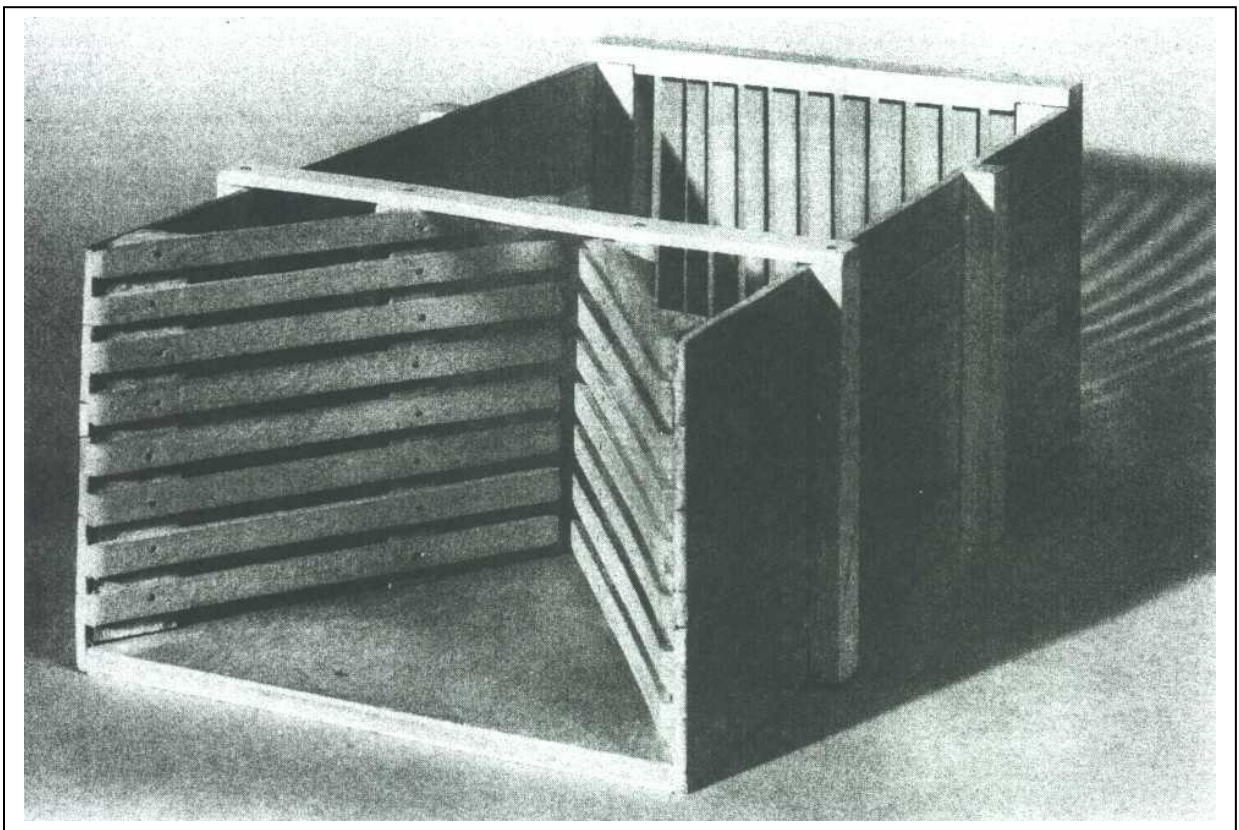


Figure 11. Model of the Reed Finger Trap built by Clyde Reed.



Figure 12. Ground view of the remains of a fish trap on No Business Creek 1980s.
(Courtesy Tennessee State Library & Archives #SC-31).

cloudburst, and it would hit the river, and it would kill everything that was in that river. I've seen fish laying along the banks, and you could shovel them up by the truckload they was so thick; and the water was so clear that you could see twenty or thirty feet; it killed all the bacteria and everything. But as I mentioned a while ago, Mother Nature will take care of itself .

As hydroelectric dams were constructed throughout the Southeast fishing productivity was affected. Also, as the pollution effects of coal mining sterilized many river systems the economy of trapping fish disappeared along with the fish. Family incomes moved from a cash and barter economy to an exclusively cash based economy. The “footprints” of this historic subsistence activity still remain in our southern river systems but as Figure 13 shows, given enough time this evidence will slowly pass away.



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FISH SPECIES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

<u>Species</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
Cyprinus, carpio,	asiatic carp – common carp
Moxostoma, valenciennesi	red horse fish.
Stizostedion, vitreum,	walleye
Stizostedion, canadense,	sauger
Ameiurus, natalis,	yellow bullhead catfish
Ictalurus, frucatus,	blue catfish
Ictalurus, punctatus,	channel catfish
Lepomis ,macrochirus,	bluegill
Anguilla, rostrata,	eel
Aplodinotus, grunniens,	drum