

CLUB HISTORY

The Chickamauga Fly and Bait Casting Club was organized in the early spring of 1940, and, whether they claim the honor or not, Ted Henson and Bob Thatcher must assume the responsibility for the organization of this club.

At that time the waters of Chickamauga Lake were lashing against its 600-mile shore line and these two anglers, while on a fishing trip in the late winter on Possum Creek, became imbued with the idea of forming an organization that would benefit from the fishing and wonderful opportunities for water activities that a kindly government had placed within our reach. They contacted a number of friends and numerous meetings were held, the result of which brought about the organization of the club. Organizing the club involved a lot of work and it took some little time before by-laws, constitution, a bona-fide membership were secured, and officers elected.

The state charter was applied for by the Board of Directors, consisting of Ted Henson, Roy Shelton, Wayne Kindrick, Bob Thatcher, Bob Godsey, E. H. Peckinpaugh, J. F. Alexander, Grover Rann, Clifford Curry, and D. C. VanDuesen.

From its very inception the club was a tremendous success, and very shortly the demand among members became insistent that the club secure a place for docks and a clubhouse somewhere on the lake. A committee was appointed for this purpose and, after various sites were considered, a location on Possum Creek was finally purchased and docks built. This beautiful camp site is 25 miles from Chattanooga on the north side of the lake, located between Soddy and Sale Creek. It consists of a ten-acre tract of wooded land along the banks of Possum Creek, a tributary to the lake.

Possum Creek was chosen because of its excellent fishing possibilities, its beautiful shore line, and the ideal harbor where the club dock was constructed. This arm of the lake is fed by cold springs, making it ideal for game fish. That the fish are there has been often proven by the numerous record catches made. The number of pictures in this book show some of the catches made by men and women members.

The club's property is paid for today. From a dense tract of woods, the area has now become an attractive recreation park with a number of lovely cabins that are delightful summer homes. The boat harbor is equipped with buoys, docks, and lockers to accommodate the large number of fishing and pleasure craft of members. The club maintains a caretaker who lives on the property the year 'round.

Improvements are constantly being made on the club property. There is a well which provides the finest of drinking water, a pavillion

equipped with tables on which meals may be served under shelter, a small oven for use by parties for steak fries and other outdoor cooking and in 1943 one of the finest and most modern barbecue pits was built which is completely screened and enclosed. Some additional land adjoining the original tract was procured in 1943.

From the beginning, the club was interested in scientific angling and casting and soon became affiliated with the National Association of Angling and Casting Clubs.

Realizing that a great work in the Chickamauga area was needed to have good fishing, the club decided to promote a conservation program, asking for strict law enforcement and seeking to educate the public to protect its fish and other natural resources. In this work the club has had the wholehearted support of the local newspapers, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Tennessee Wild Life Federation, and the Tennessee Conservation Department,

When the Chickamauga Fly and Bait Casting Club was first organized, law violators were numerous, and, in an effort to check the wholesale slaughter and destruction of undersized bass and other game fish in the new lake, approximately 25 members of the club were given commissions as assistant conservation officers. This courtesy came through the fine cooperation of the Department of Conservation officials. At that time Hamilton County had only one Game Warden to patrol the entire county. At the request of the club, an additional paid game warden was appointed. Both officers are now equipped with fast motor boats to cover the Tennessee River and Chickamauga Lake as the result of the club's activities. The educational work of the club has resulted in widespread observance of the laws, and seldom do the game wardens find it necessary to make an arrest.

In 1945 the Club made its first annual award to the outstanding conservationist of Hamilton County, Mr. Z. Cartter Patten. In 1946 this award went to Mr. L. J. Williams. In 1947 the award went to Mr. E. H. Peckinpaugh.

Boys' Day at the Club was instituted in 1944, when a group of underprivileged boys, selected by the Y. M. C. A., was taken to the Club by boats belonging to various members and friends of the Club. Activities of the boys were supervised by a special Boys' Day Committee and various members of the Club. The boys were feted, were allowed to swim and fish and had a grand time. Moving pictures were made of the event and later shown at our Club meeting. This event was also repeated in 1945, 1946, 1947 and is again planned for 1948.

In 1945 the Club's annual barbecue was held and was an outstanding success. In 1946 it was voted to dispense with the barbecue

and instead a Club picnic was held on the grounds, with members bringing their own picnic baskets and spreading lunch all together. This, of course, did not attract the large crowd as did the barbecue, as it was not a money-making occasion, but was an enjoyable event nevertheless.

During the summer of 1946 the Outdoor Writers' Association of America held their annual convention in Chattanooga and a barbecue, featuring venison and bear meat, was held for them on our Club grounds and was a huge success. This event was sponsored by Chattanooga, Inc., with our Club lending its facilities and assistance.

During World War II the Club sponsored an Overseas Fishing Tackle movement, headed by Mr. L. J. Williams, and many boxes of tackle for our boys in the armed services went to the far corners of the earth, and many were the thanks the Club received from these favors from both officers and men in the ranks.

During the summer of 1946 a new Dock was built and the old Dock was repaired and moved slightly upstream to provide a place from which members and their friends could fish.

Also, during the spring of 1945 the first fish shelters were placed in Possum Creek waters adjacent to the Club property. These shelters were made by the members by taking brush and forming small rafts of same and then sinking the rafts by means of heavy anchors made of rocks. It was reported by various members that these shelters started paying off even before the summer of 1945 was past. During the spring of 1947 the TVA, at the instance of our own and other local organizations, approved the installation of many additional shelters along the Chickamauga Lake shores. This was accomplished by felling trees at strategic points along the shore into the water and then anchoring the trees by means of a wire cable from the tree to the stump. It is hoped that this practice will greatly improve the fishing in the neighborhood of these shelters.

Also, during the years 1945 and 1946 our Club grounds were greatly improved and beautified by the planting of large numbers of dogwood trees and shrubbery of various kinds, and this program is planned to continue for the next several years.

The Electric Power Board of Chattanooga extended its power lines to the Club's property and made electric current available to the Club in December, 1947. Lights were installed by the Club at various locations in the Club area early in 1948.