

# ABIKA, THE DEVIL, AND SAM JONES

Abiaka, one of the most significant leaders of the Seminole War, was a Miccosukee elder, a spiritual leader, and a passionate voice against removal. His words rallied warriors such as Coacoochee and Osceola to fight for the Independence of the Seminole people.

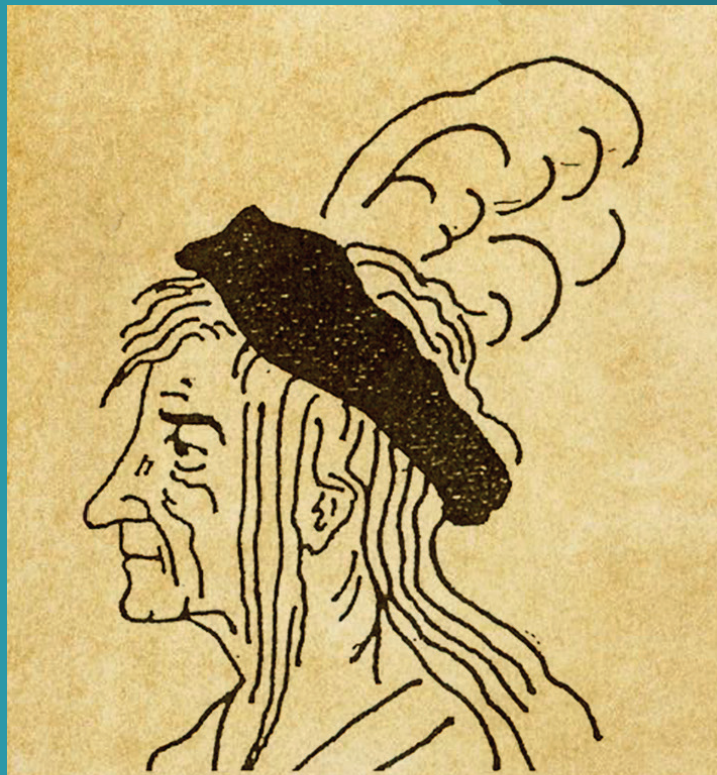
Before the Indian Removal Act was signed in 1832, The soldiers at Fort King knew Abiaka only as an "eccentric old Indian", a fisherman who visited the fort to sell his catch. Already over 60 years of age, the soldiers regarded him as a harmless old man and welcomed his presence. There was a popular song at the time called "Sam Jones the Fisherman", and the name soon stuck for him.

As tensions increased and war appeared inevitable, Sam Jones continued his trips. But he listened and learned as he did, carrying his catch while he watched the troops, counted men and supplies, and gathered invaluable intelligence. He watched the build-up that meant war was coming, and he prepared his people.

Abiaka was a fierce opponent in war. He and his followers were known for guerilla tactics, seeming to appear out of nowhere, striking, and disappearing into the wetlands. While he could not fight on the front lines, he was known to fire the first shot, before guiding the battle and tending to the wounded. Within a short time the Americans had new names for the fisherman. He was called "Sam Jones-Be-Damned" and "The Great Rascal", but most popularly he was simply "The Devil."

Abiaka, Sam Jones, The Devil, would continue to be a leading voice in the Tribe through the end of the War and after. He led his people deep into the wetlands, never surrendering. He lived until 1867, passing away in his camp in Florida, and said to have been at least 111 years old. Thanks to his perseverance, the Seminole in Florida remained unconquered.

***"In Florida I was born. In Florida I will die. In Florida my bones shall bleach."*** - Abiaka (Sam Jones)



This sketch of Abiaka, drawn by US Army Doctor Ellis Hughes in 1837, is the only known image of him.

The lyrics for 'Sam Jones the Fisherman' were a parody of the popular song 'Dunois, the young and brave'

'It was Sam Jones, the fisherman,  
Was bound for Sandy Hook,  
But first upon his almanac  
A solemn oath he took—  
"And grant a streak of fishing luck"—  
So ran this prayer of Sam's—  
"That I may have good sport to-night,  
And catch a load of clams."'

If you're interested in more Seminole History, The STOF Tribal Historic Preservation Office is creating a new site with more stories, historic resources, and more. Visit [stofthpo.com](http://stofthpo.com) soon!

