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DUNGEON ROCK, LYNN, ESSEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS

Jack Speece

Dungeon Rock in Lynn, Massachusetts, has been a well-known landmark for centuries. Pirates were reported to have buried their booty there in 1658. Several attempts have been made to uncover this treasure but none more notable that that of Hiram and Edwin Marble beginning in 1852. Today the cave remains locked within the Lynn Woods Reserve for all to view.

Lynn, Massachusetts, lies along the Atlantic sea coast in Massachusetts Bay, just 10 miles northeast of Boston, in the southern part of Essex County. To the north is Salem and Peabody. It is an industrial community first settled in 1629. It was incorporated as a city in 1631 using the name Saugus, as it was then called by the Indians. The name was later changed to Lynn in honor of King's Lynn, Norfolk, England, and incorporated as a city in 1850. In addition to its iron works (the first foundry in America) it produced large quantities of shoes and boots for soldiers in both the Revolutionary and Civil wars. High Rock, a picturesque cliff of sienite, towers 170 feet in the center of the city. At its base was the humble home of the famed fortune teller, Molly Pitcher. Due to a high rate of crime in the early 20th century, it was often referred to as “Lynn, Lynn, the City of Sin.”

Dungeon Rock also stands above the town and has a unique history. There are several versions to the tale of the Rock but perhaps the most authentic is that told by Lewis (1865):

Sometime previous [1658], on a pleasant evening, a little after sunset, a small vessel was sent to anchor near the mouth of Saugus river. A boat was presently lowered from her side, into which four men descended, and moved up the river a considerable distance, when they landed, and proceeded directly into the woods. They had been noticed by only a few individuals; but in those early times, when people were surrounded by danger, and easily susceptible of alarm, such an incident was well calculated to awaken suspicion, and in the course of the evening the intelligence was conveyed to many houses. In the morning the people naturally directed their eyes towards the shore, in search of the strange vessel—but she was gone, and no trace could be found of her or her singular crew. It was afterward ascertained that, on that morning, one of the men at the Iron Works, on going into the foundry, discovered a paper, on which was written, that if a quantity of shackles, handcuffs, hatchets, and other articles of iron manufacture, were made and deposited, with secrecy, in a certain place in the woods, which was particularly designated, an amount of silver, to their full value, would be found in their place. The articles were made in a few days, and placed in conformity with directions. On the next morning they were gone, and the money was found according to the promise; but though a watch had been kept, no vessel was seen. Some months afterward, the four men returned, and selected one of the most secluded and romantic spots in the woods of Saugus, for their abode. The place of their retreat was a deep, narrow valley, shut in on two sides by high hills and craggy, precipitous rocks, and shrouded on the others by thick pines, hemlocks, and cedars, between which there was only one small spot to which the rays of the sun, at noon, could penetrate. On climbing up the rude at almost perpendicular steps of the rock on the eastern side, the eye could command a full view of the bay on the south, and a prospect of a considerable portion of the surrounding country. The place of their retreat was a deep, narrow valley, shut in on two sides by high hills and craggy, precipitous rocks, and shrouded on the others by thick pines, hemlocks, and cedars, between which there was only one small spot to which the rays of the sun, at noon, could penetrate. On climbing up the rude at almost perpendicular steps of the rock on the eastern side, the eye could command a full view of the bay on the south, and a prospect of a considerable portion of the surrounding country. The place of their retreat was a deep, narrow valley, shut in on two sides by high hills and craggy, precipitous rocks, and shrouded on the others by thick pines, hemlocks, and cedars, between which there was only one small spot to which the rays of the sun, at noon, could penetrate. On climbing up the rude at almost perpendicular steps of the rock on the eastern side, the eye could command a full view of the bay on the south, and a prospect of a considerable portion of the surrounding country. The place of their retreat was a deep, narrow valley, shut in on two sides by high hills and craggy, precipitous rocks, and shrouded on the others by thick pines, hemlocks, and cedars, between which there was only one small spot to which the rays of the sun, at noon, could penetrate. On climbing up the rude at almost perpendicular steps of the rock on the eastern side, the eye could command a full view of the bay on the south, and a prospect of a considerable portion of the surrounding country. The place of their retreat was a deep, narrow valley, shut in on two sides by high hills and craggy, precipitous rocks, and shrouded on the others by thick pines, hemlocks, and cedars, between which there was only one small spot to which the rays of the sun, at noon, could penetrate. On climbing up the rude at almost perpendicular steps of the rock on the eastern side, the eye could command a full view of the bay on the south, and a prospect of a considerable portion of the surrounding country. The place of their retreat was a deep, narrow valley, shut in on two sides by high hills and craggy, precipitous rocks, and shrouded on the others by thick pines, hemlocks, and cedars, between which there was only one small spot to which the rays of the sun, at noon, could penetrate. On climbing up the rude at almost perpendicular steps of the rock on the eastern side, the eye could command a full view of the bay on the south, and a prospect of a considerable portion of the surrounding country. The place of their retreat was a deep, narrow valley, shut in on two sides by high hills and craggy, precipitous rocks, and shrouded on the others by thick pines, hemlocks, and cedars, between which there was only one small spot to which the rays of the sun, at noon, could penetrate.
in several other places, none has ever been found. After residing there some time, their retreat became known, and one of the king’s cruisers appeared on the coast. They were traced to the glen, and three of them were taken and carried to England, where it is probable they were executed. The other, whose name was Thomas Veal, escaped to a rock in the woods, about two miles to the north, in which was a spacious cavern, where the pirates had previously deposited some of their plunder. There the fugitive fixed his residence, and practiced the trade of a shoemaker, occasionally coming down to the village to obtain articles of sustenance. He continued to reside till the great earthquake this year [1658], when the top of the rock was loosened, and crushed down on the mouth of the cavern, enclosing the unfortunate inmate, in its unyielding prison. It has ever since been called the Pirate’s Dungeon.

Prior to 1851, there had been several attempts to uncover the buried fortune at Dungeon Rock. About the year 1816 a man named Brown claimed to have been guided by a dream and resumed the treasure. However, the man could never be induced to work, stating that he had sufficient means to make himself independent. Shortly afterwards he was placed in the Ipswich Asylum by his relatives. Another report was of Jesse Hutchinson who by mesmeric clairvoyance worked for several weeks before abandoning the task. On May 28, 1834, several persons destroyed the curious cave in the Dungeon Rock, under an imagination that they might obtain a treasurer. They placed a keg of powder in the cave, which, on its explosion, blew out the lower portion of the rock, causing the great mass above to fall, and thus destroying the cavern.

In 1852, Hiram Marble purchased 5 acres of woodland from the city of Lynn in which Dungeon Rock is situated. He moved with his wife, son, and daughter from Charlton, Worcester County, and immediately began the laborious task of excavation. Under spiritual direction he faithfully drilled and blasted a tunnel through the very hard porphyry stone. This medium sized man was a most energetic and persevering enthusiast. He had a bright, quick eye, and wore a flowing beard, of sandy hue, that was in need of a good combing.

At the start of the undertaking he had about fifteen hundred dollars which was shortly exhausted. He next sought donations from the local industries to continue his efforts. In addition he charged curious visitors 25 cents for a tour into the depths of his cavern. He even resorted to the selling of $1.00 bonds with a promise to repay with interest when able.

At the close of the year 1863 the passage excavated had reached 135 feet and was of the average height and width of seven feet. When he was in doubt as to the direction he should pursue, he applied for spiritual direction which was never offered in vein. Being a spiritualist and encouraged by the Hutchinsons, he enjoyed elaborating on how the spirit of Thomas Veal and others would assist him in his efforts.

Hiram Marble dug for about 17 years at the rate of about one foot per month, resulting in a tunnel depth of 172 feet. Born in 1803, Hiram Marble died at his home by the Rock on November 10, 1868, at the age of 65 and was buried just outside the cave beneath an old hemlock tree. He remained a spiritualist to the last, and the mediums of the vicinity were invited to be present at the funeral services which were held at the Rock. His son Edwin
resumed his labors and continued until his death on January 16, 1880, aged 48, leaving only a wife. He was buried at the southwest foot of the Rock. It is said that over $50,000 was spent in their search. The treasure they so earnestly sought has never been found.

In 1658 an earthquake shook up the settlers in a most alarming manner. It is believed by some that the entire face of Dungeon Rock was split off, and the cavern forever closed up. Others remark that the evidence of the splitting is not the most satisfactory. There is also an account from May 28, 1834, when several persons were reported to have destroyed the curious cave, under an imagination that they might obtain a treasure. They placed a keg of powder in the cave, which, on its explosion, blew out the lower portion of the rock, causing the great mass above to fall, and thus destroying the cavern.

Henry David Thoreau traveled to Lynn in the spring of 1859 to deliver a lecture at Frazier Hall on April 26th. The following day he took a walk through the woods and collected various specimens to take back to Concord. Although his path came close to Dungeon Rock, he never mentions the famous landmark and attraction. At this time Hiram Marble had obtained a remarkable reputation within the community.

One of Marbles goals was to obtain the treasure and purchase the beautiful surrounding property. In 1881 the Trustees of the Forest obtained the property along with 2,200 acres of forest and created a recreational area. On Memorial Day, 1888, they held an early camp and performed a dedication service for the lovers of the woods. It is the second largest municipal park in the United States. The Park encompasses nearly one-fifth of the entire land area of the city and represents a significant natural, watershed, and public recreational resource. Financial support is presently requested from the Friends of Lynn Woods to maintain the area and keep it from falling back into urban decay. Its beauty and history makes this an exceptional place to visit.

Today the cave is still a popular curiosity for many visitors. It can be reached by entering Lynn Woods Reserve, next to the baseball lot. Take the dirt road past the 48 foot tall Burrill Stone Tower to an intersection and bear left. At the next curve the cave lies about 75 feet in the woods to the right. There are prominent signs to the cave if you are taking the hiking trails. The aperture in the rock is only about five feet in height and extends only fifteen feet into the rock. The drill marks still remain in the solid rock from Marbles attempt to recover the pirates’ treasure. A steel door locks away any remaining secrets that future explorers may uncover. Others say they lock the door to keep the ghosts of those whom the cults in the area sacrificed from wondering through the woods. Situated on a lofty range of thickly wooded hills it commands an extensive view of the ocean, for fifty miles both north and south.
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BELTRAMI'S TROPHONIAN CAVE OF 1823

Greg Brick, Ph.D.

The two most famous natural caves in St. Paul, Minnesota, Carver's Cave and Fountain Cave, were often confounded by early travelers on the Mississippi River. Despite the confusion it is fairly easy to tell them apart in the literature even when they have been misnamed. Carver's Cave is the short cave downstream from St. Paul containing a lake, whereas Fountain Cave is the long cave above town containing a stream. Stratigraphically, the two caves differ in that Carver's Cave is located near the middle of the sandstone layer, whereas Fountain Cave is located near its top. There are subtle differences in the character of the sandstone itself at both locations, as perceptively noted by the explorer Long, who visited both caves on the same day in 1817. However, this article describes the most bizarre case of spelean confusion, that of the eccentric Italian traveler Giacomo Beltrami (1779-1855) (Fig. 1).

Native Americans have always referred to Carver's Cave as Wakan Tipi, the Dwelling of the Great Spirit. Jonathan Carver visited what he called the “Great Cave” in 1766 and again in 1767, and it became the earliest Minnesota cave in the published literature when the first edition of Carver's best-selling Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America appeared in 1778. In what is perhaps the most heavily quoted passage from Carver's Travels, we read that:

About thirty miles below the Falls of St. Anthony, at which I arrived the tenth day after I left Lake Pepin, is a remarkable cave of an amazing depth. The Indians term it Wakon-teebe, that is, the Dwelling of the Great Spirit. The entrance into it is about ten feet wide, the height of it five feet. The arch within is near fifteen feet high and about thirty feet broad. The bottom of it consists of fine clear sand. About twenty feet from the entrance begins a lake, the water of which is transparent, and extends to an unsearchable distance; for the darkness of the cave prevents all attempts to acquire a knowledge of it. I threw a small pebble towards the interior parts of it with my utmost strength: I could hear that it fell into the water, and notwithstanding it was of so small a size, it caused an astonishing and horrible noise that reverberated through all those gloomy regions. I found in this cave many Indian hieroglyphicks, which appeared very ancient, for time had nearly covered them with moss, so that it was with difficulty I could trace them. They were cut in a rude manner upon the inside of the walls, which were composed of a stone so extremely soft that it might be easily penetrated with a knife: a stone everywhere to be found near the Mississippi. The cave is only accessible by ascending a narrow, steep passage that lies near the brink of the river.

When Major Stephen H. Long, U. S. Corps of Topographical Engineers, who had ascended the Mississippi River in a “six-oared skiff” to find a location for what would become Fort Snelling, visited Carver's Cave on July 16, 1817, he had this to say:

Two miles above the village [Kaposia] on the same side of the [Mississippi] river is Carvers Cave, at which we stopped to breakfast. However interesting it may have been, it does not possess that character in a very high degree at present. We descended it with lighted candles to its lower extremity. The entrance is very low & about 8 feet broad, so that a man in order to enter it must be completely prostrate. The angle of descent within the cave is about 25°…. In shape it resembles a Bakers oven. The cavern was once probably much more extensive. My interpreter informed me that since his remembrance the entrance was not less than 10 feet high, & its length far greater than at present.

Another account, by the ethnologist Henry R. Schoolcraft, who would discover the “true head” of the Mississippi River in 1832, dates from 1820, not long after Long's first visit. We read in his Narrative Journal of Travels (1821) for August 2, 1820, that:

The cave itself, appears to have undergone a considerable alteration since that [Carver's] period…. As the rock is of a very friable nature, and easily acted upon by running water, it is probable that the lake has been discharged, thus enlarging the boundaries of the cave.

These early perceptions of change at Carver's Cave were illusory, however, because both
travelers had almost certainly confused the cave with other, nearby caves. In Long’s case, it has been alleged that he confused Carver’s with Dayton’s Cave—a much smaller cave—while it is known with more certainty that Schoolcraft confused Carver’s with Fountain Cave, a much larger cave. Either way, the cave appeared to the bewildered traveler to have undergone a veritable metamorphosis in the half century since Carver’s original visit.

Beltrami, an Italian exile, arrived at Fort Snelling on the very first steamboat to dock there, the Virginia, in 1823, and attached himself to Long’s second expedition to what is now Minnesota, sent to investigate the Canadian border. Beltrami soon had a disagreement with Long and struck out on his own, carrying his trademark red umbrella while searching for the source of the Mississippi River, which he claimed to have identified, years before Schoolcraft’s naming of Lake Itasca, in 1832. Beltrami County is his other, more enduring, memorial.

Passing through what is now St. Paul on his travels, Beltrami confounded Carver’s and Fountain caves in his memoirs, A Pilgrimage in America, published in 1828, producing the hybrid “Trophonian Cave.” The physical description of Beltrami’s cave undeniably belongs to Fountain Cave, yet he attributed to it Native American ceremonies and the “hieroglyphics” (petroglyphs) associated with Carver’s Cave, even using the name “Whakoon-Thiby,” which usually pertains to the latter cave. In any case, Beltrami certainly gives the most elaborate description of the Native American religious rituals at this cave, laced with Classical allusions:

On the 19th [May 1823] we stopped to take in wood. I was told of a cavern, which was only at a short distance from there, and about twelve miles above the encampment of the Marsh. A small valley on the east leads to it. Cedars, firs, and cypresses, seem to have been purposely placed there by nature, that the approach might bespeak the venerable majesty of this sacred retreat. The entrance is spacious, and formed in lime-stone [sic] rock, as white as snow. A rivulet, as transparent as air, flows through the middle. One may walk on with perfect ease for five or six fathoms, after which a narrow passage, which however is no obstacle, except to those apathetic beings whom nothing can excite, conducts to a vast elliptical cavern, where the waters of the rivulet, precipitating themselves from a cascade, and reflecting the gleam of our torches, produced an indescribable effect. You climb to the top of a small rock to reach the level of the bed of this Castalian spring, whose captivating murmur allures you onwards, in spite of the difficulties which impede your progress, and you arrive at its source, which is at the very end of the cavern. It is calculated that it is about a mile in length.… The savages assemble yearly in this cavern, to perform their lustrationes; and, what is more remarkable, at the same season, that is to say, in the spring; and in the same manner, by water and fire, as the Catholics, the Peruvians, and the ancients. They plunge their clothes, arms, medicine bags, and persons, in the water of this rivulet; they afterwards pass their arms and clothes, together with their medicine bags, through a large fire, which was not extinguished at the time of my visit. This ceremony is always accompanied with a dance round the sacred fire, in a mystic circle, like the medicine dance. It appears that this lustratio is their corporeal purification. The cave is appropriated to
other ceremonies in the course of the year. The Indians assemble there to consult either the Great Manitou or their particular Manitous; and their chiefs, like Numa Pompilius, can make their nymph Egeria speak whenever they want to prevail on a reluctant people to obey them. They perform all their lustrationes before they consult the oracle, as the Greeks did before they entered the cave of Trophonius. The Sioux call this cave Whakoon-Thiiby, or the abode of the Manitous. Its walls are covered with hieroglyphics: these are perhaps their ex-voto inscriptions. This cavern has one great advantage over those of antiquity; credulity is not here an object of traffic.

Beltrami’s Trophonian Cave was based on the Cave of Trophonius, a famous Greek cave, entered by descending a ladder, which contained an oracle that was consulted even into Roman times and is well described and depicted in W.H. Davenport Adams’ Famous Caves and Catacombs, published in 1886 (see cover of this issue). Adams reports that “it became proverbial in Greece to say of any person who appeared grave and anxious, “He has returned from the cave of Trophonius.” According to other sources, the cave contained an underground river—just like Fountain Cave.

TWO NEW TITLES (2014) FROM SPEECE PRODUCTIONS (ALTOONA, PA) COMPLEMENTING THIS ARTICLE:
WAS IT REALLY IN THE CIVIL WAR? EXAMINING THE CHRONOLOGY OF SALTPETER MINING IN SELECT TENNESSEE CAVES

Joseph C. Douglas

In the literature on Tennessee caves and in the public imagination, saltpeter mining in Tennessee caves is generally considered a Civil War activity. I have been reconsidering this chronological paradigm as part of larger effort to obtain and collate information, including finer grained temporal data, from Tennessee’s approximate 290 suspected saltpeter caves. This paper present the results of recent research on the history of saltpeter mining from three cave sites in Middle Tennessee: Whiteoak Saltpeter Cave and Cave Branch Cave, both in Macon County, and Old Squires Cave, in nearby Smith County. All three are located in the dissected hills of the western escarpment of the Eastern Highland Rim physiographic province. Previously unrecognized information from the writings of Stephen Calvin Gregory, a local preacher, historian, and newspaperman, has added to our historical knowledge of all three caves. The focus of this paper lay in the chronological data; all three cave sites significantly predate the Civil War.

The Civil War presumption was never absolute, but as scholars began to research deeper, it became clear that the Civil War paradigm was incomplete if not incorrect. Many large caves such as Nickajack Cave, Hubbards Cave, and Big Bone Cave saw episodic mining in the War of 1812 and the Civil War. At Bellamy Cave the mining took place around 1812 rather than in the Civil War. Another blow to the Civil War presumption occurred when Marion Smith revealed that there were East Tennessee saltpeter mining operations from the late eighteenth century, one before October 1780. Marion also delineated the revival of cave saltpeter mining in Tennessee in the mid-late 1850s. Recent attention has shifted to the many less extensive and often lesser known saltpeter caves in the state, and chronological data now exists for a few of them. This paper adds to this growing corpus of research.

Whiteoak Saltpeter Cave, first described in 1961 by Charles E. L. McCary in Thomas C. Barr’s Caves of Tennessee, is “probably the best known of any in Macon County. Local residents report that it was formerly used for square dances and picnics.” It was once known as Dance Hall Cave for this usage, which took place in the level entrance areas. Today, a man-made water basin inside the entrance reflects this social use from the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. There is evidence of other social visitation in the form of historic graffiti, but they are hard to read and impossible to link to the mining activity. There is also a prehistoric Native American component, which I discuss in another paper. Unfortunately, the site has been significantly abused over the last fifty years, having been used as a trash-bin, for storage, and around 2005, for an illegal methamphetamine lab.

The cave has two entrances and is 2727 feet long, consisting of a large upper passage with middle and lower level crawlways. There is much physical evidence of saltpeter mining in the cave. The middle level contains excavated areas with patinated metal tool marks on remaining sediment deposits. There are wood fragment in the main trunk passage, which may represent the side slats of processing vats. The north passages were mined intensively, with extensive excavated areas, piles of “waste rocks,” and other modifications. The physical evidence agrees with the vernacular nomenclature, local histories, and folklore, which all assert that the cave was mined for saltpeter. Details concerning the mining operation are lacking, with one exception: local histories and
folklore insist that the mining took place in the Civil War. For example, at the Courthouse in the county seat of Lafayette, Tennessee there is a plaque on the Civil War in Macon County which states that “[s]altpeter, an essential ingredient of gunpowder, was mined in caves in Oakdale and at the Saltpeter (Dancehall) Cave off Cave Hollow Road.” However, I suggest that saltpeter mining at Whiteoak Saltpeter Cave long predates the Civil War, and that there are political, geographic, and military reasons to doubt the Civil War chronology.

Politically, Macon County was badly divided between Unionists and pro-Confederates in the crises leading up to Tennessee’s secession. Unionists dominated the county up until then; the majority of men in the county opposed secession, voting over 60% (697 to 447) against it in the (second) statewide referendum, in June 1861, making Macon County one of the few Unionist strongholds in Middle Tennessee. Sentiment in the county also divided geographically, as people in the lower river valleys in the southern part of the county were generally pro-Confederate, while people on the Highland Rim and in the upper valleys in the northern part of the county, including the area around Whiteoak Saltpeter Cave, were generally Unionists.

Once Tennessee seceded, Confederates briefly controlled Macon County, where they established two recruitment and training camps. It is possible that in the second half of 1861 and in early 1862 the cave could have been mined for saltpeter for the Confederate war effort. Yet in the surviving records, there is no hint of direct mining by the CSA, nor the use of contractors by either the CSA or the Tennessee Military and Financial Board (in 1861) for any cave in Macon County. Confederate military control ended in early 1862, following the Union capture of Nashville in February. Federal authorities were soon established in Lafayette, just a few miles south of Whiteoak Saltpeter Cave. Union forces remained nominally in control of the county the remainder of the war, though there was significant Confederate guerilla activity.

If the assumption that Whiteoak Saltpeter Cave was mined in the Civil War does not rest on a solid evidentiary basis, there is strong evidence the cave was known and mined much earlier. Before becoming part of new Macon County in 1842, Whiteoak Saltpeter Cave was located in Smith County. In the June 21, 1802 session of the Smith County Quarterly Court and Court of Pleas it was ordered that a group of twelve men “be a jury to view, mark and lay off a road agreeable to law, from Daniel Wichter’s to the State line in a direction to the Salt Petre Cave, and report same to our next court.” Whichever cave this was, it had already been prospected as a source of nitrates by the time the Court acted in 1802, and it was a prominent enough economic asset to include in road planning.

This saltpeter cave reference caught the attention of Calvin Gregory, who promoted the study of local history and genealogy as the editor for the Macon County Times from 1930 until his death in 1957. In Cal’s Column, on August 28, 1952, he analyzed the road route the jury laid out, first by identifying where Daniel Wichter lived, on Long Fork in southeastern Macon County, then by tracing the route along the Long Fork, up the hill at Liberty Church, across the divide, down the next valley, White Oak Creek, up the next divide, and then towards the Kentucky line via the community of Underwood. He corroborated his initial analysis by examining where the jury members resided, noting that they were usually chosen because they lived along the route. At least three of them did so. Calvin Gregory wrote, “[t]he Salt Petre Cave of that day and time was doubtless the present ‘Salt Peter Cave’ owned by Jimmy Tucker and located on the waters of White Oak Creek, not many miles northeast of Lafayette.” I find his analysis quite credible. Whiteoak Saltpeter
Cave was already well-known as a saltpeter source by 1802. It seems likely that production continued for another dozen years or so, because of the increasing price (and relative scarcity) of saltpeter.

There is a reference to an Old Squires Cave in a local history, *The History of Smith County, Tennessee* (1987) by Sue W. Maggart and Nina R. Sutton. In a section on the early economy of the area, the authors wrote about a cave unknown to me and the Tennessee Cave Survey:

On the south side of the Cumberland River in the Ward Hollow is the “old Squires Cave” that is said also to have been a source of saltpeter. This area was settled early in the nineteenth century by the Squires family; the cave lies under land that was later owned by the late W. G. Minton and has been explored for about a half of mile. Far back in one of the chambers of the cave can be seen the punts of the hoes made more than one hundred fifty years ago in the nitrate deposits. According to tradition, Joseph Bishop, the famous pioneer hunter, used to get saltpeter from the cave for making his gunpowder.

Using this information, I began research in 1996 and 1997 to locate the cave. Additional archival research was undertaken in 2013. The search for the cave is the subject of another paper, but I checked deeds, census data, wills, and cemetery records to investigate family patriarch Levi Squires (1774-1840) as well as the Minton family. To my dismay I found there were four different “Ward Hollows” in the county. I investigated all of them. I even contacted one of the authors of the *History of Smith County, Tennessee* to no avail.

On July 15, 1997, after talking to two local informants, I was directed to the correct area, where I soon met the owner of the cave, though he had never been in it. He confirmed that he had bought it and the surrounding farm in 1962 from a [J.W.] Minton. He pointed out the entrance, in a sinkhole, a few hundred feet behind the old Minton house. He knew nothing about Levi Squires or saltpeter mining, but he stated that the Mintons had used the cave for storing apples prior to the arrival of electricity. I walked to the cane-filled sinkhole, crossed the fence, and climbed down about fifteen feet to the cave entrance. I went inside a short distance, enough to verify that it was a cave, and to look for evidence of saltpeter mining. On a sediment bank a short distance inside there were distinct metal tool marks, indicating that the cave had been mined for nitrates. I returned and explored more of the cave with Marty Forbes on July 20, 1997, and then completed exploration with Marion O. Smith and others on September 28, 1997.

Old Squires Saltpeter Cave is not half a mile long, unfortunately, but somewhere between 300 and 400 feet long, with a vertical extent of about 50 feet. The entrance passage slopes downward for 30 feet to a junction. To the right, a crawl under a rock goes a short distance to a drop-off into a high dome passage. It is possible to climb down a crack to the bottom of the dome. A steep dirt climb leads up the far side of the dome but ends. There are a few old names but no evidence of saltpeter mining in this section.

The majority of the cave passage is to the left of the entrance junction, where a canyon passage leads past the first excavated sediment area and the wooden frame remains from the historic storage of apples in the cave. At the back of the canyon passage is another sediment bank which appears to be mined. Beyond this dug area is a low crawl over dirt to a wide low area. A short crawl goes an additional 60 feet before ending. Cultural materials in this section, in addition to the logs, boards, and nails used for storing foodstuffs, include a low “rock wall” delineating the end of the food storage area. There are also a few old names, dates, and initials, some from the late 1800s and 1930s. There are faint steps cut into the sinkhole
slope which could be from either the saltpeter mining operation or to ease the transport of apples. Besides the two dug areas, evidence for saltpeter mining includes torch marks on the walls and waste rocks piled in a side passage.

This is a modest but real saltpeter cave. The lack of processing vat remains suggests that the dirt was removed from the dry cave and processed elsewhere, probably a couple of hundred yards south at the creek. Because Levi Squires died in 1840, I tentatively assigned it to the “early period” of mining. But I lacked specific data to allow a more precise chronological assessment. The original 1987 source was equally imprecise. And the Joseph Bishop part of the story still needed exploring.

Joseph Bishop was a well-known long-hunter and then resident of middle Tennessee. Born in 1770 in Prince George County, Virginia, he told his story to Dr. John W. Gray, who published it in 1858 under the title of *The Life of Joseph Bishop*. In 1791 he moved to Cages Bend on the Cumberland River. He soon became a market hunter, focusing on bear, deer, and bison. In 1797 he began to transition away from hunting. In 1798 he leased land on both banks for the Cumberland River, erected a small house, built a flatboat, and began to “keep ferry,” an occupation he continued for seven years. He married, accumulated a modest amount of property (including slaves), operated a farm, and served as the Smith County Constable. Later in life he was plagued with debt. He recovered and achieved a modest solvency by the end of his life.

Tradition says Joseph Bishop made saltpeter in Old Squires Saltpeter Cave, and the cave does have evidence of mining. Is there any way to corroborate the folklore? I have been unable to directly link Bishop to Old Squires Saltpeter Cave. But there is evidence that Bishop had knowledge of saltpeter and gunpowder production, and by inference, with caves in the Cumberland River area. Bishop told Dr. Gray that around 1793, he “…ascertained that he could economize a little by manufacturing my own saltpeter and gunpowder…” Bishop detailed how he made hickory ashes for the chemical conversion of cave (calcium) nitrate, essential to the saltpeter production process. But Bishop never mentions a cave, or the initial mining of the saltpeter, nor any other aspect of production, instead telling a long tale of how he played a practical joke on a lazy young man, who ended up carrying fifteen large tubs of ashes for him, to avoid a more onerous, dangerous (and fictional) task. Bishop did make saltpeter and gunpowder himself, at least on a small scale, and though we will likely never know for sure if he mined Old Squires Saltpeter Cave, the folklore is at least plausible.

Going through the mid-twentieth writings of Stephen Calvin Gregory, I recently found a brief reference to Levi Squires and the cave. In an article appearing in the *Macon County Times* on November 29, 1951, Calvin Gregory reprinted a series of letters between Sam Bains of Smith County, serving in the War of 1812, and his wife Christiana [Kitty] Bains. In Christiana’s letter to Sam, dated December 27, 1813, she related that “Mr. Squires has quit the cave. They have worked out all the dirt which made about five hundred weight [of saltpeter] in all that was made at the cave.” We now know that the cave was mined in 1813 by Levi Squires (and crew, as Christiana Bains said “they”) and that about 560 pounds were produced (100 weight equals 112 pounds) from this relatively small cave. If niter-impregnated dirt was “rich,” it could produce 3 pounds of saltpeter per bushel, suggesting that at least 186 bushels of earth were removed. Select areas of the cave were likely almost full of sediment prior to the mining.

Calvin Gregory grew up in Pleasant Shade, Tennessee, on Peyton Creek, where
generations of the Gregory family lived since the 1790s. Calvin wrote more than once about an unfortunate fatal accident linked to cave saltpeter mining, with the most complete version appearing in the March 10, 1949 Macon County Times. Calvin wrote “[g]oing on down from Gum Springs [community] for about a half mile, we come to Cave Point, named for the big cave in the hill or point between Peyton’s Creek and the Wilmore Hallow [sic].” A topographic map showed this to be just north of Pleasant Shade, a short distance inside Macon County. I could even see the narrow hill coming to a point. But the Tennessee Cave survey did not have any reported caves in the immediate vicinity, not had I ever heard of Cave Point. Calvin Gregory wrote further:

Near the entrance to the cave occurred another tragedy, in 1814. The cave had then and perhaps still does have a supply of saltpeter. The Second War with Great Britain was then in progress and gunpowder was extremely scarce in the western settlements. Some of the men of the community decided to quantities of the saltpeter and to make their own gunpowder. Among those helping in this undertaking was Ansil, a 16 year old son of our great-great-grandfather, Bry Gregory. In cutting down a large tree near the entrance to this cave, to get wood for boiling down the saltpeter, the youth was crushed to death by the falling tree. His father, who lived not a great way off, took his mule and sled…, and went to bring the body home. As he lifted his own, dead son, a youth of only 16 tender years, onto the sled, the old man said: “Now’d—n you, I guess you won’t run away any more.”

Subsequent research has confirmed some of the details of this recorded family lore. There is an obvious cave, with three entrances, one-half mile from Gum Spring, on a prominent hill or point above where Wilmore Hollow intersects Peyton Creek. This is Cave Point. Although I was unable to find either Ansil or Bry Gregory’s gravesites, there are at least three Gregory Cemeteries in the area, and it is presumed they are in early, that is, unmarked, graves somewhere in the vicinity. Bry Gregory is well represented in the historical record, appearing for example in the 1820 Smith County census. He remained a prickly and unsympathetic character; Calvin Gregory wrote in the July 2, 1953 Macon County Times that “[t]his was the same man who 33 years later [in 1847], was killed by lightning when he cursed the Almighty and called on Him to ‘try old Cuff a pop.’” One of his surviving sons later lived on the road upstream from the cave. Today the road is called Gregory Road past Wilmore Hollow.

On March 14, 2013, I located the site and briefly explored the cave. I returned on July 15, 2013, with Marion Smith for a more thorough examination of its cultural features. From the largest entrance, located 20 feet from the valley road, the cave extends as a walking passage a short distance, past attractive stalagmites, to a junction. A brief crawl on the left leads to the first (or wide) room. To the right passages go a short distance to the second entrance and a too-small skylight. The main passage continues as a wide crawl for 75 feet to a T-junction with a larger passage. To the right the passage leads upslope to the third entrance. To the left the passage extends as a crawl for 80 feet before becoming too low. The cave has significant airflow between entrances, and some biological resources: millipedes, crickets, snails, cave and two-lined salamanders, and in March, a single tri-colored bat. Cave Point Cave has an estimated length of 300 feet and a vertical extent of 20 feet. But unlike Whiteoak Saltpeter and Old Squires Saltpeter caves, it does not have clear evidence of saltpeter mining.

The cave has a limited amount of cultural material; a small amount of contemporary trash, a few inscribed wall markings which are mostly illegible, and evidence of minor pot-
hunting for Indian artifacts at the main entrance. No saltpeter processing equipment was found, though none was expected, as the vats and boiling kettles would have been located outside near the creek. But there are no metal tool marks on dirt deposits, piled rocks, nor any other positive markers for saltpeter mining.

Despite this lack of direct physical evidence, the family lore is still believable. The cave has a fluctuating environment due to the proximate multiple entrances and does not preserve evidence like graffiti well. The floor of the main entrance has clearly been disturbed and sediment may have been removed in the past. The first (or wide) room has a dirt floor and it also appears disturbed. There is an unusual coloration line on the south wall in this room, but it probably reflects different rock strata rather than an old sediment level. The dirt floor inside the third entrance is also “unnatural.” There is the remnant of a larger dirt bank on the right side of the third entrance. On the bluff just east of the third entrance are two karst features, each completely plugged with banks of sediment. These bear a resemblance to the fill remnant at the third entrance. Perhaps the entrances to Cave Point Cave were originally filled with sediment, now removed. Because other aspects of the family lore match up, and because of Calvin Gregory’s well-established credibility, the evidence still suggests to me that, despite the lack of physical confirmation, local men extracted saltpeter-laden dirt from Cave Point Cave in 1814 for local use, due to the difficulty in obtaining it during the War of 1812. Ansil Gregory was almost certainly killed by a fallen tree while cutting wood for the boiling kettles. His death sadly reflected all-too-common hazards: both timber-cutting and powder-making were dangerous pursuits.

The three caves discussed in this paper comprise only 1% of the known saltpeter caves in Tennessee, and they were neither famous nor nationally important (i.e., large scale) sources of commodities. They were small to moderate production sites which primarily served local or regional markets. There is still much we don’t know, including which powder mills processed the saltpeter. But their history, as far as we know it, is suggestive, as most saltpeter caves in Tennessee are similar in scale and economic function. Their chronology is especially instructive. For political, geographic, and military reasons, Whiteoak Saltpeter Cave was probably not mined in the Civil War. It was instead mined as early as 1802, and likely for some time after. The cave was tied by road to the regional trade artery, the Cumberland River. Old Squires Saltpeter Cave was intensively mined by Levi Squires in 1813, producing 560 pounds of saltpeter, a relatively large amount for such a short cave. The saltpeter probably went to the regional market at Carthage. There is also the possibility it was mined for personal use by Joseph Bishop around 1793. Cave Point Cave was mined during the War of 1812, though for local use rather than to serve a regional market. All three were mined early in the nineteenth century. I suggest that further investigations will reveal similar results for many other Tennessee saltpeter cave as well.
SOME EARLY NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF HAWAIIAN BURIAL CAVES

Donald B. Ball and Marcia E. Hemming

Created by the emergence of volcanoes rising from the depths of the Pacific Ocean, the lava caves of Hawaii have long attracted the attention of geologists (e.g., Macdonald et al. 1983), archaeologists (e.g., Kirch 1985:237-246), and spelean historians (e.g., Ball and Hemming 2012). However, with but few exceptions (e.g., Halliday 1991) the use of these caves as burial places for Hawaiian commoners and royalty alike has seemingly garnered a lesser degree of interest on the part of cave historians far removed from the Hawaiian islands despite their cultural and social importance. It is the purpose of this paper to briefly examine a sampling of the numerous accounts of these caves which appeared in various early Hawaiian newspapers published both during and after the existence of the Kingdom of Hawaii.

We may begin by reviewing an account of a royal burial cave on the island of Maui which appeared in the July 28, 1903, issue of the Hawaiian Gazette. As noted therein (Anonymous 1903a):

WHERE MAUI'S KINGS LIE HIDDEN AWAY

Perhaps Kapela, the highest peak of the Lihau ridge, overlooking Olowalu, is the most interesting one in Iao valley, for somewhere among its numerous dark, hidden recesses, no living soul knows where, is the cave containing the bones of the kings and chiefs of Maui. In this cave were supposed to have been hidden the bones of Kahekili [sic], king of Maui, and Kalanikupule, his son, and other royal personages. Other authorities claim, however, that after the death of Kahekili on Oahu in 1795 his bones were sent to [the island of] Hawaii. Sometime during 1884 the late King David Laamea Kalakaua, with native kamaainas from Wailuku, spent a day in Iao valley trying to locate the cave with the royal treasures, but he gave up the attempt in despair. Either the natives did not know the exact location of the cave, or they would not show the place on account of the prevailing superstition that he who would give away the bones the kings would surely die, but any rate, none of the ten men knew where the place was. W. B. Keau was one the party, and according to his statement some of them climbed a lofty lehua tree and from that elevated position they looked into a cave and saw some bones, but they could not make out whether they were human bones or not. Some of them had the temerity to believe they belonged to animals, but the question would be asked how the animals ever got there, for no human being of later days, and not even goats, could get there. But this can only be answered by the fact that the natives of the last century were, by far, greater and superior athletes than their brothers of today, and what would seem impossible nowadays was within the range of possibility then. For it is recorded in history how Kamehameha the Great used to lift men in the air and break them in two, and how he performed other feats equally superhuman, that would make his modern brethren hide their faces for very shame. That was the age of athletic feats. They would have excelled in baseball, too, had that game been known at the time.

There is no doubt that this cave, known as Kapelakapu-e-na-lil [sic], contains treasures of untold value, but to reach it is the question. Not only the bones of high chiefs and chiefesses [sic] were hidden here, for fear of being made into fish hooks, but feather cloaks or royal ahuulas belonging to King Kahekii and other Maui rulers may be there still. Lehua trees abound here. The indigenous birds have almost disappeared, for the familiar notes of the ao, iiwi, o-u, amakiki, omoa, and other songsters of the dale are silenced forever.—Hilo Side Lights.

Such caves are further described in a short article published in the August 19, 1901, issue of The Hawaiian Star (Anonymous 1901) which reported:

ANCIENT BURIAL CAVE.

Young Men Goat Hunting Find One in Waialae.

While Lisbon Schweitzer and Arthur Giles were goat hunting in Waialae [a town near Honolulu] a week ago today they discovered an ancient burial cave about two hundred yards mauka [toward the mountains] of the Waialae road not far from Judge Perry's country place. The mouth of the cave had been walled up. Close to the entrance, a body or rather a part or a skeleton was found, and farther in was a skeleton in a much better state of preservation. Near the skeleton closest to the entrance was a very finely carved carved lei palaoa [a type of much prized necklace worn only by the ali'i, the chiefs and royalty of Hawaiian society], yellow with age.
What kinds of artifacts were placed in these caves with the remains of the dead? While this obviously varied through time and from person to person, an insight into the type of grave goods placed with the deceased is addressed in remarks appeared in the December 5, 1905, issue of the Hawaiian Gazette (Anonymous 1905a):

AN ANCIENT SLED FOUND IN A KONA BURIAL CAVE

Another historical and archeological discovery has been made in a cave near Hookena, Kona, [Island of] Hawaii. This time a sled, with the ropes still attached, a deep-water surf board, a calabash and some other trinkets were found.

The finder is N.K. Pupui, a young Hawaiian resident of Honolulu, who recently visited Kona. The cave was found in the face of a Pali which rose sheer up close to the sea. The entrance to the cave was very small and was barely discernible.

The sled, according to old-time natives, must be about three hundred years old. They think it dates back 200 years before Kamehameha I’s period. The ropes are made of cocoa-nut fibers, and are still in fine condition. The surf-board is very short, a style used by the olden-time natives for deep-water sport.

The Forbes discoveries from the Waipio gulch cave, have all been received at the Bishop Museum [in Honolulu], and are being given a critical examination by those in charge. These relics are believed by some to be the remains of Kamehameha I, but their identity is still being shrouded in mystery.

Other burial caves were more sparsely furnished as discussed in a short article published in the September 21, 1915, issue of the Hawaiian Gazette (Anonymous 1915a):

OLD CAVE IS ExploreD

A large burial cave, in the Pahoa district [of the Island of Hawaii], which was used years ago by natives, has been explored by a party of Hilo men. Headed by G. Ross, one of the island pioneers, the party traversed the cave for more than a half a mile. In some places the roof of the cave was so low they were compelled to crawl. Many skeletons were seen.

It should come as no surprise that the caves selected for burial purposes were situated in remote and difficult to access places and their location held in great secrecy. Two early accounts vividly describe these circumstances. In a series of comments relating to the grounding of the ship S. S. Manchuria on a coral reef off the coast of Hawaii, an unidentified reporter (Anonymous 1906) remarked within the pages of the August 24, 1906, issue of the Hawaiian Gazette:

JAMIE SPINS YARNS.

Artist [Jamie] Wilder is regaling all and sundry ashore with tales of the burial caves in the great bluff. There are several of these ancient burial-places, he says, and in some royal bones are laid. He recalls instances of feather cloaks and war spears having been found and taken away.

The bearers of the dead to their apparently inaccessible last resting-places were trained for the work which was in fact a profession. Secrecy of location of a burial place was preserved by breakers of the tabu [sic; kapu = taboo] being visited with instant death.

There is said to be only one of the old cave-buriers alive today. He resides on Molokai.

Years ago a tourist armed with an alpenstock, much experience and other climbing impediments arrived at Waimanalo landing with the intention of scaling the bluff. He soon gave up the attempt in disgust.

The only way, apparently, to gain access to the burial cave today is by means of ropes lowered from the summit.

In an article concerning the Island of Molokai published in the August 18, 1905, issue of the Hawaiian Gazette, Taylor (1905) observed:

BURIAL CAVEs.

There are some who live at Pukoo and elsewhere, remember in their youth to have entered burial caves cut in the face of a cliff, within which they saw skeletons, remains of feather cloaks, spears, war-clubs, feather helmets and all the trappings of power of ancient times, but today they cannot locate the caves, because the heavy development of lantana and tropical growths has concealed the entrances. There is a cave near the beach which, they say, can be entered only by diving into the sea and swimming through a tunnel. There is another passage also on the land side. Within this is said to be a double war-canoe and other valuable relics.
As was often the case throughout the nineteenth century with Native American mounds and burial grounds on the mainland, following the annexation of Hawaii by the United States such caves were often subjected to wholesale pillaging by learned professors intent upon collecting curios and artifacts for their “cabinet” of antiquities (e.g., Anonymous 1893; 1898) or outright looting by bored soldiers seeking an afternoon’s amusement (Anonymous 1899; 1903b). This rampant and widespread despoliation of these venerated places was (and remains) highly offensive to the native population of the islands and prompted the Hawaiian legislature in early 1909 to enact “Senate Bill 62, providing penalties for body snatchers, violators of graves or burial caves, putting the penalty at a maximum of two years at hard labor and a fine of $1000, passed without debate” (Anonymous 1909a; see also Anonymous 1909b).

For the sake of brevity, the present remarks have been held to a minimum but it is appropriate to observe that a surprisingly large number of other early newspaper articles reported on the general location and contents of these burial caves. These accounts include (but are by no means limited to) sources such as Anonymous (1868; 1885; 1902; 1905b; 1905c; 1915b), Austin (1899), Berry (1908), and Whitney (1893). It is reasonable to suggest that these sources collectively serve as useful supplements to the existing body of spelean, geological, historical, anthropological, and archaeological literature concerning the use and distribution of burial caves throughout the islands of Hawaii.

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For a number of years now, I have had a photo postcard in my collection of B.J. Palmer and his wife, Mabel, taken at Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. At the time I purchased the postcard, I did not make the connection of who Palmer was. To me, the Palmers were just tourists at Mammoth Cave who had a picture made. It was only after I did some research that I realized that B.J. Palmer was a significant figure in the field of chiropractic.

Bartlett Joshua (B.J.) Palmer (September 14, 1882—May 21, 1961) was a pioneer of chiropractic and was the son of Daniel David (D.D.) Palmer, the founder of chiropractic. Daniel D. Palmer opened the Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa, in 1897.

On May 30, 1904, B.J. Palmer married Mabel Heath, and they both worked as chiropractors and instructors at Palmer College. B.J. Palmer is given credit for developing the chiropractic profession into what it has become today.
B.J. Palmer was a noted lecturer, world traveler, and author of several books. The Palmers loved to travel. As an escape from the stressful life of running the chiropractic school, the Palmer's traveled around the world several times, giving lectures and collected antiquities for their home in Davenport.

In his travels, B.J. Palmer always sought out caves. It has been said that “B.J. can smell a hole in the ground like a tombstone man smells a newly made grave.”

“For forty years we have made an intensive study of caves. Holding degrees of caveologist and volcanologist, we should know one from the inside out, and the other from the outside in.” Palmer was very knowledgeable about the caves he visited.

Palmer studied the great caves of the world including Mammoth, Luray, Carlsbad and Jenolan. He occasionally gave talks at the College (Caves and Where They Lead Us) to his class assembly. Palmer “inspected, and studied the topography, character, level, construction, growths of every well-known cave of importance” including:

1. Mammoth Cave, Kentucky
2. White’s Cavern, Kentucky
3. Mammoth Onyx Cave, Kentucky
4. Horse Cave, Kentucky
5. Central Cave, Kentucky
6. Diamond Caverns, Kentucky
7. Hidden River Cave, Kentucky
8. Lost River Cave, Kentucky
9. Colossal Cavern, Kentucky
10. Big Bone Cave, Tennessee
11. Wonder Cave, Tennessee
12. Tennessee Cave, Tennessee
13. Lookout Mountain Caverns, Tennessee
14. Luray Cavern, Shenandoah Valley, Virginia
15. Massanuttin Cavern, Shenandoah Valley, Virginia
16. Endless Cavern, Shenandoah Valley, Virginia
17. Wyandotte Cave, Indiana
18. Madison’s Caverns, Grottoes, Virginia
19. Grand Caverns, Grottoes, Virginia
20. Virginia Caverns, Harrisonburg, Virginia
21. Shenandoah Caverns, Shenandoah, Virginia
22. Crystal Caverns, Strasburg, Virginia
23. Weyer’s Cave, Virginia
24. Wind Cave, Colorado
25. Crystal Cave, Black Hills, South Dakota
26. Ice Cave, Decorah, Iowa
27. Niagara Cave, near Harmony, Minnesota
28. Carlsbad Cave, New Mexico
29. Painted Caves in mountains behind Santa Barbara, California
30. Salt Mines, Hutchinson, Kansas
31. Lava Tubes of Kilauea, Hawaiian Islands
32. Blue Grotto, Island of Capri, coast of Italy
33. Waitoma Cave, North Island of New Zealand
34. Cheshire Cheese Caves, southern England
35. Salt Caves, Austria
36. Jenolan Caves, Australia
37. Lost River Caverns, Hellertown, Pennsylvania
38. Meramec Caverns, Stanton, Missouri
39. Mark Twain Cave, Hannibal, Missouri

In his 1949 book, *Bigness of the Fellow Within*, Palmer goes into great detail about many of these caves.

According to a Davenport newspaper, B.J. Palmer and his wife, Mabel, “made several trips” to Mammoth Cave during their travels, “On our trips south, via Kentucky, we make it a point to visit one or more caves—some of them more than once. Mammoth Cave is one that never tires.”

The Palmers first visited the cave in 1904 as a result of their honeymoon to Washington, DC, and the South. They also visited the cave in 1910 and 1950. In his book from 1951, *Conflicts Clarify*, Palmer talks about some of his trips to Mammoth Cave:

> About forty-five years ago, we made our first trip to this cave country. We came then by L&N train to Glasgow Junction, took stub line railroad engine (Hercules) and one open air coach to cave ten miles away. Today we came by car to Cave City, then over perfect highway. In former days, all wore bloomers or overalls, heavy boots; now ordinary clothes. Then each person carried his own torch. Today, in large part it is electrically lighted, although torches are also used to throw up to unlighted spots.

> In those days there were rough log cabins and such food as colored folks prepared. Today there is a modern hotel, cabins and cottages, electric lights, hot and cold water, baths, etc. Dining room is excellent, with fountain and light lunch service. In those days, heirs owned property. Today it is a U.S. National Park, government controlled. Concessions and their prices are regulated, prices for all things being reasonable.

> ‘Old Cave’ has long been known. In 1938, there was discovered another entrance to Crystal Lake, which cave connected with Original Mammoth Cave. Entrance from old to new is via Echo River, by boat. In event of heavy surface rains, Echo River rises and makes this impossible. On day we were there, it had risen 11-1/2 feet.

> This new cave in our opinion is one of the most beautiful parts of what is now entire Mammoth Cave. Upon arrival, we contacted Taylor Hoskins. As a result, he arranged for us to see ‘The New Discovery’ as yet unnamed. Leon Hunt, one of older and most experienced guides, and son of one of the guides present when we were there 45 years ago, took us on this tour.

> Because of this ‘new discovery’ being so beautiful, and so seldom entered even by guides and not to public at all, Mr. Lix, naturalist of the park, went with us—only we three. We drove over hills, thru woods, on an unbeaten road, climbed a hill, opened a few locked doors, then down a steep incline cut in rock to permit entrance. This decline was rugged, unfinished.
From there on in, one is on his own, up and down, in and around, over rocks and, while going was rough, we liked it.

Close by entrance, we saw hundreds of eyeless crickets mating. Leon said they came to entrance to mate—why, he didn’t know. After they mated, they go back into depths of cave—why, he didn’t know. It seemed we must have walked eighteen miles, but as far as we went—which wasn’t to end, by any means—gypsum formations were the most beautiful of any we have seen in any cave anywhere. We suggested name ‘Gypsum Grandafloa Cave.’ It fits and is appropriate. We hope it will be completed and opened to public, and gorgeous formations fully protected against human rats who like to chip, break, and handle things they should let alone.

On May 7, 1908, B.J. Palmer presented an illustrated lecture on Mammoth Cave in front of a large crowd at the Duncan’s Business College in Davenport. There was so much interest in this talk; “even the largest room at the Palmer School was unable to hold the crowd.”

According to the Davenport Democrat and Leader from May 6, 1908:

The lecture promises to be worthy of the good attendance which will be accorded to it and will be illustrated with 121 views of this wonderful place. You will travel on the famous Echo River; see underground waterfalls greater than Niagara Falls, etc.

We predict a very interesting and instructive time, one not easily forgotten. Dr. Palmer is a man of character, strong personality and sterling worth. He has individuality which will be
manifested in his lecture. He is an able lecturer as the numerous calls which he will gratify by an extended tour of 64 lectures.

According to the *Davenport Daily Times* from May 6, 1908:

His (Palmer) ideas and memories are vivid, his photographs and stereopticon slides perfect reproductions. He will deliver this lecture, with 121 illustrations; covering 25 miles of this marvelous cave….Lovers of nature will have a feast, as every flower in the greenhouse or florist’s catalogue will be represented as formed of solid stone; one Martha Washington Statue, which is perfect, and many other phases of rock study will be portrayed.

According to the publication, *The Chiropractor* from May 8, 1908, B.J. Palmer delivered a “splendid illustrated lecture on the wonderful Mammoth Cave” to about 200 people:

The lecturer was in his usual fine form and kept his audience fully absorbed and interested for 2 1/2 hours. The views were splendid, and three routes were taken covering 25 miles of this immense and awe-inspiring wonder of the world. It was an education in travel, and set many longing to see the wonderful cave in reality. Dr. Palmer ably described all the interesting details so vividly as to carry the audience with him and forget, for a time, their actual surroundings.

In 1910, the Palmers returned to Mammoth Cave. As the result of this visit, a photo was taken of them with the “cave” donkey by Mammoth Cave resident photographer, Harry M. Pinson. Written on the front of the photo postcard was, “Mrs. & B.J. Palmer at Mammoth Cave, Ky., Sept. 15, 1910, When Will We Three Meet Again.”

The Palmer’s Mammoth Cave photo inside the Palmer Residence in Davenport, Iowa.
The Palmers had a number of postcards made from the original negative that were given to family and friends. These postcards can occasionally be found on auction websites like eBay. The original photo from the negative can be found today on the mantel of the Palmers residence in Davenport, Iowa, which is open to the public for tours. The image itself is 9” x 13” and is on one sheet of paper. According to Alana Callendar, Senior Director of the Palmer Foundation for Chiropractic History, “This photograph has been on the mantel in B.J.’s office for as long as I can remember.”

The original 9” x 13” photo of the Palmers taken at Mammoth Cave is displayed on the mantel inside the Palmer’s residence in Davenport, Iowa.

Entering Mammoth Cave, c. 1920s.
Besides photos taken with the donkey, pictures were also taken of tourists in front of the entrance to Mammoth Cave before they venture in, but it is unsure if the Palmers had their picture taken during their visits to the cave.

The following text of Mammoth Cave and White Cavern was written in B.J. Palmer’s 1949 book, Bigness of the Fellow Within. It is uncertain whether Palmer wrote some of this as he refers to his cave guide as “Old Mat” (“Old Mat” is Mat Bransford, who died in 1886). It looks that Palmer may have gotten his information from an old Mammoth Cave handbook written in 1909 by noted Mammoth Cave author, Horace Hovey. Hovey wrote a number of books and articles on the cave from 1880 to 1912.

MAMMOTH CAVE, KENTUCKY

Have traveled more than 120 miles through its channels, sometimes crisscrossing back and forth through its various levels to do so. When this mileage is stated, some remark: ‘We didn’t think it was that long.’ It isn’t, but as one wanders back and forth, up and down, much mileage can be stacked up in a small space.

It has the Echo River, one of the few caves that has. It is so named because about its center there is a partition wall that lowers itself, and a call issued at that break echoes back and forth from one side to the other.

Eyeless fish, crickets and grasshoppers are found in this cave. They are referred to as ‘blind fish.’ No fish can be blind that never had eyes. These fish have lived in darkness so long they have lost development of eyes.

Same is true of crickets and grasshoppers.

On one of our many trips into the cave with Old Mat, the negro guide who has been there so many years (who is now dead) we discovered Olive’s Bower which we named after Miss Olive, the first name of the wife of the manager of the log cabins at that time. It was here we found ‘helictites’ which we describe later.

At no time, in this cave, are we ever more than several hundred feet from the surface. This is usual in most caves.

At one time, somebody suggested the air in this cave might be good for tuberculosis cases. Huts were built to live in. That theory soon petered out.

In several rooms, especially in Violet’s Cavern, gypsum hangs from ceilings in forms of white flowers that look like roses, chrysanthemums, etc. Mammoth Cave gets its name from the fact that it was the largest cave discovered as of that date.

WHITE’S CAVERN, KENTUCKY

It is larger than Mammoth, is less known, harder to get to or in. It is back in the hills and has been less exploited.

It was inhabited by people at some time, either by hundreds of thousands, or hundreds covering thousands of years. Who these people were, when they were, nobody knows.
Evidence which sustains this conclusion is found in end sticks of what appear to be bamboo-like torches. Evidently long sticks at one time, as they burned down one section after another, they cut off the joint and used the next hollow section. Possibly used bear oil to burn. When they got down to the last stub, they were thrown into one room. There are enough of these torch ends there now to fill one hundred box cars.

In another room is human faeces; eight acres of it, eight feet thick. It is apparent that our conclusion is sound, that to produce this it was either hundreds of thousands of people for a short time, or hundreds for thousands of years.

In one part of this dry cave, there is a large, flat, smooth rock which fell off the ceiling and dropped down at a 45-degree angle, that made it possible for people to slide on this smooth rock from one high level to a lower one. In so doing, one can see that they sat with their two hands on each side, with legs bent up. The stone is worn away with a center groove eighteen inches deep, with two smaller grooves on each side where they rested their hands to keep their balance.

This cavern is dry. No water is found. Old Mat (the same guide of Mammoth) and we were hunting here for further remains of human living. In one room we dropped our lanterns down between rocks and saw a wooden dish—what appeared to be one half of what is similar to our modern pickle dish. It was on the sand bed about twenty feet down. It was one of the accessible places where we could get in, but once in it proved inaccessible to get out. We were there to stay. Mat had to go outside, get extra help with crowbars, to get us out. It was then we realized how lonesome and how dark it could be when one is left alone in a cave. We were not scared because we knew Mat knew his way around.

In another room we found, for the first time, evidence of human people; a mummified, dried body of a mother with babe clasped to her breast. We had no difficulty bringing it to the surface. This body is now in the Louisville Museum. It is the only body discovered in this cavern so far as we know.

Mabel Palmer died from a stroke in 1949. In 1951, B.J. Palmer purchased a home in Sarasota, Florida, where he lived out his last years. He died in 1961 from intestinal cancer. Soon after, his son, David Daniel Palmer, assumed the role of President of Palmer School of Chiropractic. David Daniel Palmer’s was known as “the Educator” with his “straightforward leadership and brought greater legitimacy and recognition to the chiropractic profession.”

Acknowledgments

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Photo postcard: Mrs. & B.J. Palmer at Mammoth Cave, Bob Thompson Collection

Photo: Entering Mammoth Cave, Bob Thompson Collection

Photos: B.J. Palmer, c. 1920s. & Mabel Palmer, c. 1920s, courtesy of Palmer College of Chiropractic Archives, Davenport, Iowa.

Photo: The Palmer School of Chiropractic, courtesy of Palmer College of Chiropractic Archives, Davenport, Iowa.

Photos: The Palmer’s Mammoth Cave photo inside the Palmer Residence, photo by Julie Knaak, Museum Coordinator/Curator, Palmer College of Chiropractic

Photo: The Interior of the Palmer’s Residence in Davenport, Iowa, photo by Julie Knaak, Museum Coordinator/Curator, Palmer College of Chiropractic
ROBERT PAINE HUDSON: ADVENTURER, CAVER, POET, STEREOPTICIAN

Larry E. Matthews

In 1956 Roy Davis was editor of the Nashville Grotto’s *Speleonews*. In the June, July, and August issues, he reprinted a poem titled “Fairy Caverns” with the notation:

Robert Paine Hudson
Cardwell Mountain
December, 1880

*Fairy Caverns* is a long and delightful poem about an adventurer who journeys deep into a cave and falls in love with a Fairy Queen. The entire poem was reprinted as Appendix E of my book *Cumberland Caverns* (1989, 2005, 2010) so it is easily accessible and it will not be reprinted here. When *Cumberland Caverns* was being written, in the days before the Internet and Google, I had no clue who Robert Paine Hudson (1857-1923) was. However, while researching the names and dates on the walls of Cumberland Caverns, I located his name and the date 1880 written on the wall of the Grand Canyon Passage (Fig. 1). I also found his name and the date 1880 smoked on the ceiling of the Ten Acre Room. Clearly, he had been in Higgenbotham Cave, as Cumberland Caverns was known in its pre-commercial days, but other than that fact, I knew nothing about him. I recall asking Roy Davis, while I was researching the Cumberland Caverns book, where he had located the poem, but he could not remember. So, Hudson remained a mystery to me for many years.

Then one day in early February, 2010, the NSS Office forwarded me a letter that was written to me, but sent to the NSS Office, since the writer did not know my mailing address. The letter was from Mr. William J. Hurteau, Co-Director of the White County Heritage Museum and dated February 6, 2010. The letter read:

Nashville, Tenn.
May 1, 1910

*The Mystery of Bone Cave*

“How’r you feeling Pete, since the explosion?”

“Little sore yet, but I’ll make it, I think. How’r you feeling, Sam?”

“Bully. Can’t see much yet, tho.”
Pete Mason and Sam Tobin found themselves in bed in a mountaineer's shanty, victims of a wild and un governable curiosity that led them to investigate personally everything they heard of that had an air of mystery about it. They had visited every fortune teller and so called medium in their community, and were looking for ghosts and witches. At last they heard of a mystery surrounding Bone Cave and at once determined to visit this cave and investigate it for themselves.

Bone Cave, picturesque and romantic as it is, is not without its historic importance. This cave is in Bone Cave spur of the Cumberland Mountain, the spur reaching out a few miles west from the main mountain opposite Spencer, Tennessee. It was called Bone Cave. It contains vast beds of salt peter or niter dirt, and for the niter crystals it has been worked for more than a hundred years. During the rebellion, it was the principle source of salt peter for the powder mills that supplied the western wing of the Southern army, and here a force of men have kept at work during the war. After the Yankees invaded this section, terrible fights occurred about the mouth of this cave for its possession. At last it was supposed to have been abandoned by the Rebels so the Yankees withdrew. Yet it was whispered around that a band of Rebels still occupied it, and who never believed or recognized the fact that the war was over. At any rate, they had sworn they would never surrender.

This information somehow had reached the ears of Pete and Sam who at once resolved to visit the cave and know its hidden mysteries and investigate for themselves. They proceeded on foot from the nearest railroad station and sought the home of a mountaineer which was but half a mile from the cave's mouth. Here they learned that to enter the cave was not a safe proposition. While a gang of Rebels had occupied the cave for some years after the war, they had all disappeared except possibly one, and he seemed to be crazy. This one had been seen wandering about by moon light, but always retreated toward the cave on the approach of anyone. He was described as being a very old man with very long white hair and beard, usually barefooted, and whose clothes were so ragged they hardly covered him. It seemed he did not believe the war was over, and would not venture far from the cave from fear of capture. It was said he raided fields at night for his support, but as he had never harmed anyone, nobody had molested him.

Pete and Sam heard the mountaineer's story, and resolved to go at once to the cave and explore it. To this the mountaineer objected, asking the boys to stay overnight with him, and all would go to the cave in the morning. To this the boys agreed.

Next morning breakfast was ready at 6. The boys were at the table, anxious for the day's adventure. Soon they arrived at the mouth of the cave where they lit their lanterns which they had brought with them and all three entered, one behind the other. The mountaineer, in advance, acted as guide. The cave is complicated, prongs and rooms leading in every direction. There are two main entries, and these lead in different directions far back into the mountain. They took the right, intending first to visit the Muster Room. For half an hour they toiled along sometimes crawling through small holes, then climbing over great boulders, then descending to great depths but always rising as high farther on gain, until finally they reached the famous Muster Room. Here they saw many evidences of human life, but not a human being. The famous Muster Room is about 40 feet wide and 1,000 feet long. Here were boards, troughs, and water pipes, and immense hoppers filled with niter dirt. Some of these hoppers had fallen, some standing in good condition, while all had the appearance of having been suddenly abandoned. The remains of an old camp with bunks and cooking outfit were found.

After exploring the Muster Ground, thought there was much to interest them, the boys were still not satisfied and insisted on seeing the other wing of the cave which was, after all, the main cave. So they turned back to its entrance and followed it as far as they had the right prong. This they found even more interesting, but far more difficult to explore. As in places the bottom had been dug into deep pits for the niter dirt, while in other places huge rocks had fallen from overhead. Soon they came to an old tramway which led them on to more hoppers filled with niter dirt. This tramway was built to carry dirt to the hoppers, and was still in good condition, though built perhaps a hundred years ago. By walking the rails, they had smoother traveling, and made greater progress. Soon they found themselves in the widest of many rooms, and passages leading out in all directions.

"Boys, I smell smoke," said Pete. "I see it," Sam said. Then the mountaineer spoke, "Look sharp, we may be nearing the old man's den." Rounding a curve, they saw a dim light flickering on the walls. A little nearer, and they saw back in a side room an old man in rags with long, white hair and beard bending over a dim fire of boards on which rested a simmering pot. He was evidently engaged in cooking, and so was he caught so easily.

Sam spoke: "Hello, old man." The old man straightened up with a wild and frightened look, lifted his arms into the air, and said: "God! Damned Yankees come! I'll give 'em hell." Saying this, he seized a brand of fire, lit the fuse of a cannon ball which lay near, and
pitched it at the boys. The floor of the cave being here slightly inclined, the ball, with its sputtering fuse, rolled into their midst. They were quick to see the danger so jumped for their lives. A few feet back a big rock that had fallen from above. Behind this the boys quickly retreated and fell flat on their faces. They were none too soon, for immediately there was a deafening report, and the hot fragments of the shell fell all about them. The boys were in the act of rising when followed immediately a terrific explosion that shook the whole mountain, followed by a rush of air through the cave, that picked up the boys like so many paper bags and slammed them against the opposite walls with such fearful force that all three dropped on the floor unconscious, while tons of rocks fell about them.

How long they lay there they did not know. Perhaps hours. At last the mountaineer pulled himself together sufficiently to rise. The cave was in utter darkness and the air was stifling with a strong sulphurous smell. The lanterns had been scattered about the cave, and their globes shattered. Striking a match, he looked about at the wreck and ruin. The old man, thought he had in reality given them hell. There lay Sam and Pete near him, unconscious, but breathing. A broken lantern lay near him which yet contained some oil. This he lit, and proceeded at once to revive the boys. On one side of the cave he heard the trickle of water. Wetting a handkerchief in the cold water he proceeded to revive the boys by bathing their faces. At last they revived and sat up. One of Sam’s eyes was swelled shut, and his face badly skinned, while Pete suffered from many bruises. “Boys, let’s get out of here,” said the mountaineer.

“If we can,” said Sam. “We’re a mile and a half underground.” “Let’s see what’s become of the old man,” added Pete. “Let the old man take care of himself,” said the mountaineer. “Let’s get out of here as quick as possible.”

Painfully they gathered themselves up and, after lighting the globeless lanterns, slowly proceeded toward the mouth of the cave. This they found at a most difficult undertaking. Everywhere were evidences of the explosion. Hoppers of dirt and tons of rocks had fallen, and everywhere obstructed the way. After two hours of hard work and worry, during which time they added many fresh bruises and cuts, the three reached the surface just as the sun was setting. Here they discovered that the fence which surrounded the mouth of the cave had been scattered in every direction by the rush of air following the explosion.

The boys rounded their way up the hill to the home of the mountaineer and were soon in bed, with their bruises bandaged and bathed in turpentine, the only medicine in the home. There the boys remained several days before they were able to return to their homes.

A couple of days after the explosion the mountaineer led a number of the citizens back into the cave to see what had become of the old man. There on the floor of the cave, stripped of almost every rag of clothes, lay the old man, dead. He had bravely fought his last battle. An explosion of gas had followed the bursting of the shell and this had wrought the destruction. A suit of clothes and coffin were provided. They took his body to the Muster Ground and there buried it beneath the niter dirt that made the gunpowder with which he fought the Yankees.

Quebeck, Tenn., Oct. 11, 1911

Except for the reference to “an old camp with bunks and cooking outfit” in the Muster Ground, this is a remarkably accurate description of Big Bone Cave that leaves no doubt that Robert Paine Hudson had visited this cave in person and was quite familiar with its main passages. Also, Quebeck is a small town located in White County, Tennessee, not far from Big Bone Cave.

So, here we have two cave stories, one about Cumberland Caverns (Higgenbotham Cave) in 1880 and the other about Big Bone Cave in 1910. But who was Robert Paine Hudson?

I mentioned this amazing find to Thomas C. Barr, Jr., and he went online to do some research about Hudson. Soon, he emailed me with exciting information:

February 19, 2010

Larry,

Possibly his early, self-published books, one of which surely included “Fairy Caverns,” might be in the State Library. But in 1907 Hudson published “Southern Lyrics,” which must include all his works. It is a volume of over 800 pages, and of course, out of print. He was apparently living in Nashville then, as that’s where he signed the introduction in 1907.

HOWEVER, it’s one of those numerous books that Google has digitally scanned, and if you use Barnes and Noble’s eReader (a free app you can download to your computer), you can download “Southern Lyrics” for free and read it in eReader. All 854 pages plus the
foxed front and back covers! The copy they digitized is from the New York Public Library.

This book includes Fairy Caverns (and it’s probably where Roy got it) plus lots of other items like “Ode to the Caney Fork, The Hills of White,” etc.

And on page 633 is the beginning of a 3-4 page poem, Here Would I Love, subtitled To Arsey. One section is labeled “Higgenbotham Cave.” And the end of the poem is signed off, “Cardwell Mountain, Tennessee, Aug. 20, 1880.” [This poem is not obviously about the Cave].

Sherlock Barr, literary detective

Further research by William J. Hurteau revealed that Robert Paine Hudson was born on November 11, 1857, on the banks of the Caney Fork River in White County, Tennessee. Hence the poems Ode to the Caney Fork and The Hills of White. He was writing poems about his home. Hurteau goes on to add that Hudson lived in Manchester, Tennessee, during the Civil War, but afterwards returned to White County where he resided and engaged in school-teaching until 1884. In 1881 he published a volume of poems under the title of Roving Footsteps. Later there was a little volume titled Songs of the Cumberland, which was written while he was living in Summitville in Coffee County, Tennessee. Then, his book Southern Lyrics places him in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1907.

The Nashville Public Library has a service called “Ask Your Librarian,” so I emailed them to see if they could determine an address for Robert Paine Hudson in Nashville in 1907 and, hopefully, what year he died and an obituary. Mr. Jim Havron in the Nashville Room worked on this project for me and determined that Hudson’s address in Nashville was 612 Woodland Street. Furthermore, Who’s Who says that: “He studied medicine, particularly diseases of the eye.”

His publication of My Travels in Two Mexicos is listed as being in Sports Afield magazine, Chicago, 1906. He apparently traveled much and was on the lecture circuit, using “stereopticon illustrations.” They also list him as being married in 1890 in Chicago, although not to whom. The Methodist Quarterly Review’s review of his 1880 book, Roving Footsteps, suggests the poems were about his past “sweethearts.” Clearly, my next goal was to drive to 612 Woodland Street and find out if his house still existed. This was an affluent, upper-class neighborhood in Nashville in the early 1900’s and many of these beautiful homes still survive and have been restored. Alas, his house is gone! The block where his house would have stood is now a city park. Just a block away, many beautiful, restored homes still survive.

The Tennessee State Library and Archives informed me that Hudson’s Death Certificate appeared in the June 3, 1923, Nashville Banner. Hudson died on June 1, 1923, and was buried at Mt. Pisgah Cemetery in White County, Tennessee.

On February 15, 2013, I visited the White County Heritage Museum to take a first-hand look at Hudson’s manuscript. Written inside the cover was the following:

R. P. Hudson

June 10, 1908

1305 Forrest Ave.

Nashville, Tenn.

This was a different address from the address in his obituary in 1923. On February 24, I went to the Forrest Avenue address hoping that this house would still be standing. I was delighted to see that it was. It is a modest house on a small lot that clearly is of the correct age (Fig. 2).

Also, while I was visiting the White County Heritage Museum, Mrs. Hurteau provided me with a clipping that showed a formal photo of Hudson (Fig. 3) and the short biography, reprinted below:
ROBERT PAINE HUDSON

Was born on the banks of the Caney Fork River, White Co., Tenn., Nov. 11, 1857. Eighteen months later his father dies, leaving his mother to care for four small children. He spent the years of the war at Manchester, Tenn., with his grandfather James Koger, but afterwards returned to White Co., where he attended such schools as the country afforded until he was eighteen. He now began to teach, which business he followed for eight years. During this time he contributed articles to various periodicals of the State and in 1881 published a volume of poems under the title “Roving Footsteps.” The winter of 1881-2 he spent in South Florida. In 1884 he quit teaching and began traveling with stereopticon views, during which he has traveled through all the Southern States. His “Songs of the Cumberlands” were composed principally within the last five years. He never knew any help but from his own hands. His present home is Summertown, Coffee Co., Tenn.

The White County Heritage Museum also had a flyer for a “Grand Stereopticon Exhibition and Balloon Ascension!” (Fig. 4). It sounds like quite a show, according to the flyer: “Giant Sun Pictures Together with Numerous Chromatropes, Statues, Comicalities and Colored Photographs from Every Subject of Popular Interest. Presented by Robert P. Hudson, the Favorite Stereoptician. Children’s Delight, Young Folks’ Pleasure, Old People’s Instructor. In short, a round of enjoyment and Sight-Seeing never before embodied in a Single Night.” They also have a “Programme” that describes R. P. Hudson’s traveling Metropolitan Museum. This may very well be the same show, described in a different manner.

On June 21, 2013, my wife Betty and I again visited the White County Heritage Museum to look at the Robert Paine Hudson material and to visit the Mt. Pisgah Cemetery. It is interesting to note that the Mt. Pisgah Cemetery, where Hudson is buried, is slightly less than 6 miles north-northwest of Big Bone Cave. This is apparently the main family cemetery, because there were many Hudson graves grouped together. We found Robert Paine Hudson’s tombstone, which is made of marble (Fig. 5). Next to Robert Paine Hudson’s tombstone was that of his wife, Antoinette E. Hudson, who was born on April 3, 1866 and died February 6, 1939 (Fig. 6). Her tombstone is made of granite. According to the Mt. Pisgah Cemetery records, Antoinette was born in Mexico on April 3, 1866, and she died on February 6, 1939.

Hudson’s book *Southern Lyrics* was published in 1907. It is a collection of poems 854 pages long. Although some of the poems are about nature and caves, the vast majority were written to women. These women lived in many different towns and even some foreign countries. It seems likely that Hudson was the Don Juan of the caving community during his lifetime. This book has been scanned in by the New York Public Library and is available online. It has also been reprinted in is for sale at online book outlets.

It was a pleasure to learn more about Robert Paine Hudson. He was clearly a talented, multi-faceted person who left his mark on the world and on the walls of Cumberland Caverns.
Figure 3. Robert Paine Hudson about 1884. Courtesy of the White County Heritage Museum.

Figure 4. Flyer for “Grand Stereopticon Exhibition and Balloon Ascension!” Courtesy of the White County Heritage Museum.
Figure 5. Robert Paine Hudson tombstone, Mt. Pisgah Cemetery, White County, Tennessee. Photo by Larry E. Matthews.

Figure 6. Antoinette E. Hudson tombstone, Mt. Pisgah Cemetery, White County, Tennessee. Photo by Larry E. Matthews.
BOOK REVIEW


In his first book on Binkley Cave (Fifty Years Under the Sinkhole Plain, 2009) Gary Roberson recounts the story of a handful of young caving enthusiasts who banded together in 1967 to form the Indiana Speleological Survey (ISS) and take up the mantle of serious exploration and mapping in the Binkley Cave system. This project had been started a decade earlier by members of the newly formed Bloomington Indiana Grotto. As one of the founding members of the ISS and an ardent caver who remains closely associated with the exploration of Binkley Cave, Roberson was in a unique position to narrate this story from a firsthand perspective. The story now continues with development of the Indiana Caverns show cave.

In 2009, approximately 22 miles of passage had been mapped in the Binkley Cave system, making it the longest-known cave in the state of Indiana. By 2009, however, momentum for continued exploration and discovery had waned. In an unexpected turn of events, the publication of Fifty Years Under the Sinkhole Plain revitalized ISS interest in the cave and members of a rejuvenated ISS redoubled their efforts to explore the system. At the present time, the Binkley Cave system has approximately 38 miles of mapped and surveyed passage. It is now the ninth longest cave in the country, with many newly discovered leads yet to be explored. The cave is still going.

As a former show-cave manager himself, Roberson is certainly no stranger to commercial caves. Throughout the years of exploration, commercializing a portion of the Binkley system was never out of his thoughts. Interest peaked in 2012, when he first saw the Big Bone Mountain section of the cave, an area that had been discovered the previous year. Almost immediately, Roberson recognized that he had found the portion of the system that he wanted to convert into a show cave. This was followed by a whirlwind of planning and a year of frenetic activity, as he endeavored to turn a lifelong dream into reality.

The Longest Year is the detailed story of how Indiana Caverns went from a flickering thought in the back of one man’s mind to America’s newest show cave. It is a tale of
obsession, frustration, anger, financial insecurity, physical adversity, hopelessness, and emotional despair, as seemingly insurmountable obstacles rose to challenge those with the audacity to believe that such a task—whose trials and tribulations far outweighed its joyful celebrations—could be accomplished by a handful of workers operating on a shoestring budget in a limited window of time. Indeed, unless one has actually participated in such a project, it is difficult to even comprehend the monumental difficulties and levels of stress involved. However, *The Longest Year* is also a story of faith. As work in the cave progressed, the pressing weight of enormous challenges threatened to snuff out the project at every turn. Roberson, a man of deep spiritual conviction, found that his reliance on faith was often the only source of strength that enabled him to endure the ever-present burdens associated with this daunting task.

Few books address the many difficulties involved in creating a show cave. Roberson’s primary focus, in this respect, is on the physical challenges involved in constructing the actual walkways and staircases, fabricating boats and getting them into the water, and maintaining a work schedule against seemingly hopeless odds. The book affords readers a good overview of project details. A number of black-and-white photographs highlight some of the difficulties involved, and a selection of color plates promotes the cave’s rugged beauty. Although readers are made aware of the enormity of complex issues inherent to such an undertaking, it was often difficult for this reviewer to visualize what some of those problems actually were. In this regard, the availability of a map of the Big Bone Mountain section of the cave would have been helpful in illustrating the construction problems at hand.

Roberson writes in an easy, conversational style and provides an interesting and intriguing account of this long year of hazard and hardship. However, it should be pointed out that the final text is far from polished in nature. Indeed, in mentioning his enthusiasm to relate the original story of exploration in Binkley Cave, he writes, “Damn the grammar. Full speed ahead!” In fact, this is a prophetic statement that also applies to his story of Indiana Caverns, which contains numerous errors in grammar (punctuation, sentence structure, and composition). Duplicated or missing words and phrases are common. As such, the text reads more like a draft that had never been carefully proofread than a finished product, highlighting the fact that this endeavor would have clearly benefited from a stronger editorial hand. Depending on one’s perspective, however, this may or may not be of significance. Like *Fifty Years Under the Sinkhole Plain*, the publication of *The Longest Year* is meant to document the efforts of those involved and not to be a refined literary masterpiece. In this regard, the author tells a story that most cavers will find interesting and enjoyable.

It seems certain that *The Longest Year* will alter a reader’s perception of commercial caves. After reading this book, cavers will probably never again look upon show caves in quite the same fashion. For my part, I know that the next time I find myself in such a locale, my own attention will be drawn as much to the construction aspects of walkways, staircases, and bridges as to the cave passages and speleothems themselves.

1*Kartchner Caverns: How Two Cavers Discovered and Saved One of the Wonders of the Natural World* (2008, The University of Arizona Press) by Neil Miller is an excellent text documenting the unique story of the discovery and commercialization of Kartchner Caverns, generally considered to be the crown jewel of the Arizona State Parks system. However, most of the discussion in this text is related to problems of a largely bureaucratic nature.
Conducting Visitors through the Cave

Massachusetts—The Cave in Excelsior Rock, Silk Creek, in which a large quantity of gold and jewels is supposed to have been concealed by pirates. Drawn by Imbeau.

Entrance to the Cave

At Work

40