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# THE JOURNAL OF SPELEAN HISTORY

## THE ASSOCIATION

The American Spelean History Association is chartered as a non-profit corporation for the study, dissemination and interpretation of spelean history and related purposes. All persons of high ethical and moral character who are interested in these goals are cordially invited to become members. Annual membership is \$5.00; family membership \$6.00. Library subscriptions are \$4.00.

## THE COVER

The cover photograph is of Rev. G.F. Browne. It was discovered by Russ Gurnee in a copy of ICE-CAVES OF FRANCE AND SWITZERLAND written by Rev. Browne in 1865 and published in London. This photograph had been cut from what appears to be a religious magazine and tipped in the front of the book. I have no information concerning him.

## THE JOURNAL

The Association publishes The Journal of Spelean History on a quarterly basis. Pertinent articles or reprints are welcomed. As a photo-offset process is used, the editor should be contacted in advance concerning the current type of manuscript preparation desired. Submission of rough drafts for preliminary editing is encouraged. Illustrations require special handling and arrangements must be made with the editor in advance.

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## Editor's Column

A word of explanation is, I believe, in order as to why this issue is so late in being published. Actually there are two reasons. One, until September I had only one article to consider for publication. The other two arrived later. Second, our Secretary/Treasurer, Pete Hauer had disappeared in June. The circumstances of his disappearance were quite strange and led many of us to suspect foul play. His death became a certainty with the discovery of his body in November. At that time action was taken to begin the transfer of the American Spelean History Association funds and appoint a new Secretary/Treasurer. Jack Speece has accepted the temporary appointment and we are fortunate and pleased to have him with us.

Pete's death leaves a vacancy on the Board of Directors and any member who wishes to serve on this board should write immediately to John Bridge, 206 W. 18th Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43210. An election of board members will be held in 1976, and the board wishes to introduce new interest and ideas to the organization. Qualification for board membership requires membership in ASHA and a strong interest in developing active participation in Association activities.

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## CALIFORNIA SPELEOLOGY, 1901-1908: The state's first cave survey

JENS MUNTHE

Hugh Blanchard has recently summarized the impressive contributions which Erwin Bischoff made to California speleology during the period from 1938 to 1944. Bischoff's fine effort in listing and describing California's caves was not, however, the first cave survey undertaken in the state. For that we must go back to the first decade of the century.

It is not surprising that the first survey was scientific in emphasis. As in the history of mountaineering, what later came to be regarded as a perfectly acceptable leisure-time activity, or even a sport, was at first publicly justifiable only if scientific questions could be answered. This is fortunate for anyone interested in the historical aspects of cave exploration, for, at a time when there were no publications devoted to caves themselves, a great deal of information about them appeared in the scientific literature. It is actually somewhat surprising that the caves of northern California did not appear in scientific publications any earlier than they did. The first state geological survey, with Josiah D. Whitney at its head from 1860 until 1874, was quite active in northern California for many years, but apparently the legislature's desire to have the economically important mineral resources of the state described did not allow time for such peripheral studies as caves. The caves of Shasta County were first mentioned by H.W. Fairbanks in 1893. He noted that "Large caves are said to exist in this limestone range (east of the McCloud River), but time did not permit of their exploration". (Fairbanks, 1893, p. 37) It was not until 1901 that California caves began to be studied systematically.

The records of the first California cave survey, which was conducted by the Anthropology Department of the University of California (at this time the only University campus was at Berkeley) from 1901 to 1908, are found in the scientific journals of the time. Although some of the publications resulting from the survey seem to indicate that the adventurous aspects of the work were thoroughly enjoyed, none of the participants ever became an avid sport caver. Dr. John Campbell Merriam, who was clearly the driving force behind the survey, stated its intent in his article, "Recent Cave Exploration in California":

"During the last three years a series of investigations has been carried on by the Department of Anthropology of the University of California, with a view to determining, if possible, the time when man first appeared in this region. As cavern deposits have furnished some of the most important materials in the study of early man in other regions, it was considered desirable, as one of the phases of this work, to make a careful paleontological and archeological investigation of the numerous limestone caves of the state. In this study the effort has been made to obtain as complete a knowledge as possible of the mammalian faunas which have existed in this region between early Quaternary time and the present. Man is considered as a possible element of the fauna, and so far as his geographic or his geologic occurrence is concerned he must be subjected to investigations of much the same character as are used in the study of other organisms. Until the facts of this class are determined, it is difficult to make a beginning on matters which are perhaps more definitely anthropological.

"Up to the present time only a few caves situated in Calaveras county and in Shasta county have been examined. Many other occurrences are known, but limitations of time have made it impossible to visit these localities. One would hardly be justified in stating that as yet more than a beginning has been made on the possible cave investi-

gations of California. It is to be hoped that in time these studies, in connection with the other phases of this work, may give us some definite information regarding the date of man's appearance in the Pacific Coast region." (Merriam, 1906, pp. 221-222)

Because Merriam was himself a paleontologist, rather than an anthropologist, the two caves with which the survey primarily concerned itself were those containing extensive and important Pleistocene vertebrate faunas. These were Potter Creek Cave and Samwel Cave, but the survey did not begin with them. During the summer of 1901, Merriam and Anthropology Department chairman F. W. Putnam began by investigating several caves near Murphys in Calaveras County. The most significant of these was Mercer's Cave, now the commercial Mercer Caverns. This cave, apparently discovered by Walter J. Mercer in 1885, was already well known. Here the Berkeley scientists found human remains and also those of the extinct ground sloth *Megalonyx*. The sloth remains did not really help them establish the antiquity of the human skeletons, since they were found in a different part of the cave and were preserved differently. Nevertheless, the deposits were important enough to cause Dr. William J. Sinclair of the Geology Department to return in 1902. By this time, however, the survey was directing its attention farther north.

The important bone caves of Shasta County, like Mercer's Cave, were not discovered by the Berkeley group. Samwel Cave, with its prominent entrance overlooking the McCloud River (now the McCloud Arm of Shasta Lake), was well known to the Indians living in the area. Potter Creek Cave may have been known to the Indians as well, but J.A. Richardson seems to have been its white discoverer in 1878. He managed to descend the 40 foot pit into the main chamber of the cave and there found the skull of a bear. He sent this specimen to the famous paleontologist Edward Drinker Cope, who in 1879 described it as a new member of the extinct short-faced bears. Cope said nothing about the cave in his article on the skull and it was not until July, 1902 that Eustace L. Furlong rediscovered the cave and found a large accumulation of vertebrate fossils in the main chamber. Furlong was Merriam's assistant for many years thereafter, but on this occasion was a member of a joint Stanford-University of California field trip investigating the limestones of the area. When the field trip ended, Furlong remained in the area and was joined by Sinclair, who wished to gain any data from Potter Creek that might be useful to the Berkeley cave survey. Thanks to financial support provided by Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst, they were able to continue excavations at the cave until the end of the summer.

In early 1903 it was clear that the Potter Creek Cave fossil vertebrate fauna was a significant scientific discovery, so Merriam decided to mount an expedition to Shasta County that summer in order to continue the excavations and search for more fossils in the limestones of the region. Since Merriam had begun his studies of the Triassic marine reptiles of Shasta County several years earlier, he was now able to combine the cave survey with his other research. The 1903 summer field party consisted of Merriam, Sinclair, Furlong, and four others from Berkeley, including Miss Annie M. Alexander, who not only financed this expedition but was later to endow two museums at the University. Several local people also assisted at various times. Merriam spent a great deal of his time above ground, so Sinclair supervised the work in the cave. Furlong was his most useful assistant. The Potter Creek excavations were completed by the end of this season and the scientific results were published by Sinclair in 1904. This paper was the first thorough scientific publication on a western cave. Merriam summed up the Potter Creek work as follows:

"Throughout the whole of the summer of 1903 the work was in charge of Dr. Sinclair, whose excellent report on this work has already been published. The floor of the cave was carefully surveyed and all specimens taken out were labeled with reference to their position in the strata. The deposits were excavated to a depth of 25 feet, below which there seemed to be little but an accumulation of stalagmite-covered boulders. The

exploration work furnished several thousand bones and fragments, of which between 4,000 and 5,000 were determinable specimens. The remains include those of many extinct animals, and furnish the most satisfactory representation of the Quaternary fauna of California that has yet been obtained in any one locality. Fifty-two species were listed by Dr. Sinclair, of which at least twenty-one were found to be extinct.

"Associated with the remains of the Quaternary fauna in Potter Creek cave there were many broken, splintered, and polished bones, which were carefully investigated by Dr. Sinclair, having been considered as possibly representing the work of man." (Merriam, 1906, pp. 223-224)

When not working with Sinclair at the bottom of Potter Creek Cave, Furlong joined Merriam to investigate other caves in the area. One of these was Stone Man Cave, later known to most Californians as Baird Cave and now commercialized under the name Lake Shasta Caverns. It was probably shown to Merriam by J.A. Richardson, who may have discovered it and certainly explored it and found fossils in it. After Potter Creek, Merriam and Furlong were not particularly impressed by the few bones they found in Stone Man Cave, although they did find a partial human skeleton. They were disappointed that, "In this cave there is unfortunately nothing to fix the age of the skeleton definitely." (Merriam, 1906, p. 227). Once again, they were forced to look elsewhere in the hope of establishing man's antiquity in California.

Another cave visited by Merriam and Furlong during the summer of 1903 was Samwel. Situated immediately above the McCloud River and with a large entrance, Samwel was an easy cave to investigate. It seems likely, therefore, that they would have checked Samwel in any case, but the reason always given by Furlong and Merriam for going to the cave initially was an Indian legend concerning the cave which led them to believe that it might be large and deep. This indicated to them that there might be fossil deposits in the cave. The legend was made rather famous by Merriam in his later popular publications on Samwel, such as his 1927 account in Scribner's Magazine which was later reprinted as a chapter of his book *The Living Past*, but Furlong's less romantic version was the first to be published:

"The initial exploration of Samwel Cave in Shasta Co., California, for scientific purposes was carried on in the summer of 1903. An interesting legend, the scene of which was laid in Samwel cave and told by a Wintun Indian, led to its exploration. This story has a double value in making known an important cave, and in the verification of the legend, which now becomes an interesting piece of Wintun history. The Wintuns believe that caverns are of supernatural origin and have used them as places of magic. A courageous Indian, who had any important undertaking in view, such as a long hunting trip, or a war expedition, would hide himself in the cave for a certain period, fasting and meditating on the object desired. It was the belief that through this vigil they would obtain good luck and success.

"Following is the version of the legend generally current among the Wintuns:-

"Many years ago a woman of strong medicine told three Wintun maidens that this cave contained two pools of Sawame or magic water; and that if they bathed in these it would insure good luck and make their wishes come true. Acting on the old woman's advice, they entered the cave, lighting their way with pine torches. They found one pool of water in which they bathed, and then went in search of the second pool which contained the stronger Sawame. Following the instructions of the medicine woman, they climbed to the narrow entrance of a large chamber. Seeing no water here, they went hand in hand through this chamber and into the winding passages leading from it. In one of these they came to a large pit. One girl more curious and

venturesome than the others went near the edge and looked down. Craning far over, her foot slipped and she fell over the edge. She would have fallen at once to the bottom but for the supporting hands of the other maidens. The overhanging wall at the edge of the pit was slippery and her efforts to regain the top were vain. The two girls above could with difficulty retain their footing and in their bewildered state did not have sufficient strength to lift her. At last, exhausted and slipping slowly toward the edge, they let go their hold and the unfortunate girl fell into the pit. They heard her strike, and then again far below a faint thud. They fled in fright from the cave and spread the news among their relatives and friends.

"Some of the Indian braves went to the cave taking with them lengths of grass rope, which they knotted together and lowered into the pit. They seemed unable to touch the bottom with their rope and could do nothing. Hearing no sound below, after a time they left the place. They said the spirits had gotten the girl.

"From this time on the cave was held in profound awe and was seldom if ever visited by the Indians. The white people who settled in the country soon after the event thought the tale was but an Indian myth and gave it little credence." (Furlong, 1906, pp. 235-236)

It is interesting to note that this was "the legend generally current among the Wintuns", because it does not seem to be current today. A few Wintuns, who must have been very young children in 1903, still live in Shasta County and at least one of them takes vigorous exception to this legend. She claims to have hidden in Samwel herself many years ago when warlike tribes from the north made raiding trips to the Wintun area. She feels that anyone falling into Samwel's pit did so during an attempt to escape from very tangible enemies, rather than during a search for magic water. In any case, Furlong was soon to verify California's first cave fatality, which probably occurred during the first half of the 19th century.

When Merriam and Furlong entered the cave, they found that the upper level was quite easily accessible and they soon located a significant fossil accumulation in a narrow fissure on this level. Merriam soon returned to the main camp at Potter Creek, leaving Furlong to begin the excavations at Samwel. The next day Merriam received a message from Furlong stating that he had found a deep pit and requesting Merriam to return to Samwel with all the rope he had. Merriam immediately did so and the two men spent the following evening making rough rope-ladders for the descent. They drew straws to decide who should descend first and Furlong won. Merriam's account graphically portrays what happened next:

"As he descended, Furlong described the cavern opening to the light of his candle.- 'It widens as I go down from a diameter of ten feet at the top to a great chamber below. And here as the ladder begins to hang free of the wall is a sharp projecting spine of rock that thrusts itself between the ropes and makes climbing difficult.' Then after a longer wait, during which he moved carefully over the rickety lower fifty feet of odds and ends of rope and scraps of wood, the hobnails of his heavy shoes could be heard grating on the stone floor. It was a critical moment, waiting to learn whether the maiden whose tragic story had led us to this adventure was a reality or only the product of fertile imagination. Suddenly, with a voice raised by excitement, Furlong called up: 'There's a mountain lion at the foot of the ladder.' The swift train of thought in the ensuing moment I often recall, and the various possibilities that presented themselves. To go a little less than one hundred feet down an imperfectly constructed rope-ladder to help a man without weapons fighting a puma offered little hope of real assistance. If the lion should win, would

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it attempt to climb the ladder? Before any plan could be framed that seemed to have value under the special circumstances, Furlong shouted: 'It is a fossil mountain lion embedded in the cave floor.' Then, almost without pause, and with intonation indicating that he could hardly believe his eyes, came the words: 'And here on the floor below the opening is the skeleton of the Indian maiden.'

"As quickly as difficulties of descent would permit I climbed over the edge, and down past the sharp spine of rock that thrust itself against the ladder. The well widened to a great chamber in which our unsteady ropes hung clear. Swinging free at the bottom I almost stepped on the skull of the mountain lion. A few feet beyond, Furlong was bending over a delicate human skeleton that lay huddled in a dark heap. The body had not moved from the spot where the girl crashed against the solid stone immediately under the opening. Only the bones and a film of black mould remained. Here and there a beginning crystal of stalagmite gleamed in the dark covering, but the lapse of time had not been great enough to allow the lime deposited from dripping water to form a complete shroud.

"This was the end of the trail we had followed so long. Was it also the end of the trail the maiden sought to follow? Could it be that in the tragedy which terminated her search she had found the pool of greater magic?" (Merriam, 1927, pp. 265-267)

The fossil deposit at the bottom of Furlong's Pit, as it is now known, was the greatest find of the 1903 expedition. Not only was it worked for the remainder of that summer, but excavations were continued at Samwel in 1904 and 1905. Furlong was in charge of these excavations and published the results of the work himself. The lack of interest shown by the Berkeley scientists, although they supported Furlong's work as part of the cave survey, seems to indicate that they were beginning to lose hope of establishing the antiquity of man in California through cave studies. The "Indian maiden" was the only human specimen found in Samwel, so the large vertebrate fauna failed to provide an answer to the survey scientist's burning question. From this time on, the survey slowed down and functioned only sporadically throughout its remaining years.

Furlong, in his capacity as Merriam's assistant, continued to do virtually all the work of the survey by himself. In 1906 Merriam sent him to Auburn to investigate a cave report from Dr. J.C. Hawver. Hawver was apparently a friend of one of the Berkeley group engaged in the cave survey and had already made several exploring trips to caves around Auburn. The new cave was named Hawver Cave by Furlong. He found a rather extensive vertebrate deposit in a fissure at the bottom of the cave which was enough to bring Merriam to Auburn later the same year. Merriam subsequently turned his notes on Hawver Cave over to Furlong, who published a brief preliminary description of the cave and its fauna in 1907. Detailed descriptions of most of the fauna never appeared, although the birds were described some years later. Presumably, this was at least partly due to the fact that water flowed into the cave quite vigorously at times and covered the fossil deposits to the extent that they could not be properly excavated. In his 1907 paper, Furlong noted that the cave had been flooded during the winter of 1906-1907.

Although Merriam quickly lost interest, Hawver continued to dig in his cave and in March of 1908 discovered some human bones under some 12 feet of dirt and rocks. Merriam wrote a brief note describing this occurrence in 1909, but again was forced to conclude that there was insufficient evidence to associate the human remains with the extinct vertebrates. After this Merriam finally gave up trying to date human remains deposited in caves and California's first cave survey was effectively defunct.

Merriam might have continued to pursue the matter but for an historical accident. Although always busy with other research, he had at least some time to devote to the cave survey until about 1905. However, in 1904 he was asked to examine a fossil deposit on the old Hancock ranch at Los

Angeles. He immediately became very interested in this deposit and put much effort into excavating (and obtaining funds to excavate) the new find. This took his attention away from the cave project, but since this Los Angeles accumulation, the amazing tar-pits of Rancho La Brea, turned out to be the most famous fossil deposit ever discovered in the United States, it is hard to blame him.

In recent years an approach has finally been made, through radiometric dating, to determine man's antiquity on the Pacific Coast. Interestingly, even if the scientists of the Berkeley survey had succeeded in associating early man with the fossil vertebrate faunas in the northern California caves, the dating would be meaningless today. All Merriam and the others wanted to do was establish the "Quaternary" (by which they presumably meant what we would call Pleistocene) age of the human remains. Although the cave faunas contain extinct animals, none have ever been radiometrically dated, so associating man with them would tell us less than we already know from modern archeological research. In fact, we may finally have succeeded in establishing the association for which the Berkeley cave survey was searching. Obsidian, almost unquestionably indicating human presence, has recently been found among the bones of a newly discovered fossil cave fauna a few miles east of Potter Creek and Samwel Caves, but until the fauna is dated we still will not know how old this human occurrence is.

The Berkeley cave survey was not really directed at finding, exploring, and mapping caves, except insofar as these activities related to the survey's scientific aims. However, its scientific accomplishments were considerable and it must certainly be regarded as California's first organized effort in speleology.

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## Miscellaneous Notes on Two Prominent New Athens Salt Merchants: Samuel Brown and Charles Wilkins

PART ONE: SAMUEL BROWN

ANGELO I. GEORGE

In any historical research, some information will arise which is seemingly irrelevant to the primary study. In at least one instance, however, such information proved to be of such importance that early chains of events in North American spelean history were unraveled concerning the activities of Dr. Samuel Brown M.D., and Charles Wilkins. This data was collected from historical research in progress on Captain Thomas Ashe and the Great Catacomb Mystery of Fayette County, Kentucky (George, 1972, 1974, and unpub ms.); these two prominent Lexingtonians were profiled in an attempt to place them in proper relationship to Ashe's alleged 1806 visit to Lexington (Ashe, 1808). What follows are the expanded footnotes consisting of miscellaneous correspondences of Samuel Brown and Charles Wilkins' early involvement in speleology, cave exploration, artifact collecting, saltpeter, and gunpowder manufacturing.

Samuel Brown (1769-1830) upon his return from medical studies in Europe, set up a prosperous medical career in the town of Blandenburgh, just east of what is now Washington D.C. (Padgett, 1937, p. 100). Thomas Jefferson, who had not yet become President, requested that he investigate a report of a Freezing Cave located on the North Cacapon River between Winchester and Romney. Brown's reply is thus:

To Thomas Jefferson<sup>1</sup>  
Washington City March 7th 1792

Sir,

I believe I have obtained some information respecting the Freezing Cave as will enable you to find it. It is thirty miles from Winchester, two miles from the road leading from that town to Romney, on the North River of Cape Capon.

Mr. White, who gave Mr. [John] Strickland an account of this curiosity, says he has seen it and examined it with much attention. Impressed, however, with an idea that the ice was formed by some mixture of saltpetre, he does not appear to have been sufficiently careful in obtaining the facts upon which a more rational theory could be formed. The hill above the cave is composed of loose stones thru which he says the air and water pass without meeting any earth or leaves which could prevent their descent. From the mouth of the cave (where the ice remains until August) there is a constant cold blast of wind issuing -- He was informed by the neighbours that when the hill was covered with snow this blast of cold air was not perceptible. This circumstance is worthy of observation.

As it is your intention, soon to visit that part of the country I anticipate, the pleasure of being better acquainted with the history & theory of that singular phenomenon --

With the greatest respect  
I am Sir Yr. Mo. ob. Sam Brown

One can suspect that even at the early age of 23, Brown would have a keen interest in caves and natural phenomenon attributed to them. He rejected the idea that ice in the cave is formed by some mixture of saltpeter, as was suspected by White. Brown suggested that the ice in the cave is produced by the freezing of dripping water from the talus slope during the winter season. With a snow cover there is no air circulation from the cave; but, during the summer months there is continuous cold air circulation over the ice mass that will preserve some of the ice even into August. He promised Jefferson that he would look into the matter of freezing cave development and formulate a better theory. There is no known data which suggests that he ever followed

through on his promise. The location of Freezing Cave corresponds with that of a cave now known as the Talus Ice Cave on Ice Mountain, Hampshire County, West Virginia and described by Hayden (1843), Balch (1900, p. 188-189), and Halliday (1954, p. 22).

In 1798 Samuel Brown left Blandenburgh and moved to the frontier town of Lexington, Kentucky. His brother James had already made the move several years before and found the practise of law quite lucrative. Sam was to enjoy a similar success in medicine. Because of his health and a yellow fever epidemic in 1804, James Brown had moved permanently to New Orleans. Judging from Samuel Brown's extensive correspondence with his brother (Padgett, 1937) one can tell that they were very close -- it was this lengthy separation that grieved Samuel so much; he wanted to be near his brother. But, New Orleans was "high society" and the prospects of setting up a new medical practise in competition with already established doctors did not, at that time, seem too practical a venture. He needed a kind of business that would yield tremendous profits; medicine was not the answer.

Prior to 1804, Samuel Brown had no known monetary interest in the mining of saltpeter from caves nor in the manufacture of gunpowder. A prosperous local merchant, Thomas Hart Sr.<sup>2</sup>, approached Brown with a business proposition to buy Kenkards? [*sic*] Saltpeter Cave<sup>3</sup> (Great Saltpeter Cave, Rockcastle County) in what was then Madison County, Kentucky. An experienced powder maker, George Montgomery had purchased this cave in 1802 as recorded in the Kentucky Land Office Warrant No. 2, March, 1802 (communication from John Lair; July 23, 1975; Anon., n.d.). Montgomery mined saltpeter there on a limited scale. By November of 1804, Thomas Hart and Samuel Brown had purchased this cave from Montgomery. I have not seen the title to this transaction, but can only infer that it existed. This venture is recorded in the following letter; because of its length, only the reference to saltpeter is quoted.

To James Brown<sup>4</sup>  
Lexington Novr. 10th 1804

Dear Brother

I have therefore formed a partnership with Mr. Thos. Hart purchased Kenkards Salt Petre cave & intend to go largely into the manufacture of that article & of gunpowder. Our prospects are very flattering. We shall have 20 hands employed in the course of two weeks if we meet with no accident & expect to make 1000 lb per day of salt petre which we can exchange for half that quantity of powder. We are offering to supply govt & hope to obtain the contract. In my present circumstances it would have been very improper to have refused such offer as Mr. Hart made. You know his address, his industry, & management. If we are not disappointed, this business will enable me to enjoy your society much sooner than I could do were I now [*to*] go in quest of a settlement on the Mississippi. More of this in my next. In the meantime I beg of you to endeavor to make some contracts for powder. We can afford it at 37/100. Write to us of any contract offers -- John Clay can sound the Spanish March!

With affection to you both I am

Sam Brown

Near the Great Cave, a powdermill was erected in what is now known as Powdermill Hollow (Anon., n.d.). There is no information to suggest that Hart and Brown were responsible for this operation other than Brown's statement that they also produced the black powder from the saltpeter. More research is needed on this subject.

During the latter part of 1805, the combined venture of Hart and Brown was so successful that the two speculators branched out into production of salt from local licks and wells. This was directly related to their packing of salt and smoke-cured pork for shipment to points as distant as New Orleans and the eastern seacoast. Brown's elation over the success of his venture is conveyed to his brother in the following letter:

James Brown Esquire  
Secretary of State for the Territory of New Orleans  
To James Brown  
Lexington Sept 14 1805

Dear Brother,

On my return from the wilderness last evening I had the satisfaction of receiving your letters of the 9th 13th & 20th ult -- During my residence of three weeks in those comfortless regions the impossibility of hearing from you formed the chief source of my anxiety . . . .

The Butter you wrote for shall be carefully packed & duly forwarded & as I am a manufacturer of salt & salt petre. I want nothing but hogs & smoke to make most excellent bacon -- of which you shall have large supplies -- After the hasty replies to the most material parts of your last letters you will permit me to entertain you a few moments with an estimate of the probable advantages of the late speculation in which I have been induced to engage . . . .

Mr. Hart & myself lent Colo Outlaw \$30[00] in cash & horses, set up 400 kettles at his lick & if necessary convey water to the wood which may cost 1000 dol more for consideration. We are invested with the simple fee of one moiety of his salt well & 1200 acres of wood land adjoining with 50 kettles now at work 3 wagons 2 teams & many other working utensils &c -- As soon as we set up 400 kettles (which will be in one month from this time) he gives up the management & profits of the works to us until the \$3000 lent are reimbursed which he engages shall be within one year. Until our kettles are set up & after the reimbursement [of] the money lent, one half the profits & expenses are his; the other ours; during my residence at the works 100 kettles badly attended made from 16 to 20 bushels of excellent salt daily which all sold for \$2 pr B. When our whole number of 500 are at work we shall make daily at least 100 bushels if the well will yield sufficient supply of water of which at present no one entertains any doubt. 200 gallons of water make a bushel of salt. The relics of mammoth bones & Indian salt works prove that the water at the licks was salt at least 500 years ago & that is the foundation we can have for believing that it will continue -- [John] Brown has recovered his health & is now on a journey to Eddysville -- All your relations are well -- Expect a longer letter next week.

Sam Brown

Colonel Outlaw's lick must have been the largest operation of its kind in Kentucky, even eclipsing the Mann's Lick salt works of southern Jefferson County. Judging from McDowell's (1956) extensive research into Kentucky's salt industry, 40 to 50 kettles was considered a large operation that utilized hundreds of workmen. Outlaw's lick had 100 kettles that were going to be increased to 500 evaporation kettles under the guidance of Hart and Brown. A piece of subjective detective work is needed to establish the location of Outlaw's salt works. At first glance this may be the Big Bone Lick of Boone County, Kentucky. Although Mammoth bones, Indian and pioneer salt works are present, the owner, Colonel Outlaw was not. According to an extracted letter published by Zadok Cramer (1811) from Charles Wilkins (to be printed in Part Two) a number of Indian kettles were found at the Goose Creek salt well. I have no information on Pleistocene Mammoth bones. Outlaw's lick was also near the Wilderness Road; this puts it in south-eastern Kentucky, just down the pike from the Great Cave. Based on the above geographical information, Outlaw's lick probably was one of the numerous licks in the Goose Creek vicinity of Clay County, Kentucky. The late Robert E. McDowell (oral communication) stated that he was unaware of Outlaw's role or those of Brown and Hart in the salt industry. To paraphrase Clarke (1938) and McDowell (1956) everybody that was anybody made salt; this was a very common first industry in Kentucky that provided the stability needed to settle the interior areas.

As a major New Athens salt merchant, it is apparent that Brown made many on-site inspections of their salt works and peter-gunpowder operations. He would journey into the Barrrens of western Kentucky to visit a saltpeter cave operation on Rough Creek. Brown is cryptic on the exact location of this Hardin County site; however, one of three known caves could be the one in question: Belt (Bell) Cave, Given Maze Cave, or the Constantine Saltpeter Cave. All Three caves were exploited on a limited scale. The original 1802 patent for the Great Cave location also encompassed what is now known as the Crooked Creek Ice Cave, and Teamers Cave. Brown (1809) mentions two unnamed caves within a mile of the Great Cave that he visited; the above two match his location. In all fairness, the Hart and Brown enterprise probably utilized these two caves as well as Scott's and Davis's cave some distance away. Although there is no documented proof that Brown and Hart ever were granted a contract to supply the United States Government with gunpowder, their presence and knowledge in that particular field was noticed by the Secretary of the Navy, Robert Smith. The Secretary of the Navy wanted to standardize the procedure in the manufacture of gunpowder -- simply because at each saltpeter site and powder factory, similar, but different processes were employed. Samuel Brown, probably early in 1805, started to compile observational notes on the manufacture of saltpeter from caves and rockshelters. Burton Faust (1967, p. 16) suggested that Brown started to visit saltpeter caves as early as 1801; data gathered so far seems to indicate a late 1804 or early 1805 date for this initial investigation. By November 1805, a Memoir on Nitre & Gun Powder was completed and sent to Mr. Jefferson for his inspection and conveyance to Smith. Brown modestly asked the President if he would bring this Memoir to the attention of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia (Jefferson was also at that time President of the Society). The cover letter reads:

The President of the United States  
Washington  
To Thomas Jefferson<sup>6</sup>  
Lexington Nov. 10th 1805

Sir,

I ought, perhaps, to apologize for the liberty I have taken in enclosing to you the Memoir on Nitre & Gun Powder at a time when important concerns of Government are likely to engage so much of your attention. As the secretary of the Navy, however, did me the honor to ask my opinion concerning the probable causes of the defects of those articles I was desirous of evincing my readiness to comply with his request & have therefore to beg that you will submit the sheets to his inspection & if you think them deserving the notice of the Philosophical Society, I am confident they would be read with much indulgence after having passed through your hands --

With sentiments of the highest esteem  
I have the honor to be Yours,  
Sam Brown

After spending a short time in the vicinity of Great Saltpeter Cave in January 1806; Brown traveled over the Wilderness Trail on horseback to Philadelphia (Norton, 1941, p. 190). Though it is unsubstantiated, it is believed that on February 7th, 1806, Sam, then thirty six years old, stood before the Philosophical Society and read his paper entitled: A Description of a Cave on Crooked Creek, with Remarks and Observations on Nitre and Gun-Powder.<sup>7</sup> After his presentation, one of the very first of its kind (Hovey, 1896, p. 54) he returned to Lexington. There, he settled some of his personal matters in preparation for joining his brother in New Orleans. Sam left Lexington in April of 1806 and arrived in New Orleans in the early part of May. From the extensive correspondence with his brother, it became quite clear that Sam had accumulated a substantial fortune from his New Athens salt venture. He made so much money that he gave up the idea of practicing medicine in the Louisiana Territory; Brown did not resume his practice of medicine until 1819 when he permanently returned to Lexington, Kentucky. Thomas Hart Sr. died in 1807 followed by his eldest son, Thomas Jr. in 1809 (Leavy, 1873, p. 262).

I do not know what happened to the Hart and Brown saltpeter, gunpowder, and saline industry; especially that connected with the Great Cave. One can only offer a conjecture: could this be the moment that Charles Wilkins comes into the picture as saltpeter and gunpowder merchant? More research is needed.

END PART ONE

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#### FOOT NOTES

1. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress. Letter transcribed and published by James A Padgett (see References)
2. This is the same Thomas Hart who was a working associate with Judge Richard Henderson in the formation of the Transylvania Land Company (Clarke, 1968, p. 17). Hart was a merchant who came to Lexington about 1790 from Hagers-town, Maryland (Leavy, 1873, p. 261).
3. It is ironic to note that Brown did not have a clear idea as to the correct cave name. He uses with some hesitancy, Kenkards Cave. Then in his 1809 saltpeter paper, spells the Great Cave in lower case letters. There is enough published target information to support the idea that Kenkards Cave is the same one mentioned as Kencaids Cave by Harold Meloy (1971, p. 22) as a saltpeter source for Charles Wilkins on Crooked Creek. Rafinesque (1832, p. 29) talks about a Big Cave on Crooked Creek capable of producing 1000 pounds of saltpeter per day. Brown's Kenkards(?) Cave could also produce that amount. And because of the size of the saltpeter operation there at Great Saltpeter Cave in 1804 (Anon, n.d.) and physical description of the cave by Brown (1809) and Rafinesque (1832), this investigator at least is inclined to believe that Kenkards Cave is the Great Cave.
4. James Brown Papers, Library of Congress. See note 1.
5. Ibid.
6. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress. See note 1.
7. Personal communication from Roy E. Goodman, Reference Librarian, Am. Philo. Soc., dated September 3, 1974.

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## The Ozark Bear Story

H. DWIGHT WEAVER

"In the state park (Meramec State Park, Sullivan, Mo.) in the early days they had a zoo. They had two bear cubs and these cubs broke out of the zoo and couldn't be found. That winter they hibernated in some cave in the park. The next spring they started running around the park. The bears got to be a pretty good size. Finally, the bears were caught and put in a cage. The bears got into a fight and one killed the other, broke the cage, got out, and he was loose for a long time. He must have been about three years old when I got acquainted with him. He would raid the garbage cans in the park." So related Eddie Miller in December of 1974 while recalling his days as a guide at Fishers Cave in Meramec State Park. He continued with his story.

"Back then I stayed at the cave all night in the back of the concession stand. I had to be there 24 hours a day or have someone there to take my place. That was in 1937. The bear came up and went into Fishers Cave one day. So I locked him in. I figured he'd make a lot of tracks in the cave and it would be a good attraction. I left him in the cave overnight . . . ."

Bear tracks, claw marks, beds, bones and stories have long been staple items in the lore of commercial cave guides. These stories are legion in the Ozarks. Folklore would have one believe that most Ozark caves were found by hunters in pursuit of bear.

Henry R. Schoolcraft was among the first to write an account of bear hunting in the Ozark region. According to his description the usual method involved tracking the animal to its den, either over the snow or with the aid of dogs. If the bear were to enter a large cave, hunters would follow and after trapping it in the farthest recess, shoot it without further difficulty. At times the aperture through which a bear would escape was too small for the men to follow comfortably. Then dogs were sent in to provoke the animal, either bringing it in sight within the cave or driving it out and engaging it in battle. A hunter would then have an opportunity to shoot his prey, but a clear shot and steady aim were mandatory because a wounded bear could be dangerous.

Occasionally bear hunters met with accidents such as the one which befell Sylvester Labaddie. The legend, as usually related, describes a hunting tragedy from which Labaddie's Cave in Franklin Co. ostensibly derives its name. A hunter named Labaddie, with his boy about 12 years old, followed a bear, which had been wounded, to the mouth of the cave. Labaddie crawled in thinking that the wound was mortal. The boy waited some hours. When the father did not return, the boy returned to St. Louis in great alarm. A rescuing party went out to the cave but found nothing. Years later the skeletons of the hunter and the bear were found in the cave.

Robert Ramsay (1954) has taken issue with this legend. He states that it is hard to believe the story when "exploring the ghostly old cavern" and further says, "the hard and prosaic facts are against it. That particular bear story, if it ever happened at all, must have happened to somebody else. It is, however, accepted as gospel truth by all the old timers of Franklin County."

The Frenchman who supposedly died with the bear was Sylvester Labaddie Sr. who came to St. Louis from France in 1769 and married into the prominent Chouteau family of St. Louis. Sylvester Labaddie Jr. was a son of this marriage. According to Roblee and Ostiek (1968), Sylvester Labaddie Sr. died in 1794 of natural causes.

At the age of 21 Sylvester Labaddie Jr. received a Spanish land grant of nearly 14,000 acres in Franklin County. In 1809 he entered a partnership with General William Clark to form the famous St. Louis Fur Company. The Fur company hired men to live in the wilderness and trade with the Indians. By the 1820's white men were being hired to actually go out and kill and skin the fur bearing animals themselves rather than rely entirely upon Indian trade. Placed in order of value, bear skins were not high on the list. Otter, beaver, buffalo, wolf and elk were preferable. Bear meat was considered an excellent dish by both the Indians and the settlers. Bear fat was used as a cooking grease and oil for leather. The Indians used tanned bear pelts for bedding and white men used bear pelts for coats and rugs.

Thirty-nine years after the death of Sylvester Labaddie Sr., The Youths Literary Gazette (1833) published a bear story which may have been the origin of the Labaddie legend. It said:

"Many years ago, a Frenchman and his son were hunting within 40 miles of St. Louis in Missouri. A large bear that they had wounded escaped into a cave through a small opening. The hunter instantly crowded through the opening and followed the bear. Soon he shot and fatally wounded him. The bear rushed forward by the hunter to the mouth of the cave, but had not strength to struggle through the gap. Of course, he soon died, and his carcass completely closed the passage.

"The son, on the outside, heard his father screaming for help, and attempted, but in vain, to drag out the bear. He was terrified, and mounted his father's horse, in order to find assistance.

"There was no road through the woods; but the horse carried him to St. Louis. A party was soon raised and dispatched for the relief of the hunter.

"No trace of the cave could be found. The boy, in his agitation, had not carefully observed, or had forgotten the landmarks that led to the cave. After long [and fruitless] search . . . , they returned, not doubting that the hunter had perished in the cave.

"Some years after, the cavern was [re-]discovered. Near its mouth was the skeleton of a bear. Within the cavern was found the skeleton of a man, and, doubtless, it was that of the hunter, with gun and equipment, all, apparently, in the same condition as when he died.

"The hunter, most probably, died of suffocation; or it may be, for want of presence of mind or power to cut up and remove the dead bear, piece by piece, from the entrance. Possibly he . . . injured both his body and mind by firing his gun in a place so confined. The place is called 'The Hunter's Cave'."

Another bear hunter met his demise, according to folklore, in Marvel Cave in Stone County. Stevens (1915) and Martin (1974) give similar versions of this tale which has an Indian and a dog pursuing a bear beneath a rock overhang near the lip of the shaft that opens into Marvel Cave. The bear, the Indian and the dog, all, fell into the pit and perished. Supposedly, the bear's skeleton was found at the base of the shaft many years later.

The oldest records of bear in Missouri caves are those of Arctotherium, the short-faced bear. This giant beast of the Pleistocene became extinct 10,000 to 25,000 years ago at the end of the Ice Age. The bones of this animal have been found at three Missouri sites -- Carroll Cave and Perkins Cave in Camden County, and Bat Cave in Pulaski County.

A majority of the many bear specimens which have been discovered in Missouri caves are those of Ursus americanus, the common black bear. A dozen remains have been discovered in one Boone County cave.

Onondaga Cave in Crawford County and Round Spring Caverns in Shannon County (commercial caves), have bear remains on display. Those of Onondaga are well preserved by a coating of calcite as are the bear skeleton in Bat Cave (a wild cave in Shannon County). Interestingly, the Bat Cave specimen also has a perfect "willow leaf" (Nodene) point preserved with it.

Although commercial cave visitors sometimes react with skepticism toward such cave features as bear beds and claw marks, many of them are probably authentic. Dr. Oscar Hawksley (1965), who has participated in the examination of numerous cave sites (hibernaculum) where bears have wintered, has observed that such bear beds are familiar features to cave explorers "and are easily recognized as shallow, rounded depressions in clay floored passages. They may be considered as potential sources of fossil bear material."

The black bears of Missouri are the largest and heaviest wild mammal in the state. Being glossy black with a brown muzzle and small white patch on the chest, the animals vary from 200 to 600 pounds in weight and reach a length of 50 to 78 inches.

These bears were common in the Ozarks prior to settlement but by 1850 were rare due to the depredations of fur hunters and settlers. Subsequent sport hunting all but eliminated the species in Missouri by the early 1900's, however, conservation efforts have led to a marked increase in their numbers.

Black bears live in densely forested areas and winter in hollow trees, logs, caves or other sheltered places. The abundance of caves in the Ozarks served these bears well as dens but may have also resulted in their early demise. Going into hibernation in November, the bears often lapse into deep sleep for weeks at a time, making themselves easy prey.

The bear claw marks seen in so many Missouri caves on limestone walls, sandstone boulders, and clay banks may be due to the animal's habit of marking its territory. Bears are known to put deep scratch marks on trees as warnings to other bears of their presence. Females often winter with their cubs and the playful exploration of these youngsters could be another source of claw marks.

Adult male bears have been known to attack and kill cubs but mother bears are good protectors. Black bears are quarrelsome creatures, distrustful even of each other. Adult bears have been known to fight to the death, a fact of bear life.

Meramec State Park along the Meramec River at Sullivan, Missouri, was dedicated in 1928. In 1930 Sheep Cave, one of the more than 20 wild caves known in the preserve, was made into a holding pen for wild animals. The first bears were introduced at this time. "A number of new animal pens have been built and eventually quite a zoo will be maintained around Sheep Cave. They now have bears, foxes, racoons and wolves," the news release said on October 16, 1930.

By the summer of 1933 Sheep Cave had been renamed Bear Den Cave and it was used exclusively for bears. At that time there were four bears in the area.

The park attendants were elated when, in 1936, one female bear gave birth to cubs.

"The state park superintendent and other workers at the park zoo were more than pleased last Friday when Mrs. Bruin made her first appearance, bringing with her two young cubs. They are the first bear cubs Mrs. Bruin has ever presented at the Park. The youngsters are said to be about 12 inches long and 5 inches high . . . and as playful as a couple of kittens.

"One of them climbed a tree the other day and stayed for hours, worrying his mother. Already, Mrs. Bruin has other troubles too. It is said that the greatest danger a bear cub has to face is the fact that his father may turn cannibal. But this mother is aware of that fact and she won't let the papa near them. Superintendent Chiles may help her out and take the erring parent to other quarters for awhile." (Sullivan (Mo.) News, May 7, 1936)

Eddie Miller, quoted at the beginning of this article, was born at Sullivan, Missouri in 1911 and raised just outside the park boundaries on a farm. In 1936 he began working at the park, watching after boat rentals and the bathing beach, and performing other concession duties.

In 1937 Eddie assumed responsibility for Fishers Cave, the Park's only commercial cave operation since 1933. Like any good cave entrepreneur, he was always looking for new ways to entertain his visitors. Shutting up a bear inside the cave to make authentic bear tracks seemed like a winning idea. It certainly was novel but a stunt of which the Park Superintendent would probably have disapproved. "I don't think the superintendent ever knew about it," Eddie says. "But I had beautiful bear tracks all over the place."

To keep his bear tracks fresh, Eddie says, "I locked that bear in another time and I was feeding him. I had one of those big old Mr. Goodbars. I was sitting on a log bench by the gate reading a book and I'd break off a piece of candy and hand it to him, and when I ran out of candy of course I stopped feeding him. After a few minutes I had a strange apprehension of danger. I looked around and that bear had his big paw coming down between those bars right at my shoulder. I dodged and if I hadn't he would have torn my shoulder all to pieces. He was mad because I had quit feeding him."

But of all the bear stories proliferating in the Ozarks, . . . Eddie Miller's story about the time he locked old Bruin in Fishers Cave overnight is one of the best. Eddie himself considers it one of the funniest things ever to happen to him in his long career in the cave business.

"I left that bear inside the cave all night so I would get some good tracks," he relates, "but when

I opened up the cave the next day, he never came out. That morning I had a tour of 12 or 13 people . . . . We got back there in the cave . . . and I caught a glimpse of that bear going around a corner just ahead of us. [Fishers Cave is shown by lantern only.] I turned around to the group and announced that there was a bear up ahead of us. Of course you know how they took it. They figured I was joking. So I figured well, what the heck; the bear was pretty tame, in fact, I fed him out of my hand. Anyway, this bear kept just ahead of us keeping just out of sight until we got to the low bridge and here he came right down the passageway just a snorting and rearing. He thought he was getting trapped or pinned down and he was mad. He was a grown bear and I figured we'd better let him have his way.

"Give him room! Give him room!" I shouted. Those people were scared to death. There was one woman who just froze right in the bear's way. She was so scared she just wet all over herself. She just couldn't move, so I jumped over and grabbed her by the arm and jerked her out of the bear's way and off the walk. That bear came right on and just shot right past us. That was the last time I ever locked a bear in Fishers Cave overnight!"

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