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### 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 those goals are cordially invited to become members. Annual membership is \$5.00; family membership is \$6.00; and library subscriptions are \$4.00.

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### THE COVER

Antiparos is a small island in the Archipelago, about one mile east of Paros, which is east of Athens. This is not only a beautifully decorated grotto but one rich in history dating back to Alexander the Great. The drawing was extracted from page 87 of THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD, produced around 1850. The cover print on Volume 12 of the beautiful Kingston Cave, County of Tipperary, Ireland, is also from the same book. Additional information on the original source of these engravings is being sought.

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### JOURNAL STAFF

Editor: Jack H. Speece  
711 East Atlantic Avenue  
Altoona, Pennsylvania 16602

Assistant: Audrey N. Speece

### THE JOURNAL

The Association publishes the Journal of Spelean History on a quarterly basis. Pertinent articles or reprints are welcomed. Manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced. Submission of rough drafts for preliminary editing is encouraged. Illustrations require special handling and arrangements should be made with the editor in advance. Photos and illustrations will be returned upon request.

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### BACK ISSUES

Some back issues of all volumes of the Journal are available from Jack H. Speece, 711 East Atlantic Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania 16602. Out-of-print issues are in the process of being republished and will be available soon. All issues of Volumes 1-7:2 are available on Microfiche from Kraus Reprint Company, Route 100, Millwood, New York 10546.

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### Officers

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1244 Holy Cross Drive  
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Vice President: Keven R. Downey  
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Secretary-Treasurer: Jack H. Speece  
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## Speleological Writings in Early America

by Robert M. Hazen, Margaret H. Hazen, and Larry W. Finger

The early American literature on caves is widely scattered in numerous periodicals, books and pamphlets. Many of these references are included in American Geological Literature, 1669 to 1850, a bibliography and index with approximately 15,000 references, compiled by Robert and Margaret Hazen. The bibliography, which was recently published by Dowden, Hutchinson and Ross, Inc., 523 Sarah Street, Stroudsburg, PA 18360, is a comprehensive list of articles, books, maps, pamphlets, and other works on the earth sciences published in America through 1850. Included in the bibliography are approximately 150 entries specifically on caves. These references are listed below.

The information reported in American Geological Literature is also contained in magnetic storage at the Carnegie Institution of Washington, Geophysical Laboratory computer facility. Larry Finger has devised computational procedures to print subsets of the bibliography as desired on specific topics or by specific authors. The following list was generated by computer in this manner.

The existence of numerous caves in North America was assumed, if not proven, as early as the 1690s. At that time it was believed that a system of underground caverns and cavities filled with hot expanding gases caused the earthquakes which frequently shook New England. The first published article devoted exclusively to the description of a cave, however, did not appear until nearly 100 years later. In the early years of the American Republic, as settlers moved farther West, accounts of new caves appeared ever more frequently. Of the almost 150 references cited below, the greatest number (34) are descriptions of Mammoth Cave and other Kentucky caverns. Caves of Virginia (24), New York (10) and Pennsylvania (8) are also described, as are more than a dozen caverns and grottos from other countries.

The following bibliography includes only those works primarily about caves. Many other early American publications contained speleological notes but are not catalogued here. Thomas Jefferson's eloquent Notes on the State of Virginia (Philadelphia, 1788), for example, incorporated a description and plan of Madison Cave, as well as remarks on several other caverns. Speleological notices were an obligatory part of early American travel and exploration accounts, such as those of Lewis and Clark, Zebulon Pike, and others. In annual reports of state-sponsored geological surveys of the 1830s and 40s, geologists often remarked on the location and origin of caves. The early American speleological literature is thus a diverse body of writings to be found in many publications. It is hoped that the present list of references on caves will aid the student of spelean history in locating and evaluating these fascinating documents in American natural science.

We are always eager to learn of new references from pre-1851 America on caves, and we encourage all users of this list to contact us about additional sources. If you locate a book, pamphlet, journal article, poem, or other non-newspaper publication on caves, please send the information to: Robert M. Hazen, Geophysical Laboratory, 2801 Upton Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008.

## Use of the Bibliography

References are listed alphabetically by author. Many early American periodicals did not cite authors, and these articles are included under the periodical title. Source information includes journal title, volume number, and pages for periodical articles, and title, publisher and pagination for books or pamphlets. Note that original spellings, which were not standardized, are used for geographical locations. Many references contain additional information regarding original source of the article, or location of later printings. Most of the periodicals cited are now extremely rare in original form, but may be examined using the American Periodical Series of microfilms, available in the microfilm facilities of most major libraries.

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ASHA 1979 ANNUAL MEETING

The American Spelean History Association held its annual meeting at an informal luncheon at the Susan B. Anthony Center, Berkshire College, Pittsfield, Mass., on Friday, August 10, 1979, at 12:30 P.M., under the direction of President Paul Damon. Last year's minutes, published in Vol. 11 No. 3 of the JOURNAL, were approved. It was announced that the society was now an official Section of the National Speleological Society, as approved at last year's meeting. The Treasurer's report was read:

Balance 6/1/78.....		\$598.94
<b>INCOME:</b>		
Dues.....	\$221.00	
Libraries.....	12.00	
Back issues.....	<u>54.00</u>	<u>287.00</u>
		885.94
<b>EXPENSES:</b>		
Vol. 10 #4.....	86.43	
Vol. 11 #1.....	100.00	
Vol. 11 #2.....	100.00	
Vol. 11 #3.....	100.00	
Membership pamphlets.....	86.55	
Postage.....	51.47	
Envelopes.....	<u>30.00</u>	<u>554.45</u>
Balance 8/1/79.....		\$331.49

The announcement of the 1980 calendar arrived at the meeting via special courier. Robert Stitt asked ASHA to support his proposal to the BOG to make the Glawkes the official animal of the NSS. ASHA decided not to take part in this issue.

It was announced that after several hard years of effort the Peter M. Hauer Award would be made at this convention. The organization helped to organize this award for a spelean history effort by a group or individual.

Pittsburgh Grotto will bury a "cave capsule" containing numerous speleological equipment and publications at Laurel Caverns. It will be marked to be opened in the year 2079.

Anne Whitmore is presently putting the final touches on a history of the Virginia Region of the NSS. This will be a very thorough publication including pictures and side notes. Perhaps one of the best histories ever produced. It was also noted that Dale Ibberson is collecting material for a history of the Mid-Appalachian Region. It would be nice if all regions would make this a project, before the information is lost. ASHA is also in need of having its history written.

A ten-year index is needed for the ASHA JOURNAL. ASHA will sponsor an annual auction at the convention to raise funds for publications. K. Deacon Deem is to be thanked for being this year's auctioneer.

In 1981 the International Congress of Speleology will meet at Mammoth Cave. It was suggested that ASHA take part by sponsoring a session and perhaps a field trip to Big Bone Cave. A special publication or book would also be nice on the history of American Caving.

Michael Cullinan, Editor of the JOURNAL, asked to be released. There were no volunteers to take his place. It was suggested that guest editors be sought for single issues.

William Halliday proposed that the affairs of the Balch Institute be investigated by a study group of the organization. He explained that the estate of Edwin Swift Balch, after about 50 years in the courts, is being spent on ethnic cultures with little mention of Balch himself. It was unanimously approved that Halliday would head a committee of volunteers to do whatever they could to at least have the speleological accomplishments of Balch established at the Institute.

Jack Speece, William Halliday, Russell Gurnnee, and Harold Meloy were nominated as Trustees. William Halliday declined the nomination. Cato Holler and Ernst Kastning were also nominated. It was approved to enlarge the Trustees from 4 to 5. All 5 nominees were elected to be Trustees. The Trustees agreed to allow the selection of ASHA officers to be made by the membership. They unanimously selected Paul Damon President, Kevin Downey V.P., and Jack Speece Sec.-Treas.

A motion was made to appoint William Halliday to study and recommend a method of making the selection of Trustees a more permanent and stabilizing body.

Jack H. Speece

Lester Howe was an immigrant to the agricultural area of upstate New York known as the Schoharie Valley. Because this area has many caves, Lester Howe was able to make a mark for himself. Howe was able to find a cave that was larger and more impressive than most of those known in the area and, although the story of the discovery of this cave has been told many times, it is seldom told the same way twice; in fact, there are several discrepancies in the old records. One thing is agreed upon: Howe purchased the cave for \$100 and created a substantial empire in the tourist trade until he was bought out by the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad.

Howe Caverns is located in the town of Cobleskill, Schoharie County, New York, in the well-known and classic Helderburg Plateau Karst. It is one of the oldest known caves in the county and one of the oldest commercial caves in the United States, with operations beginning in 1842. Just how long this cave has been known is a subject for speculation, as there are several pieces of folklore which date back far before Lester Howe's discovery and include some rather colorful (but not totally consistent) legends.

One recurring piece of folklore reflects Indian usage of the cave. Although the Indians of the Northeast traditionally were superstitious and avoided caves, there are many accounts of aboriginal use of Howe Caverns, but little, if any, concrete evidence.

In an 1842 account of the discovery of the cave, visitors related the belief that the cave was known much earlier by the Indians "from the fact that human bones as well as pieces of charcoal, encrusted with a solid coating of carbonate of lime, two to three inches in thickness, have been found at the distance of more than a mile from the entrance."<sup>1</sup> No other evidence or written account has been found relating to these artifacts. The author of the account in later years became an authority on aboriginal artifacts in the state and assembled a comprehensive catalogue of archaeological sites. No mention was made of Howe Caverns. Other accounts state that the local natives were superstitious of caves and would only use the well-lit entrances for shelter. A legend has developed about the Indians' use of this cave, and the word "Ostagaragee" has been claimed as being their name for it, meaning, "Cave of the Great Galleries".<sup>2</sup> The substance of these legends is open to question, but they are widely accepted and quoted.

The word "Ostagaragee" actually means "hemp-hill", and it was the Indian word for the area of Cobleskill, and has been applied to Howe Caverns.<sup>3</sup> The translation of this word as "Cave of the Great Galleries" apparently stems from an early account by G. F. Yates, Esquire, an antiquarian and naturalist who was one of the first to describe the cave.<sup>4</sup> Yates apparently coined the phrase, "Cave of the Great Galleries", which was later associated with the Indian word. It seems quite possible that the word Ostagaragee may well have been Lester Howe's original name for the cave, and only later did he call it "Howe's Cave", as its fame spread. The cave was found or rediscovered in 1842, but needed to be excavated in order to be entered, according to some accounts.<sup>5</sup> According to the deeds in the Schoharie Courthouse, it was then on the Henry Wetzel farm, and Howe did not purchase the cave until 1843. During those years, Howe acted as guide to the new cave and became associated with it--often called its owner. Since he did not in fact own the cave, he may have refrained from calling it Howe's Cave. Visitors, however, used the name "Howe" for the cave, and it has been called this ever since. At times it was also referred to as Schoharie Cave and Cataract Cave.

Another often cited pre-Howe legend has been recounted by the management of the present day Howe Caverns, Inc. There are many unanswered questions from the posthumous diary of Reverend John Peter Resig, a German exile. This book was published in 1835 under the title of Der Walperfarrer am Schoharie and describes a cave during the 1770's.<sup>6</sup> In Schoharie County the Indian wars were in full swing, and Jonathan Shmull, a Jewish peddler, found or was shown a cave to hide in during times of trouble ... he eventually made the cave his secret home, and took Resig into his confidence. He described the cave as "ten miles west (of the Schoharie River) near the Kobels Creek, named for the German Kobel." Apparently others also knew of its existence, since Resig was once called upon to visit a sick woman "who lay in the cavern which was dimly lighted by a candle." Resig eventually made his home there also, and fought the Indian wars as well. The identification of the cave mentioned is often made as being Howe

Caverns, generally by the Howe Caverns management, who seem determined to annex every bit of folklore possible to their cave. Unfortunately, no proof is available other than the general location (occupied by dozens of other caves). Recent investigations, however, have failed to find any other references, citations or original copies of this document. The New York Historical Association and the Library of Congress have no knowledge or listing of this book and Howe Caverns, Inc. has not permitted this writer to see the copy they profess to have.

It seems fairly safe to say that Lester Howe found "his" cave in 1842, although there is probably no other cave in America with more published versions of its discovery than Howe's Caverns has. Ignoring the tales of Ostagaragee and Resig's diary, Lester Howe has received credit (sometimes shared with Christopher Wetzel) for a multitude of methods by which he found this cave.

Perhaps the earliest version of Howe's discovery was published in August of 1842 in the New York Tribune by "E.G.S." (probably E. George Squire) in his account of a journey by foot to the "new" cave at Schoharie (Ball's Cave being the "old" one). The account is dated less than six months after the claimed discovery date, and by this time it appears the cave was being actively shown as a commercial venture by Howe.

"Since the early settlement of the country, it has been known to the inhabitants of the vicinity that there was a spot somewhere along the ledge of the rocks on the side of the mountain north of the stream, from which issued a strong current of cold air--so strong indeed that in summer it chilled the hunter as he passed near it. It was familiarly called the "blowing rock", and no person ever ventured to remove the underbrush and rubbish that obscured the entrance, lest probably some hobgoblin or wild beast should pounce upon him as legal prey. Mr. Howe, who has recently removed into the neighborhood, accidentally heard some intimation of its existence in May last, and with commendable curiosity immediately determined to visit it, and set out alone without delay for that purpose. He found the fact as stated, and upon removing the underbrush, he discovered a spring some four feet square, from which proceeded a current of cold air, plainly to be felt at the distance of several rods. Satisfied that there was a cave of some extent, he returned next day with a friend and entered it by the aid of lights to a great depth. He renewed his visits from time to time, proceeding a little further each time until about the 15th ult. (of last month), when after penetrating to the distance of one mile, his passage was interrupted by a lake of water . . . "7

However, Horace Hovey, the noted Nineteenth Century American speleologist, much later gave a distinctly different (and plausible) account in 1880 of Howe's discovery.

"Several caves had already been found in this region, the largest being the one known as Ball's Cave, when in 1842, Mr. Lester Howe resolved to open what had previously been called Ostagaragee Cavern, but which now bears his name. A stream of considerable size had long been observed flowing from it by several outlets. This subterranean river was the agent that made the cavern, but it had obstructed it by debris.

"Mr. Howe hit on an ingenious plan for utilizing the water. He loosened the clay, water and rocks, then stopping other outlets, he flooded the main channel, and thus forced the stream to sweep out its own deposits. This having been effectually done, he re-opened the side passages, and made a dry path . . . "8

A guide book sold at the cave, printed in 1876, gives still another, radically different, version of Howe's find.

"Howe's own account of the discovery is as follows: While rabbit hunting one day in the fields over this cave, he fell into a "sinkhole". Relating this adventure to a scientific man, he was informed that sinkholes mark the course of extinct or existing caves. He had also noticed that on hot summer days the cows that were pastured in a field at the present mouth of the cave were accustomed to huddle together in a certain spot that was in reality less shaded than other parts of the field. But the most singular circumstance was the

fact that the temperature in this particular portion was very much cooler than the general temperature. Howe now began to believe that his farm contained a cavern. On the 22nd day of May, 1842, he and some friends were out fox hunting. The fox secreted himself in the face of the hill where the entrance is today. In digging the animal out, the cave was discovered."<sup>9</sup>

This version may have been an attempt to combine several different discovery stories.

Yet another early guide book states of Howe that ". . . Stimulated by the light of science, he was led to search the countryside for caves, which he commenced in the spring of 1841, and after a diligent search, his efforts were crowned with success on the 22nd of May 1842 by the discovery of the cave which now bears his name." The description also states that Howe varied the water pressure in the cave to remove the debris which blocked the passages for 3/4 mile. The cave was believed to be wholly virgin prior to this opening.

One brief but notable version, from an 1861 travelogue by a visitor known only as "Pip", is contained in a portion of a 100-page handwritten letter.

"While passing through this hall, I began asking "Plug" questions; and first, when the cave was discovered: 'In 1842', he replied. 'How did it happen to be discovered?' said I. 'Well, sir', he replied, 'Mr. Howe was hunting for caves, and came across this.' Queer kind of thing to be hunting for, I thought. . . ."<sup>10</sup>

An 1884 newspaper account of Howe Caverns' discovery states:

"The discovery was made in 1842, although for a year previous, Mr. Howe, who was an apt student of geology, had asserted that a cave existed in that area. One day in company of Christopher Wetzel, now of Binghamton, he was hunting in the vicinity when their dog disappeared from sight, almost in front of their eyes. The hunters came to this very spot, and saw some bushes growing on the hillside. They pushed these apart and found a small hole leading into the hill, and from this hole there came a draught of cold air. By reaming out the loose dirt and gravel, they were able to enlarge this hole so that Mr. Howe could crawl inside. He didn't mention finding the dog, but he did say that soon he got into a space high enough to stand erect."<sup>11</sup>

Howe Caverns, Inc. has provided several variations on these tales. Virgil Clymer's guide-book of 1946 tells about a blowing rock on Howe's farm where cows stood around, and after Howe pulled up a few bushes, he discovered the entrance. In later years the promotional literature and tour guides referred to "Millicent" as the cow who led Howe to the entrance.

One of the most recent variations (and there are almost as many variations as there are descriptions of the cave) was published in 1977 by Eric Porteus, a local historian, in The Schoharie County Review.

"When people asked Howe in what way he had discovered his cave, he replied with a story that has now become legend. He was walking up to his pasture in search of his cows on the warm afternoon of May 23rd, 1842, when he was alerted by the bellowing of one of his animals. Nearing the animal, he found her to be caught in what at first examination appeared to be a thicket. Closer inspection revealed, however, that the cow had fallen part way into a cleft in an outcropping of rocks hidden by the thicket. From this hole blew a distinct draught of cold air by which the cow had been lured to disadvantage on the warm afternoon. After freeing the cow and enlarging the hole, he returned with a rope and candles to the hole and lowered himself in . . ."<sup>12</sup>

Robert Addis, a Howe Cavern historian, provided the author with a unique version of this oft-told story. "It seems that Lester Howe and Christopher Wetzel were out hunting one day in 1842, when they came upon a hole in the hillside. When Lester asked what it was, Wetzel replied, 'Howe Caverns.' This seemingly ridiculous version is perhaps as valid as any other, although considerably less romantic."<sup>13</sup> There is some support for this view, as an 1861 newspaper account describes the cave discovery thus. Howe was ". . . clued into

the cave's existence by friends." Yet this same article as continued in the next weekly instalment seemingly contradicts itself by stating that the discovery was the result of a one-year search by Howe, and that the cave was completely sealed, and a drill and pick were used to open the cave. Flooding was then being used to attempt to open new avenues of the cave.<sup>14</sup>

Much else of the history of Howe Caverns is shrouded in mystery, conflicts and controversy. However, a few things can be stated as more likely than others. Howe's Cave was not on his farm in 1842--as he owned no land according to property records in the Schoharie courthouse. As a recently arrived inhabitant (from New England) Howe may well have been working as a farm hand or leasing property from the Henry Wetzel farm, where he was boarding. He also appeared to be operating a hotel nearby as early as 1842. How he did find the cave is not likely ever to be clear (or if he actually did find it) but shortly after he announced it, local people began arriving at the cave, and knowledge of its existence spread by word of mouth. The 1842 account of Howe Caverns by E. George Squire mentioned Howe's Hotel--"The Mineral Hotel", which was situated on the Cobleskill about fifteen minutes' walk from the cave itself. Here Howe kept a display of mineral formations from the cave on the shelves of his bar-room.<sup>15</sup> These formations are now housed in the old stone fort at Schoharie. Howe had collected them soon after his cave was "discovered" but underwent a change of heart and stopped his collecting with but a handful of formations, unlike at other area caves, which were stripped bare. Later visitors did however continue to collect formations despite requests that they avoid doing so.

During this time Howe did not own the cave itself, and no record remains detailing what sort of arrangement he made with the Wetzels while he acted as guide to "his" cave on their property. However, Howe did purchase the property on February 23, 1843, for one hundred dollars, and officially the property was transferred on February 14, 1844, according to deeds on file at the Schoharie courthouse. A few months later Howe purchased several adjoining parcels which formed the grounds surrounding his soon-to-be-erected "cave house".

Howe's word-of-mouth advertising slowly brought him considerable fame, as did the newspaper accounts of his cave, which were quite colorful in their exaggerations.<sup>16</sup>

Although local people who were in the midst of the cave exploring activity of the time may have found the cave a fine diversion, it was far from a comfortable and appealing trip, despite Howe's rude pathways and a wooden boat for crossing the lake. Here it was necessary to wear "outrageous costumes" which were far from flattering. Further, according to an 1851 account, early visitors were "forced to forego the use of their legs, and for a considerable distance to imitate the locomotion of Eve's seducer."<sup>17</sup> Such crawling around in the mud and water would only appeal to a limited clientele. So, Howe set out to gradually improve his cave and his accommodations over the next few decades.

Howe's Cavern was quite spacious and spectacular--in many places. The early tours were led by Howe himself, and a few regular guides, with visitors carrying oil lamps and "lucifers", or sulphur matches. The tour appeared to vary in length with the group visiting the cave, and several accounts of the trip cite turning around before reaching "the winding way", others at the "rotunda" beyond "the fat man's misery". Trips could easily last all of 8 to 10 hours and were generally fatiguing.<sup>18</sup> The sights on the trip were (and still are) quite intriguing, and the myriad of names given to certain features were highly imaginative.

These imaginative descriptions of the various points of note are mostly interesting today in that they reflect the height of contemporary romantic description, humor, and the awe which the caverns evoked. A few examples should suffice to illustrate this. E. George Squire, an early visitor, gave a good idea of this in 1842:

"The rushing of the waters, the thunders of distant waterfalls that send their reverberations through these apartments--the grand majesty of the rocks and impenetrable darkness, all unite with the sermons so plainly written upon the whole that 'God only is great' and to bow the soul in reverential awe!"<sup>1</sup>

Lester Howe was a man of considerable ingenuity and inventiveness, which he demonstrated in his promotion of his cave. Although the details of much he did are hopelessly clouded in conflicts, certain events are reasonably clear. Howe soon learned that his discovery had considerable appeal, and could provide significant income. Over the next few years he bought up much of the surrounding farmland. For a fee he would conduct the 8-hour tour and entertain

his guests with his subterranean fiddle playing.<sup>17</sup> He erected a hotel near the cave (not the same "Mineral Hotel" he operated in 1842) and began massive improvements to his property. Boats were constructed to cross the lake, low passages blasted open to enlarge them, and pathways and stairs constructed. Despite these improvements, visitors still had considerable difficulty in traversing the cave, wearing old clothing and carrying oil lanterns. Due to flooding problems, the cave was only opened from May to October. However, these drawbacks and obstacles provided a sense of adventure that lured increasing numbers of visitors. A visitor in 1850 described this portion of Howe's operation:

"Howe threw open a wardrobe, containing jackets and trousers of coarse sacking, made so as to button close to the person. They had already seen much underground service, and were thickly plastered with stygian mud. We now began to catch the spirit of our adventure, and throwing aside our broadcloth and linen, we plunged into our over-hauls. A cheap leathern skull cap finished the uniform, and but for a sprinkling of spectacles and pallor, we might have been mistaken for a platoon of jolly hod-carriers. It was a matter of lament that we could not have stood for a daguerreotype, and thus furnished our wives and sweet-hearts with a new study in the 'Philosophy of Clothes.'<sup>17</sup>

Early promotional literature described the procedures and apparel used at the cave as ". . . Gentlemen are furnished with a pair of overalls, a loose coat and hat, the ladies with pants, a bloomer coat, shoes and hat, and all with lamps so hung in gimbals so when we are lost in amazement, silent rapture, and the lamps are forgotten, they will still stand upright."<sup>19</sup>

Despite the primitive operations, Howe managed to promote the cave and hotel as a cultural center. Local Society soon found the hotel to be the ideal place for masquerades, balls, and other events. A printed invitation in the Old Stone Fort Collection illustrates the atmosphere which Howe worked to sustain at his establishment:

SCHOHARIE CAVE PARTY - "live while you live, the managers do say, and sport the pleasures of the present day, the company of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and lady is respectfully solicited to attend a collion party at the assembly room of Lester Howe, on the first day of January at 2 o'clock P.M. December 20th, 1844."

Among the several signatures of "managers" is one D. Wetsel, a member of the family of former owners. Also of interest is that the 1844 dated invitation does not use the name Howe Caverns, which indicates that this name was not used until later. When the name change occurred is not known. Other social invitations dated as late as 1849 do not use "Howe Caverns" but do refer to Lester Howe's Hotel which was rebuilt in that year as the "Cave House."

Howe's new hotel was a success. The Cobleskill Index in 1869 recounted a description by visitors to the cave who noted that the bar room was particularly well stocked, and from this room the cave tours departed and returned. "And this cheerful fact is doubtless that spirit which sustains visitors on the whole fatiguing tour."<sup>20</sup> Yet there were still difficulties.

Howe's development met with continuous problems. His first two hotels burned and he built a third one which included air conditioning using the cave air, perhaps the first in the country.<sup>21</sup> Howe had moved his headquarters from the Mineral Hotel, previously mentioned, to the cave itself in 1845, when his new Hotel called the Cave House was completed. This Cave House stood only a few years when it burned to the ground. Another hotel was built and the north wing stood over the cave itself. In January 1872 this hotel also burned. The following year Howe built his third Cave House, a gothic structure made of dressed limestone.<sup>22</sup> This building was later extensively damaged by fire.

Howe also did some masterful promotions which kept his cave in the public eye. With considerable fanfare, he had his daughter Elgiva married in the cave in 1854.<sup>2</sup> Howe further claimed one young man was cured of pulmonary disease by spending three months in the "Consumptive Chamber" of the cave.<sup>8</sup> This statement went beyond claims of Mammoth Cave promoters, whose cave-dwelling consumptives (and owner) got worse and died. The cave was typically claimed to be twelve miles long, a nearly ten-fold exaggeration. Many popular accounts, such as North's popular Visit to Howe Caverns, supplemented Howe's own press releases and guide-books. The use of lithographs and steel engravings in the journals of the day allowed Howe to

exhibit views of his enterprise. However, the most significant factor in the success here was the expansion of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad in 1865. When the Howe Cave spur was completed, and the tourists poured in, the cave may have been second only to Niagara Falls as a popular New York retreat.<sup>23</sup> The fee for Howe's tour was 50¢, and lodging up to \$3 per day.<sup>9</sup> This tour would usually run from the old entrance into the "winding way", through "fat man's misery" to the "rotunda", and out again, stopping for lunch and to occasionally collect specimens. It was a fairly lengthy trip which was appreciated by most visitors.

Yet despite this success, Howe did not maintain control of his cave. Locals claim he fell into disrepute due to his eccentric manner and attitude. When tourism declined in the 1870's, Howe sold out his holdings (he was not bankrupt as often claimed)<sup>11</sup> to the Howe's Cave Association and Joseph Ramsey, the railroad magnate. The Association may actually have been in control of the cave in 1864 or earlier as newspapers of the time have implied.<sup>24</sup> The exact details of the arrangement are not known, although Howe reportedly did well financially, but held some bitterness at his loss.<sup>25</sup> Although the business records and property transfer are lost, the local papers carried rumors that Howe received \$200,000 for his share of the cave, a substantial amount.<sup>25</sup> Local historian Kenneth Fake mentioned that Howe received his payment in shares of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad.<sup>22</sup>

As Howe grew older other legends, such as his new cave, "The Garden of Eden," began to be told. He also developed a reputation of being eccentric, as well as being a colorful character. Eventually the cave would take on many new changes. Modifications became so extensive that by the time Horace Hovey visited the cave in 1880, after Howe had sold out, he found the cave itself to be rather unnatural. "So much digging and blasting had been done between the entrance and the reservoir, as to detract from the primitive wildness of the cave, and it too much resembles an unfinished railway tunnel. Gas also has been introduced, thus far with a pleasing effect ordinarily, though far less picturesque than torches and not free from danger."<sup>5</sup> Apparently Howe faced a common dilemma, in that visitors wanted both an easy, comfortable experience, and a "natural" one as well.

After fire destroyed a portion of Howe's hotel the Howe Cave Association phased out the tourist trips. The tourist trade had been in decline since 1890 despite a massive publicity campaign. They did expand the limestone mining, which became a major portion of the local economy.

It wasn't until 1929 that Howe Caverns was reorganized and another massive lodge was built at a new location, far from the natural entrance which is now part of a limestone quarry. A 140-foot elevator shaft was dug for easy access. This operation has been successful ever since.



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- <sup>22</sup> Kenneth L. Fake, "History of the Town of Cobleskill" (Cobleskill 1937), p. 160-161.
- <sup>23</sup> Cudmore, p. 98.
- <sup>24</sup> Anon., Cobleskill Index (Cobleskill June 1, 1869).
- <sup>25</sup> Arthur Van Voris, "The Mystery of the Garden of Eden," unpublished, c. 1950.