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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. All persons who are interested in those goals are cordially invited to become members. Annual Membership is \$8.00. Meetings are held in conjunction with the annual convention of the National Speleological Society and sometimes at West Virginia's Old Timers' Reunion.

Front cover: "Caves at Chickhour River," is from the collection of Fred Grady. The costumes indicate that the scene is probably somewhere in India.

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Editor for this issue: Joel M. Sneed, 5171 Adams Street NE, Covington, Georgia 30209.

Typesetting for this issue: Evelyn W. Bradshaw, 10826 Leavells Road, Fredericksburg VA 22407.

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, or may be submitted on IBM-compatible diskettes with hard copy. 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

Most back issues of the *Journal* are available. Early issues are photocopied. Indexes are also available for volumes 1-6 and 13. Send your requests to Fred Grady (address given below, with officers). Volumes 1 to 7:2 are available on Microfiche from Kraus Reprint Company, Route 100, Millwood, New York 10546.

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The Confederate Saltpeter Works at Fort Payne [Manitou] Cave, DeKalb County, Alabama, and Its Personnel

by Marion O. Smith

Manitou Cave, so named in the 1880s for the Cherokee "Great Spirit," was known in Confederate Nitre Bureau records as Fort Payne, sometimes spelled Paine, Cave or Nitre Works. That name was used because during the removal of the Cherokees in 1837 and 1838, Fort Payne, occasionally garrisoned by Captain James H. Roger's company of Alabama Volunteers, had been erected nearby. The town of Fort Payne was not founded until nearly two decades after the Civil War. Up to then the main villages in the vicinity of the cave were Rawlingsville and Valley Head to the North and Lebanon to the South.¹

The cave was certainly known for many centuries by the aboriginal population. Before the Cherokees were forced West white visitors to their Nation toured the cave and left graffiti, including "1818," "Porter February 6th 1819 ?," "1829," and "1833." After the Indian removal and before the Civil War others left their names and dates on the cave's walls, such as: "1841," "W Manney [?] 1842," "D P King 1848 [?]," "I. N. Jones of Tennessee Dec. 9th 1848," and "_____ Amos 1857 [?]." Obviously before 1861 the cave was a well-known curiosity.²

The entrance of Manitou Cave is in a bluff near the base of Lookout Mountain, at the south end of the present day town of Fort Payne. During the late 1890s the cave was described in a geological report as an

uneven high broad archway, higher and broader in places than in others. Its clear space is from 10 to 50 feet in height and from 12 to 50 feet in breadth. It can be traversed for over a mile in a general south-east direction. Its floor is cavernous, as is evident from the sound in walking over it. It is made very uneven by piles of earth that were worked extensively for salt-peter during the late war between the States. In these piles of earth, there are impressions of the pick that are just as plain now as when they were made some 35 years ago. The stalactites and stalagmites are comparatively few . . . though there are some. . . . There is throughout the greater length of the cave a running stream that comes to light as a big spring at the foot of the mountain, some 40 feet below the mouth of the cave.

The geologist's depiction is generally accurate, except as to length. On New Year's Day, 1969, Gadsden Grotto cave club members Lin Guy and Kenneth Kifer made the only known tape and compass survey of the cave. They obtained a distance of 2,555 feet, concentrating their efforts in the easily accessible and dry passages and tending to ignore the lower level stream conduits.³

It is not known if early white settlers utilized Manitou Cave for saltpeter, the main ingredient of gunpowder. The first allusion to it in that regard was May 10, 1861, when Bellefonte, Alabama, lawyer Nelson Robinson (c. 1800-1862) wrote that he had "started a party to examine a large cave in De Calb Co. near old fort Payne." Robinson was responding to a Nashville citizen's solicitation for sources of saltpeter for the Tennessee state government.⁴

Except for the names of employees, only bits and pieces are known about the Confederate effort to mine saltpeter at Manitou or Fort Payne Cave. In spite of Nelson Robinson's effort to have the cave prospected in 1861, apparently it was not put into operation until September, 1862, after the four and a half month Union occupation of Huntsville and the area north of the Tennessee River. Until then, Captain William Gabbett, the recently appointed superintendent of northern Alabama's Nitre District No. 9, had been prevented from organizing much of his territory, and was headquartered in the little town of Cave Spring, Floyd County, Georgia. He did make efforts to organize the region south of the Tennessee River. In late August Gabbett explored "nitrous caves" in Blount County, visited Blountsville and Gadsden, and explored "Big Spring nitre works" in Marshall County.⁵

During September and October, 1862, James M. Walker, the superintendent of subdistrict A, and Gabbett made several trips to Fort Payne Cave. Between September 6 and 27 Walker's pay voucher indicates at least three trips to the cave from Cave Spring, Georgia. It is unclear if Walker made each trip himself, but materials, including potash, were hauled by wagon to apparently help set up the works. From September 16 through the 26 Gabbett went on a "trip from Gadsden Ala, via Guntersville Ala, Exploring Fort Paine Nitre Works," and the next month, October 12-13 and 25-27, he visited the cave twice more. On the latter visit he brought Professor Nathaniel A. Pratt, the Nitre Bureau chemist, probably to analyze

the saltpeter content of the cave dirt. During each of Gabbett's October visits as well as assistant superintendent James M. Hull's inspection tour of mid-March, 1863, their horses were fed at "Hammocks," the residence of either Thomas or Willoughby Hammack, who lived near the cave.⁶

Surviving pay vouchers provide other clues that mining began at Manitou Cave in September, 1862. On the 6th, Noble Brothers and Company, Rome, Georgia, iron founders, supplied "10 Grate Bars" weighing 650 pounds. On the 16th, Thomas Hammack provided 1,153 feet of plank at \$1.25 per hundred, 1,933 feet of plank at \$1 per hundred, 600 feet of sheeting at 75¢ per hundred, and 822 feet of sheeting at 37-1/2¢ per hundred, plus sawing 2,221 feet of square plank at 75¢ per hundred, all for the "Construction of Nitre Works at Fort Paine Alabama." In addition, he was paid for providing a wagon and team eleven days and a wagon and driver seven days for "Hauling furnace wood at Fort Paine Ala." Two months later, November 15, 1862, Hammack again hauled furnace wood.⁷

The leaching operation at Manitou Cave was apparently conducted outside near the spring. On September 12, 1862, J. J. Lathrop of Cave Spring, Georgia, supplied "25 yds Heavy Duck" for "Packing nitrous Earth at Fort Paine." The succeeding November 30 Willoughby Hammack sold the Nitre Bureau personnel a wheelbarrow "To wheel dirt from [the] cave" and a "Pump Leather" for "watering Hoppers." A year later, December 1, 1863, Hammack sold another wheelbarrow plus a chain to the works.⁸

When Confederate commissaries could not supply food and forage, it was acquired from local residents. On September 26, 1862, John L. Barnard provided 1,275 pounds of beef, nine bushels of meal, and a thousand pounds of hay. Later the same Fall, October 9, November 24, and December 4, V. C. Larmore sold to the works a total of 1,981 pounds of beef, thirty-one and three-fourths bushels of meal, twenty-six bushels of corn, and 300 pounds of hay. On September 16 and November 15, 1862, respectively, Thomas Hammack made available thirty pounds of beef and twelve bushels of corn for "Laborers food." A year later, November 16, 1863, the former superintendent, Joseph Douglas of Marshall County, furnished 170 pounds of flour. A few days later, December 1, 4, and 8, Willoughby Hammack sold an aggregate of 1,218-1/2 pounds of beef, four bushels of Irish potatoes, and three and one-fourth gallons of syrup "for the maintenance of the force at Fort Payne Nitre Works" because "no commissary or Quartermaster . . . [was] accessible." On January 3, 1863, John Stewart supplied 650 pounds of beef.⁹

Eight payrolls and one non-payment roll of Fort Payne Cave have survived, which show that between September, 1862, and January, 1864, the regular monthly work detail fluctuated from seven to twenty men. Altogether, the names of forty-six workers are known, although undoubtedly there were other laborers during the period of the missing rolls, March-August, 1863. In addition, a few of Captain James H. Young's Nitre Guard Company were on duty there. The only hint of slave labor being used at the cave is on an October 31, 1862, voucher of the Huntsville firm of Douglass, Donegan & Co. for "Board of Negroes 6 meals @ .50" who were "Laborers at Ft Paine." The workers and guards were mostly non-residents of DeKalb County, Alabama, although at least nine men were local citizens. Fourteen or more were from Georgia, who had been transferred from other saltpeter caves, and there was at least one worker each from Alabama counties of Marshall, Jefferson, Madison, and Cherokee. The guards were from Jackson County except one from Giles County, Tennessee.¹⁰ Biographical sketches of the Fort Payne Cave employees and guards follow:

John C. Anderson was a laborer at Fort Payne September, November, 1862-January, 1863, and November, 1863-January, 1864. He supplied a wagon and team for three months beginning November, 1862. He was also a laborer at Sauta Cave, Jackson County, Alabama (Feb.-Mar. 1863); Cedar Mountain Nitre Works [Horse-Adcock Caves], Blount County, Alabama (Feb.-May, 1864); Long Hollow Nitre Works [Cave Mountain Cave], Marshall County, Alabama (part of May, 1864); and Blue Mountain Nitre Works [Weaver-Lady Cave], Calhoun County, Alabama (May-June, 1864). Confederate Payrolls, Record Group 109, National Archives; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta.

Samuel Beasley (1835-1902), a South Carolina native, before the war was a resident of Calhoun, Gordon County, Georgia. He apparently became a DeKalb County, Alabama, resident beginning with his employment by the Nitre Bureau. He was a laborer at Fort Payne Cave September, November, and December, 1862. Tombstone Inscription, New Hope Missionary Baptist Cemetery, DeKalb County, Alabama; 1860 Census, Ga., Gordon, Calhoun, 26; (1880), Ala., DeKalb, T8S-R6E, 15; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

Tom Black, a Fort Payne laborer November, 1862-January, 1863, may be the same as Thomas J. Black (b. c 1847), a son of William and Mary Black of Floyd County, Georgia. After the war he was a "Mill Hand" near Cave Spring, Georgia. *Ibid.*; 1860 Census, Ga., Floyd, Etowah Dist., 299; (1870), 141st Subdiv., 18.

Stephen Brand (b. c1832), a Fort Payne Laborer October, 1863-January, 1864, is possibly the pre-war grocer from near Logansville, Georgia. He was also a laborer at Chattanooga Potash Works (Oct. 1862-

Aug. 1863); Camp near Kingston, Georgia (Oct. 1863); and at Big Spring Nitre Works Guntersville Caverns, Marshall County, Alabama (Mar.-June, 1864). 1860 Census, Ga., Walton, Northern Div., 958; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

James J. Burns was a carpenter at Fort Payne September, 1862, and November, 1863-February 2, 1864. He was also at the Camp near Kingston, Georgia (Oct. 1863). He was captured and entered Rock Island, Illinois, Prison February 13, 1864. *Ibid.*; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Archives; Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers . . . Raised Directly by the . . . Government, Nitre and Mining Bureau, Record Group 109, National Archives.

David B. Carr (c1830-1882), an Abbeville, South Carolina, native, was a laborer and farmer who before the war lived in Floyd County, Georgia. During his association with the Nitre Bureau he was employed as a laborer at the following sites: Ringgold Cave [possibly GSS 106, Chickamauga Cave], Catoosa County, Georgia (May-June, 1862); Ravenel Cave [Jolley Cave], Bartow County, Georgia (June-Aug. 1862); Lookout Cave, Hamilton County, Tennessee (Aug.-Sept. 1862); Nickajack Cave, Marion County, Tennessee (Jan. 1863); Pack Cave [possibly Hooker Cave], Dade County, Georgia (Jan.-Aug. 1863); Camp near Kingston, Georgia (Oct. 1863); and Fort Payne Cave (Dec. 1863-Feb. 1864). Captured February 2, 1864, he was held prisoner of war at Rock Island, Illinois, until the following October 17, when he joined Company F, 3rd U. S. Volunteer Infantry for service on the western frontier against the Indians. He was mustered out of that duty at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, November 29, 1865. By 1870 he resided in Fulton County, Georgia, and sometimes was a citizen of Atlanta, dying between 1882 and 1885. 1860 Census, Ga., Floyd, Flat Woods Dist., 204; (1870), Fulton, 219; CSR-Nitre Bureau, RG 109, NA; Atlanta directories (1881-85).

Furney Carroll was a laborer at the Chattanooga Potash Works (Oct. Nov. 1862, Jan.-Aug. 1863); Camp near Kingston, Georgia (thirteen days in Oct. 1863); and laborer (Oct. 1863) and boiler (Nov.-Dec. 1863) at Fort Payne Cave. Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Archives.

Peter Cobb (b. c1822) was probably the North Carolina-born wagoner who before the war lived near Roswell, Georgia. He was a private in Company H, 7th Georgia Infantry, CSA, from May 31, 1861, until May 14, 1862, and was wounded at the first battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861. After his discharge he was employed by the Nitre Bureau as a worker at Parten Cave near Rome, Georgia (May-June, 1862), Ravenel Cave (June, 1862), and Cave Spring Cave, Floyd County, Georgia (June, 1862). At Fort Payne Cave he was "Fore- of Kettles" (Sept. 1862) and a laborer (Nov. 1862-Jan. 1863). Subsequently he was a boiler at Sauta Cave (Mar.-Apr. 1863), and borne on the rolls of Bartow Cave. Kingston Saltpeter, Bartow County Georgia, as a laborer (July and Sept. 1863). Vouchers at the end of June and July, 1863, show him "making nitre in Middle Georgia—from April 4th to May 25" and exploring in East Tennessee "for nitrous deposits in Caves & Domestic sources from May 26 to July 31," all for \$2.25 per day. 1860 Census, Ga., Cobb., 1st Dist., 170; Lillian Henderson, comp., *Roster of the Confederate Soldiers of Georgia 1861-1865* (6 vols., Hapeville, Ga., 1958-64), I, 892; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; Peter Cobb file, Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens or Business Firms, Record Group 109, National Archives.

James Coleman was a laborer at Cave Spring Cave, Georgia (Oct. 1862), Fort Payne Cave (Nov. 1862-Jan. 1863), Big Spring Cave (Apr.-Aug. 1863), and Little River [Daniel] Cave, Cherokee County, Alabama (Dec. 1863). Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

George T. Crumbley was a laborer at the following locations: Chattanooga Potash Works (Aug. 1863); Camp near Kingston, Georgia (Oct. 1863); Fort Payne Cave (Oct.-Dec. 1863); Long Hollow Cave (May, 1864); and Cedar Mountain Nitre Works (Mar.-Apr., July, Sept. and Dec. 1864, Jan. and Mar. 1865). Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Archives.

Moses B. Dobbins (b. c1844), a farm laborer from Henry County, Georgia, worked for the Nitre Bureau at: Chattanooga Potash Works (Jan.-Mar., May-Aug. 1863); Camp near Kingston, Georgia (Oct. 1863); Fort Payne Cave (Oct. 1863-Jan. 1864); Big Spring Cave (Feb.-June, 1864), and Little Warrior Nitre Works [Crump-Second Caves], Blount County, Alabama (July, 1864) After the war he returned to Henry County, resumed farming, married, and began a family. He apparently died before 1880, because that year's census shows his wife and three children, without him, living with his mother, Mary Dobbins. 1860 Census, Ga., Henry, 830; (1870), 489th Military Dist., 17; (1880), 498th G.M. Dist., 34; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Archives.

Joseph Douglas (b. c1830) was a Pennsylvania-born lawyer who resided in Guntersville, Alabama. From November, 1862, through July, 1863, he was assistant superintendent of Sauta Cave, then until his capture and apparent parole in early September, 1863, he was superintendent of Fort Payne Cave. He was also borne on the Town Creek Potash Works, Sand Mountain, Alabama, as assistant superintendent (Aug. 1863). 1860 Census, Ala., Marshall, Eastern Div., 1; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; Joseph Douglas file, Citizens Papers; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 70 vols. in 128 books (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. 1, XXX, Pt. III, 354.

Robert Duncan (b. c1835), a farm laborer from Gwinnett County, Georgia, was employed by the Nitre Bureau at: Ringgold Cave (June, 1862); Ravenel Cave (June-Aug. 1862); Lookout Cave (Aug. Sept. 1862); Camp near Kingston, Georgia (Oct. 1863); Fort Payne Cave (Dec. 1863-Jan. 1864); Big Spring

Cave (Feb.-June, 1864); Blue Mountain Cave (June 27-July, 1864); and Cedar Mountain Caves (Sept., Dec. 1864). 1860 Census, Ga., Gwinnett, 406th Dist., 178; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Archives.

David Fields (b. c.1837), probably the native Alabama farmer residing near Lebanon, was a worker at Fort Payne Cave September, November-December, 1862. 1860 Census, Ala., DeKalb, 2nd Div., 97; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

James Fields was a laborer at Fort Payne during November, 1862. *Ibid.*

Andrew J. Floyd (c.1834-f/1870) was a South Carolina-born son of David Floyd and a Gordon County, Georgia, blacksmith. His Nitre Bureau assignments were: laborer at Parten Cave (eight days in June, 1862), Cave Spring Cave (June, Oct., 1862), and Big Spring Nitre Works (Oct.-Nov. 1862); and boiler or foreman or superintendent of kettles at Sauta Cave (Nov. 1862-Mar., May-June, 1863), Fort Payne Cave (Oct. 1863-Jan. 1864), and Cedar Mountain Nitre Works (Feb.-Apr. 1864). After the war he returned to Gordon County and farmed. 1850 Census, Ga., Floyd, 12th Div., 45; (1860), Spring Town, 1; (1870), Calhoun P. O., 219; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

Miles L. Floyd (c.1838-f/1880) was also a South Carolina native, a son of David Floyd, and a resident of Gordon County, Georgia. During the war he worked at the following places: as a laborer at Parten Cave (seven days in June, 1862), Cave Spring Cave (June, Oct. 1862), Big Spring Cave (Oct.-Nov. 1862), Camp near Kingston, Georgia (Oct. 1863), Fort Payne Cave (Nov. 1863-Jan. 1864); and as a boiler or kettle hand at Sauta Cave (Nov. 1862-June 1863) and Fort Payne Cave (Oct. 1863). He returned to Gordon County and became a farmer near Plainville. 1850 Census, Ga., Floyd, 12th Div., 45; (1870), Calhoun P. O., 204; (1880), Plainville 1055 Militia Dist., 30; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Archives; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

William Fowler was a laborer at Fort Payne Cave during September, 1862. *Ibid.*

A. J. Gaskey [or J. A. Gasken] was a laborer at Fort Payne Cave, September, November-December, 1862. *Ibid.*

J. W. Griggs was a laborer at Fort Payne Cave (Nov. 1862-Jan. 1863) and Sauta Cave (Mar. 1863). During January, 1863, Dr. J. J. Garrett charged the Nitre Bureau \$10 for medicines, etc., for Griggs. *Ibid.*; J. J. Garrett file, Citizens Papers.

Thomas Hammack (1808-1881) was a well-to-do Georgia-born farmer who lived very close to Fort Payne Cave. In September, 1862, he was listed on the payroll as "Waggoning." Tombstone inscription, Hammack Cemetery, DeKalb County, Alabama; 1860 Census, Ala., DeKalb, Northern Div., 58; (1880), Fort Payne T7SR9E, 1; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

Willoughby Hammack (1811-1887), also a Georgia native, was probably Thomas Hammack's brother. Before the war he was a "Mechanic" and afterwards a farmer. He too was listed in September, 1862, as "Waggoning" at Fort Payne Nitre Works. Tombstone inscription, Hammack Cemetery; 1860 Census, Ala., DeKalb, Northern Div., 45; (1800), T7SR9E, 40; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

Harbard M. Harwell (1839-1930), a native and resident of Giles County, Tennessee. Before the war was a farm laborer living with his parents, Stith M. and Martha Harwell. In late 1862 he became a private in Captain James H. Young's Nitre Guard Company, and when captured in early February, 1864, he was protecting Fort Payne Cave. Held a prisoner of war at Rock Island, Illinois, he was released upon taking the U.S. oath of allegiance June 20, 1865 (or 1864, Statements conflict). He returned to Giles County and lived in the Stella Community. 1860 Census, Tenn., Giles, Southern Subdiv., 67; Harbard M. Harwell file (16497), Tennessee Confederate Pension Applications.

Robert Howell, a Nitre Bureau employee who apparently had just arrived, was captured at or near Fort Payne Nitre Works February 2, 1864, and forwarded to Rock Island Prison eleven days later. CSR-Nitre Bureau, RG109, NA.

John Daniel Jackson (1845-f/1814), a Larkinsville Alabama, native, was also a private in Young's Guard Company. His official record shows him present December 26, 1862, through Dec. 15, 1863, and indicated he "Deserted near Cedar Bluff Ala Feby 16 1864." By Jackson's own 1907 and 1909 statements, he enlisted in Captain Henry F. Smith's Confederate company in the spring of 1863, but before he left home he was stricken with smallpox. Later, at Guntersville, either July 15 or August 15, 1863, he enlisted in the Nitre Guards, and "immediately afterwards was detailed to guard the commissary and nitre works." He was at Kingston, Georgia, and "From there we were sent to Blue Mountain and I was sent to Little River." Months later, "while stationed at Fort Payne, Ala. Morgan L. Smith Brigade attacked us. I was captured . . . and . . . pay rolled." His capture apparently did not occur at the cave but at Larkin's Landing on the Tennessee River, which gives credence to the probability that he deserted. He said he was carried before General Smith, who gave him the choice of taking the oath and staying at home or being sent north to prison. After the war he lived at Trenton, Alabama. Census or Enumeration of Confederate Soldiers Residing in Jackson County, Alabama, 1907, no. 123; 1860 Census, Ala., Jackson, 3rd Dist., 58; Compiled Service Records, James H. Young's Company, Nitre and Mining Bureau, Record Group 109, National Archives; John D. Jackson to Thomas M. Owen, July 12, 1909 (photocopy), Burton Faust Saltpeter Collection, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green.

J. D. Justice, a laborer at Fort Payne Cave (Sept., Nov.-Dec/ 1962), was possibly the same as James

Justice (b. c1837), a Georgia-born DeKalb County, Alabama, farm laborer. Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; 1860 Census, Ala., DeKalb, 2nd Div., 57.

W. S. Justice, was also a laborer at Fort Payne Cave (Sept., Nov.-Dec. 1862). His identity remains unsolved although it is remotely possible he was William Justice (b. c1805), a farmer and the father of James Justice, who less than four years before the war moved from his native Georgia to DeKalb County, Alabama. Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; 1860 Census, Ala., DeKalb, 2nd Div., 57.

Thomas McDaniel was a laborer at Fort Payne Cave in September, 1862. Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

A. J. McDonald labored at Fort Payne Cave November-December, 1862. It is not known if he is the A. J. McDonald of Cotton Valley in northern Alabama who on December 10, 1863, sold 176-1/2 pounds of beef to the Big Spring Nitre Works. *Ibid.*; A. J. McDonald file, Citizens Papers.

John L. McIntosh (b. c1834), a prosperous Tennessee-born Madison County, Alabama, farmer, was a long-time employee of Nitre District No. 9. His duties included: overseeing Negroes at Gunters Mountain Potash Works near Sauta Cave (Jan.-Mar. 1863); traveling to Huntsville and Decatur to hire slaves to work at Sauta Cave (March 27-April 14, 1863); acting as "Agent to Exchange Powder & Shot for Lead" (June, 1863); serving as superintendent of Fort Payne Cave (Oct. 1863-Jan. 1864); and finally as "General agent" (June, 1864) and "Asst Disbursing Agent" (July-Sept. 1864) of the District. 1860 Census, Ala., Madison, SW Div., 9; John L. McIntosh file, Citizens Papers; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

M. M. McMullen was a laborer (Nov. 1862, and Jan. 1863), cook (Dec. 1862), foreman (Oct. 1863), and assistant superintendent (Nov. 1863-Jan. 1864) at Fort Payne Cave; laborer at Sauta Cave (Apr.-May and July, 1863), Camp near Kingston, Georgia (Oct. 1863), and Long Hollow Cave (May, 1864); and stable boss (Mar.-Apr. 1864) and boiler (June-July, 1864) at Blue Mountain Nitre Works. *Ibid.*; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Archives.

John W. Palmer was a Nitre Bureau laborer at the following sites: Bartow Cave (July, 1862); Cherokee Potash Works, Cherokee County, Georgia (Aug. 1862); Chattanooga Potash Works (Mar., May-Aug. 1863); Camp near Kingston, Georgia (Oct. 1863); Fort Payne Cave (Oct. 1863); Big Spring Nitre Works (Feb.-May, 1864); Blue Mountain Nitre Works (July, 1864); and Cedar Mountain Nitre Works (late July, Sept. Dec. 1864, and Mar. 1865). In addition, he was "Cave Supt" at Fort Payne Cave (Nov. 1863-Jan. 1864). *Ibid.*; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

W. L. Palmer was a laborer at Chattanooga Potash Works (Aug. 1863); Little River Cave (sixteen days in Dec. 1863); Fort Payne Cave (Dec. 1863-Jan. 1864); and Big Spring Nitre Works (Feb.-Mar. 1864). *Ibid.*

H. T. Perry (c1833-*f*1870) was a native Alabama farmer living in Jefferson County near Village Springs. His Nitre District No. 9 duty stations were: Fort Payne Cave (Nov. 1862-Jan. 1863); Sauta Cave (Mar., May, July, 1863); Big Spring Cave (July-Nov. 1863, Jan., May-June, 1864); Blue Mountain Nitre Works (also Mar., May, 1864); and Little Warrior Nitre Works (July, 1864). He was a laborer except October-November, 1863, when he was a cook at Big Spring. 1860 Census, Ala., Jefferson, Self's Precinct, 88; (1870), T15SR1E, 5; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

M. Peterson was a laborer at Fort Payne Cave during September, 1862. *Ibid.*

James O. Phillips was a laborer at Fort Payne Cave (Nov. 1862-Jan. 1863); Sauta Cave (Feb.-Mar., May, 1863); and Nixon's [also known as Blountsville Works, now known as Posey Cave] Nitre Works (Mar.-Apr. 1864). *Ibid.*

Albert H. Ragsdale (c1845-*f*1900), a Jackson County, Alabama, resident, was a private in Young's Nitre Guards from December, 1862, until his capture in early February, 1864, at or near Fort Payne Cave, and imprisonment at Rock Island, Illinois. He may have had an earlier 1861-62 enlistment in Company K, 4th Alabama Infantry, CSA. After the war he moved to near Huntsville, Alabama. 1860 Census, Ala., Jackson, 3rd Dist., 32; CSR-Young's Company, RG109, NA; CSR-Nitre Bureau, RG109, NA; Albert H. Ragsdale file, Alabama Confederate Pension Applications.

William L. Ragsdale (c1829-*f*1870) was a Georgia-born Atlanta brickmaker. During late 1861 he was "making Saltpetre near Adairsville Cass Co. ga.," and between July 14 and August 8, 1862, he made three deliveries to the Chattanooga Nitre office. Later in August, through September, 1862, he was a laborer at Nickajack Cave. By the succeeding November 11, through July, 1863, he was "assistant Superintendent 2 Division District No. 8" at McMinnville, Tennessee. After the Confederate evacuation of middle Tennessee he was temporarily back in Georgia, at Kingston and Rome. On October 9, 1863, he was ordered to Walker County, Georgia, to "encourage the manufacture of nitre under old houses and make a thorough exploration of caves thru the County." During the first three weeks of December, 1863, he searched "for nitrous caves" in DeKalb County, Alabama, and for nine days in the same month and seventeen days in January, 1864, he was superintendent of Fort Payne Cave. From May 15 through August, 1864, he was again "exploring agent," during which time he searched for saltpeter caves in Blount and Jefferson counties, Alabama. In October and November, 1864, he superintended Little Warrior Nitre Works in Blount County. Subsequent to the surrender he returned to Atlanta and worked as a brickmason. 1860 Census, Ga., Fulton, Atlanta, 5th Ward, 178; (1870), Atlanta P. O., 50; William L. Ragsdale file, Citizens Papers; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Archives.

J. Reece [or Reese] was a carpenter at Fort Payne Cave, September, 1862. He may have been from DeKalb County. Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

William David Reece [or Reese] (b. c1834), a Tennessee-born farmer living near Valley Head, was a laborer at Fort Payne Cave, September, 1862. 1860 Census, Ala., DeKalb, Northern Div., 52; Elizabeth S. Howard, ed., *A Partial Who Was Who in DeKalb County* (Fort Payne, Ala., and Collegedale, Tenn., 1978), 129; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

W. S. Reese, who worked at Fort Payne Cave, September, 1862, may have been William S. Reese (c1841-f1880), a DeKalb County resident who after the war was a house carpenter. *Ibid.*; 1880 Census, Ala., DeKalb, Fort Payne T7SR9E, 1.

Hesakiah S. (c1836-f1880), **John D.** (c1844-f1880), and **Samuel M. Rowan** (c1841-f1880) were sons of George W. Rowan, a farmer living near McDonough, Henry County, Georgia. During the war the three brothers were Nitre Bureau employees:

H.S.: Bartow Cave (June-July, Sept. 1862); Chattanooga Potash Works (Oct.-Nov. 1862, Jan.-Mar., May-Aug. 1863); Fort Payne Cave (Oct. 1863-Jan. 1864); Cedar Mountain Caves (Feb.-Apr. 1864); Long Hollow Cave (May, 1864); Blue Mountain Caves (June, 1864); and Little Warrior Caves (July 1864).

John D.: Camp near Kingston, Georgia (twenty-four days in Oct. 1863); and at Fort Payne Cave (Oct. 1863-Jan. 1864).

Samuel M.: Ringgold Cave (May, 1862); Ravenel Cave (June, 1862); Bartow Cave (July and Sept. 1862); Chattanooga Potash Works (Oct.-Nov. 1862, Jan.-Mar., May-Aug. 1863); Camp near Kingston, Georgia (twenty-four days in Oct. 1863); Fort Payne Cave (Oct. 1862-Jan. 1864); Cedar Mountain Nitre Works (Feb.-Apr. 1864); and Long Hollow Cave (Apr.-May, 1864).

John D. Rowan was captured at Fort Payne Nitre Works February 2, 1864, and held a prisoner of war at Rock Island, Illinois, until June 21, 1865. 1860 Census, Ga., Henry, McDonough P. O., 1229; (1880), 68th Enum. Dist., 18, 31; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; CSR-Nitre Bureau, RG109, NA.

J. Samples was a Fort Payne Cave laborer (Sept., Nov. 1862). Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

M. Y. Scott is believed to be Merney Y. Scott (b. c1834), a native South Carolina farm laborer who before the war lived with his parents in Gordon County, Georgia. His many Nitre Bureau assignments included: laboring at Parten Cave (thirteen days in June, 1862), Cave Spring Cave (June, 1862), and Blue Mountain Nitre Works (July, 1864); "Foreman of Cave" (Sept., Nov.-Dec. 1862) and superintendent at Fort Payne Cave (Jan. 1863); kettle hand at Sauta Cave (Mar. 1863); foreman, foreman of hoppers, wagoner, and superintendent at Big Spring Nitre Works (Apr.-Nov. 1863, Jan.-June, 1864); and unspecified duties at Cedar Mountain Caves (late July, Sept., Dec. 1864-Mar. 1865). 1860 Census, Ga., Gordon, Spring Town, 330; Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Archives.

Edmund Wade, possibly from DeKalb County, Alabama, was a laborer at Fort Payne Cave, September, 1862. Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.

Polk Wade, a laborer at Fort Payne Cave (Sept., Nov.-Dec. 1862), was possibly the same person as James P. Wade (b. c1843), a son of Edward H. Wade, and a resident of the Valley Head vicinity. *Ibid.*; 1860 Census, Ala., DeKalb, Northern Div., 51.

Jacob W. Whorton (1841-f1900) was a life-long resident of Cherokee County, Alabama. His Bureau duties were: laborer at Cave Spring Cave (Oct. 1862), Fort Payne Cave (Nov. 1862-Feb. 1863), and Sauta Cave (6 days in Feb., Mar.-Apr., July, 1863); and assistant superintendent (Mar.-Apr. 1864) and commissary and clerk (May-July, 1864) at Blue Mountain Nitre Works. 1860 Census, Ala., Cherokee, 1st Div., 153; (1900), 6th Precinct, B6; Confederate Payrolls, NA.

Manitou Cave proved to be vulnerable to Union raids. During late April and early May, 1863, Colonel Abel D. Streight led about 2,000 mounted men eastward on an expedition from Eastport, Mississippi. This force crossed north Alabama via Tusculumbia, Blountsville, and Gadsden, with the purpose of destroying the railroads south and east of Chattanooga. Before that could be achieved, however, Streight and his command were captured May 3 near Gaylesville, in Cherokee County, by a less numerous detachment under General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Soon afterwards, on May 8 and 9, probably leaving from his district headquarters at Larkinsville in Jackson County, Captain Gabbett and eight men went on a "Trip to find out purpose of Enemy & to see to Govt property at Fort Payne Nitre Works Ala."¹¹

By early September, 1863, the Confederate army under General Braxton Bragg had given up middle Tennessee and had fallen back to the vicinity of Chattanooga. The Union army under General William S. Rosecrans threatened that city from the west, southwest, north, and northeast. Portions of the Federal First Cavalry Division, commanded by Colonel Edward N. McCook, reconnoitered south along Little Wills Valley. On September 4 McCook reported to his superiors that "The scout I sent to Rawlingsville returned this evening. There was nothing there. Two miles the other [south] side, at the spring, they found the Confederate salt peter works, and captured the agent of the niter bureau, Mr. Douglas. They had just got the works ready to go into operation." The next day, on another scout,

this time to Lebanon, Private William Thomas of Company B, 9th Pennsylvania Cavalry, noted in his diary that his regiment "passed a saltpeter Cave and Burned the works and the Saltpeter Mills."¹²

For a while Manitou or Fort Payne Cave was abandoned by the Confederates. The rapid advance of the Union army through middle Tennessee into northern Alabama and Georgia caused a major disruption of the Southern saltpeter mining efforts in those areas. Nitre District No. 8, including middle and southeastern Tennessee, was combined with District No. 9, both under the supervision of Captain Gabbett. Many of the laborers of the government works, Sauta, Nickajack, Pack, Battle Creek [Monteagle Saltpeter, Marion County, Tennessee], Fort Payne, and Lookout Caves, were withdrawn to Georgia, and in the early fall of 1863 were at a camp near Kingston. In Alabama, except at Fort Payne Cave because it had been raided, most of the saltpeter operations south of the Tennessee River continued in production.¹³

Fort Payne Cave was reopened in late October, 1863. This is indicated by the cave's payroll and by the expenses incurred between the 24th and 29th by the newly assigned superintendent, John L. McIntosh, "conducting men and stock from Kingston Ga to Fort Payne Nitre Works," including horses, mules, two wagons, and three men. A few days later, October 28 through November 8, Captain Gabbett traveled from Kingston "to visit and inspect the C.S. nitre works" at Little River, Fort Payne, and Big Spring, as well as the Town Creek Potash Works and Epsom Salts Works, both on the western side of Sand Mountain. On October 31st he boarded at "Hammocks," his usual stopover when visiting Fort Payne Cave.¹⁴

During November, 1863, Lieutenant Bolling A. Stovall, one of Gabbett's new assistant superintendents, made two trips from Georgia to Cherokee and DeKalb Counties, Alabama. From the 1st through the 10th he was involved in "Exploration and Examination of Nitre Caves," and between the 17th and 26th he visited government caves to supply "the forces with subsistence" and to attend to "the requirements of the works & men generally."¹⁵

Fort Payne Cave remained in operation only a few months before it was raided again. After the defeat of General Bragg's army at Missionary Ridge, November 25, 1863, the Union army, now under General William T. Sherman, wintered at Chattanooga and at various points along the railroads, particularly westward on the Memphis and Charleston and Nashville and Chattanooga lines. The Confederate army, under Bragg's successor, General Joseph E. Johnston, was concentrated at Dalton, Georgia.

Between January 26 and February 5, 1864, Brigadier General Morgan L. Smith led two brigades, plus several smaller miscellaneous units, of the 2nd Division, 15th Army Corps, over the Tennessee River at Larkin's Landing near Scottsboro on an expedition toward Lebanon. His goals, among other things, were to capture Confederate pickets, arrest conscripts, and intercept deserters from Johnston's army. On the 26th Smith's forces went to Gourd Neck and Smith's Gap on Sand Mountain then returned to Larkin's Landing. On February 1st they moved again and took a route which narrowly missed Guntersville to Town Creek and Lebanon. From Lebanon on the 2nd Smith "sent the Fifteenth Michigan Mounted Infantry to Rawlingsville to try to communicate with General [George H.] Thomas' right. They failed in this, but destroyed a quite extensive niter-works in the vicinity, and captured 1 officer and 7 privates," including employees James J. Burns, David B. Carr, Robert Howell, and John D. Rowan, plus guards Harbard M. Harwell and Albert H. Ragsdale.¹⁶

The next day near Lebanon "the enemy appeared in force on the Rome road" and a skirmish ensued. The Confederates reportedly "retired slowly," but General Smith concluded that their "mounted force was evidently far superior to ours and increasing." Therefore, he "declined to order a pursuit," and began his withdrawal to Larkin's Landing.¹⁷

Although many of the workers at Fort Payne Cave were captured, they apparently knew the Federals were nearby and had time to hide some of their equipment. Local resident John Jack was paid by the Nitre Bureau \$10 for "taking care of [secreted] C. S. govt tools, Beef, Kettles &c," and \$12 for services by himself and two slaves "on 6th Feby in assisting to remove" the same to Edwards Ferry across the Coosa River." Between February 2 and 9, 1864, Lieutenant B. A. Stovall went to Little River and Fort Payne Nitre Works to pay "off part of the 'Guard Co'" and to move "the effects of both Caves on the East bank of the Coosa River out of danger from the raids of the enemy." The tools, etc., were removed to Blue Mountain, the newest headquarters of Nitre Districts 8 and 9.¹⁸

The evidence is sparse, but sometime later the Confederates once again resumed work at Fort Payne Cave. The only clue for this is an August 13, 1864, voucher. John D. Borin (c1828-1875), a Stevenson resident who was superintendent of subdistrict E, was reimbursed for beeswax, thread, and tallow to make "candles to light Cave while the Hands are at work," and for \$100 rent "For use of 'Fort Payne Cave' for the purpose of making nitre."¹⁹

The productivity of Fort Payne or Manitou Cave is unknown. No figures have survived regarding the amount of saltpeter made at the site. But whatever the output, it was ultimately sent, like most of the saltpeter from north Alabama, to the powder mill at Augusta, Georgia. Between February 19 and 23, 1863, Pleasant S. Woodall (1831-1879), a Jackson County, Alabama, farmer, served as a "special messenger with nitre from Fort Paine to Rome Geo."²⁰

Epilogue

On February 24, 1990, thirty-three cavers from Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia were allowed by the current owner to visit Manitou Cave. During the visit the cave walls were scanned for names which would match the 1862-1864 Confederate payrolls and nine were found: S. M. Rowan Decr 12 1863, J. C. Anderson, J. W. Whorton, M. Y. Scot, J. Coleman, Tom Black, J. W. Palmer, D. B. Carr, and H. S. Rowan.

Acknowledgment

Robert Crumley of Northeast Alabama Grotto, 904 Grand Avenue N., Fort Payne, Alabama 35967, researched and supplied biographical data for several of Manitou Cave's laborers.

Footnotes

1. *Huntsville Grotto Newsletter*, II (June, 1961), 49; Confederate Payrolls, Record Group 109, National Archives; Lenoir Papers, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Military Map of the Tullahoma, Chickamauga, and Chattanooga Campaigns (1865, 1874, 1896).
2. Manitou Cave notes, February 24, 1990, in possession of Marion O. Smith.
3. Henry McCalley, *Report on the Valley Regions of Alabama, Part II. The Coosa Valley Region*. Special Report No. 9, Alabama Geological Survey (Montgomery, 1897), 185; Alabama Cave Survey, Birmingham.
4. Nelson Robinson to Samuel D. Morgan, May 10, 1861, Samuel Dold Morgan Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville; 1860 Census, Ala., Jackson, Bellefonte, 84; Jackson County Will Book M, p. 82.
5. William Gabbett file, Compiled Service Records, Cobb's Georgia Legion, Record Group 109, National Archives.
6. James M. Walker, Nathaniel A. Pratt, and James M. Hull files, Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens or Business Firms, Record Group 109, National Archives; William Gabbett file, CSR-Cobb's Legion, RG109, NA. Walker (1833-1875), a Davidson County, Tennessee, native, was a merchant and farmer at Cave Spring, Georgia. After superintending subdistrict A (July, 1862-Dec. 1863) he was Captain Gabbett's "Agent for Supplies." Pratt (1834-1906), a professor at Oglethorpe University, Georgia, immediately after the war was a medical doctor near Augusta, and later served as the chemist for the Sulphuric Acid and Super-Phosphate Company in South Carolina. Hull (c1836-Feb. 8, 1864), a native of Athens, Georgia, and an 1856 graduate of the university there, served six months as a Confederate private before promotion to lieutenant in the Nitre Bureau. He was an assistant superintendent in District No. 9 from September 2, 1862, until his death from "Typhoid Pneumonia." Shirley Kinney, Madge Tate, and Sandra Junkin, eds., *Floyd County, Georgia Cemeteries* (Rome, Ga., 1985), I, 529; 1860 Census, Ga., Floyd, Cave Spring Dist., 352; (1870), Subdiv. 141, 3; James M. Walker and James M. Hull files, Citizens Papers; J. R. Hopkins Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta; Ralph W. Donnelly, "Scientists of the Confederate Nitre and Mining Bureau," *Civil War History*, II (December, 1956), 76-77; *Augusta Constitutionalist*, August 1, 1865; *Athens Southern Banner*, March 30, 1864.
7. Noble Brothers & Co. and Thomas Hammack files, Citizens Papers.
8. J. J. Lathrop and Willoughby Hammack files, *ibid*.
9. John L. Barnard, V. C. Larmore, Thomas and Willoughby Hammack, Joseph Douglas, and John Stewart files, *ibid*. John L. Barnard (1821-1893) and Vance C. Larmore (1809-1886) were Georgia- and Virginia-born farmers living near Valley Head. Tombstone inscription, Valley Head Cemetery, DeKalb County, Alabama; 1860 Census, Ala., DeKalb, Northern Div., 38, 21; (1880), T6SR9E, 15; Letter from Robert Crumley, Fort Payne, Ala., ca. Oct. 23, 1990.
10. Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA; Compiled Service Records, James H. Young's Company, Nitre and Mining Bureau, Record Group 109, National Archives.
11. John Allan Wyeth, *That Devil Forrest* (New York, 1959 1899), 165-95; William Gabbett file, CSR-Cobb's Legion, RG109, NA.
12. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 70 vols. in 128 books (Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Ser. 1, XXX, Pt. III, 354; John W. Rowell, *Yankee Cavalrymen* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1971), ix, 141. Thomas (c1839-1896) was a Welsh-born tinsmith from Lykens, Dauphins County, Pennsylvania. *Ibid.*, 8n, 9, 11, 260.
13. Confederate Payrolls, RG109, NA.
14. *Ibid.*; John L. McIntosh file, Citizens Papers; William Gabbett file, CSR-Nitre Bureau, RG109, NA.
15. Bolling A. Stovall file, *ibid*.
16. *Official Records*, Ser. 1, XXXII, Pt. I, 128-29; CSRs-Nitre Bureau, RG109, NA.
17. *Official Records*, Ser. 1, XXXII, Pt. 1, 129.
18. John Jack file, Citizens Papers; Bolling A. Stovall file, CSR-Nitre Bureau, NA. Jack (b. c1835) was a Tennessee-born farmer living at or near Rawlingsville. 1860 Census, Ala., DeKalb, Northern Div., 47.
19. John D. Borin file, Citizens Papers; Marion O. Smith, *Saltpeter Mining and the Civil War in Jackson County, Alabama* (Maryville, Tenn., 1990), 35.
20. P. S. Woodall file, Citizens Papers; Pauline J. Gandrud, comp., *Alabama Records* (245 vols., Easley, S.C., 1981), Vol. 146, p. 76; 1860 Census, Ala., Jackson, 3rd Dist., 71.

HARRIS, THADDEUS MASON. 1768-1842.

THE JOURNAL OF A TOUR INTO THE TERRITORY NORTHWEST OF THE
ALLEGHANY MOUNTAINS: MADE IN THE SPRING OF THE YEAR 1803.
BOSTON, PRINTED by MANNING & LORING, 1805. VIII, 271P. Rc-2343.

CAVE-IN-ROCK, ILLINOIS, P. 176-178.

CURIOSITIES.] IN THE BANK OF THE OHIO RIVER, ABOUT ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY MILES ABOVE ITS JUNCTION WITH THE MISSISSIPPI, IS A LARGE CAVE CALLED BY THE INDIANS, "THE HABITATION OF THE GREAT SPIRIT." THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION OF IT WAS TAKEN ON THE SPOT BY A GENTLEMAN OF OBSERVATION. "FOR ABOUT THREE OR FOUR MILES BEFORE YOU COME TO THIS PLACE, YOU ARE PRESENTED WITH A SCENE TRULY ROMANTIC. ON THE INDIAN SIDE OF THE RIVER YOU SEE LARGE PONDEROUS ROCKS PILED ONE UPON ANOTHER, OF DIFFERENT COLOURS, SHAPE, AND SIZES. SOME APPEAR TO HAVE GONE THROUGH THE HANDS OF THE MOST SKILFUL ARTIST; SOME REPRESENT THE RUINS OF ANCIENT EDIFICES, OTHERS THROWN PROMISCUOUSLY IN AND OUT OF THE RIVER, AS IF NATURE INTENDED TO SHOW US WITH WHAT EASE SHE COULD HANDLE THESE MOUNTAINS OF SOLID ROCK. YOU SEE AGAIN PURLING STREAMS WINDING THEIR COURSE DOWN (P. 177) THEIR RUGGED FRONT; WHOLE APPEARANCE IN A MOON-LIGHT NIGHT, ADDED TO THE MURMURING NOISE THEY OCCASION, IS TRULY BEAUTIFUL, THOUGH IT RATHER DISPOSES THE MIND TO SOLEMNITY: WHILE OTHERS PROJECT SO FAR THAT THEY SEEM ALMOST DISPOSED TO LEAVE THEIR DOUBTFUL SITUATION. AFTER A SMALL RELIEF FROM THE SCENE, YOU COME TO A SECOND, WHICH IS SOMETHING SIMILAR TO THE FIRST; AND HERE, WITH STRICT SERUTINY [sic] YOU DISCOVER THE CAVE. BEFORE ITS MOUTH STANDS A DELIGHTFUL GROVE OF CYPRESS TREES, ARRANGED IMMEDIATELY ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER. THEY HAVE A FINE APPEARANCE, AND ADD MUCH TO THE CHEERFULNESS OF THE PLACE. THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE IS BUT A FEW FEET ABOVE THE ORDINARY LEVEL OF THE RIVER, AND IS FORMED BY A SEMICIRCULAR ARCH OF ABOUT EIGHTY FEET AT ITS BASE AND TWENTY-FIVE FEET IN HEIGHT, THE TOP PROJECTING CONSIDERABLY OVER, FORMING A REGULAR CONCAVE. FROM THE ENTRANCE TO THE EXTREMITY, WHICH IS ABOUT ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY FEET, IT HAS A REGULAR AND GRADUAL ASCENT. ON EITHER SIDE IS A SOLID BENCH OF ROCK; THE ARCH COMING TO A POINT ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE CAVE, WHERE YOU DISCOVER AN OPENING SUFFICIENTLY LARGE TO RECEIVE THE BODY OF A MAN, THROUGH WHICH COMES A (P. 178) SMALL STREAM OF VERY CLEAR AND WELL-TASTED WATER, WHICH IS MADE USE OF BY THOSE WHO VISIT THIS PLACE.. FROM THIS HOLE A SECOND CAVE IS DISCOVERED, WHOSE DIMENSIONS, FORM, &C. ARE NOT KNOWN. THE ROCK IS OF LIMESTONE. THE SIDES OF THE CAVE ARE FILLED WITH INSCRIPTIONS, NAMES OF PERSONS, DATES, &C.

Submitted by Bill Torode

A Tale Concerning Caves Under Lexington

From *Ancestors West*,
Santa Barbara County Genealogical Society,
Vol. 18, No. 4, Winter, 1992.
by Tabitha Burnside Walker

Submitted by Wm. R. Halliday

*[The story below is taken from "The Kentucky Explorer," September, 1992.
The tale first appeared in "The Illustrated Kentuckian," circa 1893.]*

More than thirty-five years ago, this story I relate was told me by my grandmother HURST. She was the daughter of Richard ALLEN, of whom GREEN writes words of praise in his History of the First Families of Kentucky. Grandmother was very proud of her old Virginia blue blood. She, Patsy ALLEN, was first cousin to Patsy GATEWOOD, my grandmother BURNSIDE, who was a grandddaughter of Lord GATEWOOD, of England. Patsy ALLEN was born at Bryan's Station, five miles from Lexington, was a child there when Simon GIRTY surrounded the Fort with a band of Indians, and the women and children were sent to the spring for water with the Indians in ambush nearby. Her parents moved to Lexington, where she attended the first school taught by McKINNEY, in a log schoolhouse. This is what happened while she attended school there.

Near where Lexington now stands, said she, was a large cave. The scholars had heard wild stories about it, and would go there and look down into the black opening with awe. One day they concluded to explore it, so the largest boys cut down a sapling twenty feet tall, trimmed the limbs to serve as a ladder, and put it down the hole. Then, unknown to the teacher, they assembled early next morning, with torches and lunches prepared. All went down into the cave. They landed in what seemed to be a long gallery, with others leading in every direction. In these rooms and galleries were bones, beautiful Indian relics, pottery, inscriptions on the walls, etc. So busy were they examining these curiosities, and running from one gallery to another that they lost themselves. They wandered on and on, never finding any end, but always the long, beautiful galleries leading, one into another, all filled with countless, curious things.

They rested, ate their lunches, then went on seeking for the entrances. My grandmother being the youngest, became exhausted and the older ones carried her. At last, after what seemed to them an age, they heard the reports of guns and shouting of men, which meant to their affrighted hearts that rescuers were at hand. McKINNEY, when he found they were in the cave, had assembled the neighbors as soon as possible, and all day long they too had been tramping in these catacombs, marking their way as they went; hunting for the runaways; for it was dark, grandmother said, when they got them all out.

Next day the neighbors came with their wagons and teams, cut down large trees, and filled the entrance with logs, earth and stones.

A century has passed, for this event took place in 1783. The eyes of the children who looked on those strange chambers have closed in death, the young feet whose footprints still linger undisturbed in the silent halls, have crumbled to dust; while the voice of her, the youngest of the band, has long been silent; and still the entrance to those wonderful chambers she described remains unknown.

I sometimes see a reference to the "Catacombs of Lexington," and many regard them as a myth. But I always think they do exist, for grandmother explored them one hundred years ago.

having in charge 3 Prisoners, captured while on picket, and being on their way to camp with them, were halted on the road by some unknown person or persons, who demanded that they surrender, which was promptly refused; whereupon the party was fired upon, without injury, however, to any one, and the fire instantly returned by Captain Jenks, killing 1 man, whose name was ascertained to be Allen Basham. Captain Jenks and Corporal Ramsey succeeded in reaching camp safely with 2 of the 3 prisoners, 1 of the prisoners escaping during the encounter.

At 4 o'clock on the following morning I had the column in motion, and by daylight reached the saltpeter works on Buffalo River, 14 miles from Kingston, where I completely surprised the small force there employed, and captured 17 out of 20; the lieutenant in charge and 2 men being engaged at work in the timber a short distance from the buildings, succeeded in making good their escape.

The buildings, fourteen in number, very extensive, entirely new and of good workmanship, together with the steam-engines, three boilers, seven large iron kettles, weighing according to the bill for the same, found on the premises, 800 pounds each, besides half a ton of saltpeter, a large fire-proof iron safe (Hall's patent), three Concord wagons, two carts, and all the appurtenances of a first-class establishment of this character were completely destroyed by fire and otherwise.

After remaining at this place about six hours, I moved my command to a point 4 miles below, on Buffalo River, and sent a detachment of 100 men, under the command of Captains [Alexander G.] McQueen and [David C.] Dinsmore, of the First Iowa Cavalry, to destroy an establishment of similar character. The working party, having a lookout posted on an elevated point on the mountains, escaped, but the detachment took possession of the works, which consisted of several frame buildings, entirely new, with four large iron kettles in full operation, all of which were destroyed.

In the mean time I captured, in the valley and mountains skirting the Buffalo River, some 20 prisoners, all notorious outlaws, and a like number of horses.

Having been entirely successful in accomplishing all that was assigned to me, without casualty to any of my command, I started on my return, and recrossed the mountains in the night time, arriving in camp at Carrollton, Ark., on the evening of January 12, delivering my prisoners, to the number of 39, and 39 horses and mules, to Lieutenant-Colonel [Elias B.] Baldwin, of the Eighth Missouri Cavalry, Provost-marshal of the Third Division, Army of the Frontier.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,
J. W. CALDWELL
Major First Iowa Cavalry

Brig. Gen. F. J. Herron
Commanding Third Division, Army of the Frontier.

The Hole Story: Howe Caverns

By Robert A. Holt
American Cave Conservation Association

Submitted by Fred Grady

Prior to 1842, there had been talk of a mysterious blowing rock on the side of a hill north of the Cobleskill Creek in rural upstate New York in Schoharie County, as on warm days a strong current of cool air issued from a crevice in a rocky ledge.

Lester Howe, a newcomer to the valley, found these references to a blowing rock alluring. Howe was a dairy farmer and his house and barn were located on the south side of the Cobleskill Creek. His curiosity was increased when, on hot days, he often found his cows standing out in the hot sun instead of under the cool shade trees. Howe's cows grazed on pasture land located on the north side of the creek where the blowing rock was said to have been located.

On May 22, 1842, Howe set out to fathom the mystery. He found the herd standing near a clump of bushes and from within the bushes he could feel breeze issuing out. Howe gave credit to his cow, Millicent, for the discovery of what would now become Howe's Cave.

The next day, Howe fastened a tape at the entrance, to be unwound as he penetrated the unknown depths so that he could find his way back. A deep passageway indicated that a cavern of vast extent stretched beyond in appalling silence and blackness. Terrifying shadows appeared on the formations, seen by the flickering light of his lantern. Clambering over wet and slippery rocks, he made slow progress and was finally blocked by a body of water.

Later that week, he carried materials into the cave with which to build a raft to cross the lake. After an eighth-of-a-mile trip on the raft he reached the head of this underground body of water and was able to explore that part of the cave now open to the public.

Mr. Howe's discovery was heralded to the world by newspapers, natural histories, encyclopedias, National Geographic and in special books on caves. The publicity Howe received encouraged him to open the cave to the public, the admittance fee being fifty cents. In those days, the trip was a feat of skill and endurance. Each visitor was provided with special clothing and rubber boots, as it was necessary to crawl, climb, and wade. One also had to carry an oil lantern or torch for light and a box lunch as tours lasted for eight hours.

Later, the original passageway from the entrance was lighted with gas to the foot of the lake. With the advent of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad in 1865, the cave became a leading tourist attraction. A hotel was erected upon the cave entrance where cool air from the cave came up through the floor to comfort the guests as they ate their meals in the hotel dining room. This hotel burned in 1872. A second was built and likewise was destroyed by fire. The third hotel still stands today.

The most interesting event during the Howe's ownership of the cave was the marriage of his daughter Miss Harriet Elgiva Howe, to Hiram Shipman Dewey, on September 27, 1854, in a room then called the Bridal Chamber. Today, well over 315 weddings have since been solemnized at a new Bridal Altar.

To keep his small empire afloat, Howe entered into a joint agreement with railroadman/politician Joseph Ramsey and two other partners to form the Howe's Cave Association. As time went on Howe noticed that Ramsey would run the business differently and Howe's beloved cave received less attention as Ramsey started a quarry to manufacture limestone for cement. Howe sold his interest in the Association and retired to his farm across the valley. The operation of the cave under the new management was also a loss, and after a few years of unsuccessful efforts, the association closed the cave to the public.

In 1890, a young steam fitting and heating engineer from Syracuse, John Mosner, was placed in charge of some installation in the nearby village of Cobleskill. While there he learned of Howe's Cave, which was then still closed to the general public. His curiosity was aroused and engaging a former guide he made the trip through the cave. He was greatly impressed with its beauty.

In 1927, while returning from Florida with his wife, he stopped at Luray Caverns, in Virginia, a place he had visited once before. However, a great surprise awaited him as electric lighting had been installed which vastly increased the beauty of the caverns' formations, and steps and paths had been built so that now the visitor could walk through without unusual effort.

He immediately realized the possibility of developing the then unused Howe's Cave and making it a place of like enchantment through similar improvement. Upon his return to Syracuse, he discussed with Virgil H. Clymer, an attorney, his plan of forming a corporation to take over the cave. In October 1927, a corporation called Howe Caverns, Inc., was formed to finance the \$500 project.

Upon the formation of the corporation and the raising of sufficient funds, the work of reconditioning the cave commenced. Smith, Golder & Homberger of Saranac Lake, NY, were employed as engineers. Mr. Henry Homberger was placed in charge. He had a survey of the interior of the caverns and then laid the survey out on the surface. The original passageway presented so many difficulties that the only way to bring the public into the caverns would be to sink a shaft and install elevators at the extreme end of the cavern. This was done under the direction of John Robertson of Scranton, PA, who specialized in the digging of coal mine shafts. When finished, there had been 3400 tons of cement and 105 tons of reinforced steel put into the 156-foot shaft.

To mark the desired location of the shaft, a test bore hole was drilled through the caverns' ceiling and came through only three inches from the marked spot. During the period of surveying, the building of cavern walks was started by two shifts of workmen. Practically all the electric cable, many miles of it, was passed down through the borehole and rewound on a reel on the floor of the caverns. All cement and most of the gravel used in making the railing ties were poured down the same hole.

At the entrance, a lodge was erected on a hill which commands a 20-mile view of mountain and valley below. The architect was inspired by the wonderful old manor houses of England.

Before the elevator shaft was completed, all workmen had to enter a temporary opening near the old natural entrance and work their way up through the foot of the lake. They also had to carry on their backs all their tools and material to be used. When it was recalled that the elevator shaft was not ready for elevators before January 1, 1929, and that the caverns were opened in May of that year, it can be readily seen that the greater part of the material except the crushed stone for the walks were carried in that way.

It was the desire of the management that the lighting would be indirect and the wiring would be out of sight as much as possible. After the elevator shaft was finished in early 1929, the men entered and left the caverns through means of a bucket which was lowered and raised by a cable. Mrs. Mabel Sagendorf, the caverns' first corporate secretary, often had to go up and down the shaft in this manner. "Once he wanted me to go with him," she said of her husband, "which I did. A never to be forgotten, interesting ride."

After the work was finished, Howe Caverns opened to visitors on May 27, 1929. The management extended an invitation to visit the caverns the first day to all stockholders and about five thousand editors, geologists, museum managers and other prominent citizens.

Today, 63 years later and 150 years after Lester Howe's discovery, Howe Caverns entertains over 250,000 visitors each year. The above ground facilities have expanded a great deal since 1929 to include gift shops, a restaurant, a motel, a snack bar, and horseback trail rides and cross-country skiing when weather permits. In 1993, a new addition to the entrance lodge will include a museum depicting the history of the caverns and a scientific/geological portion as well. Howe Caverns is open every day of the year 9 a.m.-6 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.