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IN MEMORIAM

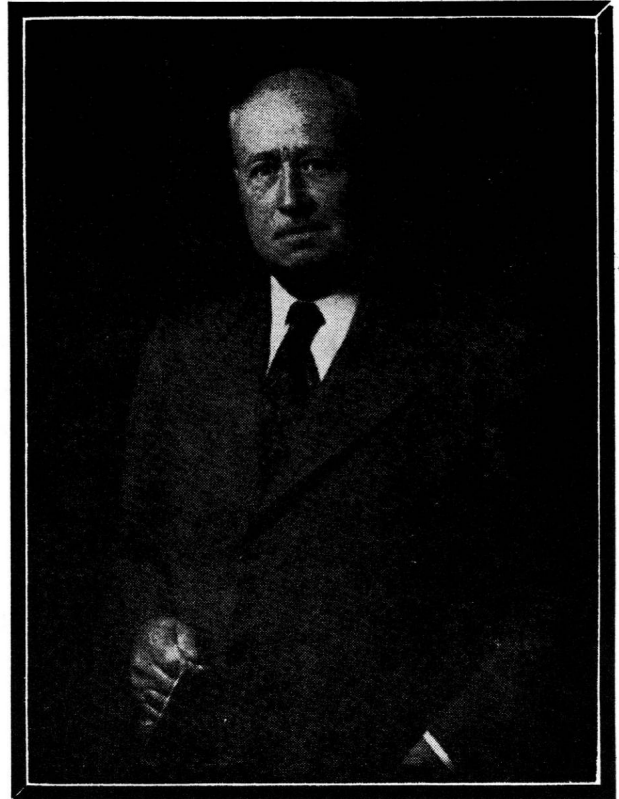
It is with heavy heart that we report the loss of our beloved president, Judge J. A. Smith. This issue is the first one in almost twelve years that has been written without the knowledge that our president, who knew more about the history of the county than anyone, would be critically reading the material. Judge Smith passed away on January 27, quite suddenly. He had attended the December Christmas party of the Historical Society and had seemed to enjoy it very much, but in January he had become ill and had been in the hospital for several days. The end came a few days after he returned home, although he had seemed to be improving.

Judge Smith helped organize the Calaveras County Historical Society in 1952 and has served as president continuously since that time. He is best known because of the forty years he served on the Superior Court bench of Calaveras County. However, he was very active in Boy Scout work, educational activities, and the County Chamber of Commerce.

His greatest love was for the history of his native Calaveras region. He loved to study and research its history and for thirty years he maintained a weekly column in the local newspapers, publishing the material he was able to discover about the county history. He became not only the authority on Calaveras County but on the central Mother Lode as well. Other historical writers were indebted to him for his research in the county archives as his columns were carefully preserved in his five scrapbooks. These scrapbooks give a rather complete account of the history of the county.

In 1957, when the "Judge" (as everyone called him) retired as Superior Court Judge, the Calaveras Historical Society named him "Mr. Calaveras" for his historical writings and inspirational leadership. The Board of Supervisors unanimously passed an ordinance in 1962 calling him "Mr. Calaveras County."

Few men have left a greater imprint upon their home community and few historians have done so much to preserve and popularize the history of their native county. His influence will continue on down through the years in his writings. We will miss him very much but we are happy that we had the opportunity to walk with him for a little ways.



Judge J. A. Smith

MOANING CAVE

By W. P. FULLER, Jr.

(As Presented at the Calaveras County Historical Society, September 26, 1963)

Limestone caves have been one of the leading natural attractions of Calaveras County ever since the Gold Rush. They have been exceeded, in this respect, only by the Big Trees. In recent years Moaning Cave has received the largest share of attention, among the caves, both from sightseers and from scientific circles. Under the careful management of Mr. Addison Carley, this unusual cavern has become a must for the visitor who really wants to become acquainted with the unusual features of our county, and we are much indebted to him for his part in opening and developing such an interesting geological and archaeological occurrence. We are concerned tonight, however, not with an underground excursion in Moaning Cave, but rather to inquire into its geological beginnings and the part that it has played in the history of our Calaveras community.

The history of Moaning Cave may well have commenced some sixty million years ago, before the Sierra Nevada mountains had been uplifted to their present lofty heights. At that time, the topography of much of Calaveras County consisted of gently rolling hills, and here and there a higher mountain rising above the general level. Large but fairly sluggish streams meandered



Dedication of plaque near Mt. Ranch, in January, of 1962, where the last stage coach hold-up occurred in Calaveras County. From left to right: Judge J. A. Smith, speaker; Louie Domenghini, Master of Ceremonies; Mrs. Agnes Guerard, only survivor of the tragedy; Archie Stevenot, "Mr. Mother Lode"; Bill Russell, Noble Grand Humbug, E. C. V., Matuca Chapter. The marking of the historical site was a joint project of the Calaveras County Historical Society and the Matuca Chapter of E Clampus Vitus.

through this terrain, streams whose fossil remnants were to become so well-known to the California gold miners as the Tertiary gold channels. Geologic conditions were so stable that the streams had ground their gravel beds almost to the point where only the hardest material, quartz, was left. This long period of geological quiescence allowed the slowly moving groundwater to dissolve large open caverns out of the limestone beds. It took untold thousands, or more likely, millions of years for the underground water, locally acidized by decaying vegetation and by mineral substances, to remove by solution the many, many tons of limestone rock. Because most such rock is so tight and impervious, this action had to originate along fault zones and their associated cracks and permeable openings. This explains, in part at least, the irregular and complicated shapes of such caves. The greater part of the solution took place in earliest Tertiary time, but no doubt continued through the Eocene, Miocene, and Pliocene epochs of the Tertiary period. Most geologists today are agreed that the formation of the Sierran caves occurred beneath the groundwater table, and so this solution had to have taken place before the modern topography was carved out by the present-day streams.

Hence, by late Tertiary time, when the gigantic range we now call the Sierra Nevada came into being, the caves had already been excavated, but still had clean walls without the stalactites and stalagmites that form the spectacular speleological scenery of today. Tertiary time came to a close and the Quaternary period began. The

Sierra Nevada mass rose up in response to geological forces. The streams were steepened, ran swifter, and cut the deep canyons like the Stanislaus, and sculptured the sharp draws and ravines we all know so well. As the new topography took shape, the underground water-level dropped and the caves were left, as it were, high and dry on the mountainsides. The water was drained from the upper chambers, and a wholly new geological process was set into motion. Rainwater, acidized, and percolating downward through the limestone to find the groundwater level, dissolved calcium carbonate and other mineral substances. Some of this mineralized water dripped into the cave chambers and started precipitating on the walls, commencing the build-up of the beautiful speleothem formations. Thus the making of a Sierran Cave included a very long period of solution of the limestone below the water level to create the cavity, and then in a new erosion cycle, the deposition, within this opening, now drained of water, of the stalactites, stalagmites, and other speleothems.

Up to this point in geologic history, the story of Moaning Cave was quite the same as the many other Sierran limestone caverns. It was now that the particular shape of the upper part of Moaning Cave began to create unusual conditions. Referring to the vertical diagram or section view, it will be seen that there are two steep entrances, both opening downward into the top of the immense upper chamber. These entrances have undoubtedly been open for much of the time during and since the ice ages. We can say this because of the detailed archaeological investigations that have been conducted in recent years in the deposit on the floor of the big chamber.

As time passed on and **Homo Sapiens** came to live in the area, the cave was found and entered by these earliest residents of Calaveras, ten or twelve thousand years ago, and possibly as much as forty or fifty thousand years ago. Every now and then, adventuresome individuals became trapped in the cavern, and fell into the main chamber. Perhaps this room was used at times for the disposal of bodies, thrown from the ledge, or from the surface, into the chamber. One archaeologist estimated that there are the remains of a hundred or more individuals in the debris on the floor of the big room. But as many thousands of years elapsed during the accumulation of this deposit, these people were trapped or their bodies thrown in only at rare intervals. Perhaps the cave was rediscovered many times in its history. It is doubtful that the most recent of the native peoples, the Miwoks, had anything to do with it, as they believed in the existence of "Che-ha-lum-che, the rock giant who carries on his back a big basket which, like himself, is of rock. He lives in caves, and comes out only at night, and wanders about seeking Miwok to eat. He prefers women. Of these he catches and carries off all he can find. Sometimes he makes a crying noise like a baby, to lure them. If they come he seizes them and tosses them into his big basket and carries them to his cave, where he eats them." This from C. Hart Merriam's book, *The Dawn of the World*.

Suddenly, with the discovery of gold, the peaceful countryside was invaded by a horde of gold-crazed pro-

spectors. These were of a very adventurous and inquiring type, and it was not long before the accessible caves were found. There is a reference in **Bancroft's History** of an exploration of a Calaveras cavern as early as August, 1849, which might well have been Moaning Cave. The first well-substantiated reference to Moaning Cave is contained in the December 7th, 1851 issue of the **Daily Alta California**, of "Solomon's Hole." This description based on a visit and correspondence of Dr. J. B. Trask, the first California State Geologist, so closely resembles the cave, that there is little question that it refers to it. A local company of miners had located a claim over the entrance, and had explored the cavern to a depth of 450 feet. Undoubtedly any skulls found then were removed as curios and souvenirs. Confirming these early explorations, Mr. Carley, in 1922, found a miner's pick and a whiskey bottle, and in 1953, a whale oil lamp. There are further articles in early papers, which may refer to this cave. There is no question but that early visitors to Solomon's Hole found skulls, as Trask mentions picking one up. The "Hole" was well known in that era, but could be entered only with great difficulty, due to its shape and size.

However, after the days of the gold rush, little is recorded of the cavern, and although local people were familiar with its existence, it was generally avoided. It is reported that Clay Hellock, superintendent of the Confidence mine, and an early spelunker, was lowered into the cave on a rope, with a barley sack soaked in coal oil for a light, in the 80's or 90's. Percy and Orrie Sloan, who mined for many years in the immediate vicinity, once made an attempt to explore the opening, but decided that there was a deficiency of oxygen inside. There may have been other attempts to enter the cave, but we have no record of them. The moaning sound and the steep entrances undoubtedly gave it a bad name, and the local people prudently gave it a wide berth.

In 1921, Addison Carley, a member of a pioneer Calaveras family, became interested in "Spelunking." At that time he was a construction superintendent on a P. G. & E. job in the valley, and came up to Calaveras on holidays. With his friends Dan Malatesta and Clarence Eltringham, he decided to explore the cave on Malatesta's claim. He had often heard his uncles, Lou Sanguinetti and Mills Mitchell, describe its location and the moan. So on August 20th of that year, they tied a rope to an oak tree growing near the old entrance, and Addison Carley shinnied down the rope for some distance. He soon came to the conclusion that he was in a somewhat precarious position, and that more adequate equipment was needed. The next attempt was made on Christmas Day, 1921. A windlass was borrowed from the Sloans, and Mr. Carley was able to get down to the bottom of the big chamber, the first person to do so since the gold rush. This paved the way for his associates to continue with the exploration and to plan ways and means of developing the cave for sightseeing. Mr. Carley was tied down to his job, and was unable to participate actively in this phase, but members of his family represented his part in the venture. A well-written account of one of the early trips underground, using the windlass, was written by Sheldon Davis, with photographs by V. C. Martin, and published in the **Stockton Record** of April 1st, 1922.

The Carley group cleared the second entrance for access to the cave, and then engaged Mr. Tangerman of the Stockton Iron Works to design and build the remarkable spiral staircase used today to climb down into the big chamber. A detailed write-up of the opening of the cave and these improvements appeared in the special Mother Lode Highway edition of the **Calaveras Prospect**, November 24, 1923. The stairs contained 150 steps, and is enclosed with spiral metal guard rails for the safety of the visitors. Electric lights were also installed at strategic locations to show off the cave formations to best advantage. Unfortunately, this construction work upset the original atmospheric conditions in the underground chambers, and stopped the celebrated moaning sound.

A year or so after the opening of the cave, Tom and Lee Burroughs entered the scene, and the next few years were very trying as well as expensive ones for the Carleys. The Burroughs persuaded Malatesta and Eltringham to sell out to them. They then, unbeknownst to Addison Carley, purchased a 15 acre tract next to the cave. When Mr. Carley discovered this, he brought suit against the Burroughs to either buy him out, or to sell their interest to him. Meanwhile the Burroughs had had a survey made, to show that the cave was actually on the 15 acre tract and not on the original 40 acre claim owned by Malatesta. So they proceeded to ask for an injunction against the Carleys to restrain them from entering the premises or exercising their rights of ownership. Judge Smith denied this request, and after a lengthy trial, in 1926 ruled for the Carleys, finding that the boundary line between sections 31 and 32 was as contended by the Burroughs, but finding in favor of the Carleys in their defense of estoppel and plea of breach of trust. This action entitled the Carleys to acquire full title to the premises. The Burroughs appealed but finally the State Supreme Court, in July 1930, upheld Judge Smith's decision, and the Carleys' troubles were over.

Subsequently, Addison Carley bought out the interest of his mother and brother, and he and Mrs. Carley now have the full ownership of the property. In addition, they have also purchased another 230 acres adjoining the cave, from the Halbert estate. In his successful operation of Moaning Cave for some 41 years, during which he estimates over 200,000 people have visited the attraction, Mr. Carley has encouraged geologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, and spelunkers to study the interesting features of this geological curiosity. Certain very significant observations have resulted from this policy.

In June, 1950, Professor Robert Heizer, of the University of California and A. E. Treganza of San Francisco State College, visited the cave, and as a result, Dr. Heizer arranged for William J. Wallace, of the University of California, to make a detailed study, including excavation of a pit in the deposit on the floor of the big chamber. Mr. Wallace reported his findings in 1951, in the University's Archaeological Survey Report No. 12. He described the main deposit as a red clay with layers of dripstone, sloping down from the north wall, and containing human

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The Calaveras County Historical Society meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Courthouse in San Andreas. Dinner meetings are held each quarter at different places in the county.

EDITORIAL

The historical society is studying the plan to set up a Judge J. A. Smith Memorial Fund for the purpose of offering an annual scholarship to graduating seniors at Bret Harte and Calaveras High Schools who are majoring in history. The funds for these scholarships would be raised in various ways. In this way the Society would honor the memory of Judge Smith and at the same time help a worthwhile student to get an education with a major in the area which the Judge loved best, history.

I'm sure all members of the Society extend our best wishes and pledge our full cooperation and support to our new president, Paul Lewis. It is always difficult to follow in the footsteps of a great man, but Paul has served for several years as vice-president of the society and fully understands the problems and responsibilities of the office of President. We feel sure that under his leadership the society will continue to grow and serve the people of Calaveras County well in its efforts to preserve the history of our region.

Moaning Cave

(Continued from page 3)

and fauna bones and some artifacts. Overlying this formation, and apparently washed in from the south side of the cave, he found considerable gravel, also containing a few artifacts. He concluded at that time that the human remains and artifacts in the red clay dated from the Valley Middle period, about 1500 B.C. to 50 A.D.

Wallace also stated that he believed that the cave was used as a burial place.

A year later, Mr. Phil C. Orr, under the sponsorship of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, made further excavations and studies. Mr. Orr investigated the rate of growth of the dripstone material, or speleothem, on various objects, and concluded that the human remains were very old, helping to upset the theories of a number of prominent anthropologists on the subject of the antiquity of man in America. Moaning Cave has thus become a key archaeological site, and has contributed an important link to our knowledge of man's history on this hemisphere. Mr. Orr's conclusions are interesting enough to be quoted in their entirety. He says, "Excavation and study of the occurrence of human bones under the dripstone capping in Moaning Cave show that man has been in the region for more than 12,000 years. While the human bone is mineralized and is associated with the bone of other mammals, no extinct species have so far been identified.

"There were two entrances to the cave through which human material has come—the 'original' entrance, which supplied the bulk of early materials as well as recent, and the present one, opened artificially in 1922, but which had been open about 3400 years ago to probably about two or three hundred years ago. Skulls and other bones are so shattered from their 165 foot fall and so coated with speleothem, sometimes to depths of several inches, that only a lucky find or weeks of work would allow for a restoration to tell us much of the physical type of person. All artifacts so far recovered have been in late strata.

"No indications of intentional burials have come to light. Four possible explanations for the presence of human bone in Calaveras County cave have been made. 1) Accidental, the death trap theory; 2) Disposal of prisoners; 3) Disposal of dead during pestilence or war, and 4) Disposal of dead by prehistoric semi-nomadic people in various caves. Of the four, the second and third can be ruled out so far as Moaning Cave is concerned, although these practices may have occurred in other Calaveras caves. It is certain that only one or two bodies entered Moaning Cave at a time, over a period of at least 12,000 years, a fact which has been determined by measurements of speleothems growing on iron during the past 29 years." This is quoted from a paper by Mr. Orr, entitled "Excavations in Moaning Cave," published by the Santa Barbara Museum in 1952. The following year, Mr. Orr published a second paper, "Speleothem Age Dating," in the **Bulletin** of the **Texas Archaeological Society**, Vol. 24, in which he went into further details about this method of inquiry, and in which he stated that "at this time it appears reasonable to suppose the human remains in Moaning Cave date back at least 12,000 years, with the possibility that they may be as much as 50,000 years old."

In recent years the Stanford Grotto chapter of the National Speleological Society has mapped the cave (1951) and has compiled a bibliography of all known references to caves in Calaveras County. This has recently been expanded, under the direction of Mr. William Halliday, and published in a limited edition, as **Caves of California**.