

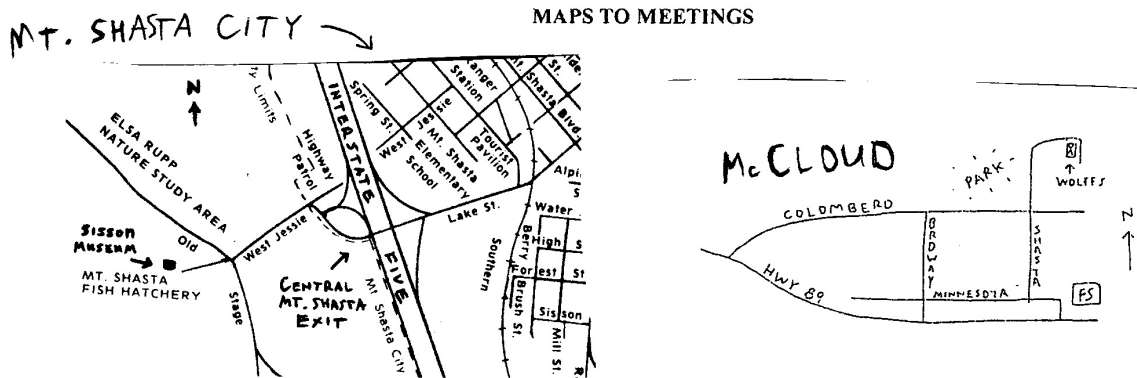


JOHN MUIR CALIFORNIA CAVER

The SAG RAG is published by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society, Grotto meetings are held at different locations the fourth Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Meeting locations are announced in the SAG RAG, Membership dues are \$6 dollars per year and include newsletter subscription. Original material not otherwise noted is copyright to the SAG RAG. Such material may be copied with credit given to the author and the SAG RAG. For use outside of the caving community, please seek the permission of the author or editor first. Send material for publication any time to Bighorn Broeckel, 2916 Deer Meadows Road, Yreka, CA 96097 or <jbroeckel@snowcrest.net>. For more on SAG, check the web site at <<http://www.caves.org/grotto/sag>>.

CAVERS CALENDAR 2003

- July 3-6 KMCTF Marbles Speleocamp. Contact Bill Broeckel (530) 842-3917.
 July 12 (Sat.) SAG meeting 7:30 pm at Sisson Museum. Ray Miller (530) 926-2440.
 Aug 4-8 NSS Convention in Porterville, CALIFORNIA. (408) 356-8506.
 Aug 15 (Fri.) SAG meeting 7:30 pm at the Wolffs in McCloud. (530) 964-3123.



SAG RAG SUMMARY (for convenience of CAL CAVER)

Judy Broeckel reviews SAG's Hat Creek campout, and the report includes a copy of a map showing the two caves which were surveyed during the weekend: Plastic Bag and Alice.

Bighorn provides commentary on selected caving references (the ones we could find quick around the house) from the writings of John Muir. A famous environmentalist, mountaineer, and writer, Muir has been designated the official mentor of the 2003 NSS Convention in Porterville. How much of a caver was John Muir? Look and see for yourself. This issue contains references to an unnamed cave (KY), Horse Cave (KY), Mammoth Cave (KY), Cave City Cave (CA), Pluto's Cave (CA), and Captain Jacks Cave (CA).

The Kentucky references are written in journal form, in which the first person identifier may be missing. Used to do that myself sometimes. The first cave Muir encounters in Kentucky has a vertical entrance. Muir somehow overcomes the unconscious daring of a new young caver, and resists the temptation to slide down the slippery pole into the pit. Failure to resist may have been his end, just five days into his new life completely devoted to the love of nature. His early speleo instincts are further displayed at these Kentucky entrances as he considers the ferns, air flow and temperature, and immediately adopts an attitude of cave conservation at Mammoth Cave. He approaches caves from a pre-existing perspective of conservation.

Next we have a detailed description of his trip to California's first show cave, now known as California Caverns. To finish this commentary is a general reference to the caves of California and visits to lava caves near Mt. Shasta. All of Muir's caving was done way back in the old days, before there was the NSS. You have to wonder how much secret caving he did. John Muir wandered the mountains for many years, and with his mind set on conservation, may well have chosen not to write about many of the caves he saw. So here you have John Muir – California Caver. The cover shows John Muir in about 1870, in his early thirties.

BB

THE CHAIR CREAKS – More on 2003 CAVE CONSERVATION WEEKEND

By Liz Wolff

A little history of the cave conservation weekend:

Since most caves in our immediate area are snowed in during the winter months, and many of our members ski, we decided to back-country ski instead of traveling to another area to get underground. This gradually gained the rather facetious name of a “cave conservation” trip. A few years ago, I decided rather unilaterally, to try making it a cave conservation weekend in deed. Most of the active grotto members went along with the idea, and a cave cleanup of one of the usually accessible and over used Shasta Valley caves was done. From that beginning, and the unusual finds that were made in the caves, it has grown into somewhat of a tradition. In this case, a good and beneficial tradition for all three public caves.

When we began it, the Shasta Valley caves were privately owned and nothing was being done for their benefit. Since the FS has completed a land exchange, more benefits have occurred, although gating the bat caves may not seem to be much of a benefit to most people. The bats have certainly benefited, and two of the caves have been open for use on a rotating basis, while one is open year round. **LW**

SHASTA AREA GROTTA MEETING May 11, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 11:04 am at Mark Fritzke's and Linda Villatore's home in Arcata. Present were Bill Broeckel, Jim & Liz Wolff: Mark Fritzke, Linda Villatore, and Dick LaForge, who arrived on bicycle. Minutes were accepted as corrected. Treasurer's Report: April balance \$565.91. SAG RAG: Bill Broeckel was reminded that the newsletter is to be mailed in a timely manner.

Correspondence: Liz Wolff reports on correspondence with Randi Smith, a Fish and Game historian regarding a cave on Mount Persephone, which turns out to be Potter Creek Cave. Pertaining materials were given to Bill Broeckel, some of which push back the original modern discovery by four years. An e-mail message was received from Gary Werner of the Etna Elementary School asking for help with a cave related class field trip. Matt Reece writes that he is back another summer as seasonal cave specialist at Lava Beds. The grotto also met with Mike Hupp, the new District Ranger for McCloud and Mt. Shasta. Many topics were discussed, including Bat Cave. Mike has experience in cave management from dealing with issues at Mowich Cave. He states that his new District is larger than some National Forests, and that we should leave the meeting without elevated expectations. No promises, however, he hopes to surprise us and get some things done on behalf of caves.

Old Business: COG issues. Somebody needs to represent the grotto at the COG meeting at convention this-summer. Job descriptions for grotto officers. Dick suggested that the wording for the Vice-Chairman to provide for “regular training program” be moderated so as not to place such a heavy burden on the office or the grotto. Other topics discussed were Indian relations, RNA status, cave register program, CMP on National Forests, declining trends in recreation use, and the fact that CMP will ultimately result in restricted access to cavers. Regarding Indian relations, we were thinking we should be open to site specific arrangements to accommodate their concerns.

New Business: No new business.

Trip Reports: No trip reports, however, Mark Fritzke regaled us with tales of a land surveyor. Also with stories from karst in Trinity County, keeping a good pace in Borneo, speleothem repair by Claude Smith in Butter Creek Cave, entrance culvert installation at Lechuguilla, and behind the scenes at On Your Knees Cave in Alaska. He also has been mapping the trees and purging the exotics from his yard, and further entertained us with a giant swing he rigged with a park bench suspended by rope from two large trees. The limiting factor was when one of the ropes runs into a rain gutter on the house. There was also a turkey dinner, and eggs and rice for breakfast, so by the time we got around to conducting the meeting, we were all well fed.

Meetings: June 13th weekend is the Annual Hat Creek Camp Out.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Bill Broeckel standing in for Melanie.

BB

Annual SAG Hat Creek Trip June 13 – 15, 2003

By Judy Broeckel

I often wonder how I get myself into these things. What was I doing out at Hat Creek caving without Bill? Luckily for people like me, who sort of bumble along, there are a number of kind, friendly, and helpful people in this world, who help make life, and Hat Creek trips, possible. Jim and Liz Wolff and Niels Smith had already put up the NSS signs and set up camp at the Hat Creek Campground when I arrived explaining I wanted to run into Susanville to pick up my daughter, Becky, before returning to camp. We made it back by 8 pm, finding other cavers already settled into camp.

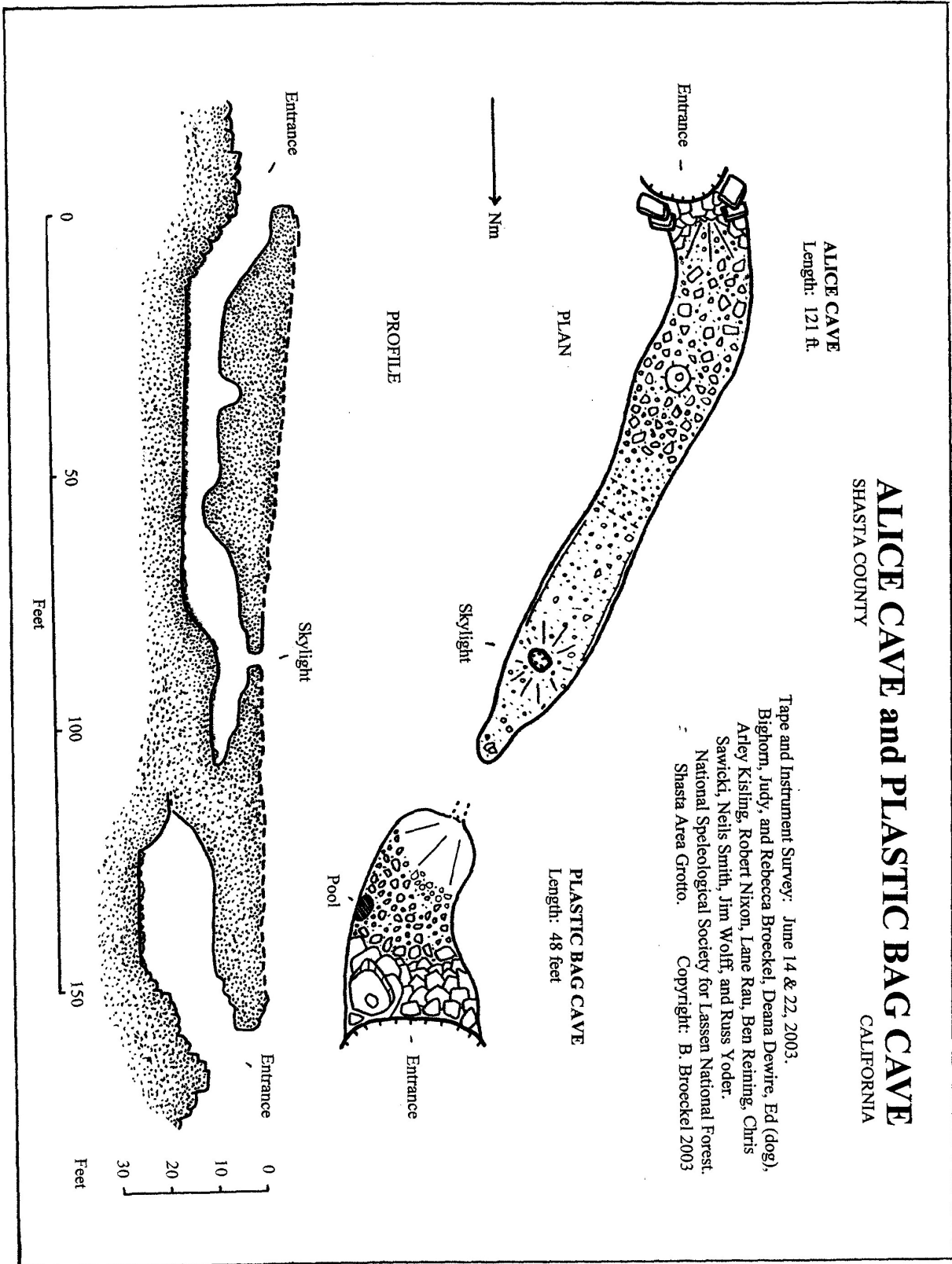
Friday and Saturday evenings Sharon Kising and Liz Wolff provided campfires. I even saw a few marshmallows getting roasted.

Saturday morning Oregon Caves employees Deana Dewire, Ben Reining, and Chris Sawicki arrived to join with SAG for some caving and for a meeting about the Oregon Caves Draft Management Plan. The Plan is still in the "scoping" phase. Comments are still encouraged from cavers regarding the plan and various issues including access policies, prioritization of projects, safety, safety training, ethics, candlelight tour, "spelunker's" tour (off trail tour led by ORCA staff for up to 6 people from the public), a request for SAG members to volunteer to be observers bringing up the rear of groups on the "spelunker's" tour, data management, relationship between ORCA and NCRC, NSS, and CRF. Comments on any or all of these topics are encouraged. ORCA wants to hear from us. Ray Miller and Melanie Jackson also arrived on Saturday. Matt Reece joined us with, arguably, the best-in-camp hat. The competition for best cave stories was closer, with many contributions made.

Russ Yoder and Robert Nixon led the way on the "blue tape trail" to two little caves to be surveyed Saturday morning. The two caves surveyed were named Plastic Bag Cave (47.8 feet) and Alice Cave (120.7 feet). A large group worked on the survey with Arley Kising doing the book and the sketch. Niels Smith read the instruments. Ben Reining did lead tape. Comments and suggestions were made by many and sundry. Robert Nixon did GPS and photography. (Why does he seem to emphasize rather ahem! uncomplimentary poses?)

The weather conditions seemed ideal. There really weren't even all that many mosquitoes. Ed, the cave dog, impressed me with his caving ability, though he did somewhat disappoint his friend, Lane Rau, by charging ahead into Wilcox Cave before Lane was quite ready. What an eager caver! Russ Yoder and Jim Wolff led the way to Wilcox. Melanie Jackson and Arley Kising and I were among those glad to be led to the entrance. There was also a trip to Rusty Cave to introduce some of the limestone cavers to an interesting lava tube. Expect a trip report at the next grotto meeting which I hear will be in Mount Shasta. **JB**





Map: Alice Cave, Plastic Bag Cave

Commentary on John Muir's Cave References By B. Broeckel**JOHN MUIR DESCRIBES KENTUCKY CAVE ENTRANCES**

John Muir began his walk from Louisville to Florida when he was 29 years of age. Employed in the invention of clever machines for industry, he was also recovering from a serious injury to his right eye. At this time he decided to devote himself more fully to study "the inventions of God". He started his long trip on September 1, 1867. "My plan was simply to push on in a general southward direction by the wildest, leafiest, and least trodden way I could find ..." Early in this adventure he encountered cave entrances in Kentucky, and the following descriptions are taken from his book "A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf".

September 5, 1867. ... Escaped to the woods. Came to the region of caves. At the mouth of the first I discovered, I was surprised to find ferns which belonged to the coolest nooks of Wisconsin and northward, but soon observed that each cave rim has a zone of climate peculiar to itself, and it is always cool. This cave had an opening about ten feet in diameter, and twenty-five feet perpendicular depth. A strong cold wind issued from it and I could hear the sounds of running water. A long pole was set against its walls as if intended for a ladder, but in some places it was slippery and smooth as a mast and would test the climbing powers of a monkey. The walls and rim of this natural reservoir were finely carved and flowered. Bushes leaned over it with shading leaves, and beautiful ferns and mosses were in rows and sheets on its slopes and shelves. Lingered here a long happy while, pressing specimens and printing this beauty into memory.

September 6, 1867. Started at the earliest bird song in hopes of seeing the great Mammoth Cave before evening. ... Arrived at Horse Cave, about ten miles from the great cave. The entrance is by a long easy slope of several hundred yards. It seems like a noble gateway to the birthplace of springs and fountains and the dark treasures of the mineral kingdom. This cave is in a village (of the same name) which it supplies with an abundance of cold water, and cold air that issues from its fern-clad lips. In hot weather crowds of people sit about it in the shade of the trees that guard it. This magnificent fan is capable of cooling everybody in the town at once.

Those who live near lofty mountains may climb to cool weather in a day or two, but the overheated Kentuckians can find a patch of cool climate in almost every glen in the State. The villager who accompanied me said that Horse Cave had never been fully explored, but that it was several miles in length at least. He told me that he had never been at Mammoth Cave – that it was not worth going ten miles to see, as it was nothing but a hole in the ground ...

Muir is not put off by the local advice, but with the instincts of a true caver, he goes to see for himself, and seems happy to find the cave in a natural state.

September 6, 1867 [later]. Arrived at the great Mammoth Cave. I was surprised to find it in so complete naturalness. A large hotel with fine walks and gardens is near it. But fortunately the cave has been unimproved, and were it not for the narrow trail that leads down the glen to its door, one would not know that it had been visited. There are house-rooms and halls whose entrances give but slight hint of their grandeur. And so also this magnificent hall in the mineral kingdom of Kentucky has a door comparatively small and unpromising. One might pass within a few yards of it without noticing it. A strong cool breeze issues constantly from it, creating a northern climate for the ferns that adorn its rocky front. ... The trees around the mouth of the cave are smooth and tall and bent forward at the bottom, then straight upwards. Only a butternut seems, by its angular knotty branches, to sympathize with and belong to the cave, with a fine growth of *Cystopteris* and *Hypnum*. (1)

Muir made his way to Florida and visited Cuba where he fell sick. He still planned to walk the Amazon, but arrangements did not work out, so he headed for a more temperate climate where he hoped to recover his health. Arriving in California by ship, the last journal entry reads as follows: "We reached San Francisco about the first of April, and I remained there only one day, before starting for Yosemite Valley." Here in the Range of Light, Muir would not only regain his health, but would find his spiritual home and life work. Forever a student of natural history and a lover of all things wild and free, he would one day write the following as a statement of mission: "I care to live only to entice people to look at nature."

JOHN MUIR'S CAVE CITY CAVE TRIP REPORT

Only a handful of California caves are longer than Cave City Cave. In 1987, the KMCTF reported that this limestone cave in the Mother Lode had a length of 7,020 feet. The principal surveyor was Peter Bosted. John Muir's trip report is taken from his book "The Mountains of California" which was his first book published in 1894. Muir first walked to Yosemite in the Spring of 1868 at the age of 30. The exact date of his visit to Cave City Cave is not evident from the report. However, we can learn something about his development as a caver and catch a glimpse of the early days at Cave City, and the cave now known as California Caverns.

Anxious that I should miss none of the wonders of their old gold-field, the good people had much to say about the marvelous beauty of Cave City Cave, and advised me to explore it. This I was very glad to do, and finding a guide who knew the way to the mouth of it, I set out from Murphy the next morning. ... Our way from Murphy's to the cave lay across a series of picturesque, moory ridges in the chaparral region ...

The ride from Murphy's to the cave is scarcely two hours long, but we lingered among quartz ledges and banks of dead river gravel until long after noon. At length emerging from a narrow-throated gorge, a small house came in sight set in a thicket of fig-trees at the base of a limestone hill. "That," said my guide pointing to the house, "is Cave City, and the cave is in that gray hill."

Many cavers can relate to the late start. The following description of the speleo scene at Cave City sounds like an early precursor of what we now know of as a "convention." Sometimes you have to wonder what John Muir would think of us; then again cavers are such a diverse bunch someone like John Muir would probably fit right in.

Arriving at the one house of this one-house city, we were boisterously welcomed by three drunken men who had come to town to hold a spree. The mistress of the house tried to keep order, and in reply to our inquiries told us that the cave guide was then in the cave with a party of ladies. "And must we wait until he returns?" we asked. No, that was unnecessary; we might take candles and go into the cave alone, provided we shouted from time to time so as to be found by the guide, and were careful not to fall over the rocks or into the dark pools. Accordingly taking a trail from the house, we were led around the base of the hill to the mouth of the cave, a small inconspicuous archway, mossy around the edges and shaped like the door of a water-ouzel's nest, with no appreciable hint or advertisement of the grandeur of the many crystal chambers within.

Lighting our candles, which seemed to have no illuminating power in the thick darkness, we groped our way onward as best we could along narrow lanes and alleys, from chamber to chamber, around rustic columns and heaps of fallen rocks, stopping to rest now and then in particularly beautiful places – fairy alcoves furnished with admirable variety of shelves and tables, and round bossy stools covered with sparkling crystals. Some of the corridors were muddy, and in plodding along these we seemed to be in the streets of some prairie village in springtime. Then we would come to handsome marble stairways conducting right and left into upper chambers ranged above one another three or four stories high, floors, ceiling, and walls lavishly decorated with innumerable crystalline forms.

After thus wandering exploringly, and alone for a mile or so, fairly enchanted, a murmur of voices and a gleam of light betrayed the approach of the guide, and his party, from whom, when they came up, we received a most hearty and natural stare, as we stood half concealed in a side recess among stalagmites. I ventured to ask the dripping, crouching company how they had enjoyed their saunter, anxious to learn how the strange sunless scenery of the underworld had impressed them. "Ah, it's nice! It's splendid!" they all replied and echoed. "The Bridal Chamber back here is just glorious! This morning we came down from the Calaveras Big Tree Grove, and the trees are nothing to it."

After making this curious comparison they hastened sunward, the guide promising to join us shortly on the bank of a deep pool, where we were to wait for him. This is a charming little lakelet of unknown depth, never yet stirred by a breeze, and its eternal calm excites the imagination even more profoundly than the silvery lakes of the glaciers rimmed with meadows and snow and reflecting sublime mountains.

Our guide, a jolly, rollicking Italian, led us into the heart of the hill, up and down, right and left, from chamber to chamber more and more magnificent, all a-glitter like a glacier cave with icicle-like stalactites and stalagmites combined in forms of indescribable beauty. We were shown one large room that was occasionally used as a dancing-hall; another that was used as a chapel, with natural pulpit and crosses and pews, sermons in every stone, where a priest had said mass. Mass saying is not so generally developed in connection with natural wonders as dancing ...

Here Muir makes reference to "dancing in the famous Bower Cave above Coulterville."

It was delightful to witness here the infinite deliberation of Nature, and the simplicity of her methods in the production of such mighty results, such perfect repose combined with restless enthusiastic energy. Though cold and bloodless as a landscape of polar ice, building was going on in the dark with incessant activity. The archways and ceilings were everywhere hung with down-growing crystals, like inverted groves of leafless saplings, some of them large, others delicately attenuated, each tipped with a single drop of water, like the terminal bud of a pine-tree. The only appreciable sounds were the dripping and tinkling of water falling into pools or faintly splashing on the crystal floors.

In some places the crystal decorations are arranged in graceful flowing folds deeply plicated like stiff silken drapery. In others straight lines of the ordinary stalactite forms are combined with reference to size and tone in a regularly graduated system like the strings of a harp with musical notes corresponding thereto; and on these stone harps we played by striking the crystal strings with a stick. The delicious liquid tones they gave forth seemed perfectly divine as they sweetly whispered and wavered through the majestic halls and died away in faintest cadence, – the music of fairy-land.

Here we lingered and reveled, rejoicing to find so much music in stony silence, so much splendor in darkness, so many mansions in the depths of the mountains, buildings ever in process of construction, yet ever finished, developing from perfection to perfection, profusion without over-abundance: every particle visible or invisible in glorious motion, marching to the music of the spheres in a region regarded as the abode of eternal stillness and death. When we emerged into the bright landscapes of the sun everything looked brighter and we felt our faith in Nature's beauty strengthened, and saw more clearly that beauty is universal and immortal, above, beneath, on land and sea, mountain and plain, in heat and cold, light and darkness. (2)

JOHN MUIR'S GENERAL VIEW OF CAVES IN CALIFORNIA

In "The Mountains of California" John Muir also gives us a broader view of caves in the Golden State. His understanding is comprehensive, though there are some notable exceptions such as alpine karst and desert pseudokarst. Glacier caves were referred to earlier, and now he even describes the ephemeral caves in the clouds. Special mention is made of lava caves, and to finish we will turn to his Mt. Shasta chapter in "Picturesque California and the Region West of the Rocky Mountains, from Alaska to Mexico" for descriptions of lava tubes in North California.

The most beautiful and extensive of the mountain caves of California occur in a belt of metamorphic limestone that is pretty generally developed along the western flank of the Sierra from the McCloud River on the north to the Kaweah on the south, a distance of over 400 miles, at an elevation of from 2000 to 7000 feet above the sea. Besides this regular belt of caves, the California landscapes are diversified by long imposing ranks of sea-caves, rugged and variable in architecture, carved in the coast headlands and precipices by centuries of wave-dashing; and innumerable lava-caves, great and small, originating in the unequal flowing and hardening of the lava sheets in which they occur, fine illustrations of which are presented in the famous Modoc Lava Beds, and around the base of icy Shasta. In this comprehensive glance we may also notice the shallow wind-worn caves in stratified sandstones along the margins of the plains; and the cave-like recesses in the Sierra slates and granites, where bears and other mountaineers find shelter during the fall of sudden storms. In general, however, the grand massive uplift of the Sierra, as far as it has been laid bare to observation, is about as solid and caveless as a boulder.

That last sentence I would recommend as the theme quote for the Porterville Convention. Further in the Foothills chapter of "The Mountains of California", Muir gives some more hints about his caving experiences in the realms of darkness of the Range of Light.

Fresh beauty opens one's eyes wherever it is really seen, but the very abundance and completeness of the common beauty that besets our steps prevents its being absorbed and appreciated. It is a good thing, therefore, to make short excursions now and then to the bottom of the sea among dulse and coral, or up among the clouds on mountain-tops, or in balloons, or even to creep like worms into dark holes and caverns underground, not only to learn something about what is going on in those out-of-the-way places, but to see better what the sun sees on our return to common every-day beauty.

The outer chambers of mountain caves are frequently selected as homes by wild beasts. In the Sierra, however, they seem to prefer homes and hiding-places in chaparral and beneath shelving precipices, as I have never seen their tracks in any of the caves. This is the more remarkable because notwithstanding the darkness and oozing water there is nothing uncomfortably cellar-like or sepulchral about them.

Here now about the caves in the clouds, also from "The Mountains of California."

Toward noon, as we were riding slowly over bank and brae, basking in the unfeverish sun-heat, we witnessed the upheaval of a new mountain-range, a Sierra of clouds abounding in landscapes as truly sublime and beautiful – if only we have a mind to think so and eyes to see - as the more ancient rocky Sierra beneath it, with its forests and waterfalls; reminding us that, as there is a lower world of caves, so, also, there is an upper world of clouds. Huge, bossy cumuli developed with astonishing rapidity from mere buds, swelling with visible motion into colossal mountains, and piling higher, higher, in long massive ranges, peak beyond peak, dome over dome, with many a picturesque valley and shadowy cave between; while the dark firs and pines of the upper benches of the Sierra were projected against their pearl bosses with exquisite clearness of outline. These cloud mountains vanished in the azure as quickly as they were developed, leaving no detritus; but they were

not a whit less real or interesting on this account. The more enduring hills over which we rode were vanishing as surely as they, only not so fast, a difference which is great or small according to the standpoint from which it is contemplated. (2)

JOHN MUIR DESCRIBES LAVA CAVES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Pluto's Cave is a large lava tube near the base of Mount Shasta. Nelson Cash was chasing stray cattle in 1863 when he came upon the entrances to Pluto's Cave. George Tyler and Elijah Heard explored and named the cave in April, 1863. William Brewer visited the cave in October of 1863. John Muir published his description in 1888. Perhaps we can forgive him getting carried away with his imagination. Again, it was Peter Bosted leading the survey team in 1983 that determined the length of the cave was 2501 feet.

On the north side of Shasta, there is a long cavern sloping to the northward nearly a mile in length, thirty or forty feet wide and fifty feet or more in height, regular in form and direction like a railroad tunnel, and probably formed by the flowing away of a current of lava after the hardening of the surface. At the mouth of this cave where the light and shelter is good I found many of the heads and horns of the wild sheep, and the remains of camp-fires. No doubt those of Indian hunters who in stormy weather had camped there and feasted after the fatigues of the chase. A wild picture that must have formed on a dark night – the glow of the fire, the circle of crouching savages around it seen through the smoke, the dead game, the weird darkness and half-darkness of the walls of the cavern, a picture of cave-dwellers at home in the stone age. ...

In a north-northwesterly direction from the foot of the pass you may chance to find Pluto's Cave, already mentioned; but it is not easily found, since its several mouths are on a level with the general surface of the ground, and have been made simply by the falling in of portions of the roof. Far the most beautiful and richly furnished of the mountain caves of California occur in a thick belt of metamorphic limestone that is pretty generally developed along the western flank of the Sierra from the McCloud River to the Kaweah, a distance of nearly 400 miles. These volcanic caves are not wanting in interest, and it is well to light a pitch-pine torch and take a walk in these dark ways of the under-world whenever opportunity offers, if for no other reason to see with new appreciation on returning to the sunshine the beauties that lie so thick about us. (3)

John Muir also visited the "Modoc Lava Beds" which we now know as Lava Beds National Monument. The famous Modoc War was in 1873, and John Muir came through some time after the war. Naturally he was drawn to the battlefield sites, and the memory of the war was still fresh upon the land. These were in the days before J.D. Howard arrived to discover and make known so many fine lava caves at the Beds. However, in the account of the Modoc Stronghold, Muir does take time to describe a small shelter cave within the natural fortress, an alcove known as Captain Jack's Cave. John Muir was influenced slightly by anti-Indian sentiment of his time. Of this there can be no doubt, yet it is significant to Northern California caves that he strongly associates both Pluto's Cave and Lava Beds Caves with the Native Americans.

From the Van Bremer Ranch the way to the Lava Beds leads ... to the brow of the wall-like bluff of lava 450 feet above Tule Lake. Here you are looking southeastward and the Modoc landscape, which at once takes possession of you, lies revealed in front. It is composed of three principal parts; on your left lies the bright expanse of Tule Lake; on your right an evergreen forest, and between the two are the black Lava Beds. ... That dark mysterious lava plain between them compelled attention. Here you trace yawning fissures, there clusters of somber pits; now you mark where the lava is bent and corrugated in swelling ridges and domes, again where it breaks into a rough mass of loose blocks. Tufts of grass grow far apart here and there, and small bushes of hardy sage, but they have a singed appearance and can do little to hide the blackness. Deserts are charming to those who know how to see them – all kinds of bogs, barrens, and heathy moors; but the Modoc Lava Beds have for me an uncanny look. ...

Two or three miles further on is the main stronghold of the Modocs ... forming as a whole the most complete natural Gibraltar I ever saw. Other castles scarcely less strong are connected with this by subterranean passages known only to the Indians. ... Captain Jack's cave is one of the many somber cells of the castle. It measures twenty-five or thirty feet in diameter at the entrance, and extends but a short distance in a horizontal direction. The floor is littered with the bones of the animals slaughtered for food during the war. (3)

Given the timing of his life in history, we can retrospectively nominate Muir as a California caver. He was one of the early ones, a forerunner, and accepted caves as integral to the grand schemes of nature. He may have explored a few caves, and as we have seen, written about some. However, his main contribution to the world of caves was indirect. In founding the western environmental movement he has inspired generations of people to love, appreciate, and conserve the integrity of natural beauty. This influence has filtered into the caving community and lends us a dimension of cave conservation concepts that continues to shape our caving lives to this very day. John Muir was talking about hiking here, but this final quote can also be seen to have a deeper application. "One must labor for beauty as for bread here as elsewhere." (4) Many cavers understand that a wild and free cave is food for the hungry soul, and worth working for in one way or another.

BB

- 1 Muir, John, 1916. A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf. Houghton Mifflin, Boston MA 1981. Chapter 1, Kentucky Forests and Caves, pages 7-12.
- 2 Muir, John, 1894. The Mountains of California. Doubleday, Garden City NY 1961. Chapter 15, In the Sierra Foot-Hills, pages 251-258.
- 3 Muir, John, 1888. West of the Rocky Mountains. Running Press, Philadelphia, PA 1976. Chapter 10, Mount Shasta, pages 201 and 224-227.
- 4 Muir, John, 1888. West of the Rocky Mountains. Running Press, Philadelphia, PA 1976. Chapter 4, The Yosemite Valley, page 83.



SAG Editor Bighorn Broeckel on a recent cave trip. With all these "cave trips" no wonder he has trouble getting the RAG out. 6-30-02 Photo by Becky Broeckel

SAG RAG
 2916 Deer Mdws Rd
 Yreka CA 96097

STAMP

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