

Speleological Writings in Early America

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use of the Bibliography

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

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