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.

Adams, Benjamin

The American Athenaeum: or, Repository of the Arts, Sciences, and Belles Letters (New York, 1825)
1825, The grotto of Balagansk, in Siberia: v. 1, 270.

The American Journal of Science (New Haven, 1818-1850)
1833, Miscellaneous notices, in a letter to the editor, dated from an American national ship, off Cape de Gott, in Spain, August 11, 1832: v. 24, no. 2, 237-246.
A description of an eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, and Grotto del Cane.
Abstract, communicated by A. Eggleston.

The American Magazine and Repository of Useful Literature (Albany, 1841-1842)
1841, Mammoth caves of Kentucky: v. 1, 86-90; 130-133; 184-190, map.
Signed by "J. S. W."

The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge (Boston, 1835-1837)
1836-1837, [Brief notes on caves]: v. 2, no. 2, 75; no. 12, 518 (1836); v. 3, no. 4, 131; no. 5, 184 (1837).
1836, Caverns: v. 2, no. 12, 507-508, 3 figs.
Notice of recently discovered caves in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia.

American Moral and Sentimental Magazine (New York, 1797-1798)

The American Museum; Or, Annual Register of Fugitive Pieces, Ancient and Modern (Philadelphia, 1799)
1799, Description of a newly-discovered cavern, on the north-east end of Mount Anthony, in Bennington: v. 1, 123-124.

The Antiquarian and General Review (Schenectady, New York, 1845-1848)
1847, The Mammoth Cave [in Kentucky]: v. 3, no. 5, 111-117.
Signed by "E. M." From Journal of Commerce.

Baird, Spencer Fullerton (1823-1887)

Barton, Benjamin Smith (1766-1815)

Bigsby, John Jeremiah (1792-1881)
Croghan, John
1845, Rambles in the Mammoth Cave during the year 1844, by a visitor: Louisville, Kentucky; Horton and Griswold, 101 p., 6 plates, folded map.

Dwight’s American Magazine, and Family Newspaper (New York, 1845-1850)
1845-1847, [Brief notes on caves]: v. 1, 135, 269, 285-286, 328-woodcut, 335 (1845); v. 2, 554-555 (1846); v. 3, 524-525 (1847).

The Eclectic Journal of Science (Columbus, Ohio, 1834-1835)
1834, Remarkable caverns [at Erpfingen, Hollenberg]: v. 2, 766.

The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science and Art (New York, 1833-1841)
1850, A visit to Mammoth Cave: v. 21, 474-484.
Abstracted from Fraser’s Magazine

Eights, James

The Family Lyceum (Boston, 1832-1833)
1832/1833, Caves: v. 1, 66 (Wier’s Cave); 71 (Indiana epsom salt cave); 87 (Fingal’s Cave).

The Family Magazine, or General Abstract of Useful Knowledge (New York, 1833-1841)
1840, [Brief notes on caves]: v. 7, 300, 324.

The Family Visitor (Cleveland, Ohio, 1850)
1850, Fingal’s Cave: v. 1, no. 2, 12, fig.

The Farmer’s Monthly Visitor (Concord, New Hampshire, 1839-1849)

Farnham, John Hay (1791?–1833)

Featherstonhaugh, George William (1780-1866)
1831, Bone caves in New Holland: Monthly American Journal Geology, v. 1, no. 1, 47.

Feuchtwanger, Lewis (1805-1876)

Forbes (Mr. of Windsor, Connecticut)
1848, [Stalactitic formation of Sharon, Vermont]: Boston Society Natural History Proceedings, v. 3, 56.

Franklin Institute Journal (Philadelphia, 1826-1850)
1836, Vapour cave at Pyrmont [Italy]: v. 17 (ns), 366 (4 lines).
1838, Singular discovery of a subterranean river [in Flintshire, England]: v. 21 (ns), 353.

The Friend, a Periodical Work (Albany, 1815-1816)
1815, Natural curiosity: v. 1, 73-75.
Description of two caves in Bethlehem, New York.

1835-1849, [Notes on caves]: v. 8, 324-325; v. 11, 337-338; v. 15, 337-339; v. 17, 99; 164; v. 18, 247; 303; v. 22, 42.
1840, Grotto of Adelsberg: v. 13, 386-387.
Signed by “W. J. M."
1843, Stalactites and stalagmites: v. 16, 234-235.
1847, The Mammoth Cave, Edmondson County, Kentucky: v. 20, 389-390; 397-398; 404-405; 414-415; v. 21, 7-8; 15.

Gaylord, Willis (1792-1844)

The Genesee Farmer and Gardener’s Journal (Rochester, New York, 1831-1839)
1835, Ball’s Cave, Schoharie [New York]: v. 5, 304.
Bird, Robert Montgomery (1806-1854)

The Boston Cultivator (Boston, 1839-1850)
1841, Mammoth Cave of Kentucky: v. 3, no. 44, [4].
1845, A mammoth lead cave [in Jefferson County, Missouri]: v. 7, 184.

The Boston Weekly Magazine (Boston, 1838-1841)
1839, Extraordinary caverns in Moravia: v. 1, 150.
1840, Mammoth Cave of Kentucky: v. 3, no. 51, 402.

Bowman, John Eddowes (1819-1854)
In British Association Proceedings By "J. B. [i.e. J. E.] Bowman."

Brown, John Newton (1803-1868)
A poem descriptive of the cave.

Brown, Samuel R. (1775-1817)
1809, A description of a cave on Crooked Creek, with remarks and observations on nitre and gun-powder [from Kentucky]: American Philosophical Society Transactions, v. 4, pt. 2, 235-247; also in: American Mineralogical Journal, v. 1, no. 2, 100-113 (1811).

Buckland, William (1784-1856)
1823, Some account of an assemblage of fossil teeth and bones of the elephant, rhinoceros, hipposcopatus, bear, tiger, hyena, and sixteen other animals; discovered in a cave at Kirkdale, Yorkshire, in the year 1821: Boston Journal Philosophy Arts, v. 1, no. 1, 74-86.
1825, Professor Buckland’s reply to some observations in Dr. Fleming’s remarks on the distribution of British animals: Boston Journal Philosophy Arts, v. 2, no. 6, 543-557.
From Edinburgh Philosophical Journal

The Cabinet of Religion, Education, Literature, Science, and Intelligence (New York, 1830-1831)
1830, The Kentucky cavern: v. 4, 105-107.

Campbell’s Foreign Semi-Monthly Magazine; or, Select Miscellany. (Philadelphia, 1842-1844)
1844, Sandstone pillars and caves of North-western Australia: v. 6, 142.

Child, Maria (i.e. Lydia Maria Francis Child?)

The Cincinnati Literary Gazette (Cincinnati, 1824-1825)
1825, Mammoth Cave: v. 3, 195-196.
1825, White Cave: v. 3, 196.

The Cincinnati Mirror (Cincinnati, 1831-1836)
1835, Caves in Cuba: v. 4, 398.

The Cincinnati Miscellany, or Antiquities of the West (Cincinnati, 1845-1846)

The Columbian Magazine, or, Monthly Miscellany (Philadelphia, 1786-1790)
1787, Account of remarkable cascades and caverns in the state of Virginia: v. 1, no. 7, 335-337.

Cooke, Henry David (1825-1881)
Signed by "H. D. C." but index indicates H. D. Cooke.
Goldsmith, Oliver (1728-1774)

Graham's American Monthly Magazine (Philadelphia, 1826-1850)
1827, [Cavern at Soil, Java]: v. 2, 382.

Green, Jacob (1790-1841)
1816, Description of a cave and intermitting lake, in Saratoga County, New-York: New York Society Promotion Useful Arts Transactions., v. 4, 79-82.
1816, Description of a cavern near Bennington, Vermont: New York Society Promotion Useful Arts Transactions., v. 4, 109-111.

Hall, Frederick (1780-1843)

Harlan, Richard (1796-1843)

Hastings, G. H.

Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania. (Philadelphia, 1828-1835)
1828-1833, [Notes on Pennsylvania caves]: v. 1, 132-133; v. 3, 265-267; v. 9, 222-223; v. 12, 22.

Hazard's United States Commercial and Statistical Register. (Philadelphia, 1839-1842)
1839-1841, [Notes on American caves]: v. 1, 95; v. 5, 126-127.

The Hesperian (Columbus, Ohio, 1838-1839)
From Louisville Journal

Hobhouse (Mr.)
1834, Great cave [at Mount Parret]: Genesee Farmer and Gardener's Journal, v. 4, 312.

Horsford, Eben Norton (1818-1893)

Humboldt, Alexander Friedrich Heinrich von (1769-1859)
1818, On caverns of rocks and on their relation to the strata in which they are found: Journal Science Arts, v. 4, no. 1, 85 (8 lines).
In France Academy Science Proceedings

The Huntingdon Literary Museum, and Monthly Miscellany (Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, 1810)
1810, Description of the Grotto at Swatara [at Hummelstown, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania]: v. 1, 156-157.
1810, The blowing cave [of Virginia]: v. 1, 221-222.

Illustrated Family Magazine (Boston, 1845-1846)
1845, Wier's Cave, Augusta Co, Virginia: v. 1, 42-44.

Imrie, Major
Abstracted from Philosophical Journal by J. Griscom.

Jefferson, Thomas (1743-1826)
1800, Description of the most remarkable cascades and caverns in the state of Virginia: Political Magazine, v. 1, no. 2, 87-89.
From Notes on the State of Virginia.

Jones, Calvin (1775-1846)
1815, A description of Wier's Cave, in Augusta County, Virginia ... : Albany, Henry C. Southwick (printer), 4 p., map.
Reprint editions in Port Folio, v. 12 (5s), 325-332, fig., plate (1821);
American Farmer, v. 3, 273-274, fig. (1821); Baltimore, The American Farmer, Broadside, 2 p., map (1821); Plough Boy, v. 4, no. 15, fig., 113-115 (1822).

Juvenile Rambler, or Family and School Journal (Boston, 1832-1833)
1833, Delany's Cave [at Union, Fayette County, Pennsylvania]: v. 2, no. 22, 87.
1833, Meyer's Cave: v. 2, no. 29, 114 (7 lines).
1833, Mammoth caves in Ireland: v. 2, no. 41, 163.
Kain, John H. (1759-1831)

Lincoln, Benjamin (1733-1810)
1785, An account of several strata of earth and shells on the branches of the York River, in Virginia; of a subterraneous passage, and the sudden descent of a very large current of water from a mountain, near Carlisle; of a remarkably large spring near Reading, in Pennsylvania; and also of several remarkable springs in the states of Pennsylvania and Virginia: American Academy Arts Sciences Memoirs, v. 1, 372-376.
Extracts published in New Haven Gazette, v. 1, 124 (1786); American Museum or Universal Magazine, v. 1, 208-209 (1787); New York Magazine v. 3, 7-8 (1792); Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine, v. 9, 39-40 (1792); and Rural Magazine or Vermont Repository, v. 1, 403-404 (1795).

The Literary and Philosophical Repertory (Middlebury, Vermont, 1812-1816)
1815, Natural curiosity: v. 2, 287-288.
On a cave on Lake Ontario’s North Shore.

Literary Magazine and American Register (Philadelphia, 1803-1807)
1804, A cavern newly discovered [at Nice, France]: v. 2, 312.

The Literary Miscellany, or Monthly Review (New York, 1811)
1811, Description of a romantic grotto in St. Anne’s Parish, Jamaica: v. 1, 14-19.

The Living Age (Boston, 1844-1850)
1844, Cave in Ireland: v. 2, 618.
Abstracted from London Athenaeum

Locke, John (1796-1856)

Long
In British Association Proceedings.

Loomis, I. Newton
On a field trip to Mammoth Cave, Kentucky.

The Massachusetts Magazine (Boston, 1789-1796)
1790, Description of the grotto of Antiparos: v. 2, 198-199.
1792, Description of Sepascot Cave [at Ryhnebeck]: v. 4, 656.

Mechanics’ Magazine, and Register of Inventions and Improvements (New York, 1833-1837)
1835, Curiosities of caves: v. 5, 96 (14 lines).
On bone caves of the Hartz Mountains.

The Medical Repository (New York, 1798-1818)
1804, Description of a cavern in Ulster County, in the state of New-York: v. 7, 303-304.
1806, Caverns in Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, which afford an inexhaustable supply of salt-petre: v. 9, 86-87.
1806, Native sulphate of magnesia and soda in Virginia [in caverns of Greenbrier County]: v. 9, 112.
1807, A splendid cavern discovered in the lime-stone country of Virginia, in 1806: v. 10, 298-300.
1815, Green River, or Mammoth Cave, Henderson County, Kentucky: v. 17, 391-393, plate.

Miller, John Peter (1709-1796)
The Minerva; or Literary, Entertaining, and Scientific Journal (New York, 1822-1825)

The Monthly Repository and Library of Entertaining Knowledge (New York, 1830-1834)
1832, The great Kentucky caverns: v. 3, 9-12; 96-99.
1832, Fingal’s Cave: v. 3, 206-209, plate.
Includes a descriptive poem.

The New-England Magazine (Boston, 1831-1835)
1831, Kentucky cavern [Mammoth Cave]: v. 1, 275-276.

The New-Harmony Gazette (New Harmony, Indiana, 1825-1827)
1827, Singular cave (at Soli, Java): v. 2, 414.

New Haven Gazette, and the Connecticut Magazine (New Haven, 1786-1789)
1786, [New cave found at Asturial]: v. 1, 340.

New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal (Boston and Philadelphia, 1821-1834)
1833, Curious cave [in Tipperary County, Ireland]: v. 2 (ns), 293.

New-York Literary Journal, and Belles-Lettres Repository (New York, 1819-1821)
1819, Great Cave of Ellora: v. 2, 73-85.
From Fitzclarence’s Journey through Egypt. On a cave in India.

The New-York State Mechanic. (Albany, 1841-1843)
1842-1843, [Notes on caves]: v. 1, pt. 2, 87; 105; v. 2, 152.

The New Yorker (New York, 1836-1841)
1838, Caves of Ellora [in India]: v. 5, 94-95.
Signed by "Indicus".

The Nightingale, or, a Melange de Literature (Boston, 1796)
1796, Natural curiosity. on a newly discovered cavern, on the north-east end of Mount Anthony, in Bennington, Vermont: v. 1, no. 36, 424-426.

Niles’ Weekly Register (Baltimore, 1812-1850)
1815-1845, [Notes on American caves]: v. 9, supplement, 176; v. 10, 420-421; v. 22, 270; v. 60, 256; v. 66, 336; v. 68, 216.

Ohio Miscellaneous Museum (Lebanon, Ohio, 1822)
1822, Stupendous cavern [in Jefferson County, Kentucky]: v. 1, no. 5, 222-223.

Parley’s Magazine (New York and Boston, 1833-1844)
1836, Singular cavern, in Illinois [at Quincy]: v. 4, 236-237.
1836, A coal fish [fossil from Mansfield, Massachusetts]: v. 4, 248 (6 lines).
1844, A beautiful crystallized cavern [at Bradford, Derbyshire, England]: v. 12, 371-373.

The Pictorial National Library. (Boston, 1848-1849)
1849, New cave in Kentucky: v. 3, 228 (9 lines).

The Plaindealer (New York, 1836-1837)
1837, The mammoth cave of Kentucky: v. 1, no. 24, 379-381.

The Plough Boy (Albany, 1819-1823)
1822, Virginia husbandry. Wier’s Cave: v. 4, no. 15, 113.

The Port Folio (Philadelphia, 1801-1827)
1818, Mammoth cave in Indiana: v. 6 (5s), 397-398.

Prentice, George Dennison (1802-1870)
1845, Mammoth cave: Living Age, v. 7, 53.
A descriptive poem.

Rafinesque, Constantine Samuel (1783-1840)

The Rural Magazine and Literary Evening Fireside (Philadelphia, 1820)
1820, Cave in Virginia [Wier’s Cave]: v. 1, 396.
The Rural Magazine: or, Vermont Repository (Rutland, Vermont, 1795-1796)
1796, An account of Antiparos [the Grotto]: v. 2, 261-266.

Russel
Extracted from Tour in Germany.

Scientific American (New York, 1845-1850)
1845-1850, [Brief notes on caves]: v. 1, no. 3, [3]; no. 5, [3]; no. 6, [3]; no. 10, [11]; v. 2, 89; v. 3, 298; v. 4, 59; v. 5, 75; 248; 305; 386; v. 6, 106.

Scott (Mr.)
On a cave at Abingdon.

Select Reviews of Literature. (Philadelphia, 1809-1812)
1809, Discovery of a new mephitick grotto: v. 1, 284.
1810, Description of the Grotto of Zinzanusa, or the ancient Temple of Minerva, near the town of Castro in Apulia: v. 3, 207-208.

Serres, Pierre Marcel Toussaint de (1783-1862)
1831, Letter addressed to M. Cordier, member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, on a certain new bone cave [at Bize, France]: American Journal Science, v. 21, no. 1, 56-59. 
Abstracted by J. Griscom from Annales des Mines.
Abstracted from Revue Encyclopédique.

Tuomey, Michael (1805-1857)

Ward, Nahum (1785-1860)

Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine (Lexington, Kentucky, 1819-1821)

White, Thomas
1794, A short account of an excursion through the subterraneous cavern at Paris: Massachusetts Magazine, v. 6, 325-327. 
Also in Universal Magazine, v. 3, 48-52 (1797).

Williams, Samuel (1743-1817)
Extracted from his History of Vermont.

The Yankee (Boston, 1828-1829)
1828, [Account of Mammoth Cave]: v. 1, 5.

Young, J. H. (Reverend)