“FIRST TOURISTS IN CRYSTAL CAVE 1918”

This story comes from the Los Tulares newsletter (Tulare County Historical Society) and was printed in September 1988 by Mary Anne Terstegge, Reference Librarian.

Since the centennial of Sequoia National Park is approaching, I thought our readers might be interested in some of my father’s experiences as a summer ranger soon after the establishment of the National. My father, Harry Joseph Terstegge, was a bachelor orange grower at Lindsay, CA, during the years when he served as a summer ranger at Atwell’s Mill, Lodgepole and Cabin Creek.

In April 1918, Crystal Cave was discovered by C.M. Webster and A.L. Medley, park employees who were on a fishing trip. In the early summer of 1918, an exploring party was organized. Apparently Ranger John Grunigen was the leader. He asked my father to join the group. Having been born and raised in the cave country of Indiana/Kentucky, Harry Terstegge was more knowledgeable about caves in general than any other member of the park personnel. He accepted, final plans were made, and the small group of about a half a dozen men, including one of the discoverers, proceeded to explore Crystal Cave. That, as a teen-ager, my father and four other boys had been lost in a cave for three days and nights!

They located my father who advised them that getting to the cave and back involved a long hike so the proposed visit would be a day-long trek. They still wanted to go, so he arranged to meet them early in the morning and he instructed them to bring lunches. As a matter of fact, they had to hike from Giant Forest.

This first group of Crystal Cave visitors consisted of a Mrs. McClure of Visalia, her son (about 9 years old), her sister, and another woman. To reach the cave at that time, they had to climb over the opposite sides partially “on the seat of our pants!” Anyway reached the cave in the forenoon and Dad, armed with rope and flashlight, let them inside. Everything went well until they reached the big room which is now called the Marble Room. Near the spot where modern rangers doff the lights, the boy dropped his lunch. Down into the darkness it disappeared! My father went down after it, aided by his rope. Of course, he took the light with him, so those poor women were left alone in the dark! However, my father safely retrieved the lunch and rejoined them. Then he led them back to the cave entrance where they sat and ate their lunches before tackling the long claim up and out of the canyon and back to Giant Forest.

Although I heard this story many times from my father, I did not know until recently that there was a sequel of sorts. More than a dozen years after the cave tour, when the boy was a man in his mid-twenties living in another state, he returned to visit his mother and they looked up Harry Terstegge. By then my father had married and moved to the Ivanhoe area, but they located him and came to his Ivanhoe place to see him. Mother met them at that time and she told me that the McCrases stated that they would never forget their visit to Crystal Cave in 1918! By that time, of course, the rangers were conducting regular tours of the cave.

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MISSION STATEMENT & MORE

The Museum’s ‘Mission Statement’ talks about collecting, preserving and exhibiting materials relating to our region and provide opportunities for the community and visitors to understand through exhibits the history of our region.

Our Board of Directors has taken a hard look at our many successes and our goals for the future and agree that we need additional space to exhibit all our artifacts.

One of the ideas that we have been looking at is a ‘barn’ type structure built on the Bequette land next to the museum. We have been researching the cost of building a ‘barn-style’ structure keeping with the appearance of the historic Bequette house. This new building would house a large exhibit area and much needed additional storage space. Various types of construction have been considered and at present a pre-built metal barn appears to be the most practical option because of its low cost and easy maintenance.

Of course this always takes money and being a true non-profit organization we look to our member friends and foundation grants for the support to make this build a reality.

Preserving our history is not an easy task and finding ways of displaying it when our current museum is to the walls with so much more that we could do with additional exhibit space.

We have had a couple of our members interested in being a part of this new building and would like to join forces with other individuals and businesses that feel that the Three Rivers Historical Museum is and will be a strong and visible part of life in Three Rivers.

BIGGEST LIAR IN THE SIERRA’S

Here is another short story from the Los Tulares Newsletter of December 1976. It is a story about a Fish and Snake, from Ben Harris, the Biggest Liar in the Sierra’s

“I was fishing on the Kaweah one day and was having no luck. I began to wish for some kind of different lure when I looked down and discovered a rattlesnake in the process of swallowing a small frog. Knowing the snake couldn’t strike with its mouth full, I reached down, grasped it behind the head and removed the frog from its mouth. Tears formed in the eyes of the snake thus deprived of its dinner and a wave of sympathy swept over me. I reached into my pocket where I had a bottle of snakebite remedy, took out the bottle, removed the cork and gave the snake a generous shot. The snake smacked his lips, and when I replaced it on the ground, it went looping off happily into the brush.

“I resumed fishing and with the frog caught a nice big fish. Then my luck died again. I was wishing I had another frog when I felt something trap me on my heel. I looked down. There was the snake with another frog in its mouth.”

IT JUST HAD TO BE SAID!

Here is a thought that just had to be said. Taken from a small booklet published by the Reader’s Digest in 1964.

It was well known throughout the Maine Farming community where I was born that Farmer Brown and his wife let a cat-and-dog life. Finally he built himself a cabin in a field back of the barn, moved in and let his wife the house. One day I was helping him in the woods and at noon we went back to his cabin. It was immaculate and on the table were a blueberry pie and a pan of biscuits.

“Sarah comes in now and then and clean up a bit and brings hot biscuits and such,” he said, answering my look. “You know, no man could live with that woman, but she makes an awful good neighbor.” - George Ginader
WE STILL NEED RECIPES FOR OUR COOKBOOK

Original or favorite family recipe’s
Listed below is the recipe information we need.

- Recipe Title
- Measurements & Ingredients
- Detailed Cooking Instructions
- History of Recipe
- What makes it special. Where did it come from and when.
- Name of person in family that started the recipe.
- Your name, Address, Phone, Email

Upcoming Event Dates
April 4, 3pm to 6pm
Writer’s Reception
April 9-12, 9am to 5pm
Jazz Display at Museum
April 23-26, booth at arena
Lion’s Team Roping
May 3, booth at Memorial Building
Redbud Festival
June 6, 8am to 4pm
Town Yard Sale at Museum
July 11, 10am to 4pm
Hot Dog Festival
October 10, 10am to 4pm
Living History Day
November 14, 10am to 4pm
Holiday Bazaar, booth at Mem. Build
December 12, 5pm to 7pm
Community Holiday Gathering

Community Yard Sale
Saturday, June 6th 8am-4pm, at the Museum
We wanted to give you plenty of time to clean out that garage, attic or whatever you have.
$10.00 will hold your space

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What an easy way to support the Museum!

Community Yard Sale
Saturday, June 6th 8am-4pm, at the Museum
We wanted to give you plenty of time to clean out that garage, attic or whatever you have.
$10.00 will hold your space
Here’s your March and April 2015 Newsletter

Artifact of the Month, March 2015
Fairbanks Scale (donated by Mark and Dot Rob)

Artifact of the Month, April 2015
Clarinet Lamp
(donated by Rusty and Pat Crain)

WRITER’S BOOK SIGNING RECEPTION
Jana Botkin, Louise Jackson, Bill Clark, Sylvia Ross
Saturday, April 4th
3:00pm to 6:00pm
At the Museum