

**THE CAVERNS OF LURAY: THE  
MANNER OF THEIR  
FORMATION, THEIR PECULIAR  
GROWTHS, THEIR GEOLOGY,  
CHEMISTRY, &C**

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# **SHENANDOAH VALLEY RAILROAD**

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THE  
Caverns of Luray.

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The Manner of their Formation,  
Their Peculiar Growths,  
Their Geology, Chemistry, &c.

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AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE-BOOK.

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MAP OF THE CAVE.

- 1, Entrance Hall. 2, Washington Column. 3, Vegetable Garden. 4, Theatre. 5, Natural Bridge. 6, Fish Market. 7, Crystal Spring. 8, Proserpine's Column. 9, The Spectre. 10, The Balcony. 11, Oberon's Grotto. 12, Titania's Veil. 13, Saracen's Tent and Fallen Column. 14, Organ and Throne. 15, Tower of Babel. 16, Empress Column. 17, Leidy Column. 18, Henry-Baird (or Double) Column. 19, Chalcedony Cascade. 20, Coral Spring. 21, The Dragon. 22, Scaly Column. 23, Helen's Scarf. 24, Wet Blanket. 25, Chapman's Lake. 26, Lake Lee. 27, Castles on the Rhine and Lake Lethe. 28, Imperial Spring. 29, Skeleton. 30, Twin Lakes. 31, Engine Room. 32, Miller's Room. 33, Hawes' Room. 34, Specimen Avenue. 35, Leaning Tower. 36, Proposed Exit Avenue.

## THE CAVERNS OF LURAY.

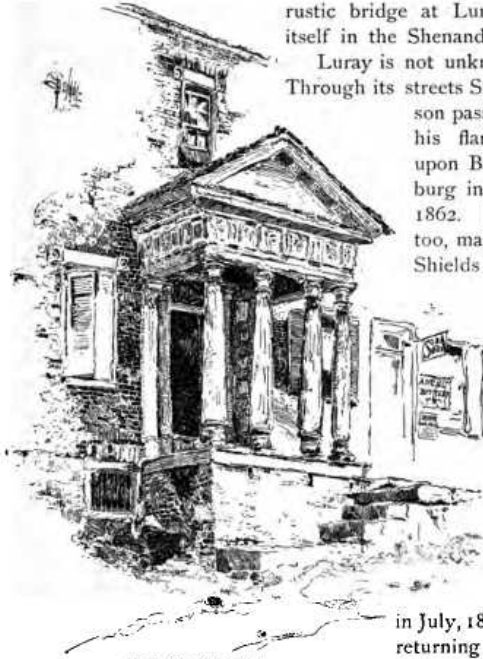
"All are but parts of one stupendous whole."—*Pope.*

### ITS HISTORY AND SURROUNDINGS.

THE GREAT VALLEY OF VIRGINIA lies between two elevated ranges—the Blue Ridge on the southeast rising to heights of from 2000 to 4000 feet above tide-level, and the North Mountain range on the northwest almost equally high. It is not a continuous plain like some of the Western prairies. On the contrary it is of varied surface, a land of hill and dale, well-watered, fertile, and abounding in every variety of mineral and agricultural wealth. Nor is it a single valley throughout. From a few miles southwest of Winchester to a point nearly opposite Harrisonburg it is divided into two subordinate valleys by the Massanutton Mountain—a long belt of ridges of silurian and devonian rocks which withstood the denuding agencies that cleared away on either side so many hundreds of square miles of strata.

Both valleys are proverbial for their beauty and famous for important historical events, of which each has been the scene, but our present concern is with the eastern and narrower one, the Luray Valley. This constitutes Page County, of which Luray (at 822 feet above sea-level) is the county seat. For the lover of the beautiful in nature it is endowed with innumerable charms. Hemmed in on every side with a rim of blue mountains, it is traversed in its western part by the South Branch of the Shenandoah, a beautiful river known in many a story of battle and guerilla adventure during the civil war. It was upon its banks at

Front Royal, near its junction with the North Branch, that the first battle of Jackson's famous Valley campaign was fought. The Hawksbill, a winding and picturesque stream, flows through the centre of the valley, alternating along its upper course with wild mountain cascades and bits of bosky dell, until at length, after watering miles of fertile meadow, it passes beneath the rustic bridge at Luray and loses itself in the Shenandoah.



ON THE MAIN STREET.

Luray is not unknown to fame. Through its streets Stonewall Jackson passed in making his flank movement upon Banks at Strasburg in the spring of 1862. By this way, too, marched General Shields a little later,

to intercept the wily Confederate in his retreat before Fremont. After the affair at Port Republic, Luray lay in the line of the Federal general's retreat. Again,

in July, 1863, Lee's army returning from Gettysburg to Eastern Virginia,

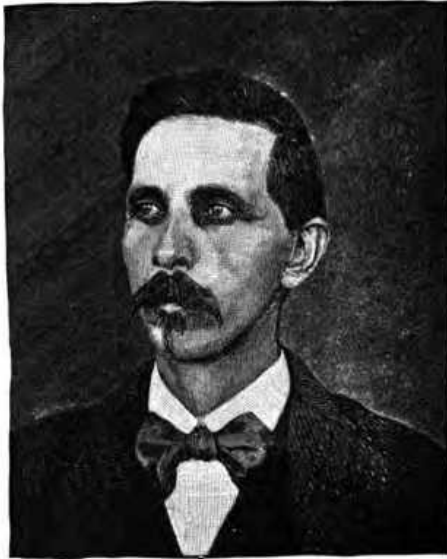
and finding the lower passes of the Blue Ridge held by Meade's troops, came this far up the valley to gain Thornton's Gap, and crossing here, once more confronted its old adversary. Then, as now, the valley was famous for its pretty girls and abundant rations, to both of which soldiers are ever devoted, and it became in consequence the scene of many exploits of the partisan



soldiery of Harry Gilmore, White, McNeil, and Mosby—gay fellows who were loath to yield possession of so charming a place.

About a mile west of Luray near the Newmarket pike, is a conical hill, long known as Cave Hill from the existence of a cave\* near its summit. At its base is a large depression filled with water. Along its sides, here and there are sink holes, marked with a growth of briar and weeds, known to vagrant

boys as the haunts of rabbits. Their more important significance was not understood, however, until after the arrival in April, 1878, of Mr. B. P. Stebbins, a photographer of Easton, Md., who induced several of the townspeople to join him in the search for an undiscovered cave which, from surface indi-



ANDREW J. CAMPBELL.

cations, he felt sure must exist in the neighborhood. With his companions in this memorable hunt he prospected about the country, digging here and there at promising localities but without success, until, being nick-named "cave-rats," they be-

\* Discovered in 1795 by Ruffner, a famous hunter and pioneer, who was afterwards killed in combat with the Indians. On May 7th, 1825, new discoveries were made by a party of fifteen gentlemen from Luray, who penetrated a distance of half a mile, reaching (it has been inferred from their descriptions) Hades and other portions of the "new cave" of Stebbins and Campbell.

came the objects of good-natured ridicule from their fellow townsmen who charged them with mistaking rabbits' hiding places for mares' nests, and jumping rabbits for sprightly young colts.

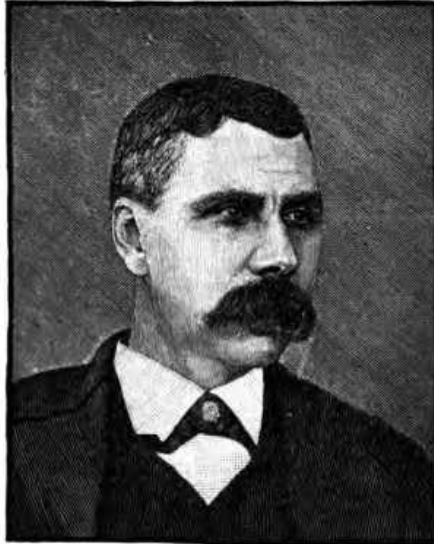
At length, on the 13th of August, 1878, they examined a depression on the hillside, about forty feet in diameter by ten in depth, filled with loose stones and brush, and grown up with weeds. Removing these obstructions with considerable labor, they found an opening from which a current of air was escaping. The opening was further enlarged; Mr. A. J. Campbell was lowered by means of a rope, and reaching bottom, candle in hand, peered about him. He found himself in a narrow rift about fifteen feet long by five wide, with no apparent outlet. Closer examination disclosed a hole through which with some difficulty the discoverer of the Caverns passed into the large open space now known as Entrance Hall. Having abandoned the rope which connected him with his companions, he for some time contemplated with rapt interest the strange scene presented to his eyes, until—the rest of the party becoming alarmed at his absence—his nephew William B. Campbell followed in search of him. The importance of their discovery was appreciated, and at night the party returned with candles and explored Stebbins' Avenue, Entrance Hall, and Entrance Avenue as far as Muddy Lake, since drained and replaced by a dry, cement walk. The lake—then a considerable body of water—stopped them, and of the largest and grandest part of the cave they remained in ignorance, until, on a venture, they had purchased the land under which it lay.

Soon after its discovery the tract of land overlying the cave, and containing twenty-eight and one-half acres, was sold by order of the county court at auction, to close up a bankrupt estate, and Messrs. Stebbins, Campbell & Co. became the purchasers. The price paid was double what the land had brought at a previous sale. It was considered by persons not in the secret a bad bargain, as the soil is light, consisting of a thin clay strewn with fragments of quartz, while the hillside is disfigured with sink-holes and masses of lower silurian limestone projecting in horizontal strata from the surface.

A few days later, however, the town was electrified by the

announcement of the discovery of a wonderful cave. The commotion was immense, and when the nature of the property with which they had parted became known, relatives of the original owner instituted suit for its recovery. The decision of the local court was in favor of the purchasers, but the case was carried to the State Court of Appeals, and was there, in the spring of 1881, decided in favor of the plaintiffs. It had scarcely been

decided when the Luray Cave and Hotel Company, related in interest to the Shenandoah Valley Railroad Company, purchased the cave for \$40,000. Other bodies of land adjoining have since been added to the original tract until property exceeding the whole area overlying the cave, and several times the extent of the original "cave tract," now belongs to the same owners.



WILLIAM B. CAMPBELL.

The object that first attracts the attention of travelers arriving at Luray is the "Inn," a handsome "Queen Anne" structure on an eminence two hundred yards from the railroad station. Commanding a view of mountain scenery in every direction, beautifully appointed in every detail, tastefully and luxuriously furnished, and having a cuisine of particular excellence, it has