

# **Three Visits to Perry's Cave on South Bass Island in 1818 and 1819**

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# Two Different Narratives of the same 1818 Visit to Perry's Cave

## Estwick Evans Visits Perry's Cave in 1818

*Estwick Evans, a native of New Hampshire, undertook a 4,000 mile trip through the western states and territories in the winter and spring of 1818<sup>1</sup>. Thomas Langlois wrote in an article in *Inland Seas* in 1951 that "from his (Evans') account, which is repeated here, it is obvious that this (Perry's) cave had not been opened up by Perry five years before, and had actually probably not been seen by white men before Evans".<sup>2</sup> However, Langlois' interpretation is not considered conclusive.*

After remaining one night at Grose Isle<sup>3</sup>, I proceeded to Malden, and from thence entered the lake. During the night the wind was high, and we ran back a considerable way to avoid several islands called the Sisters. Towards morning, the wind being fair, we continued our course. At day light we experienced a gale of wind, and run for Put-in-Bay. Our Captain was a very experienced seaman, and perfectly understood the navigation of the lake; but having got among a cluster of little islands, situated near the bay, he was, for a moment, bewildered. Our situation was highly interesting. The darkness of the gale seemed to contend with the dawn; and fancy could almost see it hold the reins of the car of day. The waves dashed, our sloop ploughed the foam, many little islands reared, through night, their ragged tops, our Captain exclaimed, "where are we?" and all was hurly. We were now passing over the battle waves of the gallant Perry. Our little gunless keel moved where whole fleets had stormed. In fancy's ear, the cannon's roar had not ceased to reverberate; the undulating wave seemed anxious to bury the dead; the wind, through our scanty shrouds, whispered in the ear of death; and the green wave, reddened by battle, greedily sported around our sides.

Many of the islands near the Bay are not larger than a dwelling-house. Their sides consist of ragged rocks, and on their summits are a few weather beaten trees. The storm continuing, we remained at anchor in Put-in-Bay four days. During this time I frequently went ashore, and surveyed the island of this name. Wild fowl are

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<sup>1</sup> Evans, Estwick, *A Pedestrious Tour, or Four Thousand Miles Through the Western States and Territories, During the Winter and Spring of 1818*, Printed by Joseph Spear, Concord, NH, 1819. (Reprinted in Thwaites, R.G., *Early Western Travels*, Volume 8, Cleveland, The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1904-07.) Also available online at the Library of Congress at [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).

<sup>2</sup> Langlois, Thomas, *The Caves on South Bass Island*, *Inland Seas* (Quarterly Bulletin of the Great Lakes Historical Society), Volume VII, 1951

<sup>3</sup> Grosse Isle, MI, near Lake Erie

numerous here, and in the woods there are swine. The island is uninhabited. Its soil and the growth of its timber are very good. The former abounds with limestone.

This island is rendered interesting by its forming the bay in which our fleet was moored both before and after its great victory; and also by its containing the graves of some of those who fell in the engagement. My visit to these graves excited melancholy reflections. The parade and confusion of battle had passed; and nothing was heard but the chill blast, wending its devious way through the rank weeds. So bloody was this battle, that the victor himself might well have mourned.

It was natural for me here to reflect upon our naval history. During the Revolution our prowess upon the ocean promised every thing; and in the late war even the prophecies of philosophy, and the inspirations of liberty, were distanced. But I must speak of Renown! Where is our Wasp?<sup>4</sup> *True* glory was her object; and she returns not for earthly honours. Langdon and Toscin sleep in France:<sup>5</sup> ---they were buds of fame. Lawrence fell like Hector, by the shaft of fate<sup>6</sup>. My memory is full of valour's sons; but they need not the eulogy of my pen.

In one of my excursions into the woods of Put-in-Bay island I was accompanied by my friend Capt. Whiting<sup>7</sup> of the United States Army, a gentleman of a scientific and polished mind. Having provided ourselves with some old clothes, we visited a cave situated about a mile from the bay. This cave is smaller than some others in the west; but is, nevertheless, worth a description.

After exploring the woods for some time, we found what we supposed might be, and what actually was the cave. Its front is situated at the end of a considerable rise of land of an oval form. The mouth of the cave was very small; and being covered with sticks and leaves, presented a very uninviting aspect. After removing the obstructions, we took lights, and descending about ten feet perpendicularly, came to a rock, the position of which was that of an inclined plane. This rock is, in its descent,

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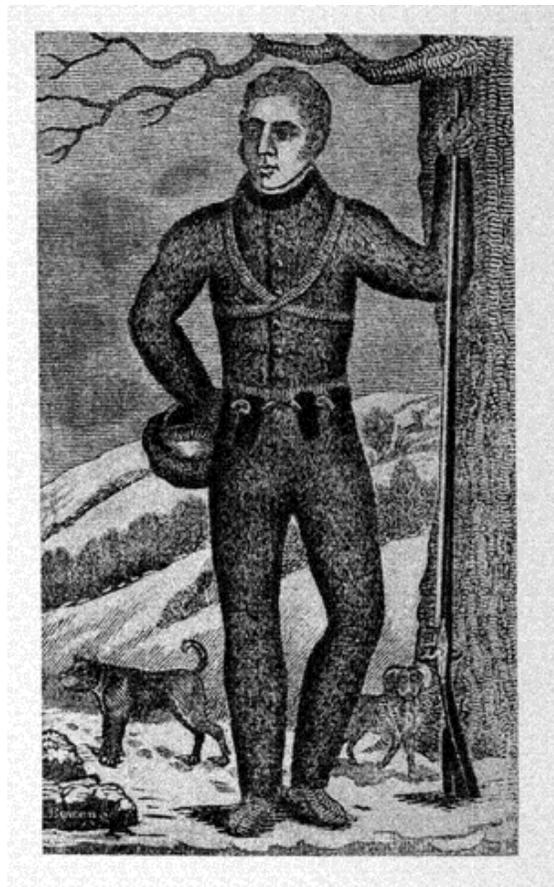
<sup>4</sup> The "Wasp" under command of Johnstone Blakely sailed from Portsmouth for the British Channel (May, 1814) and began the destruction of English merchantmen. June 28, the brig "Reindeer" bore down upon her, but after twenty minutes of hard fighting was compelled to surrender. Although suffering severely in this engagement, the "Wasp" continued her ravages until October when she disappeared and was never heard from again.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Langdon and Frank Toscan were both midshipmen on the "Wasp" during her fight with the "Reindeer," and died from wounds received in the battle.

<sup>6</sup> James Lawrence, born in Burlington, New Jersey (1781), served with Decatur in the War with Tripoli, and as lieutenant on the "Constitution." In 1811 he was placed in command of the "Hornet," his most notable achievement with that vessel being the destruction (1813) of the British ship "Peacock." For this victory he was given command of the "Chesapeake," and accepting the challenge of the "Shannon," fought with her off Boston harbor, June, 1813. He fell, mortally wounded, and the "Chesapeake" was compelled to surrender. His countrymen, stirred by his dying cry, "Don't give up the ship," had his body brought from Halifax, and buried with military honors in Trinity Churchyard, New York City.

<sup>7</sup> In the original article, this was written as "Capt. W." This was later deduced to have been Capt. Henry Whiting, as described in a later section of this document.

met by the front of the cave, so as to leave an aperture, near the floor of it, of only about three feet in length, and eighteen inches in height. This aperture also was covered with leaves. After removing them, we lay flat, and crowded ourselves, one to time, into an unknown and dismal region. As we advanced the cave, gradually, became higher; and at length we could move in an erect posture. Here we found ourselves in a spacious apartment, constituting about an acre, and surrounded by curious petrifications. Those on the walls were small; but on the floor of the cave they were large; some of them weighing about thirty pounds. The latter are, generally of a pyramidal form. At the distance of about two hundred feet from the mouth of the cave, we came to a precipice, at the foot of which was a body of deep water. Whilst my companion sat upon the brink of the precipice, I descended it, and holding a light in one hand, swam with the other for the purpose of ascertaining the course and boundaries of this subterranean lake.



**Figure 1: Estwick Evans, from his book**

In this gloomy, yet interesting cavern, we saw no living thing, excepting two bats, which were in a torpid state. Whilst exploring the most distant recesses of the cave, one of our candles was accidentally extinguished. The extinguishment of our other light would, perhaps, have been fatal to us. The darkness of this dreary region is palpable. No ray of nature's light ever visited it. Its silence too is full of thought. The

slippery step of the traveler, and the stilly drippings of the slimy concave, yielded a contrast which made silence speak. Our own appearance interested us. We forgot ourselves, and unconsciously dwelt upon two ragged Fiends, prying, with taper dim, along the confines of this doleful place. We saw these beings under the low sides of the cave knocking off some large petrifications. We said, who are they? --- and almost shuddered to find they were ourselves.

As soon as the storm ceased we set sail from the Bay, and the next evening arrived at Erie. In this harbour were several United States' vessels of considerable magnitude. The banks of the harbour, on the town side, are high, steep, and romantic; and from them there is an extensive view of the Lake. The harbour itself is spacious, and the water deep.

### Capt. Henry Whiting Visits Perry's Cave in 1818

*This article by Whiting was first published in the 1830's in Henry Schoolcraft's magazine "Souvenir of the Lakes", the first literary magazine in Michigan. It was also reprinted in the Historical Society of Northwestern Ohio Quarterly Bulletin, April, 1939*

#### A Visit to the Cave in Put-in-Bay Island

Sometime in April, 1818 I embarked at Detroit, on board the sloop --- bound for Buffalo. We made what, in those days, was called an early start for the season. The vessels then were neither well found nor well manned, and all navigation was considered somewhat unsafe, which began before the summer months, or continued beyond them. No vessel ventured out of her hyemal<sup>8</sup> nest, until after the attempering influences of May or June had persuaded Boreas to gather in his storms, and give place to breezes and zephyrs. And even May was distrustfully intruded upon, particularly if "lingering winter" had left a "chill" upon its "lap."

Our master was a cautious mariner, but economy sometimes - as in this case - led him to imprudence. He had no freight down, for at that time the exportations of Michigan were few and small. Much came in, but little went out - *vestigia nulla retrorsum*. Even ballast was wanting, nor was it safe to sail without it. But it cost something at Detroit, and at Put-in-Bay it could be had for nothing. To postpone taking it in until we should reach that place was hazardous, but the weather was fair when we got under weigh, and, sailor-like, he thought it would continue so. Night, with a fog and a calm, came on, before we neared the 'Middle Sister,' and we were floating listlessly over Perry's battle *ground*, (we are not allowed to call it *battle water*;) until towards day-break, when, as is usual in these capricious climates, a

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<sup>8</sup> Hyemal: belonging to winter

wind sprang up, which soon increased to a tempest. The first rockings of the agitated waters rather soothed than disturbed our sleep, but the motion soon lost its lullaby character, and we were awakened by the few articles of furniture in the cabin, which seemed to be interchanging places, as if engaged in a lively dance, or a game of leap-frog. First, the candlestick, whose taper had burnt down to one of those long wicks, which at last overtops and almost puts out the blaze, after a few indecisive slides each way, was precipitated to the floor, leaving us in darkness which would have been total, if a slight glimmer of day-breaking had not come down the gang-way. Next, the light moveables, such as the shovel and tongs, a few pairs of boots and shoes, and a small box or two, showed signs of locomotion; and by the time the table, the most permanent piece of furniture there, began to stir its stumps, every thing like *statu quo* was lost. Whack! went everything sheer to larboard; then back again to the other side, making a dead pause of a few moments between each lurch.

The passengers, who, as is often said, were not responsible, even if the vessel sunk, kept close to their berths. Indeed, it was no small occupation to do that; for, being without ballast, the sloop was as buoyant as an egg shell, and every time she rolled, it was with much ado we kept from being spilt out. Half the time we appeared to be looking right down into the opposite berths; the other half, the tables being turned, our *vis-a-vis* had the same bird's-eye view of us. While we had the upper hand, except for the narrow rim in front of the berths, we might as well have been lying on a perpendicular wall.

Among the passengers was one who was a stranger to Detroit. Through eccentricity, he had travelled when everybody else staid at home, having come to see Detroit, in the depths of winter. He was now returning, laden with memoranda, which, with much dilating, afterwards served to fill a small volume. He was intelligent, and of most singular imperturbability. During this pother of the elements without, and of the furniture within, he seemed to be lying as undisturbed - not in body, for that was out of the question - in mind, as if we had been sailing with a holyday breeze; and as soon as the light of day permitted, he got out of his berth, and, bracing himself in a central position on the after locker, so as to be aloof from the blind-man's-buff before him, he took out his note-book, and began to make *mems*. I presume he described, *currenti calamo* the tempest then raging; and if we had floundered, (which appeared at that time not an unlikely even) his notes (if afterwards by accident retrieved) would probably have run - "mem - terrible tempest - may go down - going down" - *etcetera desunt*.

How we got to the island, I do not precisely recollect, for one's ideas are apt to get jumbled when the body is thus violently handled. Once or twice I put my head out of the gang-way, but each time a huge wave seemed to be aiming at it with particular animosity, and I thought it prudent to keep the deck between me and such sweepstakes. In one of these peeps, I observed our course lay near the "Hens and Chickens," (a foul name, one traveller remarked) and appeared to be irresistibly bearing us right on to their roosts. I thought of Scylla and Charybdis, and bobbed

again below, internally resolving that if I once got out of the scrape, I would thence forward travel altogether on terra firma. If one upsets there, the fall has a tennination, but to *capsize* in the deepwaters, it is a down derry down sort of an accident, as indefinite as terrible.

When we reached Put-in-Bay, the contrast between the *intra* and *extra* was sudden and extreme. This little Bay, which received Commodore Perry and the two fleets after his victory, is almost land-locked, and so protected by its own formation, and the adjacent island, that no storm, however boisterous, can send a wave in to agitate its surface. The sudden transition we experienced from the rough and tumble without, to the perfect serenity within, seemed to be the effect of magic; and our traveller declared that old Neptune, *summa placidum caput extulit unda*<sup>9</sup>, had befriended us as the Trojans of old.

The violence of the winds did not abate during that day, and we resigned ourselves to anchorage. We were not, however, without pleasant occupation. Having all heard of the extraordinary cave in Put-in-Bay Island, we resolved to improve the opportunity thus thrust upon us, by visiting it. - The Captain, in his homely language, said it was a dirty business, though well worth seeing, and advised us to doff our genteel garments, and furnish ourselves with more befitting costume out of his cast-off ward-robe. As no ladies were on board to witness our metamorphosis, nor any mirror in which we could see it ourselves, we consented. The Captain, whose clothes I was about to assume, weighed probably two hundred pounds, while I scarcely exceeded nine stone, being then just at the standard of dandy gentility. When I came to be invested in his suit, I found that another person of the same dimensions as myself, could have been well accommodated in it, and not a button strained. However, with some looping and reefing, (as the Captain termed it) and a cord around the waist to bring the gathers home, I was at last prepared for the *descensus averni*<sup>10</sup>.

We landed where there was a clearing of some acres extent. The green grass of an early spring was just struggling through the decayed and tangled growth of the previous season. Not far from the beach, a number of little tumuli were pointed out to us as the graves of those who fell in Perry's fight. They had then been bur~§ about four years, and already the slight inequalities of the surface, which alone marked the spot of their interment, were disappearing; and probably at this time, not a visible memento of the spot remains. Our traveller mused long, and animadverted much on this neglect of the gallant dead, and said that if he made a map for his work, he would call the "Middle Sister" *Perry's Isle*, and also recommend that a rostral monument be erected upon it.

We followed our guide, by a devious path, into what I supposed to be the centre of

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<sup>9</sup> from Virgil's *Aeneid*: Neptune "calmly raised his head above the highest wave"

<sup>10</sup> from Virgil's *Aeneid*: "facilis descensus Averni": "the descent of Avernus (is) easy in ref. to Avernus, a deep lake near Puteoli, a reputed entrance to the underworld; hence, "it is easy to slip into moral ruin."

the island, when, being near a hole five or six feet in diameter, we were told that we were at the entrance of the cave. 'The ground in the vicinity, of perhaps an acre's extent, appeared to have been lifted up several feet above the common level. Our traveller remarked that the island looked as if it had "got its back up." The entrance into the cave was just under the eaves of this wen, and descended perpendicularly about ten feet. There were no steps or means of descent, excepting such as we constructed at the moment. The surface of the soil was wet with the recent rains, and one of our party, betrayed by its lubricity, went down with unexpected celerity, but without injury to flesh or bones. At the bottom of this rude shaft, the descent was but slight for several feet, the rock over head shelving gradually down, until it appeared to rest on the rock below. Our guide soon undeceived us. With a lighted candle in his hand, (we were all provided in the same manner) he got upon his hands and knees, and bade us follow. All of us, like so many quadrupeds, did so. But we were soon compelled to still greater degradation. The passage, which was several feet wide, after a short space, became so low, that we were obliged to abase ourselves almost upon the "human face divine," and depend upon the elbows for advancement, leaving the nether limbs to drag themselves along as they best could. The trickling rain had run down the entrance, and spread a slimy carpet over the rocky floor, convincing us that the Captain had been friendly in advising us to dress ourselves in "loop'd and window'd raggedness." Being of a spare form, I worm'd myself through with tolerable facility, but we were often attracted by the ejaculations of one of the company, whose rotundity of waist led him frequently to pause before he essayed the passage. But our progress soon brought us to "ample room and verge enough." The ceiling, after several feet, began to rise, and in the course of a few yards, we stood once more erect. The first precaution was to fix a candle to mark the entrance, that we might retrace our steps aright. We then advanced into the centre, fixing a line of candles as we went on. In the centre the ceiling was several feet high, and continued at about the same height to the further side, which terminated in a small lake. The rocks shelved down into the water, and closed all search in that quarter. As we all stood upon the brink of this basin, admiring its exquisite limpidity, our traveller cried out, "here's to the Naiads of the cave!" and "accoutred as he was," plunged in head first, candle and all. The depth of the water was about three feet, and as he paddled a moment beneath the surface, his form was almost as distinctly visible, as if he had been in his native element. After this tributary ablution, we proceeded to explore several inner chambers, branching off from the main hall, and found several of various forms and dimensions. How extensive might have been this suite of subterranean apartments, we had neither patience nor candles to determine. The roof of every part of the cave was studded with small stalactites, and corresponding stalagmites were found frequently on the floor beneath. In some cases, where the percolation had been more copious, the icicle above had almost, and in one or two instances, had quite, met the spar beneath, forming a beautiful marble pillar, which softly reflected the light of our surrounding tapers. On the sides of the cave, where the sloping rock caught the drops with their calcarious<sup>11</sup> freight, and gave them an inclination downwards, a

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<sup>11</sup> Composed of, containing, or characteristic of calcium carbonate, calcium, or limestone; chalky.

little pearly-looking turnpike, following the sinuosities of the descent, was seen running over the dark limestone - a fairy Appian way. All these beauties had been even, at that time, much disfigured by the strokes of plundering visitors. Each one of our own party made some depredations, thus, in one moment, destroying the slow production of perhaps many ages. I felt inclined to ask them to spare the pearly turnpike, lest the tiny travellers, when next descending, should meet with some accident, or be obliged to discontinue their little perambulations, until those tedious laborers, the calcarious drops, should repair the highways.

Our traveller said he was curious to know what length of time would be spent in forming a stalactite, and had a mind to settle in the cave, in order to ascertain the fact. We thought he ought to lay in a good stock of patience, and of *elixir vitae* too; as we doubted whether Methuselah himself, with his ek'd-out life, had he undertaken such a job, would have seen the accumulation and fall of more than a score of drops.

At last our candles began to burn low; the idea of being left in the dark to grope our way out, led to a common wish to retrace our steps. We returned upon our train of lights, having wandered some hundred feet under ground; and often looked back upon the gloom, which, restored to its dominion by our retreating tapers, seemed to frown upon our unwelcome intrusion.

One of our party, before we went out, proposed discharging a pistol in the cave, to see its effects. The more prudent of us strongly opposed such an experiment. Who knew what slight props kept the shell above us in its displaced elevation; or whether such an agitation of the air beneath might not loosen some of them, and bring the whole mass down again, *in situ*, (as the mineralogist would say) crushing us at once, or, what was worse - closing up our only place of egress! We all shuddered at the thought, and not only refrained from burning gunpowder, but even spoke with suppressed voices, lest the slightest jar should cut off retreat. Every one made the best of his way out, the fat man the hindmost; doubtless often ejaculating - "Oh, that this too solid flesh would melt!"

When all stood on the face of the earth again, and we began to count noses, to ascertain if all were present, not one could refrain from laughter, each one looking as if he had just come out of the hands of the potter, or was just fitted to go into them.

### A Commentary on the Two Accounts

*This article explains the deduction that Captain Henry Whiting was the author of the previous article. It is from Historical Society of Northwestern Ohio Quarterly Bulletin, July, 1939*

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THE AUTHORSHIP OF  
"A VISIT TO THE CAVE IN PUT-IN-BAY ISLAND"

The last sketch in the previous issue of the *Bulletin*, reprinted with only a conjecture as to its authorship, may now be definitely assigned to Captain Henry Whiting. M. M. Quaife, Secretary of the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library, called my attention to Estwick Evans' *Pedestrious Tour of Four Thousand Miles Through the Western States and Territories* (1819), which describes a visit to Put-in-Bay in the early spring of 1818, as establishing the authorship of the item in question, "A Visit to the Cave in Put-in-Bay Island." On this particular expedition the boon companion of Evans and co-explorer of South Bass Island was Captain W., whom he characterizes as a "gentleman of a scientific and polished mind." Reference earlier in the account included Captain W. in the company and party of General Macomb, who had a home\_ at Malden. Whiting, who was made a captain in 1817, was aid to General Macomb and was the only Captain W. of the Detroit area of known literary leanings. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the Captain W. referred to in Evans' account was Captain Henry Whiting, later Major (1834), Lieutenant Colonel, and finally Brigadier General Whiting of the United States army.

Since it is fairly conclusive that the reference in Evans' book is to Captain Henry Whiting, the chief matter to be established is that the two accounts, that of Evans and that here reprinted, are sufficiently identical and unusual to have been written only by fellow travelers on the same trip, or, in short, that the Souvenir sketch could have been written only by Evans' companion. This I believe to be true. In both there is mention of the honored dead and concern over neglected graves. Both versions date the trip in early spring, an unseasonable period for the movement of lake boats, and both indicated that the captain headed for Put-in-Bay to secure ballast. In both there is a gale which delays advance for several days. In both there is reference to old clothes and to the diving or jumping of one of the two comrades into the cave pond. Such resemblances are too close to be accidental. The writer of the anonymous account, moreover, refers to one of his traveling companions as having "come to see Detroit, in the depths of winter," and as "now returning, laden with memoranda, which, after much dilating, afterwards served to fill a small volume." This is an obvious reference to Evans. Only one slight discrepancy appears: Evans refers to two visitors, whereas Whiting adverts to more; but this is not significant when we call to mind the difference in length of the two accounts and the obvious simplification which Evans' notes must have undergone.

One other consideration remains. What opportunity was there for Whiting's story to get into Schoolcraft's hands? This is easily explained on the basis of their personal correspondence. Whiting had a letter from Schoolcraft in January, 1831, the month of the *Souvenir of the Lakes*. In the same year Schoolcraft supplied notes for Whiting's *Sanillac*, a metrical romance of the Indians. In 1839 Schoolcraft dedicated to (then) Lieutenant Whiting his *Algic Researches* as an expression of "literary sympathy and personal friendship," and these tales and legends of the Indians were

reviewed by Whiting that same year. Thus a selection from Whiting in an 1831 gift-book was a contribution from a friend and from the Detroit author second in reputation to Schoolcraft himself.

A further word as to Whiting's literary activity may be adduced. In 1823 Whiting published *Ontwa*, a long poem on the pattern of *Lady of the Lake*. It is a five-part tale, opening in true Chateaubriand fashion, of a tramp with an Indian cicerone<sup>12</sup>, during which the tragedy of the Erie Indians in 1653 is poured out by the last surviving mourner of the race. Indebtedness to Scott here manifested by diction, irregularity of stanza, and lyrical interlude, is also evident in the structure and context of *Sanillac*, published by Whiting nine years later. It is a tale of Indian life without any white characters and unique, therefore, among metrical romances. The story itself is an Indian version of the "test of love," for the Wyandot suitor of the "Maid of the Isle" must return from the Iroquois camp with enemy club and scalp before the consent of the father will be granted. The purpose of the author, however, is not so much to tell the story of the war between the Iroquois and the Wyandots as to furnish illustrations of the manners and\_ customs of, Indian tribes. In 1834 Whiting was one of the authors of *Discourses before the Historical Society of Michigan*, which reprinted his 1832 address as well as other annual speeches from 1830 to 1833 by Cass, Schoolcraft, and Biddle. During the twenties Whiting contributed several articles to the *North American Review* on the military affairs of the United States, and in succeeding decades added reviews and articles on national defense, the Seminole war, and the Northern lakes. In 1844 he edited *George Washington's Revolutionary Orders* and to Spark's *American Biography* contributed a life of Zebulon M. Pike. Thus, though the sketch of the visit to Put-in-Bay was written early in Whiting's career, probably four years before his first published volume, its author continued for some years to devote himself to literary enterprises as well as to fulfill his duties as an army officer.

G .. HARRISON ORIAN.

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<sup>12</sup> cicerone: an old term for a guide

## Excursion to Perry's Cave at Put-in-Bay, 1819

*This is a delightful story of a visit to Perry's Cave by a group of "tourists" in 1819, a year after Evans' and Whiting's visit in 1818. The tourists were travelers on the first steamer in Lake Erie, the Walk-in-the-Water. In the cave, they listened to a song accompanied by flute music.*

**Boston Weekly Messenger**

Thursday, August 12, 1819

(Article reprinted) FROM THE NEW-YORK EVENING POST  
Letters from an American Traveller, now on a tour to Missouri.  
No. II<sup>13</sup>

### CAVERN, AT PUT-IN BAY, LAKE ERIE

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, we left Black Rock<sup>14</sup>, in the steam boat Walk-in-the-Water<sup>15</sup> for the upper lakes. Every comfort and luxury was amply provided on board. The party were such as to make the trip sociable and friendly, and that monotony, frequently experienced and inwardly complained of, the noise of steam boat machinery, was lost in "the maze of the sprightly dance and the echo of sweet music."

The next day found ourselves amidst the Islands near Sandusky Bay. Those beautiful specks, rising from the bosom of the water, gave the most charming effects to lake scenery. We landed at Put-in Bay, to take in more fuel, and most of us, including a few enterprising ladies, visited the cavern, situated in the centre of one of the Islands forming the harbor of Put-in Bay – a name that will be dear to every American. This cave is difficult of access, admitting but of one person, of moderate compass, at a time. After sliding down, feet foremost, on the damp earth, for about seven yards, we find ourselves on a table rock of lime stone arched and roofed by the same material, which originally composed one mass, but whose foundation has

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<sup>13</sup> Letter No. I covers the trip past Utica and Rochester, NY and a tour of Niagara Falls. Letter No. III covers travel to Detroit and up the River St. Clair, with some mention of Fort Gratiot.

<sup>14</sup> In 1853, Buffalo, NY annexed Black Rock, an adjacent community, which had been Buffalo's fierce rival for the terminus of the Lake Erie Canal.

<sup>15</sup> "The first steamboat built on the upper lakes was named the Walk-in-the-Water, not only for its appropriateness, but for a chief of the Wyandot Indians, who lived with his band about 12 miles below Detroit, on the margin of the Detroit River. The boat was built at Black Rock, which place continued for some time to be her most eastern port and the terminus of her route, Buffalo at that time having no pier or dock to accommodate her. She was hauled up the rapids by 16 yoke of oxen, aided by the power of her engine. She made her trial trip in August, 1818 and carried passengers and cargo up and down the lake until Oct. 31, 1821, when she foundered in a storm off Point Abino west of Buffalo." (excerpted from a story written by Mary A. Witherell Palmer, a passenger on its last trip.)

been undermined by the deep water, leaving the upper stratum to be supported by the surrounding rocks. Its area is about 20,000 square feet, seven feet in height, and of an oblong form. At its extreme there is a descent of several steps of flagstone, to a small lake or spring of transparent, cool water.

In descending this dark cavern, most of us were obliged to leave our hats and coats behind – some had provided themselves with dresses, corresponding to the rudeness of the entrance – and when all arrived at the decent leading to the water, we seated and otherwise rested ourselves, in various positions, whilst one of the gentlemen attached to the suit of Gen. Brown, who himself was with us, “the gayest of the gay” gave us a song suited to the occasion, accompanied, in the best style, by the echo of a fine flute. In the course of a whole life, we seldom witness so picturesque a scene. The dark recess of the cavern, in contrast with the glare of our numerous tapers, which reflected every face from the water, gave to each variety of costume and figure the magic effect of banditti’s<sup>16</sup> midnight revelry. In the midst of this group, was a seated, on a rock, resting a cheek of pure vermilion on an arm as white as snow, the lovely Mrs. G-----y herself, the queen of beauty, among the robbers. Indeed, it was a scene far superior to any dramatic representation.

But enough of the cavern: you must now accompany me through the streets of Detroit, leaving Sandusky Bay and the Miama of the lakes on our left, whilst we are compelled, for the sake of a deep channel, to pass under the guns of Malden<sup>17</sup>. Then commences that stream of compact population that characterized the French in their first settlement – log houses, neatly squared, in close Indian file, along a water line. – Every tree, without discrimination, leveled to the ground, for a half mile in depth from the river; the plain laid open, and the farms so narrow, on the roads, as to admit neighbours to give each other the morning salutation. In a few hours we passed Sandwich on our right bank, and Spring Wells on our left, and were landed at Detroit in safety. And so may heaven preserve your life a thousand years.

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The 1819 schedule of the steamer Walk-in-the-Water was the following:

**Detroit Gazette**, 21 May 1819

The Lake Erie Steam-Boat Walk-in-the-Water, Job Fish, Master

Will make a trip every week, (except the 3d week in June,) from Black Rock to Detroit, and back, touching each way at the principal towns on the American shore.

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<sup>16</sup> An armed robber, especially a member of a gang that attacks travelers or isolated homes and villages.

<sup>17</sup> Fort Malden, now a National Historic Site of Canada. For 200 years, fortifications at Fort Malden have witnessed and participated in the struggles which helped forge a new nation out of the North American wilderness. An army garrison, British Indian Department post, dockyard for the Upper Great Lakes and the meeting place for Chief Tecumseh and British General Brock - the fort has been all these.

Leaves Black Rock every Friday, at 4 o'clock and Detroit every Monday, at 4 o'clock. p.m. accidents and unavoidable delays excepted.

The Boat has undergone great alterations and repairs, and her accommodations for freight or passage are not surpassed by any vessel in the United States.

Families moving to Ohio or Michigan, will be carried on very low terms, and accommodated with a cabin fitted up expressly for them.

Mr. H. THOMPSON, of Black Rock, having erected a large Dock and Store House, for the accommodation of the Boat, as well as the Forwarding and Commission Business in general, all goods to be forwarded by the boat must be consigned to him, or delivered on the dock, at the expense of the owner.

\* Agents for the Boat--Col. Foster, Erie; Seymour Austin, Esq. Grand River; A.W. Walworth, Esq., Cleaveland; Capt. Coit, at Cunningham's Island<sup>18</sup>, for Sandusky Bay; John R. Williams, Detroit.

April 30, 1819

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<sup>18</sup> Today's Kelleys Island.

