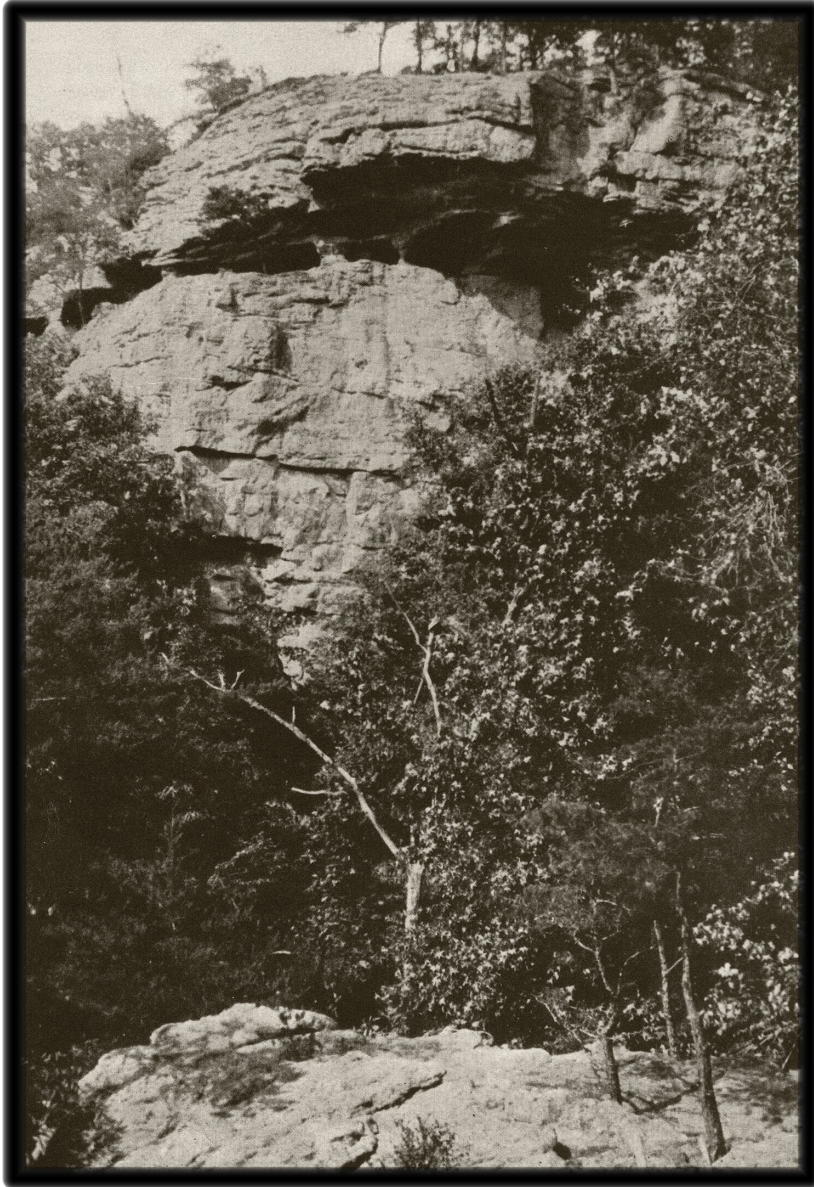


The Welsh Caves



These caves located in the vicinity of the DeSoto Falls area of DeSoto State Park may have been built by the Welsh before DeSoto's famous explorations. The mysterious caves, located in a cliff approximately 325 feet above Little River, are also thought to have been used by Indians of the area hundreds of years ago. There are five caves located side by side with three of them interlocking by openings connecting each chamber. They are protected by the cliff in which they are carved and by the only trail to them.

The trail is 90 feet long and is so narrow that only one person can pass at a time. The trail averages in width two to five feet, and in some places is precarious and slippery.

The cave was once protected by two stone walls located in a semi-circle in the area surrounding them. The walls are believed to have been four or five feet high at one time. They were stuck together with a material, which Indians never used. All that's left of the walls are mounds with occasional rises with jugged rocks. According to former Park Manager Doyal Benefield, the walls were built up fairly well at one time. He said the stones of the walls were carried off by people of the area for use as stepping-stones or to build chimneys

Historians say that Indians could not have built the caves due to the fact that none of the tribes of this area were familiar with the art of excavation. The legend and folklore of Prince Madoc (Mad dog) has it that the Welsh explorer may have landed in Baldwin

County, Al; long before Hernando DeSoto.

Is it possible that Alabama and Dekalb County were visited by explorers 300 years before Columbus discovered America? Many Historians believe so. One stated, "Madoc did indeed sail from

Wales and did land on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. They maintain that he took three trips instead of one to the New World.

In 1793 Gov. John Sevier of Tennessee wrote that a Cherokee Chief informed him that folklore of his tribe told of a people calling themselves Welsh, He claimed that the Welsh had traveled the area between Mobile Bay and Lookout Mountain but later were driven out of Alabama by the Cherokees. Also mentioned in the Governor's report was the discovery, in 1799, of six skeletons encased in brass armor bearing the Welsh coat of arms. During Gov. Sevier's Indian campaign he had found prehistoric, fitted-stone fortifications. (Ruins mentioned by the Gov. was one in Tennessee and another at DeSoto Falls)

None of the Indians who lived in the vicinity of these forts had ever worked in stone. Scientists who



determine the approximate date of past events claim that timber found within the caves had been cut by axes centuries before the Spanish came to the New World. Historically, one author wrote that the caves were part of a dreadful war, and those who constructed them, to have acted defensively. The caves are situated so that, in ancient times, 20 men could have held off an army of thousands.

Located in the old inn at Fort Morgan in Baldwin County is a bronze plaque which bears the following inscription: In memory of Prince Madoc, a Welsh explorer who landed on the shores of Mobile Bay in 1170 and left behind with the Indians, the Welsh Language

Who built the walls and inhabited the caves? The Indians, the Welsh and

Madoc, or the Spaniards and DeSoto? No one can say, but one thing is for sure, the view from the bluff is spectacular.

These caves are not open to the public.