



PROJECT MUSE®

---

*Big Bone Lick: The Cradle of American Paleontology* (review)

James L. Murphy

Ohio History, Volume 116, 2009, pp. 132-133 (Review)

Published by The Kent State University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ohh.0.0054>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/263137>

The fourth and most extensive section contains thirty-one interviews conducted between 1998 and 2004. The bulk of these interviews represent a generation of Delawares who grew up without knowing many of their cultural traditions and language. For the most part their collective memories express a desire to learn more about their heritage and reconnect the songs, dances, clothing, and foods of their grandparents and great-grandparents. They also express a community effort not only to explore and restore their heritage but also a commitment to transmit that knowledge to the younger generation.

For scholars this work is a tantalizing sampling of Indian oral histories that continue to be underutilized. For the general reader the stories shared by the Delaware people are lessons in the resilience and tenacity of a community.

DAWN MARSH  
Purdue University

*Big Bone Lick: The Cradle of American Paleontology.* By Stanley Hedeon. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008. xviii, 182 pp. Cloth \$24.95, ISBN 978-0-8131-2485-8.)

Kentucky's first tourist attraction, Big Bone Lick has long deserved a modern account such as Stanley Hedeon provides. Professor emeritus of biology at Xavier University, Hedeon does a fine job of interpreting the history and significance of the prehistoric and historic salt lick aptly termed "the cradle of American paleontology."

Well-grounded in history, geology, and vertebrate paleontology, the author for the most part ably deals with a historical problem compounded by a plethora of obscure and widely scattered references; but in some respects his study supplements rather than supplants the 1936 work of the same title by the indefatigable Willard Rouse Jillson (published by the original Big Bone Lick Association). Hedeon does clarify Jillson's mistaken 1729 date for Charles de Longueuil's 1739 expedition and provides previously unknown nineteenth-century newspaper references. His account is more readable and benefits from more recent advances in our understanding of local geomorphology, paleoecology, and vertebrate taxonomy. He incorporates much unpublished or "underpublished" recent research.

Hedeon's account is comprehensive but not quite complete, for both he and Jillson omit two significant references to early visitors. In 1779 Capt. William Harrod, hastening to join Col. John Bowman's expedition against the Shawnee Indians of Ohio, encountered a group of men transporting a canoe-load of specimens from Big Bone Lick to Redstone Old Fort.<sup>1</sup> Some

1. "Bowman's Expedition Against Chillicothe, May-June, 1779," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* 19 (1910): 450-51.

of these men joined Harrod and Bowman on the unsuccessful Ohio foray, and subsequently “Capt. Wm. Harrod, with 6 others, went up the Ohio to Red Stone in the two keel boats &c. and took along several bones & tusks got at the Big Bone Lick.”<sup>2</sup> What became of these specimens remains unknown, but this was an important early effort at “mining” the deposits at Big Bone. Similarly, neither Jillson nor Hedeem mentions Thomas Rodney’s well-documented stop there on October 10, 1803, less than a week after Meriwether Lewis’s collecting visit for Thomas Jefferson. Rodney not only took measurements of several of the remaining fossil bones but speculated (incorrectly) that no animals larger than bison ever existed there, larger bones being “only Fossil Concretions.”<sup>3</sup> Rodney himself collected a mastodon tooth and a tusk fragment, but these were lost when his boat sank at Natchez.

Curiously, Hedeem merely reproduces without explanation a photograph of three Paleo-Indian points “collected” at Big Bone Lick. Elsewhere, he has written that these were discovered in the lowest level of the Big Bone deposits during William Clark’s 1807 excavations for Thomas Jefferson and are “now likely” housed at the Cincinnati Museum Center.<sup>4</sup> The significance of associated Paleo-Indian artifacts and megafauna at Big Bone Lick should certainly be acknowledged but so too should the considerable debate existing about the precise provenance and pedigree of these artifacts.

Such strictures aside, this book provides ample context for the present Big Bone Lick State Park Museum and should remain a standard resource for many years.

JAMES L. MURPHY  
The Ohio State University

*Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War.* By James O. Lehman and Steven M. Nolt. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. xiv, 353 pp. Cloth \$39.95, ISBN 0-8018-8672-4.)

When war engulfed Virginia in the summer of 1861, Mennonite Christian Good was conscripted into the state militia. After Good experienced battle and failed to discharge his rifle, his perturbed captain asked him why he

2. Henry Hill, “Bowman’s Campaign—1779,” *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* 22 (1913): 519.

3. Simon Gratz, “Thomas Rodney,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 43.2 (1919): 132–33.

4. Stanley Hedeem, *Natural History of the Cincinnati Region*. Cincinnati Museum Center Scientific Contributions No. 1 (Cincinnati: The Center, 2006), 23. In the same publication, these artifacts are captioned only as “most likely [discovered] during William Clark’s 1807 expedition” (Plate 24).