Famed Quarry At Bee Rock Worked Again

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This is a story of buried treasure. Of blacked ledges three feet below the surface of a certain Arkansas ridge two miles west of Clinton on United States Highway 65. They are owned by M. V. Shofner, who runs a filling station and general store across the road.

On Mr. Shofner’s land is a layer after layer of multi-colored stone. Some of it is yellow with white veining. “But-ten eggs, we call it,” says Mr. Shofner. Some of it is the reddish rust of surrounding black gum trees. In some places what fashion designers currently call Indian Iron— it looks like manganese iron ore. There is other patterned in black, and snowy white stipples in black and purple. To see the rocks stacked neatly in piles or lying in un-paveded disarray awaiting stacking is to see an independent part of Arkan-sas. Peculiar autumn colors of the trees and bushes of many many years ago have repeated themselves in stone.

The discovery of this buried treasure came unexpectedly. “I’d been living in Clinton, running a filling station on the edge of town for eight years,” explained Mr. Shofner (who incidentally comes from a long line of German ancestors, being the sixth generation of Shofners in this country). “My wife and I decided to move out here and take a rest. When Highway 65 was being graded, the road men had to do some grading along the general store across the road. The road would see the colored rocks and stop to pick them up. The Highway Department couldn’t get much done when the road was always being torn up like that. Road men finally had to put a sign making it a $20 fine to take the rock in the road away.”

Mr. Shofner glanced at the younger of his two sons, Milburn, then continued. “About the time they deci-ded to build a new courthouse in Clinton, people began to remember the road-tearing-up incident and came out here to ask me if there was any of that colored rock on my land. I told them I like that. Road men finally had to put didn’t know, and didn’t bother to dig them. When I did get around to it three years ago, I found all sorts of rock. Got enough to last us 10,000, I guess.”

“See that cow over there?” asked his son, Milburn. “This cow was about 350 yards away. We sold it, we in the picture at the right Milburn Vain Shofner is standing by another type of stone also found in the quarry. Stacks of stone are shown in the picture below.

Milburn Vain Shofner is shown above, crossing a timber coming out of the quarry. Note the unusual markings on the piece of stone he carries. At the left M. V. Shofner is shown while his son separates a stone from its bed with wedge and hammer.

They’ve done all the work themselves, except once, they explained, they hired 40 yards cut for them. In the summer when the sun is too hot, they put up an old tent top for protection.

The Shofners do not own a truck. When the rock is cut they carry it over a heavy plank (pictured), which serves as a bridge and stack it on the right-hand side of the cut. Anyone who wants the rock must come after it, or make arrangements for its haulage.

In demonstrating their cutting methods the Shofners also demonstrated that they are not afraid of work. Since
Standing on top of the sandstone bluff on the Jordan farm, in Brock mountain, in Cleburne county, 20 miles southwest of Batesville, one glimpses the most interesting example of erosion in northern Arkansas. The Garden of Allah, some call it, comparing it with the Garden of the Gods in Colorado, and many who have seen both natural wonders say that it is not minus.

This bluff is from 75 to 125 feet high, running in a slight curve about one mile long. Erosion has played fantastic pranks with its upper edge. Crevices from a foot and a half to five feet wide—some run up to the top of the bottom. Some are hardly a jump across, but to get around the wider ones is like working out a Chinese puzzle.

Gazing only at the top of the bluff and leaving out of the picture its green surroundings, there comes to mind a cinematographic view of the Sahara desert. A large herd of camels and dromedaries, moving toward the horizon. You see nothing but the humps—single humps and double humps—and at intervals among these humps rise minarets, that remind one of the small sentry towers on French desert forts.

Looking across narrow fissures, working your way around wider ones, you are in the midst of sandstone, high, 45 or 50 feet high, seen to be the standing walls of the streams. Wind, rain, snow, and ice have not been idle in the creation of these peculiar rock formations. They are about 12 feet in diameter and are nearly round, the few feet at the top being larger than the mass below.

You often find on one of these strange geological formations and you cannot believe what you see. A perfect boot, the toe of which is just a few inches high, with a perfect foot about half as long as the leg. This foot, carved a little on the left side, was the boot left boot. It stands out there in the small, second growth timber, all by itself. A careless hoo-do, like some indifferent husband, who has come in later after his boots lying in the corner of the bedroom for his wife to pick up in the morning. The foot of an ordinary No. 10 boot is approximately 12 inches long. Using this as a base, this hoo-do boot is about size 250. Probably the largest boot made from any material in the world, andubbled by Nature.

Gazing at these spectacular geological formations from the top of the bluff, you have a hankering to examine them more closely, and you焉g your way back across the bluff and through the woods to your car. Driving down the rough woods road for a half mile you make a sharp turn to your right, at the end of the bluff and swing along a narrow road at its foot, driving up to the hoo-doos.

The problem that baffles most visitors to this Arkansas Garden of Allah, is how these hoo-doos, or chimney rocks, detached themselves from the main stem of the bluff and isolated themselves in the little bottom. Some of them are 100 feet or more away from the face of the cliff.

John Melvin, geologist with the United States Engineers, who is now working on dam projects in the upper White river valley, gave the writer a very comprehensive idea of how nature carved them out.

The deep crevices that run from the top to the bottom of the bluff seem to be the key. When the geological disturbance that caused what is known as the Ozark Uplift occurred, this bluff was cracked in places from top to bottom. Many of these cracks were criss-cross, making a square, with the cracks on the four sides of a solid. How large these solids were in the first place is hard to determine.

Wind, rain, snow, ice and other forces of erosion then started to work in the cracks and centuries centuries finally cut the solid square loose and isolated them from the main bluff. Rains from the south, rains from the east, west, and from the east and west, freezes and thaws, wind from all directions, eroded the square corners, carving the hoo-doos into crude circular shapes, like large round chimneys.

But this explanation does not entirely solve the problem. "Why were the hoo-doos not entirely eliminated by the forces of erosion?" Examining the circular top of a hoo-do you notice that it is larger in circumference than the rest of the column, and the answer is easy. The hoo-do is wearing an erosion proof hat. This top part is much harder, and erosion works on a more slowly than on the rest. In the hoo-do rock, this is true of both top and bottom, and the bottom part, strange to say, happened to be in the exact shape of a human foot. This answer can be applied to hoo-doos and balanced rocks all over the world.

This hoo-do is located at the head of Grassy creek, a small, clear water mountain stream, that runs into Salado creek, about six miles from the head; the latter stream empties into the White river, near Rosier, Independence county.

The head of the hoo-do is 50 feet long and continues down the canyon to its mouth.

A rock in minaret formation in the Garden of Allah, Cleburne county.

A lone hoo-do in the Garden of Allah area.