

## Today in Columbus History:

On March 28, 1855, the *Columbus Times and Sentinel Triweekly* ran a review of a "Lecture" given by the Rev. George White on the Revolutionary War in Georgia (it was very acceptable). The story came from his recent book *Historical Collections of Georgia* that White was in town to sell. An article in the previous day's *Weekly Times and Sentinel* ran another story on the book highlighting the stories specific to Muscogee County and mentioned woodcuts of the Eagle Factory and Lovers Leap.

The legend of Lovers Leap dates to the early days of Columbus and tells the tale of two formerly betrothed young lovers Mohina, daughter of the Cusseta chief, and Young Eagle of the Cowetas. With the two tribes now enemies, the Cusseta chief sent his hunters to ambush Young Eagle near their trysting spot above the falls. While outrunning their pursuers, the couple leaps to their death in the turbulent waters.

White scoured the libraries of Charleston, Savannah, Milledgeville, and New York as well as colonial sources loaned to him from the Georgia Legislature for his *Historical Collections of Georgia*. He found "The Legend of Lovers Leap" in Columbus, along with a sketch, both by Thomas Addison Richards in *Georgia Illustrated* (1842), a series of sketches and stories sold through subscription by Richards and his brother William Carey Richards.

White was an Episcopal preacher living in Marietta, Georgia at the time. He was born in Charleston in 1802. He moved to Savannah as young man to pursue his vocation. In his spare time, he authored *Statistics of Georgia* (1849) and *Historical Collections of Georgia* (1853). In 1859, he moved to Memphis, Tennessee and remained at Calvary Church as Rector or Rector Emeritus until his death in 1887.

In March 1855, Rev. White was staying at the Perry House hotel while lecturing and selling his book. At the same time, Lillian Foster was traveling the country and recording stories about the places she visited for her own book *Wayside Glimpses, North and South* (1860). She was staying at the Perry House hotel, as well. It seems reasonable to assume that she got the story from White as she included it in her book, too.

Also in March 1855, German composer Herrman Saroni was organizing a Philharmonic Society in Columbus (the precursor of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra). Coincidentally, he composed *The Lovers Leap* galop the same year. It's not hard to imagine that the three of met and possibly visited the landmark together, just north of the city. The legend would now spread through both song and story.

The Legend of Lovers Leap appeared in several other books, including *Appleton's Illustrated Handbook of American Travel* (1857). In 1868, someone going by the name "Uncle Leumas" told a version of it in the Macon paper *Burke's Weekly for Boys and Girls*, but with a different cast of characters. John Martin included the original story in *Columbus, Georgia, From Its Selection as a Trading Town In 1827 to Its Destruction By Wilson's Raid in 1865* (1874). Mrs. Mary Louisa (Redd) Cook revised the original story for the *Enquirer-Sun* in January 1890, adding a rival of Young Eagle named Crazy Wolf, and other changes throughout. She also published the story in her book *The Legend of Lovers Leap and Poems* (1892).

Construction of the Bibb Mill on the well-known site not only destroyed the feature but also rekindled nostalgia for the legend in 1898. The *Enquirer-Sun* reprinted Mrs. Cook's story on January 24, 1899, in response. Despite the landmark's destruction, the legend appeared in McKnight's *Georgia Landmarks, Memorials and Legends* (1914) and the *Columbus Centennial Number Industrial Index* (1928). More recently, the legend appeared in *Haunted Columbus, Georgia* in 2012, the *Southern Views Magazine* in

2019, and *Muscogiana* in 2021. A fire destroyed the mill in 2008 and now a section of the River Walk passes near the approximate location of Lovers Leap above the North Highlands Dam.

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Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

*Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.*

**LECTURE.—Rev. Geo. White, author of *Historical Collections of Georgia*, delivered a very acceptable Lecture in Temperance Hall on Monday evening to a large audience upon the “Revolution in Georgia and the men who figured in it.”**

From the *Columbus Times and Sentinel Triweekly*, March 28, 1855,  
<https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Rev. George White, from his Find-A-Grave memorial, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8610345/george-white>

HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS OF GEORGIA.—The author of this work, we are pleased to announce, has arrived in this city for the purpose of bringing his work to the notice of our citizens. The work is handsomely bound, illustrated with fine steel engravings of the leading citizens of the State, and contains a large collection of facts bearing upon the early history of Georgia. The article on Muscogee is highly interesting and contains wood cuts of the Eagle Factory and of Lover's Leap. Wm. White will remain in Columbus a few days and may be found at the Perry House, where he will be happy to see his friends.

From the *Columbus Weekly Times and Sentinel*, March 27, 1855,  
<https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



THE LOVER'S LEAP.

From the *Historical Collections of Georgia* (1854),  
[https://www.google.com/books/edition/HISTORICAL\\_COLLECTIONS\\_OF\\_GEORGIA/DuZ3XCZ9D-8C?hl=en&gbpv=1](https://www.google.com/books/edition/HISTORICAL_COLLECTIONS_OF_GEORGIA/DuZ3XCZ9D-8C?hl=en&gbpv=1)





Lovers Leap/Chattahoochee River, drawn by J. Smillie, based on a sketch from T. Addison Richards, 1842. Note the additional people not in the *Historical Collections of Georgia* version. From the Columbus Museum, <https://columbusmuseum.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/76B86B69-31FB-49F8-93CC-733545611129>



Lovers Leap before construction of the mill, Muscogiana cover, Fall 2011.



Colorized glass slide showing the mill atop one the beloved geological feature of early Columbus.



Cover art from Saroni's *The Lovers Leap* galop, from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sm1855.280170.0?st=gallery>.



Photo of the North Highlands Dam with the approximate location of Lovers Leap noted by the arrow. A pedestrian bridge leading to the mill ruins is on the far right.