

The Last Haunting of Edgar Allan Poe

Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*: A Possible Source for *The Beale Papers*

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Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*, first published in 1844, is one of the most authoritative sources of the early history of the Santa Fe Trail. The two volume journal documented Gregg's experiences while travelling along the various routes from Missouri to Santa Fe in the 1830's, as well as the nine years he resided in what was then the territory of Northern Mexico. *The Beale Papers*, a cryptographic treasure tale of thirty American adventurers who discovered gold and silver near Santa Fe in 1818, appears to draw liberally from Gregg's journal. This monograph explores the relationship between *Commerce of the Prairies* and *The Beale Papers*.

The Beale Papers: Elaborate Hoax or True Story

One of the fiercest debates over the one hundred and twenty-seven year existence of *The Beale Papers* concerns the legitimacy of the narrative. The anonymous author ("the Beale author") tells the tale of thirty Virginia adventurers who discovered gold and silver near Santa Fe, transported the cache of metal in two trips back to Virginia, buried the treasure and then disappeared after leaving coded messages with a trusted Lynchburg innkeeper. Over the years, those who have advocated that the story is a well-orchestrated hoax have presented evidence of: i) similar writing styles between two supposedly different authors writing sixty years apart; ii) the use of words in 1822 correspondence that did not appear in the English lexicon until much later; iii) anomalies and inconsistencies in the coded messages and iv) the difficulties involved in traveling from St. Louis to Santa Fe, mining hundreds of pounds of gold and silver in a foreign country, and transporting this treasure to Virginia through a thousand miles of dangerous wilderness. Those who believe the story counter that while the evidence of similar writing styles, untimely word usage and inconsistent codes is inconclusive, the story is reasonable because many men did travel safely between St. Louis and Santa Fe in the 1820s, gold and silver were abundant in Northern Mexico, large groups of men were sometimes killed in massacres or died from privation in this wild and dangerous region and burying valuables and using coded messages were commonplace occurrences during this period.

If *The Beale Papers* is a work of fiction, however, then perhaps the Beale author gained inspiration for his story from identifiable sources. Certainly, the writer would need help concerning the topography, people, animals, weather, etc., of the Southwestern United States during the 1817-1822 timespan. This is particularly true if the Beale author never travelled further west than the Appalachian Mountains! Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that the Beale author would turn to one of the best and earliest sources of information regarding life in the early days of the Santa Fe Trail, Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*, *the Journal of a Santa Fe Trader*.

Commerce of the Prairies: A Repository of Ideas for the Beale author

In evaluating a possible source for *The Beale Papers*, one should keep in mind that the evidence of a relationship between two stories is almost certainly going to be circumstantial. Although it does occasionally happen, one should not expect to see, for example, an identical, i.e., plagiarized, copy of a complete paragraph from one story into another. To be sure, researchers have found very persuasive evidence that a specific writing was used as a source of a published story by an identification of identical sentences or fragments from the original piece. This is particularly true with lines from a poem or song. Most often, however, the evidence is more subtle, and therefore less certain, that a given writing was used as a source for a subsequent story. Of course, in most cases, a classic tale is created from that mysterious combination of a fervent imagination, the genesis of an idea from a variety of sources and hard work. Most likely, *The Beale Papers* was also created from numerous sources, but this monograph will focus only on events, explanations and words provided by Josiah Gregg in *Commerce of the Prairies*.

A comparison of *The Beale Papers* and *Commerce of the Prairies* does not reveal any direct evidence of outright plagiarism. There are, however, tantalizing clues that the Beale author may have used *Commerce of the Prairies* as a source for his story. Particularly as a repository of *ideas* for a tale about a journey to Santa Fe, the real life events described in *Commerce of the Prairies* match closely some of the fictional events in *The Beale Papers*. When evaluating *Commerce of the Prairies* as a possible source for *The Beale Papers*, then, the reader is urged to focus on the ideas presented by the Beale author. Are the ideas reasonable for the time and place based on information provided by Gregg? Are the events described in *The Beale Papers* believable based on the reality conveyed by Gregg's journal of similar events on the Santa Fe Trail? Most critically, did the ideas and scenarios borne from the mind of the Beale author come from Gregg's real life depiction of the early history of the Santa Fe Trail?

William Becknell, Father of the Santa Fe Trail: The model for Thomas J. Beale?

In 1821, William Becknell, a Missouri trader, made the first successful trading journey from Missouri to Santa Fe and back. In fact, his first encounter with the Santa Fe marketplace was so successful that he raced back to Missouri, organized a caravan and returned again the following year. Gregg's description of the modest beginnings of the Santa Fe Trail left much to the imagination concerning the character and make-up of Becknell but included a few critically important details concerning his adventures which may be of interest to Beale researchers:

- Becknell made two trips to Santa Fe, the first in 1821 and the second in 1822
- Becknell's party was welcomed to Santa Fe by Mexican authorities
- After his first visit to Santa Fe, Becknell returned alone to Missouri, leaving his men in Santa Fe over the winter
- Becknell's first, longer route to Santa Fe was through the mountains, his second, through the desert
- Becknell made an enormous profit and was paid in silver specie
- Becknell's second expedition, in 1822, consisted of thirty men

Gregg wrote only a few paragraphs concerning Becknell and his two expeditions but his comments bear many similarities to the adventures of Thomas J. Beale and his party:

During the same year, Captain Becknell, of Missouri, with four trusty companions, went out to Santa Fe by the far western prairie route. This *intrepid little band* started from the vicinity of Franklin, with the original purpose of trading with the Iatan or Comanche Indians; but having fallen in accidentally with a party of Mexican rangers, when near the Mountains, they were easily prevailed upon to accompany them to the new emporium, where, notwithstanding the trifling amount of merchandise they were possessed of, they realized a very handsome profit. (CP, Vol. I, p. 21)

Similar to Gregg's description of Becknell's men, the Beale author described the Beale party as both a band and a company:

*One thing at least is certain, that of the young and *gallant band*, whose buoyant spirits led them to seek such a life, and to forsake the comforts of home, with all its enjoyments, for the dangers and privations they must necessarily encounter, not a survivor remains. (BP narrative)*

*The *company* being formed, we forthwith commenced our preparations, and, early in April, 1817, left old Virginia for St. Louis, Mo... (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)*

Becknell, like Beale, left his party in Santa Fe and returned to Missouri:

Becknell returned to the United States alone the succeeding winter *leaving the rest of his company at Santa Fe.* (CP, Vol. I, P. 21)

Note that for his second, 1822 expedition, Becknell's party, like Beale's, consisted of "a company amounting to nearly thirty men":

The next effort of Captain Becknell was attended with very different success. With *a company amounting to near thirty men*, and perhaps five thousand dollars' worth of goods of various descriptions, he started from Missouri... (CP, Vol. I, p. 22)

In order to save time during his second expedition, Becknell attempted a more dangerous route to Santa Fe. His party suffered greatly in the desert but prevailed with courage and tenacity:

The *adventurous band* pursued their forward course without being able to procure any water, except from the scanty supply they carried in their canteens. As this source of relief was completely exhausted after two days' march, the sufferings of both men and beasts had driven them almost to distraction.

By degrees, however, they were all enabled to resume their journey; and following the course of the Arkansas for several days, thereby avoiding the arid regions which had occasioned them so much suffering, they succeeded in reaching Taos (sixty or seventy miles north of Santa Fe) without further difficulty. Although travellers have since suffered

excessively with thirst upon the same desert, yet, having become better acquainted with the topography of the country, no other equally thrilling incidents have subsequently transpired.

It is from this period — the year 1822 — that the virtual commencement of the SANTA FE TRADE may be dated. (CP, Vol. I, p.24)

Perhaps envisioning the courage and fortitude of Becknell, the Beale author created this description of his fictional hero:

*"In person, he was about six feet in height, with jet black eyes and hair of the same color, worn longer than was the style at that time. His form was symmetrical, and gave evidence of unusual strength and activity; but his distinguishing feature was a **dark and swarthy complexion**, as if **much exposure to the sun and weather had thoroughly tanned and discolored him**; this, however, did not detract from his appearance, and I thought him the handsomest man I had ever seen. Altogether, he was a model of manly beauty, favored by the ladies and envied by men. To the first he was reverentially tender and polite; to the latter, affable and courteous, when they kept within bounds, but, if they were supercilious or presuming, the lion was aroused, and woe to the man who offended him. Instances of this character occurred more than once while he was my guest, and always resulted in his demanding and receiving an apology. His character soon became universally known, and he was no longer troubled by impertinence. (BP, Morriss statement, paragraph #2)*

Beale's travels to and from Santa Fe

The Beale author expended very little energy discussing the actual travel between Missouri and Santa Fe:

It is not my purpose now to give you details of our wanderings, or of the pleasures or dangers we encountered. All this I will reserve until we meet again, when it will be a pleasure to recall incidents that will always be fresh in my memory. (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)

He did provide a chronology, some brief comments on the outfitting of the men and a discussion of the organization of the party, all of which bear striking similarities to descriptions in *Commerce of the Prairies*.

Dates and Location of Departure

The beginning of the Beale journey is described as follows:

*The company being formed, we forthwith commenced our preparations, and, early in April, 1817, left old Virginia for St. Louis, Mo., where we expected to purchase the necessary outfits, procure a guide and two or three servants, and obtain such information and advice as might be beneficial hereafter. All was done as intended, and **we left St. Louis the 19th May** (sic), to be absent two years, our objective point being Santa Fé, which we intended to reach in the ensuing Fall, and there establish ourselves in winter quarters. (BP: January 4, 1822 letter)*

The Beale party's initial point of departure, St. Louis, is close to Gregg's reported departure point of Franklin, a few hundred miles to the west, and other aspects of the trip are similar.

Gregg advised that "people who reside at a distance" wrongly believe that St. Louis is the "emporium" for the Santa Fe trade, although he acknowledged that "a small portion" of traders did depart from St. Louis. Despite this warning, the Beale author chose St. Louis as the departure point for the Beale party anyway. While accuracy is important in fiction, it is only necessary to the extent that it affects believability. Perhaps the Beale author realized that most potential readers of his story would be readily aware of St. Louis but unfamiliar with Franklin, Missouri.

The Beale author did incorporate much from Gregg's experiences into the outfitting and, most particularly, the organization, of his fictitious company. In discussing expeditions in the later years of the Santa Fe Trail, Gregg reported that caravans routinely set out in May and that the official departure date of his first expedition was May 15, four days earlier than the Beale party departure date.

Selection of Guide

The Beale author had the Beale party "procure a guide" for the expedition.

The company being formed, we forthwith commenced our preparations, and, early in April, 1817, left old Virginia for St. Louis, Mo., where we expected to purchase the necessary outfits, procure a guide and two or three servants, and obtain such information and advice as might be beneficial hereafter. (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)

Although it is, perhaps, not surprising that the services of a guide would be obtained for long expeditions into unfamiliar territory, many prairie parties did not use guides because of cost, lack of trust in the guide or unavailability. Although Gregg believed in the wisdom of using a guide, he provided many examples of traders and others who succeeded using a compass, the stars or their knowledge of the land. Gregg also described a number of parties that encountered privation or worse because they did not have a guide. Gregg offered this description of one Comanche guide he seemed to admire:

*** Manuel *el Comanche* was a full Indian, born and bred upon the great prairies. Long after having arrived at the state of manhood, he accompanied some Mexican *Comancheros* to the frontier village of San Miguel, where he fell in love with a Mexican girl — married her — and has lived in that place, a sober, 'civilized' citizen for the last ten or twelve years — endowed with much more goodness of heart and integrity of purpose than a majority of his neighbors. He had learned to speak Spanish quite intelligibly, and was therefore an excellent Comanche interpreter: and being familiar with every part of the prairies, he was very serviceable as a guide. (CP, Vol. II, footnote on p.137)**

Organization of the Party

The Beale author devoted one paragraph to the organization of the Beale party. This description included the election of a Captain, agreement to form along military lines and the framing of a set of by-laws governing proper conduct during the journey.

*After leaving St. Louis we were advised by our guide to form a regular **military** organization, with a **captain**, to be **elected** by the members, to whom should be given sole authority to manage our affairs, and, in cases of necessity, ensure united action. This was agreed to, and each member of the party bound himself by a **solemn obligation to obey**, at all times, the orders of their captain, or, in the event of refusal, to leave the company at once. This arrangement was to remain in force for two years, or for the period of our expected absence. Tyranny, partiality, incompetency, or other improper conduct on the part of the captain, was to be punished by deposing him from his office, if a majority of the company desired his dismissal. All this being arranged, and a set of **laws framed**, by which the conduct of the members was to be regulated, the election was held, and resulted in choosing me as their leader. (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)*

Gregg provided considerable insight into the process of organizing a prairie caravan:

The designation of 'Council Grove,' after all, is perhaps the most appropriate that could be given to this place; for we there held a 'grand council,' at which the respective claims of the different 'aspirants to office' were considered, leaders selected, and a system of government agreed upon, — as is the standing custom of these promiscuous caravans. One would have supposed that **electioneering and 'party spirit' would hardly have penetrated so far into the wilderness: but so it was. Even in our little community we had our 'office-seekers' and their 'political adherents,' as earnest and as devoted as any of the modern school of politicians in the midst of civilization. After a great deal of bickering and wordy warfare, however, all the 'candidates' found it expedient to decline, and a gentleman by the name of Stanley, without seeking, or even desiring the 'office,' was unanimously proclaimed '**Captain** of the Caravan.' The powers of this officer were undefined by any '**constitutional provision**,' and consequently vague and uncertain: orders being only viewed as mere requests, they are often **obeyed or neglected at the caprice of the subordinates**. It is necessary to observe, however, that the captain is expected to direct the order of travel during the day, and to designate the camping ground at night; with many other functions of a general character, in the exercise of which the company find it convenient to acquiesce. (CP, Vol. I, p.44-45).**

Gregg's caravan was not established with military discipline, in fact, just the opposite, and he voiced his displeasure with this loose and undisciplined organizational model. Gregg described an incident during the journey where the wagon masters, ignoring the orders of the Captain, dispersed like a flock of birds at the first sign of danger. Naval captains from the Napoleonic era to World War II have experienced the frustration of convoy duty where a few military ships must protect many commercial vessels. Even when military discipline was imposed, the independence of the commercial captains from the command structure of the convoy's military captain often led to destruction of property or worse. It seems that the Beale author wanted to create a tighter, more disciplined group of men, perhaps because of the need to

transport such valuable cargo across so many miles of wilderness. In any case, he rejected the prairie model in favor of a more militaristic approach. The *idea* that the Beale party would form a military organization with a Captain by a democratic election, though, may have been borrowed from *Commerce of the Prairies*.

The Beale Party in Santa Fe

Most of what can be gleaned from *The Beale Papers* concerning the activities of the Beale party in Santa Fe comes from Beale's January 4, 1822 letter to Robert Morriss, the trusted Lynchburg innkeeper, although some information, particularly with respect to dates of travel, may also be found in the Robert Morriss statement. We learn from Beale that the men purchased supplies and otherwise "fit out" for the trip in St. Louis and, shortly after their departure on May 19th, 1817, formed into a "regular military organization, with a captain, to be elected by the members." The company travelled at a leisurely pace, arriving at Santa Fe "about the first of December," apparently without incident as "nothing of interest occurred during the winter and of this little Mexican town we soon became heartily tired."

Early in March 1818, some of the men journeyed north of Santa Fe "for the purpose of hunting and examining the country around us." After "pursuing a northerly course for some days," the small hunting party came upon a large herd of buffalo and followed it for "two weeks or more." One day "while encamped in a small ravine" one of the men discovered gold in a cleft of rocks and "much excitement was the natural consequence."

Although much of the information concerning Beale's time in Mexico is general in nature, one detail is relatively specific, the location of the mine! Beale places his gold discovery "250 or 300 miles north of Santa Fe." Although no one would be able to find the mine and start digging for gold with this description of the location of the treasure site, it may, nevertheless, be possible to extract some useful information from these coordinates, particularly if a similar description is contained in a publication about the area.

The Sangre de Cristo Mine

In *Commerce of the Prairies*, Gregg provided some of the history of the Spanish search for gold and silver in the area and he gave detailed descriptions of historical and current mining operations. Perhaps importantly for Beale researchers, Gregg is thorough in his reporting of mine locations. While he acknowledged that people believed that gold was located only to the south of Santa Fe, he refuted this belief by reporting the location of a rich gold placer to the north of Santa Fe. Gregg described this site:

Placers of gold have also been discovered in the mountains of Abiquiu, Taos and elsewhere, which have been worked to some extent. In truth as some of the natives have justly remarked New Mexico is almost one continuous placer; traces of gold being discoverable over nearly the whole surface of the country. The opinion formerly entertained that gold is only to be found in the southern climates, seems fully confuted here; for at a point called Sangre de Cristo, considerably north of Taos, (above the 37th degree of latitude), and which from its location among the snowy mountains of that region, is ice-bound over half the

year, a very rich *placer* has been discovered; yet owing to the peculiarly exposed situation in which it lies, it has been very little worked. (CP, Vol. I, p.175)

The 37th parallel north is the latitude boundary between Utah and Colorado in the north and Arizona and New Mexico in the south. It is the latitude for the famous four corners, the only point where four states touch each other in the United States. The distance from Santa Fe north to the 37th parallel, or the Colorado border, is about 100 miles.

The Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) Range extends from Salida, Colorado to Santa Fe, a distance as the crow flies of about 255 miles. Travel in the 1820's, however, was seldom as direct as the crow flies, particularly in the mountains, so the Beale distance estimate of 250 to 300 miles was fairly accurate if placing a mine somewhere to the north in the Sangre de Cristo Range. The Sangre de Cristo Mountains have produced numerous gold (mostly in the days of Spanish rule), and silver (mostly in the late 1800s) mines throughout the range.

Mexico in Turmoil

The Beale author may have wanted to place his gold and silver mine so far north of Santa Fe because its remoteness would give the party of *Americanos* a reasonable chance to extract a fortune in gold and silver without the authorities learning of the discovery. Although the period 1818 to 1822 was the best time for Americans to "visit" Santa Fe, Mexico was still a foreign country jealous of its territorial borders. To be sure, Mexico was a country in turmoil. From 1810 to 1821 the Mexican War of Independence was being fought. The Mexicans, it seemed, were fighting Spain for independence and each other in class, or caste, guerilla warfare. Even after independence from Spain was acquired in 1821, the new republic remained a cauldron of conflict which included almost continual internal power struggles and, in 1836 and 1846, respectively, wars with Texas and the United States.

During this tumultuous time in Mexican history, the government often maintained power by use of force, and foreign "invaders" were not always exempt from corporal punishment. Gregg wrote of the ill-fated McKnight expedition of 1812. Hearing rumors of Mexican independence from Spain, McKnight organized a party of a dozen traders for a trip to Santa Fe. Although the party made it to Santa Fe, they were immediately arrested as spies and imprisoned by the authorities who still remained in power. The revolution sputtered on and the McKnight party was not released from prison for nine years! So dealing with the authorities in Santa Fe could still be dangerous, depending on who was in charge at the time.

Gregg reported, however, that by the time Becknell arrived in 1821, the citizenry of Santa Fe were very supportive of trade with their neighbors to the north because of the exorbitant cost of goods in the northern Mexican outpost:

The fact is, that up to this date New Mexico had derived all her supplies from the Internal Provinces by the way of Vera Cruz; but at such exorbitant rates, that common calicoes, and even bleached and brown domestic goods, sold as high as two and three dollars per *vara* (or Spanish yard of thirty three inches). (CP, Vol. I, p. 21)

Based on information provided exclusively by Josiah Gregg, it was not unreasonable for the Beale author to suggest that the Beale party could have succeeded in secreting its treasure out of Mexico. Working at a secret mine in the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range to the far north of Santa Fe during a tumultuous time in Mexican history, and at a time when citizens of Northern Mexico were receptive to, or at least tolerant of, American visitors, Beale's men could have pulled it off! But they needed assistance from one more group to extract and transport the heavy metal.

Indian Labor

In his January 4th letter to Morriss, Beale discussed the use of Indian labor in his mining operations:

*Everything necessary for our purposes and for the prosecution of the work had been obtained from Santa Fé, and **no trouble was experienced in procuring assistance from the Indians in our labors.** (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)*

*On my return I found the work still progressing favorably, and, **by making large accessions to our force of laborers,** I was ready to return last Fall with an increased supply of metal, which came through safely and was deposited with the other. (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)*

With the above comments, the Beale author appears to describe a major mining operation. It may be that the Beale author felt that any mine which produced the volume of metal extracted by the Beale party would need more than thirty laborers. Recall that the Beale cache buried in Bedford, Virginia consisted of:

The first deposit consisted of one thousand and fourteen pounds of gold, and three thousand eight hundred and twelve pounds of silver, deposited November, 1819. The second was made December, 1821, and consisted of nineteen hundred and seven pounds of gold, and twelve hundred and eighty-eight pounds of silver; also jewels, obtained in St. Louis in exchange for silver to save transportation, and valued at \$13,000. (BP, from Decryption of Beale "2" Cipher)

The larger the mine the more difficult it would be to keep its operation a secret. This is especially true for a mine in continual operation for over 30 months that is using outside labor. This aspect of the Beale story really pushes the believability index! Nevertheless, using Indian, rather than Mexican, labor, would, according to Gregg, at least give the Beale party a slim chance of keeping the mine a secret.

In *Commerce of the Prairies*, Gregg discussed the historic abuses of the Indian population by the rulers of Mexico. Particularly with respect to mining, the treatment of the Indians was brutal, according to Gregg. Things got so bad that the Indians, in one legend described by Gregg, were so fearful of being forced to work the mines that they covered up and hid mining sites from the authorities:

Tradition speaks of numerous and productive mines having been in operation in New Mexico before the expulsion of the Spaniards in 1680; but that the Indians, seeing that the

cupidity of the conquerors had been the cause of their former cruel oppressions, determined to conceal all the mines by filling them up, and obliterating as much as possible every trace of them. (CP, Vol. II, p.104)

The legend was so powerful that Mexican aristocrats repeatedly attempted to coerce mine locations from Indians. Gregg was suspicious, though, of this legend, telling the story of one Indian who fooled the authorities by claiming to know of mine locations but later claiming to have forgotten the exact site. Nevertheless, the local Indian population was, apparently, fearful of being forced into the mines by the authorities.

Why, then, would the Beale author use Indian labor to assist his fictional gold and silver miners? Perhaps, he thought the Indians would be more willing to work with the Americans and less likely to talk to the authorities. Beale does say he “procured” the services of the Indians, indicating a voluntary exchange; perhaps the Beale author intended to suggest that Beale paid a higher wage than usual to obtain the services and silence of the Indians. In any case, Gregg’s discussion of the mistreatment of the Indians in Northern Mexico may have planted the seed in the Beale author’s mind that Indian labor was available for the right price and that the workers would not inform the Mexican authorities of the mining activities of the Americans.

The Demise of the Beale Party

In order to create a treasure which can only be obtained by solving a cipher or coded message, it was necessary for the Beale author to make every member of the Beale party disappear. Otherwise, there is no story because all of the men in the Beale party knew the location of the vault and any one of the men could return to dig up the gold and silver. The Beale author used a few clever techniques to envelop the disappearance with elements of truth but also an aura of mystery. By suggesting various possibilities, all of which had occurred in real life situations on the prairie, the Beale author intertwined reality with fiction. He also required a delay of ten years to insure that no member of the party returned to claim the treasure. Interestingly, this ten year deadline, 1832, corresponded exactly with the date of a “terrible calamity” described by Gregg that befell a party of Americans on the prairie.

The Beale author’s speculation of how the Beale party may have died is told from the perspective of Innkeeper Robert Morriss:

Mr. Morriss felt much uneasiness about him, but had had no means of satisfying his doubts; ten years had passed; 1832 was at hand, and he was now at liberty to open the box, but he resolved to wait on, vainly hoping that something definite would reach him. (BP, narrative)

During this period rumors of Indian outrages and massacres were current, but no mention of Beale's name ever occurred. What became of him and his companions is left entirely to conjecture. Whether he was slain by Indians, or killed by the savage animals of the Rocky Mountains, or whether exposure, and perhaps privation, did its work can never be told. One thing at least is certain, that of the young and gallant band, whose buoyant spirits led them to seek such a life, and to forsake the comforts of home, with all its enjoyments, for the dangers and privations they must necessarily encounter, not a survivor remains. (BP, narrative)

Note particularly the date, 1832, and the comment, “during this period rumors of Indian outrages and massacres were current,” and also the references to privation.

Now observe Gregg’s tale of disaster suffered by a party of Americans returning from Santa Fe in 1832. Note the following in this story:

- i.) The year of the incident - 1832
- ii.) The Indian attack
- iii.) The burying of the men, then the specie, in a cache in the ground
- iv.) The use of the word “cupidity”
- v.) The division of the spoils by the men
- vi.) The description of the sufferings and privations of the men
- vii.) The disagreement among the men concerning direction

Gregg’s story of the 1832 calamity:

It was somewhere in this vicinity that a small party of Americans experienced a terrible calamity in the winter of 1832-3, on their way home; and as the incident had the tendency to call into play the most prominent features of the Indian character, I will digress so far here as to relate the facts.

The party consisted of twelve men, chiefly citizens of Missouri. Their baggage and about ten thousand dollars in specie were packed upon mules. They took the route of the Canadian river, fearing to venture on the northern prairies at that season of the year. Having left Santa Fe in December, they had proceeded without accident thus far, when a large body of Comanches and Kiawas were seen advancing towards them.

Finding themselves surrounded in every direction, the travellers now began to move on, in hopes of getting rid of the intruders: but the latter were equally ready for the start; and, mounting their horses, kept jogging on in the same direction. The first act of hostility perpetrated by the Indians proved fatal to one of the American traders named Pratt, who was shot dead while attempting to secure two mules which had become separated from the rest. Upon this, the companions of the slain man immediately dismounted and commenced a fire upon the Indians, which was warmly returned, whereby another man of the name of Mitchell was killed.

By this time the traders had taken off their packs and piled them around for protection; and now falling to work with their hands, they very soon scratched out a trench deep enough to protect them from the shot of the enemy. The latter made several desperate charges, but they seemed too careful of their own personal safety, notwithstanding the enormous superiority of their numbers, to venture too near the rifles of the Americans.

During the siege, the Americans were in great danger of perishing from thirst, as the Indians had complete command of all the water within reach. After being pent up for thirty-six hours in this horrible hole, during which time they had seldom ventured to raise their heads above the surface without being shot at, they resolved to make a bold *sortie* in

the night, as any death was preferable to the fate which awaited them there. As there was not an animal left that was at all in a condition to travel, **the proprietors of the money gave permission to all to take and appropriate to themselves whatever amount each man could safely undertake to carry. In this way a few hundred dollars were started with, of which, however, but little ever reached the United States. The remainder was buried deep in the sand, in hopes that it might escape the cupidity of the savages;** but to very little purpose, for they were afterwards seen by some Mexican traders making a great display of specie which was without doubt taken from this unfortunate *cache*.

With every prospect of being discovered, overtaken, and **butchered**, but resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible, they at last emerged from their hiding-place, and moved on silently and slowly until they found themselves beyond the purlieus of the Indian camps. Often did they look back in the direction where from three to five hundred savages were supposed to watch their movements, but, much to their astonishment, no one appeared to be in pursuit. The Indians, believing no doubt that the property of the traders would come into their hands, and having no amateur predilection for taking scalps at the risk of losing their own, appeared willing enough to let the spoliated adventurers depart without further molestation.

The destitute travellers having run themselves short of provisions, and being no longer able to kill game for want of materials to load their rifles with, they were very **soon reduced to the necessity of sustaining life upon the roots and the tender bark of trees.** After travelling for several days in this **desperate condition, with lacerated feet and utter prostration of mind and body,** they began to **disagree among themselves** about the route to be pursued, and eventually separated into two distinct parties. Five of these unhappy men steered a westward course, and after a **succession of sufferings and privations** which almost surpassed belief, they reached the settlements of the Creek Indians, near the Arkansas river, where they were treated with great kindness and hospitality. The other five wandered about in the **greatest state of distress and bewilderment, and only two finally succeeded in getting out of the mazes of the wilderness.** (CP, Vol. II, p.49-53)

Does this not sound familiar? In the same year, 1832, that the Beale author noted that “rumors of Indian attacks and outrages were current” Gregg reported an attack by a large group of Indians on a party of Americans laden with a small fortune in metal coins. Morriss speculated that the Beale party was “**slain by Indians, or killed by the savage animals of the Rocky Mountains, or whether exposure, and perhaps privation, did its work.**” Gregg’s party was attacked by Indians, suffered thirst, starvation and exposure and many failed to survive the ordeal.

The Beale party divided its treasure equally among the men:

...an agreement was entered into to work in common as joint partners, the accumulations of each one to be placed in a common receptacle, and each be entitled to an equal share, whenever he chose to withdraw it--the whole to remain under my charge until some other disposition of it was agreed upon... (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)

The treasure was buried in an excavation or vault:

I have deposited, in the county of Bedford, about four miles from Buford's, in an excavation or vault, six feet below the surface of the ground, the following articles, belonging jointly to the parties whose names are given (BP, Decryption of Beale "2" cipher)

In *Commerce of the Prairies*, Gregg's party of Americans survived by digging an excavation and then placing most of their fortune in the ground. They then divided equally among themselves a small portion of the treasure that they could safely carry in the hope that they could reach Missouri with some of their metal. They suffered death by Indian attack, exposure and privation. The similarities to events in *The Beale Papers* are many indeed. Both parties carry valuable metal across the prairie. At one point, both parties agree to an equal division of the spoils. The Beale party is entirely destroyed while the party of Americans is severely reduced in number. One group actually suffers exposure and privation while there is speculation that the other suffered a similar fate.

Finally, each group experienced a disagreement concerning location or direction, the Beale party in where to store their treasure and Gregg's party in how best to traverse the wilderness.

The Beale party discussed what to do with the treasure:

We were in a dilemma. Some advised one plan, some another. One recommended Santa Fé as the safest place to deposit it, while others objected, and advocated its shipment at once to the States, where it was ultimately bound to go, and where alone it would be safe. The idea seemed to prevail, and it was doubtless correct, that when outside parties ascertained, as they would do, that we kept nothing on hand to tempt their cupidity, our lives would be more secure than at present. (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)

Gregg's party of desperate Americans debated the best route to survive the elements:

After travelling for several days in this desperate condition, with lacerated feet and utter prostration of mind and body, they began to disagree among themselves about the route to be pursued, and eventually separated into two distinct parties. (CP, Vol. II, p. 52)

Finally, observe the placement and use of the word "cupidity," in both stories. The Beale author justified returning the treasure to Virginia, in part, on the belief that:

...when outside parties ascertained, as they would do, that we kept nothing on hand to tempt their cupidity, our lives would be more secure than at present. (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)

This is essentially what happened to the party of Americans in Gregg's story:

The remainder was buried deep in the sand, in hopes that it might escape the cupidity of the savages... Often did they look back in the direction where from three to five hundred savages were supposed to watch their movements, but, much to their astonishment, no one appeared to be in pursuit. The Indians, believing no doubt that the property of the traders

would come into their hands, and having no amateur predilection for taking scalps at the risk of losing their own, appeared willing enough to let the spoliated adventurers depart without further molestation. (CP, Vol. II, P. 52)

Is it not reasonable to suggest that the Beale author drew at least some inspiration for events in *The Beale Papers* from Gregg's story of the calamity that befell the American party in 1832?

Select Words from both *The Beale Papers* and *Commerce of the Prairies*

Certain words can be found in both writings, not the least of which is the often discussed “stampede,” a word that reportedly did not enter the English language until much later than 1822. The history of the word “stampede” may be of interest to Beale researchers because Beale used the word in his 1822 letter to Morriss. In theory, this premature use of the word may indicate that *The Beale Papers* was a work of fiction written after the word “stampede” had entered the English lexicon in approximately 1835. (For a discussion of the history of the word “stampede” see Ron Gervais' *Beale Ciphers Analyses* Page One, “Beale Codes - Were They a Hoax?” here <http://www.myoutbox.net/bch2.htm>)

Stampede

The word appeared once in *The Beale Papers*:

It appears that when the left Santa Fé they pursued a northerly course for some days, being successful in finding an abundance of game, which they secured, and were on the eve of returning when they discovered on their left an immense herd of buffaloes, heading for a valley just perceptible in the distance. They determined to follow them, and secure as many as possible. Keeping well together, they followed their trail for two weeks or more, securing many and stampeding the rest. (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)

Gregg described a stampede in *Commerce of the Prairies*:

Our encampment was in a beautiful plain, but without water, of which, however, we had had a good supply at noon. Our cattle, as was the usual custom, after having grazed without for a few hours, were now shut up in the pen of the wagons. Our men were all wrapt in peaceful slumber, except the guard, who kept their silent watch around the encampment; when all of a sudden, about the ominous hour of midnight a tremendous uproar was heard, which caused every man to start in terror from his blanket couch, with arms in hand. Some animal, it appeared, had taken fright at a dog, and by a sudden start, set all around him in violent motion; the panic spread simultaneously throughout the pen; and a scene of rattle, clash, and 'lumbering,' ensued, which far surpassed everything we had yet witnessed. A general 'stampede' (*estampida*, as the Mexicans say) was the result. Notwithstanding the wagons were tightly bound together, wheel to wheel, with ropes or chains, and several stretched across the gaps at the corners of the *corral*, the oxen soon burst their way out; and though mostly yoked in pairs, they went scampering over the plains, as though Tam O'Shanter's 'cutty-sark' Nannie had been at their tails. All attempts

to stop them were vain; for it would require 'Auld Cloutie' himself to check the headway of a drove of oxen, when once thoroughly frightened. (CP, Vol. I, p.103)

Dark - Swarthy - Complexion - Exposure

In two sentences, the Beale author described Thomas Beale in this manner:

*In person, he was about **six feet in height**, with jet black eyes and hair of the same color, worn longer than was the style at that time. His form was **symmetrical**, and gave evidence of **unusual strength and activity**; but his distinguishing feature was a **dark** and **swarthy complexion**, as if much **exposure** to the sun and weather had thoroughly tanned and discolored him; this, however, did not detract from his appearance, and I thought him the handsomest man I had ever seen. 9BP, Morriss statement, paragraph #2)*

Note the words - dark, swarthy, complexion and exposure. Also note the words - height and symmetrical - and the phrase, “unusual strength and activity.”

Now observe this page heading and paragraph from Gregg’s description of the local population:

Heading of Page 217 — THE **SWARTHY COMPLEXION**.

The **stature** of both sexes in New Mexico is commonly **below medium**: but they are mostly **well proportioned**, of **athletic** make, and sound, healthy constitutions. Their **complexion** is generally **dark**; but every variety of shade is found among them, from the lightest European tint to the **swarthiest** hue... The peasantry, as well as from a more general intermixture with the Indian, as from **exposure**, are the **darkest**; yet the tawny **complexion** pervades all classes — the rich as well as the poor. (CP, Vol. I, p.217-218)

Certainly a description of individuals who have lived a rugged life out of doors might be similar but here the similarities include the characteristics used in both stories and their *order of presentation*. Particularly observe the *order* of the physical description of Thomas Beale and the native population of Santa Fe in the two stories:

- i.) First height is discussed: six feet in height v. stature below medium;
- ii.) Then form: symmetrical, unusual strength and activity v. well proportioned, athletic; and
- iii.) Finally, complexion: dark, swarthy complexion v. dark, swarthy complexion.

Perhaps the *suggestion* for Thomas Beale’s physical description came from *Commerce of the Prairies*.

Checquered (sic)

The Beale author used the word “checquered” (spelled with a “CQ”) in his report on the wonderful marriage and community life of Robert Morriss:

*After a **checquered** and eventful life of more than eighty years, passed mostly in business, which brought him in contact with all classes of people, he died, lamented by all, and leaving not an enemy behind. (BP, The “Late Robert Morriss” narrative)*

The word “chequered” was used a number of times by Gregg, including in this passage about his brother’s longing for home:

AFTER passing the custom-house ordeal, and exchanging some of our merchandise for 'Eagle Dollars' — an operation which occupied us several weeks, I prepared to set out for the Chihuahua market, whither a portion of our stock had been designed. Upon this expedition I was obliged to depart without my brother, who was laboring under the 'home fever,' and anxious to return to his family. "He that hath wife and children," says Lord Bacon, "hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief." Men under such bonds are peculiarly unfitted for the **chequered life of a Santa Fe trader. (CP, Vol. II, p.64)**

Is it possible that the *idea* of a discussion of the close family and community ties of Robert Morriss came from Gregg’s “he that hath wife and children” comment?

Accession

From *The Beale Papers*:

*On my return I found the work still progressing favorably, and, by making large **accessions** to our force of laborers, I was ready to return last Fall with an increased supply of metal, which came through safely and was deposited with the other. (BP, January 4, 1822 Beale letter)*

From *Commerce of the Prairies*:

As to the Pawnees, the most experienced traders were well aware that they had not been known to frequent those latitudes since the commencement of the Santa Fe trade. But what contributed as much as anything else to lull the fears of the timid, was an **accession to our forces of seventeen wagons which we overtook the same evening. (CP, Vol. I, p.42)**

Atmosphere

The Beale author used the word “atmosphere” once, in Beale’s May 9, 1822 letter to Morriss:

*Ever since leaving my comfortable quarters at your house I have been journeying to this place, and only succeeded in reaching it yesterday. I have had altogether a pleasant time, the weather being fine and the **atmosphere** bracing.(BP, May 9, 1822 Beale letter)*

Gregg was very fond of the word “atmosphere,” using it many times in his journal. Perhaps Gregg’s fondness for the word arose from his belief that the pure air of the prairies cured his maladies:

Among the concourse of travellers at this 'starting point' besides traders and tourists, a number of pale-faced invalids are generally to be met with. **The Prairies have, in fact, become very celebrated for their sanative effects more justly so, no doubt, than the most fashionable watering-places of the North.** Most chronic diseases, particularly liver complaints, dyspepsias, and similar affections, are often radically cured; owing, no doubt, to the peculiarities of diet, and the regular exercise incident to prairie life, as well as to the **purity of the atmosphere** of those elevated unembarrassed regions.

An invalid myself; I can answer for the efficacy of the remedy, at least in my own case. Though I set out myself in a carriage, before the close of the first week I saddled my pony; and when we reached the buffalo range, I was not only as eager for the chase as the sturdiest of my companions, but I enjoyed far more exquisitely my share of the buffalo, than all the delicacies which were ever devised to provoke the most fastidious appetite. (CP, Vol. I, p.34)

Edgar A. Poe

The mid-1840's were years of artistic success for Edgar Poe, particularly after his publication of *The Raven*, one of the greatest poems ever written. Unfortunately, they were also years which included poverty, personal illness and grief over the deteriorating health and eventual death of his wife Virginia in 1847. For a brief period after the release of *The Raven* in 1845 though, Poe was the toast of New York.

Although an outsider to the literary social scene for most of his career, Poe was on the "A" list of every hostess in New York after the phenomenal critical success of *The Raven*. It seemed that the entire world recognized the brilliance of the poem and everyone wanted to see and meet Poe and hear him recite his famous poem.

This period also coincided with the successful publication of *Commerce of the Prairies*, with volume I being published in 1844 and volume II in 1846. Even in those days, New York was the publishing capital of the nation and Josiah Gregg had brought his journals to the big apple in search of a publisher.

Slight Authorship Controversy

Although it did not arise for decades, there was some slight controversy over who actually wrote *Commerce of the Prairies*. There is no disagreement, however, that John Bigelow, then a 26 year old lawyer and editor, assisted Josiah Gregg in preparing his journal for publication. The controversy arose as a result of a claim by Bigelow years later that he actually authored the book from rough notes prepared by Gregg. In any case, Bigelow was deeply involved in the publication of *Commerce of the Prairies*.

Poe and Bigelow

During the mid-1840's both Poe and Bigelow were close to publisher Evert Duyckinck. Certainly, both knew of each other, Bigelow acknowledged meeting Poe on a number of occasions at parties hosted by Duyckinck. Although the older Poe (by 10 years) may have considered Bigelow something of an upstart, he would have had to admit a grudging respect at

the success of *Commerce of the Prairies*, a very popular publication which ultimately extended to six editions into the 1850's.

Poe was interested in many of the “hot” topics of the day, including western expansion and the gold fever gripping the nation. He also followed the current political events including the saber rattling and eventual war with Mexico. In a letter to Duyckinck in 1849, Poe provided a glimpse of his thoughts regarding the lust for quick riches created by the California gold rush:

Letter to Evert Duyckinck, March 8, 1849

Fordham March 8.

Dear Sir,

If you have looked over the Von Kempelen article which I left with your brother, you will have fully perceived its drift. I mean it as a kind of “exercise”, or experiment, in the plausible or verisimilar style. Of course, there is not one word of truth in it from beginning to end. I thought that such a style, applied to the gold-excitement, could not fail of effect. My sincere opinion is that nine persons out of ten (even among the best-informed) will believe the quiz (provided the design does not leak out before publication) and that thus, acting as a sudden, although of course a very temporary, check to the gold-fever, it will create a stir to some purpose.

I had prepared the hoax for a Boston weekly called “The Flag” — where it will be quite thrown away. The proprietor will give me \$15 for it on presentation to his agent here; and [page 2:] my object in referring the article to you is simply to see if you could not venture to take it for the “World”. If so, I am willing to take for it \$10 — or, in fact, whatever you think you can afford.

I believe the quiz is the first deliberate literary attempt of the kind on record. In the story of Mrs Veal, we are permitted, now & then, to perceive a tone of banter. In “Robinson Crusoe” the design was far more to please, or excite, than to deceive by verisimilitude, in which particular merely, Sir Ed. Seaward’s narrative is the more skillful book. In my “Valdemar Case” (which was credited by many) I had not the slightest idea that any person should credit it as any thing more than a “Magazine-paper” — but here the whole strength is laid out in verisimilitude.

I am very much obliged to you for your reprint of “Ulalume”.

*Truly Yours,
Edgar A Poe.*

(Credit to the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore)

This letter provides a sense of how ready Poe was to deceive his audience by verisimilitude. It also hints at the difficulties Poe faced making a living solely as a poet and author and it suggests that in desperation Poe may not have been above accepting a “commission” for a favorable critique or, perhaps, a heroic, if fictional, short story, such as *The Beale Papers*, to honor a beloved elder such as Robert Morriss.

Perhaps Poe accepted a “gift” from William Burwell, his friend and fellow student at the University of Virginia, or maybe Poe owed a debt of gratitude to Morriss for a past kindness. Burwell, whose father was President Thomas Jefferson’s secretary, was a resident of Liberty, now Bedford, Virginia. He built the now historic mansion, *Avenel*, in Bedford, in 1838. Poe is rumored to have been a guest at Avenel. Poe may also have been acquainted with Morriss, either in the early years when Morriss was active in the tobacco trade and John Allan, Poe’s adopted father, was the overseer of his uncle William Galt’s Lynchburg tobacco plantations, or, later, when the Allans would stop over in Lynchburg in the summers on their way to the cool, medicinal springs of the mountains. Or even later still, when Poe and Burwell were rambunctious students at the University of Virginia and they took a break from their studies for an independent frolic to Lynchburg.

Dating of The Beale Papers

The primary topics of *The Beale Papers*, gold mining, the acquisition of a treasure from the ground, the Santa Fe Trail, the wilderness, Mexico, etc. were front page news in the 1840’s. Other, more subtle clues point to an era prior to 1850 as the time when the story may have been created. And though a story about events in the first half of the 19th century could certainly have been authored in 1885, a close examination of *The Beale Papers* suggests that the tale could easily have been written much earlier.

Still, the 1885 publication date of *The Beale Papers*, the close connections to the very real Robert Morriss, and the references to events that occurred well after Poe’s death, all comprise formidable evidence against any suggestion that Poe is the author of the Beale mystery. Nevertheless, modification of the original tale would not have been difficult if it somehow travelled through time from Poe in 1848 to James Beverly Ward, in 1885.

Robert Morriss, the key to the Beale mystery

The description of the life of Robert Morriss in *The Beale Papers* is heavily weighted toward events that occurred prior to 1850. His birth, marriage, removal to Lynchburg, financial losses in tobacco trading and survival as an innkeeper all occurred in the first half of the century. This, perhaps, is not surprising since most of the story is an accurate memorialization of actual events in Morriss’ life. Notice how skillfully the Beale author blended the reality of Morriss’ background into his fictional tale:

First, his birth and marriage:

Robert Morriss, the custodian of the Beale papers, was born in 1778, in the State of Maryland, but removed at an early age, with his family, to Loudoun county, Va., where, in 1803, he married Miss Sarah Mitchell, a fine looking and accomplished young lady of that county. (BP, Robert Morriss narrative)

Next, his move to Lynchburg and entry into the tobacco trade:

Shortly after his removal to Lynchburg, Mr. Morriss engaged in the mercantile business, and shortly thereafter he became a purchaser and shipper of tobacco to an extent hitherto unknown in this section. (BP, Robert Morriss narrative)

Next, note how the Beale author, or his devoted follower, seamlessly inserted an event that occurred subsequent to 1850:

*It was during this period of his success that he erected the first brick building of which the town could boast, and which still stands on Main street, a monument to his enterprise. His private residence, **the house now owned and occupied by Max Guggenheimer, Esq.**, at the head of Main street, I think he also built. (BP, Robert Morriss narrative)*

One could argue that the only purpose of this Guggenheimer clause is to bring the story into the 1870's at least, as it otherwise adds nothing to the story. Max Guggenheimer was a real person who resided in the Lynchburg area at that time. In fact, Guggenheimer was a well-regarded civic leader and a successful business man who contributed both financially and otherwise, he fought for the South in the Civil War, to his community. Guggenheimer's life story might be interesting, but the Beale author tells us nothing about Guggenheimer except that he owned Morriss' old house. If the Beale author wrote the story in the 1840's, though, but wanted to create an impression it was written much later, adding clauses like the Guggenheimer clause to the story would certainly accomplish that goal. This would not be so difficult, particularly if a loyal, perhaps younger follower, were given specific instructions where to "update" the story as the years went by. It was known in the 1840's that Morriss built a brick house during his time of wealth. Brick houses were a rarity in that time and would likely survive for many years after 1850. Identifying who owned the house in subsequent years would be an easy way to suggest the story was written later than was actually the case.

Morriss' fall from wealth and his entry into the hotel business also appear to have been actual events in the man's life. Nevertheless, the Beale author found it necessary to slightly modify Morriss' history to suit the needs of his fictional tale. Because the Beale author wanted to place the Beale party in Santa Fe from 1817-1822, a seemingly "safe" window for Americans, and therefore he needed Morriss to be the innkeeper of the Washington Hotel in 1820, he simply made it so, despite the fact that Morriss did not actually start his career at the Washington Hotel until 1823.

*Thrown thus upon his own resources, by the advice of his wife, he leased for a term of years the Washington Hotel, **known now as the Arlington**, on Church street, and commenced the business of hotel keeping. (BP, Robert Morriss narrative)*

"It was in the month of January, 1820, while keeping the Washington Hotel, that I first saw and became acquainted with Beale." (BP, Robert Morriss statement)

Again note that the Arlington clause brings the story into the "present," which would be just prior to the 1885 publication date.

The list of distinguished guests at the various Morriss hotels also tends toward a time prior to 1850:

Amongst his guests and devoted personal friends Jackson, Clay, Coles, Witcher, Chief Justice Marshall, and a host of others scarcely less distinguished, might be enumerated. (BP, Robert Morriss narrative)

Andrew Jackson died in 1845, Henry Clay in 1852 and Chief Justice John Marshall in 1835. Coles may be Edward Coles, confidant of President's Jefferson and Madison (he was President Madison's private secretary) and Governor of Illinois, who died in 1868. Coles was a man of principal who gave up the life of a central Virginia plantation owner because of his opposition to slavery. He was one of the few Jeffersonian followers who actually freed all of his slaves. Most of Coles' time in Virginia was in his early years prior to 1825. Finally, the "Witcher" mentioned by the Beale author could be any one of the famous "Witcher" family in the area but may be Vincent Witcher, the Virginia legislator who was instrumental in building the Franklin Turnpike in 1824.

The choice of these names by the Beale author is an interesting sub-mystery to this tale. Did Jackson, Clay and Marshall stay at one of Morriss' hotels while visiting Lynchburg? Was Morriss a "devoted personal friend" of Coles, Witcher or any of the other famous men? Likely the Beale author was exercising considerable artistic license when writing this passage. Poe, on the other hand, did personally know Chief Justice Marshall as the Allans and the Marshalls shared a pew at the Monumental church in Richmond and Justice Marshall gave John Allan the oath of citizenship when he became a citizen of the United States. Poe may also have met Clay, Coles, Witcher and Jackson in his youth during their visits to Richmond as his "granduncle" William Galt was one of the richest men in Virginia.

The Morriss' deaths, in 1861 and 1863, could also have been added to the Beale tale years after it was written:

After a checquered and eventful life of more than eighty years, passed mostly in business, which brought him in contact with all classes of people, he died, lamented by all, and leaving not an enemy behind. His death, which occurred in 1863, was just two years subsequent to that of his wife. (BP, Robert Morris narrative)

The fictional revelation by Morriss to the Beale narrator of the contents of the mysterious box containing the Beale ciphers, which the Beale author placed into the story in 1862, could have occurred at any time after 1822! Placing the date one year prior to Morriss' death and adding the superfluous comment, "the second year of the Confederate war" does bring the story beyond the 1840's and subsequent to Poe's death in 1849.

It was in 1862, the second year of the Confederate war, that Mr. Morriss first intimated the possession of a secret that was destined to make some persons wealthy. (BP, Robert Morriss narrative)

Finally, the last paragraph of the Beale tale also brings the story into the "present" day of publication in 1885 with clauses concerning the selection of an agent to publish the papers:

The gentleman whom I have selected as my agent, to publish and circulate these papers, was well-known to Mr. Morriss; it was at his house that Mrs. Morriss died, and he would have been one of the beneficiaries in the event of my success. Like every one else, he was ignorant of this episode in Mr. Morriss' career, until the manuscript was placed in his hands. Trusting that he will be benefited by the arrangement, which, I know, would have met the approval of Mr.

Morriss, I have left the whole subject to his sole management and charge. It is needless to say that I shall await with much anxiety the development of the mystery. (BP, narrative)

Thus, in the entire tale of *The Beale Papers* there are six references to events that occur subsequent to 1850, and all are related to Robert Morriss' life:

- 1.) The Max Guggenheimer clause, referencing the man who purchased Morriss' brick house;
- 2.) The Arlington Hotel clause, modernizing the name of the Washington Hotel where Morriss worked;
- 3.) The references to the deaths of Mr. Morriss' in 1863 and Mrs. Morriss, two years earlier;
- 4.) The fictional revelation by Morriss of the Beale mystery in 1862, with its reference to "the second year of the Confederate War;"
- 5.) The reference in the last paragraph to the selection of an agent to publish the papers; and
- 6.) The agent's close connections to Mr. and Mrs. Morriss.

Although how the Beale manuscript may have travelled in time and space from 1848 New York to 1885 Lynchburg remains a mystery, it nevertheless may have been Edgar Poe who blended the actual events of Robert Morriss' life, the true elements in *Commerce of the Prairies*, portions of his previous tale of western exploration, the incomplete serial, *The Journal of Julius Rodman*, and his beloved cryptography to create *The Beale Papers*, one of the great cryptographic treasure tales of all time.

Acknowledgements

Commerce of the Prairies, Volume I and II, Kansas Collection Books, Transcribed by Dick Taylor and John Maier: <http://www.kancoll.org/books/gregg/>

Ron Gervais' Beale Ciphers Analyses: <http://www.angelfire.com/pro/bealeciphers/>

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