

**An Etymological Study of Illiteracy
among
TransMississippian Fur Trappers
in the 1830's:
The Peter Lebeck Grave – A Case Study.**

by

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Parakeet
(Budgerigar),
Melopsittacus
undulatus
(Length 7 in.)

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Vincennes. Translated into English from the original French
by P.B. Champlain.*

An Etymological Study of Illiteracy among TransMississippian Fur Trappers in the 1830's: The Peter Lebeck Grave – A Case Study.

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Little is known of the famed trapper and mountain man Peter Lebeck, other than he was buried under an oak tree in Grapevine Canyon on the grounds of what was later to become Fort Tejon in Kern County, California.

It was previously thought that Lebeck was a member of the Michael La Framboise expedition which entered the region in 1832 in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. More recent research proves that La Framboise's group never made it that far south in 1837. Lebeck was more likely a member of the Chaguanoso gang led by Jean-Baptiste Chalifoux, which was known to be stealing horses and trapping in the area during that year.

It is a widely held belief that Lebeck (or Lebec, or Le Beacque) was hunting with friends and shot a bear. Thinking the bear had been killed Lebeck walked up to it to obtain its skin. Unfortunately for Lebeck the bear was not dead. It attacked and killed him.

It is our intention to prove that the most commonly held view of the death of Peter Lebeck is incorrect. We believe the reference to a "X bear" does not

really mean a "cross bear" as in "angry or upset," nor is it a reference to a grizzly bear (sometimes referred to as an "X" bear due to the diagonal markings on the bear's back resembling an "X"). Rather, it was actually a crude attempt at a phonetic spelling for "Kroesse Baare," a corruption of "Kruzbyhar" from the Cisalpine dialect of Gaulish; Kruzbyhar meaning parakeet.

Gaulish was the extinct Celtic language of ancient Gaul. The Cisalpine dialect was used in the southern region of Gaul south of the Alps. Gaul ranged throughout much of pre-nationalist Western Europe, including the area of modern France. Most likely a Gaul himself, it is a reasonable presumption that Lebeck's friends, too, were Gauls. That is, native to France.

As Gauls, probably semi-literate at best, it is clear that it would easily follow that "X bear" is actually a reference to parakeet. So it seems the intrepid explorer (or common thief) was sent to his grave by a small, colorful bird and not by a bear as has been commonly held since the discovery of his grave.

Although we are Etymologists, not Ornithologists, we must presume that this was not just an ordinary parakeet, but most assuredly, the Mother of All Parakeets.

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PETER LEBECK
KILLED
BY
A X BEAR
OCTr. 17
1837