

Woodstock, Thursday, December 1, 1881

Panther Hunt in Barnard –

Our people are very much excited about a panther hunt which took place here last Thanksgiving Day...

[This is the story, as told] by the youth who first discovered the track and followed it to the end. His name is James M. Cadwell; he is fifteen years of age, over six feet in height and weighs about 175 pounds; a Barnard specimen of boyhood that it will be hard for other towns to beat. His statement is as follows, and is in the opinion of your correspondent the exact truth:

“The morning of Thanksgiving day, 1881, dawned warm and pleasant for the time of year, an inch or two of snow having fallen during the night, making it an excellent time to track game... I thought I would try my luck during the forenoon. Taking my shot gun, I started about 7 a. m., and had not gone more than 100 rods when I struck a track made by some large animal, leading towards the north. The track made was about four inches in diameter, and unlike any I had ever seen. I finally concluded it must be a bear track, and followed it about 40 rods through a clearing, on Capt. Bruce’s hill, till it entered a dense spruce thicket on the farm of Mrs. Abbott. The tracks seemed very fresh and I knew the game must be near...

I now thought I had better go for

assistance, as I had nothing but a shot gun, although it happened to be heavily loaded. I was now not far from the house of Mr. Bourdeau, who had two rifles, and I expected to find my brother George there also. I soon reached the house and told Mr. Bourdeau, his son John, my brother George, and Mrs. Abbott’s boys, Will, Ed. and Carl, that there was a bear in the spruces, and asked them to go with me after it...

There were now six of us, with two rifles and one shot gun; our ages being from 11 to 19, and none of us ever having seen a bear outside of a menagerie. We separated into parties of two as we entered the thicket, each party with one gun, and hunted for the track, and continued to follow them for an hour or more; but the spruces were so thick and the tracks crossed each other so often – all of them fresh – that we could not tell which was made first and which last, and we came near giving up the hunt when myself and John Bourdeau, who was with me, happened to strike the trail leading from the thicket towards the south.

It was soon after making this turn that we came in sight of the animal. I was startled by my companion saying, ‘Hold on Jim! there’s a catamount!’ I saw it at the

same moment walking slowly up the hill some 15 rods ahead and not seeming to notice us. It was an immense one standing some three feet high, and was a panther, or American lion of the largest size. We now stopped a few minutes and waited for the others of the party to come up, Will, Ed and George; Carl having abandoned the trail. We now started on the run to overtake the panther, but he soon entered a small thicket of spruces...

We had to continue slowly and cautiously, and when we came out of the thicket it was not in sight. We pressed on and followed the trail into the thicket we had left about an hour before. We now had to move cautiously and creep through the spruces and could go but slowly. We continued on the trail for a considerable time longer, when I began to be both tired and hungry; my clothes and feet being wet; the snow falling from the spruces upon us most of the time. We now thought best to send for more help, and dispatched Ed Abbott, the youngest of our party, to have Mr. Alexander Crowell and his son Ed come up and helped us get the panther. John, George and myself (Will soon leaving us), continued on the trail an hour longer without again seeing the panther, when Mr. Crowell and his two sons arrived and joined us. A little snow squall now enabled us to tell the fresh track from the old, and we all followed it for half an hour without sighting the game; at this time we met it without seeing it, but we heard it make some big jump to avoid us. Mr. Crowell

proposed that we separate, he and his sons following the trail to drive the panther out where we were so that we could shoot it. We remained as stationed about twenty minutes, when we heard a gun fired some 30 rods below us; we started for the place at our best pace. As we came up to Mr. Crowell he said, 'John, I have shot him! Let me take your gun and shoot him again!' He took the gun and shot again, putting a ball into the eye of the savage creature as he lay disabled from walking, but glaring at us in a savage manner. This ended his existence; his first shot, from a shot gun, having entered his breast as he lay on his belly. It seems he had eaten heartily of some sheep killed in Pomfret the night before and was feeling good natured, and did not care to pick a fuss with anybody...

There is no doubt that the first shot both surprised and hurt him, and he started from Mr. Crowell up the hill – went about three rods and lay down, unable to go farther, and there is where he lay as Mr. Crowell fired the second shot. We all felt easier, and greatly rejoiced as he breathed his last; and as we thought what might have happened in the thick spruces... we felt that we were a brave crowd or a foolish one; you must judge for yourselves which."

The panther was a male and weighed 182 pounds, after at least five pounds of blood had been taken from him. He had killed many sheep and lambs in different parts, and the people greatly rejoice at his death.