

The Bentonville, Ohio, Case

Back in the 1950s and for some time later there were no restrictions on bringing in animal parts from other countries. One grisly relic that I vaguely recall was an actual gorilla's hand (taxidermied) to which a ceramic ashtray was placed in the palm, resulting in a "gorilla hand ashtray." Many people smoked in those days and there were no restrictions on smoking (cigarettes, cigars, pipes) in offices, public buildings, and so forth. As a result, there was a large market for "smoking accessories," as it were.

The thought of these disgusting things did not resurface in my mind until 2002. Joedy Cook in Ohio sent me photographs of a hand cast associated with a possible "sasquatch/bigfoot incident" in Bentonville, Ohio. Two ladies living in a portable building were frightened by strange noises in the bush and saw what they said was "a large man" (possible bigfoot). They called the police who investigated the area, but did not find anything. Ohio has many strange incidents of this nature so the ladies were referred to Joedy Cook. One of the ladies told her brother of the event and he looked around and found a hand impression in the soil and a rough footprint. He made a plaster cast of the hand print and later when Joedy arrived he was given the cast.

Joedy did a thorough investigation and determined that whatever made the hand print had hopped up a little bluff and used its hand to steady itself. The hand was placed on a little tree branch fragment, pushing it into the ground. As a result, the thumb of the hand did not register in the impression.

The photographs provided definitely showed dermal ridges (finger prints) so I sent the images to Jimmy Chilcutt a finger print specialist in Texas. He was impressed and asked to see the actual cast. This was arranged and he provided a detailed report. Beyond any doubt, the hand that made the print was that of a gorilla; however, the finger impressions were very flat, indicating that the hand was "dead." Were the fingers "alive" they would not have flattened out.

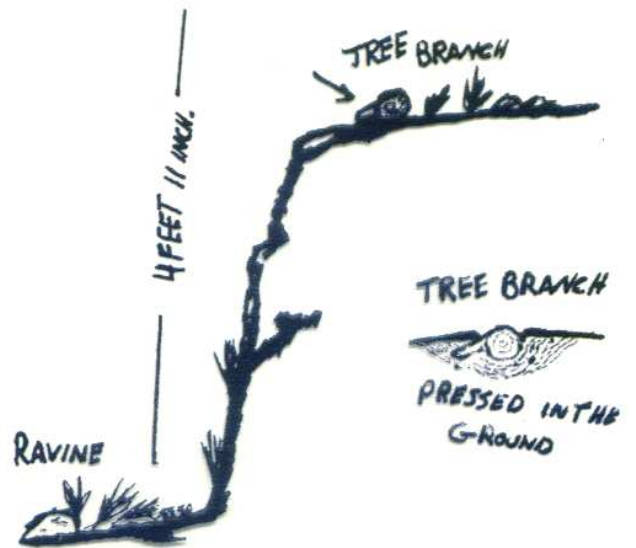
In the course of working on this case, it came to mind that the impression was probably made using a real gorilla hand (previously used for an ashtray). Joedy thoroughly researched everything and does not believe the lady's brother fabricated the hand print. Whatever the case, it was decided that the print was fabricated, so the cast was not included in museum exhibits. The following pages show photographs and illustrations. It was an interesting case and does provide insights on the things that can happen.



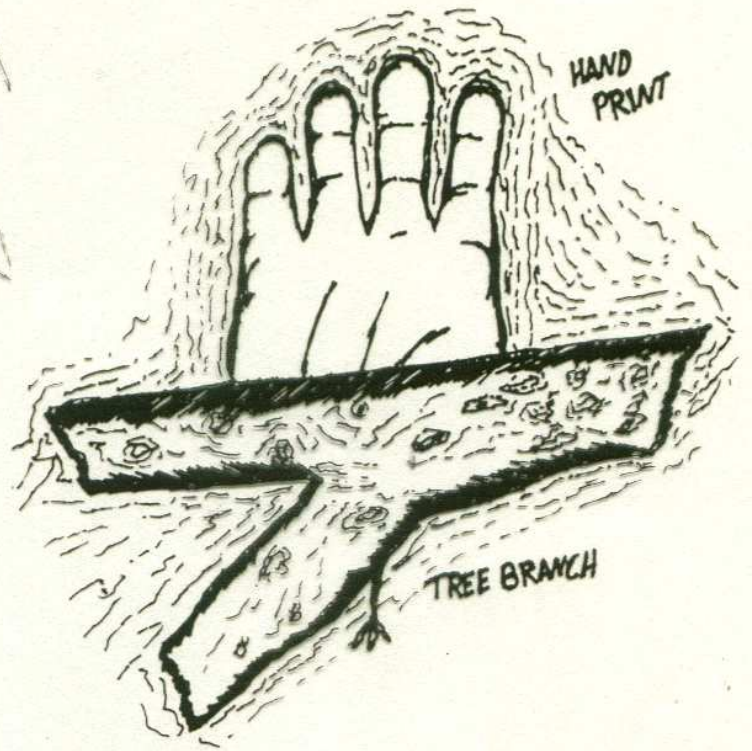
Actual gorilla hand used to make "ashtrays" in the 1950s and 60s.



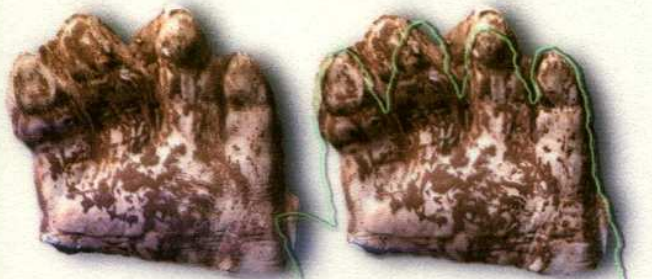
A ceramic ashtray such as that which would be placed in a real gorilla hand to result in a "gorilla hand ashtray." Taxidermy was quite popular in those days, but has now "fallen from grace."



The first image shows the cast as it originally appeared; the second after it had been cleaned to examine the dermal ridges and other features. The close-up on the left is of the first finger (note how flat it is). The drawing is Joedy's depiction of the the little bluff and the tree branch upon which the hand was placed.



Ohio handcast



Gorilla hand



chimpanzee hand

I po -I po



The first two images are drawings made by Joedy to illustrate what appears to have happened. The third image was prepared by Yvon Leclerc to illustrate the cast along with a gorilla hand and a chimpanzee hand. The fourth image shows Joedy Cook with the hand cast some time after he received it.