



# Holt Collier: His Life, His Roosevelt Hunts, and the Origin of the Teddy Bear

*Minor Ferris Buchanan*

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On November 14, 2002, the 100th anniversary of the world famous Teddy Bear will be celebrated. The origin of the Teddy Bear stems from an occasion when President Theodore Roosevelt visited the wilderness of Mississippi in hopes of killing a black bear. He was guided on this hunt by Holt Collier, a former slave, Confederate veteran (yes—amazing though it sounds), Texas cowboy, Mississippi lawman, and noted pioneer. He is known to have killed over 3,000 bear in his lifetime, more than Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett combined. Roosevelt, who also hunted with Collier in Louisiana in 1907, called him "the greatest hunter and guide I have ever known."

Collier killed many white men, several in Mississippi. One exciting incident in his biography is a detailed description of the gunfight at Washburn's Ferry where Collier out-drew the notorious Louisiana outlaw Travis Elmore Sage. He was prosecuted only once—for the murder of a Union captain after the Civil War—but he was acquitted. Collier was famous nationally during his lifetime, but the racial atmosphere in Mississippi for the last eighty years kept his remarkable story from being told. There is no detailed and authoritative work on Holt Collier or the origin of the Teddy Bear other than this book.

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