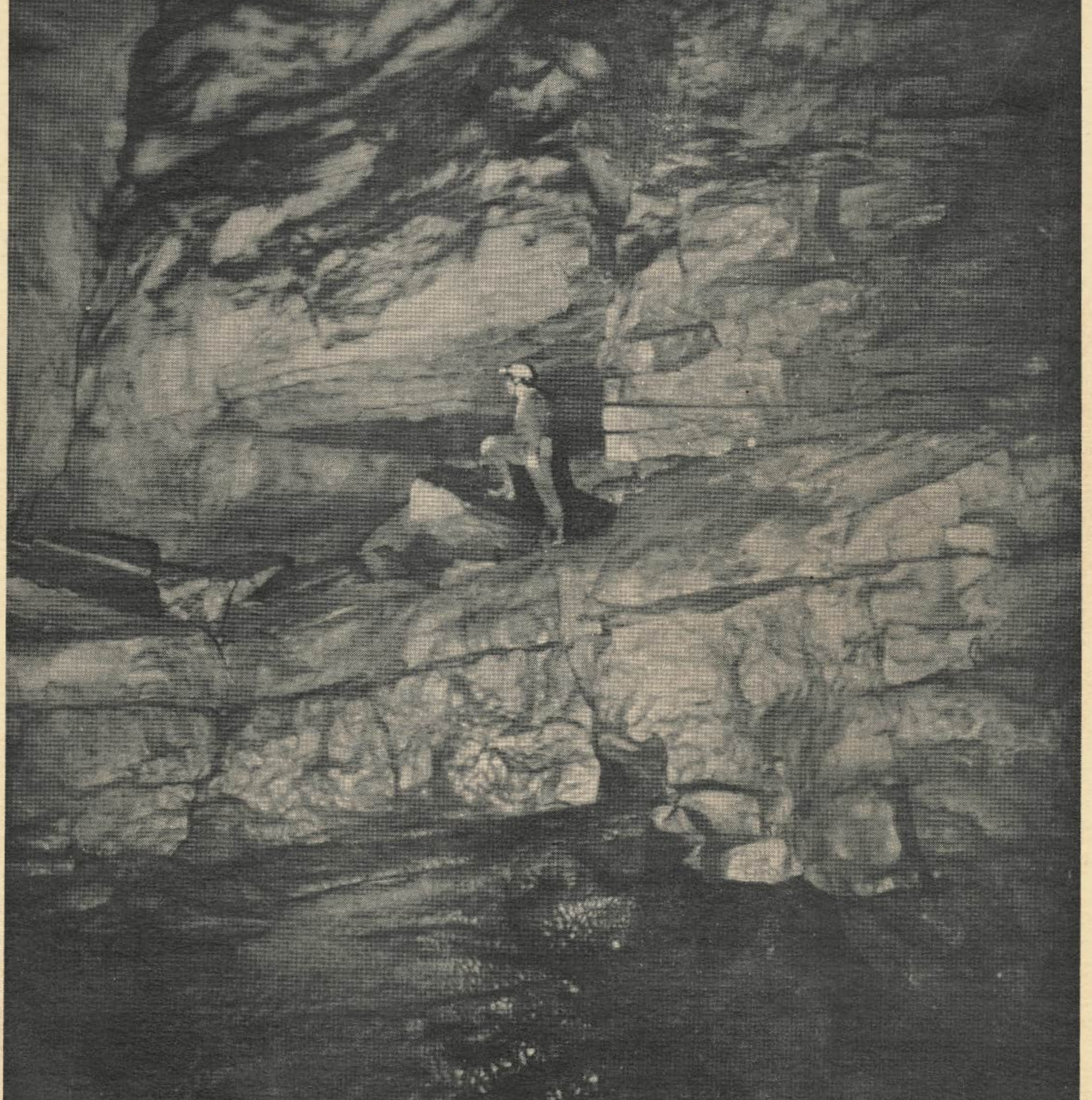


KENTUCKY SPELEOFEST 1987



16th Annual - Renfro Valley

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FRONT COVER Sinks of the Roundstone Cave, from a color slide by Steve Brown.

TITLE PAGE ARTWORK A pointalism by Christine Marie Gerace.

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Speleofest Schedule

Friday, May 22

4:00 pm.....Registration begins

Saturday, May 23

9:00 am.....First cave trips meet
8:00 pm.....Bluegrass music
10:00 pm.....Registration closes

Sunday, May 24

9:00 am.....First cave trips meet
7:30 pm.....Banquet
9:15 pm.....Guest Speaker, followed by
door prizes

Monday, May 25

9:00 am.....Cave trips
12:30 pm.....Campground cleanup

Acknowledgements

Speleofest Chairman.....Phil O'dell
Treasurer.....John Barnes
Preregistration.....Mary Andersen
Site Coordination and Preparation
.....Landrum Haddix, Susan
Haddix, Tab Farthing, Ed Wesley
Brochures....Don Pollock, Linda Pollock, Diana
George, Mike Hill, Duke Hopper
T-shirt Design.....Christine Gerace
Inter-grotto Courier.....Chuck Everman
Trip Coordinator.....Mike Hill
Trip Leaders.....Gary Bush, Stuart Butler,
Landrum Haddix, Duke Hopper, Gary
O'Dell, Doug Stecko, Doug Carroll, Jack
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Entertainment.....Ed Wesley
Speleofest Advisors.....Angelo George, J. Pat
Stephens, Larry McCarty, Dick Weller
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Halftones.....Diana George
Cartographic Retouch and Enhancement.....
Mike Hill, Gary O'Dell
Assistants.....Mary Andersen, Bill Andrews,
John Barnes, Wade Crabb, Chuck Everman,
Jon Hagee, Larry Peterson

SPECIAL THANKS are due to the various landowners who have allowed access to their caves for this year's Kentucky Speleofest, and to the vendors and advertisers who supplied door prizes. Appreciation is also extended to those who supplied cave maps and descriptions for the guidebook, in particular to Gary Bush, Doug Carroll, Thomas Cottrell, Jack Hissong, Don Pollock, Richard Sellers, and Lou Simpson.

This, the 16th annual Kentucky Speleofest, would have been a nearly impossible task without the advice and assistance of the other regional NSS grottos. We would like to thank the Greater Cincinnati Grotto, the Miami Valley Grotto, and the Louisville Grotto.

It is not possible to name all of the people who have helped with this year's Speleofest, but we gratefully acknowledge all of the assistance we have received.



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Guidebook
for the
1987 Kentucky Speleofest



Renfro Valley KOA, Kentucky
May 22-25, 1987

Editor Gary A. O'Dell

Speleofest Chairman Phillip W. O'dell

Welcome to Speleofest

This year is the first opportunity for the Blue Grass Grotto to host a Kentucky Speleofest. Although a variety of great caving areas are within a short drive for most of our membership, Rockcastle, Pulaski and Jackson counties has been our favorite caving region for the past twenty years. We are sure you will see why when you visit some of the caves and take in the beautiful countryside.

We would like for you to experience the culture, history and quality of the area during your stay. Many of the fine people of these counties have become our good friends. "Chewing the fat" before a trip has helped us locate many new caves as well as providing the folklore and history of the caves.

We are glad to have you at the 1987 Kentucky Speleofest and wish you a pleasant and interesting visit.

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 (ask for the Speleofest staff)

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 (Richmond)

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 Police 256-2178
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 Day 864-9396
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 Hospital 256-2195

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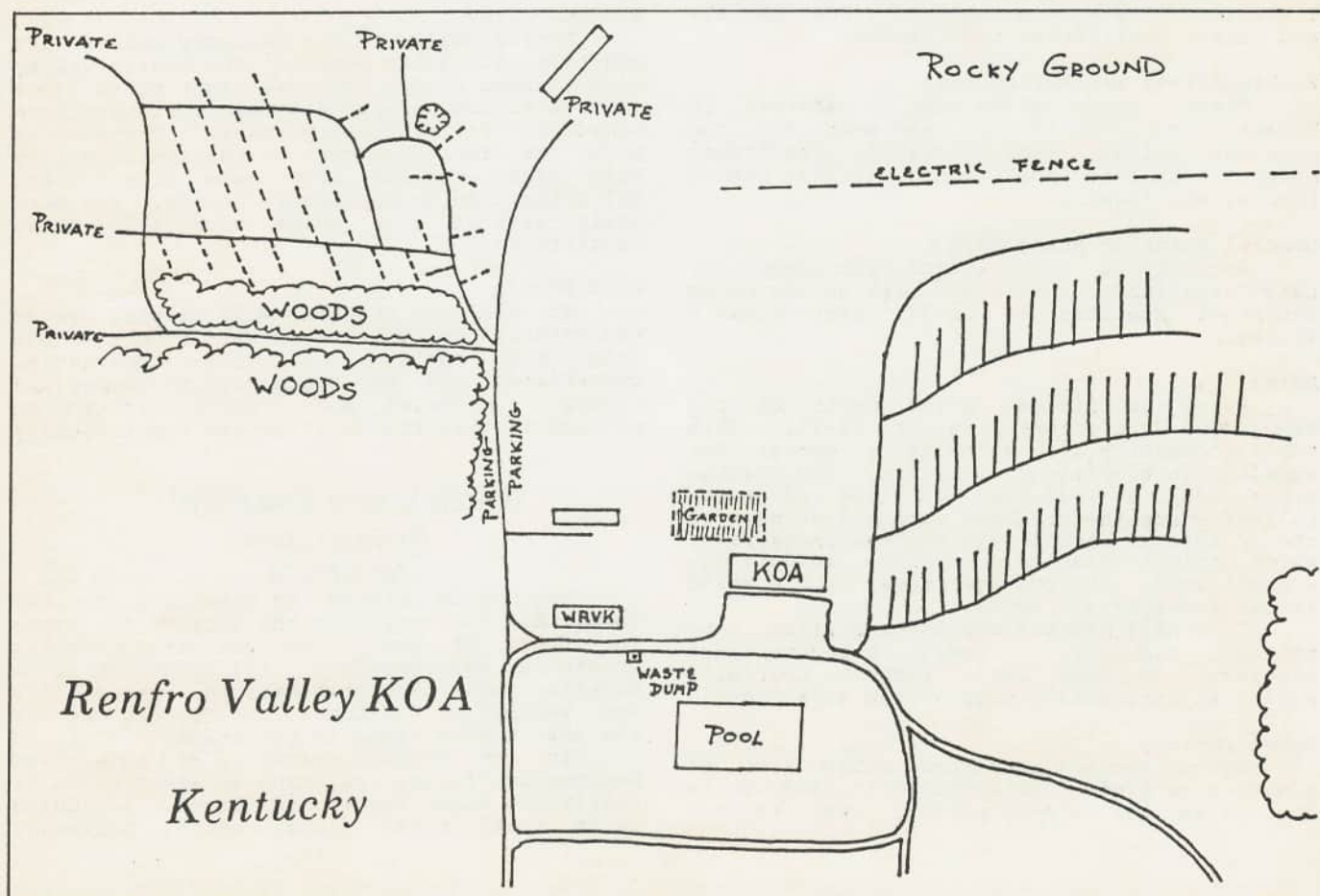
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LOCAL ATTRACTIONS



By Susan Haddix
NSS 26177

In addition to cave exploring, there are many things to do and see in this region of Kentucky. These include the numerous lakes with waterskiing, boat rentals, swimming and fishing; historical sites and tours; hiking and wildlife reserves.

Lake Cumberland

Lake Cumberland offers a variety of diversions. With over 50,000 acres spanning several counties, it is accessible via a number of routes. The fish population is diverse and abundant in this large lake, including walleye, smallmouth and largemouth bass, crappie, and white bass.

The Lake Cumberland State Resort Park is fourteen miles off the Cumberland Parkway south on US-127, then five miles east along the lake on KY-1370. The State Park offers boat launch facilities, boat rentals, fishing, golf, bicycle trails, and four miles of hiking trails.

Lake Linville

This small lake is adjacent to Renfro Valley. When leaving Interstate 75 by the Renfro Valley exit, follow US-25 for one mile south and turn left at the sign. Lake Linville offers a swimming beach, boat rentals and launch facilities, and fishing.

Fishing Creek Recreation Area

Travel three miles west of Somerset in Pulaski County on KY-80, then west for one mile on KY-1248. The recreation area offers beach, bathhouse, boat launch, grills, hiking trails, and fishing.

General Burnside State Park

Actually a large island surrounded by Lake Cumberland, this state park is ten miles south of Somerset on US-27, near Sloan's Valley.

Berea

Berea is fifteen miles north of the campground via either I-75 or US-25. This small community is noted as a center for Appalachian traditions, culture, and crafts. Since 1855 it has been the home of Berea College where the students earn all or part of their tuition through the college industries, which include ceramics, weaving, woodcrafts, wrought iron, the college press, or the world famous Boone Tavern Hotel.

Churchill Weavers was Berea's first non-college industry. Their products are handwoven on hand built looms. Churchill offers an interesting tour of the work rooms.

Bybee Pottery

Bybee Pottery is fifteen miles east of Richmond on KY-52. Established in 1809, it is hailed as the oldest pottery west of the

Alleghenies. The process of mining local clay, grinding it in an antique pugmill, throwing and shaping it by hand is carried on today very much as it was over a century ago. Free tours are offered from 9:30-4:30, along with the opportunity to purchase the famed but inexpensive pottery.

White Hall

North of Richmond in Madison County near the Kentucky River is this historic site. White Hall is the post-Civil War grand estate of Cassius Marcellus Clay. Cousin to Henry Clay, the master of White Hall was a fiery abolitionist in antebellum days, friend of Abraham Lincoln, and appointed minister to Russia. The completely restored estate offers a tour that covers 19th century history and personalities.

Fort Boonesborough

Fort Boonesborough, reached from the same exit as White Hall, is a carefully reconstructed pioneer fort from the days of Kentucky's settlement. Pioneer crafts are demonstrated by Kentuckians using functional 18th-century antiques. This state park also features a sandy beach with swimming in the Kentucky River, camping, boat rentals, and boat rides on a paddle-wheeler.

Renfro Valley

Renfro Valley is the Kentucky center for old-time Bluegrass music. The Renfro Valley Barn is home to the Saturday night performance and the Sunday morning services that have been broadcast for over forty years. The opening night CBS radio broadcast of the Renfro Valley Barn Dance was in fact made from Great Saltpeter Cave in Rockcastle County. The barn hosts several gift shops with Appalachian handicrafts.

Wild Rivers

In 1972 the Kentucky Wild Rivers System was established; designated wild rivers in the area are portions of the Rockcastle, Cumberland, and Big South Fork of Cumberland rivers. Canoeing and fishing are to be enjoyed in this region of rugged scenic beauty

Watch Where You Step!

By Gary O'Dell
NSS 10278

If, while hiking up the trail to the cave, all you notice is the back of the caver in front of you...then you are missing something very special. All about you is a diverse fauna that help make the wooded hills and valleys of the Cumberland Plateau one of the most scenic areas in the state.

In the complex ecology of this Mixed Mesophytic forest are found an association of nearly two dozen species of trees, including tulip tree, sugar maple, beech, basswood,

yellow buckeye, red oak, white oak, red maple, hemlock, black walnut, black cherry, shagbark hickory, white ash, and formerly chestnut. The abundant flowers of redbud and dogwood fill the woods with splashes of color in the spring. In company with these are other understory vegetation such as the pawpaw, mountain pepperbush, silverbell, ninebark, persimmon, serviceberry, and deciduous magnolias.

On abandoned pastures and strip mine sites, the edges of woods and along roadsides are found the invaders, eastern red cedar and sassafras. These may also be found in the more heavily forested areas, due to timber harvesting or deadfalls that allowed a habitat to be established.

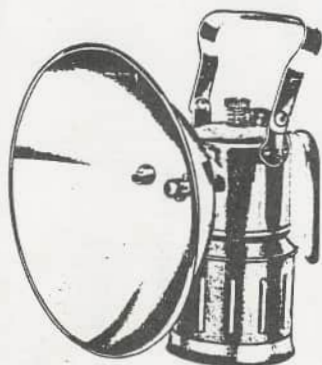
Above the limestones, growing on the acidic sandstone caprocks, are the pines -- pitch pine, yellow pine, Eastern white pine, and scrub pine. Associated with them are other acid-loving shrubs such as holly, azalea, mountain laurel, and the spectacular rhododendron, which sometimes forms impenetrable thickets.

Along the stream banks is found the sycamore, which may reach tremendous girth and spread, along with sweet and yellow birches, and sweet gums.

Crunched unknowingly beneath your feet may be the dainty beauties of the leaf-covered forest floor. There are jack-in-the pulpit and mayapples, phlox and violets, stonecrop, bloodroot, and geranium. Several species of the otherwise rare trillium grow here in abundance, with delicate three-petaled flowers in April and May. Ferns of every description grow in profusion, leafy fronds unrolling in early spring. There are the evergreen Christmas fern; the maidenhair, woodsia, bracken, and lady ferns; the spleenwort, cliffbrake, and the odd walking fern; and many more.

So before you charge blindly through the woods with your muddy caving boots, take a closer look at the greenery you are about to trample...and hesitate.

Tread carefully. Conservation does not begin and end at the cave entrance.



Speleo Word Search

Words can go up, down, right, left, or diagonally in any direction. When all the words have been crossed out, the remaining letters will spell out the authors' names. The first person to solve this puzzle correctly, and reveal the author's secret identities, will receive a prize.

G N I R P S G E V A C H G N I D O O L F
J D O L O M I T E N O A Y H G I B B S L
R E S T L O B L O N D M R A T S L O W O
I W E T S U I T L O R M D B S A D O F W
C R A W L R E A H A B E R A I N O T I S
Y T R A P S A L C A F R P E E D M S G T
R L N C R I C K E T B M I L C Y E E U O
N W O D K A E R B E O S U S U T I P R N
R I M S T O N E H C A V E D I N S M E E
X N O A T N I C E N O T S D N A S U E H
O D O S O D A S T R A W S A M I W S I H
S O R U T D Y L I M E S T O N E T A G E
L W P R T A B H A N D H O L D A P L H L
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M E P E J U M A R S W R E A M E R P I E
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M N R A G S E O L M O T D B E N D T K E
A A E L R P R K C H I S E L T E U E L B
Z R N I O P G L L T S T R E A M P R A E
E T I R T S U J E N A W E T W D L A M P
C N B C T D A N O D A R R E S U U N T O
A E A W O L N A S T B L I N D F I S H R
V N R S T O O B R I M S T O N E D A M S
E D A R K C L R S T A T I O N X K C A P
L I C N E P X C A L C I T E I C E R O S

ACHE ART
BAT BELAYS BEND BIG BLINDFISH
BOLTS BOOTS BREAKDOWN
CALCITEICE CARABINER CARBIDE CAVE
CAVEDIN CHISEL CLIMB COLD COMPASS
COOL COVERALLS CRAWL CRICKET
DARK DEEP DOLOMITE DOME DRY
EAT END ENTRANCE
FALL FIGUREEIGHT FLOODING FLOWSTONE
GATE GIBBS GORP GROTTO GUANO
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ROOM ROPE RUN
SALTPETER SANDSTONE SANDY SING
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SPRING STALACTITE STALAGMITE
STATION STONE STREAM SUUNTO
SUMP SURVEY SWIM
TALK TAPE TICK
WALK WATER WET WETSUIT WINDOW

SPELEOFEST CAVE CHART

CAVE	OWNER	CONDITION	RATING	VERTICAL HORIZONTAL	LONGEST DROP	FLOODS	OPEN/ LED
Across the Road Cave	-	Dry	Easy	Horizontal	30 Feet	No	Open
Blue Hole Cave	-	Very Wet	Moderate	Horizontal	-	Yes	Open
Bowman Saltpeter Cave	Tom Clark	Dry	Easy	Horizontal	20 Feet	No	Led
Climax Cave	John Clark	Dry	Easy	Horizontal	-	No	Open
Crooked Creek Cave	-	Dry	Easy	Horizontal	-	No	Open
Crooked Creek Ice Cave	George Wynn	Dry	Moderate	Horizontal	-	No	Led
Goochland Cave	-	Moderately Wet	Moderate	Horizontal	-	Yes	Both
Miller's Cave	Oscar Miller	Dry	Difficult	Horizontal	40 Feet	No	Both
Miller's Pit One	Oscar Miller	Dry	Moderate	Vertical	70 Feet	No	Open
Owens Saltpeter Cave	Simon Byrd	Dry	Easy	Horizontal	-	No	Open
Pine Hill Cave	Jim Lambert	Moderately Wet	Varies	Horizontal	135 Feet	Yes	Both
Sinks of the Roundstone Cave	-	Damp	Easy	Horizontal	-	Yes	Both
Sinks of the Roundstone Pit	-	Damp	Moderate	Vertical	110 Feet	?	Open
Sloan's Valley System	-	Damp to Wet	Varies	Horizontal	-	Yes	Both
Sugar Tree Pit	-	Damp	Difficult	Vertical	60 Feet	?	Both
Wind Cave	-	Dry	Easy	Horizontal	-	?	Both

HISTORY

By Gary O'Dell
NSS 10278

It was the game trails that led the early explorers to Rockcastle county.

The Cumberland Gap, then known as Cave Gap, was the gateway into the wilderness land. The early explorers found a network of game trails and followed these preexisting pathways to the interior of Kentucky. One of the first of these hardy explorers was Dr. Thomas Walker, who in 1750 reported finding aluminous rocks in a cave on Crooked Creek.

As the Cave Gap was the land route, so was the Ohio River the water route to the Kentucky lands. Maysville was the point of entry for those who traveled the river road; Middlesboro was to rise adjacent to the Gap. But before either of those towns existed, a cluster of precarious communities grew in the Bluegrass region, midway between the land and the water gateways. The game trails were enlarged and improved, and became wagon roads, bringing commerce to the Bluegrass and facilitating the settlement of the region.

One of the most important of these wagon roads, the Wilderness Trail, enroute to Lexington forded the Rockcastle River into the land that was later given the same name. It was (and is) rugged country, with swift-flowing streams in narrow valleys, bounded by cliffs of fissured, cavernous limestones. The first historian of Kentucky, John Filson, wrote in 1784 that "Caves are found in this country amazingly large; in some of which you may travel several miles under a fine limestone rock, supported by curious arches and pillars: In most of them runs a stream of water." At that time Mammoth Cave was yet undiscovered; the caverns of the Mississippian Plateau were largely unknown and unexplored in that western frontier. In all likelihood Filson referred to the caves in the region with which he was more familiar -- south of the Bluegrass, in the Cumberland.

Cave exploration in the pioneer days, just as in our own time, was frequently engaged in just for the fun of it, to see what lay beyond the entrance. It is certain, however, that a great proportion of the early cave exploration was stimulated by the profit motive. It was in the caves and rockshelters that nitre earth was found.

Gunpowder was an essential commodity on the frontier, both for providing fresh meat and for defense. Supplies of this substance from the East must necessarily travel the same long and arduous pathways to the interior, so it behooved the frontiersmen to produce their own from local materials. By 1793 in Kentucky, as reported in George Imlay's account of the "Western Territory of North America," many of the settlers were mining the

nitre earth from the numerous caverns of the region and manufacturing their own gunpowder. Prophetically, Imlay noted that nitre was so common that it might become an important export. (1)

The first powder believed to have been made in the Kentucky region, or at least the first recorded, was that produced by one Monk Estill about 1780. Monk was a slave of James Estill at Estill's Station, north of Rockcastle County near Richmond, and is thought to have obtained saltpeter from Adam's Cave in Madison County. He supplied the surrounding forts with gunpowder, and for this and other outstanding services he was later freed. Such small-scale powder manufacture by individuals resulted in the first mining of area caves, but as the region became settled and commerce was established, saltpeter mining and the production of gunpowder quickly became important Kentucky industries.

It would be impossible to say which was the cavern first discovered in Rockcastle County, for so numerous are they that the frontiersman could have scarcely helped observing dozens of these prominent landscape features on his route along the Wilderness Trail. The first recorded visitation to a cavern in the county was the discovery of Great Saltpetre Cave in 1798. Over the course of the next half-century, this cave was to become an important producer of saltpeter, helping supply the needs of three major wars. Dr. Samuel Brown, of Lexington, was co-owner of this cave in the early nineteenth century and was a cave-exploring entrepreneur greatly involved in the saltpeter trade. In an 1805 paper dealing with Great Saltpetre Cave and nitre production, Brown mentioned a number of other caves in the region that he had visited. (2)

Other Rockcastle County caverns that were sites for nitre mining operations include Teamer's Cave, Climax Cave, and Crooked Creek Ice Cave, as well as many caves in the adjacent counties of Jackson and Pulaski.

The 1812 war inflated the price of saltpeter, and accordingly the value of saltpeter caves rocketed. Lexington, centrally located to most of the cavernous regions in Kentucky, became a major center of gunpowder manufacture. Much of the saltpeter that was produced in Rockcastle County was shipped to the powder makers in that community.

The war finally came to an ending, and the saltpeter industry went from boom to bust almost overnight. Prices for both caverns and saltpeter plummeted. Rockcastle County continued to supply saltpeter until the time of the Civil War, but never again achieved the same scale. Local residents, however, mined nitre from the caves for their own use. The late Thomas Owens of Crooked Creek reported that a man named Saxton had mined saltpeter from a cave on the Owens' property

well into the twentieth century. Jackson County's Bowman Saltpetre Cave, from wall graffiti, was evidently also mined on small scale in the post-Civil War era.

Constantine S. Rafinesque visited Lexington in the year 1818 and was persuaded to stay by a friend and resident of the city, John Clifford. Clifford was interested in cave archaeology and had performed many excavations in the caves of the region; he is credited with discovering the mummified body of an Indian in White's Cave in the Mammoth Cave area. Rafinesque secured a position as instructor of Natural History at the Transylvania University, and it seems likely that Clifford stimulated him to investigate the abundant caverns near Lexington. Rafinesque explored many caves across the state, including some in Rockcastle County. He reported that rockhouses or "Cliff Caves" were common in Eastern Kentucky and along the Rockcastle River. One cave that he described was Crawford's Little Cave, which "...one mile from Mount Vernon in the sandstone region, is 200 yards long, full of beautiful stalactites." Naturally he visited the Great Saltpetre Cave, which he referred to as the "Big Cave." Of it he wrote, "...a fine saltpetre cave, 700 yards long, surface about 12 1/2 acres, divided in many rooms and branches. Breadth and height from 5 to 40 feet. There is a spring in it without outlet, but no stalactites. As much as 1000 lb. of saltpetre was made there in one single day."

For well over a century the caverns of Rockcastle County escaped further outside attention, save for a minor amount of nitre mined commercially at Great Saltpetre during the Mexican War of 1844-1848 and again during the Civil War. Mining by locals continued sporadically in the caves and rockshelters, and sport exploration engaged in by the more adventurous of the area residents. Inscriptions on cave walls that date back fifty or even a hundred years are frequently seen; it is often possible to trace local genealogy from the signatures of generations of casual cavers. Many an old timer in the county is delighted to recall the days of his youth spent in tracing the subterranean routes. The extent of some of these early explorations is often astonishing.

The beginning of organized cave exploration in Rockcastle County in the mid-twentieth century can possibly be attributed to a number of causes. Chief among these would be the firm establishment, in the period immediately following the Second World War, of "caving" as both a recreational activity and a scientific pursuit. Karst regions across the country came increasingly under scrutiny as cave-hunters set forth, aided by the massive road-building programs that pushed pavement into areas that hitherto had been relatively inaccessible.

About 1940 John Lair, a Rockcastle resident, purchased the Great Saltpetre Cave to develop and promote it as a tourist attraction. A few improvements were made and the cave was operated commercially until 1943. This brief early period of commercialization, however, was sufficient to introduce the caves of Rockcastle to outsiders. Richard Mullins, whose family owned Great Saltpetre through

most of its history, was reported to have led groups of cave explorers, "mainly from southern Ohio and northern Kentucky, through the cave almost every weekend." Wild caving was also permitted there.

Caves such as Great Saltpetre, Pine Hill, Climax, and Sinks of the Roundstone, with entrances virtually opening out onto the roadways, drew cave explorers from outside with increasing frequency, although the numbers as yet were relatively few.

In 1960 William H. Russell and Thomas R. Costello of the University of Texas Grotto explored and surveyed many of the better-known caves of the county, producing a report with maps that was eventually included in the 1963 Speleo Digest. Among the major caves described were Crooked Creek Ice Cave, Great Saltpetre Cave, Mullins Spring Cave, Pine Hill Cave, Sinks of the Roundstone Cave, and Teemer's [Teamer's] Cave. Mentioned only briefly were Climax and Goochland caves.

In the mid- and late-1960's, members of the newly-established regional grottos of the NSS became interested in the caves of Southern Kentucky. James Rebmann, then a non-caving student at Richmond's Eastern Kentucky University, was in 1966 taken by a professor of that school to visit a number of caves in Rockcastle County. Impressed by the large and numerous caverns, he returned again and again to the area with members of the Eastern Kentucky University Student Grotto, compiling locations and surveying the caves. Missing the upper Crooked Creek region, he concentrated on the equally cave-rich areas to the south and southwest.

Rockcastle County in the late 1960's was a great unknown to the Bluegrass Grotto; there were a few known caves, with rumors of many more. Bill Andrews, grotto chairman at the time, led a trip to Goochland Cave in early 1969. Only a very small part of the cave, mainly the first section of the right side, was explored.

I was present on that trip, and convinced that there must be more to the cave than had been seen. In the summer of that same year I returned to Rockcastle County, and initially with the help of Dave Beiter, began the first of dozens of survey trips into a cave that proved to exceed even the most exaggerated hopes. With the aid of many members of the Blue Grass Grotto over the next three years, nearly fifty new caves were discovered and explored along the headwaters of Crooked Creek, and surveys made of most.

In 1971 the paths of James Rebmann and myself crossed, resulting in the 1972 joint publication of *The Caves of Rockcastle County, Kentucky*, in an edition of thirty copies. This book listed 128 caverns and significant springs, with 37 cave maps.

Elsewhere in Rockcastle County, others were also active in the late Sixties and early Seventies. Notable among these were the survey of Pine Hill Cave by Thomas Cottrell, that of Teamer's Cave by Charlie Bishop, the intensive study of Up and Down Cave by James C. Currens, and the survey of Blue Hole Cave by various members of the BGG.

The Greater Cincinnati Grotto had explored caves in Rockcastle and Jackson counties on several occasions prior to 1972,

in 1971. In April of 1973 the Blue Grass Grotto hosted a caving weekend sited at the Great Saltpetre Cave (which was again operating commercially). The GCG was in attendance at this get-together and toured a number of the large caves of the area. In July of that same year, the GCG hosted their Annual Meeting in Berea, featuring caving in Jackson and Rockcastle Counties. In that very same month occurred a discovery of tremendous significance.

Members of the Cincinatti Grotto, in exploring the right-side passage of Goochland Cave, penetrated the apparently terminal breakdown that had halted earlier explorations in that section of the cave. Past this breakdown was over a mile of large stream passage, ending at yet another breakdown blockage. A route through this obstacle, too, was found, and beyond lay still more miles of cavern. Ultimately an independent group known as SWORCA (Southwestern Ohio Regional Caving Association) was formed, whose prime, though not sole, objective was the exploration and survey of this vast new area of Goochland Cave.

With the Richmond grotto defunct and the Blue Grass Grotto quiescent, generally pursuing only sport caving expeditions into the area, it was primarily the Ohio cavers that continued to probe Rockcastle County. Many new caves were located and mapped, and the older surveys of several known caves extended. Pine Hill Cave, in particular, jumped from a published length of a little over 7,000 feet to a survey exceeding 28,000 in a few short years. A similar increase occurred at Crooked Creek Ice Cave, and Goochland continued to expand in all directions, with a long-sought second entrance finally found, the Poplar Pit Entrance.

In 1978 a major cavern was found by the GCG on the waters draining Crooked Creek. The miserably wet entry was discouraging, though, and the find was not pushed until 1980. In June of that year, wading through thigh-deep water, they found that in less than twenty feet the passage ceiling had descended to leave only inches of air space, with a virtual hurricane of wind roaring through the narrow space. Gary Bush pushed this miserable lead to find -- walking passage! On the following day the survey began; close to a mile of cave was mapped on that single trip. By year's end the length of Precinct Eleven Cave exceeded three miles. (3)

In 1984, after a long absence from active caving, I rejoined the Blue Grass Grotto and again began working in the Rockcastle County area. Miller's Cave, with a mapped length of over two miles, has been the major recent effort, although a number of smaller but significant caverns have also been lately discovered and surveyed.

The Rockcastle area continues to yield new caves by the score and, along with Pulaski and Jackson counties, remains a fertile field of endeavor for many caving groups.

This is by no means a complete chronicle of the underground explorations in Rockcastle County, and apologies are offered to any who may have been overlooked. Corrections and additions are solicited.

NOTES

- (1) Filson's description of Kentucky, although written in 1784, was not until 1793 actually published as an accompaniment to Imlay.
- (2) Great Saltpetre Cave, while far from the largest, has remained the most prominent cavern in Rockcastle County, due to its historic and commercial aspects.
- (3) The near-siphon entrance of Precinct Eleven Cave led to a well-publicized entrapment of several experienced cavers in April of 1983.

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GEOLOGY



By Don Pollock and Phil O'dell
NSS 14653 and 17000

GENERAL INFORMATION AND GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

Rockcastle, Jackson, and Pulaski counties lie on the eastern portion of south central Kentucky and along the western portion of the Cumberland Plateau. Along I-75 from Lexington to Rockcastle County one travels up section through approximately 140 million years of geology. Ordovician, Silurian and Mississippian age karstic development can be seen along this relatively short distance.

PHYSIOGRAPHY

This caving area is formed at the intersection of two major physiographic divisions, the eastern edge of the Mississippian Plateau and the western edge of the Cumberland Plateau or Eastern Kentucky Coal Field. The Mississippian Plateau is characterized by gently rolling hills and extensive areas of sinkhole plain. Outlines of the dissected Cumberland Plateau are also present.

The Cumberland Plateau area is characterized by highly dissected rocks of Pennsylvanian and Mississippian age. Further east, the Mississippian strata are generally not exposed. The rugged terrain has very steep hillsides with approximately 500-550 feet of elevation change between the valley bottoms and the ridge tops. In some locations, as much as 200 feet of limestone in Rockcastle and 350 feet of limestone in Pulaski counties are exposed.

GENERAL GEOLOGY

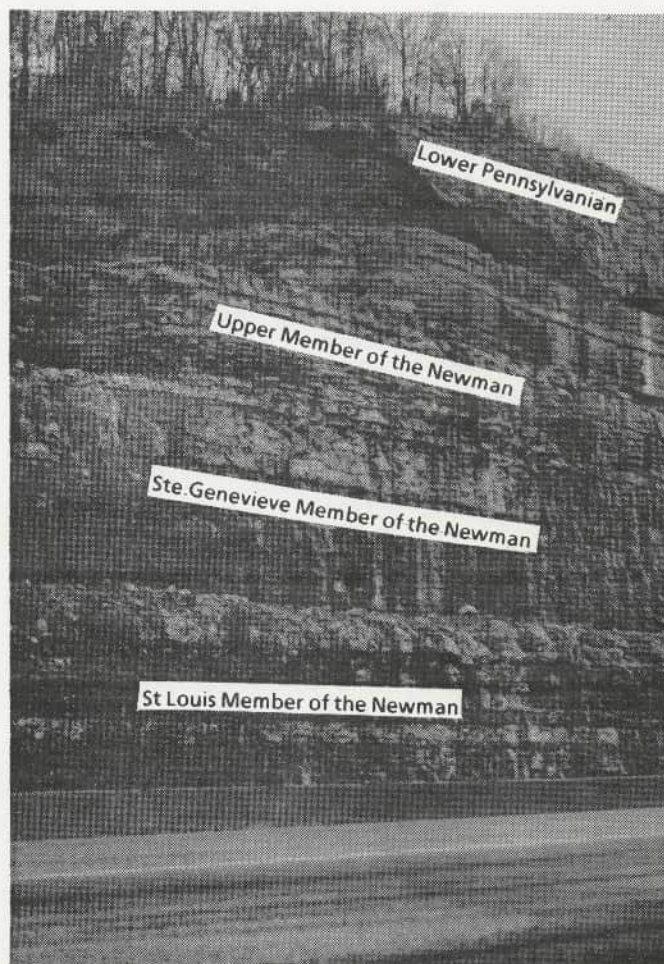
Rocks chiefly of Middle and Upper Mississippian and Lower and Middle Pennsylvanian age comprise the area of Rockcastle, Jackson, and Pulaski counties of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Mississippian strata in these counties is comprised predominantly of limestone, with lesser amounts of sandstone and shale. The limestone averages 85-90% calcium carbonate in composition.

The Mississippian rock units in the region covered by this report are as follows, named in ascending order. These start with the Borden Formation, whose uppermost member (unit of formation division) is the Renfro. It is a dolomite and is not recognized in the section of rocks southeast of Rockcastle (See Figure 1).

In Rockcastle and Jackson counties, the Newman Limestone is the unit that overlies the Borden Formation. It is subdivided into three members; the St. Louis, Ste. Genevieve and the Upper Member. The Ste. Genevieve and the Upper members of the Newman are the chief cave forming rocks. Although cave passages do penetrate the St. Louis and even the Renfro

Member of the Borden, there are no known entrances found in the Renfro.

Above the Newman Limestone is the Pennington Formation, a shale with occasional limestone beds in its lower part. Above the Pennington are the Pennsylvanian rocks. On the west side of the Livingston topographic quadrangle the Livingston Conglomerate Member of the Lower Pennsylvanian Lee Formation cuts down through the Pennington and Newman. This is a paleo river channel which forms the sandstone cliffs in the area of Sinks of the Roundstone Cave. The remainder of the Lower Pennsylvanian Lee Formation overlies this channel, and where the channel is not present, the Pennington. East South-east of Mt. Vernon in the vicinity of Pine Hill Cave the Lee Formation rests directly upon the Upper Member of the Newman Limestone, as the Pennington has been eroded away.



Roadcut on west side of I-75 between the two Mt. Vernon exits. A Pennsylvanian slump feature is visible at the top of the cut. The Newman limestone is the center section of the cut. The lower portion is the Ste. Genevieve limestone. Photo by Phil O'dell.

Moving from Rockcastle County southwestward into Pulaski County, a different nomenclature is applied to the Middle and Upper Mississippian rocks. As shown in Figure 2, the Ft. Payne Formation correlates to the Borden of Rockcastle County; overlying the Ft. Payne are the Salem and Warsaw Formations. These units are mapped as one in Kentucky. They do not correlate to the Renfro as they are younger rocks than the uppermost Ft. Payne. These rocks are not present in Rockcastle and Jackson counties. Above the Salem and Warsaw is the St. Louis Limestone. The St. Louis carries formation status here as opposed to member status in the Newman limestones of Rockcastle County. Almost no caves are known in the Salem, Warsaw and St. Louis formations in this area as most or all of these units are below the pool level of Lake Cumberland. It is certain that cave passages exist in the St. Louis Limestone here, given the submerged lower levels of Sloan's Valley Cave system.

The units overlying the St. Louis Limestone are the principle cave forming units in Pulaski County, constituting the Monteagle Limestone. The Monteagle correlates to the upper two members of the Newman Limestone in Rockcastle and Jackson counties, and itself is made up of two member units. Overlying the St. Louis is the lowermost of these two units, the Ste. Genevieve Member, equivalent to the Ste. Genevieve of the Newman. Above is the Kidder Limestone Member of the Monteagle. The St. Louis, Ste. Genevieve and Kidder members are much thicker than their equivalents in Rockcastle and Jackson counties due to a regional thickening of these rock units to the south.

Above the Monteagle Limestone are two units of formation status not present in either Rockcastle or Jackson counties. Directly overlying the Monteagle is the Hartselle Formation, predominantly shale in the northeast part of Pulaski County, becoming sandier to the south and southwest. Above the Hartselle Formation is the Bangor Limestone. The Bangor is the highest cave forming limestone in Pulaski County. Capping the Bangor Limestone is the Pennington Formation. This unit is thicker in Pulaski County than in Rockcastle or Jackson counties. The top of the Pennington Formation marks the top of the Mississippian. Above this is the Pennsylvanian Breathitt Formation.

Cave development in the Bangor and lower units can be described as follows: Water runs off the Pennington and sinks into the Bangor, forming small diameter pits and springs at the top of the Hartselle Formation. It then runs over the Hartselle and sinks again into the Kidder and Ste. Genevieve members of the Monteagle Limestone, forming larger diameter pits and trunk passages. These trunk passages cut downward until either base level is encountered (currently Lake Cumberland) or the water exits as a spring in the St. Louis near or at its basal contact with the Salem and Warsaw formations. An example of this is the spring at Mill Springs State Park on Lake Cumberland. It is most likely that most of the discharge was of this manner, although the creation of Lake Cumberland has inundated most of these springs and back-flooded all or most

of the lower cave passages below the elevation of 723 feet above sea level, the normal pool of the lake.

STRUCTURAL GEOLOGY

The rocks of Eastern Kentucky for the most part dip to the southeast, toward Virginia and the Appalachian Mountains. There are many features that affect this regional dip. These features sometimes steepen the dip or make broad anticlines and synclines. Some of these features are faults; others are deeply seated and can only be detected by sophisticated geologic analysis and equipment.

In Rockcastle County, on the northern part of the Mt. Vernon Quadrangle is a fault that extends from the western boundary of the quadrangle across to near the eastern edge where it breaks up into a swarm of smaller faults. The displacement of the Mt. Vernon fault is between 30 and 100 feet vertically. The last of the smaller faults is in the northern part of the Livingston Quadrangle and the southern part of the Johnetta Quadrangle along Crooked Creek. This fault causes the rocks to dip rather steeply to the southeast, causing the Mississippian limestones to reach the subsurface on the central portions of the Livingston and Mt. Vernon quadrangles. This faulting is further reflected by an anticlinal structure with its axis or center from Cave Branch of Roundstone Creek through Roundstone Junction or Sinks on the Livingston Quadrangle.

The regional influence that resulted in the faulting was the Rockcastle Uplift. This is an uplifted body of rocks in the southern part of Rockcastle and Jackson counties. This upward warping of the rocks, or anticline, extends for several thousand feet and is over 50 miles long.

Into Pulaski County the Mississippian and Pennsylvanian rocks maintain their southeasterly dip. There is no significant break in the structure until well into Wayne County. The normal variances in the structures are due to the rises and swells of the sea floor when these rocks were deposited.

The structure of rock bodies can affect cave development principally in the form of joints in the limestone. These joints allow the passage of water and in Rockcastle, Jackson and Pulaski counties are the chief cave formers in that region.

DESCRIPTION OF ROCK TYPES

Livingston Conglomerate Member

Present as a channel cut and fill with a width of 1 to 1.5 miles. This is a sandstone and conglomerate layer and acts as a caprock where the channel has not entirely cut out the Newman Limestone. The unit does not form caves.

Pennington Formation

Shale with sandstone, thin dolomite and limestone beds. This formation is a caprock for the area. This unit does not form caves.

Newman

Upper member of the Newman is the highest cave forming unit in the area. In places it has been eroded by the Livingston channel cut

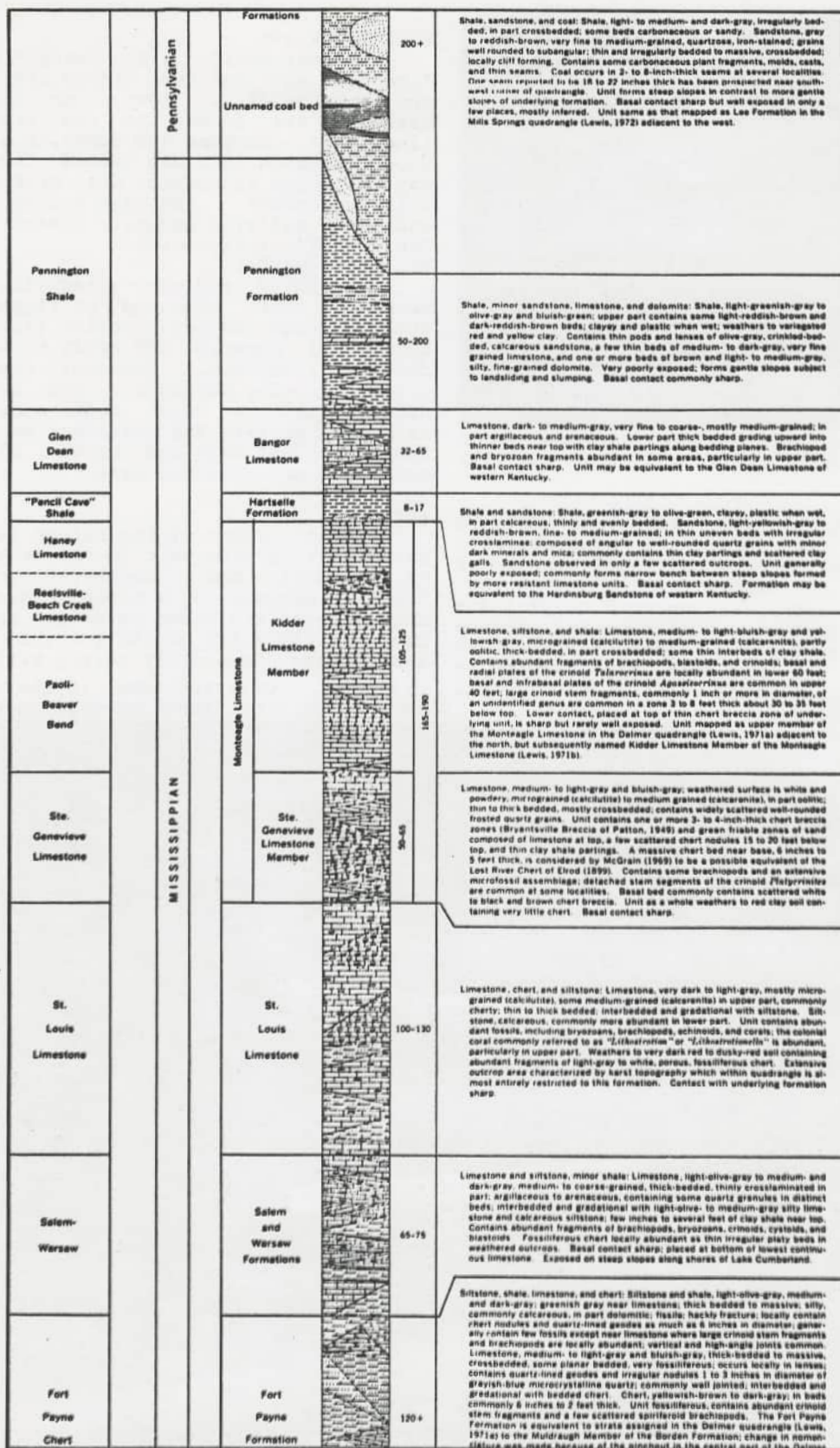


Figure 2. Generalized Stratigraphic Column Representing the Mississippian and Lower Pennsylvanian Rocks of Pulaski County, Kentucky (Louis, 1975)



Rockcastle conglomerate along railroad near Sinks of the Roundstone Cave. Photo by Phil O'Dell.

and replaced by the river sands and gravels which formed the Livingston conglomerate. Many of the caves in this guidebook are in or extend up into this member.

Dome pits and interconnected canyons are common in this member. Oval tube and canyon passages are many times related to the thin shale layers. The area above the Quagmire in Miller's Cave is a good example of typical upper Newman passage.

Ste. Genevieve

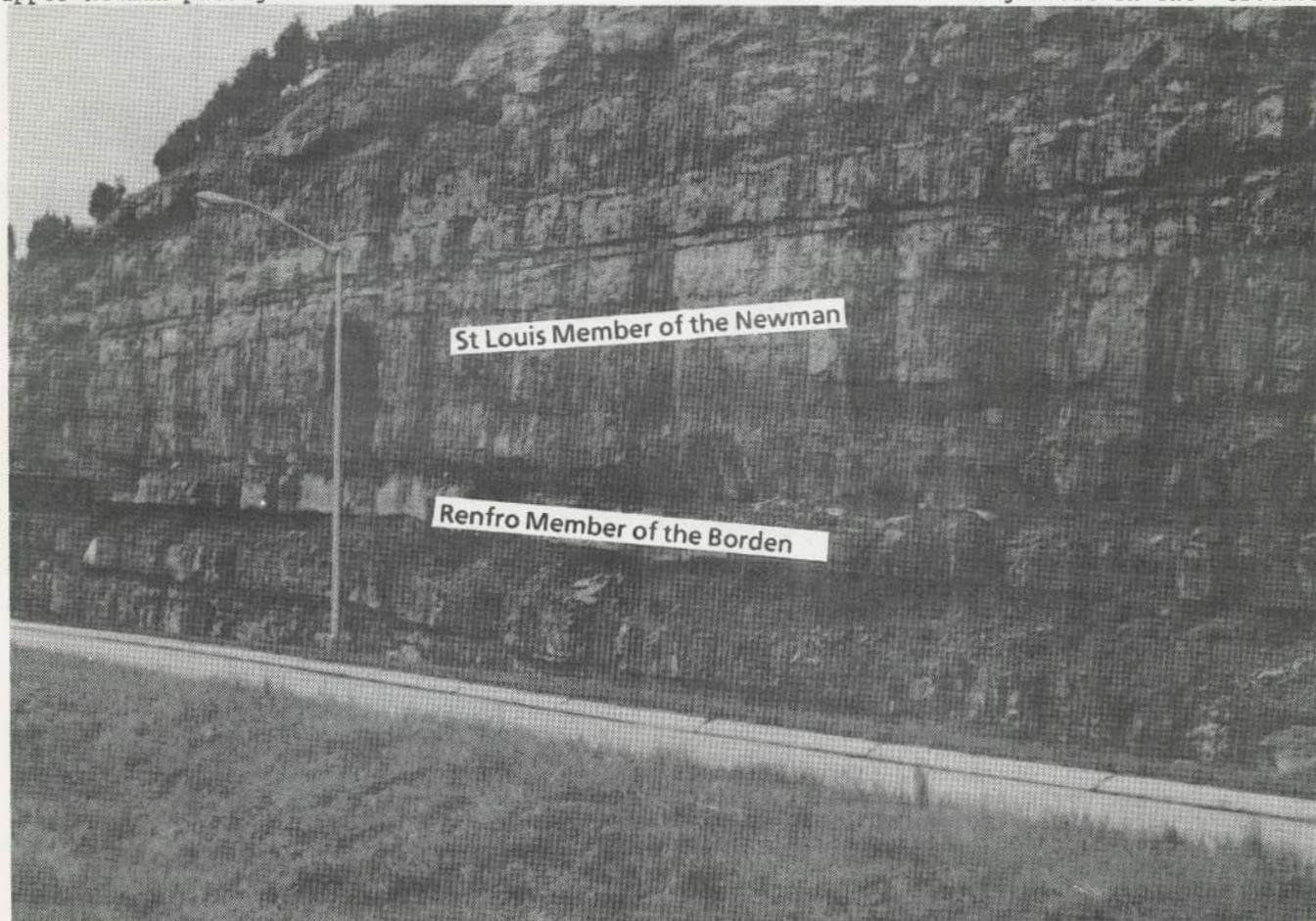
A near-shore, high energy environment limestone with oolites, broken shell fragments and crossbedding. Most of the larger trunk passages are formed in the Ste. Genevieve Limestone. Canyons and domepits are common. Good examples of cross bedded Ste. Genevieve may be found throughout most of the caves in this guidebook. The main Miller's entrance and the Miller's Quagmire passage are good Ste. Genevieve exposures.

St. Louis Member

A finite medium-grained limestone with abundant chert beds and partings of green shale. this member is often exposed in the bottom of domepits and tends to be a canyon forming limestone. The chert comprises the floor for many passages. The authors have noted that the chert beds show the same relative pattern and character as named chert zones farther west and north, although the zones are much thinner here.

Borden

Renfro Member of the Borden is the lowest known cave forming unit in the area. The unit is dolomitic and is separated from the St. Louis Limestone by a green shale. Several shaft drains are known to extend into Renfro. Cave passages are horribly tight and sleazy and become impassibly narrow within a short distance. Cave entrances in the unit seem to be covered with stream gravels in the Crooked



Roadcut at I-75 Mt. Vernon-Renfro Valley exit. St. Louis limestone over the Renfro Valley unit of the Borden. Photo by Phil O'Dell.



A good example of crossbedding found in the Ste. Genevieve Limestone. Photo by Phil O'Dell.

Creek area and access to Renfro passages is generally by following small cave streams downward through the Ste. Genevieve Limestone.

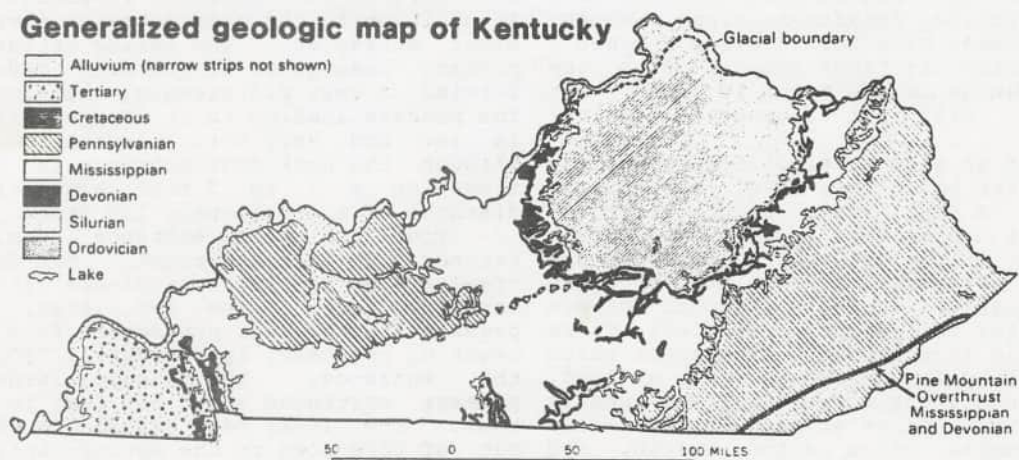
Limestone of Pulaski County

These limestones exhibit similar characteristics as those listed above although they generally are thicker. The thicker beds allow more variety in cave development throughout the section. Sloan's Valley has cave development from the Kidder down into the St. Louis. The lower cave passages in the Lower St. Louis Limestone of Sloan's is below Lake Cumberland's normal pool level.

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Generalized geologic map of Kentucky



JACKSON COUNTY



Bowman Saltpeter Cave

By Gary O'Dell NSS 10278

The main entrance to Bowman Saltpeter Cave is located at the base of a bluff in a scenic valley, tributary to the headwaters of Horse Lick Creek in extreme western Jackson County. On the hillside above and to the northeast is a second, skylight entrance.

From an entrance room strewn with breakdown in assorted sizes, passage bears to the left, parallel with the cliff face. Quickly encountered is a set of domes and enlarged joints up to 50 feet in height, forming narrow, upper level leads. Leading left away from this section is a pleasant walking passage, oval in contour, that deteriorates after a few hundred feet as it approaches an area of massive collapse, the western remnants of a large trunk passage.

At the intersection of this trunk there is a climb upward over and through breakdown to the right, in a passage nearly filled with rock debris. The passage then opens to impressive size, about 40 feet high and wide, though travel consists of picking through and climbing over the huge breakdown chunks that obstruct the floor. Daylight is seen here as the skylight entrance is encountered from within. A shaft 15 feet long and 6 wide reaches about 10 feet from the surface, appearing as an opening in the broad flat cave ceiling just out of fingertip reach to the caver standing on the huge mound beneath. It lights this area of the cave well, and is quite photogenic.

Beyond the pit entrance the trunk passage continues for somewhat less than 1000 feet, averaging 20-30 feet wide and 8-40 feet in height. Near the end of this passage are several attractive formation areas, which, sadly, in places have been heavily 'mined', with the broken sections removed from the cave. The damage is beginning to heal, but unfortunately will not regenerate in our lifetimes.

Mining of an altogether different variety was once carried on in this cave, giving rise to its name. A small scale nitre-extraction operation was conducted in the main trunk passage, about midway between the skylight and the passage terminus. Here can be seen shallow excavations where 2-3 feet of cavern soil was dug for refinement, with tool marks clearly visible at the edges. The spent earth was dumped in piles nearby to form a long, irregular mound about 3 feet tall and nearly 100 feet long. Close at hand is the well-preserved remains of a stone hearth, and several pre-1900 dates are inscribed on walls.

It seems likely that the geography of the cave was the major factor that limited the nitre mining to a very small scale. Access to this portion of the cave would be only through the arduous breakdown-obstructed route from

the main entrance, or through the skylight. A ladder would provide surface access at the skylight, but ferrying supplies back and forth in this fashion would soon become very tiresome.

The stone hearth may have been a later addition unrelated to the saltpeter mining. The current owner, Tom Clark (nephew of the late Ike Bowman and related to John Clark, owner of Climax Cave in Rockcastle County) reports that at one time there was a moonshine still in the cave, and the hearth may have been built for this purpose.

Bowman Saltpeter is an interesting and appealing cave, easy to explore but with enough challenge to satisfy almost any caving appetite. It is not known to have been surveyed, but an estimated length of passages would range from 1500-2000 feet.

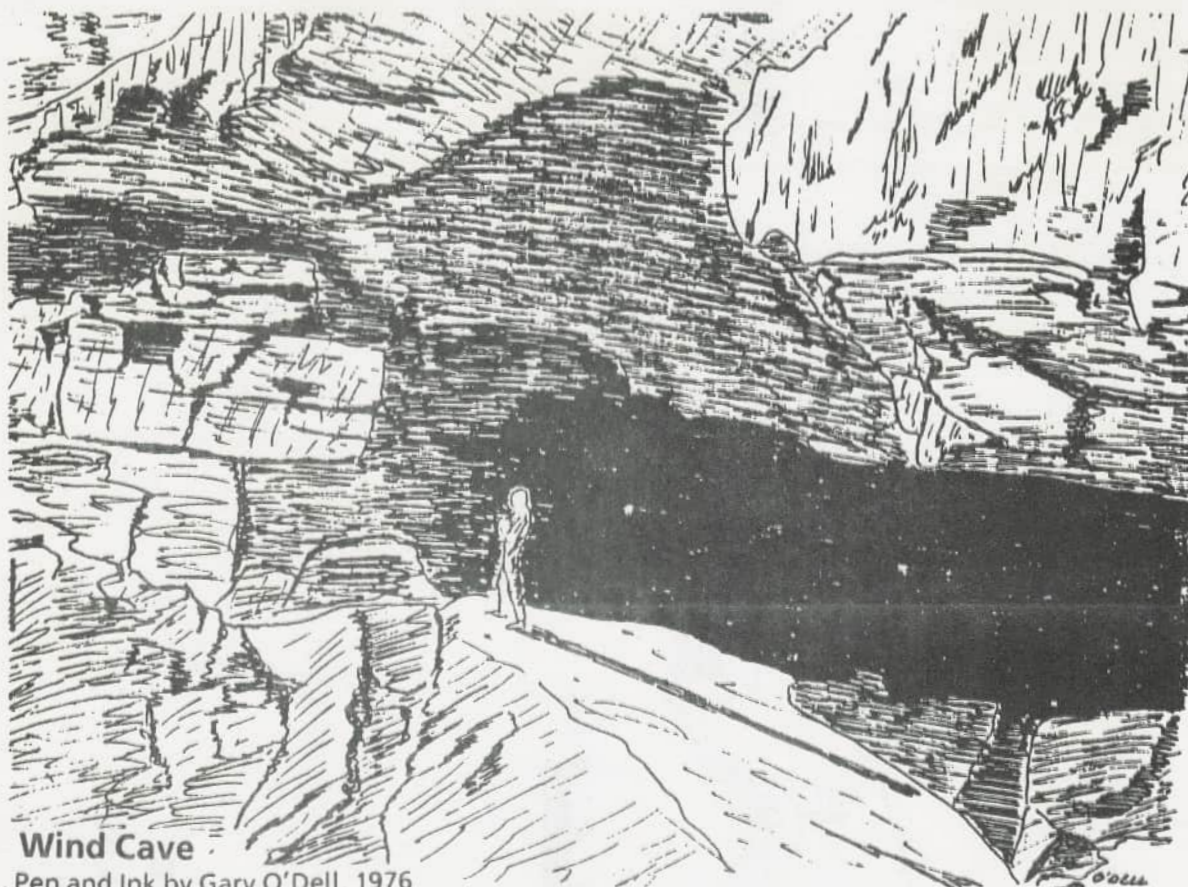
Wind Cave

By Wm. "Duke" Hopper NSS 15832

Wind Cave is located in northeastern Jackson County within the Daniel Boone National Forest. The route to the cave from the Speleofest site winds and twists through the scenic, sandstone-capped pinnacles and wooded valleys of Rockcastle and Jackson counties, and ends at Wind Cave Church and Cemetery. The main entrance to the cave can be found by following a well-beaten, easy trail southeastward from the church for a distance of approximately 3000 feet.

The main entrance to Wind Cave is approximately midway between the valley floor and the top of the bluff, and reputed to be the largest cave entrance in Jackson County. In addition to the main entrance there are two other entrances. The spring entrance is the primary resurgence of the Wind Cave stream, forming a very picturesque, hanging spring. The passage leading to it from within the cave is low and very wet. Access to the cave through the back door entrance is gained by traveling a 1 to 3 foot high crawlway a distance of approximately 150 feet.

From the main entrance room, passage extends both left and right. The low, dusty crawlways to the right terminate within a few hundred feet. The two large, parallel passages to the left connect to form the main trunk of the cave, approximately 300 feet from the entrance. The single large walking passage continues about 550 feet to a large room. The lower main stream can be followed out of this area to the spring entrance, or the caver can travel farther into the cave by following the stream passage upstream or taking the parallel dry, upper level route. The Back Door entrance can be reached by bearing left in the upper level. The lower level passage ends at a terminal siphon.



Wind Cave

Pen and Ink by Gary O'Dell, 1976

Karns Hobby Shop

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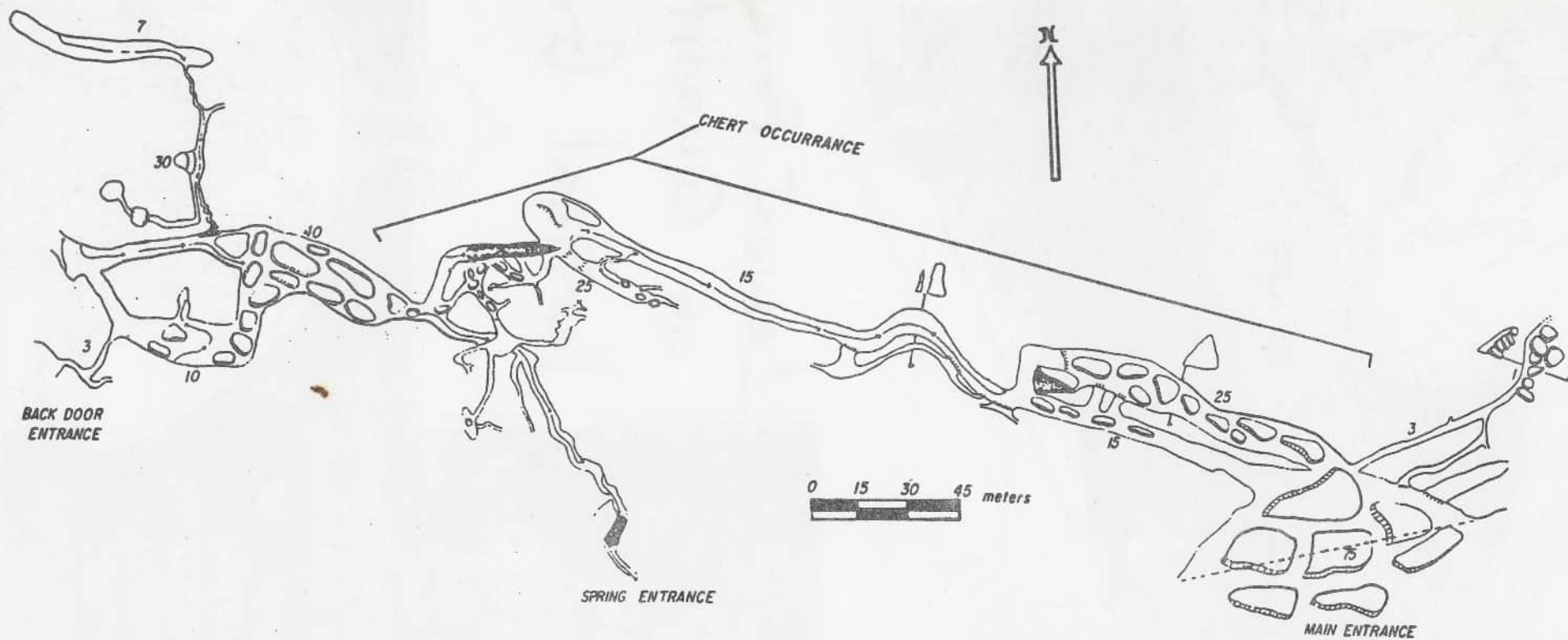


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Wind Cave
Jackson County, Ky.
Ken Tankersley

PULASKI COUNTY



Sloan's Valley Cave By Lou Simpson NSS 11138

Sloan's Valley Cave System, at 24.63 miles, is the third longest cave in Kentucky and the ninth longest cave in the United States. The cave's sixteen entrances and large, predominantly horizontal passages have made this easily accessible cave a favorite, especially for through trips in one entrance and out another. Sloan's has been a focal point for midwestern caving for several decades. Although the comprehensive mapping effort was completed in the Seventies, NSS cavers continue to meet in the valley for occasional tours between their project trips to other nearby caves.

Historical Perspective

Early History

Artifact hunters have excavated the shelter cave above the west entrance in Great Rock Sink, finding Indian bones and tools. The Great Rock Sink (Crystal) entrances were mined for saltpeter, possibly during the War of 1812. Jillson (1954) refers to the saltpeter mining in his 1954 monograph, and Malott and McGrain (1977) even published a picture of a vat cast. The Great Rock Sink entrances were commercialized during the Twenties and Thirties, being called either Crystal Cave (Jillson, 1954) or Cumberland Caverns (Malott and McGrain, 1977). Malott and McGrain published a photo of the western Great Rock Sink entrance showing stairways and handrails.

Lake Cumberland

Lake Cumberland was impounded following the completion of Wolf Creek Dam(n) in 1950. As a result, the greater part of Sloan's from Garbage Pit to the submerged River entrance is permanently or periodically flooded. Even low levels distant from the lake suffer raised water levels. During summer and late fall, when the lake level is deliberately lowered, sublake passages are accessible, but they are quite muddy and unattractive. In general, the lake fluctuates between a high of 730 feet above sea level and a low of 690 feet, with extremes outside this range. The underlined numbers on the cave map indicate elevation above sea level, so you can anticipate whether passages are backflooded by the lake.

Modern Exploration

Malott mapped about eight miles in 1940-1942, but the map was not published until 1977. Jillson mapped a part of Great Rock Sink, in 1952. Al Geiser, of the Greater Cincinnati Grotto, mapped about sixteen miles in the mid-Sixties, but never circulated copies of his map. It was during this project

that the Post Office entrance was connected to the system by digging through breakdown. The only available comprehensive map was the result of the effort initiated in 1970 by Dave Beiter and the Blue Grass Grotto and continued by the Central Ohio Grotto. Although most of the cave appearing on the present maps was known prior to the cartography, a few significant discoveries were made, notably in the Railroad Tunnel and Grand Central Spaghetti sections. The only vertical entrance, Screamin' Willy, was dug open in 1971, providing much faster access to the complex core of the cave. The most recent discovery (1980), which resulted in about a mile of cave beyond the dread Rocky Horror Crawl, has yet to be included in any finished map.

Geology and Hydrology

Sloan's is developed primarily in the Newman Limestone, which is about two hundred feet thick in the area and dips slightly to the southeast. Lithostrotion coral, a marker for the contact between the Ste. Genevieve and the underlying St. Louis limestone, is visible in the Great Rock Sink section. Elevations in the cave range from 890 in the northwest to 650 at the submerged River entrance.

FLOOD WARNING! Portions of the system flash-flood, especially Martin Creek, Railroad Tunnel, Minton Hollow, and Scowling Tom's. The variable level of Lake Cumberland complicates things by creating an artificially high base level so that areas which may not normally be hazardous could flood when the lake is higher. Caving parties have experienced flood difficulties in each of these sections of the cave. Fortunately, there have been no fatalities due to flooding or other causes, although there have been injuries and rescues.

In an attempt to document pollution of the cave's streams by the Pulaski County Landfill, considerable water analysis has been done since 1980. NSS cavers have been working with a group of concerned citizens in opposition to the landfill (which occupies the site of the former strip mine across the highway from the cave). Although testimony at a hearing in late 1980 failed to prevent the landfill from opening, recent efforts have resulted in the landfill operator being fined and a ruling that a deposition by Dr. Tom Barr that was omitted from records of the original hearing must be reconsidered.

Present ownership of the cave system is diffuse because it underlies an entire community. Major entrance owners include Tom Crockett (Garbage Pit and Scowling Tom's entrances), Bob Daulton (Screamin' Willy and Railroad Tunnel entrances), Greenwood Land and Mining Company (Minton Hollow and Martin Creek entrances), Dorothy Casada (Post Office entrance), and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Great Rock Sink entrances). Access to two of these entrances is being disputed by

adjacent landowners (Martin Creek and Great Rock Sink entrances) and these entrances should not be used. Also, cavers should seek permission to enter entrances owned by Tom Crockett and by Dorothy Casada.

Description of the Cave

Sloan's is 24.63 miles long and has sixteen entrances. Major entrances include Garbage Pit, Post Office, Great Rock Sink, Scowling Tom's, Railroad Tunnel, Screamin' Willy (33 to 56 foot pit), Minton Hollow, Minton Left, and Martin Creek. The cave can be best described in ten sections:

Garbage Pit/Big Room

Once characterized by trash, used appliances, and dead animals, this entrance no longer deserves its disgusting appellation since Tom Crockett cleaned it up. However, while it never before deserved to be called a pit, it does now, since Tom blasted the sides vertical in preparation for building an elevator and a ventilating shaft for his greenhouse complex. Tom built his prototype greenhouse and drew out cave air and water, but has been unable to get funding for the rest of the project. An 18-foot aluminum rigid ladder has been provided for climbing down into the entrance.

At the bottom of a 100-foot breakdown hill, you can head west toward Grand Central Station or continue along one of the two large parallel trunks through the Appalachian Trail and the Hogback Room to the Big Room. When Lake Cumberland is at normal pool level of 723 feet, flotation would be required to reach the Big Room. The trip to the Big Room includes the most impressively large passages in the cave system. Beyond the Big Room are the connections to Great Rock Sink and Post Office entrances. If lake level is 690 or less, a dry through trip between Garbage Pit and Post Office is possible.

Post Office

The twenty-five foot entrance shaft can be free-climbed or rigged with a ladder from rig points provided in the entrance building built by the late Hardin Casada (pronounced 'Cassidy'). A second drop of ten feet near the Well Room can be negotiated by a tricky maneuver. A well pipe is visible in the Well Room, hence the name. Points of interest include the Hughes section and Eternal Crawl, both of which are very worthwhile, especially for photography. A small hole through breakdown connects to the rest of the system near the Fountain of Youth and the Big Room Extension.

Great Rock Sink

Although these historically interesting entrances are owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the sink is surrounded by land owned by a private citizen who has at times denied access. If Lake Cumberland is below

690 feet, this part of the cave can be reached internally from the Fountain of Youth by following the water. As the name implies, the entrance sink has impressive overhanging cliffs. It is this part of the cave where there were tours in the Twenties and Thirties, saltpeter mining in the nineteenth century, and even Indians.

Railroad Tunnel

Named for a nearby abandoned railroad tunnel under the highway, the Railroad Tunnel entrance provides access to a sporting through trip toward Grand Central Station, involving considerable crawling, narrow canyons, and an impressive, downcutting stream canyon with thundering waterfalls. The recently discovered Rocky Horror Crawl takes off near the end of the major southeast branch on the map. For a connection trip to Grand Central Station, a lake level of 700 feet or less is recommended.

Scowling Tom's/Grand Central Station

The Scowling Tom's entrance (which is a flash-flood area) provides quickest access to Grand Central Station, focal point for many major through trips. An upper level route beginning near the Scowling Tom's entrance connects more directly to Garbage Pit through dry, gypsum crawls, including 8 inch high Bare Bev's Bellycrawl. After Grand Central Station, you can try to find the way to Minton Hollow or Railroad Tunnel. To reach Minton Hollow, the Sauce Route is the most direct, but normal lake level forces a more circuitous and strenuous connection on a higher level, passing near Screamin' Willy.

Minton Big Passage

The Minton Hollow main entrance is the most attractive, classical walking entrance in the system. Its passages are a comfortable 12 to 20 feet high and 10 to 20 feet wide. The narrow canyon immediately to the left at the entrance eventually gets too tight to continue. At the first major Y, the left passage leads to a section described below as Left Cave. The right branch leads to the rest of the system, including Middle Cave/Martin Creek, also described below. The Duck-Under, a key side passage, leads to the Big Passage after a series of stoopwalks. You pass Lost and Found corners, where it is difficult to find the return route at a low, wide intersection; Spitting Rock Extension, where it is easy to get sidetracked; Dread Pool, which is pretty awesome because it is down in a deep canyon, can usually be walked past; and the Jigsaw Room, with its intricate pattern of little floor channels.

The Big Passage is a 3000-foot long breakdown trunk, with a parallel high level on the right. This upper level is worth visiting and can be reached at several key connection points. In the area called Beyond the Fountain there is a connection to Garbage Pit not involving Grand Central Station. This connection is extremely tight at one point, and involves getting very wet and muddy at Lewd Lou's Nude Scoop. A lower parallel level toward the north end of the Big Passage features tasty-looking caramel-colored stalactites.

Screamin' Willy

C. O. G. requests that this entrance not be free-climbed so further rescues may be avoided; rigging is recommended. You can rappel all the way down an offset pit (56 feet) or get off at 33 feet and climb down chimneys, which works well with a cable ladder for the 33 feet and avoids difficulty with communication and pulling up the rope.

In the Lunch Room you can connect with Grand Central Station by climbing down Connection Pit, working your way toward the end of the Minton Big Passage by following the tortuous Crevice Canyon (which starts out as a low crawl), or heading toward the White Grotto. An attempt to wash away the muddy footprints from the White Grotto flowstone in 1982 was partially successful. Part of the way down White Grotto Hill you can crawl through the breakdown and connect with the Minton Hollow Big Passage near Canoe Rock. Yet another significant section can be reached from Cross Canyon along the Crevice Canyon route. This Cross Canyon Extension features a remote area affectionately called the Suicide Room because the rocks are loose.

Minton Left Cave

A shelf lead on the left side of the first major branch in Minton Main Entrance is the connection to the Minton Left Entrance. While an entrance to entrance trip is brief, you can spend much more time trying not to get lost in the mile of mazes.

Minton Middle Cave/Martin Creek

Instead of going down to Duck-Under, you can stroll through the First Loop and enter the Second Loop either by the Slot or a tricky breakdown connection. The Slot is a narrow crevice half-filled with water, while the breakdown connection involves some tricky climbing and searching. These connections can be used for a nonrepetitive Second Loop trip. The Great White Cone Room is very worthwhile and photogenic.

A low crawl near the breakdown end of the second loop leads to the Sand Room. Beyond this room is a usually-sumped deep-water connection to Martin Creek. A through trip between Minton and Martin Creek can be made only during a season of dry weather. The forty-foot high Martin Creek water canyon is very pretty, but there are large logs jammed between the walls high overhead, indicative of the danger of flooding. A landowner adjacent to the Martin Creek entrance has traditionally been hostile.

Spitting Rock Extension

A rather complex little segment of the system, the name Spitting Rock came from a carbon smoke target some nurd once drew on a rock. A long muddy crawl beyond the Spitting Rock Room finally opens up and you should try to find an eight-foot canyon, gypsum, waterfalls, and mazes. This section is worth a day's trip in itself.

References

- Jillson, Willard R., *Geology of Crystal Cave*, Roberts Printing Co., Frankfort, KY, 1954
- Malott, Clyde and Preston McGrain, "A Geological Profile of Sloan's Valley, Pulaski County, Kentucky", Kentucky Geological Survey, Series X, 1977.



Linda Nolan in the Screamin' Willy entrance of Sloan's Valley System, one of 16 entrances. Photo by Dan Silvesteri.

Sugar Tree Pit Cave

By Wm. Douglas Carroll NSS 23852

Sugar Tree Pit Cave was first discovered in the late 1970's by Brian Baker and Steve Mollett of the Blue Grass Grotto. Brian dropped the 60 foot entrance shaft and reported finding virgin cave.

In October of 1985 the BGG began to map Sugar Tree. At present the survey is still incomplete with a current total of 2,121 feet of true horizontal cave. The vertical extent of known passage spans 228 feet.

After descending the entrance pit, which broadens considerably from a narrow opening, a steep mud slope leads to a second drop of 12 feet. A ladder has been placed at this short drop to facilitate travel; visitors, however, are advised to approach and use this ladder only while on belay.

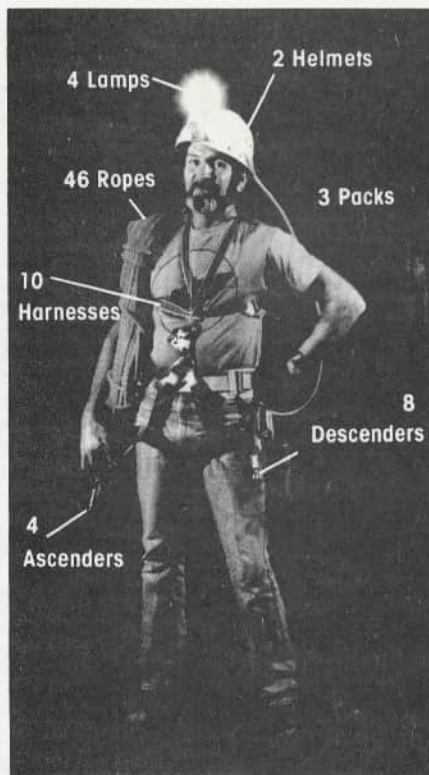
The downstream section of the cave consists generally of vadose canyons of variable width, with many chimneys and climb downs. In addition to a yet-unsurveyed pit, there is a difficult traverse along ledges to a 47 foot drop into another pit.

Traveling upstream from the entrance area, the stream forks. The west fork soon becomes a stream crawl which opens up to many domes, some up to 50 feet in height. The east fork consists of an unsurveyed dome complex and the stream passage, the latter soon decreasing to a wet crawl.

Due to the vertical drops and numerous climbs, Sugar Tree should be considered a trip for the experienced vertical caver.



Tony Pearson, a 17 year-old Madison Central High School student, won the cave poster contest held last fall by S. Haddix.



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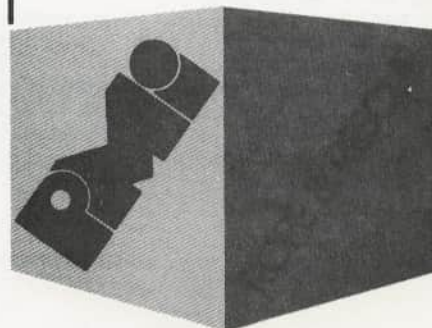
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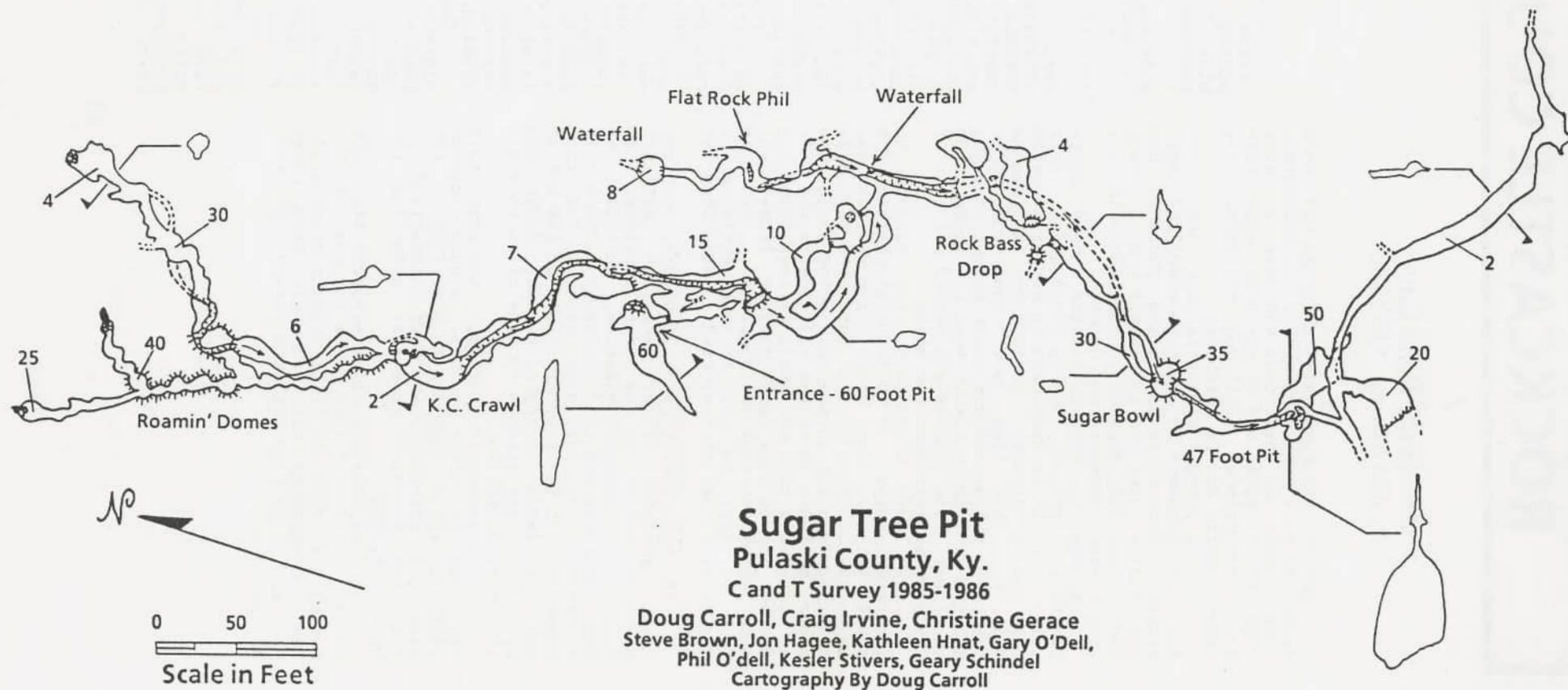
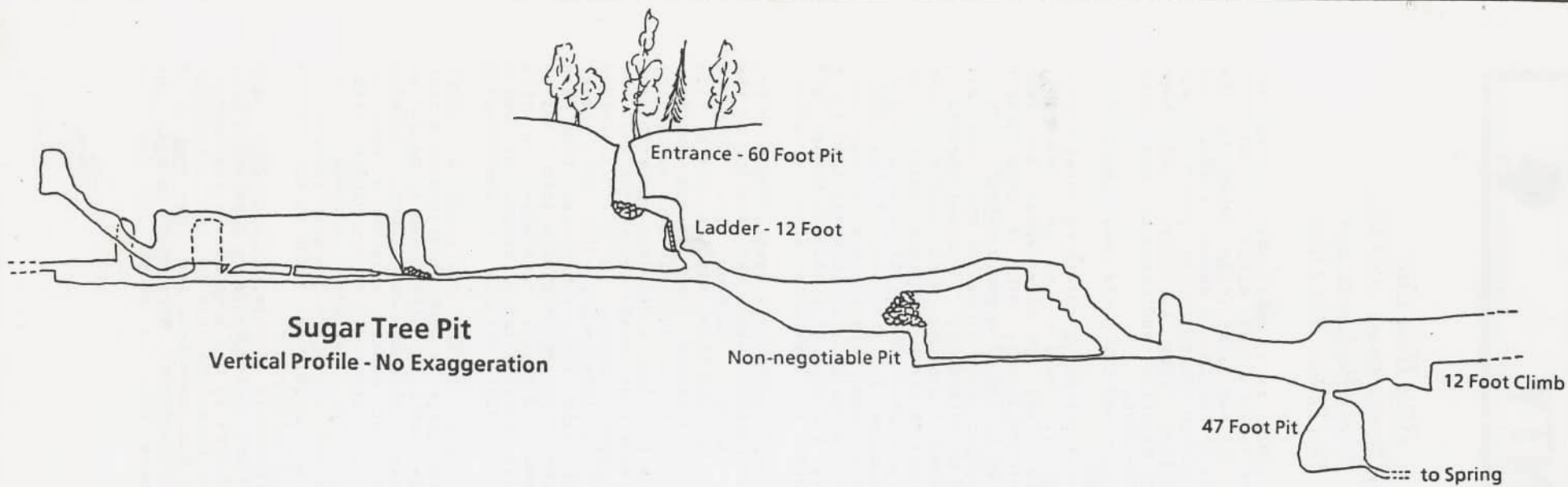
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ROCKCASTLE COUNTY



Across the Road Cave *By Jack Hissong NSS 16422*

Across the Road Cave is across the road from the more popular Sinks of the Roundstone Cave. Most of the people who cave in this area go to Sinks and do not even know that this cave exists, so it does not receive the heavy traffic of its neighbor.

It is a small cave with just over 1000 feet of passages in which to crawl and walk around. Most of it is walking passage, but the tallest ceiling is no more than 25 feet high. You will stay dry, since there is very little water anywhere in the cave.

Across the Road Cave makes a nice self-led trip if you are looking for a quick, easy trip. It is an easy cave to negotiate with only two exceptions: persons over 220 pounds will find the tight slot near the upper entrance narrow and difficult to get through, and the skylight entrance must be rigged to go in or out. You can see all mapped portions of the cave in less than two hours.

The lower entrance is the easiest to locate and enter. It is found at the end of a small valley. Four wheel drive vehicles can be parked in front of it, but watch the deep hole and deep rut in the road going back. The upper entrance is on the hillside to the left as you walk back the small valley from the road. It is in a large shelter ledge near some prominent rock outcroppings. The trip from the upper entrance to lower entrance (or the reverse) can be traversed in less than an hour.

If you want a quick 20 minute vertical trip, you can rappel into the skylight entrance and go out the upper entrance. To locate the skylight entrance, go above the upper entrance and head southwest. The pit is a straight 30 feet down with a 7-8 foot diameter. It bells out slightly at the bottom and one lands on top of a long steep mud slope. Do not attempt to free climb this pit in either direction.

If climbing is your bag, the best this cave has to offer is the "window connect climbs", which complete a nice loop in the cave. If formations are your interest, don't miss the formation room that underlies the upper entrance.

If unexplored passages are your bag, then go to the "quit" room named for one of the surveyor's attitude after doing station A-22. The two passages that lead south from there are small and have not been pushed more than 50 feet each.

Blue Hole Cave *By Charles Bishop NSS 9355,* *Martin Hackworth, and* *Don Pollock NSS 14653*

Blue Hole is a challenging, very wet stream cave with two miles of surveyed passage. It was first investigated by the Blue Grass Grotto in the summer of 1972, and surveyed during the following year; it was later learned that the cave had been previously explored and named by the Berea College Cave Club.

The cave has two entrances, though both are crawlways.

The Sink Entrance, draining water from a small valley, begins as a reasonably comfortable crawl but after about 500 feet becomes miserably wet, with a considerable quantity of washed-in organic debris. There are a few upper leads along the way, but all are choked by breakdown. The crawl emerges in a canyon-domepit complex, where several climbs are required to reach the lower level. The cave then continues as several hundred feet of walking passage to the Room of the Gods. Beyond this room, the passage is high and narrow and essentially featureless save for a few loops, and gradually becomes higher and higher until it separates into overlying levels.

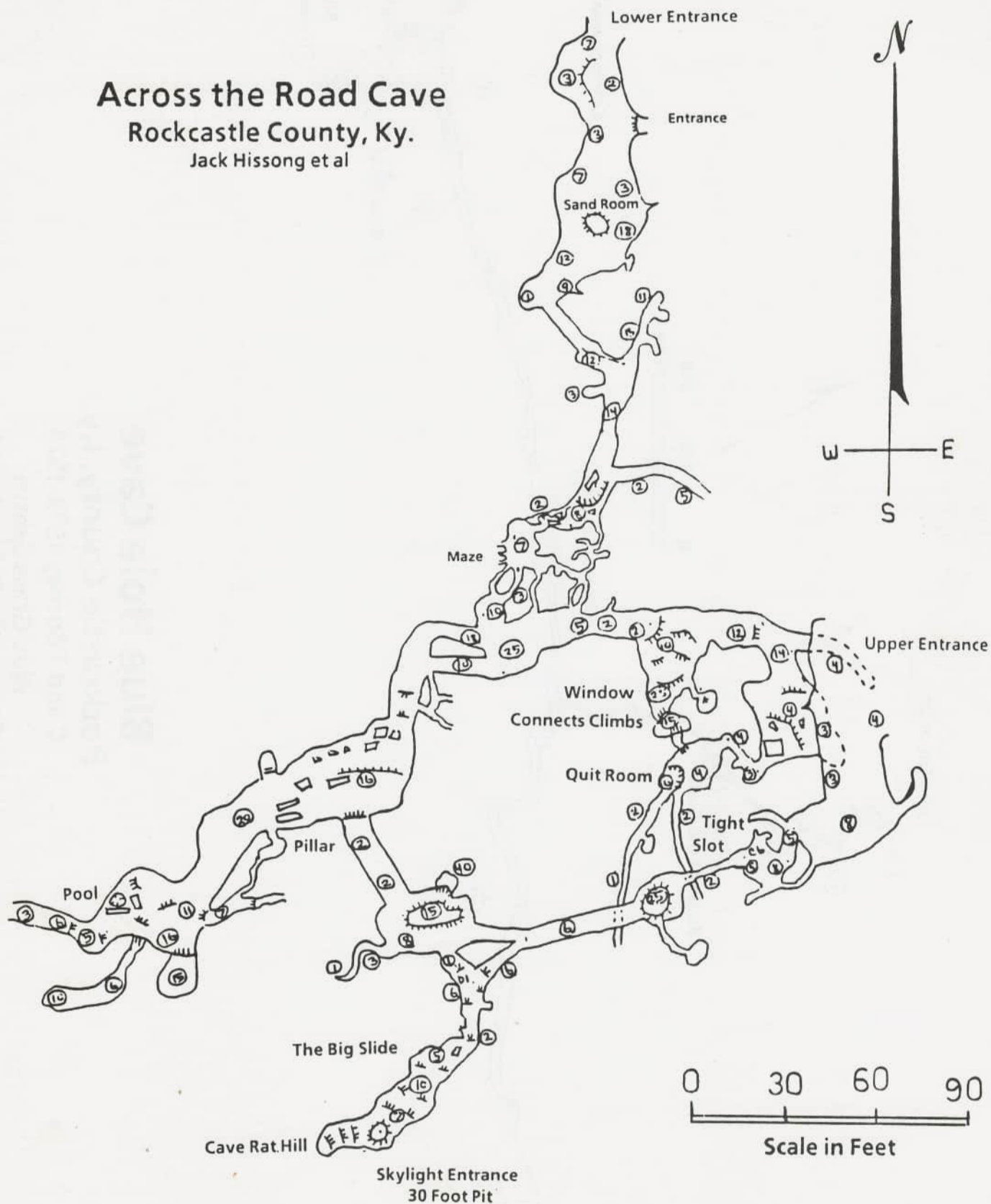
The canyon intersects eventually with the main stream passage, where the majority of the cave is found. Between the upstream resurgence and the final sump is over a mile of cave in a single long stream passage, mostly low walking or stoopway with water from wall to wall. Some 2,000 feet upstream from the T-intersection is the resurgence and the Junction Room; beyond is the submerged connection to (presumably) Pine Hill Cave. Several thousand feet downstream from the intersection, the passage breaks into a multi-level complex of mainly crawlways. In this complex are several large rooms, of which perhaps the most notable is Commonwealth Stadium.

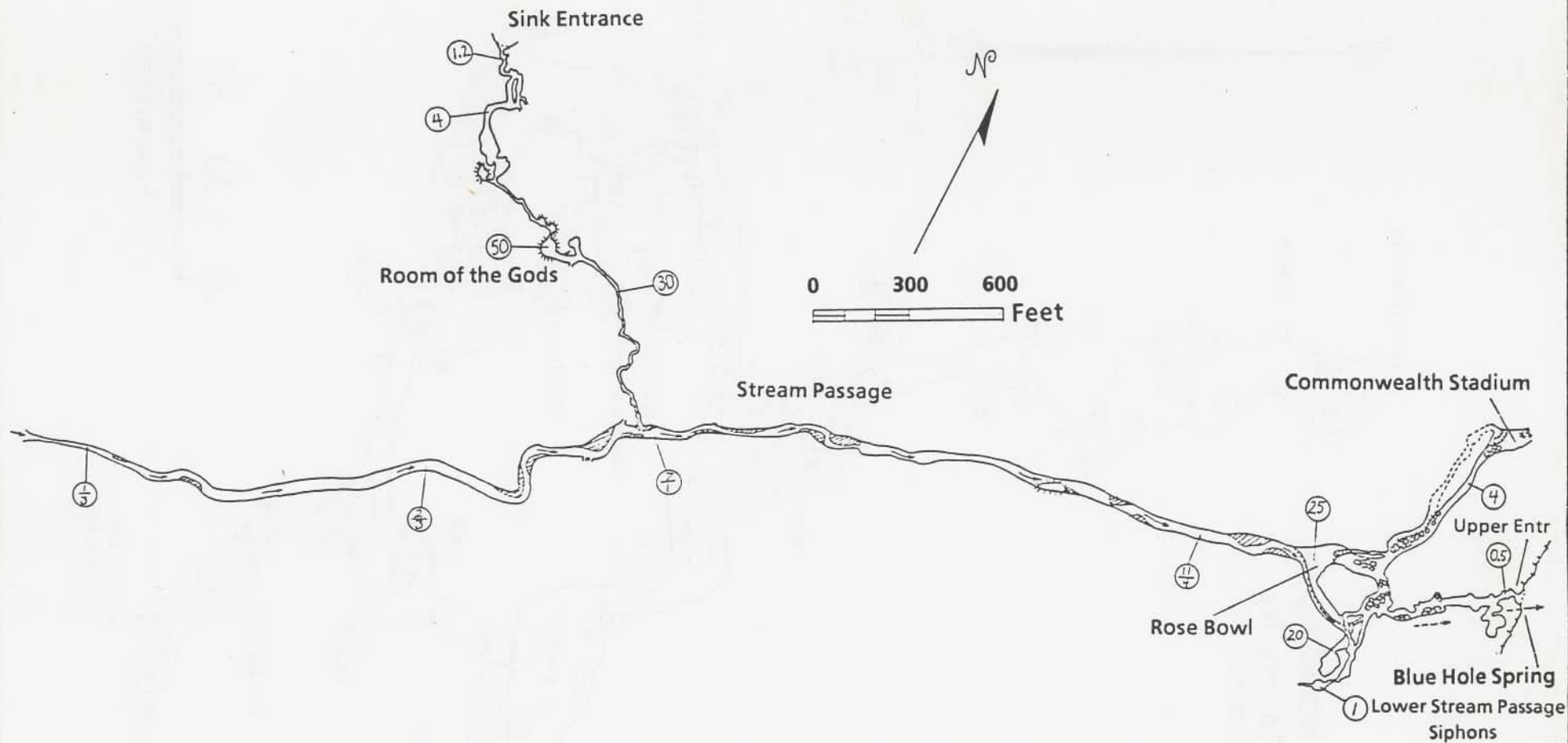
The cave stream continues a short distance further to a sump, emerging in a rise pool at the base of a cliff directly below an upper level entrance and thence flowing aboveground for about a mile and a half to vanish into Sinks of the Roundstone Cave. Overlying the stream passage and interconnected through holes and fissures is an upper level crawl that leads to the second entrance, a belly crawl.

On the basis of observational data made from the Mount Vernon Geologic Quadrangle Map, and field work in the area of the resurgence, Blue Hole Cave lies within two lithologic units, the Ste. Genevieve and Upper members of the Newman Limestone, Mississippian in age. The Upper Member here is about 160 feet in

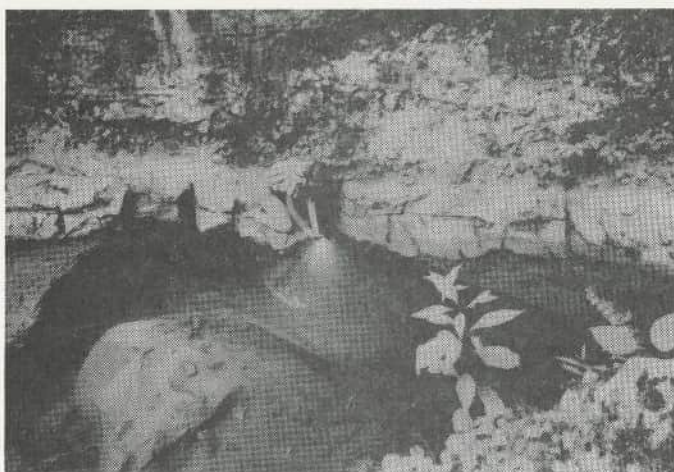
Across the Road Cave

Rockcastle County, Ky.
Jack Hissong et al





Blue Hole Cave
Rockcastle County, Ky.
C and T Survey 1973-1974
Blue Grass Grotto
Cartography By Tom Seibert



The Blue Hole Spring, emerging from the base of the bluff about 30 feet below the Upper Entrance. Note the submerged cave passage visible in the crystal-clear spring. Photo by Steve Brown.

thickness, and an estimated 75 feet for the Ste Genevieve; the base of the Ste. Genevieve is not exposed in the vicinity of Blue Hole.

Most of the field work was done at the resurgence. It was found that this portion of the cave was developed in the contact of the Ste. Genevieve and the Upper Newman, the basal Upper Newman forming the ceiling of the cave. From elevations taken at key stations throughout the cave it was determined that nearly all of Blue Hole, excepting the sink entrance and Commonwealth Stadium, lies within the Ste. Genevieve.

Blue Hole Cave may hold the key to a large drainage system in the area between Pine Hill Cave to the west and Sinks of the Roundstone to the east. Connections to these caves are hypothetical at present. The volume of water present in the cave stream during the fall indicates that the stream is carrying drainage from a large area. A description of the stream in September at a shallow point would be six feet wide and six inches deep, flowing at a rate of several feet per second.

Exploration in the cave has been done only in the dry seasons. Long pools with little air space, four to six inches, must be traversed on each trip. The average stream passage dimensions are 15 feet wide and 4 1/2 feet tall, with 3 to 3 1/2 feet of water. As there are numerous points where a water rise will siphon the passage, **THIS CAVE SHOULD ONLY BE ATTEMPTED DURING DRY WEATHER!** It is definitely a cave for the hard-core caver.

An interesting set of trips might be to examine each of the three consecutive stream caves in turn; Pine Hill, Blue Hole, and Sinks, following this major cavern drainage system. Each cave has its own distinguishing passage characteristics.

Climax Cave

By Stuart Butler

Climax Cave is named for a tiny village in eastern Rockcastle County. For many years it has been a popular cave, with many visitors, some of whom have not been appreciative of the cave's uniqueness and natural beauty. The easy accessibility of Climax Cave has allowed certain undesirables to use and abuse this cavern. There has been an accumulation of cans and other trash, along with spray-painted graffiti. Despite these detractions, it remains an interesting cave with many notable features.

Access to the cave is gained through a small stoopway entrance on the hill above and north of Climax Christian Church. The entry slopes downward into an area containing some massive speleothems. Two hundred feet from the entrance is a passage to the right that soon forks at an excavation. The passage left from here, beyond large slabs of breakdown, contains traces of what may have once been a saltpeter operation.

Returning and continuing down the main trunk, which in some places is nearly 50 feet wide, a passage to the left contains some interesting rimstone, a sort of Grand Canyon in miniature. Just beyond this is a major passage fork, with a canyon passage to the right or another tunnel to the left. The right passage leads to a long section of massive collapse; the left route eventually intersects with this breakdown area.

The canyon passage leads to the route through the breakdown to the rear section of Climax. Past the breakdown the passages divide again and again into a confusing labyrinth which the caver can spend many hours exploring. Several obscure routes lead to the north entrance. The large rear entrance offers an excellent view of the surrounding countryside. A small stream enters the cave on the left at a lower level.

Crooked Creek Cave

By Gary O'Dell NSS 10278

The large entrance of this cave seems diminutive only due to the nearby vastness of the Goochland Cave mouth, almost directly across the creek. The Crooked Creek Cave entrance, 14 feet high and 20 wide, is the portal to a pleasant walking cave, short in length but quite attractive. Three hundred feet of mostly dry passage, 6 to 10 feet in height, leads to a wetter section near the end with some nice flowstone.

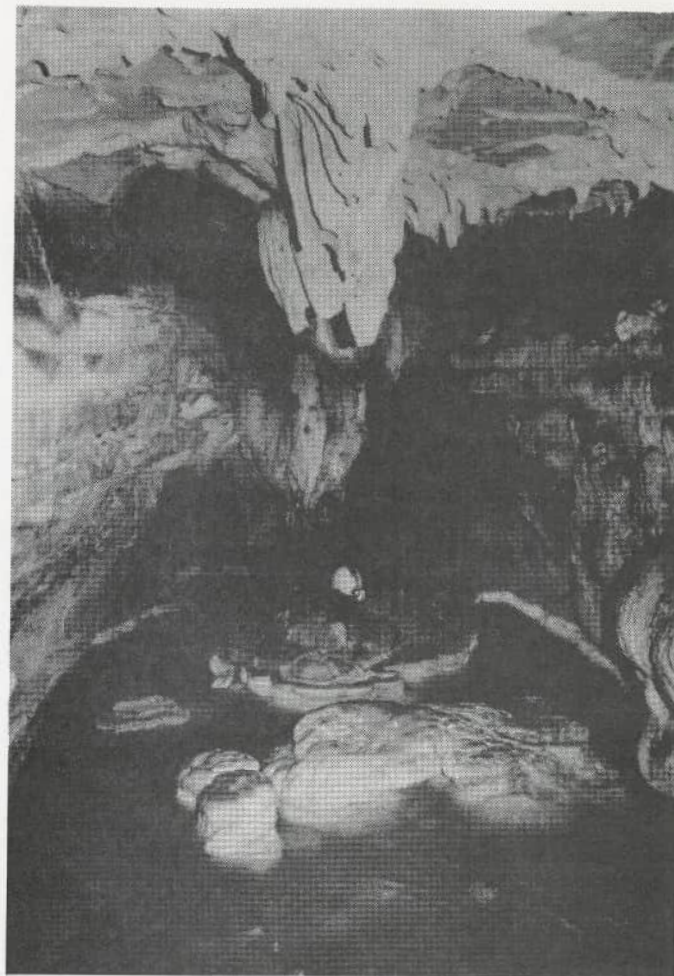
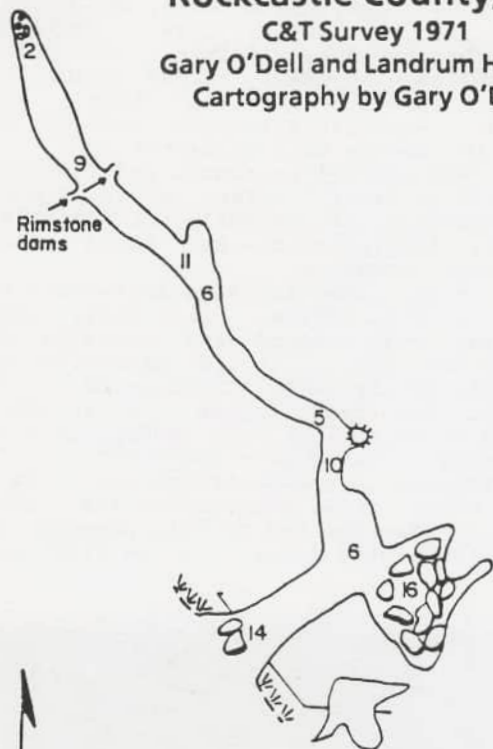
It is well worth a visit, especially to unwind and relax after a grueling Goochland tour. A good trip with small children might include this cave and the first 1500 feet of the right side of Goochland, up to the First Breakdown.



Climax Cave
Rockcastle County, Ky.
C&T Survey 1966
Blue Grass Grotto
Cartography by James R. Rebmann

Crooked Creek Cave Rockcastle County, Ky.

C&T Survey 1971
Gary O'Dell and Landrum Haddix
Cartography by Gary O'Dell



Pool and formations in Crooked Creek Cave, a worthwhile reason to visit this small cave. Photo by Steve Brown.

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Crooked Creek Ice Cave

By Gary Bush NSS 17697

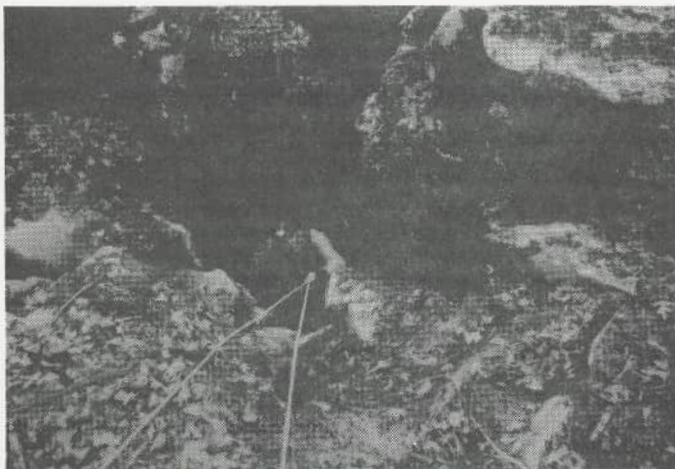
Crooked Creek traces a meandering path southward down the eastern border of Rockcastle County, Kentucky. With headwaters in the Goochland section of northern Rockcastle County, the creek cuts through an especially rich karst area on its way to its southern junction with Roundstone Creek. The two longest caves in the county border this scenic little stream. While not one of the longest, Crooked Creek Ice Cave, at over 6100 feet of mapped passage, is a significant example of the caves of Rockcastle County.

Crooked Creek Ice Cave, or CCIC, has been known for many years, having been mined for saltpeter in the early-to-mid 1800's. The beautiful ice formations in the first 300 feet of the cave in the winter are responsible for the cave's name. After an especially cold winter these ice deposits can last into June.

The cave is currently owned by Mr. George Wynn, a local farmer. His farm traverses Crooked Creek and contains at least one other significant cave, located on the west side of the creek across from CCIC.

CCIC still contains remnants from the saltpeter mining era, mainly pole ladders and trenches, along with assorted planking used for vats. No complete vats remain, however. In addition, the remains of a more modern iron kettle attest to the use of the cave for another important industry...the production of moonshine. This particular product, however, has not been made here in the recent past.

Cavers have studied CCIC since the 1960's. The cave has four levels, spanning a vertical relief of 135 feet. A description of the lower level was published in 1972 in the book, *The Caves of Rockcastle County, Kentucky*, by James Rebmann and Gary O'Dell; this section was later mapped by Rebmann and members of the Eastern Kentucky University Grotto. The areas used for mining and shining were in this lower level.



Jim Rebmann in the pit entrance to Crooked Creek Ice Cave. Photo by Steve Brown.

In 1974-76 the longer upper sections were found and mapping was begun by John Rausch and Tom Staubitz of the Greater Cincinnati Grotto (GCG). They also remapped the lower sections. When this data became unavailable, GCG began a remapping of the entire cave, including several newer sections, in 1978. A complete map was published in 1982. Since then, two additional small sections have been discovered. Although surveyed, they do not appear on the map in this guidebook.

The cave has two entrances and lies high on the hill at least 200 feet above Crooked Creek. Flooding is obviously not a problem. The cave is situated in the St. Louis member of the Newman Limestone.

The larger Lower Entrance leads into the lowest of the four levels. This first level is the one most visited and contains the saltpeter workings. It is generally the easiest part of the cave, although the 15 foot drop about 200 feet inside the entrance, negotiated on an ancient pole ladder, is a bit nerve-racking to the first-time visitor. The canyon passage, a vadose trench cut below a phreatic tube, travels northwest for a third of a mile. Near the end of this passage are three interconnected domes. A low right-side

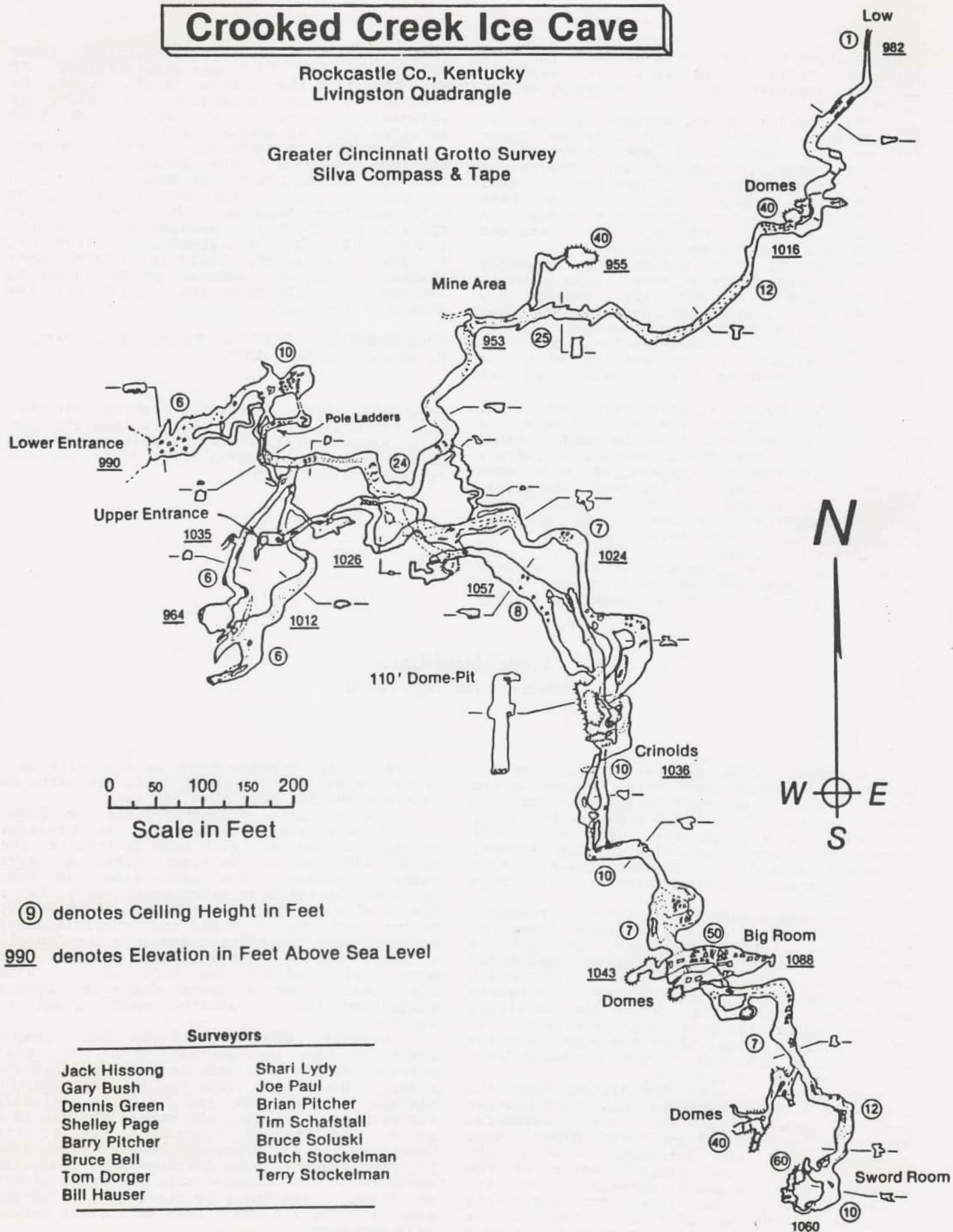


Crooked Creek Ice Cave, near the point marked 'Mine Area' on cave map. Photo by Steve Brown.

Crooked Creek Ice Cave

Rockcastle Co., Kentucky
Livingston Quadrangle

Greater Cincinnati Grotto Survey
Silva Compass & Tape



crawway from the first dome proceeds further into the cave, ending in a low crawway, currently impassable but could possibly be dug out.

The smaller Upper Entrance (about 200 feet distant, up the hillside from the Lower Entrance) is a conical pit about 20 feet deep. It can be carefully free-climbed. The bottom of this pit enters the third and longest level of the cave. This phreatic level proceeds horizontally along the face of the ridge. A particularly nasty ledge must be traversed just 50 feet from the entrance pit.

Thereafter, the passage is generally safe. Although fairly large, this level is full of breakdown and mud fills, causing you to crawl and climb through nooks and crannies to get back to the walking passages beyond. Four different dome complexes lie along this route. One dome is 110 feet high with the passage intersecting it about halfway up its height.

The Big Room, a large breakdown room, lies three quarters of the way back into the passage. Beyond this room the passage takes on a multilevel character, meandering further to the southeast and terminating in a dome system in an area of "rotten" limestone, embedded with layers of shale. Raccoon tracks and roots indicate nearness to the surface, though no surface holes have been found.

Crooked Creek Ice Cave is both interesting and challenging. There are three connection routes between the first and third levels (also a fourth voice connection). One

route is a challenging wiggle through tubes and cracks. Two routes are simple climbs. If you can find the fourth level, you'll be treated to nice formations. A leader is suggested though, if you want to see this section, as it is hard to find.

Cave life is plentiful in CCIC. We used to even find PIGS in the entrance, enjoying the cool air on hot summer days...but not in the last few years. Both solitary and colony bats are found throughout the levels. Cave species of crickets, salamanders, beetles, flies, and spiders are abundant. Since CCIC is high on the ridge, there is no large water passage. However, several pools containing various tiny life forms are found on all the levels of the cave.

(Reprinted from 1985 NSS Convention Guidebook, by permission Gary Bush)

(Editor's note: Available parking near CCIC has recently become severely curtailed; for this reason we ask that those planning to see this cave please limit their visit to the official guided trip.)

Goochland Cave By Gary O'Dell NSS 10278

Goochland Cave has the distinction of being the longest known cave in Rockcastle County, with a surveyed length in excess of eleven miles. It is well known to the local residents in a large area, who often will picnic near the entrance during the summer, cooling a watermelon in Crooked Creek. Most call it simply the "Big Cave" or the "big-mouth cave."

The cave's name itself is of interest. It is derived from an adjacent community place-name. This community at present consists of an abandoned, decaying clapboarded log cabin with a barn and a few small outbuildings. There is a county in Virginia called Goochland County, which was the origin of many of the early Kentucky settlers. It seems likely, as was often the case, that the place names familiar to the pioneers were transferred to the frontier.

The cavern is naturally divided into two major and distinct segments, each with its own separate drainage network. These segments, known as "Right Side" and "Left Side", come together near the entrance, within the daylight zone. The light zonation of the entrance area is quite extensive, for the outside opening is very large, spanning nearly 100 feet in width and over 50 in height. It is truly one of the most spectacular entrances

in the state, opening from the base of a tall limestone cliff. The chill draft can often be felt outside for more than 500 feet.

The Left Side of Goochland was the first to be extensively explored, as previous excursions had generally been limited to the first 1400 feet of the Right Side, a large walking passage. The Left Side had been explored by the Blue Grass Grotto only to a "bathtub" about 500 feet inside. In 1969 Dave Beiter and myself pushed and simultaneously surveyed past the bathtub and into the "Tube", a long, narrow vadose stream canyon that occasionally allows the explorer to walk comfortably for a short distance before subjecting him to another muddy crawl or squeeze.

Roughly 1000 feet of the Tube canyon leads to the intersection with the main portion of the Left Side and its underground river. Downstream from the intersection the passage becomes low and wide, gradually diminishing in height; the stream emerges in a series of springs along the toe of the Goochland Ridge. Upstream, however, lies some of the grandest cave passageway to be seen anywhere. The passage size increases slowly at first, then abruptly soars as it merges with the Upper Level, seen as a cross canyon high overhead.

The passage from here upstream is immense, with cross-section dimensions often 50 to 80 feet high and wide. The cave stream runs swiftly in a trench scoured bare, carved and scalloped and pot-holed grotesquely. About 1000 feet upstream from the Tube, this passage expands to nearly a 100-foot width, with a steeply sloping field of breakdown to the left. The top of this breakdown intersects with the tangent Upper Level, a dry, abandoned passage of equally grandiose dimensions that runs parallel to the main passage. It is the perpendicular crossing of this level that was earlier described. Where the Upper Level passes over the lower, the floor drops away to blackness, requiring a traverse on wide ledges above the 70-foot drop to continue. It is possible to work through a maze of passages and breakdown and regain the stream level from here.

Past the second intersection with the Upper Level, at the breakdown slope, traveling further upstream the passage height slowly diminishes until the ceiling roughly stabilizes at about 12 feet. The stream runs braided in gravels underfoot, the walls remain starkly sculptured. Mud is notably absent; the cave stream is a good housekeeper. Along the left wall can be seen an occasional remnant of the parallel passage, segmented and

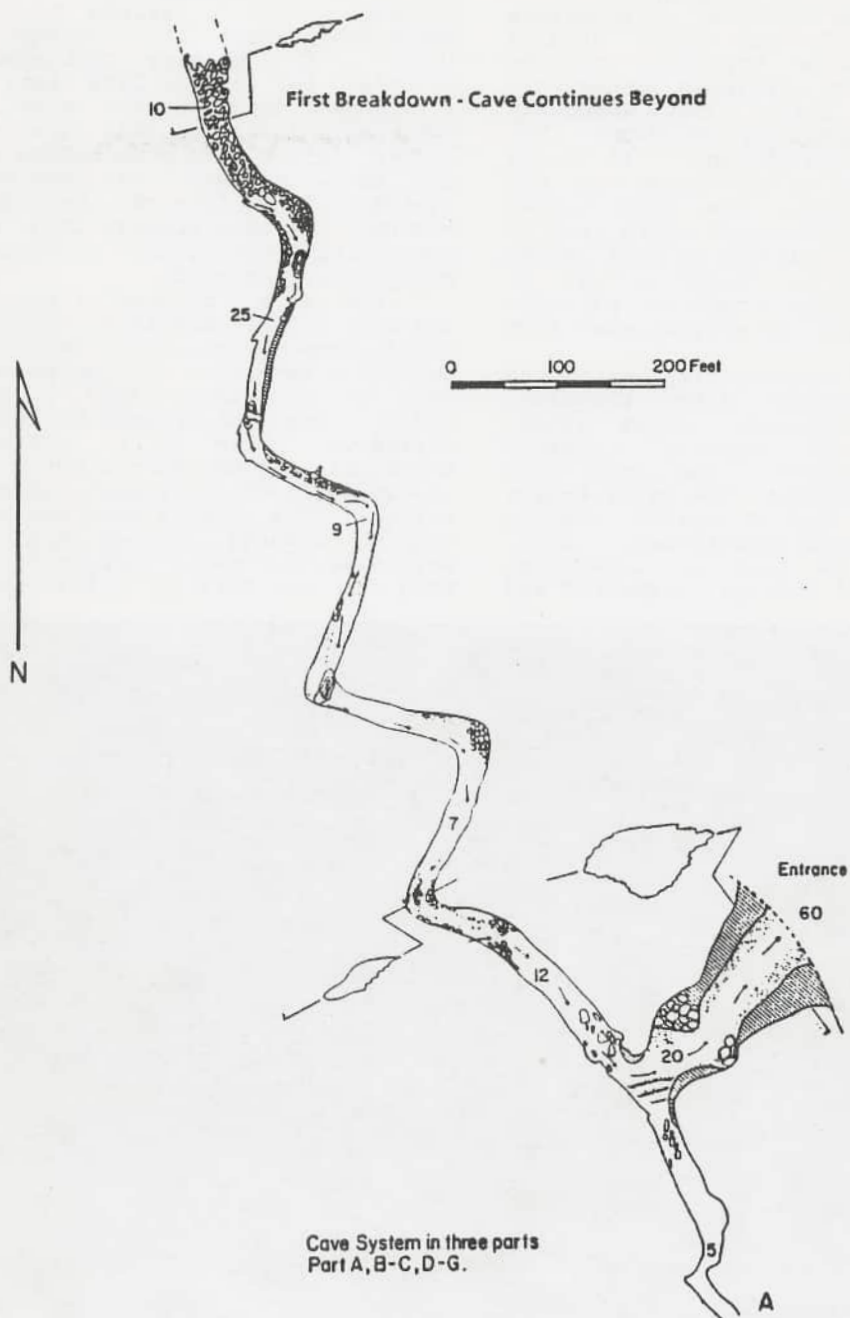
choked by collapse, wrecked by the encroachment of the lower level.

These passage characteristics prevail for almost a half-mile, then change abruptly as a waterfall is encountered. The cave stream cascades down a series of large steps, descending about 15 or 20 feet to the main level. The passage continues above this waterfall for another 2000 feet, generally as a stoopway about 20 feet wide. The height eventually lowers to less than three feet; the survey of the Left Side halted at this point. The cave, however, has been explored for a considerable distance beyond, where it consists of interminably long stream crawls connecting large domes. In this area, a third entrance is reported.

The first portion of the Right Side is the best known, and lends itself to a casual, family cave outing, as it is a pleasant stroll through a very nice walking passage, requiring only an occasional easy climb or stream-wading. The path becomes blocked by a massive breakdown choke at a quarter-mile. The breakdown can be negotiated to the right to a continuation of the stream passage at a lower height. The passage soon opens up to sizable walking passage; not as large as that of the Left Side, but quite impressive and extensive. This is the Miracle Mile, aptly named by



The spectacular entrance to Goochland Cave, 100 feet wide and 50 feet in height. In foreground is Landrum Haddix with Joseph O'Dell. Photo by Gary O'Dell.

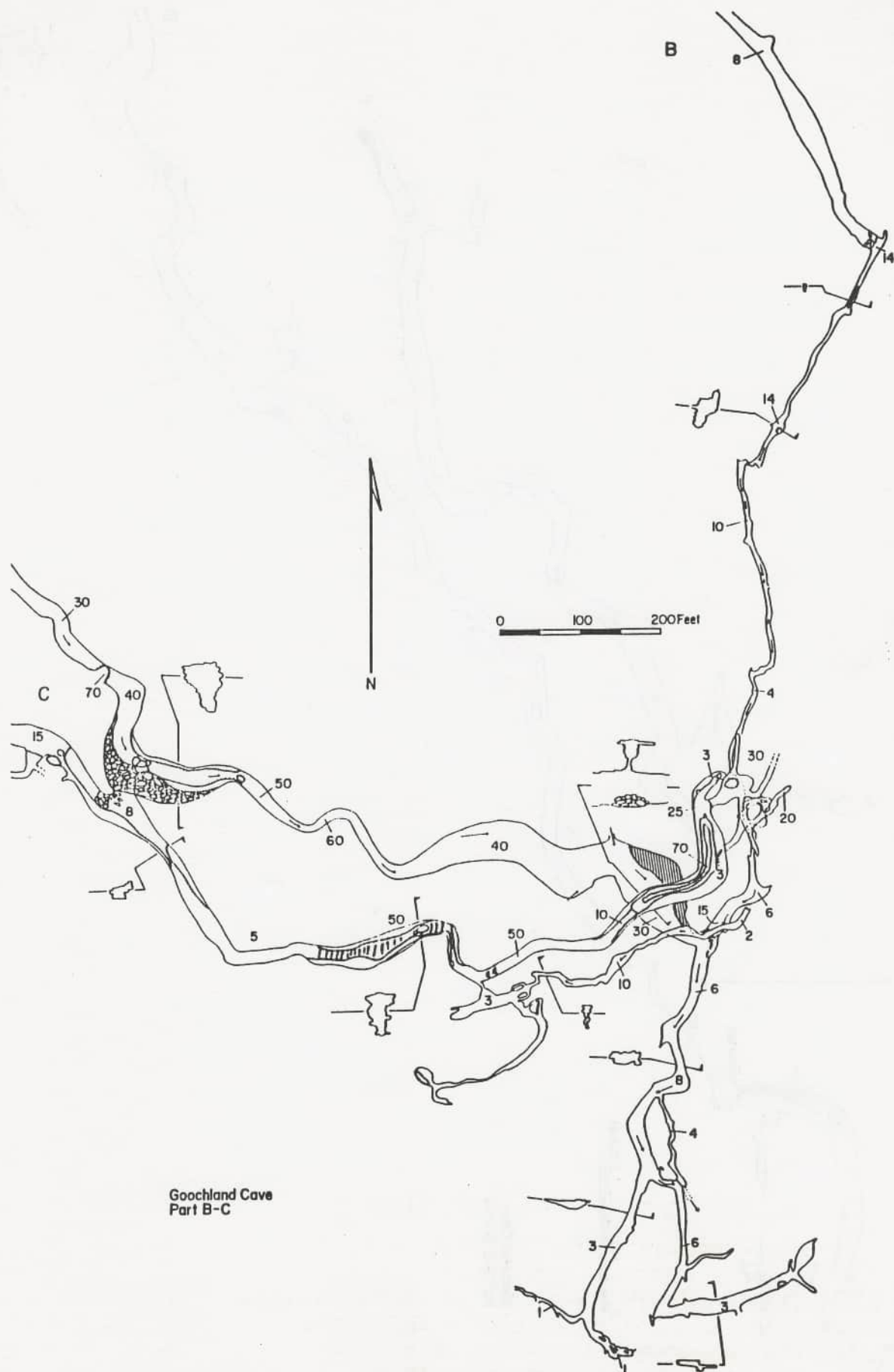


Goochland Cave-Left Side

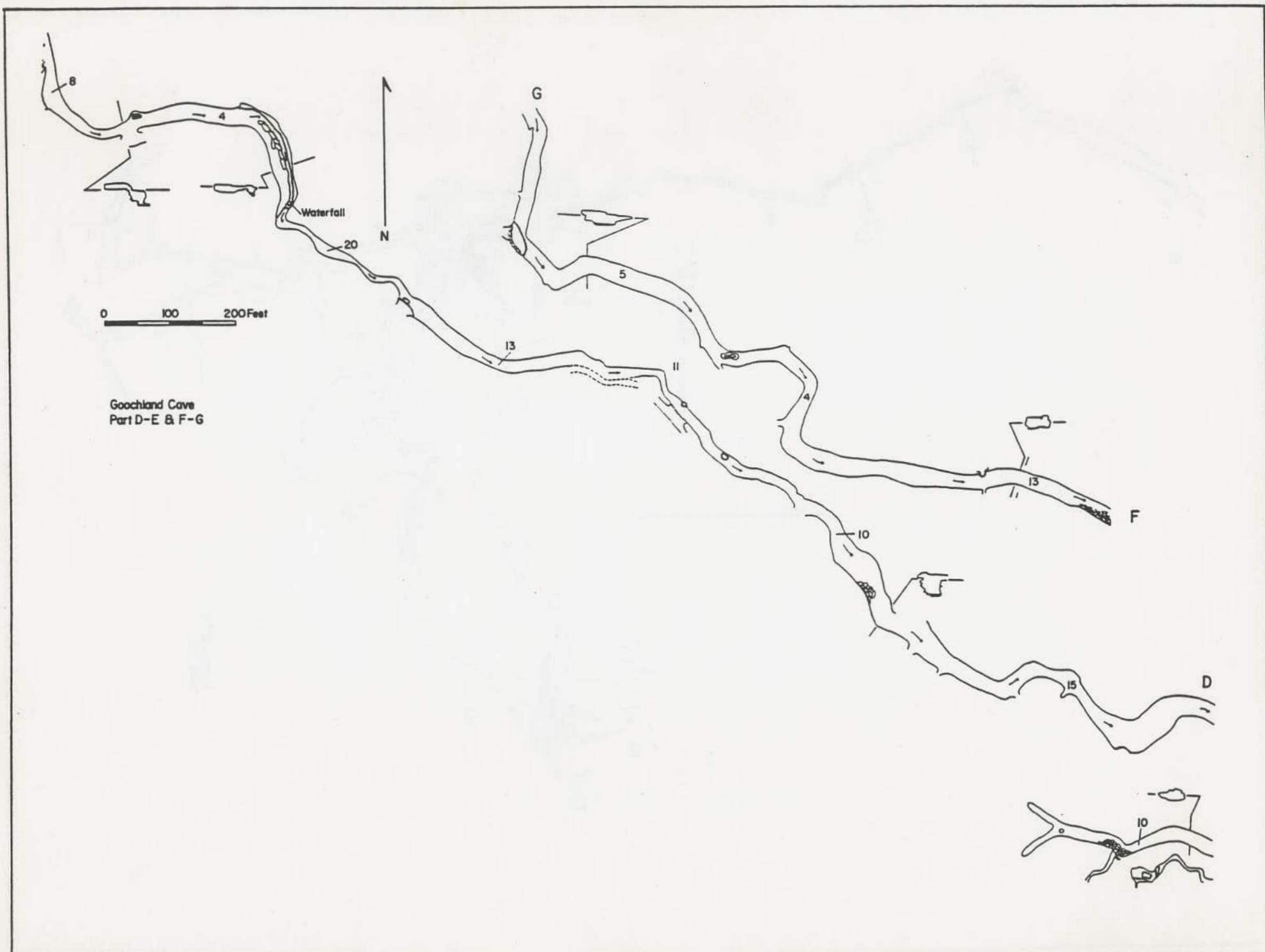
Rockcastle County, Ky.

C&T Survey 1969-1972

Gary O'Dell, David Beiter, James Currens, Jeff Vansant,
Eric Albertson, Jo Beiter, Charles Bishop, Ron Gariepy, Dave Kelly,
Jeff Marquis, Tom Roberts, Debbie Rogers, Jim Sharp
Cartography by Gary O'Dell and James R. Rebmann



Goochland Cave
Part B-C



MAGNETIC



SCALE

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GOOCHLAND CAVE SYSTEM

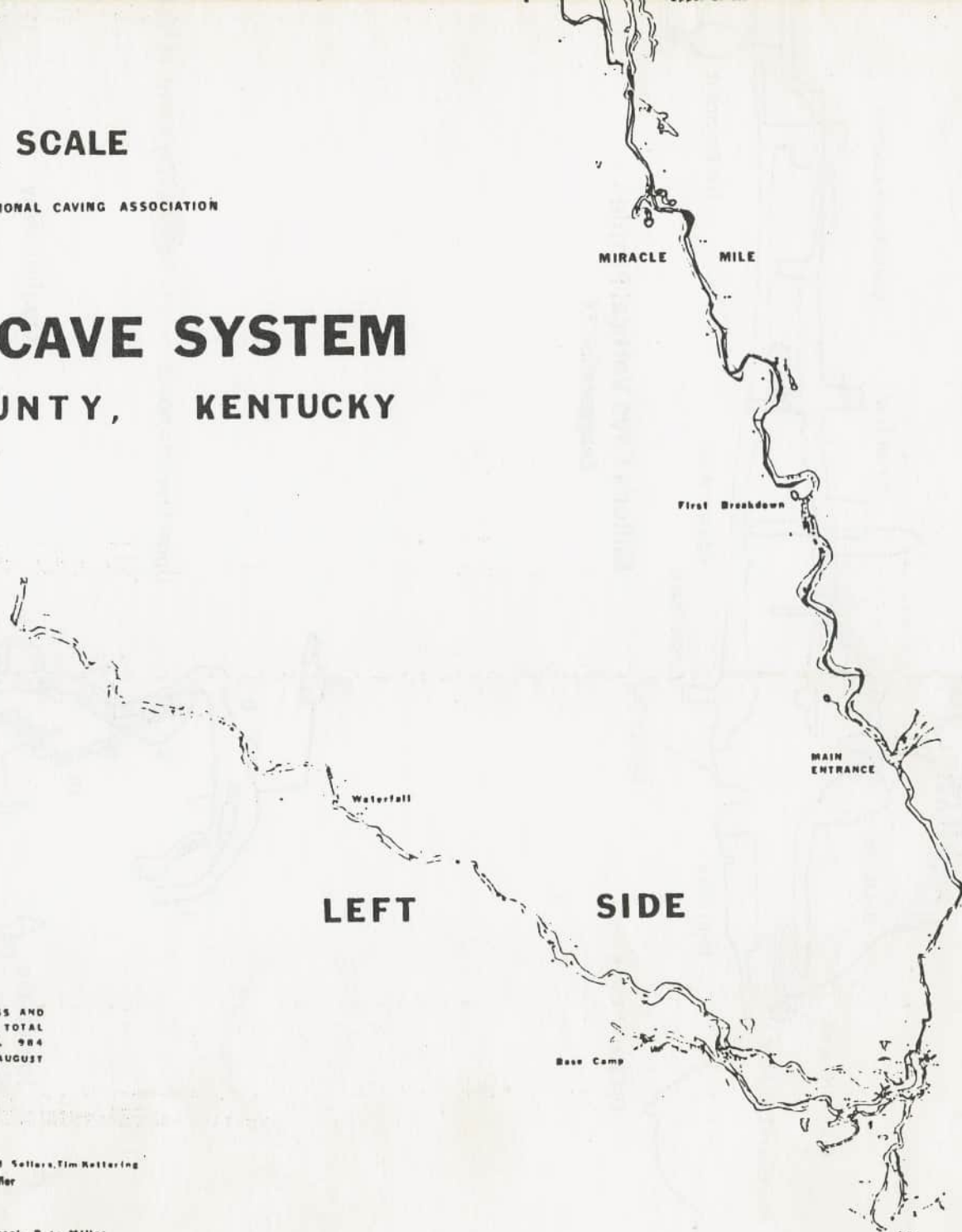
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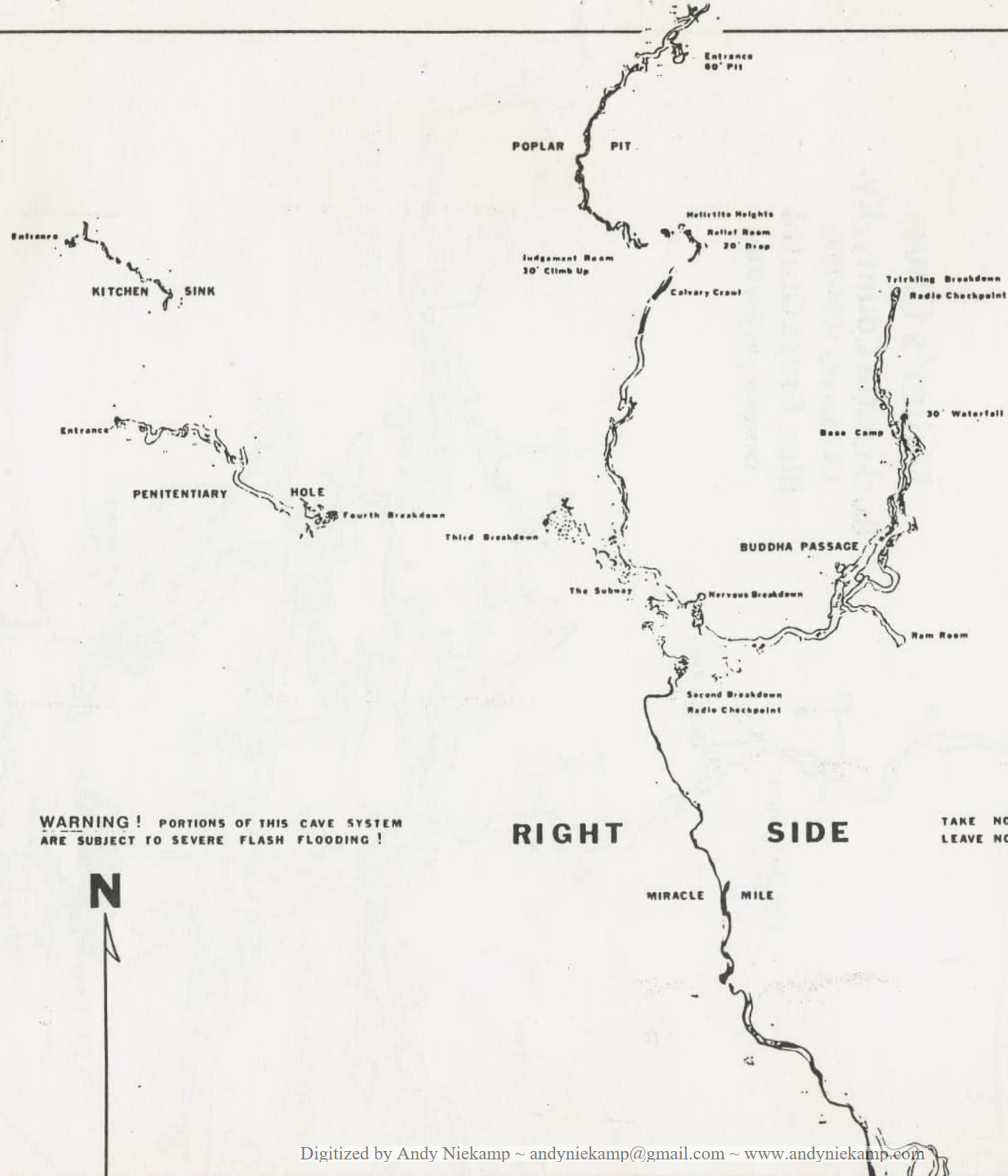
LEGEND	
• Waterflow	
• Ceiling Height (ft.)	
• Small Breakdown	
• Large Breakdown	
• Dome	
• Dome Height (ft.)	
• Slope	
• Ledge	
• Depression	
CAVE	LENGTH (ft.)
Goochland Right	22,322.8
Goochland Left	11,319.2
Penitentiary Hole	1,782.8
Kitchen Sink	982.7
Barn Sink	580.4

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1973 TO DECEMBER 1975.

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Cartography Mary Gratsch, Richard Sellers, Tim Ketterling
Compass Tim Ketterling, Pete Miller
Data Richard Sellers
Sketch Mary Gratsch
Tape Werner Jud, Mary Knasel, Pete Miller





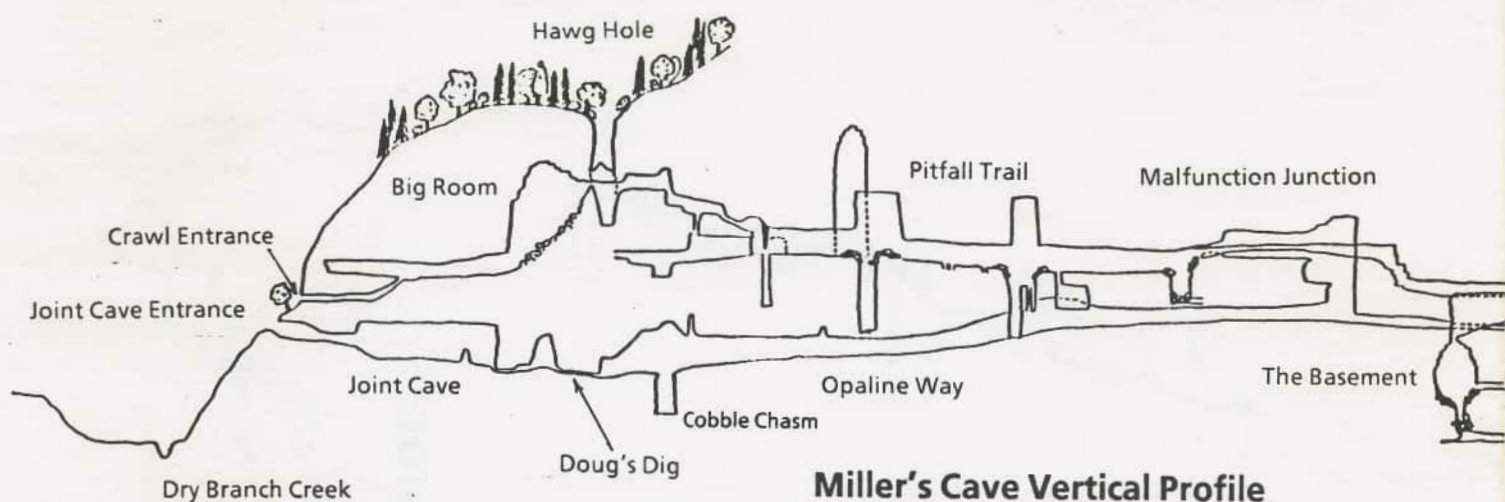
WARNING ! PORTIONS OF THIS CAVE SYSTEM
ARE SUBJECT TO SEVERE FLASH FLOODING !

RIGHT SIDE

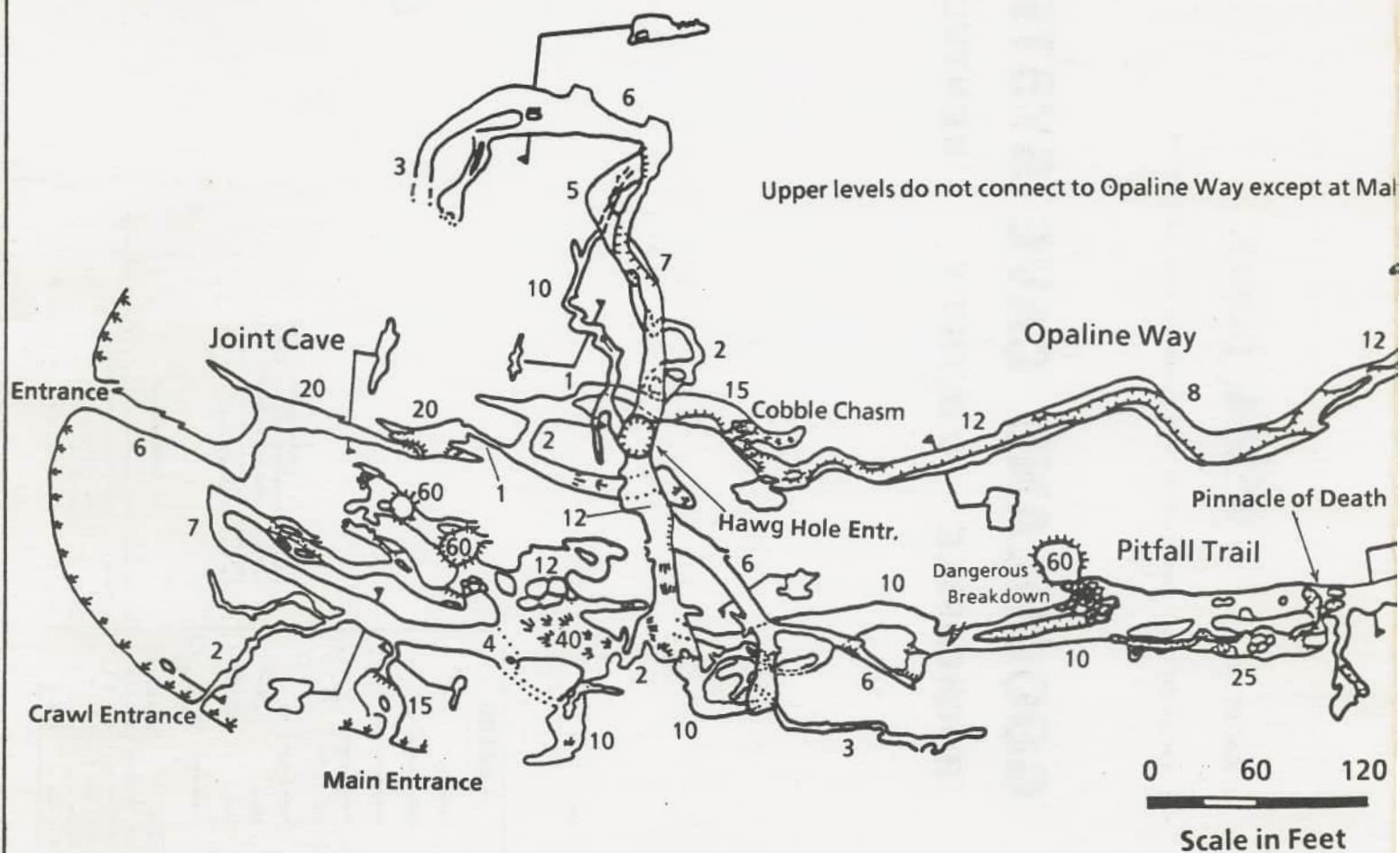
**TAKE NOTHING BUT PICTURES
LEAVE NOTHING BUT FOOTPRINTS**

N

Old Still Sight
Entrance
BARN SINK



Miller's Cave Vertical Profile
Exaggeration 3X



members of the Greater Cincinnati Grotto who were first to push through the breakdown into this amazingly long single stretch of cavern.

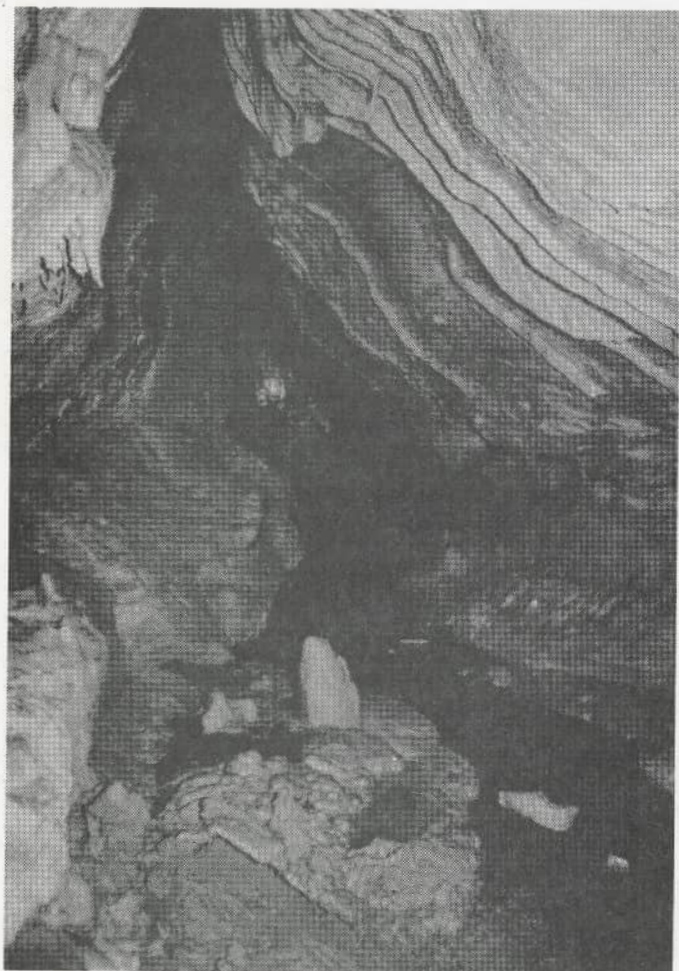
The Second Breakdown, rudely interrupting the entranced cave explorer, can be threaded with somewhat greater difficulty. The cave beyond becomes increasingly complex, wet, and miserable, most often a stoopway. The ultimate torture is the grim trial of Calvary Crawl, nearly 1000 feet of belly crawl on wet hard mud so slippery that often it is like crawling on Teflon -- the arms and legs are making the proper motions but the caver isn't going anywhere. Past the Calvary Crawl is the second entrance located to Goochland, a pit entrance. There are also reports of a fourth entrance.

The Right Side was surveyed and explored primarily by the GCG and SWORCA.

Goochland is, on both sides, a wet cave, requiring frequent immersion thigh-deep or higher. Exploration of the remoter passages requires stamina and adequate preparation. Although hypothermia can be a real danger, wet suits are unnecessary for most trips. A note of caution: As is the nature of most stream caves, this one floods! While drowning is not likely given the passage size and vertical

development, entrapment is quite possible. There are several locations where the ceiling and only possible route lie close to the normal water flow level, so that a rise of a few feet can block the way out. This is particularly true for the Right Side. Goochland responds fairly rapidly to precipitation. It is advisable to enter the cave only during fair weather.

The final stretch of road to the cave is very bad, passable only for people with 4WD or who don't care about their oil pans. Parking is rather limited -- please don't block the road, as it is used by dune buggies. Car pooling is recommended, to reduce the number of vehicles occupying space along the narrow road.



The "Tube," a long arduous canyon providing access to the main section of Goochland's Left Side. Photo by Steve Brown.



The main stream passage in Goochland's Left Side, scoured down to bare rock and grotesquely sculpted. Pictured: Steve Marple. Photo by Steve Brown.

Millers Cave

By Gary O'Dell NSS 10278

Miller's Cave is a very complex multi-level cave with five entrances, developed in the Ste. Genevieve and St. Louis limestones along the upper Crooked Creek drainage basin. Although exploration of this cavern began in 1971, an actual survey was not made until 1984. Primarily a horizontal dry cave, Miller's has numerous traverses, chimneys, and climbs required to negotiate the various levels; vertical gear, however, is not necessary except to reach the lowest stream level. It is an extremely challenging cave for the explorer.

Of the five known entrances, three are located in the hillside directly behind the owner's home. Additional entrances were created by 1984 excavations in two small caves located in the same ridge, Joint and BFR caves. As a result of these numerous entrances the explorer is seldom more than thirty minutes travel away from the outside, despite the complexity of the system.



Susan Haddix in the Joint Cave entrance to Miller's Cave. Photo by Gary O'Dell.

From the main, walk-in entrance 80 feet above the valley a loop leads in either direction to the "Big Room" of the cave. A squeeze at the top of the flowstone-cemented breakdown pile in this room emerges into a passage twenty feet wide and high; to the left can be seen daylight entering the cave through the "Hawg Hole" pit entrance which intersects this passage. Beyond are several passages which gradually become too tight to follow.

Just before the pit entrance, a side passage in the right wall leads to the major portion of the cave. Several small climbs of moderate difficulty lead from here to the "Pitfall Trail", 400 feet of aptly-named large walking passage that is pierced in dozens of locations by pits and crevices ranging from 10 to 40 feet in depth. CAUTION: THE MARGINS OF



Susan Haddix in the Loop Section of Miller's Cave, not far from the main entrance. Photo by Gary O'Dell.

SOME OF THESE PITS ARE SURROUNDED BY UNSTABLE, DANGEROUS BREAKDOWN!!

The worst of the traverses on the Pitfall Trail is called the "Pinnacle of Death". At this point two domepits, 30 feet deep, have coalesced to form a barrier completely across the passage, leaving only a narrow detached fragment between the two. One must traverse a narrow ledge along the wall of one pit, step across to the 2 x 2 foot square and balance, then step across to a climb upwards on the far wall of the pit. Adding to the interest while performing this feat is a sharp vertical stone needle in the pit beside the step across, apparently just waiting to impale the careless caver. On the far side are more deep crevices.

The Pitfall Trail terminates at Malfunction Junction, a multi-level intersection of numerous passageways and collapse that is highly confusing. Even those cavers who have made many trips through Miller's are often apt to get temporarily misplaced at this location. The sketch for the survey through here shows signs of acute frustration in attempting to depict the intricacies.

The upper route, along the right wall and weaving through the breakdown, is known as the "D-Survey". It leads ultimately to the 30-foot rappel into the "Basement", the lowest level of the cave. A major stream is present there. Along the D-Survey route, one of many similar small crawls follows an obscure, tortuous path to the large room in BFR Cave and to the outside.

Descending along the left wall from Malfunction Junction, the caver reaches a five-way intersection at Station C-23. A well-hidden crawl northwest from here intersects a series of short parallel passages with some very difficult climbs, and pops out into the D-Survey passage. West from C-23 is a dry and subjectively endless crawl, wide but very tight. Southwest from the intersection a



Along the Pitfall Trail in Miller's Cave, near the Pinnacle of Death crossing. Pictured: Gary O'Dell. Photo by Dave Black.

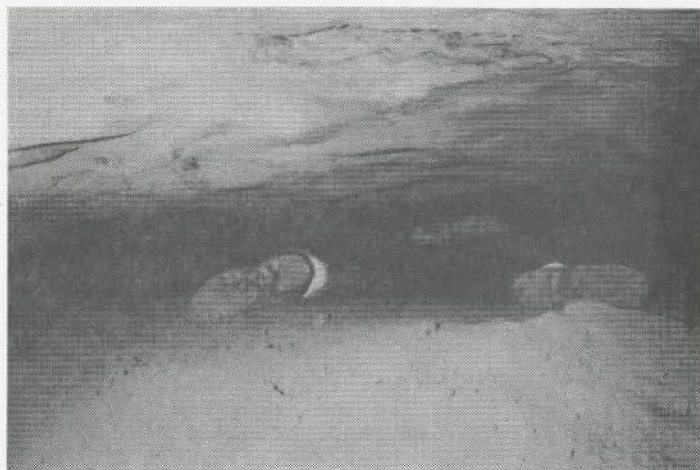
narrow canyon emerges into the Quagmire, and southeast from C-23 is Opaline Way.

The Quagmire is a winding vadose canyon that varies in width from about 6 inches to over 30 feet, with a fairly constant ceiling height at 40 feet overhead. It was almost completely filled by sediment at some time in the past, as evidenced by flowstone remnants hanging from the walls near the ceiling. Boot-sucking mud in some locations names the 500-foot passage. A simultaneous pinch and S-curve have barred further exploration from all but one small and thin caver, Doug Carroll, who reported that it opened up for a short distance before again constricting.

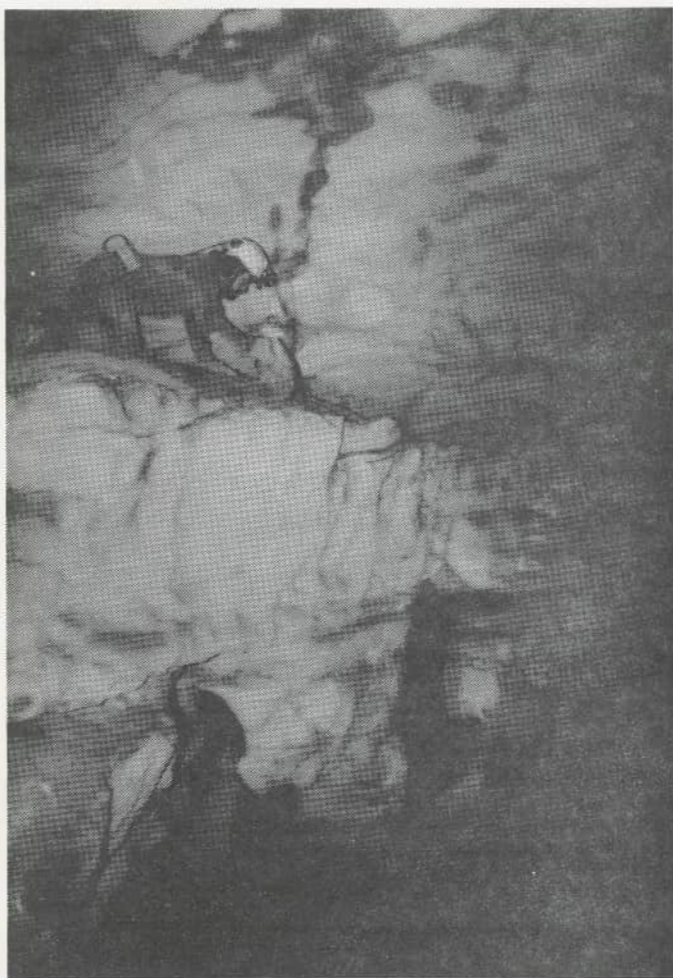
Opaline Way is the easiest passage to travel in the entire cave, being a 1000-foot stroll through an occasionally-decorated walking passage. One must pay for the pleasure, though, for it ends at a drop into an 18-foot pit. The walls of this pit are gravelly fill that crumbles easily; a descent is not recommended. Instead, the opposite side is gained by a traverse along a ledge at the ceiling level of the passage, on the left side. The walking passage ends abruptly 50 feet later. A very tight, 30-foot belly crawl dug in 1984 leads to Joint Cave and another entrance.

Cavers who visit either Miller's Cave or

Miller's Pit One should park across the road from the Miller Grocery. Oscar Miller is an interesting and affable person, and his tiny store carries a good stock of cold drinks and



The Joint Cave connection to Miller's Cave, excavated in 1984. Photo by Landrum Haddix.



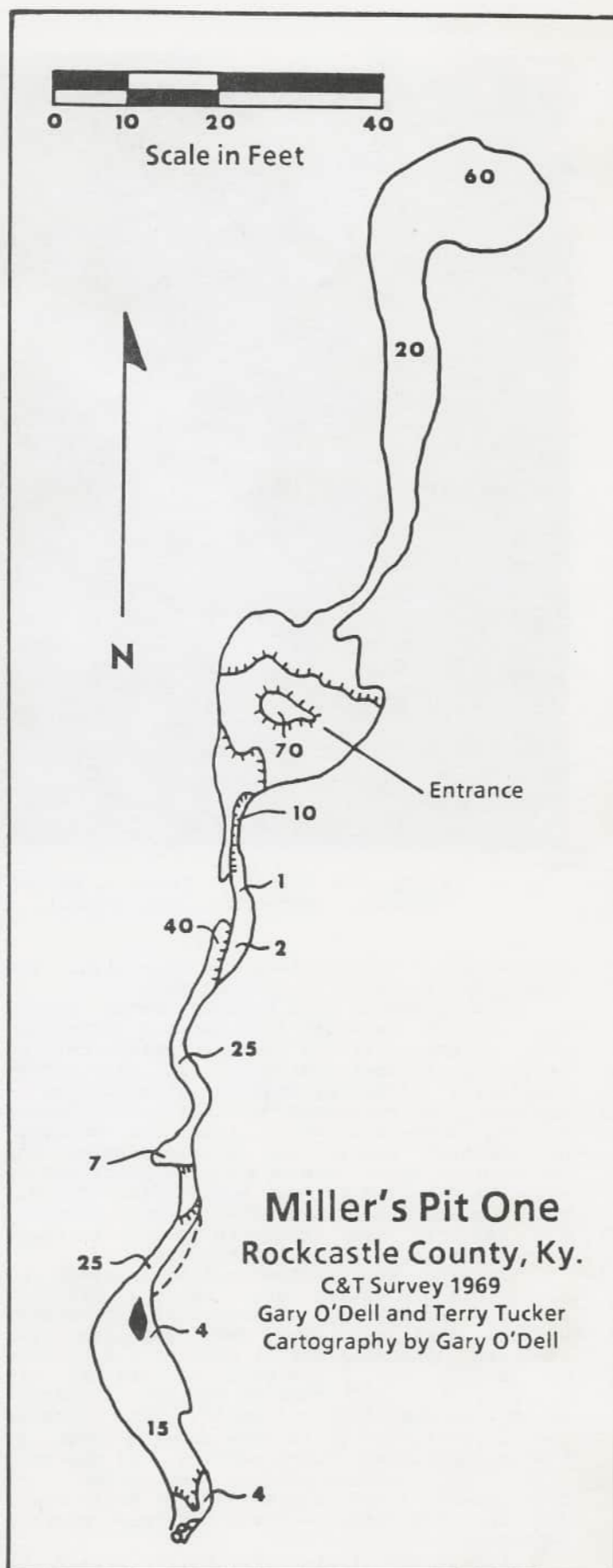
Kesler Stivers on the traverse over Cobble Chasm in Miller's Cave,, near the Joint Cave connection. Photo by Phil O'dell.

snacks suitable for cave trips. Attached to the barn adjacent to the store is an aptly-called tobacco "stripping room" which may be used for changing clothes. Please do not change outside, for exhibitionist cavers in the past once resulted in the closure of this significant cavern.

Despite being well-known for over a century and heavily visited by locals, Miller's Cave shows very little evidence of vandalism aside from minor graffiti. A son of the owner stated in 1984 that "...it wasn't right to take things out of caves..."

Millers Pit One By Gary O'Dell NSS 10278

This pit was pointed out by the owner in 1971, and prior to that time had not been descended. The entrance consists of a narrow slot, about 6 feet by 2 feet, in the bottom of one of two similar shallow, adjacent sinks. As both of these sinks overlie a dome, it is advisable to stay out of either unless rigged, for creation of a new entrance via a long drop



sans harness is not the best way to start a caving trip.

The entrance crevice bells out immediately to give a 70-foot, essentially free-fall drop into an impressive dome. This scenic dome is well worth the trouble to drop just to see, which is fortunate as there is very little additional cave present. Adjacent to the entry dome is a second dome of similar dimensions, having no opening to the surface. It is believed, but not determined, that this second dome underlies the other sink -- hence the cautionary statement.

About a hundred feet of muddy stoopway with occasional minor domes leads to a small room, the known ending. There are rumors of additional extant passage.

Parking for this pit cave is at the Miller Grocery.

Owens Saltpeter Cave By Gary O'Dell NSS 10278

This interesting cave is named for the late Tom Owens, one of the most fascinating and congenial residents of Crooked Creek. Tom always enjoyed having people stop by, to explore his cave or just to visit, to sit and while away an hour or so. He was always to be seen in the shade of his front porch, or in a chair before the barn, contentedly looking out upon the valley and the passers-by. Tom recalled for us his arrival in the valley in the late nineteenth century, as the youngest child of a dozen conveyed by a "covered" wagon. The valley seems a poorer place without his presence.

The cave entrance is located a short distance up the ravine behind the house. There are several shelter caves and blocked shafts along the path and nearby. Beside the residence is a spring house that has long been used for natural refrigeration of fruits and vegetables.

Owens Saltpeter Cave is generally a very dry and dusty cave, with deep, highly organic fill through the first section. It was never mined commercially, but, according to Tom,

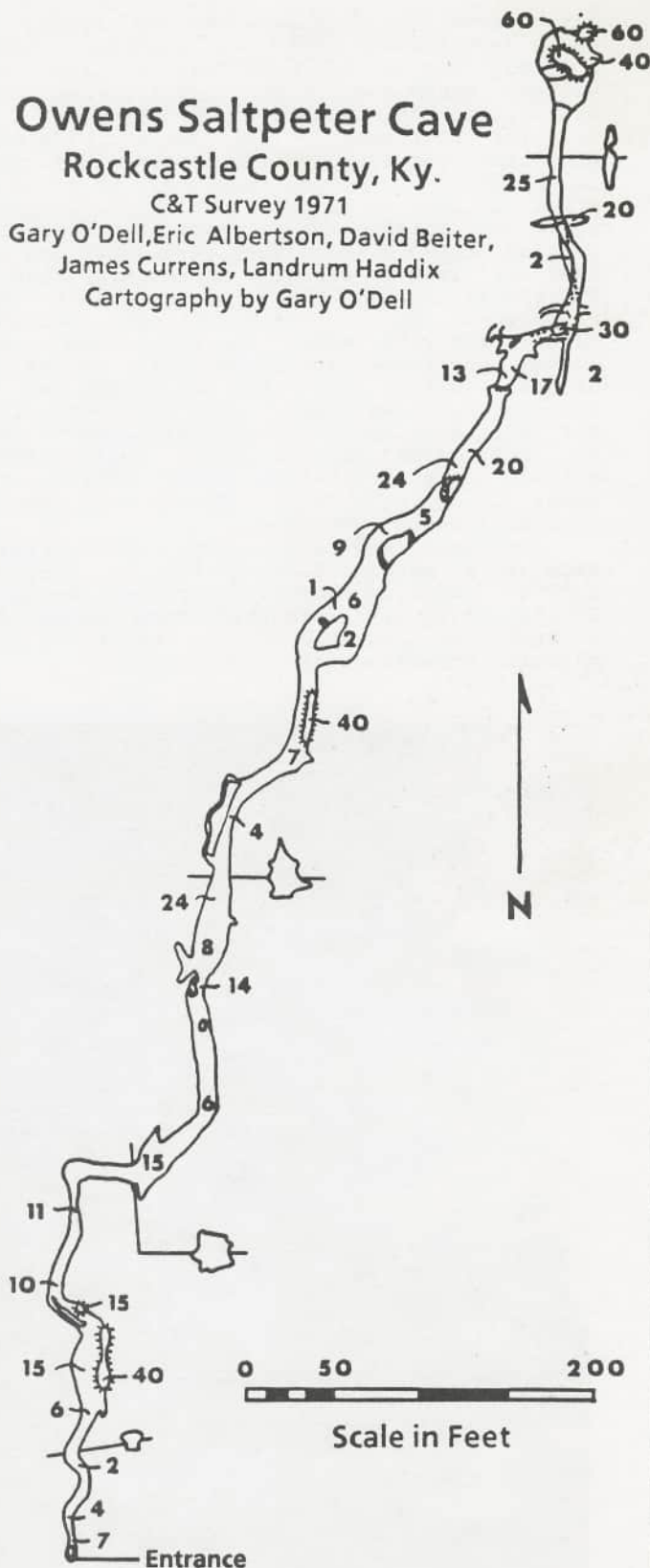


Susan Haddix emerging from the entrance crawl of Owens Saltpeter Cave. Photo by Gary O'Dell.

Owens Saltpeter Cave Rockcastle County, Ky.

C&T Survey 1971

Gary O'Dell, Eric Albertson, David Beiter,
James Currens, Landrum Haddix
Cartography by Gary O'Dell



nitre from the cave was used by locals in early days to make their own gunpowder. One, a Civil War veteran named Saxton, for this purpose mined small quantities from the cave well into the twentieth century.

The entrance precluded commercial mining of nitre, for although the opening is 7 feet in height, it drops immediately to a belly crawl 30 feet in length. This crawl opens again to sizable canyon passage, generally ranging from 8 to 40 feet in height and 15 feet or less in width. There are several additional places where short crawls are necessary. This passage continues, without significant side leads, for about 1000 feet. Along the route are a few short climbs of moderate difficulty. Tom Owens name can be found on the cave walls, with the dates 1910 and 1922; also appearing are the names of John F. and James Miller, dated 1915. These Millers were related to Oscar Miller, the owner of Miller's Cave. In one side passage is inscribed an 1890 date.

The main (and essentially, only) passage ends at a perpendicular joint; to continue further requires ascent of a rather exposed, 20-foot climb with less-than-ideal handholds. A belay is recommended for those lacking climbing experience or a long reach.



Gary O'Dell on the Standing Stone in the large dome at the end of Owens Saltpeter Cave. Photo by Landrum Haddix.

Those who do make this climb, however, are soon rewarded. Following a short stretch of rock-jammed passage, with a deep crevice to the left, one emerges into a large dome over 80 feet high and 30 feet wide. Water rains from the ceiling and disappears into the breakdown jumble. High above, unreachable passageway beckons. The most outstanding feature of this dome is the Standing Stone. An immense breakdown block occupies the center of the circular room, shaped and vertically placed exactly like a giant tombstone. It immediately demands attention.

From this dome are several low, unsurveyed leads. There certainly exists the potential for more passage in this cave.

Owens Saltpeter is fairly easy to explore. The few crawls and the exposed climb just before the dome are the only difficulties of this 1,300 foot cavern. Due to the extremely dusty conditions in much of the cavern, persons with respiratory ailments or allergies are advised to avoid the cave or carry a dust mask.

Pine Hill Cave

By Thomas Cottrell NSS 11000

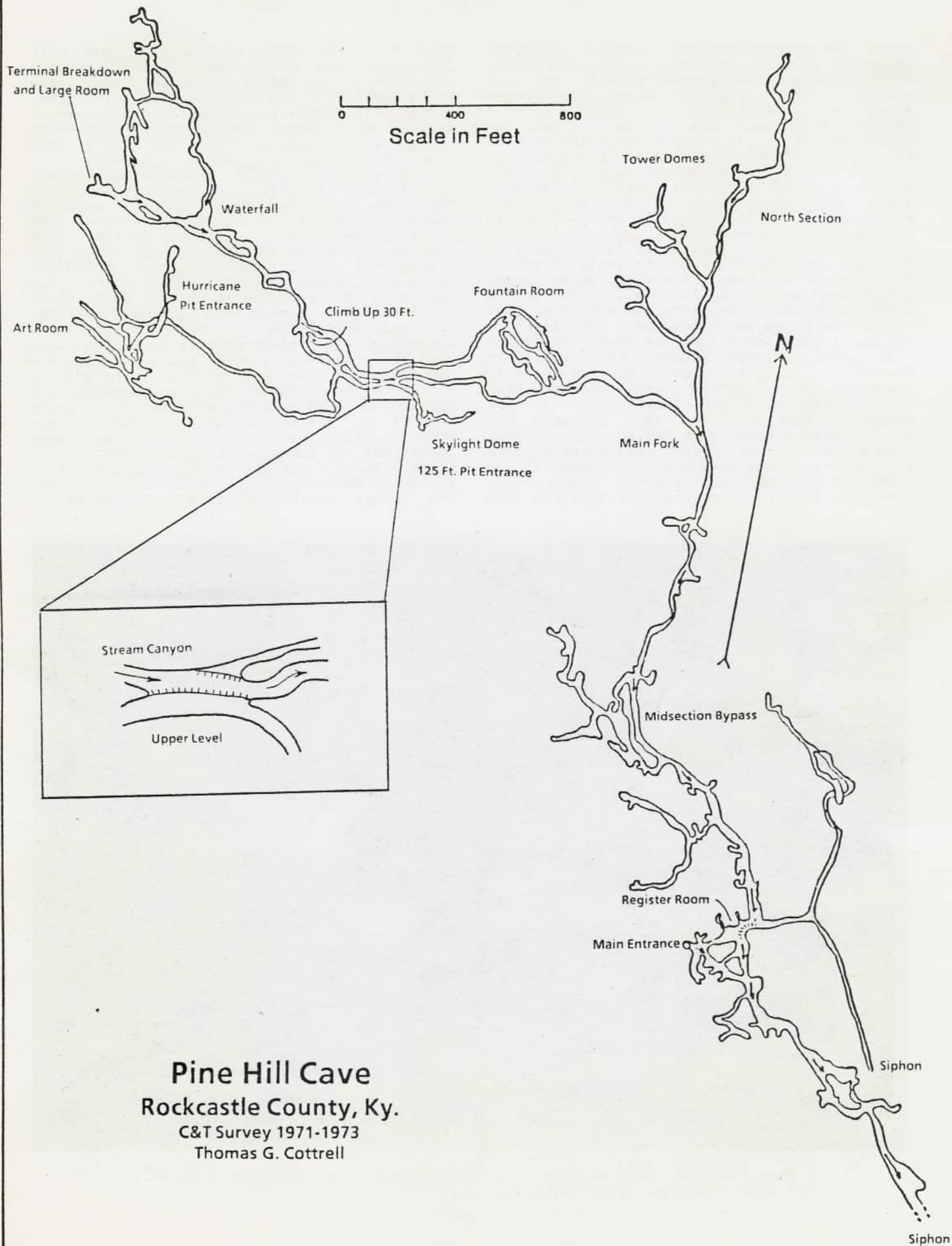
Pine Hill Cave has a large impressive walk-in entrance. The arch is about 40 feet high and 20 feet wide, and may be the best looking entrance in Rockcastle County. From Mt. Vernon, Kentucky, follow U.S. Route 25 south to the former Pine Hill School which is now a church and a residence. A trail leads down to the dry stream bed and the entrance. Since the cave is very close to the highway, it is quite well known and easily accessible. Although all the local people know of the cave, they rarely visit it. Pine Hill Cave is heavily traveled and very popular with many Boy Scouts, high school groups, college geology groups, and others from both Kentucky and Ohio.

The owner of the cave either lives in Michigan or is a lawyer in Mt. Vernon, Kentucky. There has never been a problem with the owner about visiting the cave as far as I know.

There is a story of a former owner building a dam near the entrance. He was going to get rich with a fishing pay-lake, but obviously his dam, built over porous limestone, never held water. During heavy rains the dam fills to overflowing and only then does water rush into the normally dry entrance of Pine Hill Cave.

In 1968 Bob Eggers showed me Pine Hill. I had been crawling around in Carter County and I was impressed. No one knew of a map other than a 1962 sketch by Russell and Costello, and so from 1971 to 1973 Pine Hill Cave became my pet project. I was trained in surveying techniques by CRF and Central Ohio Grotto members and as a high school teacher, I found many recruits for a weekend adventure in the Kentucky underground. After 28 survey trips we had accumulated 28,489.6 feet of cave (5.4 miles), and we were lucky enough to find some virgin cave, too.

The main passage of Pine Hill Cave is

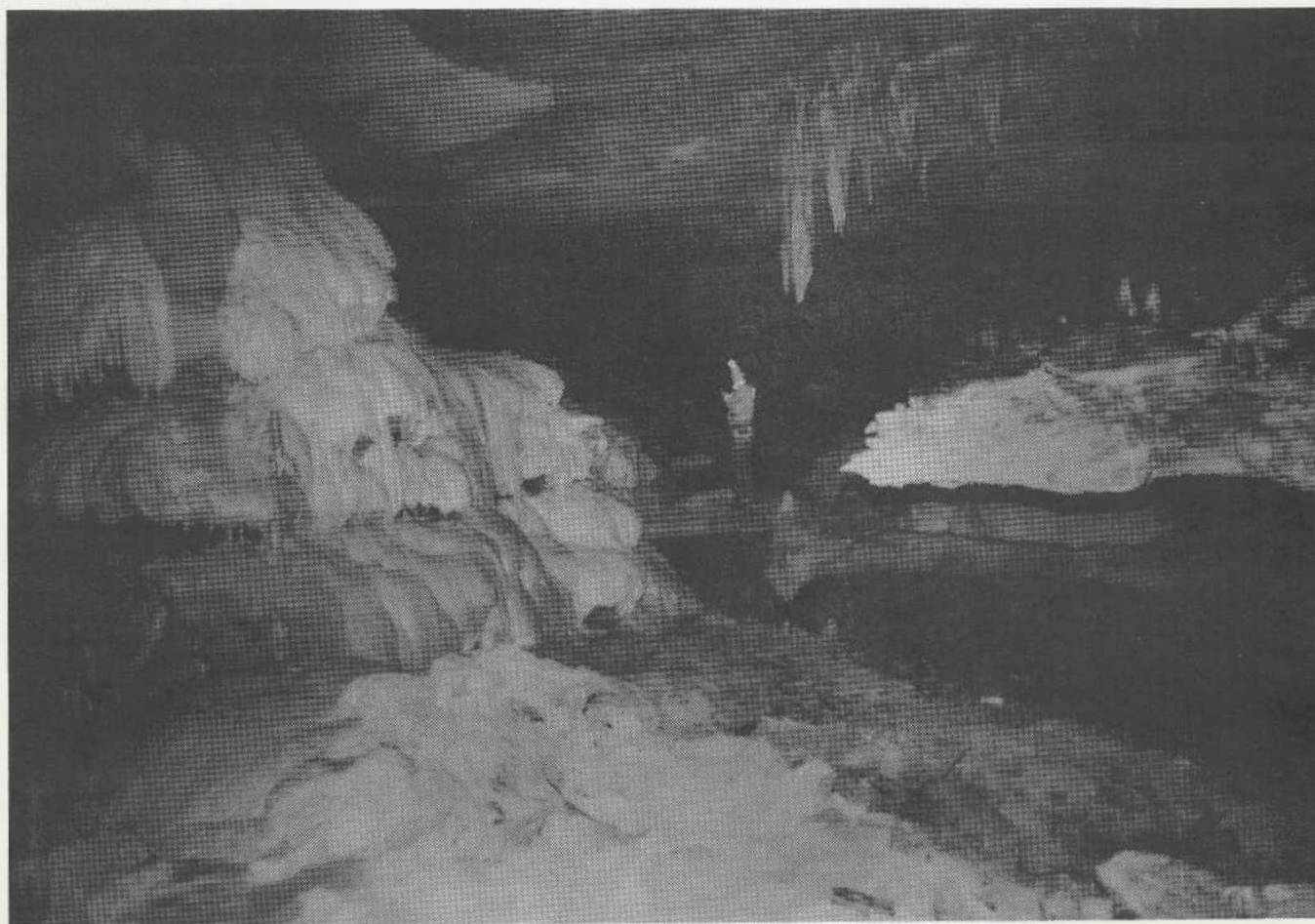


about one mile long from upstream terminal breakdown to the downstream siphon and trends from northwest to southeast parallel to the valley. Other passages trend north-south along two side valleys. A deeply incised valley seems to block all passages at the northwest end. The Large Room in the cave is the last 400 feet of the main passage and is 40 feet wide by 20 to 30 feet high. The main stream in the cave comes out of breakdown about 300 feet north of the Large Room. The stream forms a beautiful falls and pool as it enters the main passage.

Downstream the passage is 15 feet wide by 40 feet high as the water actively downcuts the floor, and there is a wider upper level meandering about 25 feet up. The stream follows the main passage to the east for 2000 feet, then turns south for about 2000 feet. A smaller stream joins from the west. In summer this water is notably warmer than the main stream. In this midsection are several fragments of a former large passage each filled with clay and flowstone. In the Register Room near the main entrance the stream takes a sharp left and shortly a right into a clean, round, 8-foot tube which siphons in 250 feet. The stream emerges again in the southeast section and siphons again in a passage 4 feet high by 20 feet wide about 1000

feet from the main entrance. From this downstream end of Pine Hill Cave it is only 800 feet to the end of Blue Hole Cave. The Bluegrass Grotto has surveyed Blue Hole Cave, and its Pine Hill-like passage takes the water another mile where it emerges in the very impressive resurgence which then flows into Sinks of Roundstone.

Pine Hill Cave has three entrances and 150 feet of vertical relief. The hillside northwest of the main walk-in entrance contains the two vertical entrances. The Skylight Dome is a pit entrance 125 feet deep located above the cemetery to the right just inside the trees among some small boulders. Be careful, there are often people below. The Hurricane Pit entrance is to the west about 1000 feet but is much more difficult to find. It was discovered by some Dayton Area Speleological Society members in winter when they saw a flume of steam. Leaves thrown into the hole were blown back out by a strong wind, hence the name. The entrance is climbable but the 20 foot high bell shaped room with a tight squeeze at the top should be rigged to get down. This part of the cave has some formations and domes but is also tight and not often visited. To get to Skylight Dome from inside go upstream in the Register Room, take the Bypass to the left in the midsection of



A huge flowstone mass in Pine Hill Cave, in the large breakdown room near the left terminus. Photo by Steve Brown.

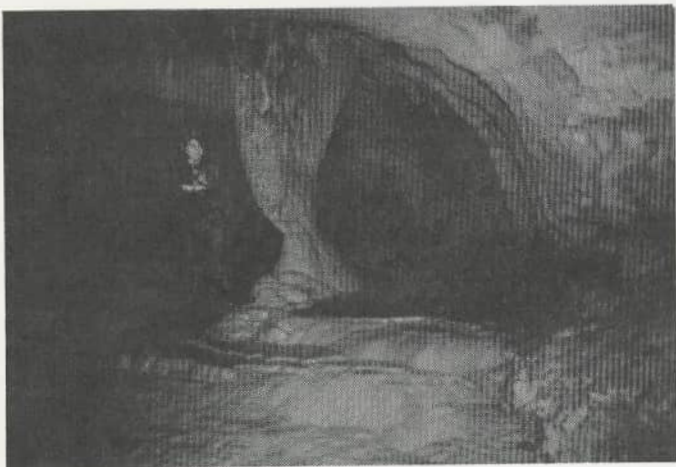
the cave, go left at the Main Fork, then 1200 feet west to the Junction Room which has high overlooks. Go to the left wall, left again, forward and up on top of the huge block, and up into the passage. From this point on be careful of slopes that drop 30 feet to the stream canyon below. Follow the ledge on the right to a right turn. At the first junction go left up the mud slope and forward to a belly crawl to Skylight Dome.

Another interesting feature of Pine Hill Cave is its many domes. There are at least 24 scattered throughout the cave. There are three above the waterfall, and another impressive series in the Tower Domes north of the Main Fork in the second passage on the left. Some may be over 150 feet high.

As you slog through the many pools and drag your body through the several crawls you may also come across some of the biological residents. To mention a few, there are pack rats, blind crayfish, two kinds of salamander, many isolated bats, many small beetles, crickets, spiders, moths, worms, etc., and all the tiny creatures. There are nice fossil corals, some crinoids, and much chert in the upstream area. Many of the side passages are interesting and worth investigating. Pine Hill is known more for passage size rather than for its formations, but there are stalagmites in the Art Room, a large flowstone mass in the Large Room, and many more formations scattered throughout the cave.

Flooding may be a problem downstream from the Main Entrance since there are tree trunks around and a railroad tie wedged into the ceiling, but on a trip with two feet of water rushing into the entrance, the upstream area was unaffected. There are lots of pools in Pine Hill Cave, usually knee deep, and you come out with clean shoes. You can rush in and out in an hour, but to see the more than five miles of passage will take considerably longer and provide much more enjoyment.

(Reprinted from 1985 NSS Convention Guidebook, by permission Thomas E. Cottrell)



Elaine Oberle in the Fountain Room of Pine Hill Cave. Photo by Steve Brown.

Sinks of the Roundstone Cave

By Jack Hissong NSS 16422

Sinks of the Roundstone Cave is the fourth longest cave in Rockcastle County and is well known and frequently visited by locals, cavers, youth groups, and college students.

Sinks is also known as Mullins Station Cave, which is the railroad name for this area, and the name by which most of the locals refer to the cave. There is plenty of evidence that the early railroad workers enjoyed the cave. The west entrance is right along the L&N tracks, and inside that entrance has been found a water barrel where the workers laying the track and building the tunnel rested and sipped the cool water. Several of their old kerosene lantern pots have been preserved at the entrance for visitors to see as part of the cave's early history. Details of any earlier discovery or usage of the cave have not been uncovered although the cave has been well-known for a long time. It is publicly owned with open access as a part of the Daniel Boone National Forest.

The Greater Cincinnati Grotto did a survey of the cave in 1978, improving on the original 1960 survey of the cave by Russell and Costello. The Bluegrass Grotto has done some survey work there as well. Most of the cave is large and easily accessible so there are no great discovery stories. A couple of new rooms, crawlways, and passages have been opened recently, but for the most part, all sections of the cave have seen a lot of caver traffic.

The cave has an overall length of 13,576 feet surveyed. At the west end of the cave is the main entrance where a stream enters the cave. These waters are the same that flow through the larger Pine Hill Cave, resurge at Blue Hole, flow on the surface for a half mile, and then go underground at Sinks. The main entrance is really a cluster of five entrances, any one of which may be used to enter the cave. Most of the western half of the cave consists of very large spacious rooms. The cave can be very easy or difficult, depending on what you want. If you stick to the main large bore, it is the simplest cave you can find. But if you stray to the north or west you can find some things that require rigging unless you go out of your way to find something. If you go into the southern passages, you will get wet as the water is frequently 20 feet deep there. This water route is subject to quick flooding during heavy rains, and we've seen the water come up 30 feet in a couple of hours. People have been trapped in this cave. It floods from two sources -- the stream going into the cave entrance, and from a tall waterfall in the middle of the cave. When the water level is extremely low, it is possible to come out the seldom used southeast entrance on Roundstone Creek. There are no significant formations. The cave has more than its share of litter and graffiti because a lot of locals

Sinks of the Roundstone Cave

Rockcastle County, Ky.

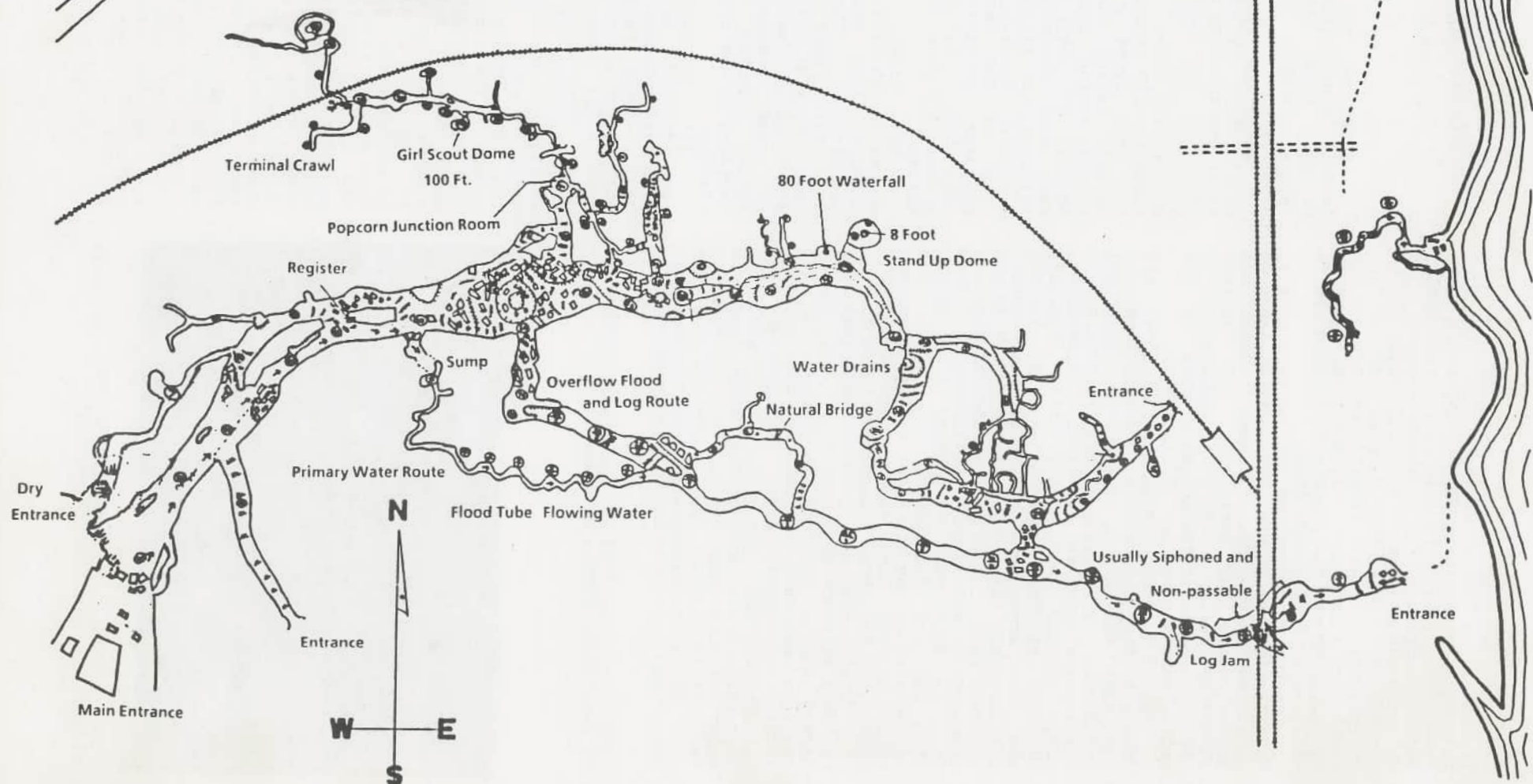
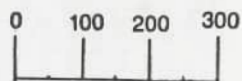
C&T Survey 1978

Jack Hissong, Dean Kenty, Sandra Hissong,

Fred Eichler, Tim Schafstall

-Greater Cincinnati Grotto-

SCALE IN FEET





Flood route tunnel in Sinks of the Roundstone Cave. Photo by Steve Brown.

use it as a party place.

The fourth railroad crossing from Highway Route 25 is a better place to park than the third crossing, because there have been some break-ins at the third crossing.

(Reprinted from the 1985 NSS Convention Guidebook, by permission Jack Hissong)

Sinks of the Roundstone Pit

Sinks of the Roundstone Pit is found on the ridge above the main entrance to Sinks of the Roundstone Cave and is quite visible from the road. The opening is situated on the contact between the Pennington Sandstone and the Upper Newman Limestone. A few large blocks of sandstone are suspended over the pit.

The actual drop is 110 feet to the breakdown below. A small wet crawlway at the bottom trends to the east where it presumably enters the body of water flowing into Sinks of the Roundstone Cave.

(Adapted from Caves of Rockcastle County, Kentucky (1972) by James Rebmam and Gary O'Dell)



Sinks of the Roundstone Pit. Photo by James R. Rebmam.

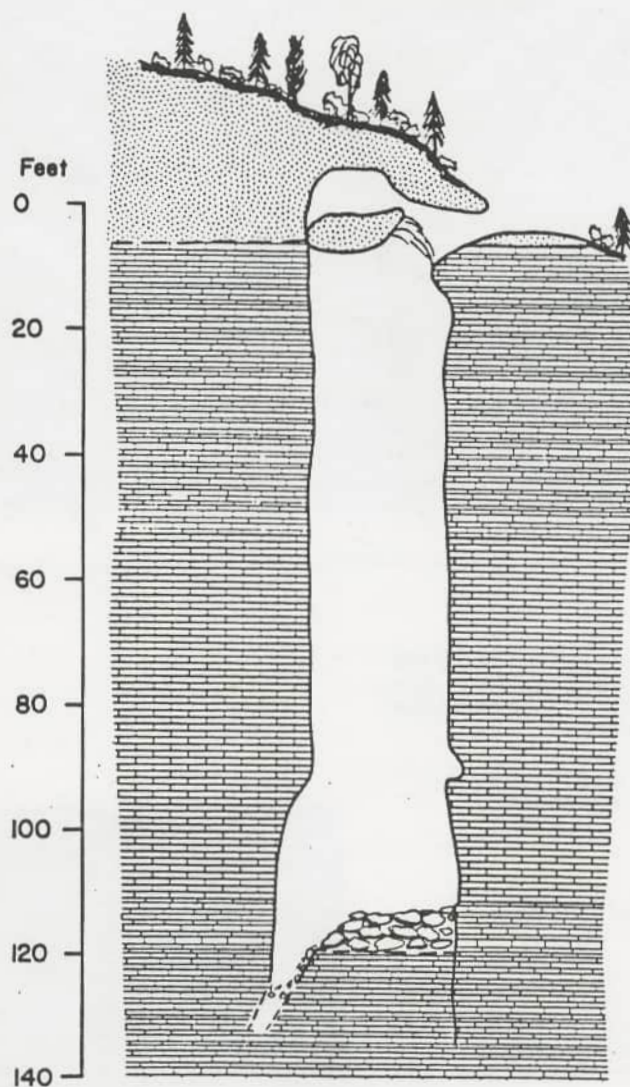
Sinks of the Roundstone Pit

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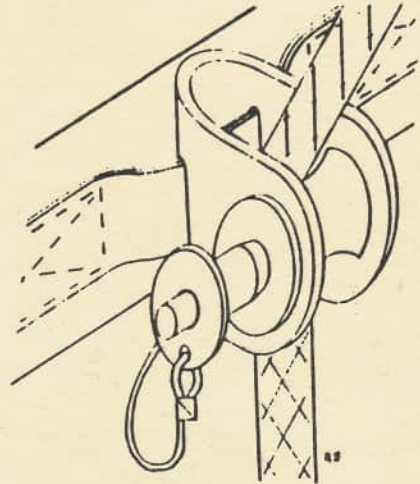
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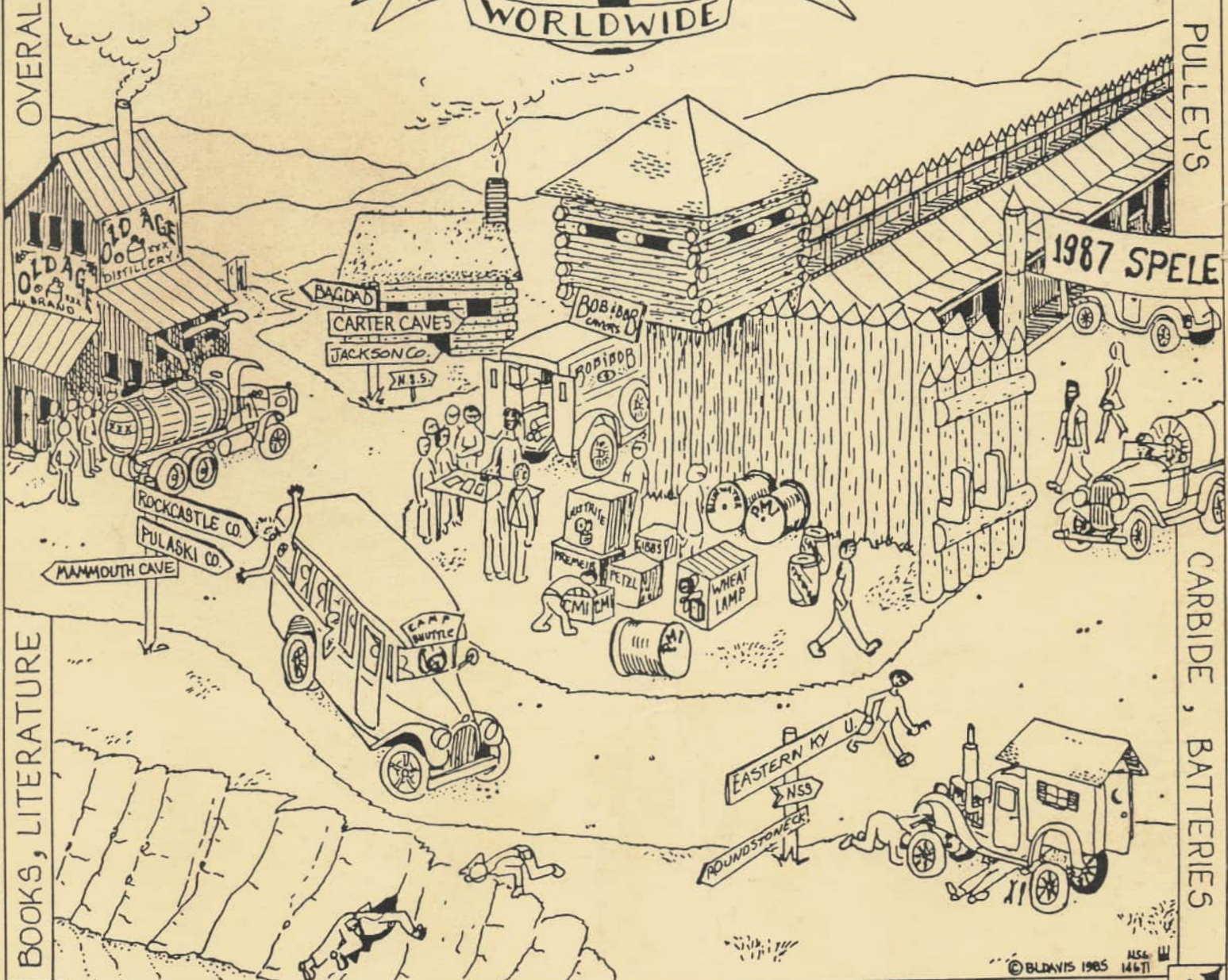
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