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The American Spelean History Association (ASHA) is an Internal Organization of the National Speleological Society and exists for the study, dissemination and interpretation of spelean history, and related purposes. All persons who are interested in these goals are cordially invited to become members. Dues are $2 per issue of The Journal of Spelean History. Dues can be paid for up to 20 issues ($40). Checks should be made payable to “ASHA” and mailed to the treasurer.

The Journal of Spelean History

The Journal of Spelean History (JSH) is the Association’s publication and is mailed to all members. JSH includes articles covering a wide variety of topics relating to man’s use of caves, including historical cave explorations, saltpeter and other mineral extraction, and show cave development. Members are invited to contribute material and to comment on published material. ASHA assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

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Cover: Knoxville caver Jim Whidby is seen posing in the entrance of the remnant section of Lookout Mountain Cave near I-24. Note the diesel residue on the cave walls. Photo by Larry O. Blair, October 10, 1981.
Cave Rescues and Incidents in Indiana Caves, a Historical Look

John M. Benton

Down through the years, Indiana has seen its share of cave rescues and incidents. This talk reviews some of those rescues/incidents that appeared in the media, mostly in print, but also on TV, radio, and a few on the national scope. Most have ended with the cavers or spelunkers in good shape, but there have been at least 8 fatalities, 3 suicides and some broken bones and medical attention required. There seemed to be a spike from the early 1980’s until about 2000 when over half the recorded incidents occurred. Besides humans, numerous animals have been rescued including horses, deer, buffalo, goats, dogs, but so far no Corvettes (as in KY!).
Castle Rock, Pennsylvania: The Cave, the Myth, and the Legend
Bert Ashbrook

Castle Rock is a rocky pinnacle in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, about 15 miles west of Philadelphia. It is the site of several small talus caves, although a larger talus cave seems to have been quarried away in 1904. Legend has it that Castle Rock Cave was the hideout of James Fitzpatrick, a Tory highwayman and kidnapper who terrorized the area during the Revolutionary War. Fitzpatrick, who was eventually apprehended and hanged for his crimes in 1778, has since been mythologized into a romantic outlaw hero. The story that Fitzpatrick used Castle Rock Cave did not emerge until 1895; however, it quickly gained widespread acceptance and persists to this day. Early on, the story was perhaps spread to entice visitors to ride a trolley from Philadelphia to Castle Rock Park, an amusement park that the Philadelphia and West Chester Traction Co. opened at the site in 1899. The history of Castle Rock Cave involves not only the Fitzpatrick legend, the amusement park, and the quarry, but also historical fiction novels, a religious retreat, and the boom-and-bust real estate market of the 1920s and the Great Depression.

Dungeon Rock, Lynn, Essex County, Massachusetts
Jack Speece

Dungeon Rock in Lynn, Massachusetts, has been well known landmark for centuries. Pirates were reported to have buried their booty there in 1658. Several attempts have been made to uncover this treasure but none more notable that that of Hiram and Edwin Marble beginning in 1852. Today the cave remains locked within the Lynn Woods Reserve.

Postponing Death in Mammoth Cave
Stanley D. Sides

Mammoth Cave owner John Croghan, M.D. placed invalids suffering from tuberculosis in his cave for therapeutic benefit in 1842-1843. This experiment in speleotherapy failed to improve survival of those who braved living in the cave, but was initially hailed as a sensible approach to treating the disease. A recently discovered newspaper article from the Boston Massachusetts Evening Transcript, July 10, 1843,
gives us, for the first time, a complete listing of the consumptives who resided in the
cave. In addition, Oliver Anderson’s measurements of distances while a resident in the
cave have been found. This allows us to pinpoint the location of his cabin in Pensacola
Avenue. This report will summarize new information on the experiment and provide
deeper insight into Dr. Croghan’s famed medical experiment.

Natural Bridge of Virginia: A Touchstone of American History, Culture, and Tourism
Ernst H. Kastning

The Natural Bridge, a massive karst feature located in the historic Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, is one of the most recognized and visited geologic landmarks in the country. The towering 90-foot-wide arch that spans Cedar Creek 200 feet below is an iconic symbol of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In 1774, Thomas Jefferson became the first owner of the bridge and surrounding land. In the succeeding 240 years, Natural Bridge has been in private hands. On February 6, 2014 Angelo Puglisi, the last private owner, sold or donated much of the land to the Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund, a non-profit holding company that will manage the property. Within a few years the arch and its karstic landscape will become Natural Bridge State Park, a jewel in the system.

The history and culture of American tourism over the last 200 years is encapsulated at Natural Bridge. Before the age of photography, painters and illustrators captured the iconic arch on canvas and paper. Appearing in books and journals throughout America and Europe, images and descriptions of the early nineteenth century inspired many to visit, in much the same way as happened at Niagara Falls, in the mountains of New York and New England, and at Mammoth Cave. Natural Bridge became a destination resort, first in the horse-drawn carriage days and later with the advent of autotourism. In microcosm, the evolution of hotels and other amenities at the site is representative of the development of tourism at natural attractions nationwide.

Israel Putnam, a Wolf, a Cave, and a Bronze Tablet
Ernst H. Kastning

Putnam’s Wolf Den is a small 28-foot-long cave in the Town of Pomfret, Windham County, in northeastern Connecticut. Locally it is a well-known landmark within Mashamoquet Brook State Park.
Israel Putnam is regarded as a notable hero of the American Revolution, specifically at the Battle of Bunker Hill. In his twenties, Putnam and local farmers followed a female wolf to its lair, a small talus cave. The wolf, supposedly the last she-wolf in Connecticut had been killing sheep and other farm animals, so it became ‘necessary’ to do away with it. In this much-ballyhooed tale, Putnam crawled into the cave in the winter of 1742 and shot the animal with his musket. His cohorts pulled him from the cave with a rope attached to his feet. He emerged pulling the dead wolf by its ears and was proclaimed a local hero. This event followed Putnam admirably during his later life and it has become legendary folklore.

In 1920, an embossed bronze tablet had been affixed to the rock just to the right of the cave entrance, in honor of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and to commemorate the wolf incident. It was stolen around 1967 and considered gone forever. Then serendipitously in late November 2013, the tablet came up for sale on eBay. The recovery of the tablet by cavers and authorities was swift and the event made national news - another victory associated with the legacy of Putnam and the little Wolf Den.

History of the NSS Headquarters Property Before 1900

Charles A. Lundquist
William W. Varnedoe

The NSS Headquarters property is located west of the intersection of Pulaski Pike and Winchester Road in Huntsville, Alabama, on the eastern slope of Drake (King) Mountain. The history of the Ownership of the property falls conveniently into five pre-NSS periods of significant length. The first three periods, discussed in this part of a two-part history, ended in 1899. During Period One, the Cherokee Period that embraces the time immediately before 1806, the land that is now NSS property belonged to the Cherokee Nation. After the United States acquired the land in northern Alabama by the Treaty of 1806 with the Cherokees, the land was for sale by the U.S. government. Period Two, the Smith Period, began in 1817 when Anthony Smith, an early settler in the region, obtained the first patent for land, which is now owned by the NSS. Pulaski Pike was already one of a few major roads into Huntsville. Anthony Smith lived on the east side of Pulaski Pike across from the NSS land. His son, James S. Smith, acquired the land and eventually sold it in 1835. After some brief ownerships, Period Three, the Wharton Period, began in 1839 when George R. Wharton bought his first parcel of land. He later bought several adjacent parcels. The Wharton Period continued until 1899 when the Wharton heirs sold the land. This long period encompassed many events in the War Between the States and Reconstruction thereafter.
History of the NSS Headquarters Property After 1900

William W. Varnedoe
Charles A. Lundquist

In 1900 after the Wharton heirs sold their land, Part II of the history of the National Speleological Society (NSS) property, located west of the intersection of Pulaski Pike and Winchester Road, begins. This land then passed briefly through several owners until 1909, beginning **Period Four**, when Cynthia A. Davis obtained it. This began the Davis Period. Shortly in 1909, Cynthia gave the land to her two daughters, Annie Buell Davis and Nellie Davis. These unmarried sisters, who lived some distance south of this land, held it until 1972. They owned it when, in 1950, Wernher von Braun and his rocket team arrived in Huntsville initiating a remarkable growth of Huntsville. Land, previously rural, including the NSS property, rapidly became incorporated into the City. In 1972, the Davis sisters sold this land to the Ancient Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, for their Temple, beginning **Period Five**, the Cahaba Temple Period. During this period, from 1972 to 2012, the Shriners built and extended major structures and ground improvements to accommodate both their many activities and those of other organizations to whom they rented or loaned the facilities. Also, during this period, two caves were discovered and mapped by NSS members in the heavily wooded mountainside. When the scope of the Shriners’ activity and their membership waned, in 2012 the NSS bought the property. In the short time since NSS ownership, a rough trail has been blazed and cleared from the building to the two caves. Other caves have been found recently on the property.

CIVIL WAR SOLDIER NAMES IN A MARYLAND CAVE

Marion O. Smith

About December 2006, Charles J. Mock, NSS 42159, of Augusta, Georgia, sent me a copy of his great great great grandfather William Nelson Jackson’s Civil War journal. Jackson (December 22, 1827-November 20, 1902) was a summer 1862 recruit in Company E, 19th Indiana Infantry.

Jackson’s unit took part in the battles of South Mountain and Antietam. By September 19, 1862, after it was apparent that the Confederates had withdrawn, the 19th Indiana marched through the latter battlefield to a camp at a “beautiful grove . . . near Sharpsburg.” They stayed there ten days when they “moved about 2 miles further down and near the river,” where “from a hill nearby” they had a “grand view of both [West] Virginia and Maryland, the spires of Shepardstown” being “visible and a wide
scope of country on the [West] Virginia side of the Potomac.” They remained in this camp until October 26.²

During the afternoon of October 6, 1862, Jackson and two friends from his company, William H. Frownfelter and Henry C. Marsh, had time to investigate some of the local terrain. They “visited a cave nearby, we went in about 100 ft, it is not wide but appears to be the entrance to one larger, by crawling through a narrow hole we could have gone further. We then took a bath in the Potomac River.”³

The next day Jackson reported that he and the same two companions explored “two caves” and “got some specimens of Crystalized lime. It is wonderful to thus be able to see some of the curiosities hid in the bowels of the earth, these crystals are in every form, mostly fluted columns, a great deal is like honey comb. I like this kind of work it is exciting. Hen. Marsh is in height of his glory crawling in every crevice hunting for specimens.”⁴

What caves did Jackson and his buddies visit? I posed the question to my old NSSer pal Terry L. “Monk” McClanathan of Smithsburg, Maryland. On January 17, 2007, he suggested that the best prospect for the cave Jackson and fellow soldiers first entered was Snyders Landing Cave, because the “description fits” and it had “a constriction at about a hundred feet in with a small room beyond.” I relayed this information to Charles J. Mock and there the investigation stopped.⁵

But, years later, May 3, 2014, on a visit to the western Maryland-eastern West Virginia panhandle region, “Monk” and I toured a few caves and cave features near Sharpsburg on the Washington County, Maryland, side of the Potomac. The first was Snyders Landing Cave No. 1, the one “Monk” thought was the most likely candidate for Jackson, Frownfelter, and Marsh’s October 6, 1862, investigation. The ten foot high by five foot wide bluff entrance indeed led to a hundred feet of walking passage to a low constriction. There, and for a few dozen feet back toward the entrance, we scoured the walls for Civil War graffiti. While we did not find Jackson and his friends’ names, we did record soldier scratchings:

```
“R. Neff Oct 12. 1862
1.55 Regt PV”
“CWT”
“Benj Turner
Co G 19 Inda”
“1862 A M? S onn?d
19?”
“Co C 134 PV”

“T C Nov 16 1862”
“________ Bices”
“WWP 1862”
“A W Ogborn
19 Ind Co B”
“123 E.U. Bragden
Allagheny 1862 Pa”
```

Since two or more of the soldier visitors were from the 19th Indiana, even though they were from different companies, that was to me good enough evidence that this was the cave which Jackson and others entered on their first spelean excursion.⁶
“Monk” and I continued downriver another half mile or so to the two (eight foot wide by ten foot high and eight foot high by three foot wide) entrances of Snyders Landing Cave No. 2. This cave is probably what Jackson called “two caves” on October 7, 1862. The two entrances are only a few feet apart and inside are connected by a tight crawl only small children can fit through. This No. 2 cave is longer, 200 plus feet, more crawly and complex than No. 1. However, we found no Civil War inscriptions.7

The 19th Indiana Infantry, originally mustered in July 29, 1861, was part of the Fourth (“Iron”) Brigade, First Division, First Army Corps. Subsequently, it was engaged in a number of battles, especially the first day at Gettysburg, where it suffered heavy casualties as it was pushed back from the vicinity of Seminary Ridge to Cemetery Ridge. Ultimately, the men who reenlisted as “veterans” were in October 1864 consolidated with the 20th Indiana Infantry.8

Jackson was born in Greenup County, Kentucky, but by the 1840s he moved, probably with his parents, to Muncie, Delaware County, Indiana, where he remained the rest of his life. On May 12, 1850, he married Sarah Leonard Collins and ultimately they had eight children. He apparently did not reenlist as a “veteran” and expected to be discharged July 29, 1864, when the non-veterans’ term of enlistment was up. But he for some reason was held in service and was still on duty October 13, 1864.9

Marsh and Frownfelter were also recruits from Delaware County, joining the 19th Indiana respectively November 25, 1861, and August 29, 1862. According to the regiment’s roster Frownfelter died of some undisclosed cause just over two months later, November 6. Jackson’s journal offers no statement on this event.10

“W W P 1862” in Snyders Landing Cave No. 1 was possibly signed by William W. Payton of Company K, 19th Indiana, another resident of Delaware County, who was transferred to the 20th Indiana. Benjamin Turner, a private in Company G, 19th Indiana, was from Elkhart County. He was captured May 21, 1864, and held a short time before also being transferred to the 20th regiment. Corporal Allen W. Ogborn of Wayne County, a member of Company B, 19th Indiana since July 29, 1861, died July 18, 1863 of wounds received the first day of the battle of Gettysburg.11

The other soldiers represented on the walls of Snyders Landing Cave No. 1 were from recently recruited Pennsylvania regiments, the 123rd, 134th, and 155th. The first two were enlisted for nine months and both had been organized in August 1862. The 155th was a three years regiment organized in early-mid September 1862. During the Antietam campaign these regiments were assigned to the Third Division, Fifth Army Corps. The 134th was in the First Brigade and the 123rd and 155th were in the Second Brigade. Due to their inexperience all of these regiments were held in reserve during the battle and afterwards they camped in the vicinity of Sharpsburg until about October 30, 1862, where undoubtedly all the men were “studiously drilled and disciplined.” Corporal Erastus Bragden, Company C, 123rd Pennsylvania, served from August 7, 1862, until May 13, 1863. His company was from Allegheny County. Sergeant Reuben H. Neff
of the same county was in Company F, 155th Pennsylvania, from August 22, 1862, until his discharge on a surgeon's certificate April 15, 1863.12

SOURCES

1. William N. Jackson Civil War Journal; Biographical data re W. N. Jackson in E-mail from William Mock to Charles J. Mock, May 14, 2014.
2. W. N. Jackson journal.
4. W. N. Jackson journal.
7. Ibid.
9. E-mail from William Mock to Charles J. Mock, May 14, 2014.

A LOOK BACK AT INDIANA KARST-- CARL H. EIGENMANN

John M. Benton

Carl H. Eigenmann was born in Germany in 1863. He moved to Rockport Indiana (Spencer County on the Ohio River) to live with an immigrant uncle at age 14. At age 16, he enrolled at Indiana University to study law. He was drawn to an interest in biology, and came under the influence of Dr. David Starr Jordan, who was already a prominent ichthyologist (study of the fishes).

Under Jordan’s guidance, Eigenmann studied darters and perches, and was made a biology instructor. His study of darters and perches was published in 1885 and he received his bachelor degree in 1886 while authoring several publications. In 1887 he got his masters degree and his doctorate in 1889, all at Indiana University. In 1891 he was appointed professor of zoology by Jordan who was leaving Bloomington to become the first president of Stanford University. He married Rosa Smith, who by her own right, was an ichthyologist, having studied at Harvard. They co-authored several papers, especially in the early years.
Eigenmann was an ichthyologist and remained devoted to the study of fishes throughout the world. However around the turn of the century the blind inhabitants of caves peaked his interest. Cave inhabitants were not new to Eigenmann, since he had done comparative work with Missouri cave fish and Mammoth Cave KY cave fish. This new interest in cave fauna was not limited to fish; he made many cave trips and introduced many of his students to the subject, most notably A.M. Banta. Among cave animals studied were salamanders and woodrats. From 1898 to 1904 the bulk of his work was devoted to the problem of degenerate evolution centered around comparisons of eye structure. In 1909 he published CAVE VERTERBRATES OF NORTH AMERICA, a 341-page volume that effectively ended his work on cave fauna. Donaldson Cave inside what is now Spring Mill State Park is where Eigenmann did a lot of his work. His fish holding tanks made from stone, can still be seen, if one looks closely, just downstream from the Donaldson entrance. A bronze plaque inside the cave, honors Eigenmann and his studies. As early as 1903, he urged the state of Indiana to set aside the area around and including Donaldson Cave (Donaldson estate) for a state reserve. This area was to become Spring Mill State Park.

Eigenmann authored or co-authored 41 articles on cave fauna, really just a small portion of at least 231 publications in his lifetime. He mentored many of his students. Eigenmann Hall, a large student residence hall on the IU campus is named after him. He studied in many foreign countries such as Cuba, British Guiana, Columbia, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. He died in 1927 after suffering a stroke.

His work and studies were a major accomplishment on Hoosier caves. He is a major reason Spring Mill is now a State Park.

Sources


Rockport (IN) Journal January 9, 1903.
While researching other aspects of spelean history, several sources were encountered relevant to the spelean history of California. These sources were compiled and are presented herein organized alphabetically by author in the hope that they will be of both interest and benefit to students of caves in that state.

As based upon this assuredly small sampling of the literature of the nineteenth century, two distinct trends were noted in the nature of the types of caves being reported. It likely comes as no surprise that a major “show cave” would attract both tourists and guide book authors. In California, this was Alabaster Cave located in El Dorado County (cf. Baxley 1865:426-427; Cronise 1868:88; Hittel 1863:88; McClellan 1872:281-282; Pine 1873:437-444; Walton 1873:331-332). It may be noted that Alabaster Cave was subsequently closed and sealed by its owners about 1993. Caves in Calaveras County were discussed in three sources (Anonymous 1852a; Barber 1867:488; Hittel 1863:88). Various other caves (including Bower Cave near Coulterville) on the mainland are mentioned to some degree in Anonymous (1850; 1852b), Geological Survey of California (1871:48), Hittel (1863:88), and Raymond (1873:56). Caves on Santa Rosa Island are briefly mentioned by Anonymous (1893). The second observable trend is how relatively few caves were being reported within the state. It seems as though any cave devoid of either intricate formations or gold was of no serious interest at the time.


Cave in California.

During a recent tour in the region bordering on Stockton, California, a cave or grotto of great extent was discovered by a Mr. Lane and a Mr. McKinney. They found that it contained large quantities of stalactite, and saw evidences of gold. The Indians who accompanied these gentlemen were horror-stricken at the audacity of our friends when they entered a cave, which tradition said no man returned from alive. Mr. Lane found the skeleton of a human being some distance from the opening.
In the county of Calaveras, California, there exists an immense cavern under solid stone, which has been called by the miners of that district, for some time, Solomon’s Hole. It is situated in limestone, and the descent is from the side of a hill, on the west side of the creek. The opening is three feet in diameter, and the descent vertical for about thirty feet. At this point a mass of limestone rock forms a platform some six or eight feet in length; the next descent is to the right of the plat some five feet, and eighteen feet vertical; at this place a smaller stage occurs, sufficient only for one man to stand upon.

This place, from its form, is called the Liberty Cap; it is of a stalactite formation and is 15 feet high, being composed of four or five of these, apparently cemented together, and resting on a table jetting from the main ledge, with circular stalactite hanging pendant from its sides. From the “Cap” the descent is near 100 feet.

The shape of the first chamber is that of a bishop’s mitre; the space from the right to the narrowest point on the left, is 50 feet, and it expands to a width of 300 feet in diameter, covered with curtains of stalactites.

A large mound occupies the centre of this room, 50 feet in height, and 70 feet in diameter, composed of loose stones and earth, that were washed in from the top, and contain gold.

This cave is now explored to the depth of 450 feet, but as yet the bottom is not found. Two other apertures of greater depth are still known to exist, below those named, and until more efficient means are used, they must remain unknown; but the company who have now located it, are determined to find its bottom.

[p. 273] But let us return to the mineral specimens. Here is a collection of stalactites from a limestone cave on the head-waters of the Middle Calaveras, seventy-five miles from Stockton. They are deposited by Dr. Harris, who tells us that the cave is reported to be three miles in extent.

As there were no candles to be had within eight miles, his party used pine-knots, and candles extemporaneously prepared with rags and tallow. They found domes, avenues, chambers of all kinds, and columns and pendants [sic] in profusion; in short, all the fanciful and multiform architecture common to subterraneous excavations in limestone strata. Superb crystal springs sent their rippling streamlets across the footway of the explorers. They washed some of the
sedimentary earth—of course they did—and they found gold, of course, not in large quantities, but in decided traces. Who knows but this cave will occupy a more conspicuous place in history than those of Virginia or Kentucky, or even the grotto of Antiparos? Imagine twenty thousand hungry gold-hunters groping in its dark and deep recesses! Put a few big lumps in the newspapers, and so it will be.


**Great Subterranean Road.**

The Mariposa, Cal., Chronicle gives an account of a wonderful cave which has been discovered by some person whose name is not given, by which a person can pass from the one side to the other through the Siera Nev~tda Mountain. The entrance was discovered behind a waterfall, and had been long known to the Indians. We are inclined to doubt the truth of the alleged discovery; it has too much the air of a romance about it.


[p. 494] Quite a little village composed of the vast storing barn and shearing room, stables, pens, and sheds, and the dining and sleeping rooms of the men, stands by itself. Across the little stream is a large natural cave in the sandstone and clay, dry and water tight, where many of the men are comfortably housed at night...

...The constant action of the wind has worn the sandstone and clay cliffs and exposed edges everywhere into strange caves, grotesque carvings, and little nooks...

Barber, John Warner, 1867. *All the Western States and Territories, from the Alleghanies to the Pacific, and from the Lakes to the Gulf, Containing Their History from the Earliest Times...* Howe’s Subscription Book Concern, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[p. 488] Near Vallecita, on Cayote creek, in Calaveras county, is a striking display of volcanic action, in the shape of what are called the natural bridges: two immense arches, thrown over the above-named creek, and covered with imitations of clusters of fruits and flowers, doubtless formed when the mass was first upheaved in a molten state. In the same vicinity is ‘Cayote Cave,’ a deep, semicircular chasm, entered by a perpendicular descent of 100 feet, and than proceeding by a gradual slope till it reaches a depth of nearly 200 feet below the surface, where you come to a chamber called “The Cathedral,” from its containing two stones resembling bells, which, when struck, produce a chiming sound.
Proceeding 100 feet farther, always on the descent, a lake is reached of great depth, and apparently covering many acres; but the exploration has not yet been carried beyond this point. The roof of the cave is studded with stalactites, assuming various fantastic forms.


[p. 426-428] Instead of taking the public stage for Folsom we hired a private conveyance, that we might deviate from the direct road [pg. 427] for the purpose of seeing a somewhat remarkable cave recently discovered in El Dorado County...

Two miles from Auburn we left the main road to Folsom, and passing two and a half miles to the east, and scarcely as far to the south, crossed the north fork of the American River, after its confluence with the middle fork, by a fine suspension bridge at the formerly somewhat famous mining locality, more significantly than classically named *Whiskey Bar*. Striking there the Georgetown road, a further distance of two miles, brought us to the cave. The entrance to the “Alabaster” or “Coral” cave is near to the roadside. A guide accompanies visitors with necessary lights. A reception room is first entered, of thirty or forty feet length, sixteen or eighteen feet width, and ten or twelve feet height, having walls of dark slate stone and an unsymmetrical arched roof of veined limestone with petrified water streaks. From this antechamber the explorer passes into a larger room, probably a hundred and fifty feet long, with an average width of seventy-five, and a height varying from ten to twenty feet. The floor of uneven slate rock, interspersed with irregular masses of crystal limestone, supports several short columns of similar marble. The ceiling is of white limestone, permanently streaked with gray and yellow clay penetrating water frescoes, while stalactite crystal pendants hang from its arches in great variety of size, shape, and color. Over the entrance to this grand cathedral is a projecting platform of rock fifteen or twenty feet wide, and extending nearly across the room, which is the orchestral gallery. Through a passage thirty or forty feet long by eight wide, near which Nature has placed a chaste marble baptismal font, we entered a crystal chapel of exquisite beauty. It is oval shaped, about a hundred feet long, thirty wide, and twenty-five feet high. Its walls and ceiling are frescoed with permeating water stains; the former being also richly decorated, pilastered, and pannelled [sic] with crystal limestone frostwork, resembling varied forms of coral, floss, scalloped and spiculated shells, moss, leaflets, and multiform frosty vegetation; while the marble ceiling, repeating this beautiful sculpture, is hung likewise with crystalline stalactite pendants, giving it the appearance of a magnificent vaulted chandelier studded with myriads of diamonds. Toward the lower end of the chapel the arched roof opens into an irregular oval dome, the deep shadow of whose interior contrasts strangely with surrounding splendor. Near the entrance to this apartment is a rude stone stairway, by which the visitor may ascend to what is called the pulpit of the chapel. This stands on a pedestal of limestone, and looks
like an oval-shaped mass of alabaster, seven or eight feet high and three or four in
diameter, of rare chiselling [sic] and graceful proportions, from the lower part of
which falls an inimitable semi-transparent drapery of like material. The
appearance of this chamber when illuminated by torches is gorgeous, and reminds
one of the gem-lit idealities of romance. It was natural to feel the inspiration of
such a sublime revelation of Supreme Power, and excusable to strike a chord
where for thousands of years silence has reigned, none having awakened the
sleeping echoes of this sealed solitude.

Cronise, Titus Fey, 1868. *The Natural Wealth of California. Comprising Duly History,
Geography, Topography, and Scenery; Climate; Agriculture and Commercial Products;
Geology, Zoology, and Botany; Mineralogy, Mines, and Mining Processes; Manufactures;
Steamship Lines, Railroads, and Commerce; Immigration, and... a Detailed Description of

[p. 251] El Dorado [County] abounds with marble of excellent quality, there
being at least twenty beds that, having been partially opened, give promise of
making valuable quarries. The material is of all the varieties known to the trade-
one deposit, near Grizzly Flat, being of an unclouded white, and more than three
hundred feet thick; within this bed there exists an extensive grotto [Alabaster
Cave], consisting, so far as explored, of a succession of rooms connected by
narrow passages. Some of these chambers are spacious and lofty, their entire
length being seven hundred feet. Pendent from their roofs are numerous
stalactites, imparting to them, when illuminated, a very brilliant appearance.

Yosemite Valley and the Adjacent Region of the Sierra Nevada, and of the Big Trees of
California ... Published by Authority of the Legislature*. University Press: Welch, Bigelow,
& Co., Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[p. 48] Coulterville lies near the “Great Quartz Vein” of California, and was
once the seat of considerable placer and quartz mining; but both of these
industries are, at present, in rather a stagnant condition. It lies on Maxwell Creek,
a branch of the Merced, at an elevation of about 1,800 feet above the sea, and not
far from the border between the “foot-hills” and the Sierra proper, where we leave
the hills densely covered with chaparral for the more open and majestic forests of
the higher regions, exchanging ditches for naturally-running water, no longer
thickened to the consistency of porridge by the red mud of the miner. The road
runs from Coulterville nearly northeast for eight miles, until it strikes the North
Fork of the Merced, down which it descends for a short distance, then crosses and
passes near the “Bower Cave.” This is a picturesque and quite unique locality, and
is well worthy of a visit.

It consists of an immense crack in the limestone, open to the air at the
surface, and irregularly widened out in a cave-like manner below, by the action of
currents of water. On the upper side of the obliquely-descending crevice, an overhanging ledge of rock permits the vertical depth of the cave to the [p. 49] level of the water, which partly fills it, to be measured it is 109 feet. The length of the open crevice is 133 feet, and its width 86. At various heights, deep cavities, or small caves, are worn in the rock, some of which may be followed for a considerable distance. The picturesque effect of the cave is greatly heightened by the growth within it of three large maple-trees, of which the branches project out at the top. The water at the bottom is exceedingly pellucid, permitting the ramifications of the crevice beneath its surface to be seen for a depth of at least forty feet. Access can be had to the bottom of the cave by a series of steps, and a boat is provided for the use of visitors; other conveniences are also furnished, permitting a cool and comfortable stay in this curious place, which seems to be peculiarly adapted for a picnic in hot weather.


[p. 88] §60. Caves.—There are a number of caves in California. Of these the most noted are the Alabaster Cave, seven miles from Auburn, in Placer county; the Bower Cave, twelve miles from Coulterville, in Mariposa county; the Cave of Skulls, in Calaveras county; and the Santa Cruz Cave, two miles from the town of Santa Cruz. The Alabaster Cave has two chambers: one about one hundred feet long by twenty-five wide; the other two hundred feet long by one hundred wide. It contains a large number of brilliant stalactites and stalagmites. The Bower Cave has a chamber one hundred feet long by ninety wide; it is reached by an entrance seventy feet long, and in one place only four feet wide. The Santa Cruz Cave has no beauty to render it attractive. The Cave of Skulls is remarkable for having contained, when first discovered, a number of human skulls and bones, all covered with layers of carbonate or sulphate of lime, from the thickness of a leaf to an inch. These bones are now in the cabinet of the Smithsonian Institute. At Cave City, and seven miles from Murphy’s, in Calaveras county, is a cave in which a Know-Nothing lodge was accustomed to meet in 1855. In the bluff bank of the Middle Fork of the Cosumnes River, eighty feet above the stream, is a cavern, called Limestone Cave, with many intricate passages and some fine stalactites.


[p. 281] CAVES.—Among the natural wonders of California, the Alabaster cave of El Dorado [County] stands prominent. This cave, which is the only one of
note in the State, was discovered in April, 1860. The cave consists of a number of chambers or rooms, the main entrance to which is a tunnel-like aperture in the side of a mountain of white limestone. The interior of this cave is beautiful beyond description, and consists of a series of chambers of various sizes, shapes, and colors. The first chamber reached on entering is about twenty-five feet in length and seventeen feet in width, varying from five to twelve feet in height. Passing through this apartment, the Dungeon of Enchantment is reached—a chamber of one hundred and twenty feet in length and seventy feet in width, and from five to twenty feet in height. Here the luxuriant and exquisite decoration of nature strikes the vision of the beholder. Pendent [sic] from roof and walls are beautiful stalactites in every variety of form and shade of color, from bright coral to milk-white, most exquisitely wrought by the hand of nature into the most fantastic foliage and charming crystallizations, representing trees, plants, flowers, and leaves, casting their shadows and brilliant contrasts of light and shade, which sparkle and glisten like stars in a clear sky or diamonds in fleecy robes of ermine. Passing from this apartment, the throne upon which is seated nature’s grandest effort is reached. Here Grecian, Roman, and Italian art pales, and the royal pomp and tinsel of the Vatican fades into stiffness and disorder: no canopy so gorgeous, no pulpit so eloquent as the one from which comes the silent admonition of man’s inferiority and Jehovah’s omnipotence as proclaimed from the **Crystal Chapel** of this royal apartment, whose exquisite drapery, fleecy festoonings, and silver cords, looped from pillar and dome by the fingers of nature, when illuminated with artificial light, render Alabaster cave a most charming sight.

Pine, George W., 1873. *Beyond the West; Containing an Account of Two Years’ Travel in the Other Half of our Great Continent Far Beyond the Old West, on the Plains, in the Rocky Mountains, and Picturesque Parks of Colorado. Also, Characteristic Features of New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho ... Oregon, Utah, Nevada, and ... California, the End of the West ... the Great Continental Railroad, Together with the ... Most Wonderful Natural Scenery in the World...* (4th ed., revised and enlarged). Baker, Jones & Co., Buffalo, N.Y.

[p. 437-444] This cave [Alabaster Cave] was accidentally discovered by some men a few years ago, employed to excavate a place for a lime kiln in El Dorado Valley, along the turn- [illegible] road, when, upon the removal of the loose rock, a large aperture was visible, sufficiently large for them to enter. They procured candles, and began at once their explorations, and soon found that California had another remarkable wonder—a very large and beautiful cave, both curious and interesting. On our first entrance, we descended about fifteen feet gradually to the centre of a room which is one hundred by thirty feet. At the north end there is the most magnificent pulpit, in the Episcopal Church style, that man has ever seen. It seems that it is, and should be, called the “Holy of Holies.” It, is completed with the most beautiful drapery of alabaster sterites, varying from all colors, from white to pink-red, overhanging the beholder. Immediately under the pulpit there is a beautiful lake of water, extending to an unknown distance. We thought this all;
but, to our great admiration, on arriving at the centre of the first room, we saw an entrance to an inner chamber, still more splendid, two hundred by one hundred feet, with the most beautiful alabaster overhanging in every possible shape of drapery. Here stands magnitude, giving the instant impression of a power above man, grandeur that defies decay, antiquity that tells of ages unnumbered, beauty that the touch of time makes more beautiful, use exhaustless for the service of men, strength imperishable as the globe, the monument of eternity, the truest earthly emblem of that everlasting, unchangeable and irresistible Majesty, by whom and for whom all things were made.

As soon as this interesting discovery was circulated abroad, the people flocked in from all the mining settlements to visit the newly discovered cave. The owner began immediately to make accommodations and prepare it for the reception of the public, by building a hotel and placing a large number of lamps, at different points, to illuminate the various apartments.

At the entrance is a door, which is carefully locked when no one is within. Upon entering we descend a few steps, and enter a room twenty-five feet in length, by about twenty feet in width, and from six to twelve feet in height. Here is a desk, upon which is a book—“Coral Cave Register.”

This book was presented by some gentlemen who believed that “Coral Cave” would be the most appropriate name, as a greater proportion of the ornaments are stalactites, being like beautifully frozen mosses, or fine coral. Passing along another passage, we come to the enchantment. Before us is a broad, oddly-shaped and low-roofed chamber, about one hundred and twenty feet in length by seventy feet in breadth, and ranging from four to twenty feet in height. Bright, coral-like stalactites hang down in irregular rows and in almost every variety of shape and shade—from milk white to cream color standing in inviting relief to the dark arches above, and the frowning butresses on either side; while low, broad ridges [sic], some almost black, others of a reddish brown, stretch from either side, between which the space is ornamented with peculiar coloring that resembles a grotesq [sic] kind of graining. Descending toward the lift, we approach one of the most beautiful stalactite groupes [sic] in this apartment. Some of these are fine pendants—no larger than pipe-stems-tubular, and from two to five feet in length. Three or four there were over eight feet long; but the early admitted Vandals destroyed or carried them off. Others resemble the ears of white elephants, (if such an animal could be known to natural history,) while others again present the appearance of long and slender cones, inverted. By examining this and other groups more closely, we ascertain that at their base are numerous coral-like excrescences of great beauty; here, like petrified moss, brilliant and almost transparent; there, a pretty fungus, tipped with diamonds; yonder, like miniature trees, which, to accommodate themselves to circumstances, have grown with their tops downward. In other places are apparent fleeces of the finest Merino wool or floss silk. Leaving these, by turning to the right, we can ascend a ladder and see other combinations of such mysterious beauty as to highly gratify and repay us. Here is the loftiest part of the chamber. Leaving this, you arrive at a large
statagmite [sic] that resembles a tying-post for horses, and which has been dignified or mystified by such names as “Lot’s Wife,” (if so, she was a very dwarf of a woman, as its altitude is but four feet and two inches, and its circumference at the base, three feet and one inch,) “Hercules Club,” “Brodignag’s fore-finger,” &c.

Passing on over a small rise of apparently snow congealed or petrified floor, we look down into an immense cavernous depth, where the roof is covered with icicles and coral, and whose sides are draped with jet. In one of these awe-giving solitudes is suspended a heart that, from its size, might be imagined to belong to one of a race of human giants.

On one side of this, is an elevated and nearly level natural floor, upon which a table and seats have been temporarily erected for the convenience of choristers, or for public worship.

It would have gratified us beyond measure to have heard these “vaulted hills” resound, by symphonies of some grand anthem from Mozart, or Haydn, or Mendelssohn. Many of the pendant harps would have echoed them in delicious harmonies, from chamber to chamber, and carried them around, from roof to wall, throughout the whole of these rock-formed vistas. We must not linger here too long, but enter other little chambers, in whose roofs are formations that resemble streams of water that have been arrested in their flow and turned to ice. In another perfectly formed, but from one point of view and from another, the front of a small elephant’s head.

A beautiful bell-shaped hollow, near here, is called “Julia’s Bower.” Advancing along a narrow, low roofed passage, we emerge into the most beautiful chamber of the whole suite, entitled “The Crystal Chapel.” It is impossible to find suitable language [p. 442] or comparisons with which to describe this magnificent spot. From the beginning we have felt that we were almost presumptuous in attempting to portray these wonderful scenes; but, in the hope of inducing others to see with their natural eyes, the sights that we have seen, and enjoy the pleasure that we have enjoyed, we entered upon the task, even though inadequately, of giving an outline- nothing more. Here, however, we confess ourself entirely at a loss.

Miss Needham, a young lady visitor, has succeeded in giving an admirable idea of this sublime sight in an excellent drawing (Figures 1 and 2) made upon the spot, which we have engraved and herewith present to the reader. The sublime grandeur of this imposing sight, fills the soul with astonishment, that swells up from within as though its purpose was to make the beholder speechless; the language of silence being the most fitting and impressive, when puny man treads the great halls of nature, the more surely to lead him humbly from these, to the untold glory of the Infinite One, who devised the laws and superintended the processes which brought such wonders into being. After the mind seems prepared to examine the gorgeous spectacle somewhat in detail, we look upon the ceiling, if we may so speak, which is entirely covered with myriads of the most beautiful stone icicles—long, large and beautiful. Between those are squares or pannels [sic],
the mullions or bars of which seem to be formed of diamonds; while the pannels themselves resemble the frosting upon windows in the very depths of winter—and even these are of many colors—that most prevailing being of a light, pinkish cream. Moss, coral, floss, wool, trees and many other forms, adorn the interstices between the larger of the stalactites. At the farther end is one vast mass of rock, resembling congealed water, apparently from above. Deep down and underneath this is the entrance by which we reached this chamber.

At our right stands a large stalagmite, dome-shaped at the top, and covered with beautiful, undulating and wavy folds. Every imaginary gracefulness possible,
to the most curiously arranged drapery, is here visible, “carved in alabaster,” by the Great Architect of the Universe.

This is named the “Pulpit.” In order to examine this object with more minuteness, a temporary platform has been erected, which, although detractive of the general effect in our opinion, affords a nearer and better view of all these remarkable objects in detail.

This spectacle, as well as the others, being brilliantly illuminated, the scene is very imposing, and reminds one of the highly wrought pictures of the imagination, painted in such charming language and with such good effect in such words as the “Arabian Knights.”

Other apartments, known as the “Picture Gallery,” &c., might detain us longer; but, as they bear a striking resemblance in many respects to other scenes already described, we must take our leave, in the hope that we have said enough to enlist an increased attention in favor of this, another California wonder.

The traveler will find the railway ride from Sacramento to Folsom a pleasant one; from there, by stage, ten miles over rolling hills, with picturesque scenery, to the cave; the guides obliging, and the place one of the most remarkable and imposing, full of Nature’s wondrous works. We say to every visitor in the State, “Go and see it.” A place of such unusual beauty and grandeur, is, indeed, “a joy for ever.”


[p. 56] The limestone belt.—Placer mining. ...Throughout its length the limestone bed-rock [in California] has been deeply worn by the action of swiftly running water carrying boulders and debris, which have cut and carved it in the most singular and fantastic shapes to a depth of many feet. In many places remarkable underground caverns of unknown extent are found. One of these exists near Cave City, El Dorado County, of many acres in extent, which has never been thoroughly explored, although discovered as early as 1852...


[pp. 331-332] ALBASTER CAVE SPRING.

Location.—El Dorado County, California.

Access.—Go to Folsom, a station on the Sacramento Valley Railroad, twenty miles east from Sacramento; thence by stage, ten miles.
Hotel—Cave Hotel.

[Chemical] Analysis.—None.

Remarks.—This spring is in a cave, known as Alabaster Cave. The cave was discovered in 1860, by William Gwynn, whose workmen were engaged in quarrying stone near by. It is not large, but is said to be even more beautiful than Mammoth Cave. Mr. Gwynn says: “On our first entrance we descended about fifteen feet to the centre of the room, which is about one hundred by thirty feet. At the north end there is a magnificent pulpit in the Episcopal Church style. It is completed by beautiful drapery of alabaster stalactites of all colors, varying from white to pink-red, which overhang the beholder. Immediately under the pulpit is a lake of water, extending an unknown distance. On arriving at the centre of the first room we saw another still more splendid, two hundred by thirty feet, with the most beautiful alabaster overhanging us in every possible shape.” There are several apartments, known respectively as Crystal Chapel, Dungeon of Enchantment, Julia Bower [sic], and Picture Gallery.

Within this cave is a spring, which, according to S. Powers, Esq., is “literally freezing over with alabaster ice, about as thick as window-glass.” He says: “I put my hand under it, and found it of the same thickness all over, and graining on the edges with particles not yet attached.”

Visitors so wishing, may have the entire cave illuminated, thus adding to the beauty of the scene.

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1854 Great Subterranean Road. *Scientific American* o.s. 10(2; September 23):14. New York.
1867 Barber, Hohn Warner. *All the Western States and Territories, from the Alleghanies to the Pacific, and from the Lakes to the Gulf, Containing Their History from the Earliest Times...* Howe’s Subscription Book Concern, Cincinnati, Ohio.

1868  Cronise, Titus Fey, *The Natural Wealth of California. Comprising Duly History, Geography, Topography, and Scenery; Climate; Agriculture and Commercial Products; Geology, Zoology, and Botany; Mineralogy, Mines, and Mining Processes; Manufactures; Steamship Lines, Railroads, and Commerce; Immigration, and... a Detailed Description of Each County*. H. H. Hancroft & Co., San Francisco.


1873  Pine, George W. *Beyond the West; Containing an Account of Two Years' Travel in the Other Half of our Great Continent Far Beyond the Old West, on the Plains, in the Rocky Mountains, and Picturesque Parks of Colorado. Also, Characteristic Features of New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho ... Oregon, Utah, Nevada, and ... California, the End of the West ... the Great Continental Railroad, Together with the ... Most Wonderful Natural Scenery in the World... (4th ed., revised and enlarged)*. Baker, Jones & Co., Buffalo, N.Y.


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**SPELEAN BOOKLET SERIES GREATLY EXPANDS!**

Gary K. Soule

Back in 1973, Jack H. Speece, a well known cave historian from Altoona, Pennsylvania, started a cave booklet series. It was oriented towards telling the often little known history of some caves. Initially the small, half page format size booklets (with only two exceptions) covered caves just in Pennsylvania. Most of the cave booklets are from about 25 to 40 pages in length. The standard format that Jack initiated for the series is to have the former or alternative names for the cave listed, as well as a brief introductory paragraph. The main, historically oriented text followed, with a nice centerfold cave map, references, and a topographic map showing the cave location. Various additional supplemental illustrations would also exist. These could include old brochures, postcards, stereo views, ads, pennants, bumper stickers, pictures, and newspaper articles.
Starting in 2013, this booklet series has been greatly expanded. Jack has encouraged numerous cave historians to take part in the series, including myself. At the present time, 43 different booklets have been produced from a 20 different U.S. states. Booklets on caves from an additional five states are in production at the current time. It should be noted here that only Laurel Caverns differs from the half page size format. Its pages are the more standard 8 1/2 by 11 inch page size.

What follows is a reference listing of all the cave booklets in the order they were produced. Included are the series number of the booklet, name of the cave, (alternative names shown on the booklet cover,) the county and state the cave is located in, the author, year the publication was produced, and number of pages.

15. Tartarus Cave, Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, Gary K. Soule, 2013, 30 pages.
22. Horseshoe Bay Cave, (Tecumseh Cave, Alpine Cave, Murphy Cave, Door County Cave,) Door County, Wisconsin, Gary K. Soule, 2014, 38 pages.
27. Fountain Cave, Ramsey County, Minnesota, Greg A. Brick, Ph.D., 2014, 26 pages.
29. Lost River Cave, (Pokerville Cave, Blue Mounds Cave, Blumemounds Cave,) Iowa County, Wisconsin, Gary K. Soule, 2014, 30 pages.
33. Cherokee Cave, (Minehaha Cave, Lemps Cave, Cherokee Brewery Cave,) St. Louis County, Missouri, Gary K. Soule, 2014, 35 pages.
37. Roubidoux Cave, (Indian Cave, Kraft Cave, Pikes Peak Cave,) Waynesville, Pulaski County, Missouri, 2015, Jack H. Speece, 26 pages.
38. Bear Cave, (Scotchtown Cave,) Berrien County, Michigan, 2015, Gary K. Soule, 2015, 30 pages.
40. Bethlehem Cave, (Crystal Cave,) Meade County, South Dakota, Gary K. Soule, 42 pages.
42. Harpers Ferry Caverns (Dittmer Caves), Bolivar, Jefferson County, West Virginia, Gary K. Soule, 2015, 26 pages.


Future confirmed, and largely completed, historical cave booklets by Gary K. Soule are:

Robber’s Cave, (Pawnee Council Cave, Penitentiary Cave, Lincoln Cave,) Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska

Wonderland Cave, (The Big Cave, Lost Dog Cave, North Cave, Wonder Cave,) Benton County, Arkansas

Cave Spring Cave, (Famous Cave, Rolater Park Cave,) Cave Spring, Floyd County, Georgia

The 7 Caves, Bainbridge, Highland County, Ohio

Gardner Cave, (Lost Cave, Crawford Cave,) Crawford State Park, Metaline Falls, Pend Oreille County, Washington

Joel M. Sneed is working on a booklet on Lookout Mountain Caverns, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Jack Speece is working on a booklet on Neff Canyon Cave, Utah.

It is hoped to eventually have all fifty states of the United States represented in this cave history booklet series.

Booklet Series on display. (Photo by Greg Brick)
THE ENTRANCE TO LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN CAVE, TENNESSEE

Larry O. Blair

One of America's most well known and advertised show caves, Tennessee's Ruby Falls (Cave) was only discovered by luck and happenstance. "The Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Tennessee have passed the following resolution: The climax of a lifetime of travel awaits the visitor to the most spectacular of underground wonders in Lookout Mountain Caves." That's how a vintage travel brochure described this renowned commercial show cave.

However, as well-known as this travel destination is, most do not realize that Ruby Falls and the lower Lookout Mountain Cave are actually linked via a 420-foot elevator shaft. Ruby Falls is at the minus 260-foot level and the Lookout Mountain Cave is at the valley floor.

This short explanation will show the relationship of the known entrances of this cave system by using vintage post cards and my own modern day photographs of the lower cave.

Jim Whidby along the train tracks outside of the remnant section of Lookout Mountain Cave, Chattanooga, Tennessee. This photo was taken at the right-of-way boundaries of the railway and Interstate 24. You can see just how close these tracks are to this section of the cave. And of course there are still the tracks running just inside the mountain. These are the rails of the Southern and CSX lines. (Photo by the author, October 10, 1981.)
This is the iconic Ruby Falls stone castle-like headquarters and entrance. The observation tower and building facade were constructed with stone drilled and quarried from the excavation of the elevator shaft. Photo dated March 27, 1982.

A Little Background

Ruby Falls, on the north western side of Chattanooga, is situated high on a promontory on the north shoulder of Lookout Mountain, overlooking the famous Moccasin Bend of the Tennessee River. Directly below at the level of the valley is the two-level Lookout Mountain Cave (or Cavern as it was once called). Both names are used today.
A linen postcard shows the sweeping Moccasin Bend of the Tennessee River. Lookout Mountain Cave is below at the valley floor level. (Collection of the author)

The cavern was well-known by the prehistoric people of the area as evidenced by human cremation remains, and by lithic and biologic artifacts unearthed by Joel and Carole Sneed and myself beginning in March of 1982. We had already recognized the importance of the Civil War era and other 1800s and 1900s signatures, including that of Leo B. Lambert, who was the secretary-manager of the Lookout Mountain Cave Company. This lower cave was reported to have been used by both the Confederates and Union Soldiers for shelter and as a field hospital. The original mouth of the cave was reported to have been shelled by the Yankees! This cave has a Ku Klux Klan history and also was used by the Masonic Orders. This is proven by the stone ballot voting boxes constructed along the floor and upon a ledge near the now blocked entrance.

These historical facts and the beautiful setting along the river warranted a commercialization effort. However the railroad made the scene.
The Railroad Tunnel

In 1908, as track was being laid for the Southern Railway, a tunnel was constructed not too far inside the mountain wall, parallel to the outer surface along the meandering curve of Moccasin Bend on the river. This tunnel cut through the cave passageway. Inside the new tunnel both sides of the cave passage were sealed, limiting access to the cave. Inside the cave a low iron gate was jammed partially open as on my last visit. Rock and rubble have been piled up, blocking access to the rail tunnel. A large five-coil train spring lies here at this point. It probably bounced into the passage when the wall and gate were breached. It is very unpleasant to be near this area of the cave when a train passes through the tunnel. The unnerving rumblings and vibrations alone are enough to make you think twice about being there. The thick diesel fumes and soot are terrible. This black greasy mess covers everything; it has been deposited into the cave for many years. Most likely it entered the cave after the barriers were breached by trespassers, or through cracks and fissures in the cave walls caused by vibrations of the trains or the blasting during tunnel construction. This greasy film can cover the explorer’s gear and clothing. Air currents have taken this film deeper into the depths of Lookout Mountain Cave. On the opposite side of the tunnel a short section of the cave still exists. It is sixty or so feet in length before opening to a view of Interstate I-24.

Outside, the large, round entrance opening is very scenic, but inside this short remnant of the passageway is totally coated with the same greasy black film. Some trash and signatures can be seen. And perhaps some of the freshwater mussel shells I saw on my visit several years ago. Some may have been left behind by the prehistoric native peoples who had sheltered in the cave. Here in this area of the original passage it is possible that more remains of Late Pliocene animals could also be unearthed. In our 1982 study of the area close to the old iron gate inside the cave, we unearthed the fossils of the Pleistocene giant armadillo, a species of peccary, and a black bear.
This old black and white, white border postcard is entitled “looking out of Lookout Mountain (Tenn.) Cave.” Notice how close the mouth of the cave was to the Tennessee River. (Postcard from the author’s collection)

Ruby Falls Discovered

In 1928 an effort to open the Lookout Mountain Caverns to the public was undertaken. Since the cave was now blocked by the construction of the railroad tunnel, an idea was conceived to drill an elevator shaft down through Lookout Mountain and to connect into the now famous cave at the valley floor level. Mr. Leo Lambert was hired as secretary-manager of Lookout Mountain Cave Company with financial backing, mainly from Gary, Indiana.

While the drilling was in progress on December 28, 1928, an unknown cavity was broken into deep within the mountain. Since this cave was not the intended target of the shaft, work continued. During “off time” Leo began to explore this new find. This narrow passage was quite different from the cave below. It was pristine and contained beautiful formations. At end of this new passageway he was the first to see the stunning 145-foot falls. On his second trip to the falls Leo named it Ruby Falls in honor of his wife. It is said that she visited the site along with Leo on one of his expeditions to this new discovery.

Once the drill broke through into the lower cave, efforts were begun to open both caves to the public. From 1930 to 1935 tourists were permitted to visit both cave
systems. However, this did not last long. The overall beauty of Ruby Falls, contrasted with the drab, muddy, soot, and odor of the passing trains in the tunnel led to the abandonment of Lookout Mountain as a part of the attraction.

![Image of Ruby Falls Cave](image.png)

This old black and white postcard, printed in Germany, has an inverted printed inscription. It states “The Cave, Lookout Mt., Chattanooga, Tenn.” Someone recognized this error for they wrote across the bottom, “Lookout Cave on the N.C. & St. L.R.R.” with the image correctly oriented. Notice the lack of the thick coating of oily diesel smoke and soot inside the mouth of the cave. (From the author’s collection)

**Epilogue**

In recent years a restriction device and the shortening of the elevator cables has enabled the elevator to only go down as far as the Ruby Falls level. The lower Lookout Mountain Cave is sealed off from above and from the sealed sections of the cave’s own natural entrance. Thus a time capsule of sorts is once again in place as it was when we first began our study of this cave in the early 1980s.

The only way to access the remaining section of the cave and the sealed section from within the railroad tunnel is to hike down the tracks, which is not only dangerous but illegal as well. One can easily be observed from the expressway and railroad police, line crews, and trains travel the tracks day and night.

There is still another entrance into the Ruby Falls Cave. It is an emergency portal accessed from the highway running up Lookout Mountain from Chattanooga. It was constructed to be used in the event of an elevator failure, as was the case during one of our expeditions into this cave system. But that is another story!
SOURCES


Cave Logs, Larry O. Blair, Books numbers 3 and 4, multiple pages, ledgers of caving trips, maps, transcribed field notes and notes taken during meetings, artifact sketches and etc.

Brochures, several including those on Ruby Falls and those concerning Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga attractions.

Tennessee official highway maps, several issues.

Conversations with cavers Joel M. Sneed of Flowery Branch, Georgia and Jim R. Whidby of Knoxville, Tennessee, concerning trips made into these caves.

My personal collection of photographs and postcards.

_NSS News_, Volume 40, Number 9, September, 1982, pages 227 – 228, “Research in Lookout Mountain Caverns, Tenn.” by Larry O. Blair and Joel M. Sneed.

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