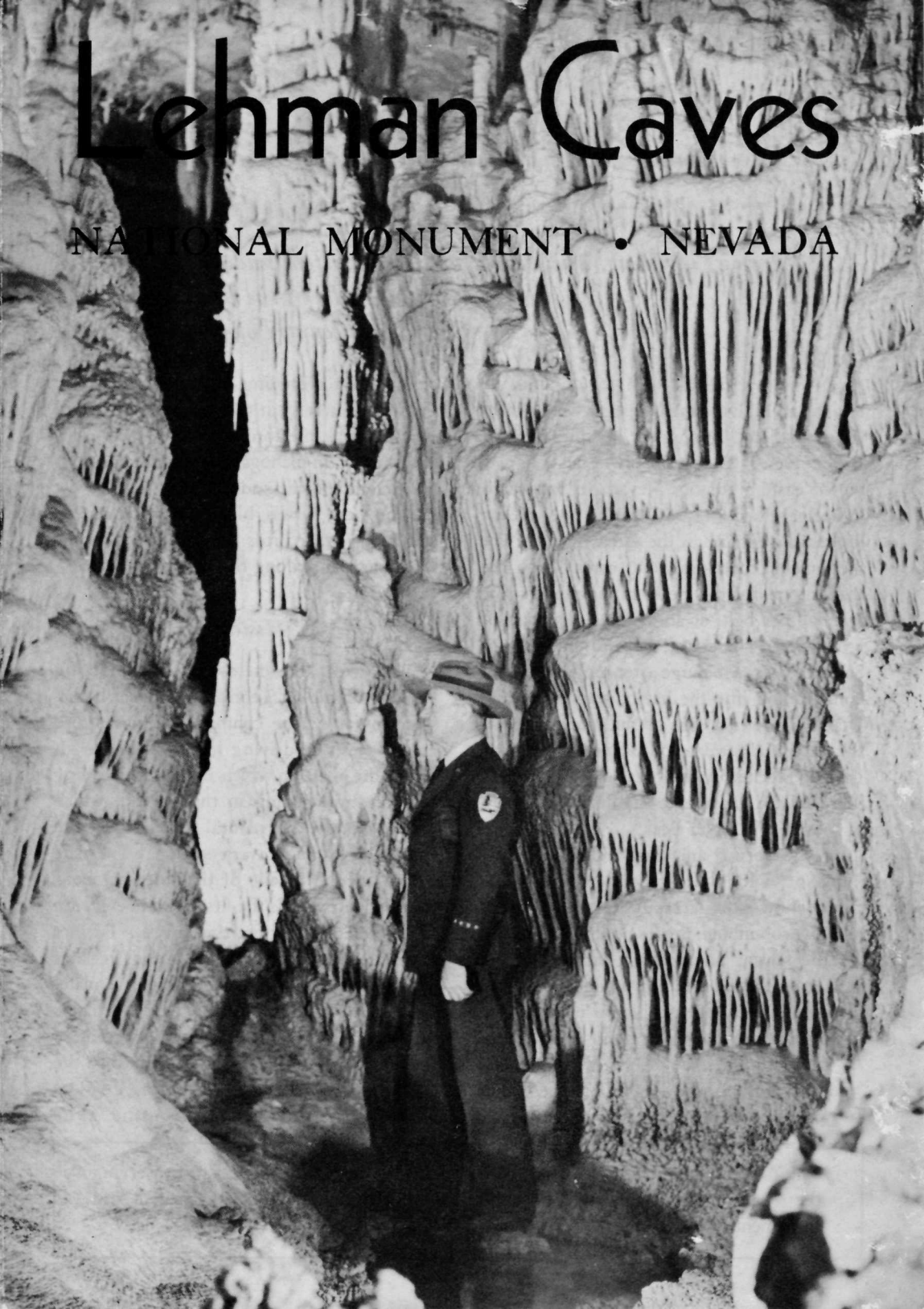


Lehman Caves

NATIONAL MONUMENT • NEVADA



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NATIONAL MONUMENT

A vast, intricate, and beautiful cavern system underlying the flank of 13,061-foot Wheeler Peak in the heart of the high desert country of eastern Nevada.

IN THE HEART of a region of wide basins and high mountain ranges lies Lehman Caves National Monument, 5 miles west of Baker, Nev. The impressive Snake Range, on the eastern edge of Nevada, is topped by Wheeler Peak (13,061 feet), one of the highest mountains in the Great Basin. The monument, containing 640 acres, is on the eastern flank of this peak, in the pinyon pine and juniper belt, at an average elevation of 7,000 feet. Eastward, beyond the flats of Snake Valley, rise range after range of mountains, fading into the hazy distance, far into Utah. On either side of the monument are the perennial streams of Baker and Lehman Creeks, stocked with trout and heading in the glaciated canyons to the north and south of majestic Wheeler Peak.

In the spring and early summer, many kinds of wildflowers bloom, including lupine, yellow aster, larkspur, locoweed, desert-mallow, columbine, thistle-poppy, and cactus. As the season advances the flowers bloom higher up the sides of the mountains. Even in late summer, flowers bloom in profusion in the high country and along the streams. In the autumn the mountain slopes are streaked with the blazing gold of aspen. For fully half the year the higher peaks are

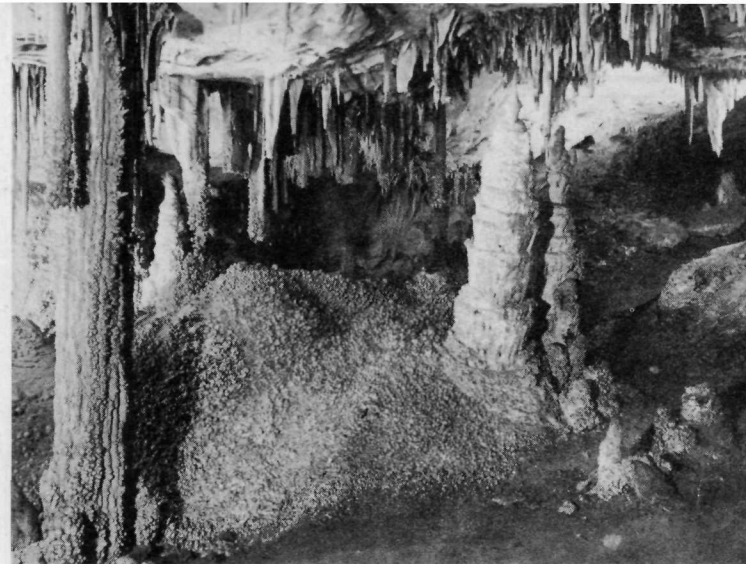
The National Park System, of which this park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.

clothed in a glistening mantle of snow.

Mule deer feed in the meadows or bound away through the forests of pine, spruce, fir, and mountain-mahogany. Mountain lions are not unknown, and an occasional coyote may be seen. Owls, bluebirds, water ouzels, and many other birds are to be seen in the monument and along the nearby streams.

History

The caves were discovered in the 1870's by Ab (Absalom) Lehman, a pioneer homesteader, for whom Lehman Creek was also named. While driving his cattle in the vicinity, the horse on which Lehman was riding fell into an opening in the ground, which proved to be the natural entrance to the vast underground cavern system. The date "1878" found in one of the side chambers, near the entrance, is the first definite evidence of exploration within the caves. Further exploration occurred in 1881 and in later years. However, from archaeological material, particularly human skeletal remains uncovered from a deep deposit adjacent to the natural entrance, it is evident that the Indians of this region utilized the caves as a burial chamber several thousand years



Popcorn Hill and the Leaning Tower.

before Ab Lehman accidentally discovered them.

Before the turn of the century, the caves were locally well known, as attested by the numerous names and dates left by early visitors. In 1922, it was recognized that the caves should be protected by the Federal Government, and the national monument was established under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture. By Executive Order of 1933 the area was transferred to the National Park Service.

Geology

Wheeler Peak has been carved into its present shape by mountain glaciers that once existed at the heads of Baker and Lehman Creeks and by the rushing waters of these streams. This peak is the highest point on a vast arch of thick quartzite, originally a sandstone. On the east flank of the peak is limestone of Cambrian age. A granite intrusion at the contact of the quartzite and limestone had little effect on the quartzite but did change some of the limestone to marble. It is in this marble that the Lehman Caves have been formed.

Tens of thousands of years ago, when the Snake Range was lower and less rugged and

the climate was much more humid, the first stage in the formation of the caves began. Water, charged with carbon dioxide, filled the cracks and joint planes in the limestone, widening and enlarging them as the process of solution continued. The more soluble rock was dissolved, leaving large vaulted rooms, and fault and joint planes were widened into connecting passageways until they eventually formed a labyrinth of straight corridors and smaller winding tunnels connecting larger chambers. As lower channels drained the water from the upper levels, the second stage in the process of cave formation began. The lime-laden water, seeping down through the overlying rock, gathered as drops or spread out in thin films on the roofs and sides of the caverns. Evaporating and losing carbon dioxide, the water deposited some of its dissolved load as "dripstone." As a result, myriads of stalactites developed from the roofs, growing longer and thicker at their bases and dripping excess water to build up stubby stalagmites from the floor. In places, water seeping through the walls built graceful draperies and the translucent, ribbonlike "bacon strips," of calcium carbonate. Thin round disks of lime dripstone



Watching Fish in Lehman Creek near Monument Headquarters.

were deposited on the flat ceilings, and, as the lengthening stalactites which hung from them grew heavier, these plates slowly peeled away. These peculiar structures, called "tom-toms," because they resound like drums, are abundant in varied forms throughout the caves.

Pools of water on the floors have built beautifully terraced miniature dams around their edges, and have deposited a white spongy, nodular growth in the pool itself. Huge fluted columns reach from floor to ceiling. These columns, with their oft-repeated "nodes," or terraces, seen also in stalagmites, are characteristic of all the formations in Lehman Caves. Tiny needle crystals, peculiar mushroomlike lumps, and frosty incrustations grow on the larger formations or cover walls and ceilings where other forms of decoration do not occur. Some of the formations are delicate shades of buff or chocolate, while others are a creamy white.

Walking down the easy trails that wind among wierd stalagmites taller than a man, through the "Music Hall" with its clear-toned "organ," past the "tom-toms" and the rippled curtains of stone, through rooms with



The "Parachute"—an example of a "plate" pulled from the ceiling.

high-arched and color-splashed ceilings, is an emotional experience not soon forgotten. Gracefully tapered stalactites carry jewel-like drops of water at their tips. Side corridors, festooned with fantastic dripstone growths, lead off into the darkness. Combinations of chance rock-form, color, and shadow stimulate the imagination. Strange stone faces, animals, and figurines line the paths. No two rooms are alike. Each has its own set of elements that have resulted in dripstone forms of such infinite variety as to defy cataloging.

Location

The monument is 5 miles west of Baker, Nev., near the Nevada-Utah boundary. U. S. 6 and 50 are 10 miles to the north, and U. S. 93 is 40 miles to the west.

Accommodations

In the headquarters area, the National Park Service maintains overnight camp and picnic facilities which are available without charge. There are also many beautifully situated campsites in the Nevada National Forest, adjacent to the monument.

Refreshments, limited meal service, souve-



The "Cypress Swamp."

nirs, and overnight cabins, with modern toilets and showers adjacent, are maintained in the headquarters area. The services are furnished under Government contract and standard prices prevail.

Trips Through the Caves

Outstanding among the many physical improvements made for your comfort and convenience is the modern electrical system providing indirect illumination throughout the caves. An entrance tunnel, of easy grade, has been driven through the limestone, eliminating the climb to the natural entrance. A system of trails and stairs extends throughout. The guided tour of the caves takes only about an hour.

All trips through Lehman Caves are con-

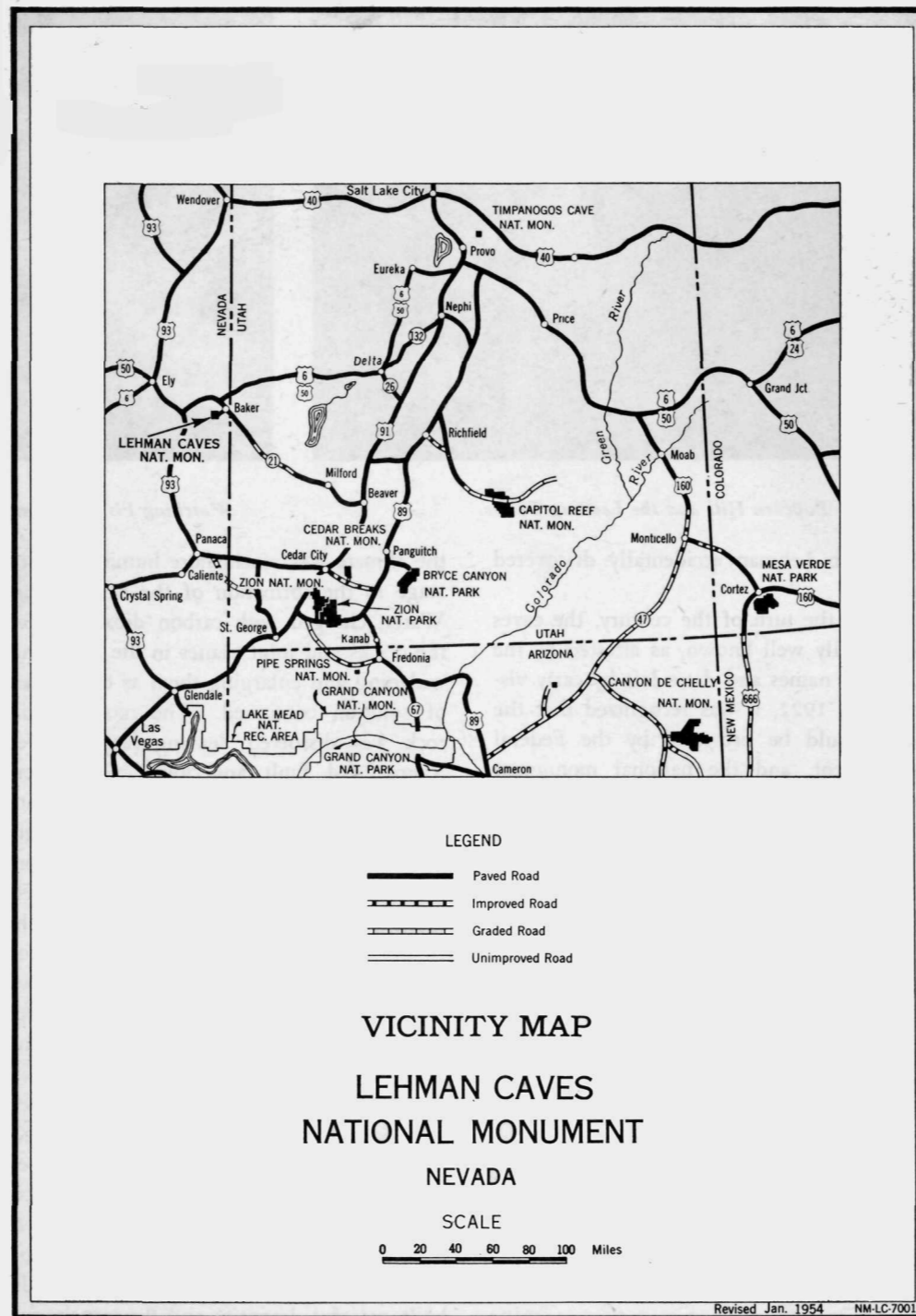
ducted by a National Park Service representative whose duties are to provide safe passage, interpretive service, and to enforce the rules and regulations relating to the protection of the park, especially the cave formations. The 50-cent guide fee is waived for children 12 years of age or under and for groups of school children 18 years of age or under when accompanied by adults assuming responsibility for their safety and orderly conduct.

Administration

Lehman Caves National Monument is administered by the National Park Service of the U. S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Baker, Nev., is in immediate charge.



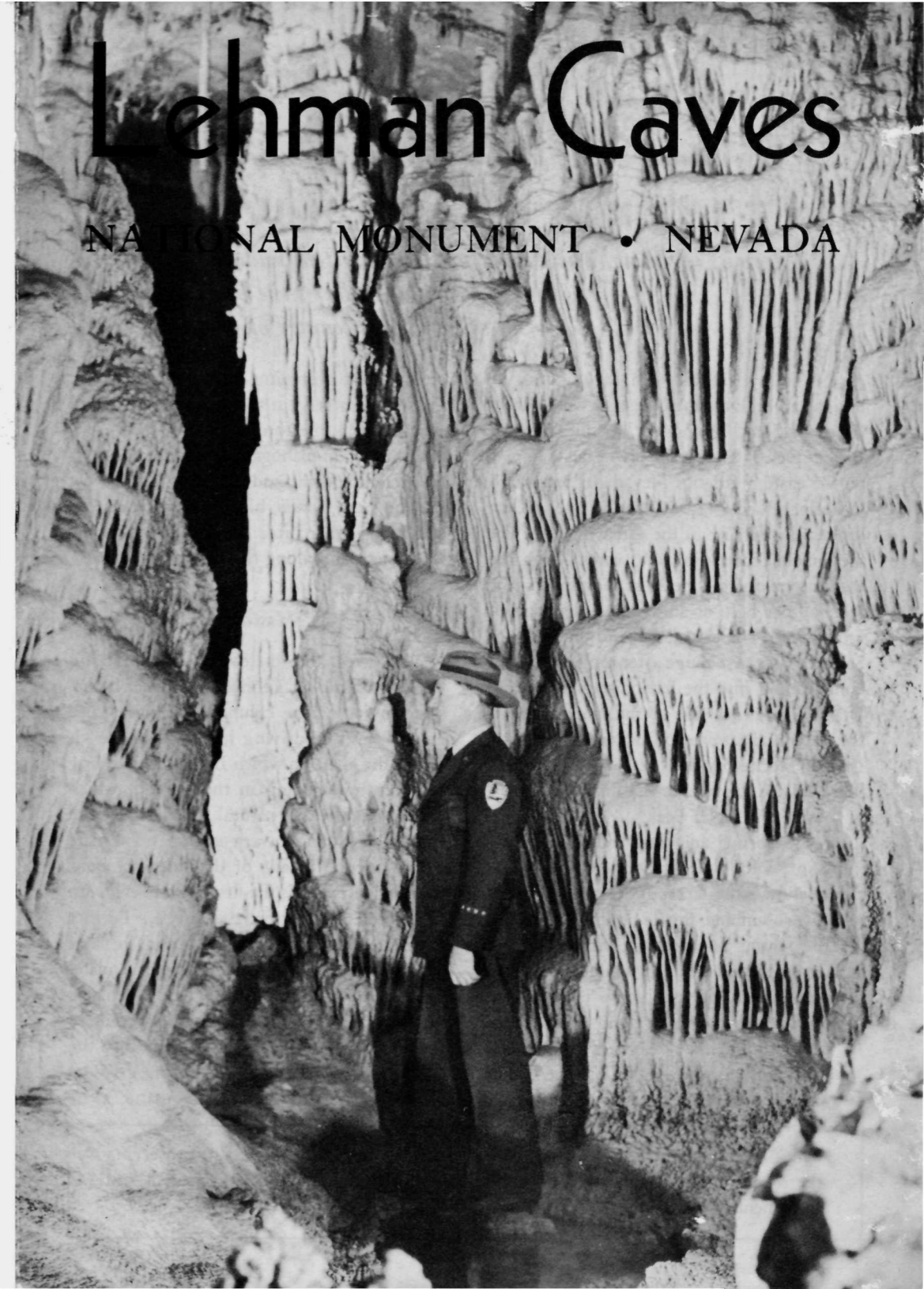
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