

# LEHMAN CAVES

By Otto T. W. Nielson

An equino, performing the laborious task of dragging wood down a hillside, floundered as his foot broke through the limestone. Mr. Lehman, the owner, interested primarily in extricating the animal, at first thought little of the incident except for the welfare of the horse. Later through curiosity, he enlarged the opening made by the horse's foot, and thus a fairyland of intricate beauty became accessible - Lehman Caves.

That was half a century ago. Roads were mere trails and wagon tracks. People in isolated places traveled with difficulty, hampered with inconveniences. Today the conditions are different. Splendid highways reach in all directions and modern transportation makes it possible to reach the once remote regions. Lehman Caves can be reached on good graveled roads six miles west of Baker, Nevada. Baker is on the highway between Milford, Utah, and Ely, Nevada. Also the highway between Delta, Utah, and Ely is about five miles from the Caves. A very short distance from the entrance to the Caves are quaintly sequestered among the junipers and pinons several cabins and a lodge. A system of cool pure water for culinary purposes has been installed. The cool breezes which waft from the adjacent Mt. Wheeler (over 13,000 feet) in the evening and during the early night are conducive to the best of sleep whether one is in the campgrounds or in the cabins.

Out of a mountain of limestone, a nature's agent, water, has performed its marvelous work. It has eaten its way through crevices and fissures, carved out spacious chambers, made hallways and corridors, created chasms and gorges, and alluringly adorned them all with myriads of fantastic stalactites and stalagmites. It has deftly and with infinite slowness produced an enchanting labyrinth of exquisite beauty, charm, and bewilderment. Such is Lehman Caves.

A trip through the Caves is an experience most stimulating. There is variety enough to gratify all, regardless of their walks in life. The dreamer can be stimulated to realms of joy; the technically trained will be awed by the symmetry and exactness; the philosopher will have ample opportunity to deduct; the artist will have reason to see beauty and form; the musician might perhaps see it as a complete symphony; and to all a journey through it will leave a most pleasant memory. The chambers contain representations of many of the famous and the glorified. There are depicted objects pertaining to music, art, drama, and nature, as well as statues in likeness, pillars of renown, obelisks, minarets, spires, gargoyles, pipe organs, and many of the things in life - formed in unbelievable verisimilitude. The Caves abound in crystalline splendor but

the formations are preponderantly incrustated with lime. However, there are exposed surfaces of vari-tinted crystallizations - opaque, translucent, and pellucid. Layers of onyx resting on marble make the Caves more interesting. Here you see nature's work - ages in the making and skillfully wrought. It is interesting to scrutinize and spectacular to gaze upon.

Trips through the Caves can be made without experiencing any particular difficulty or inconvenience. The trails have been sanded and places where crawling or excessive stooping was necessary have been eliminated by excavation and splended trail building. Chambers which hitherto had been inaccessible are now opened and can be reached with considerable ease. In all it is a most pleasant trip on trails which are dry, with no excessive exertion.

A few of the attractions seen during an hour or two spent in the Caves are mentioned with the intent that an interest may be created and not with the idea that a graphic picture of them can be portrayed. Words are inadequate to convey a mental picture of the designs, forms, and beauty of the formations throughout the caves - their gossamer fineness and shoor delicacy.

There is for instance the "Fairy Rosebush" - a stalagnite, realistic in form and lifelike in contour, with the sword of Damocles suspended from above and numerous pendants about it stretching down with needle-like points - waiting, perhaps, for the day when they might touch clusters below so indicative of blossoms. The "Washington Column", a massive monument of ghastly white and millions of years in the making, supports the domed ceiling and stands in majestic greatness very much in keeping with its namesake. There is the "Gothic Palace", a great profusion of formations. Hundreds of layered stalagnites of varying sizes reach up and continually strive for supremacy in beauty against their mates above them.

The "Suspended Python", the "Chandelier", the "Queen's Canopy", so elaborate with tassels and what-not, silently beckon the passerby to pause for at least a moment and admire them in their naturalness and realistic forms. It is a thrill to see the "Bridge Lamp" - a lamp rather large yet beautifully and elaborately wrought. The "Coral Reefs", "Profile of Lincoln", "Socrates", "Santa Claus", and the columns for the three martyred presidents draw an exclamation of surprise. A most interesting alcove harbors the "Natural Altar" where a couple was married. There is a "Little Church Around the Corner" - miniature and decidedly alluring. The kiddies love to loiter about the birthday cake and marvel at the layers and count the candles on the top as high again as their heads.

A surprise is in store when one reaches the "Music Hall". A gigantic pipe organ ribs one wall. The guide taps the towering pipes - he plays a tune. Sometimes the tourists sing while he accompanies them on the organ. No less wonderful are the "Chimes" - realistic and melodious. And this from rock. "The Lonesome Pino", life-like in form spreads its branches in profusion and canopies the trail below it. "Indian Tom Toms" echo weirdly about the caverns.

In a unique setting the "Little Theatre" with actors galore and scenery in delicacy, captivates ones attention beyond words. The modernistic "Totem Pole", a "Shark's Fin", the "Indian Elephant", and Washington's Writing Desk" contribute freely to an otherwise highly adorned room. The "Pall" is almost a replica, while the "Thatched Cottage" reposes below a huge waterfall with a sky of beautifully tinted tassels above it. The "Lace Portiers" with drapes on either side grace an archway. The "Elephant's Ear" is a sheet of translucent red. The "Side Saddle", the "Pillar of Pompeii", the "Seal Head", "Old Fashioned Bee Hives", and the "Vegetable Garden" are obvious and need no imaginative effort.

The "Convention Hall" (so called because various organizations have held their meetings in it) is indeed spacious, yet it contains the formations of beauty so characteristic of the Caves, such as the "Fairy Harp", the "Eagle", the "Chinese Writing", "Adam and Eve", numerous images and plaque walls of delicate design. The "Slice of Bacon", "Navajo Blanket", "Devil's Bathtub", "Buddah", "Chinese Pagoda" and "Panama Canal" are most interesting in their uncanny reality.

There is variety at every turn and surprises enough for all ages. The "Inscription Chamber" has its "Razed City", the "Dog Show", "Popcorn File", and a "Shadowed Cowboy" portrayed within an opaque wide ribbon of calcite. The "Cypress Swamp" with its alligator seems real. "Daniel's Lion Den", "Angel's Wing", "Castles on the Rhine", "Fountain of Youth" are a few more outstanding sights. It is hopeless to enumerate all.

And thus on leaving the Caves, it seems that one has experienced a trip into a different world - a fairyland of beauty where cares and mundane worries of life are excluded.

