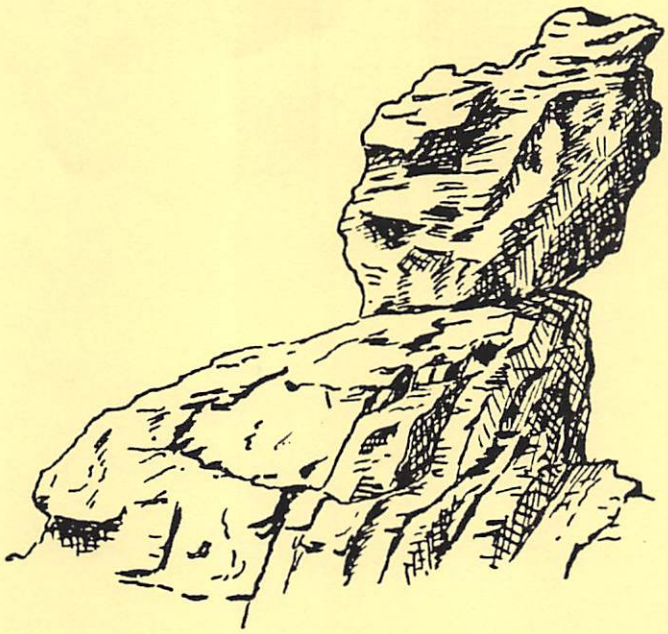

Rocks of Hot Springs National Park

These rocks may be seen along the park roads in the places indicated in parentheses. Each represents a formation which may include other rocks.

Stanley Shale (West Mtn.). Although deposited more than 200 million years ago, this is the youngest of the park's rock formations. It is black, clayey, and breaks into thin plates. Where exposed, it weathers to pale green, yellow or brown.

Hot Springs Sandstone (West Mtn., North Mtn., Campground). This hard gray rock, composed of quartz grains, was deposited more than 260 million years ago. Many of the cracks in it are filled with white quartz.

Arkansas Novaculite. Found in all sections of the park, this is the Ouachita Mountains' most distinctive rock. Dense and very fine grained, it is typically bluish white in color, but is sometimes gray, green, brown, yellow or black. Indians used it for arrowheads, and modern man prizes it for whetstones. This mystery rock (geologists disagree about its origin) tends to stand out in ridges, as softer rocks wear away from around it. It is most abundant in the area between Little Rock and Mena, Arkansas.

Missouri Mountain Shale (West Mtn.). This soft, clayey rock is dark green or black, and contains tiny flakes of mica and small crystals of iron pyrite, or fool's gold. It is believed to have been deposited more than 300 million years ago.

Polk Creek Shale (West Mtn.). This rock is composed of thin black layers of material varying in consistency from soft to slaty. Where exposed it weathers to soft gray stone, or changes to clay. The fossil graptolites in the park museum are found in Polk Creek Shale, indicating that it was deposited 350 to 400 million years ago.