

# Oregon Caves

NATIONAL MONUMENT

OREGON



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### HISTORY

In 1874 Elijah Davidson was hunting with his dog in the Siskiyou Mountains of Oregon. In pursuit of a bear, the dog led Davidson to a dark opening in the rocks. Gathering pine splinters to use as a torch, the hunter entered the opening. Thus was discovered the Oregon Cave.

The cave soon became an attraction for adventurers, who explored and opened part of it. In 1877, Frank Nickerson, of Kerby, Oreg., found four different floors, or levels, and opened several galleries that had been blocked by stalactites. Visitors were few, however, for the country was sparsely settled, and the nearest railroad was 200 miles away.

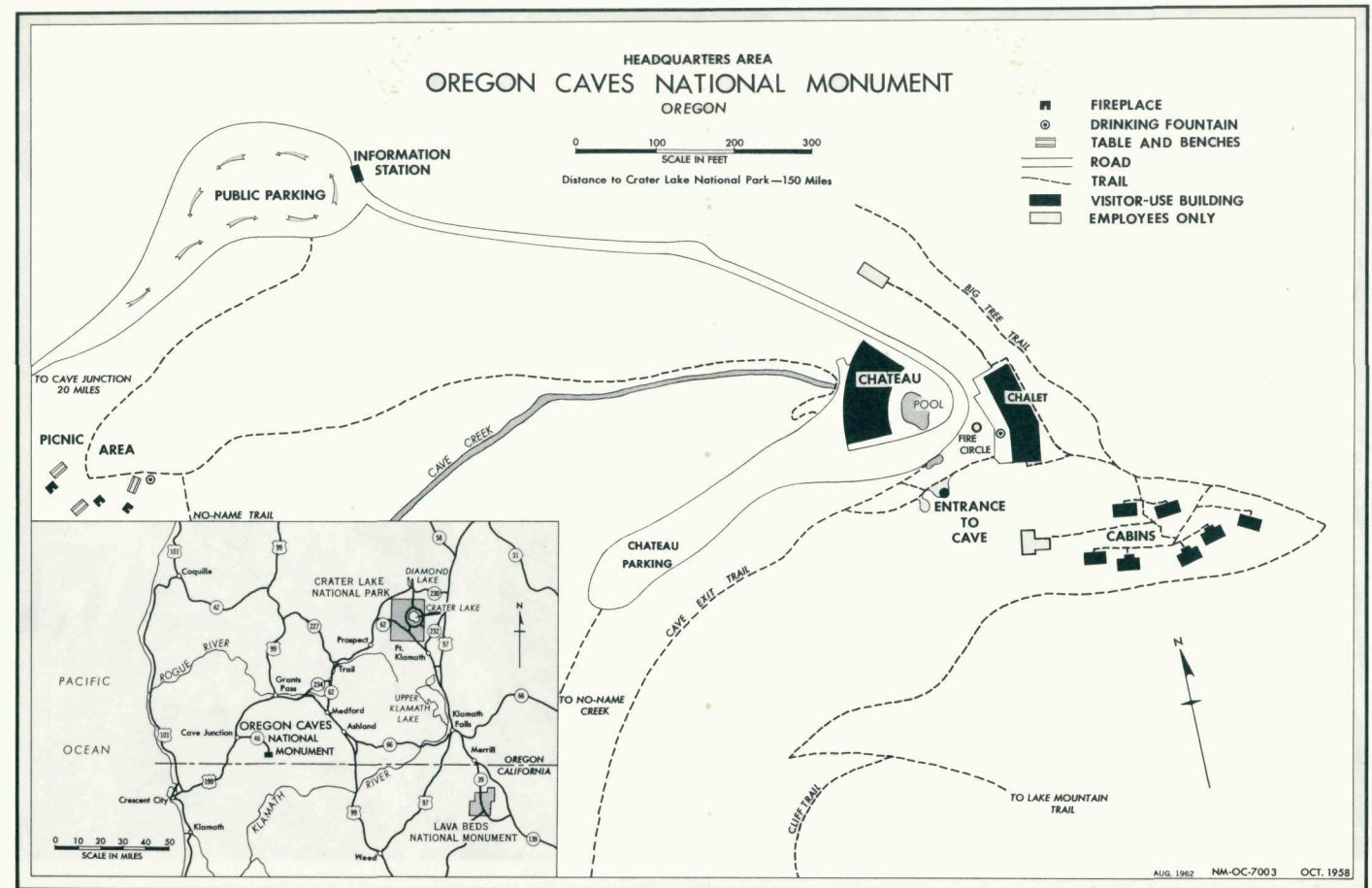
Joaquin Miller, the "Poet of the Sierra," who visited the cave in 1907, made it better known through his writings. He referred to the cave as "The Marble Halls of Oregon."

Oregon Caves National Monument was established on July 12, 1909. Although long known as the "Oregon Caves," the phenomenon consists of a single cave.

### GEOLOGY

The geological story of the cave goes back over a vast period of time to an age when an ancient ocean covered the area. In this ocean was deposited a thick bed of calcium carbonate, which later hardened into limestone. During periods of mountain building, the intense heat and great pressure generated within the earth transformed the limestone into marble, and it was raised above the sea as part of a mountain range.

The uplifts that formed the mountains fractured the marble in many places. Although the openings along these fractures may have been small, they allowed the passage of water. Rainwater, charged with carbonic and other acids from de-



caying vegetation, moved along the small fracture planes below the water table, dissolving the marble. In time, the fractures were enlarged to the size of the present cave.

In a later stage of development, carbonate, dissolved in one place by water, was redeposited wherever the water was subject to agitation and evaporation. This process is still going on today. It occurred particularly where the water dripped slowly from the ceiling of the cave, for here each drop as it clung to the rock lost some of its water to the air, and the carbonate it carried was left as a deposit. The deposit grew downward, forming a stalactite. Where water fell to the floor, a stalagmite was built upward by the carbonate deposit. In some places a stalactite and a stalagmite joined to form a column extending from floor to ceiling. Some deposits have assumed odd and fantastic shapes, and others have acquired graceful forms. Among the most striking are the exquisite miniatures of waterfalls created in stone. Some of the main features and chambers in the cave have been given descriptive names, such as Paradise Lost, Neptune's Grotto, Joaquin Miller's Chapel, Ghost Chamber, and Banana Grove.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

From Cave Junction on U.S. 199, it is 20 miles by Oreg. 46 to the monument, which is at 4,000 feet elevation.

Guide service is furnished by Oregon Caves Co., under contract with the U.S. Department of the Interior. Because of moist conditions within the cave, it may be advisable to use coveralls and rubber footgear, which can be rented from the concessioner. Temperature of the electrically lighted cave is about 48° F. Canes, sticks, and tripods must be left outside the cave to avoid accidental damage to formations.

Meals, and overnight accommodations are available in summer, light refreshments throughout the year. As children under 6 are not permitted in the cave, the concessioner provides nursery service while parents make the cave trip.

There is a picnic area, but camping is not permitted in the monument. Grayback Campground, in Siskiyou National Forest, is 8 miles from the monument on Oreg. 46.

Evening campfire programs include brief talks by members of the National Park Service staff on interesting phases of the monument.



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*Cave formations, too, show the grace and symmetry of nature's creations.*

## ADMINISTRATION

Oregon Caves National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this area 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.

The superintendent of Crater Lake National Park is in charge of Oregon Caves National Monument. Inquiries or comments about the area should be addressed to him at Box 7, Crater Lake, Oreg., 97604.

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The Department of the Interior—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute their full measure to the progress and prosperity of the United States—now and in the future.

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**National Park Service**

