

oregon

caves

national
monument



Smooth-walled erosion of the River Styx

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 it has long been 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 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 heat and pressure generated within the earth transformed the limestone into marble, and it was raised

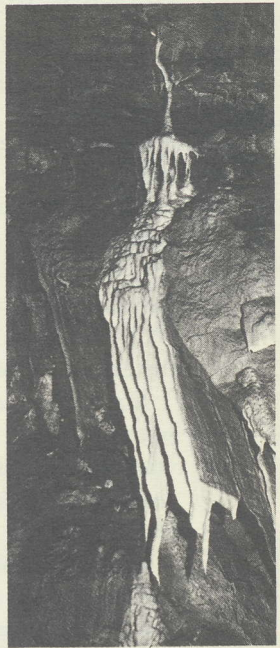
above the sea as part of a mountain range.

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 decaying 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 cave.

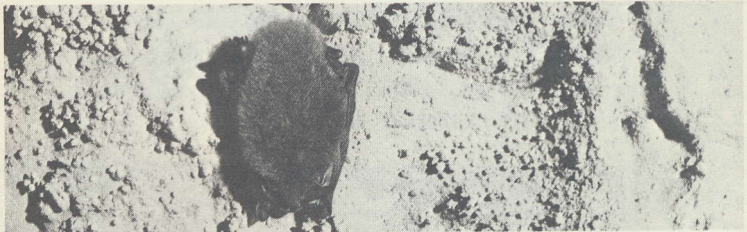
In a later stage of development, carbonate, dissolved in one place by water, was redeposited wherever the water was subject to agitation and evaporation. This process is still going on today. It occurred particularly where the water dripped slowly from the ceiling of the cave, for here each drop lost some of its water to the air as it clung to the rock, 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.



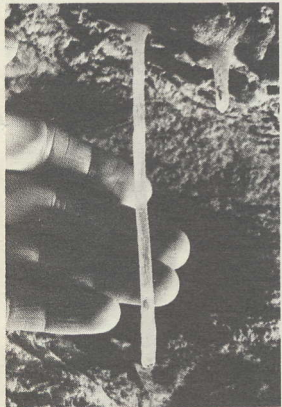
Detail in Paradise Lost



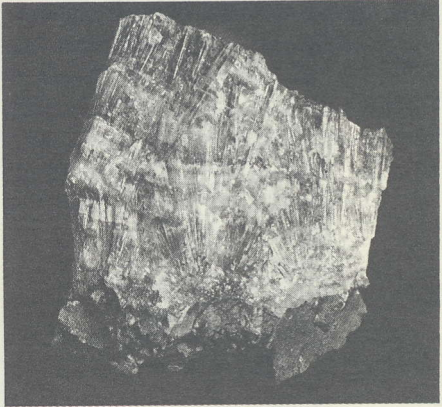
Drapery in Ghost Room



Hibernating bat in "dry" room



Soda straw stalactite



Calcite crystals in layer of flowstone



Stalactites formed since exit tunnel was completed in 1933

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 footwear, 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 lodging are available in summer, light refreshments all year. Children under 6 years of age, who are not permitted in the cave, can stay in the concessioner-operated nursery for a fee while parents make the trip.

Picnicking and camping are not permitted within the monument. Cave Creek Campground, in Siskiyou National Forest, is 4 miles from the monument on Oreg. 46.

Please keep pets on leash or in your car.

Regulations, as well as good manners, call for leaving rocks, flowers, wildlife, and other natural features undisturbed for others to enjoy.

ADMINISTRATION

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

The general superintendent of the Klamath Cluster is in charge of Oregon Caves National Monument. Inquiries or comments about this area may be addressed to him at Box 128, Klamath Falls, OR 97601. A resident manager is at the monument all year, and correspondence may be addressed to him at Box 377, Cave Junction, OR 97323.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

