



LAVACICLE CAVE

The picture was taken in Lavacicle Cave, a lava tube near Pilot Butte, approximately 40 miles southeast of the town of Bend. Other lava tubes, such as Derrick Cave, Lava River Cave, and Skeleton Cave, are common in this part of central Oregon and undoubtedly there are a great many more yet to be discovered. Lavacicle Cave is unique because of the well-developed lava pinnacles rising from the floor. Phil Brogan, geological writer and editor of the Bend Bulletin, has suggested the term "lavacicle" for these distinctive formations. We are therefore proposing that this name be adopted for all such volcanic dripstones found in lava tubes.

Geologists have observed that certain lava tubes served as channelways for later lava flows. Evidence of these younger flows is seen along the walls in the form of projecting shelves and gutters, representing the various stages of flooding as the lava stream rose and fell. Apparently, Lavacicle Cave was temporarily filled to the roof by a younger flow. Immediately after this lava drained out of the tube, the molten material coating the ceiling dripped to the floor, building pinnacles of rock. The tallest lavacicle shown here is about 6 feet high; hundreds of others scattered over the floor range from 1 to 2 feet in height. In contrast, lavacicles on the ceiling are only a few inches in length.

Lavacicle Cave was found by accident in the summer of 1959 when a forest fire swept through that area. One of the fire fighters noticed a small hole in the ground, just large enough to crawl through. From it issued a stream of cold air. His curiosity concerning the source of the air current led to the discovery.

Until the time when the lavacicles can be properly protected from destruction by man, the U.S. Forest Service has closed the entrance, but permission to visit the cave can be obtained from the District Headquarters in Bend.

[Photo by Dave Falconer]