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The Journal of Spelean History (JSH) is the Association's publication and is mailed to all members. JSH includes articles covering a wide variety of topics relating to man's use of caves, including historical cave explorations, saltpeter and other mineral extraction, and show cave development. Members are invited to contribute material and to comment on published material. ASHA assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

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Special Pennsylvania Convention Issue Dedicated to the Memory of Dale R. Ibberson

ASHA member Dale R. Ibberson died in his sleep on Monday, March 2, 2009, in his home in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He began caving in Pennsylvania and West Virginia in the 1960s. Dale was an avid cave collector, and compiled a library of hundreds of books, postcards, pennants, and records. Dale collected all sorts of information about Pennsylvania caves, and kept folders, and then notebooks as he obtained more and more references. In the early days of personal computers, he compiled the first index of Pennsylvania postcards. Dale was the expert on the history of Indian Echo Caverns, having several large three-ringed binders on the cave and nearby park. In 2000, Dale was awarded the Peter Hauer Award for his contributions to spelean history. Much of Dale's collection is now part of the MAKC library in Blairsville, Pennsylvania.

In September, 2000, Dale attended an auction in Manheim, Pennsylvania, that featured items from the estate of Henry W. Shoemaker. Pennsylvania cavers might recognize Shoemaker as the author of “History and Legends of Central Pennsylvania Caves” which appeared in Ralph W. Stone's Caves of Pennsylvania in 1953. Shoemaker (1880-1958) was a folklorist, diplomat, newspaper publisher, and conservationist. Shoemaker also wrote Penn's Cave, Pennsylvania's Grandest Cavern in 1914, which subsequently sold more copies than any other book about Pennsylvania caves.

Although the auction was somewhat of a disappointment, Dale was able to purchase a 1907 portrait of Shoemaker, and a typed and self-edited article about a cave in Dauphin County. Dale copied this article for me with a note that he wanted to publish it with his own introduction in the Journal, but unfortunately never found the time to do so.

With great admiration and with many fond memories of time spent with Dale, this Journal is dedicated to his memory.
DALE R. IBBERSON

CAVER
SPELEAN HISTORIAN
CONSERVATIONIST
OTR CHAIR
Peiper Cave, Carnegie Cave, and Cleversburg Sink in the Shippensburg area have sustained great popularity for about 60 years. These rank among the longest caves in the commonwealth. Stone (1932) and Smeltzer (1958) provide the most complete descriptions. This paper presents additional history and geology. Cumberland Valley caves formed over the past three million years (White, 2007; White, 2009; White, personal communication, 10-1-12).

PEIPER CAVE

Introduction

Peiper Cave is a well-known maze cave along the north side of Interstate 81 near Shippensburg in Cumberland County. It is located between Fayette and King Street Exits. A spectacular discovery in 1948, it was vandalized seven years later.

History and Geology

The cave was discovered in the early 1930s when limestone was quarried for crushed stone for Southampton Township roads (Smeltzer, 1958). Quarrying began there in the 1800s. At the time of discovery, Hun and Bill Coy of Shippensburg were doing the quarrying (Edgar E. Peiper, personal communication, 3-18-91). The small quarry is near the south end of a narrow wooded ridge on the former Peiper farm, previously the Cyrus Railing and, before that, the Bumgardner farm (Smeltzer, 1958). Having owned the farm on which Peiper Cave is located since 1937, Peiper sold the property in 1972 to Rick Unger of Shippensburg. Unger’s house now sits on the ridge top directly above the cave.

Along the same ridge in which Peiper Cave is located and a few hundred feet south of the entrance is a burned-out house. Cavers usually pass it on their way to the cave. Susan Heller formerly owned the house. Following her death, the house burned (Edgar E. Peiper, personal communication, 3-18-91). Prior to the fire, several Heller children also lived there. During the years they used the cave as a playhouse, entering it as their own, to such an extent that they did not like cavers going there. Upon seeing cavers, the children ran into the cave, hid, and made ghost sounds in an attempt to scare people out of the cave (Bernard Smelter, personal communication, 3-22-91).

In 1948 the Philadelphia Grotto made a significant discovery of the “Hidden Passage,” decorated with one of the most remarkable speleothem displays found in a
Pennsylvania cave (Figure 1). In 1955 virtually all of the speleothems were vandalized (Smeltzer, 1958). Despite vandalism, some interesting speleothems still exist in Peiper Cave, including helictites. Peiper Cave also provides excellent examples of dome pits, passages developed along vertical joints (Figure 2), flowstone (Figure 3), and breakdown (Figure 4).

![Figure 1: Prolific speleothems in the Hidden Passage of Peiper Cave. Image by Bernard L. Smeltzer.](image)

A conspicuous feature in Peiper Cave is breakdown – i.e., *en masse* failure of cavern roofs or walls (Davies, 1951). The largest breakdown accumulation is in the First Room (Smeltzer, 1958; Figure 4). Here limestone blocks up to 10 feet in length lie in a jumble, nearly filling half of the passage. Sometimes rock debris, clay, and travertine obscure breakdown. In these cases, recognition may be based on cave ceiling morphology. Breakdown in Peiper Cave creates flat ceilings (Figure 4). Figure 5 is a less common form of breakdown – rock slab separation from a cave wall. This slab is 20 feet long and 20 inches wide standing on edge along the left wall of the northern end of the First Room (Smeltzer, 1958).
Figure 2: Passage in Peiper Cave developed on a vertical fracture.

Figure 3: Flowstone in Peiper Cave.

Figure 4: Breakdown in the First Room of Peiper Cave. Note the flat ceiling.

Figure 5: Slab breakdown in Peiper Cave.
White and White (1969) cite eight processes activating cavern breakdown. Of those, loss of buoyant support by gallery draining appears to be the major contributor to breakdown in Peiper Cave. In this process, assuming an average density for limestone of 150 lb/ft\(^3\), the buoyancy of the rock in water contributes an upward force of 62.4 lb/ft\(^3\). When passages are drained, 42 percent of the support is removed.

It was not until late 1948 or early-mid 1949 that Peiper Cave was first surveyed and mapped (Figure 6). This earliest map identified the cave as “Piper’s Cave.” The map did not show the complex maze network, a pattern not common in the Cumberland Valley, found in later maps. Duffield Cave at Duffield is another maze cave. Peiper Cave has the most complex cave pattern in Cumberland and Franklin Counties.

Figure 6: Earliest known map of Peiper Cave. Survey and drawing by Bernard L. Smeltzer. Note spelling of the cave name.
CARNEGIE CAVE

Introduction

Carnegie Cave is a popular cave partly located under Interstate 81 near Exit 10 (King Street Exit) at Shippensburg. It has 1905 feet of passages (Bernard Smeltzer, personal communication, 3-22-91) and has been explored for at least 80 years.

History and Geology

The earliest description of Carnegie Cave is from Stone (1932), giving a location on the Mower Farm. Entrance was through a quarry opening in the north bank of Thompson Run [Creek]. Smeltzer (1958) updates land-ownership information, stating the cave is on the Henry Jacoby property, formerly the Carnegie Farm. Originally there were three cave entrances, all in the aforementioned quarry. Only one entrance remains owing to Interstate 81 construction in the early 1960s. Prior to completing this section on June 9, 1964, the York Grotto petitioned PennDOT to preserve access to Carnegie Cave. The main entrance, located in the I-81 median, was maintained when corrugated metal pipe was cemented in the opening and extended out the west side of the highway embankment (R.E. Mueser; 1-16-83; personal communication). This pipe is three feet in diameter and 155 feet long. Sections of it were sealed together with a bituminous, tar-like material. The original (easternmost) entrance lies approximately 30 feet vertically below the highway – a distance short enough that, underground, one can hear truck traffic from the surface. Most of the areal extent of the cave lies north-northwest of I-81.

On July 9, 1967 Carnegie Cave became the only local cave to sustain a fatality. On that day spelunkers exiting the cave left two burning candles in the drainpipe. A different group of three entered the cave, passed the candles, and explored the cave. Upon returning to exit, they saw a wall of fire encircling approximately 25-30 feet of the inside of the drainpipe’s middle section. One of them panicked and crawled through the flames. The other two retreated to inner recesses of the cave and waited for rescue. The panicked caver died three days later from second- and third-degree burns. (NSS Cave Accident Reports, 1967).

Carnegie Cave’s popularity has resulted in vandalism. However, some excellent speleothems persist. Figure 6 shows a three-foot “fluted column” at cross-section S-S’ shown on Smeltzer’s 1958 map. Especially interesting in this cave are the well-developed rimpools or rimstone dams (Figure 7) in the northern terminus, northwest of cross-section v-v’ on the same map. These speleothems form on cave floors and consist of narrow, interconnected ridges bounding pools of water resembling terraces. Water usually flows over them from one crescent-shaped pool to another (Franze and Slifer, 1971). Rimpools form when water flows over an obstruction and is slightly agitated, causing carbon dioxide to be given off and calcite precipitated on the lip of the dam. As more water flows over low parts of the dam than elsewhere, more calcite is deposited on them and the top of the dam, therefore, keeps nearly level (Moore and Niocholas, 1964).
CLEVERSBURG SINK

Introduction

Of Cumberland Valley caves, Cleversburg Sink is unique in that it intersects the water table. As a result, it is flooded most of the time. This flooding thwarted spelunkers for decades. Only during prolonged droughts could they explore lower levels.

History and Geology

Earliest report of Cleversburg Sink is in 1929 when two hunters discovered the sinkhole and cave (Stone, 1932). The cave was not entered because it was flooded. This is the first documentation of the cave as the landowner previously knew of the sinkhole but not of a cave below.

Unlike other spelunkers, in the 1970s the writer used one-man rafts (Figure 8) to explore the cave. These provided observational vantage points not possible during

Figure 7: Three-foot column in Carnegie Cave.

Figure 8: Rimpools in Carnegie Cave.
routine explorations. Floating on the water table put us up to 40 feet above the cave bottom. These higher-level observations revealed previously unknown features in

Figure 9: Using one-man rafts in Cleversburg Sink.

Figure 10: 25-foot column in Giant Hall, Cleversburg Sink.

Giant Hall (Smeltzer, 1958): a 25-foot tall column (Figure 9), prolific stalactites 2-3 feet in length and drapery (Figure 10); fish; large breakdown blocks wedged in the narrow passage; and the greatest vertical development of local caves, ranging 70-80 feet. The referenced ceiling speleothems in Giant Hall are too high above cave bottom to see if explorations occur when the cave is dry. Rafts also offered opportunities to photograph a 30-foot decline in the water table over a two-week period. This observation complements more recent pressure-transducer readings of water-level measurements in the cave (Feeney and Mishler, 2011). Also, in more recent years, wetsuit diving has been done here (Kenneth Tayman, personal communication, 8-2-12).

Fish in Cleversburg Sink ranged up to approximately eight inches in length and may be from Burd Run and Thompson Creek. Smeltzer (1958) reports surface surveys of the cave indicate the far end of the southwest branch lies within 20 feet of the two streams intersecting. Feeney and Mishler (2011) infer that some water in Cleversburg Sink is allogetic and is likely from the referenced streams.

Additional images of the caves are in the Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy library.
Figure 11: Prolific speleothems on the ceiling of Giant Hall in Cleversburg Sink. Photo by David Hoover.

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CONODOGUINET CAVE,
CARLISLE, CUMBERLAND COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Jack Speece

A list of the first caves recorded in America, prior to 1800 would include Durham, Dragon and Indian Echo (Swarta) all located on William Scull's 1770 map of Pennsylvania. The next most celebrated cave in Pennsylvania would be Conodoguinet, which was noted by geologist Johann D. Schöpf in 1787 and drawn by the Compte de Colbert de Maulevrier in 1794. In 1897 Henry C. Mercer hired William H. Witte to excavate the cave in search of the remains of ancient man. Today this natural wonder is a part of The Cave Hill Nature Center of Carlisle.
Conodoguinet Cave has a very classic semi-circular 7 feet high and 10 feet wide arch entrance in the bank of a creek with the same name near Carlisle. It certainly was known in 1770 when William Scull made his famous map of Pennsylvania for Thomas Penn. Scull noted three other caves (Durham, Indian Echo and Dragon) but not Conodoguinet. However, the cave near Carlisle mentioned in Johann David Schöpf's *Beytrage zur Mineralogischen Kenntniss des Ostlichen Theils von Nord-Amerika und seiner Geburge* (Geology of Eastern North America), along with the three on Scull's map, is most certainly Conodoguinet. This was written in 1787 and was translated by Edmund M. Speiker in 1972. Schöpf describes the Great Limestone valley extending from the Hudson River down to Georgia.

John Penn is recorded as to have had the occasion to visit Carlisle in April, 1788. After remaining in Carlisle until the 13th, Penn commenced his return to Philadelphia by rising early in order “to see a cave near Conodoguinet Creek,” in which the water petrifies as it drops from the roof. By this time the area would have been thriving with industry. In 1762 the first of a variety of over ninety mills was built using the power provided by the creek.

As one of the first celebrated caves in America, Conodoguinet Cave drew the attention of notable men and even that of travelers from abroad. This included men such as General John Armstrong, Ephriam Blaine, Spencer F. Baird, John Penn, and John Brown Parker. The Compte de Colbert de Maulevrier sketched the cave and Cave Hill in 1798. St. John de Crevecoeur wrote about the cave in his *Voyage dans la haute Pennsylvania* in the late 18th century. Rev. George Duffield, wrote the following poem in the early 1880's to his friend, John Brown Parker:

“Don't you mind how often on Saturday
We traveled to the cave?
And what prodigious legends there
The fullest credence gave
Of that poor man who ne'er came out
Of the little dog who did
Of Grimes, the robber, who to us was
Another Captain Kid;
Of the wonders, and the sorrows, and
The raptures of the creek,
In skating, fishing, swimming times
Shall we ever cease to speak.

When the first dam of the Carlisle Gas and Water Company was built, in 1854, a mile or so below the present dam, the cave's mouth was much higher. This dam was situated to the north of Basin Hill. It is today in ruins, but among its overturned stones, there is said to be good fishing. The Company's second dam was built on the site of General Blaine's early dam. On the foundations of the second dam, secured by tons of concrete, rests the present higher and more lengthy dam, backing up for several miles the water of the Conodoguinet necessary for Carlisle's continuous expansion. In Maulevriër's sketch of the cave, done in 1794, he shows an embankment and the cave standing high and dry - the creek quite low. Ephriam Blaine, who had his grist mill a short distance below the cave and who called his estate “Cave Middleton,” must have had a very low dam and race.

Samuel Hazard in his 1829 Register of Pennsylvania wrote a description of an 1811 visit to the cave along the “Canadoguinet” creek. It contains a good description of the cave including the “Devil's Dining Room” and surrounding area. The floor was muddy and covered with water due to several days of rain but the rumors of the seven springs within the cave were not substantiated. The following discovery was reported:

“At the farthest extremity of this branch, I found, on a small projection, three bones. One seemed to be a piece of thigh bone, and the others of the vertebrae, but whether of a brute or human being, my knowledge of anatomy was insufficient to the determination. The ledge, on which these bones were lying, was ten inches from the floor, and extended in length about four feet. There appeared to be a cavity between the ledge and the ceiling, six inches in width; but I was unable to thrust my arm farther in than to the elbow, though it seemed to be rather deep.”
As with most well-known caves, a variety of stories have been told. The cave was reported to have been the temporary deposit by the Indians for their spoils of war and, sometimes, a kind of sanctuary for personal concealment. Reports of human bones being found there lead to the belief that it had been used as a sepulture for warriors who had died in battle. This was not substantiated and is not in accordance with the superstitions of the local natives who did not travel beyond the lighted entrance.

Some have felt that “Lewis the Robber”, also known as the “Robin Hood of Cumberland,” used this cave as one of his headquarters from which to raid flatboats on the creek. A large amount of what he stole is still among the missing. This “gentleman” was arrested and sentenced to death for double enlistment and desertion during the War of 1812. He escaped from a Carlisle guard-house and hid in part of the Conodoguinet Cave known as “the Devil's Dining Room.” From this refuge, he put together a band of “merry men” that terrorized the valley. He was finally captured and died in a Bellefonte jail of gunshot wounds.

Another tale reports that the cave is much more extensive. The story tells of a dog that entered the cave and emerged near the Army Medical College, about a mile southeast (and across the strike of the limestone beds). Digging in the rear of the cave has not uncovered any additional passage.

Professor Spencer F. Baird (world famous paleontologist) visited the Carlisle bone caves in February 1848. With the aid of his students, he explored Conodoguinet Cave, Conodoguinet Rock House, and one other small cave. Baird discovered stone implements and bones of 18 animal species, including horse, beaver, and deer. His report of these fossils was published in the Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Although Baird believed that five percent of the bones were of extinct species, Gerrit S. Miller re-examined Baird's fossils in 1940 and found them all to be of recent age.

Originally the cave was known as “natural cave” or “Devil's Head Cave.” On May 18, 1897, well known archaeologist Henry C. Mercer hired William H. Witte, a well-known botanist from Springtown, PA to examine archaeological sites of the lower Susquehanna Valley at a rate of twenty dollars a month.

Mercer had previously investigated Durham Cave and even worked with Witte at the “Bone Cave” near Port Kennedy, both in Pennsylvania. His most notable expedition was to the Yucatan (Mexico), where he visited twenty-nine caves in two months, looking for the remains of ancient man.

Witte met with the owner of Conodoguinet Cave, Mr. Henderson, to obtain his permission to dig, however, the land had been leased to the Cumberland Trolley Traction Company. Witte initially believed that he would be able to secure their cooperation, as he had the backing of prominent Carlisle residents Judge Saddler and attorney J. M. Weakley. But the superintendent of the trolley company, M. B. Cumbles, was impossible to deal with.
There were two reasons why the company was reluctant to allow Witte to dig in the cave. First, with an eye toward possible commercial development, the cave was seen as “sort of an attraction” by the trolley company; and second, they weren't sure if Witte would fill up the trenches after he was through digging. Witte discovered that Cumbles had secured his position as superintendent by influence. In a letter he wrote to Mercer on June 23, 1897 he stated:

“His own attorney, Judge Saddler, told me he was a baby. Other gentlemen about town, who have as much weight as Judge Sadler have gone so far as to call him a fool. I have been insulted personally four or five times, in fact I have lost the count. … He don't care a cent for science.”

After several meetings, Witte believed that he had an agreement with the Company to dig if he posted a $25 bond in a local bank. But the deal fell through, and he was not allowed to dig. Witte remarked in another letter, “He is afraid I will take the cave with me when I leave.” Even a letter and pamphlets from Mercer could not sway the company, as Cumbles remarked, “they don't amount to anything.”

After five days of negotiations, Witte had made little progress in investigating the cave. He was not allowed to do anything but walk into the cave. Using candles as his source of light, Witte drew a map and profile of Conodoguinet Cave, which he sent to Mercer.

Witte explained in another letter to Mercer that if he was denied permission at Conodoguinet, he would go to Carlisle Cave No. 2, which he located as being three miles N.E. of the town on the farm of Mr. Eply. This is the cave known today as Conodoguinet Rock House. Witte knew that he would not be the first to investigate the cave. Professor Spencer F. Baird had done a small excavation there in 1848 and discovered lots of bones.

The cave is located in the bank of Conodoguinet Creek, 1-1/2 miles north of the square in Carlisle, PA, and 200 yards above a mill dam, 0.2 miles west of Route 34. The story book-like entrance is at the base of a limestone cliff known as Cave Hill, and is so close to creek level that flood waters enter. A thin film of tufa covers the cliff face over the entrance. The Pennsylvania Turnpike passes directly over the cave.

In Bates' *History of Cumberland and Adams Counties, Pennsylvania*, Vol. II, p. 6, 1886 is the following quotation from the History of Cumberland County by Rev. C. P. Wing published in 1879. “Two or three caves have been discovered, which have been esteemed as curiosities. The most wonderful of these is on the bank of the Conodoguinet, about a mile north of Carlisle. It is under a small limestone cliff, not more than 30 feet high above the surface of the creek; but through a semi-circular arched entrance, 7 to 10 feet high, and 10 feet in width, it descends gradually to an anti-chamber of considerable size. From this vaulted passage large enough to allow one to walk erect extends 270 feet, to a point where it branches off in three directions. One on the right is somewhat difficult.
on account of the water that percolates through the rocks on every side, but leads to a large chamber of great length. The central one is narrow and crooked, and has never been completely explored on account of a deep perpendicular precipice, which prevents all progress beyond about 30 feet. The other passage is smaller and has little interest.

“In different parts are pools of water, supposed by some to be springs, but as they have no outflow they are more probably formed from drippings from the surrounding rocks. Human bones have been found in it, and no doubt it has been used as a place of refuge or temporary lodgment by the Indians. No such articles as are usually deposited with their dead have yet been discovered.”

Wing also mentions the discovery of human bones in the cave but no mention of their age. Before the nearby mill dam raised the level of the creek, the cave must have been a very suitable place for refuge.

When this cave was visited in 1930 by State Geologist, Ralph Stone, the floor of the first room was covered with soft mud several inches deep, but beyond the first turn the floor was fairly dry. Although they followed each branch to its present end, they failed to find any large room, the whole cave being a crooked passageway mostly 10 to 15 feet wide. The “deep perpendicular precipice” was not discovered. The passage leading to “a large chamber of great length” may now be choked with mud washed in by floods since the dam raised the water level at the entrance.

Stone made a map with a plane table and pocket transit, the measurements being made with a 100 foot steel tape. The distance from the entrance to the back of the cave in a straight line is 200 feet, and by the crooked passage 300 feet. The cave as mapped is all one general level. Bernard Smeltzer and L. Wolf returned in 1959 and resurveyed the cave and provide a more extensive report.

The cave has a flat-ceilinged corridor with a level floor of deep wet mud leading south-west into the cliff. At 50' the passage widens and is offset to the left forming a chamber measuring 15' by 30', A channel 5' deep cuts diagonally across the ceiling and
penetrates the left wall as a steep alcove terraced with flowstone. From this point the cave follows a sinuous path along various joint planes for a distance of 210' with an average width of 10' and height of 6'. The walls are very irregular but ceilings are mostly flat or slightly arched and rather level. The cave ends in a broad curved wall of solid limestone, a very unusual termination for such a prominent passage. A sunken area in the floor at this point may indicate a lower level. The slump may also mark the site of an excavation for bones. An early record of the cave's exploration mentions branching passages at the vicinity of the present end of the cave. One of these branches supposedly led to a “large chamber of great length.”

One hundred and sixty feet from the cave entrance a low travertine mound covers the floor under a chimney 14' high and around the next bend in the passage a massive undercut flowstone hangs on the left wall. Twenty feet further on two subordinate passages branch from the main one. Both are narrow serpentine channels trending southeast for about 50'. The higher one follows a rather constant up-grade course, ending in a fissure. Eighteen feet from the entrance to this passage a circular hydroid fossil, about 5 inches in diameter, bulges from the left wall. The opening to the lower branch is keyhole-shaped and leads to a 15' stretch of rimstone dams. The passage ends in a flowstone blockade. The rimstone pools, some a foot deep, are inhabited by isopods, amphipods and salamanders.

According to published maps of the Fourth Pennsylvania Geological Survey, the cave extends across a fault in the Chambersburg limestone. Previous reports erroneously assigned the cave's strata to the Beekmantown formation. The bedding planes are for the most part vertical though short sections of the cave walls show beds only half as steep. This may be due to recumbent folds associated with faulting. The sinuous pattern of the cave, across the strike, with well-rounded corners, arched walls and broad uniform passage is indicative of a main phreatic conduit formed by considerable hydrostatic head. It has been suggested that the cave mouth may represent an ancient spring outlet.

Conodoguinet is an Indian word that means “for a long way nothing but bends.” This is a good description for the cave as well as the creek. With the exception of a few massive pieces of dripstone and flowstone on the walls, the cave is relatively devoid of formations. It lies in a vertical bedding of the Chambersburg limestone of Ordovician age that strikes east and west and stands on edge. Sinkholes in the immediate vicinity suggest that the cave may have greater extent.

In 1963 a group of Carlisle citizens granted the purchase of close to fifteen acres from the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission. Soon afterwards this group and additional contributors bought this tract and deeded it to the borough of Carlisle. The borough council appointed a commission to develop and administer the area as an outdoor educational center. Subsequently it was called “The Cave Hill Nature Center.”

Just as William Scull never included the cave's location on his early map of Pennsylvania, the topographic maps of today also do not locate this landmark. However, today it remains as a favorite party spot for the local youth and as has the scars that are
associated with its popularity. The high waters of the creek keep its banks muddy and fill the entrance with debris. But its classic entrance still impresses all that come here for the view.

Conodoguinet Rock House is located about three miles west of Carlisle. This shelter cave has an entrance 20’ wide and 2’ to 4’ high that opens to a single room 30’ long and 20’ wide. At one time the cave had been used as a cellar. It also served as a winter home for a tramp during the winter of 1895.

This is where Witte came to make his excavation after leaving Conodoguinet Cave. Witte worked here until July 20, 1897. Three trenches were dug, uncovering over 1,000 specimens of bone and teeth, but nothing of ancient age. He filled the trenches and left disappointed for a possible archaeological site at Cavetown, Maryland.

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Officers and members of the Kabob Hiking Club, friends, and fellow hikers, it is
great to be here in the romantic country of Jean Paul, Allen Barrett, Warren Daniel,
Warren F. Swab, Daniel Romberger, William Williams, Ben Koen and other great people.
I am going to tell you that the old people used to relate at Millersberg, Killinger, Gratz,
Berrysberg and Lykens, twenty five years ago. It is one of the many legends that have
centered around the Indian Cave, Love Rock and Pewee Rock and made this glen one of
the most romantic in Pennsylvania folklore. As some of the descendants of some of the
leading figures are in the audience, a few names are altered, otherwise it is as heard from
the venerable Charles Weaver and others of the well-posted local historians.

Jean Paul, the famous Huguenot surveyor and lightning calculator of
Elizabethville, born in 1789, related how old people told him of meeting long lines of
Indians, moving in single file, entering or leaving the Mammoth Indian Cave of
Pennsylvania, long after they had left these valleys. These same Indians would be seen a
few hours afterwards at the Big Lick in Lykens Valley. It is wondered how they got there,
unless there was an opening on that side.

Still older pioneers who had been captured by the Indians told of being
imprisoned in the cave, and what they saw there, the domed council chamber, around
which hung the skeletons of those who had offended the great Six Nations Chieftain
Schachchacha whose name, oddly enough, means the “Upright” or “Righteous One,” the
conqueror had strangled them and hung them up around the walls of the Council Hall.

Next was the room piled up with blocks of silver and lead, which the Indians
traded with the whites. Where was it obtained, did they learn the art of smelting ores from
the Spaniards along the Atlantic Coast, one wonders? Next was the bridal chamber of the
great chief and his beautiful bride Occiehucum, the “Loveliest One,” next to the Armory
where guns and knives were kept in perfect order, where bullets and arrows were made
and shafts of spears fashioned.

Yet when Jean Paul found the way into the cave by the Lykens Valley hidden
entrance, none of these things were revealed. Room after room he passed through and
found them all to be empty and desolate until he came to the rock which blockaded the
cave, and only his skill was able to find the hidden spring to move it, and he proceeded
to the exit on the trail from Carsonville to Lykens.

Who was Jean Paul, you may wonder. He was the famed surveyor, a Huguenot,
who ran the line of the Pennsylvania Central Railroad from West Philadelphia to
Harrisburg in 1827, for General Simon Cameron, and the coal carrying railroad out of the Lykens Valley, when the old Susquehanna Canal was completed to Millersberg in 1830. When all surveyors, American and foreign, had failed to find a way for the Pennsylvania Cental across the Alleghenies at Altoona, General Cameron sent Jean Paul to the Mountain City, an aged man in 1854, and without instruments he led the surveyors across the mountains, hence the engineering marvel of the world, known as the Horseshoe Curve, was made.

Jean Paul, whose astrological clock, now in Joe Kindig Jr.'s museum at York, can do everything but repeat Lincoln's Gettysburg address, was also the pioneer of radio, radar, and television, and built his “round house” home in Elizabethville, and even made his own nails and window lights. When he visited the cave he found but a few bones, beads, buttons, and breast pins.

Schachchacha, “The Flawless One,” who supposedly kept the Belle of the Six Nations in the Great Indian Cave, was not above admiring the charms of the Huguenot girls in Lykens Valley. Often he met the lovely Naomi Brochard while he ranged the mountains, like some lurking panther.

Naomi, so legend has it, was the granddaughter of Countess Maria Corneliani, who Robert Louis Stevenson says, followed the Huguenot Chieftain “Roland,” on his difficult campaigns, “out of love.” Maria was compelled, after her lover's massacre, to find a way to Pennsylvania, as a Redemptioner, where an opulant Huguenot from Oley, Marcel Brochard, bought her on the docks in Philadelphia, “for her passage money plus” and took her to Berks County.

Coming with her parents to the Lykens Valley in 1740, in the vanguard of the Huguenot settlement, Naomi Brochard's fatal beauty won all hearts, including that of the great war chief Schachchacha, despite the fact he had a lovely aboriginal queen. Schachchacha would contrive to meet the Huguenot belle picking High Huckleberries at the Wolf's Pond, raspberries at Minnie's Hit, or blackberries at Fannie Trail, or perhaps chestnutting on the Chestnut level. He was always respectful and reserved until one day at the Burnt Fields in Huckleberry time when he declared his love. Naomi must become his bride. This shocked her as she dearly loved the Huguenot bear hunter Emerich de Hart. However, she could not refuse and the chief led her in the cave and told her to “have it out” with his Indian wife. They glared at each other and the Indian woman attacked Naomi with her claws and teeth. The Huguenot girl gave her aboriginal rival a fierce right and left, such as Georges Carpentier, the French boxer used on Frankie Duffy, over a hundred years later, and Occiehucum sank down on the jagged rocks to rise no more.

The smiling expression of Chief “Flawless One” indicated how pleased he was that the way had been cleared for a new and more beautiful queen. It was an idyllic existence for a time, but Queen Naomi tired of the ceremonial life in the cave, never seeing any of her own kind with whom she could exchange Pennsylvania Dutch recipes or play any of the old Dutch running games.
One day when the chief and his bodyguards left the cave for a period of military training, the Dutch would call it a “Batalya,” Naomi made up a dummy out of fur robes, in her bed, and her watchers, thinking she slept, dozed, and she eluded her guards, and escaped, taking a loaded Lefevre rifle and shot pouch with her. Just as she emerged, the chief rode past with his aides. Emerich de Hart, Naomi's Huguenot lover, with his friend Levi Shora, was watching on the Love Rock, to kill the chief, and rescue his girl. Suddenly everything seemed to come his way. He dropped from the rock, and soon his Meylin rifle spoke, and the chief toppled off his pony, next the pony dropped while bullets whistled among the frenzied ponies of the guardsman.

Naomi, hidden behind a big pine (the stump can still be seen), fed charge after charge into them, from her Lefevre. Her bullet is said to have finished the chief. They left their victims where they fell and hurried to the fort at Lykens. Later other of the chief's forces appeared and reverently buried him, his staff officers and their ponies, a short distance inside the cave entrance.

Every now and then a bone or two comes to the surface, or a few beads or pins or buttons. On the anniversary of the slaying if there is a dark thick fog, a spectral cavalcade rides forth, and starts on a ghostly warpath, to find revenge for their sudden taking off.

As Maria Corneliani had been forced to see her lover fall in France and dragged away over stony roads behind a span of half-wild oxen, Naomi Brochard, her granddaughter in Pennsylvania, witnessed the end of her enemies and found safety and peace in her Huguenot lover's arms.

Henry Shoemaker in 1907.
WOMER'S CAVE (ELLIOTTSBURG CAVE),
PENNSYLVANIA

Jack Speece

Womer’s Cave was first noticed by the owner, William S. Womer, in the spring of 1900 but at that time it was only a short crawlway. In 1914 Frank Leonard and Bill Sheibley pushed the crawlway into walkable passage. Shortly afterwards, Frank negotiated a twenty year lease from Womer and began to improve the cave. Bill enjoyed being the guide to the few tourists that happened to come by. Although the cave has extensive passages, the low ceiling and sticky mud makes commercialization impractical. A quarry blast covered the entrance in the 1940’s. In 1980, York Grotto dug the entrance open again and secured the natural wonder with a gate for protection.
Small farms predominate the hilly, rural countryside of Perry County just north of Blue Mountain. The people living there have learned to work hard and most of them reap an adequate livelihood from the soil. In the spring of 1900, William “Billy” Samuel Womer purchased a farm from Daniel Wentzel. In this farm is a small hill between Germany Ridge and Mahoney Hill which contained a small, crawlway entrance to a cave. That same year, Billy Womer, “Shonk” Kistler, and a friend investigated this small natural void and were confronted with a seemingly bland wall after traveling a short distance inside.

The local folklore holds that the cave had been used by the Indians. Arrow heads and beads can still be found in the surrounding fields. No Indian artifacts, however, have been found in the cave.

Around 1912, a lime kiln was built just below the natural entrance and a quarry made which slowly devoured the entrance. The lime was used in the nearby fields and sold to other farmers whenever needed. Limited production and occasional use was made of the quarry until about 1940.

Frank Leonard was introduced to the quarry cavity in 1914 by Floyd Dunkleberger, an employee. On his first visit, he was accompanied by J.W. “Bill” Sheibley. The strong, cold blast of air emerging from the mouth of the cave aroused his curiosity. Frank was excited and, using only a candle, squeezed himself through the mud crawl space, with his chin digging a furrow in the clay at places. When the “blank wall” was reached, a larger tunnel veered to the right and soon became a walkable passage. Being alone, he explored only a few hundred feet before returning to his friends who were waiting at the entrance, to tell them of the great discovery.

Previous to this discovery, Frank had visited Luray Caverns in Virginia and had a great desire to find a similar cave in this area which he might develop. Other caves near Elliotsburg, Ickesburg, and Landisburg were somewhat disappointing, but this one had some potential. The following week he had a twenty-year lease prepared by a lawyer in Mechanicsburg, agreeing to share equally with the owner (William Womer) any profits realized from the commercialization of this cave.

Shortly afterwards, work began to enlarge the entrance. Workers from Frank’s orchard near New Kingston, Cumberland County, when other chores did not keep them busy, helped to hoe out the mud, enlarge the passages, build bridges, and make other improvements to the cavern. Sawdust was spread on the floor to help prevent things from becoming so muddy. A three foot wide by six foot high steel door reinforced with angle iron, three hinges, and two separate locks was installed at the entrance. Frank’s previous blasting experience proved to be rather useful in these efforts. Young John Womer, with a rope around his waist, was used to push the small passages and descend pits. His mother put a stop to this practice as soon as she found out.

Prior to the commercialization attempt, this cavity had no formal name but was sometimes referred to as the Indian Cave. Frank Leonard originally named it as
Elliotsburg Caverns after the nearest town. This name was also used on his early photographs of the cave. At some time the term “Mammoth Caverns” was used and a large canvas sign printed with black letters hung between two trees across the lane heading for the quarry. Henry W. Shoemaker (Pennsylvania’s folklore authority) referred to this name in his article printed in the Altoona Mirror:

Perry County’s Mammoth Cave of Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Cave Men’s club enjoyed the rare privilege of being guided to the Mammoth Cave of Pennsylvania in Spring township by the leading geologist of Perry County, inimitable, rare J.W. “Bill” Sheibley, sage of Ghost Ridge. Bill had been lessee of the cave, which is on the old Woomer farm, for 20 years, and spent many days and nights in the dark labyrinthine depths, building steps and bridges, widening passageways to try to commercialize this stupendous natural wonder. One has to go on hands and knees to enter, and the floor is soft yellow mud, not very good for Sunday best suits, etc. However, most of the Cave Men’s club members were suitably attired and little damage was done to raiment.

Guide Sheibley was at his best, with his quaint original sense of humor. Two rooms, gorgeously decorated with stalactites and stalagmites, reminiscent of the chandeliers and pillars in the state capitol at Harrisburg, and hanging full with hundreds of sleeping bats. “These two rooms full of bats are called the senate and house,” said Bill, dark eastern eyes gleaming, “because they are hanging on, on the state’s time.” This brought a prolonged laugh from those who remembered the long drawn-out and costly “special session” which recently folded up on Capitol Hill. The largest room in the cave is surely the veritable eighth natural wonder of Pennsylvania. Bill calls it the supreme court, on account of its lofty impressive proportions, and the seven mighty stalagmites columns which Bill calls the “justices of the court.” He has them all named for the present incumbents, the tallest and most majestic one he calls the Patterson column.”

“I have several reasons for this, not only because the Honorable Marion D. Patterson is a big and impressive personality, but His Honor comes of good old Perry county ancestry. The early Pattersons helped clean out the surplus Indian population of the county, the sneaking Japs of their day, just as they later cut down the Indian census of what is now Blair county in many a surprise attack and crushing massacre about the site of the old Keller church.” The farthest chamber, 900 feet from the entrance is adorned with one huge column in the center.

Bill calls this sanctum sanctorium the “Department of the Interior,” and the column “Harold L. Ickes,” after Blair county’s favorite son, who like the Patterson family, are of Perry county origin. Harold L. Ickes is descended from the Ickes and Loy families of Perry county, both families have towns named for them, Loysville and Ickesburg, the pioneer Indian fighters, Michael Loy and Nicholas Ickes. Bill had understood that Harold Ickes middle name was Loy, but brother Gray, the good old postmaster at Blain says it is Lannames. Said Bill, “The Huguenots were the ‘Free fear, but both Loy and Lanfear are grand.
Huguenot French” of their day, and under Laporte, Cavalier and Ravenel, administered some awful drubbings to the levels of those times.” After emerging from the Mammoth cave, which in one part has three tiers of passageways like an apartment hotel, and could house half of Perry county in a air raid, all agreed with Bill that it dwarfs all other Pennsylvania caves by its scenic majesty, its immensity, and beautiful formations, the mud-stained speleologists were escorted by Mr. Sheibley to the Nine Springs, from which Spring township is named, and also to a cluster of seven springs, in the shape of a natural star, in the same township.

Bill was anxious to accompany the party to the Perry County Warm Springs which register a temperature of 65-70 degrees Fahrenheit, the same as the Warm Springs of Huntingdon County, which they resemble, but time did not permit this pleasure. Neither was there much time to visit the ancient Gothic Castle of the aristocratic Old Holland Dutch ironmaster, Christian C.C.F. Thudium who conducted Old Grove Furnace, near the Perry county side of Wagner’s gap. “The Wagner’s were great Indian fighters in the Revolution, and before,” said Bill. “Just as their heroic descendent, Buzz Wagner, of Johnstown, the youngest Lieut. Col. of aviation is mopping-up the present day foes, the Japs, in World War II. When we decorate the Wagner graves at old St. Michael’s in Proutz Valley on Memorial day, we’ll be prouder than ever of Perry county fighting family No. 1, who knocked off their country’s enemies by whole squadrons, and helped end the war, and bring the four freedoms by their mass annihilation of treacherous foemen.”

Shoemaker and Sheibley’s description cannot be taken as accurate. Shoemaker is well known for his tall tales without any background support and Sheibley was also known as an opportunist. However, they do make for interesting reading. A Philadelphia newspaper reporter described his visit but expanded on the adventure of being in a “lost” condition.

Underground photography was not a widespread hobby in the early 1920’s. Frank Leonard, however, did his best, using flash powder and time exposures, to photograph “his” cave. One shot was exposed one hour and fifteen minutes, using two carbide lamps and seven tallow candles. The Seeds #27 extra fast plate camera did an admirable job, considering the adverse conditions underground. The cave also served as his darkroom. These early pictures have served to document some of the history within these pages.

As things progressed, curious individuals longed to see what lay behind the large rusty door. A small fee of ten to twenty-five cents was charged to cover personal expenses. These visitors, however, were rather infrequent and numbered only several score over the years. It was customary for these tourists to write their names in the mud-covered floors in the back rooms while pausing for a rest. Some would mold the mud to form raised script which was stuck to the walls, ceilings, and large rocks. Also, humorous clay figurines such as animals and cowboys were produced, making an added attraction to the passageways. This is a unique form of art and perhaps someday will be compared to that produced by ancient man occasionally found in caves of Europe.
After the commercialization attempt, the cave was referred to as Womer’s Cave, after its owner, and has been referred to thus, although incorrectly spelled as “Woomer” in several leading journals and surveys. In September, 1940, a map of “Woomer Cave” [sic] was produced by William Davies (author of *Caverns of West Virginia* and the *Caves of Maryland*) and Frank Tressler, a lawyer from New Bloomfield.

Even before the twenty year lease was about to expire, it was apparent that the cave really wasn’t worth the funds it would take to develop it properly even though Bill Sheibley would never forget his dream. Money was also tight during this period. Interest in continuing the project was lacking and the lease was never renewed. Sometime afterwards (perhaps 1942), Harry Dupert, who was still operating the quarry, blasted a large amount of overburden across the entrance and “sealed” it. This probably occurred shortly after the cave was mapped in 1940, although Stone suggests that it was in 1951. Afterwards the cave was practically forgotten. By 1949, when Bill Devitt and Bernard Smeltzer made an unsuccessful attempt to dig it open, small trees were growing from the rubble pile. It wasn’t until 1980, when the York Grotto dug open and gated the entrance that serious thought was given to the cavern again.

Of all the known writings on this natural curiosity, none can be considered adequate until now. Ralph Stone, former State Geologist, did not mention the cave in his 1930 report on commercial caves. In his enlarged 1932 edition of *Pennsylvania Caves* he gives the following description: “Open crevices along joints in the Helderberg limestone at an old quarry on the Wm. Womer farm, 3 miles northeast of Landisburg are traversable for 500 feet or more and contain some dripstone. In places the passages are less than 3 feet
high, but mostly they are 6 feet high.” It is apparent that Stone did not consider this cave as having much significance and no mention is made of Leonard’s efforts, an iron door entrance, or even a name. Stone also wrote Caves of Pennsylvania (NSS Bulletin 15) in 1953, in which Woomer Cave (sic) is described with several inaccuracies and contradictions:

WOOMERS CAVE

A cave on the William Woomer farm 3 miles northeast of Landisburg and about the same distance southwest of Elliotsburg was operated commercially many years ago by J.W. Sheibley. An iron door controlled the entrance. Hundreds of people picnicked there and paid 10 cents admission to the cave. The farm is owned and occupied in 1951 by Harper Fortenbaugh.

The entrance was blocked in 1951 by a quarry blast but cold air can be felt coming through the stones. Devitt and Smeltzer made an unsuccessful attempt to dig through it July 1949. The writer entered this cave about 1930 for about 500 feet and found it to consist of crevices opened along joints in the Helderberg limestone. The passages are narrow and mostly over 6 feet high, but in some places less than 3 feet high. The strike of the rock is nearly east-west and the dip is 20ºN. The over-all length of the cave is 700 feet, but a map made by William E. Davies, and attorney Frank Tressler, of New Bloomfield, September 1, 1940, shows more than 1600 feet of passages and 8 rooms. The main course of the cave is slightly north of east but it is offset four times for 50 feet or more to the south, intersected by crevices at various angles, and has parallel passages. At the rear several shafts slope downwards for 60 feet. Dripstone is present but not abundant.
After Smeltzer and Devitt’s attempt to dig open the cave in 1949 (along with owner Harper Fortenbaugh and several others) interest still continued to uncover this magnificent cave. In about 1960 a group from Nittany Grotto, under the direction of Chuck Landis, made an effort to obtain a bulldozer to assist in the effort but the owner lost favor with the idea and it was put to rest. In 1979, Ibberson, Smeltzer and the York Grotto signed a release with the owner, Art Kling to reopen the cave and gate the entrance. A great deal of effort was expended using hand tools but little was gained on the rocky quarry face. A bulldozer was rented and after a week or so of great effort from Barry Hivner, and others, the entrance was finally uncovered. However, only 42 feet of passage was forthcoming. After three more trips with sledge hammers and the removal of about six tons of rock, they finally entered the cave with 93 year old Frank Leonard on hand for the event. Thousands of hours of manual labor involving 45 people and hundreds of dollars in finances were expended in this remarkable task.

There was a verbal agreement with owner V. Arthur Kling that York Grotto would gate the entrance once it was uncovered. An assembly consisting of two welded 55 gallon drums and a double gate was designed. After the “pipe” and gates were put in place, cement, reinforcing rods and rock were used to cover the entrance. As an afterthought, a tunnel was made into the concrete to allow for the bats to enter since the gate was a solid door.

DESCRIPTION

During the course of quarrying several small rooms were destroyed. The gated entrance now leads to a gentle sloping low passage two to three feet high and wide trending northeast through platy limestone for 20 feet. Here an abrupt bend to the right opens into a stoopway then a walkway resembling a mine tunnel. When the cave was reopened it was found that the sidewall had been displaced inward by the force of the quarry blast that had originally closed the cave. The passage was completely blocked. Considerable effort was expended in tunneling through this obstruction and timbers were placed to support the unstable loose rock. A crawl over broken rock leads down the upslope to a small but solid-walled passage running east. Progress through this section is hindered by lower walls covered with cave coral.

One hundred feet from the entrance it is possible to stand upright comfortably and admire some attractive speleothems. Looking back over the traversed route one can see, near the ceiling, a white flowstone mound resembling a capitol dome and on the right a short side passage is filled with sparkling tan and white flowstone called the Malted Cascade. Here the cave opens into a room 36 feet long, 15 feet wide, and four to nine feet high, which has been named the Leonard Room after the first explorer to enter it. The south wall is a smooth bedding plane sloping inward at 30 degrees, splotched by stubby white stalagmites. A tubular passage slopes down-dip to the northwest for 45 feet. At the far end of the Leonard Room the early attempt to commercialize the cave is somewhat evident; there was once a wooden bridge spanning a shallow pit. There are two steel bars wedged between the walls with rotten debris below. After the pit a keyhole-shaped walkway continues due east. On the right a ledge holds a mound which
at first glance looks like a stalagmite. A closer examination reveals that it is but the stump of what was originally a rock pillar which has been all but dissolved by dissolution.

The eastward trend of the passage discontinues 80 feet from the Leonard Room where it is offset to the south for 25 feet. Here on the east wall is scratched the initials of the first person to survey the cave and the date; W.E. Davies 1940. Again the passage veers to the left or northeast past bedding plane fins projecting ten inches at shoulder height. The previous zigzag pattern is repeated, with a right angle intersection to the south after 35 feet. This has been dubbed the Stalagmite Passage as it contains the most notable speleothems of this type in the cave. As its south end vertical walls are covered with flowstone cascades and a small travertine bridge spans a narrow fissure continuing south. The principal route once more proceeds with a sharp turn to the east where after 40 feet it connects to a high meandering canyon running north-south, the northern part of which is rather well decorated. It is believed that this is the “Beauty Passage” spoken of by the early explorers.

At this point, 360 feet from the entrance, the character of the cave changes abruptly. The relatively level-floored walkways and stoopways suddenly discontinue. To explore the inner part of the cave one must scramble over large slippery, fallen blocks, squirm through low muddy crawls, and squeeze through tight fissures. However, this is the larger (about 3000 feet), more exciting part of the cave, and new sections continue to be discovered. A short climb over breakdown at the south end of the Beauty Passage opens into the Inscription Passage, extending northeast for 100 feet. This is a breakdown-strewn triangular-shaped strike passage, typical of the Appalachians. The ceiling is mostly a smooth bedding plane dipping 25 degrees northwest while the floor consists of jumbled blocks and slabs. At a low spot there is an accumulation of colorful chert cobbles. A kind of register exists at the far end of this passage. For here, in the early 1900’s, visitors left their names and initials, along with dates, on rock slabs and the ceiling by using thin coils of clay. Special care should be taken in passing these historical inscriptions. Closely paralleling the Inscription Passage, to the north, is a network of narrow canyon passages totaling about 350 feet in length.

A crawlway leaves the east end of the Inscription Room and enters the Sheibley Room, 35 feet by 12 feet and ten feet high. A shallow pool, the largest yet found in the cave, often exists at the base of the entrance slope. Polygonal mud-filled shrinkage cracks cover the ceiling. Two crawlways extend a short distance east from this room to the similar Womer Room which is slightly larger. Three sinuous canyons extend south and upslope from these rooms for 45 to 60 feet. All three connect to Anticline Alley, the first of two northeast-southwest trending parallel passages that are each about 220 feet long and developed ten to 25 feet apart. There are short secondary parallel passages, numerous branches, and higher levels which make this part of the cave complex. The total vertical extent is less than 60 feet. A dig at the eastern end of the second parallel passage (Herbein’s Highway) has opened the Coolidge Passage, 75 feet long, and five to 12 feet high. A more extensive excavation at the far end of an eastern lead of this passage has revealed an additional 165 feet of virgin cave containing a sizable breakdown room in
its lower reaches. Several leads requiring more digging could open into more cave in this area.

The highest level yet reached in the cave is the Warn Room which lies 70 feet south of the Sheibley Room and is nearly 50 feet higher. The ceiling of this room is 66 feet higher than the cave entrance. Near a passage cutting across a section of vertically dipping strata, a chimney with chockstones leads up 15 feet to the Warm Room. The room parallels the major passage below it, along the axis of a small anticline. It is 50 feet long, six feet wide, and up to ten feet high. Much of the floor is piled with breakdown and the ceiling is a smooth arch along the contour of the curved bedding planes. One bent slab is wedged midway between the walls. A total of 60 feet of small branches lead from the room. This room was named from the fact that the temperature is noticeably higher here during the summer months. Long roots hang from a soil fill at the southwest end and a surface survey has indicated that a small quarry overlies this spot.

Interesting new passages continue to be found from time to time within the well-explored sections. An example of this is the discovery of the Snowball Room when an undercut wall was checked more thoroughly. This opening is just off the main route running south from the Sheibley Room. The walls of this low room are covered with patches of white crystals resembling thrown globs of snow. Also, when most of the cave was explored, the New Maze was revealed by removing a few chunks of rock blocking a drop off the north side of the Inscription Passage. This might have been intentionally sealed, for inside were found nice formations and more evidence of the earliest explorers in the form of additional mud script.

The numerous raccoon tracks observed is evidence that one or more small openings to the surface exist that have been not discovered by cavers. Raccoon skeletal remains have been found. An article written in the 1930’s describing hundreds of bats in the cave was probably greatly exaggerated. When the cave was reopened and gated, an entry was provided for bats. So far no more than 11 bats, consisting of Little Brown Bats and Pygmy Bats, have been noticed during a visit. The Salamander Room was named for a Red-backed Salamander that was seen on two occasions at essentially the same spot.

A perennial spring issues from a sink-like depression at the base of the hill, 400 feet west of the cave and 100 feet lower in elevation. This could be the resurgence of a stream that is now flowing through lower regions of the cave, yet unexplored. Reports by early explorers indicate that such a stream does exist and access to it may have been filled in during the commercialization attempt.

GEOLOGY

Womer’s Cave occurs in the Ridge and Valley section of the Appalachian Valley Province. The Devonian and Silurian limestones that weave back and forth throughout Perry County form minor ridges with sandstones and quartzites forming principal mountains and shales underlying the valleys.
The cave penetrates the upper portion of the Tonoloway Formation of Silurian age which has a thickness of 650 feet in central Perry County. The strata consists of thinly laminated thick-bedded dark limestone and calcareous shale. Freshly fractured surfaces in the thick beds are coal black. An interesting lithologic feature occurs throughout the formation but is especially pronounced near the top. This is the development of mud cracks and polygonal columns which are especially conspicuous in ceilings and upper walls of the higher beds in the cave. In the Sheibley Room thin shale partitions, like boxwork, fill the shrinkage cracks and project an inch or more. According to Lachenbruch (1961), mud cracks form largely because of solar radiation in areas of playas, floodplains, deltas, and tidal flats. Evidence that the original environment was a shallow sea of high salinity is strengthened by the finding of halite crystal casts and a sparse fauna, mostly consisting of the ostracod, Leperditia (Miller, 1961).

The cave lies on the north flank of a major faulted anticline between Germany Ridge and Mahoney Hill, a part of a series of folds known as the New Bloomfield Anticlinorium. The bed strikes N. 70 E. and dip from 21 degrees NW to vertical. From the cave entrance to a point 60 feet south of the Sheibley Room the dip is 21 degrees to 37 degrees NW. South of this point observation of the strata can be quite confusing because of complex faulted folds. The geologic structure is especially interesting in the Junction Room where a thrust fault has left moderately dipping beds as the hanging wall while vertical beds form the foot wall.

The cave might be described as having an angulate strike joint determined pattern which develops into small maze areas. In the southeast section the passages extend updip following the more soluble beds, along disharmonic folds into successively higher levels. Prominent east-west joint clusters are responsible for the development of principal passages in the west section of the cave. East of the Beauty Passage the cave follows strike joints connected by short segments of cross joints. Strike determined passages tend to be quite straight while those along cross joints are serpentine. Like most Pennsylvania caves in the Devonian-Silurian limestone, Womer’s has been dissolving by slowly circulating ground water. Vadose modification in the form of vertical fluting is noticeable between the Warm Room and the Balcony Room, regions close to the edge of the hill.

Passage cross sections are essentially structurally determined, wall surfaces being extremely irregular. However, some ceilings show elliptical tube-like development indicative of higher velocity solution above lower walls that are quite jagged. Guiding joints are often conspicuous. A feature showing pronounced water table control can be seen, where the ceiling follows a horizontal plane cutting across bedding fins through beds dipping 27 degrees. Though recent vadose dripping has created a mud mound, the chimney appears to be the result of solution where vadose seepage had mixed with phreatic waters. Structural weakness associated with the tight folds has produced a peculiar cross section and breakdown form. Instead of the familiar triangular prisms of fallen rock there are smoothly arched slabs that have fallen free of the curved bedding planes forming the ceilings.
Speleothems are not common in the cave and occur mostly in the western section. Globulites or cave coral is the most abundant form, the stalked variety being common in areas close to the edge of the hill, often growing on sharply sculptured vadose features. A dense development of translucent helictites occurs in a part of the Beauty Passage, though most have suffered breakage by early visitors. Tiny tufts of white crystals cover clean grey lower walls in obscure branches of the cave.

A red fine grained plastic clay is abundant throughout the cave and the explorer soon finds himself well covered with the sticky substance. At places clay fills issue from side branches like small earthen glaciers. Where undisturbed the surface of these fills is very rough and lumpy, occasionally with a thin lens of chalky substance. Excavations of the clay have revealed stream worn manganese-coated cobbles of sandstone and chert within sandy layers. “Nests” of chert cobbles that exist beneath the vadose drains are probably derived from the overlying Helderberg beds. The western part of the cave is remarkably free of rockfall. Large blocks and slabs of breakdown are common in the Inscription Passage and in areas near the edge of the hill, in the southeastern section.

A combination of factors may explain the development of a sizable cave at this location. The presence of evaporates in certain beds as indicated by halite would increase the solubility in those zones. The intensity of chevron folding through the ridge producing extreme fracturing provided many easy pathways for phreatic circulation. The altitude of the cave (800 feet) suggests that it was developed during a period of base level stability provided by the Chambersburg peneplane of late Pliocene time.

With 4015 feet of mapped passage and a linear length of 760 feet, Womer’s Cave is one of Pennsylvania’s larger caves. Despite all the cave’s shortcomings, the cave is rather unique. It has a total elevation of 79 feet and still holds great potential for today’s explorer.

Owners Sally and Mark Keller have closed the cave, however, York Grotto still has access for special investigations.

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