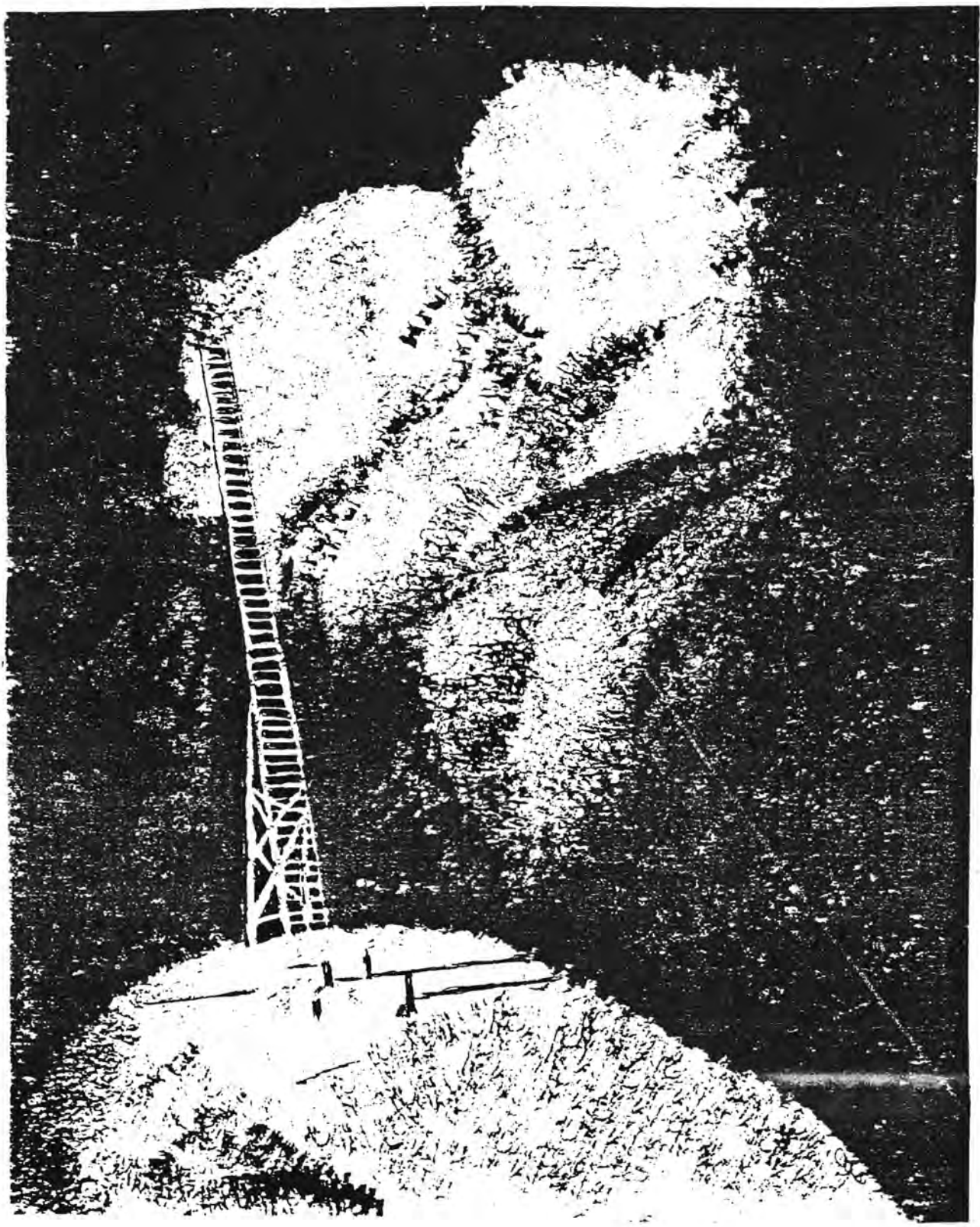


54

V17#3 #54

THE JOURNAL OF
Spelean History

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN SPELEAN HISTORY ASSOCIATION



THE JOURNAL OF SPELEAN HISTORY

Volume 17, No. 3

July-September 1983

THE ASSOCIATION

The American Spelean History Association is chartered as a non-profit corporation for the study, dissemination and interpretation of spelean history and related purposes. All persons of high ethical and moral character who are interested in those goals are cordially invited to become members. Annual membership is \$5.00; family membership is \$6.00; library subscription is \$4.00. ASHA is the official history section of the National Speleological Society.

THE COVER

The entrance to Marvel Cave, Missouri has been depicted in this drawing by Carole A. Sneed, as an illustration of her article that appears in this issue.

OFFICERS

President: Joel M. Sneed
First V.P.: Larry O. Blair
Second V.P.: Gary K. Soule
Sec.-Treas.: Jack H. Speece

THE JOURNAL

The Association publishes the Journal of Spelean History on a quarterly basis. Pertinent articles or reprints are welcomed. Manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced. Submission of rough drafts for preliminary editing is encouraged. Illustrations require special handling and arrangements should be made with the editor in advance. Photos and illustrations will be returned upon request.

BACK ISSUES

All copies of back issues of the Journal are presently available. Early issues are photocopied. Send requests to Jack H. Speece, 711 East Atlantic Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602. Indexes are also available for Vol. 1-5. All issues of Vol. 1-7:2 are available on microfiche from Kraus Reprint Co., Rt. 100, Millwood, New York 10546.

Official Quarterly Publication
of the AMERICAN SPELEAN HISTORY
ASSOCIATION, History Section
National Speleological Society

Editor, Vol. 17, No. 3:
Joel M. Sneed
4300 Maner St.
Smyrna, Georgia 30080

1983 Peter M. Hauer Spelean History Award

This year the Peter M. Hauer Award for contributions to the field of spelean history went to Larry O. Blair, NSS 13921RF. Larry is not a stranger to anyone involved in the study of the past use of caves, for Larry is a frequent writer for the NSS NEWS, several grotto publications, and contributes often to the Journal as well.

Larry has been caving for some sixteen years now, and during most of that time his primary interest has been in the mining of saltpeter from caves, and his research has carried him to several states. In the past three years Larry's interests have further broadened to include archeological and paleontological work in caves, and he is a charter member of the Paleo Section of the NSS. This past summer, in lieu of attending the Convention, Larry attended the Cave Archeology course at Mammoth Cave, furthering his knowledge of scientific and historical work in caves. Larry is presently involved in extremely important projects in several caves over a four-state area, and is always to be found working on one project or another.

Larry is the epitome of a good speleo-historian, and is a most worthy recipient for the award this year. He does excellent field work; is thorough in his research; writes frequently, properly documenting his work; is well-read on all phases of related work; and still makes time to assist in such mundane tasks as the assembly of the Journal when called upon to do so. Congrats, Larry!



Larry O. Blair measuring a kettle from Sauta Cave , Alabama

Information Wanted:

by Joel M. Sneed

Larry O. Blair and I are undertaking to compile a listing of locations of kettles that are either known or believed to have been utilized in the production of saltpeter from caves. Several speleohistorians have previously reported in various articles on saltpeter mining the locations of kettles, often describing their present use, and I have also had several verbal reports about suspected kettle locations. If you know of any kettles, please contact either Larry or myself with as much information as possible regarding the kettle, including the location, size, foundry where made, present use, and, if the kettle is not presently in a cave, give the name of the cave from which it was supposedly removed, and when. Also, if the kettle has been written up before, a reference would be valuable. At some future date, we will publish this information in the Journal. The following are some of the pots presently known to us:

Gurley, Alabama and environs: four of the seventeen kettles that were used in Sauta Cave. Ref: Georgia Underground, Vol.16, No.4, and The Journal of Spelean History, Vol.14, Nos.3&4. The kettles are now on various farms, used for watering stock; one even had a couple of fish in it when it was last seen!

Roane County, Tennessee: one kettle from Eblen Cave. This one was dragged out of the cave by the grandparents of the present owner's wife, and was used for boiling the hair loose from pig skins. Ref: Speleotype, Vol.17, No.2.

Atlanta, Georgia: one kettle presently residing in a salvage yard, but not for sale. The owner has not yet been available to provide further information.

Marietta, Georgia: Two pots acquired from Gen. William T. Sherman's army shortly after the Kennesaw Mtn. battles, and handed down. These pots were known to have been used by the Union army for cooking, and it is speculated that the army might have come upon them at a Confederate saltpeter operation, and later tired of carrying them. Field notes of L.O.B. dated 6/14/82 state the sizes of each, and that one was made at the Schofield Works in Macon, Georgia. Schofield has since sold out to Taylor Iron Works, Macon, and a subsequent fire destroyed all of the Schofield records.

Tiftonia, Tennessee: one small kettle on the property of Raccoon Mtn. Caverns presently holds flowers.

This is the sort of input for which we are searching. Please send in your information!

Big Bone Cave Burial Ground

by Larry O. Blair NSS 13921RF

Above and to the right of the trail leading down the side of Bone Mountain to Big Bone Cave, on a lonely, overgrown rise, lies the Big Bone Cave burial ground. Forgotten to time, the identity of the deceased lie hidden, shrouded in mystery.

Few people visit this historic spot, however, the area was surveyed by the State of Tennessee in 1978 and plotted-off to be possibly included as a point-of-interest on a future hiking trail. ¹

Several local stories and legends speculate as to the identity of these graves. J.T. Butler, Ranger Naturalist of the Rock Island State Park relates the well known legend of a Yankee patrol, ambushed and annihilated by rebel troops and guards engaged in the protection of the great saltpeter works at the cave. This patrol reportedly was out searching for the location of this large and productive mine. ²

Allen Deaton, former state caretaker to the land, also relates the same story of the ambush. ³

Mr George Simmons, Jr. a local historian, states that a Mr. Slatton was buried in the cemetery in more recent times. It seems as though Slatton was not connected to the cave in any way but did live nearby on the mountain. Several Slattons are buried in the Mc Elroy Cemetery; (Church of Christ), some 1.8 miles from the Bone Cave Grocery Store on Bone Mountain. o

Simmons details a story of a Union lieutenant that is believed to be buried in the cemetery. It seems as though a Tandy Slatton, possible ancestor to the Slatton buried in the cemetery, was employed by Maj. James Randell as a lookout. Tandy spotted the officer moving in on the blockhouse. With a single shot of about 250-300 yards fired from the second floor, the intruder was felled. This blockhouse was constructed as a stronghold for the saltpeter mine guards and as a place of refuge for sorties to nearby Spencer and McMinnville by regular and irregular Confederate troops. ⁴

I first visited the burial ground on December 30, 1977. Due to the season I was able to find the fieldstone markers by simply kicking aside the dead leaves. The groups interest was aroused but the main event of the day was to be in Big Bone Cave itself measuring vats, ladders, the cart, etc.

I did not visit the cemetery again until on September 9, 1982 when I decided to try to find and plot all of the existing fieldstone markers and just to see how many were there.

The vegetation was thick making locating the stones difficult. Luckily I had brought along a bundle of telephone underground cable marking flags. By placing a flag beside each stone I was able to keep track of them through the dense foliage.

This was very helpful in that I did not "locate" the same grave twice while trashing around. Twenty definite markers were found. In addition two "loose" possible markers were found. Several large flat slabs of stone, one or two of which are cut stones, are also used to cover graves. (See Plate # 2 for measurements of these flat markers.)

Anytime fieldstone markers are used to mark graves, problems arise as to a number count. This problem is sometimes brought about when fieldstones are also used to mark the foot of a grave. Sometimes when double rows are present, it becomes almost impossible to determine which is the headstone or footstone of a certain row of graves. This problem is compounded by dense brush and undergrowth. For example; which is the head of one grave and the foot of another grave on another row?

Grave locations were plotted and Plate # 1 is the product of this effort.

Who were these people? Only time knows their true identities. However, it would seem feasible that many of them were probably connected with the cave and it's mining operations, either from the War of 1812 or the American Civil War era.

Glancing blows of broad axes, falling logs and timbers, short tempers and perhaps gunshot wounds from a skirmish could have produced some of the deaths represented here. Perhaps a slave or two lie here also. Some farmer from that period may also rest here...no one knows. However, the history of the cave and its' saltpeter works would suggest clues to identities, especially with its' closeness to the cave proper. No written records to date have been found referring to the burial ground.

* * * Epilogue * * *

Perhaps the only way to determine the peoples represented by these crud fieldstone markers would be to conduct a full archaeological dig of the graves. Brass and gold buttons, military belt buckles, etc. would indicate Federal or Confederate troops. Perhaps glass, bone or shell buttons would identify saltpeter miners or farmers. Engraved watches and the like may provide positive identifications.

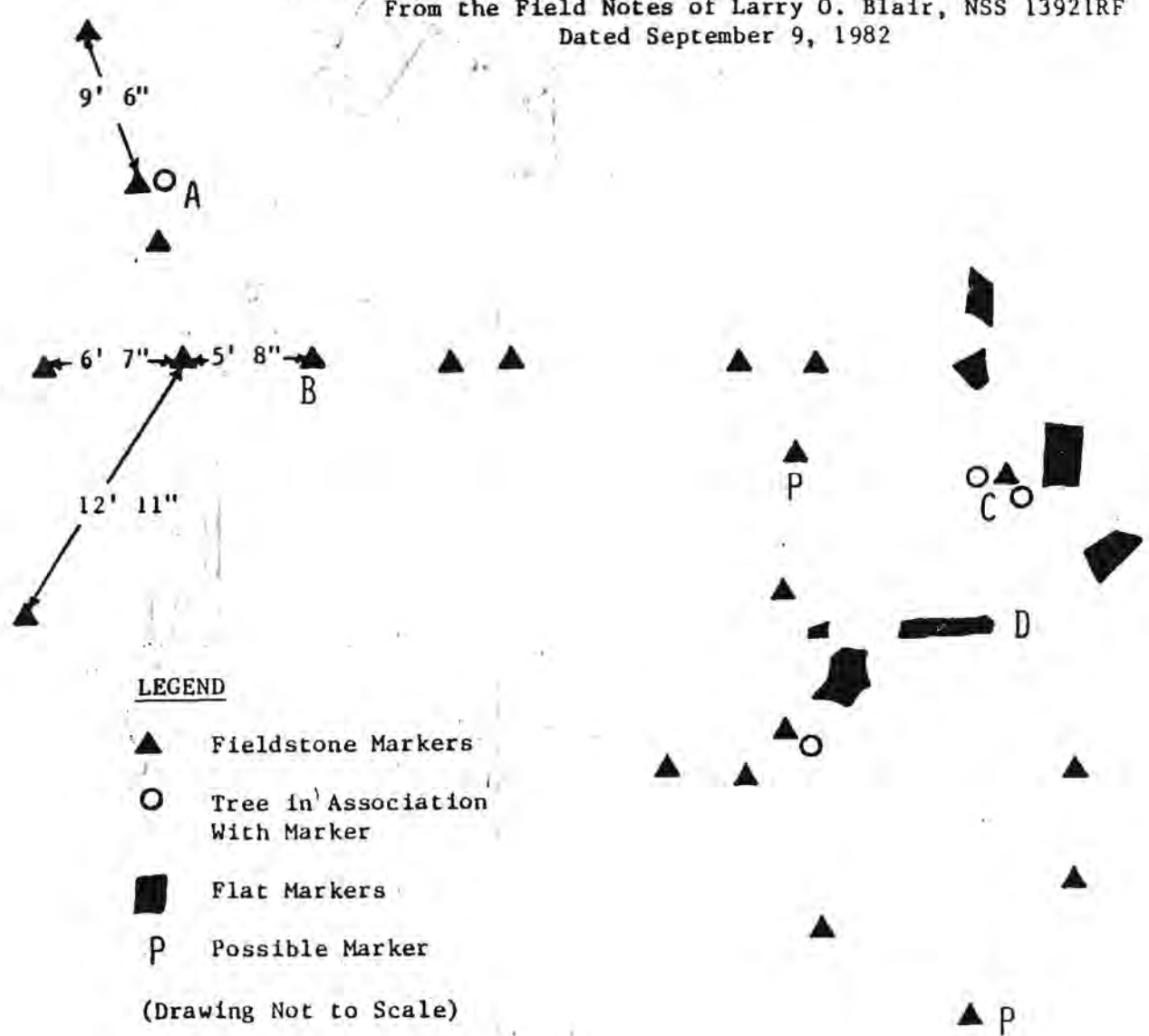
Of course physical anthropologist could determine the race and gender of the remains, depending on the condition of said remains.

However, do we really have the right to disturb these lonely places? Places that were marked in a Christian like manner, a manner that was restricted due to logistics and remoteness. I think not, at least not in current times. The mystery will remain, adding to the lore and legend of Big Bone Cave and Bone Mountain, Tennessee.

Big Bone Cave Burial Ground
 Van Buren County, Tennessee

(Plat of Fieldstone Markers)
 Plate #1

From the Field Notes of Larry O. Blair, NSS 13921RF
 Dated September 9, 1982



NOTES:

- A. The base of a large oak tree has grown around this marker.
- B. This is the largest upright marker found. It is 11" above ground by 1' 2" wide by 3 1/2" in thickness.
- C. This marker lies between two trees and at the base of a small maple.
- D. See Plate #2 for details of this area.

LEGEND

- ▲ Fieldstone Markers
- Tree in Association With Marker
- Flat Markers
- P Possible Marker

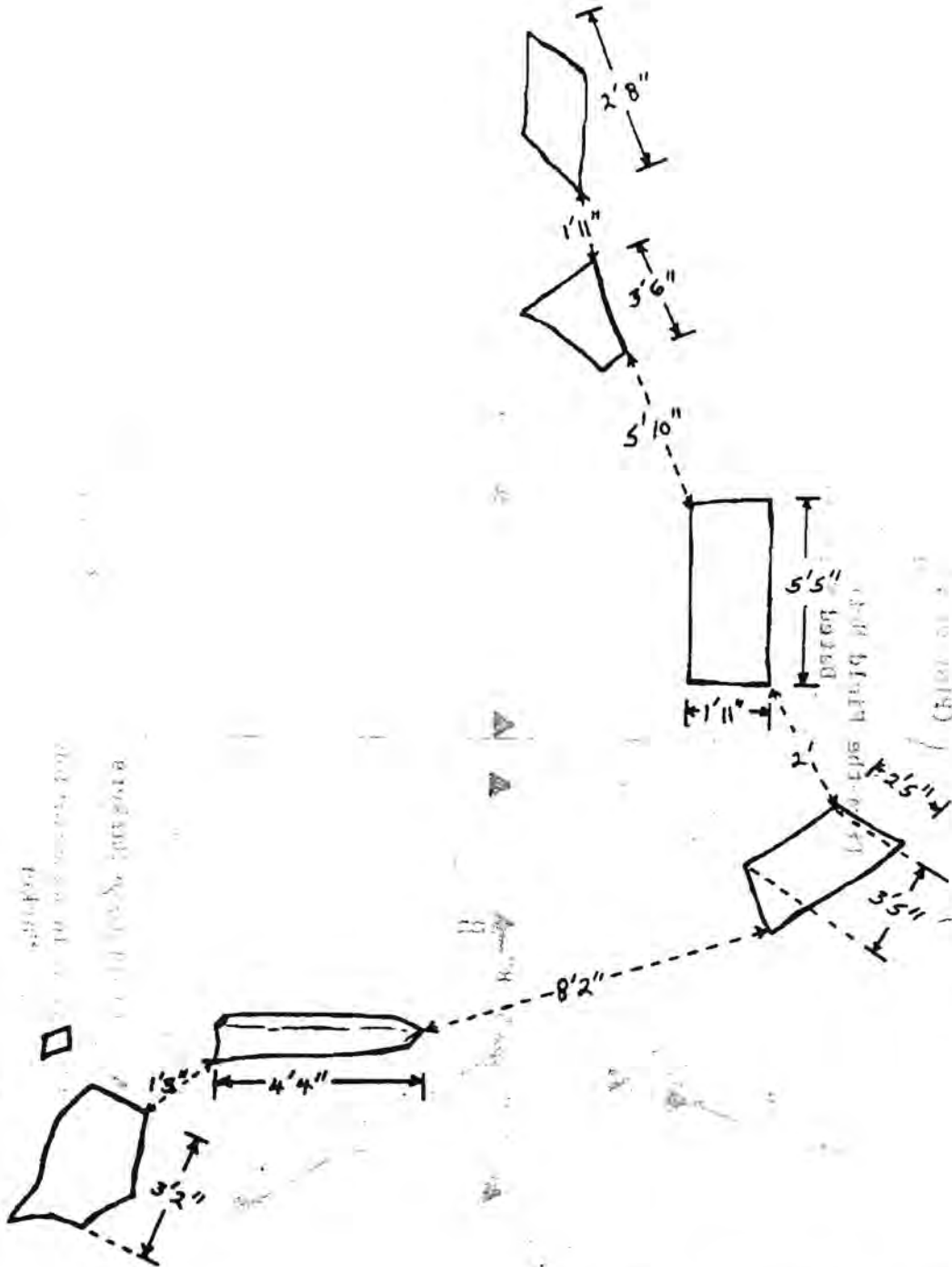
(Drawing Not to Scale)

BIG BONE CAVE BURIAL GROUND
VAN BUREN CO., TN.

(Measurements Of Large, Flat Markers)

PLATE # 2

From the field notes of Larry O. Blair NSS 13921RF dated Sept. 9, 1982.



. . . Notes . . .

1. Conversations with Mr. Gordon Grissom, State Caretaker of the Big Bone Cave Natural Area, an unattached extension of the Rock Island State Park, September 9, 1982.
2. Conversation with Mr. J.T. Butler, September 8, 1982, and on several other occasions.
3. Many in depth, recorded discussions with Mr. Allen Deaton over a period of several years. One in particular on September 8, 1982.
4. Interviews with Mr. Simmons at his home on September 9, 1982 and on September 26, 1982. NOTE: It is of special interest to note that Mr. Simmons is the owner of a large iron "pot", (kettle), which was used in the production of potassium nitrate, (saltpeter), at nearby Big Bone Cave. According to family history Mr. Simmons' great-grandfather, Thomas Russell, removed the kettle from the cave shortly after the War Between the States. Simmons and his family live in the original home place.

A Bit of Marvel Cave History
by
Carole A. Sneed, NSS #17190

Today, Marvel Cave is a star attraction of Silver Dollar City, Missouri, with thousands of yearly visitors. The trips into the inner recesses of the cave are designed for the comfort of today's tourist. Clean, well-lit paths, sturdy stairways and even a cable train for the steep ascent out of the depths of the cave are employed to enhance the desirability for excursions by even the least-hearty. Back in 1945, however, visits to Marvel Cave were not quite so accommodating. Only the hale and hearty could maneuver through the rigors of a Marvel Cave trip, as a then young Drury College girl discovered.

The cave trip began upon reaching a 2-room shack that was the home of Miss Lynch, a spinsterly lady, who's Father, Wm. H. Lynch, purchased the cave in 1894. After his death, his two daughters Genevieve and Mirian continued the cave tours. It is not remembered which Lynch daughter guided her trip that day.

Miss Lynch immediately began by passing out blue and white striped coveralls to the college girls who eagerly donned their caving apparel. Elderly Ms. Lynch then called out "Come along children!" in a scratchy high-pitched voice, much to the delight of the "mature" college women.

They proceeded to the cave entrance and were given kerosene lanterns that would not be lighted until they were in the cave. Only after this note did they descend to the inner reaches of the dark void. The ladder used was made of "two long boards with short ones across" and had "80 steps" that reached straight down into the mouth of blackness. After their descent the lanterns were lit and they again heard the "Come along children!" from their spry old guide. They walked through chambers, their feet soggy with mud and guano. A small crawl was encountered and the explorers "skinned" through the horizontal shaft on to more rocky beauty. After the wondrously eerie chambers had revealed their treasures, the intruders made the ascent--"80 steps!" --back to their more familiar outside earth.

This unique caving trip has remained fresh in the mind of Jean Sallwasser of Kirkwood, Missouri for nearly 40 years. I can't help wondering if something hasn't been lost by the modernization of the cave tours...

BOOK REVIEW

by Joel M. Sneed

Cave Clippings of the Nineteenth Century, compiled by Russell H. Gurnee, published by R.H. Gurnee Inc., Closter, New Jersey. 1983. 197pp.

"One of our own" has compiled and published this collection of newspaper clippings from the nineteenth century. The book, a numbered and signed volume, was printed as a limited edition of 200 units, and I believe that they will all sell out very quickly.

In his Foreward, and the Historical Perspective that follows, Gurnee explains the importance of the nineteenth century in the development of our nation and the associated importance of the caves. The clippings that he has included go a long way toward showing the early uses of caves, and the ideas - often quite distorted - that writers had concerning the underworld. He is quick to point out this fabrication, whether an outright hoax or simple overstatement.

The book is arranged alphabetically by State, and contains cross-references and translations where needed. One-third of the book contains clippings concerning Mammoth Cave, which may seem to be repetitious, but, considering the importance of that cave for so very long, it is not surprising that it has been written about so much.

Cave Clippings seems to be a very worthwhile addition to any speleohistorian's collection, and can be purchased from Gurnee or from Speleobooks, while the limited supply lasts.



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN SPELEAN HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Name _____ ASHA No. _____

Address _____ NSS No. _____

_____ Regular Member (\$5.00) _____ Subscription (\$4.00) _____ Family Dependent (\$1.00)

Specific Areas of interest _____

Mail to: THE AMERICAN SPELEAN HISTORY ASSOCIATION, 711 E. Atlantic Avenue, Altoona, Pa. 16602

BLANK

The printing seems to be a year or two's date in the
collection's collection, and can be purchased from source or from
the books, while the limited supply lasts.



APPL. SETTING FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMER. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
