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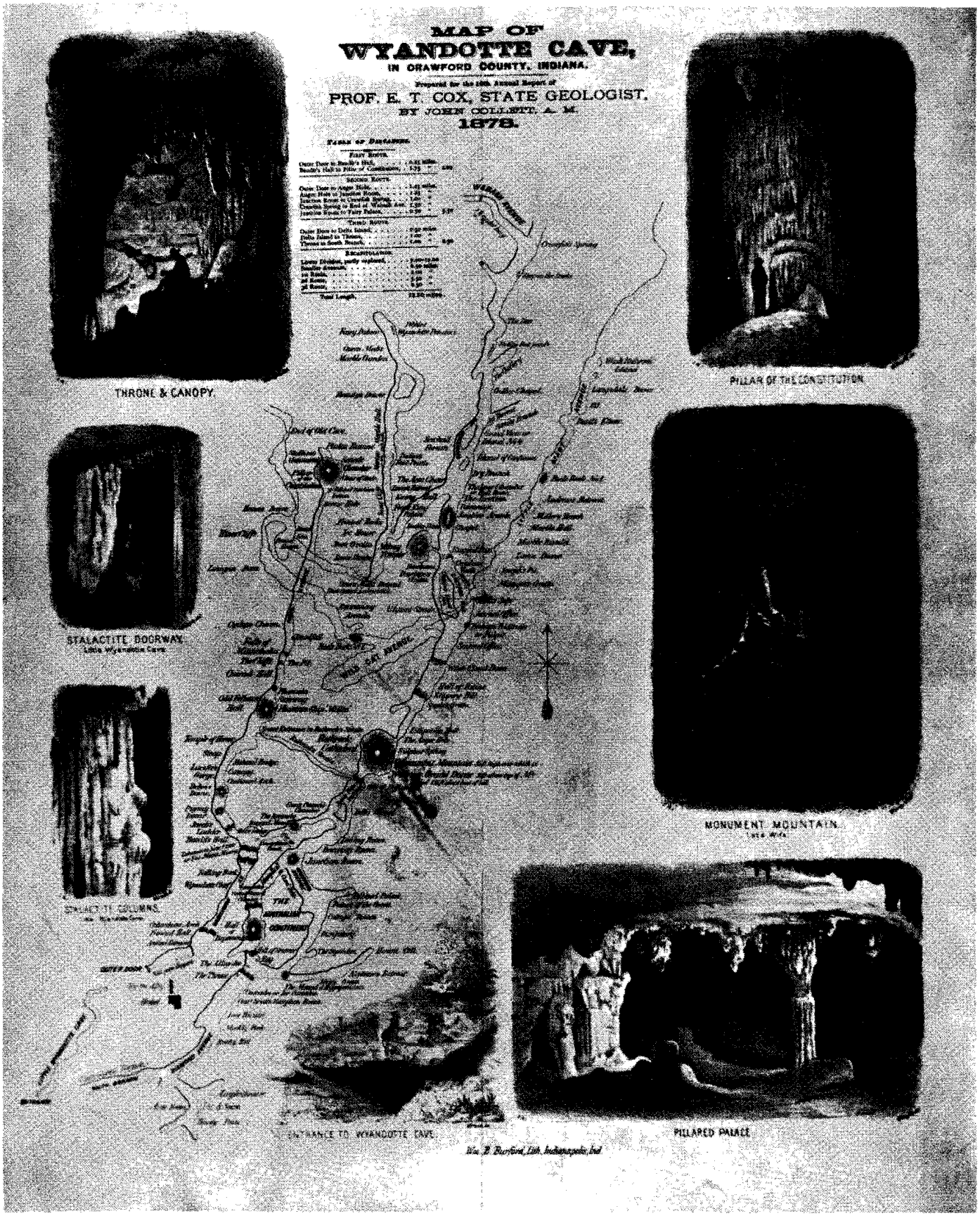

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION

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 these goals are cordially invited to become members. Annual membership is $5.00; family membership $6.00. Library subscriptions are $4.00.

ABOUT THE QUARTERLY

The Association publishes the Journal of Spelean History on a quarterly basis. Pertinent articles or reprints are welcomed. As a photo-offset process is often used, the editor should be contacted in advance concerning the current type of manuscript preparation desired. Submission of rough drafts for preliminary editing is encouraged. Illustrations require special handling and arrangements must be made with the editor in advance.

ABOUT BACK ISSUES

The last volume is available from the Secretary-treasurer at $5.00 per volume. About half the other issues are available at $1.00 per copy. All back issues are available on microfiche; for further information contact 3M-International Microfilm Press, 521 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036.

ABOUT THE COVER ILLUSTRATION

The map of Wyandotte Cave which adorns the cover was prepared by John Collett in 1877 and published in his famous Indiana Geological Survey report in 1878. Horace C. Hovey and W.S. Blatchley are among the later speleologists who referred to it extensively. While it was not notably more accurate than other maps published prior to the Powell survey, it is by far the mostbeautiful. Because it was published in the Cox series of Indiana Geological Survey reports, it is often termed the Cox map. It has been reprinted many times, but without the lithographs which give it its special flavor. The only one known to the editor to have included a scale appeared in Spelunca no. 35: Max Le Couppey de La Forest's celebrated 1903 "Quelques grottes des Etats-Unis d'Amerique".

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Because of the unusual length of this issue, the usual departments have been postponed until the next issue.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CALL FOR PAPERS ----

Harold Meloy has been designated chairman of the history session of the 1973 Annual Convention of the National Speleological Society. The meeting will be in Bloomington, Indiana, in mid-June (I had the exact dates but it's hopelessly lost in great piles of manuscript in my study).

Those interested in presenting papers at this meeting should contact Harold as soon as possible. His address is P.O. Box 454, Shelbyville, Indiana, 46176.

THE HISTORY AND EXPLORATION OF WYANDOTTE CAVE

BY

GEORGE F. JACKSON

AUTHOR'S NOTE: My first visit to Wyandotte Cave was as a very young Boy Scout in 1923. Even in those days I was interested in caves and perhaps because of this interest I became quite friendly with members of the Rothrock family, the original owners of the cave. At that time Charles J. Rothrock, who years later became my father-in-law, was manager of the cave and hotel and Washington Rothrock and his brother Andrew were living at Wyandotte. Sons of Peter Rothrock, who had purchased the property in 1819, Washington and Andrew were well past eighty years of age but were quite alert and full of tales of early explorations of the cavern. I often sat for hours talking to them, asking questions and probably bothering them no end. Nevertheless they were fluent story tellers and I listened open-mouthed, fascinated and awed by their yarns.

They told me of hazardous exploring trips with only "home-made" candles for illumination, of incredible masses of unvandalized formations, of glorious unbroken gypsum flowers and crystals on the walls, of real windstorms in the cave, of Indian footprints and artifacts they'd found, and of bears, wolves, wild turkeys, "painters" and other long-vanished wildlife in the forests surrounding their property.

In later years when I became a guide at the cave I used information given me by these "old timers" in venturing into seldom-seen areas, in finding my way through the so-called Unexplored Regions and in searching for, and finding, virgin passageways.

Thousands of trips into the cave and long association with the Rothrock family have enabled me to acquire a knowledge of Wyandotte Cave and its history that is, perhaps, not equaled by any one else now alive. Here then is the authentic history and exploration of Wyandotte Cave.

THE FIRST EXPLORERS

Long before white men came to North America Wyandotte Cave was explored by pre-Columbian amerinds. Considerable evidence indicates that these prehistoric people ventured into most of the known passageways of the cavern. Recent radiocarbon and dendrochronology datings show that some of the material they left in the cave is as old as the Early Woodland period, about 3,000 years ago.[1]

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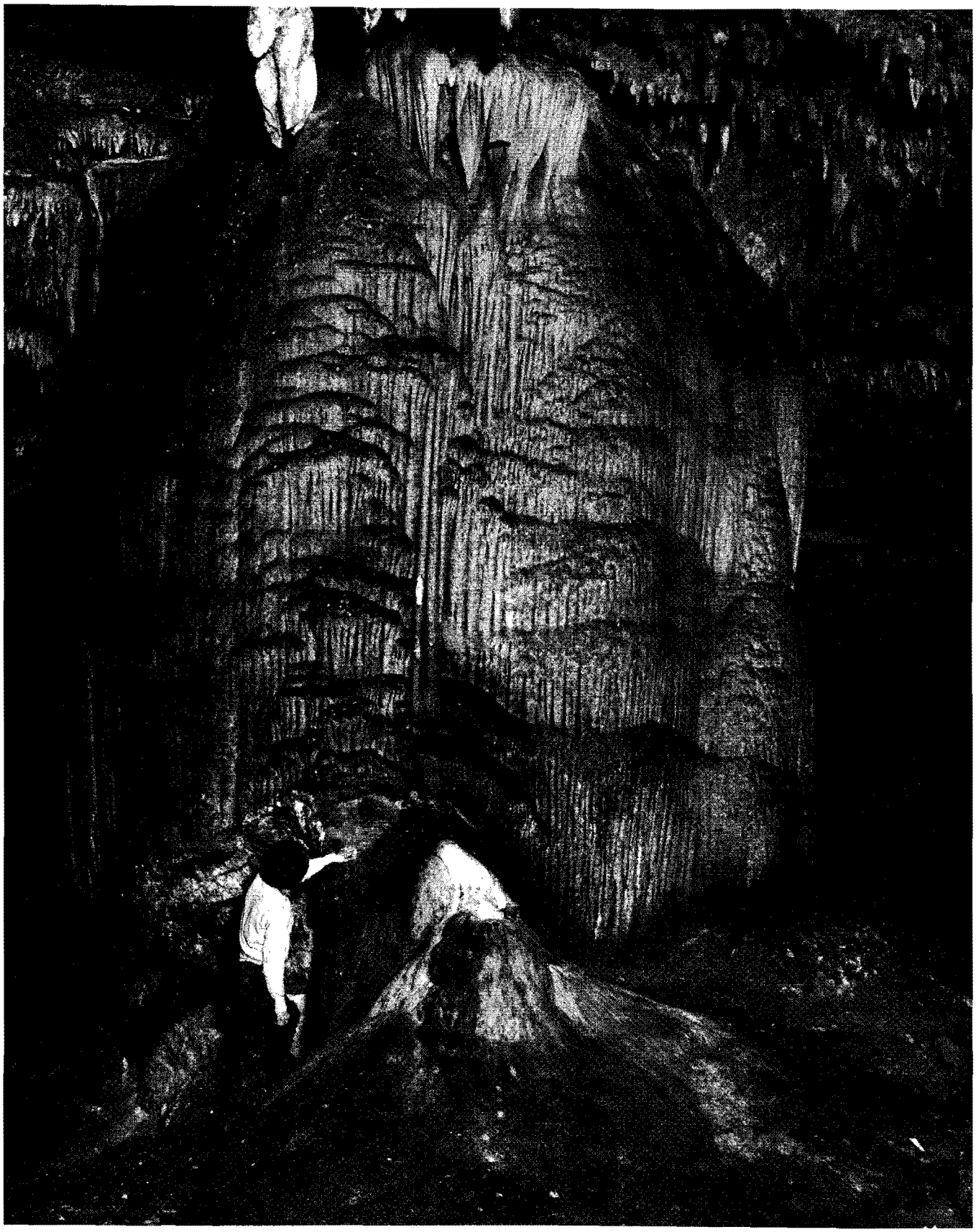


The Pillar of Constitution in Wyandotte Cave.

Early white explorers found old torch and fuel remains, charcoal fragments, smoke-blackened walls and piles of hickory and sassafras poles--all apparently cut with dull stone axes--here and there in dry parts of the cave. They also found great heaps of rectangular pieces of flint on some floors. These had obviously been chipped from exposed ledges about five feet above floor level. Most of the broken pieces are about four by two by two and one-half inches. Few show the marks of tools, but there is little doubt they were deliberately hammered from the head-high strata. Today the flint piles have been leveled by path making but their depth indicates the material was "mined" extensively over a long period of years. (Implements or weapons were not made in the cave but the "blanks" were taken to outside workshops for processing. Many such workshops have been found in nearby Harrison County--one covers several acres--and much Wyandotte flint has been found in them).[2] Pieces of partly burned "shell bark" hickory torches, bound with grape-vine or sedge grass ties, may still be found in dry parts of the Old Cave and Short Routes. Very old human fecal remains, said to be plentiful in the "new" cave secton when it was first entered by whites in 1850, are also still in evidence.

At the end of the Old Cave Route is other evidence of prehistoric activity: from the base of the great stalagmite called the "Pillar of Constitution" more than 1,000 cubic feet of material has been removed by crude quarrying methods. Most of the early white explorers assumed that this excavation had been made by the 1812 saltpeter miners. However, in 1877, Professor John Collett found several glacial rocks near the pillar which "from indications, such as wear and bruises, had been used as hammers or grinding pestles, and proved conclusively that part of the cave had been visited or occupied by men of the Stone Age".[3] H.C. Hovey agreed with Collett when he examined the quarry in 1878 and 1882, saying "Indians. . .more than 1,000 years ago" had mined "alabaster blocks" from the pillar.[4] In 1894, H.C. Mercer probed the excavation and concurred with Collett and Hovey and mentioned "a pick made of stag's antlers" which had been unearthed at the site.[5] The first real archeological work at the pillar was done by W.S. Blatchley[6] in 1896 when he found more hammer stones, remains of many old fires and deer and elk antlers which had been used as pries to loosen partly broken pieces of stalagmite. For years some of these hammer stones were on display at the cave hotel, others are still scattered around the large room where the pillar stands and one was displayed on a formation in the Short Route, but it, like many of the others, has now disappeared, the victim of thoughtless visitors and careless guides.

Few other intentionally shaped tools or weapons have been found in the cave. Once, while I was guiding a party through the Old Cave Route, a member of the group accidentally uncovered a piece of white chert chipped in the form of a cross. It was about three inches long with a two inch cross-arm. In one end was a small hole, possibly for a string or throng. No one knows what became of it. At another time when I was digging in the Short Route flint quarries, I uncovered two arrow points but they were lost in the hotel fire of 1933. Years ago several archaeological digs just outside of the entrance of the cave uncovered remains of many old campfires and artifacts, indicating that the first explorers probably camped and rested there before and after exploring the cavern.

Pre-Columbian grapevine loops knots from Wyandotte Cave.

Some who know Wyandotte well say that the Indians entered the Old Cave by another, now unknown, entrance. I believe they used the present opening. The great amounts of charcoal, partly burned torch remains, fragments of woven material, desicated human fecal remains and smoke-blackened walls seem to indicate that the Indians did travel to the Pillar through the entire length of the Old Cave Route. That there is much more cave beyond the last room I have no doubt. Along with many others I've often tried to find a way through the tremendous breakdown complex behind the Pillar. Bob Louden tells of one such attempt: He and Marion Sibert had spent many fruitless hours exploring the area so one day they decided to make a final try. They crawled, wriggled and climbed through inumerable holes and crevices. Finally Bob sat down to rest while Marion checked out a promising lead. He waited, seemingly for hours, growing more concerned all the time. Eventually Marion returned. He had made his way for some distance through the breakdown, finally coming out in a room with the only route onward down a sheer 30 foot wall he couldn't possibly climb without aids. He said his three-cell flashlight would only faintly show the roof overhead so, stymied, he made his way back to where he had left Bob. Next day he was unable to retrace his exact route and has never been back since. Bob has and he couldn't find the route either!

In 1850 when the present Long Route was discovered explorers found more evidence of Indian quarrying near the top of Monument Mountain in Rothrock's Cathederal. Here, a four-foot stalagmite had been chopped down, apparently by crude stone hammers, some of which were found near the fallen formation. And most astonishing of all, when the tiny opening, later called the Auger Hole, was enlarged enough to admit a man, the explorers found, far back in the cave, footprints--moccasin footprints! They were traced for some distance and pointed in one direction only: inward. Today the prints are gone, obliterated by thoughtless visitors, but they were there. Many scientists and visitors recorded their presence, and as late as the mid-nineteen-twenties at least two prints were plainly visable. In answer to my questions the "old timers" told me that even in 1850 the clay on the floors of the Long Route was of a hardness--as it is today--that could be only marred by a very hard heel kick. How long before that was the floor soft enough to leave a moccasin track?

The direction of the tracks and the fact that only the one entrance to the cave is known suggests that the Indians entered that area through another, now unknown, opening. If so it has been purposely, or accidentally, well hidden for repeated searches have not found it. However, there are many "connections" to the surface from the Long Route that have never been thoroughly investigated. Some are rock or water-filled channels which are now impossible to enter. Other possible points of entry are known to the writer but re-opening them probably requires considerable work. There is some evidence that the aboriginal explorers may have entered the Long Route through a now-closed passageway not far north of Rothrock's Cathederal.

THE WHITE EXPLORERS

The first white men to see Wyandotte Cave may have been some of the pioneers who pushed over the Cumberland Mountains along the Wilderness Road into what is now Kentucky. Daniel Boone and his brother Squire were among them. Once exploring north of the Ohio River in the wild Indian Territory, in 1769 or 1770, the Boones found two caves along Buck Creek in what is now Harrison County, about 15 miles from Wyandotte. Here, in 1809, Squire

built one of the first grist mills in Indiana, using the stream from one cave for water power. He lived here until his death in 1815 and was buried in the other cave in which he had once hidden from hostile Indians.[7] The Boones, who seemed to be interested in caves and were reported to have had many adventures centered around them, probably learned of the existence of Wyandotte and may have been among the first white explorers, but no known record of this exists. It is a matter of record that as early as 1801 a man named F.I. Bentley explored the present Old Cave Route to its end. His name appears frequently throughout the passage but only once with the 1801 date. Was he the first? It is unlikely, but today no one knows.

There are literally thousands of names and initials carved and scratched in this portion of Wyandotte and a check of most reveals none earlier than Bentley's.

The earliest known date mentioned by historians in connection with Wyandotte Cave is 1798 in a book by Dr. Henry McMurtrie[8]. Calling it the "Mammoth Cave of Indiana", McMurtrie says that General William Henry Harrison, then Governor of Indiana Territory, later 9th president of the United States, visited it in 1806 along with a Major Floyd. Governor Harrison is said (by McMurtrie) to have written an account of his visit but diligent searches by the writer, and other Wyandotte "buffs" have been unable to locate it. A story handed down by the Rothrocks is that Harrison and Floyd visited the cave to look over the great deposits of saltpeter, which seems reasonable, even though no written evidence has been found.

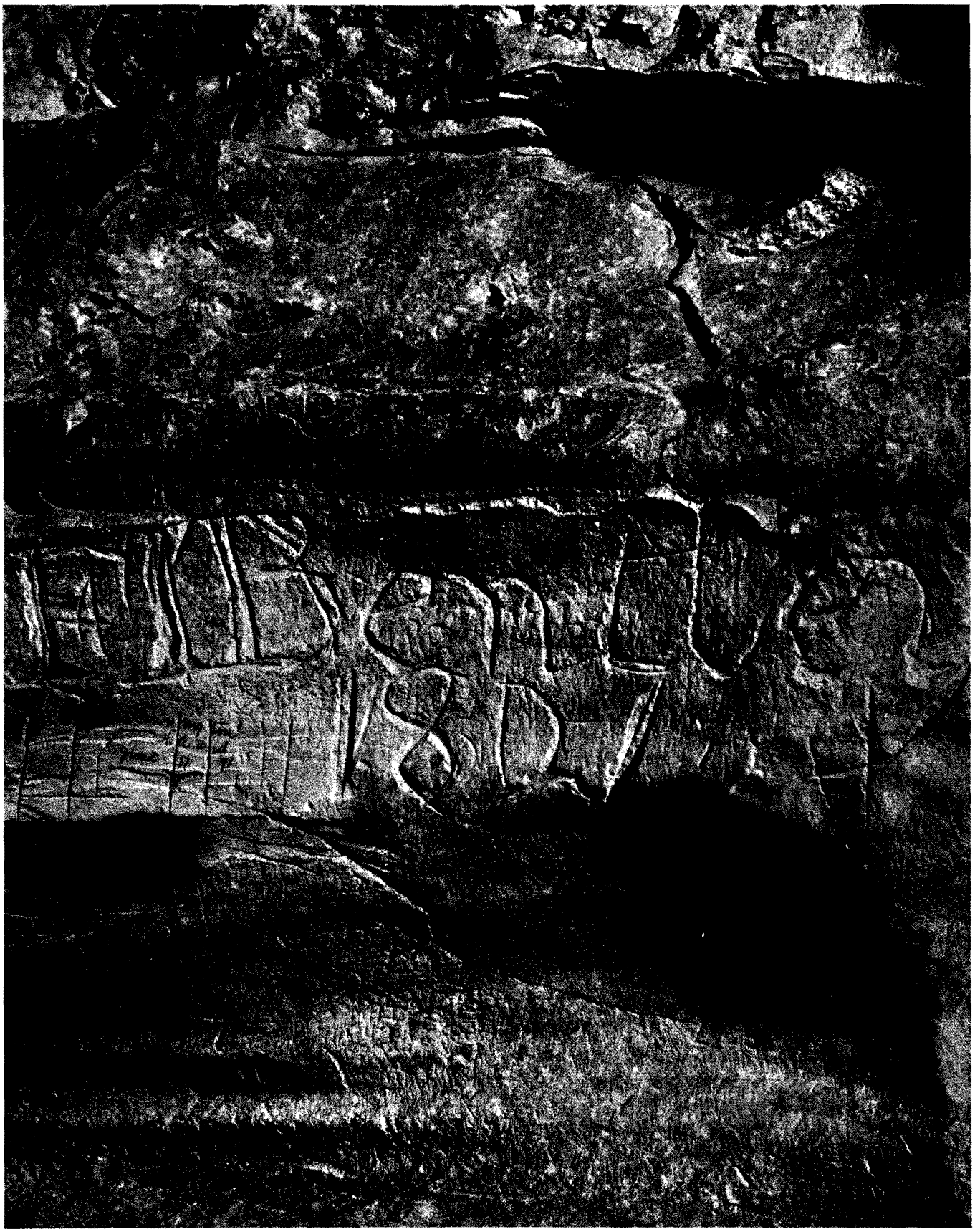
In the early days of Rothrock ownership Harrison's signature was found in the cavern but today no one knows its exact location. George Jones, a long-time Wyandotte enthusiast, said he found it in the vicinity of "The Pit" in 1920. Although he was interested in the find he became fascinated with other aspects of the cave and many years passed before he was urged to "pin-point" the signature for others. By then he couldn't find it! Since the approximate location is known, perhaps it will be re-discovered in the future.

The earliest known written account of Wyandotte is a letter written by Dr. Benjamin Adams to John H. Farnham, President of the American Antiquarian Society, Lexington, Kentucky. The letter was written February 27, 1818 but was not published until 1820.[9] In it Dr. Adams refers to the great amounts of "sulphate of magnesia or lime and saltpeter earth. There are vast quantities of this earth and equal in strength to any that I have ever seen."

Another early description of the cave's minerals is in an 1819 issue of the American Journal of Science and Arts.[10] (In later years this same publication printed a number of articles about the cave.)

About the time the War of 1812 began Dr. Adams pre-empted the land around the cave and began making saltpeter, an ingredient of gunpowder, which was badly-needed by the young United States. Dr. Adams first referred to the cave as the "Indiana Saltpeter Cave", later as his "Epsom Salts Cave".

Saltpeter Cave, one-quarter mile west of Wyandotte was also mined on a large scale by Dr. Adams. Some evidence indicates that the actual leaching of the saltpeter earth from both caves may have been carried on at Saltpeter Cave.



1801 date in Wyandotte Cave.

After the end of the War of 1812 the demand for saltpeter lessened and Dr. Adams relinguished his claim on both caves in 1818. A year later a German emigrant, Peter Rothrock, and his family moved from New York state to the area, where they purchased 4,000 acres of heavily wooded land from the Government for the then pervailing price of $1.25 an acre. That the cave happened to be on the property was simply a coincidence.

The Rothrocks built several dams and sawmills along nearby Blue River and began harvesting timber. Remains of some of the old dams are still visable, along with the stone foundations of at least one mill.

The owners probably considered the cave a nuisance and in 1843 someone (annoyed neighbors?) persuaded the state legislature to pass an ordinance ordering them to fence the entrance to prevent cattle from wandering in and becoming sick from eating the epsom salts and other minerals in the cave.

The Rothrocks continued to run their sawmills, entertaining occasional visitors to the cave, until some time in 1850. That year two significant discoveries were made, discoveries that were to make Wyandotte Cave famous as "the second largest cave in the world, second in size only to Mammoth Cave, Kentucky". That this was an exaggeration was not known even to the Rothrocks for some time. By the time the facts were known it was too late to retract and the owners made no attempt to do so. Regardless, Wyandotte <u>is</u> a large cave with infinite possibilities for discoveries which may someday make it the "second largest cave".

There are many conflicting stories regarding the explorer who, in 1850, moved a rock at the entrance to what was later named Fat Man's Misery, leading to the exploration of the New Cave, the present Long and Short Routes and the so-called Unexplored Regions. Henry P. Rothrock, Norman H. Coleman, Messers Collingswood, Cummins, and O'Bannon are all given credit for the discovery. Whomever was first, he opened a way which subsequently led explorers to seemingly endless miles of passageways.

At first the new find extended north only as far as Monument Mountain in Rothrock's Cathederal and southward through most of the present Short Route. However, late in 1850, a party led by Henry P. Rothrock was resting on the north side of the mountain near a small spring called for some unknown reason Sulphur Spring, at the base of an immense curtain of flowstone. (For years this spring was a favorite resting and drinking place but in recent years the flow has receded and the water now has a disagreeable taste). One of the party noticed a strong blast of air coming from a hole in the flowstone and soon this opening, aptly named the Auger Hole, was enlarged to 15 inches high and 30 inches wide. It led to long, walking-sized, spacious passageways that more than doubled the length of the cave. There is no doubt that penetration to Fairy Palace, Crawfish Spring and Wabash Avenue was rapid for there were no real difficulties to hamper exploration. The Indian footprints, entioned earlier, were found in Crawfish Spring Branch, Morton's Marble Hall and not far from the Island of Confusion.

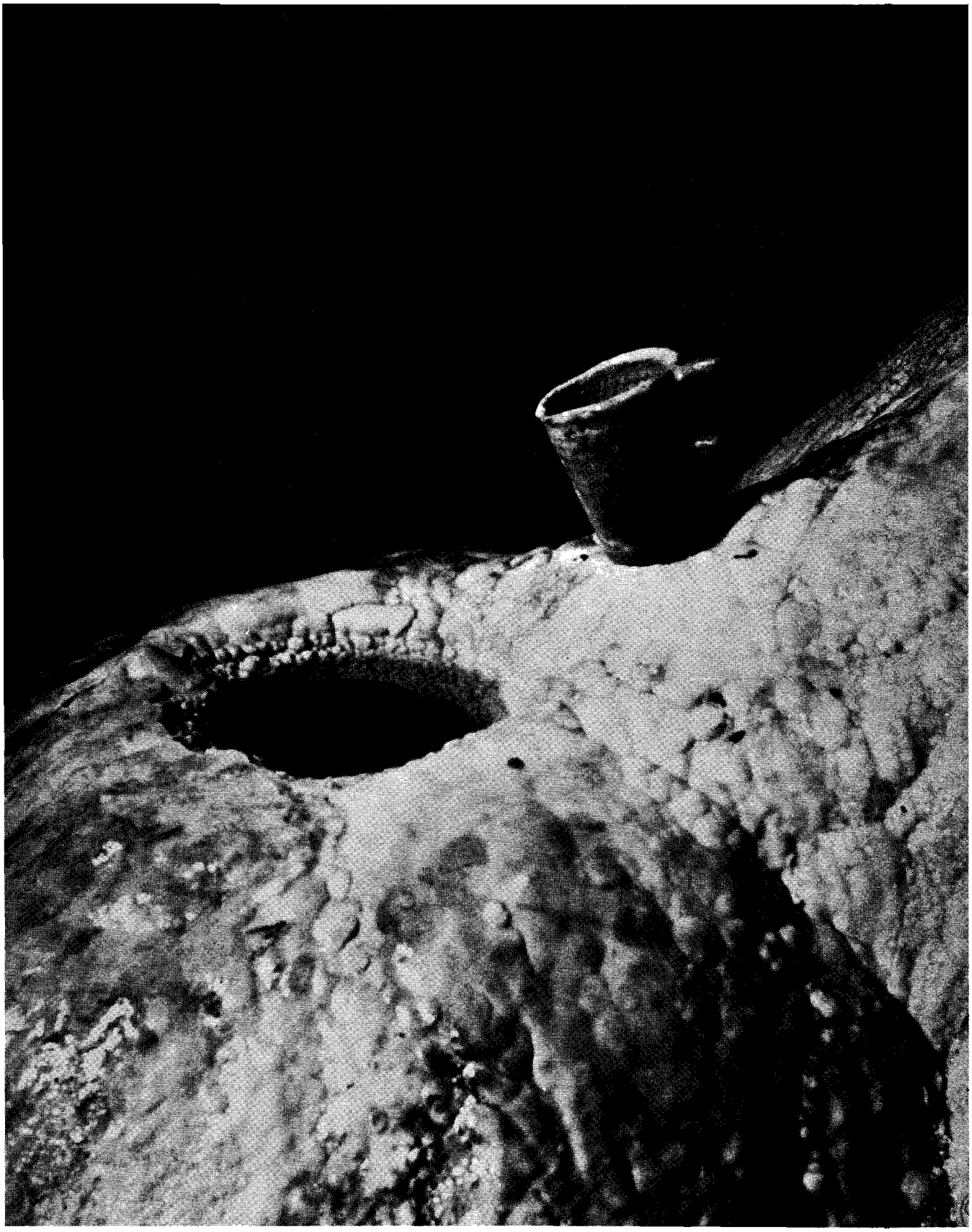
As news of the new discoveries spread the cave became famous and the Rothrocks considered opening it as a tourist attraction. In 1853 they employed Dr. D. L. Talbot of Jeffersonville, Indiana to survey and map it and in the same year there appeared the first published reference to the cavern by the name Wyandotte.

Sometime in the next few years the rugged, complex and dusty passageway called Rothrock's Secret Straits, connecting Odd Fellows Hall in the Old Cave with Rothrock's Cathederal in the New Cave, was found. There are so many labyrinthian routes through, under and around the old breakdown in this section that, even today, it is doubtful that all have been fully explored. As an example, one of my many trips through the Straits, I dug out a small opening on a whim and quite unexpectedly found that "it went". I slithered, climbed and walked through virgin cave for some distance, ending up far from where I thought I was heading!

Nearby Little Wyandotte Cave may have been found about the same time for 1850 is the oldest date I've ever been able to locate in it. There is no known connection between this cave and "big" Wyandotte but definite connections do exist between it and some of the smaller caves that lie between the big cave and the surface.

In 1858 another long and difficult stretch of passages on the upper level of Wyandotte was found when W. R. and J. G. McCollister dug through a crawl near the Dead Sea, made their way into the Round Room, and climbed into the section known ever since as "The Unexplored Regions". In the following year Washington and Andrew Rothrock and G. J. Langsdale and others explored this portion through Langsdale Passage and its ramifications. In those days there was only the one known connection between the Long Route and the Unexplored Regions and a trip from the "back end" to the entrance was long and tiresome. When one considers the crude lighting materials and the "home made" spelunking and climbing equipment used by these men it makes their explorations all the more remarkable. Some of the names they gave various parts indicate their difficulties: Rode Rock #1 and Rode Rock #2, each a knife-edged, slippery rock standing in a narrow canyon. In order to move forward it is necessary to slither (carefully!) along the edge of the rocks. Then there is the Devil's Elbow, also in a narrow crevice that must be edged past to continue onward. Andrew's Retreat, Miller's Reach, Lonigan's Pass, and some unprintable names aptly describe the hardships of the first explorations.

These early spelunkers found the Double Pit, now known as the connection between the back end of the Unexplored Regions and the Long Route but, according to Charles J. Rothrock, they never descended it. Had they done so they would have found some domes (or pits depending on one's position) different from anything else in the cave. It was not until 1904 that Sam L. Rothrock and another man (probably A. K. Sears) descended the pit on a crude wire ladder and found a connection with the Long Route's Air Torrent, thus eliminating the long and tiresome return trip on the upper level. Afterwards it was only necessary to climb down the pit, crawl through the Air Torrent's 800 feet of dry, sharp-edged sand to reach the Island of Confusion in the Long Route.



Dripstone covered cup mentioned by Hovey.

Stories about the Unexplored Regions are many and varied. Most are factual, some have an aura of mystery and there has always been a vague suspicion that the "old timers"--the first explorers--penetrated areas still unknown to the rest of us. One unusual trip was that of A. K. Sears, whose name is found here and there throughout the section with the notation "Alone Through the Unexplored, 2-21-16". Sears was a business man who became interested in Wyandotte and spent much time there. That he was an adventurer there is no doubt. Having been through all easily accessible parts of the cave, he wanted to try the Unexplored alone. Armed only with a carbide lamp and spare fuel and no other spelunking equipment he did so, not once but twice!

Then there's the story of one of the guides and a well known scientist. One of them was trapped, in total darkness, high on a wet ledge in a previously unexplored area for some time. Eventually they both managed to get out, but subsequently no one has been able to locate the section they found. It is not a figment of imagination. The guide was honest, the scientist above reproach. Yet today no one knows where to start looking for their discovery.

The stories go on and on: guide Sam Rothrock crawling alone through a narrow tunnel in virgin cave, trapped by a large rock that slipped down from above just enough to prevent him from moving. In time he got out under his own power but was so unnerved by his experience that he did not tell the story for years. By then his memory of the location of the passage was extremely vague.

I, myself, have unwittingly added to the tales of "The Unexplored", as most of us always called it: With Bill Rothrock--now Col. William G. Rothrock, (Ret)--I climbed an almost sheet wall and found a dry crawlway that seemed unexplored. We wriggled along it for some distance before stopping to rest, lying flat on our stomachs. I accidentally kicked the floor. It sounded hollow. I kicked harder. Immediately a three-foot chunk of floor fell out from under me! We backed away hastily, to say the least. We carefully looked into the hole I'd so unexpectedly opened. We saw a deep canyon, parelleling, but apparently not connected to, the one from which we had climbed. We estimated it to be 30 feet deep and about five feet wide. Definitely virgin, it seemed to be passable in both directions but we did not have ropes, so we left further exploration until the "next time". As yet neither of us have been able to make that next trip and no one else seems to be able to locate our accidental find. So, separating the factual tales of the Unexplored from the fiction is hard. Is there really a lot more cave in the region of the pits and domes? What's beyond the Dead Sea? Where is Dr. Gordon L. Curry's lost passageway? Where is the stream that only Sam Rothrock knew of? And so on and on and on. . .

After the finding of the Unexplored Regions the next discovery was in 1878 when a party of students from Wabash College was resting in the Long Route's Rugged Pass. They became interested in a low, difficult and contorted passageway bearing northwest. Forcing their way through this crawlway, which they named Worm Alley, they came out into one of the cave's largest rooms. It was named after their leader, Dr. C. E. Milroy. It is an interesting room with many helectites, waterfall draperies, and the "Musical Stalactities" on which the old-time guides were said to play tunes. High on one wall is an intriguing hole from which a large stream of water pours during the rainy season.

As far as is known no one was able to get into this "hole in the wall" until more than 63 years had passed. Then, while on leave from the Armed Forces, I led two other avid cavers into it. We found the cave's first waterfalls but our hopes for miles of virgin cave were stopped by a large stream issuing from an almost vertical crevice.[12]

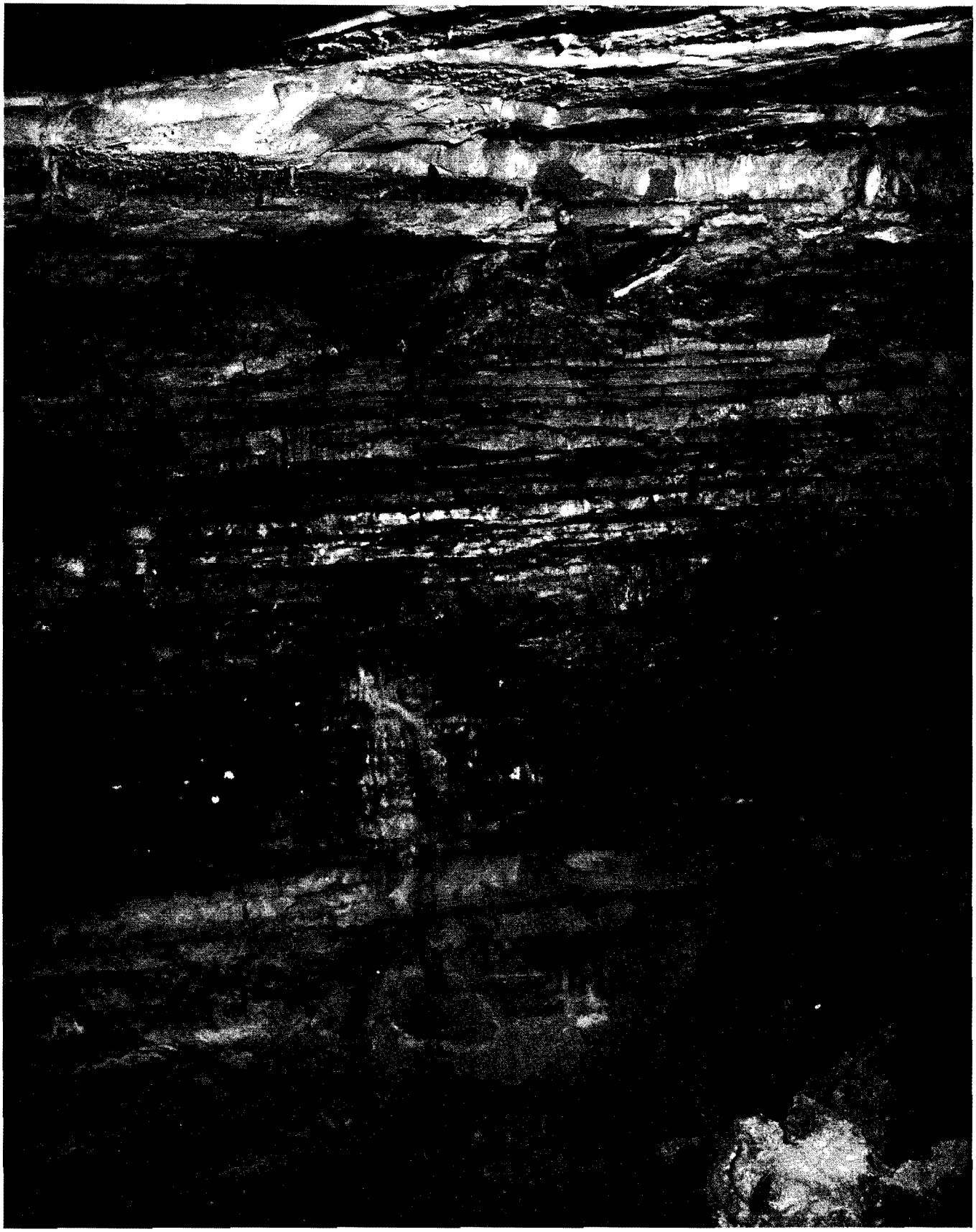
Also in 1878 the Wolf's Lair, a small passage connecting Bandit's Hall in the Main Cave with Wyandotte's Grand Council Chamber in the Short Route, was found. Evidentally the Indians had used this as a short cut to the flint quarries near Pillared Palace, for a large amount of Indian artifacts were found in it. H.C. Hovey was with the first exploring party and wrote of the exploration: "we found ourselves where I am confident no white man had ever been. . .two entire torches, their ends only being charred, projected from a crevice overhead. . .we left them as they were found. There were quantities of charred bark on the floor. Wolf tracks were seen, and also what was once the den of some animal. Hence we named the chamber 'the Wolf's Lair'...Anciently it may have been a locality of easy and frequent resort". Many of the old Indian remains were still in the passage during my first years as guide and the end of one torch was still stuck in a wall crack, but most of these are now gone. Proper excavation in the dry dirt floor would undoubtedly uncover many more artifacts.

The next discovery of importance was the finding of The New Discovery. As early as 1864 James P. Stelle [13], like Hovey before him, had vaguely suggested that a passageway existed at the east side of Pillared Palace in the Short Route. Along with Wallace Wilkins, George Jones, Bill Rothrock and others I did considerable intermittent digging here during the 1930s but never carried it far enough to open up a lead. In January 1941 Charles J. Rothrock, Robert Louden and Marion Sibert did trench far enough to break into more than 1600 feet of helectite-covered passageway. Some of the most interesting formations in the cave were found in the New Discovery's Crater Room. After considerable digging and several false starts, a connection was made between this part and Monument Mountain, permitting visitors to see most of the Short Route without retracing their steps.

Later during the same year, Avenue Number Three, leading from the Crater Room, was explored by Louden and Sibert. Afterwards, with Gordon C. Curry (sone of the late Dr. Gordon K. Curry) I completed exploration of this low, winding, dry channel to its end in the Pit Room. Several promising, but very obscure possibilities lead off from this large area--possibly the lowest spot in Wyandotte--but none has ever been "pushed".

Among other discoveries was the passage and room into which George Jones and I tunneled from the end of Fairy Palace in the Long Route. After a couple of hundred feet of passage our progress was stopped by a thick chunk of fallen limestone that blocked a knee-high channel. A strong current of air through the space above the dropped block seemed quite promising, but considerable work over the years has failed to gain entrance to the "Promised Land" beyond. Perhaps in the future some enterprising spelunker will find a way to move the rock or slither over it into. . .?

No history of Wyandotte Cave would be complete without at least one lost person story. Once, during my early days as a guide, I took a very large party into the Short Route. One of the men, who had never been in a cave



Jackson's Hole (named by yr editor) in Milroy's Temple.

before, slipped off down a rough side passage not on the regular route. Armed only with a flashlight he wandered around for a time before trying to make his way back to the rest of the group. He never found it and since the party was so large his absence was not noticed until we reached the entrance. There his friends discovered he was missing. Assuring the others we would find him, I hastily called another guide and we started a search. Traveling at top speed we soon covered all easily accessible parts of the Short Route, but found no trace of the wandering caver. Hardly believing it possible that he had wandered into the Long Route we nevertheless continued our search in that direction. Hours later we found him, far back in an area that was entirely different from anything he could have possibly seen--and recognized--on his tour with the group. When we approached him his flashlight had just gone out. He was covered with perspiration and could hardly speak. Tears streamed down his face and his teeth were chattering. He was on the verge of a complete collapse. Yet, when some composure had returned and we asked if he had been scared he replied, "Oh no! I knew where I was all the time!"

In following years innumerable small rooms and inconsequentual virgin cave were entered by myself, Louden, Wilkins and Bill Rothrock but no major finds were made. After purchase of the cave by the State of Indiana in 1966 it was surveyed and during the mapping the survey party found virgin cave in the Unexplored Regions. Several hundred feet of muddy passage was explored and named the Bloomington Grotto, as several members of the Bloomington (Indiana) Chapter of the National Speleological Society were with the survey party.

This is the story of Wyandotte Cave to the present. What is past is just a prologue. We Wyandotte aficionados look forward to an even more glorious future for this fascinating spelogical wonder.

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A PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN WYANDOTTE CAVE ARTICLE OF 1867

Editor's note: The following came to light during recent browsing in the microfilms at the New Albany (Indiana) Public Library. A letter by Hovey's wife to his father places him at Wyandotte Cave at this time, and the article quotes from Hovey's boyhood Indianapolis Journal article as having been by a member of the party. It is thus clear that the account is of a venture which included the Reverend Horace C. Hovey, father of American speleology, and then pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of New Albany, Indiana.

Correspondant of the Commercial

LETTER FROM WYANDOTTE CAVE

Best Mode of Reaching it - Fine Scenery - Splendid Halls and Avenues

Fine effect of the magnesium light.

Wyandotte, Crawford County, Indiana
August 1st, 1867

I have just paid a visit to Wyandotte cave, with a small party from your city, and as others, perhaps, may contemplate a similar excursion, it may be of interest to them, as well as to your general readers to have an account of that wonderful natural curiosity, its location and the best method of reaching it.

The cheapest and the easiest route is by way of the river to Leavenworth, and thence overland five miles to the cave. I left New Albany last Saturday evening at 7 o'clock, on the steamer Empire, Capt. Hicks King, and after considerable delay arrived at the landing the next morning.

Leavenworth, the nearest point on the river to Wyandotte, is the county seat of Crawford, and contains about six hundred inhabitants, the Courthouse, County Jail and several Hotels. The Tucker House affords very pleasant and comfortable accomodations for visitors, and the gentlemanly landlord, Mr. Tucker, will at any time, furnish transportation to Rothrock's.

The following morning, Monday, our party of three, through the kindness of a friend, were driven out to the cave, a distance of five miles. The road, after leaving the town, winds around the base of several high hills, and then following Big Blue River, courses up and down knobs, into valleys, over out-cropping rocks, and finally up the hill on which is situated Rothrock's House. The hotel is a plain wooden building, of ample room for the accomodation of guests. The fare is such as is furnished at all country houses. The entrance to the cave is about a quarter of a mile in the rear of the house, and enters the side of a hill four hundred and fifty

feet above the high water mark of the Ohio, and a half a mile from the bed of Blue river. There is a road leading to Corydon, ten miles distant, and another leading to the landing at Leavenworth.

Our party arrived at the hotel about noon, and after dining, prepared to enter the cave with Mr. Wash. Rothrock, as guide. While waiting, before going in, we were joined by a friend connected with the American Sunday School Union, and as company for the lady in our party, Mr. R.'s sister very kindly consented to enter the cave with us. Everything being ready, we commenced our march for the entrance, the guide leading our way. He was equipped in cap and jacket, and carried , slung soldier style over the shoulder, a haversack containing the necessary lights.

The mouth or entrance to Wyandotte is roofed with an immense flat rock, projecting some distance over the door, and forming an anteroom. Here the guide proceeded to "light up", and each person in the party being provided with a "tallow dip", we, one by one, passed through the door and stood in the cave. The sudden transition from light into darkness profound, produced for a time a dimness of sight, and we went stumbling in our downward course, over stones and dirt, until we had passed the Normal School and turned into Faneuil Hall, when our sight becoming better accustomed to the darkness, we could see very distinctly the roof and walls of this large room. The size is about forty feet wide, seventy-five feet long and some twenty feet high, the ceiling and walls presenting a piebald appearance. Passing from this through Columbian Arch, so-called from its resemblance to a tunnel, we entered Washington Avenue.

The ceiling here is by some estimated to be one hundred feet high, while the width remains about forty feet. From this point the descent is quite rapid, until reaching Falling Rock, an immense stone resting on its very edge and weighing over seventy-five tons. Immediately above is the representation of the Indian chief, a figure which every visitor will remember. The next large room, after passing up a rough ascent, is named from its wild appearance Banditti Hall. It has an irregular shape, and is generally recalled as the point where the entrance to the new cave begins. Our plan being to enjoy the south branch of the new cave, we left the old cave here, and, one by one, made the passage of Fatman's Misery. This is a narrow, contracted hole, where one must necessarily, however unwilling, get upon his hands and knees in order to obtain admittance. The distance is quite short, and once through, you have ample room to stand up in the Bat's Lodge. Here our guide called the attention of the party to a number of poles, conveyed here by the Indians, and which he assured us were found by the first discoverers of the cave, in 1850. There can be no doubt but that this story is true, as the walls and ceiling present the appearance of having been smoked, and besides the sticks bear no marks as if cut with edge tools. The next object of interest after passing through Counterfeiter's Trench, was Rugged Mountain, an elevation of some magnitude. On the summit we entered the Rotunda, a hall nearly eighty feet across, and about fifty feet high in the center of the domw. After the rotunda came Coon's Council Chamber, a large apartment, and then Delta Island, where the cave separates into the

North and South Branches. Following the latter as originally planned, we entered the Dining Room, and then the Drawing Room. Next in order came the Continent, an island over a mile in circumferance, formed by the division of this branch. Taking the left hand branch, as is customary, we entered Creeping Avenue, and being adepts at that art, passed rapidly through to the Pillared Palace, a very beautiful room, thicky studded with stalactites and stalagmites, forming in many cases perfect columns for the support of the ceiling, and presenting a splendid appearance when viewed by the aid of the magnesium lights, with which one of the party was thoughtfully provided before leaving Pillared Palace, we entered the Palace of the Genii, a room similar to the preceding, then Calliope's Bower and Purgatory, a long low vaulted passage, the walls showing several bands of flint, and the ceiling grooved into deep trenches. Passing through Purgatory, the lower end of the Continent was reached at the Mound. Here a short branch starts out to the left, containing several fine rooms, among which are Fairy's Grotto, Neptune's Retreat, and the Hermit's Cell. Returning, we continued our explorations, passing a large rock, called from its resemblance, a Hippotamus (sic), and crossing a small valley, were at the Throne. This is a circular projection of about three feet and is formed by beautiful long stalactites hanging from the ceiling, with corresponding stalagmites below. The effect is indeed beautiful. After the Throne came General Scott's Reception Room and then Rocky Hill and Diamond Avenue, named from the walls being incrusted with gypsum and the floor which was dry, with fragments of gypsum and crystals, which sparkled in thousands of rays to the brightness of our magnesium lights. The next point of interest was the Amphitheater, a large room containing the Pit and Lion. From this point the cave forked into several openings; pursuing each separately in search of Hovey's Point, we at last found it, and feeling satisfied with our first day's journey underground, unanimously agreed to retrace our steps. Passing rapidly over the route until reaching the Continent, we took the right hand passage to escape Creeping Avenue, and entered the Hall of Representatives - an apartment two hundred feet in diameter and forty feet high. After this came the Hill of Science, and lastly the Wyandotte's Grand Council Room, one of the grandest apartments of the cave. Here the beauty of the magnesium light was fully displayed. The illumination of the walls and lofty ceiling, revealed every part of this immense room. Leaving the council chamber we rapidly threaded our way on the now familiar ground of the main branch, and entering Fat Man's Misery were soon in the old cave at Banditti Hall. From this point the entrance was soon gained and we were again in the land of the living. The effect of the air of the cave is rather exhilirating (sic) and the outside air exerts a depressing influence upon those who have been underground. Our appetites, too, we found were very much improved. More anon. (from the Daily Commercial, August 30, 1867)

PART II

LETTER FROM WYANDOTTE CAVE

Further Explorations-Grand Avenues, Halls, Grottoes, &c - an Interesting Account

WYANDOTTE, Crawford County,
Indiana, August 3, 1867,

Editors, COMMERCIAL- In a communication of a few days ago, I gave you an account of our first days explorations in this labyrinth of wonders. The following day we resumed our operations, continuing the examination of the Old Cave from Banditti Hall and the northern branch of the New from Delta Island. These parts are, by many visitors, thought to contain the finest scenery, and so we were convinced before the day's excursion was ended. From Banditti Hall we entered Pygmy Dome and Continued Arch. Stopping for a moment to examine these, we entered smaller passages and climbing down a steep decent (sic) were in Lucifer's Gorge. Picking our way as best we could up the rough acscent (sic) on the opposite side, we passed under the Natural Bridge into the Temple of Honor. This is an appartment (sic), that Nature probably intended as ante-room to Odd Fellows Hall, which we next entered. In size this is one of the largest appartments (sic) in Wyandotte cave, being nearly two hundred feet long, one hundred feet wide and about seventy feet high. The shape is nearly an oval. We were surprised on illuminating it to find it so large. On in quiring how far we were under the earth, our guide stated that Professor Owen said we were four hundred feet below the elevation of the hill. A very narrow passage at the right hand side, called "Rothrock's Straits", intersects the new cave at Mammoth Hall, a half a mile distant. Leav ing Odd Fellows Hall, we made the passage of Jolter's Hole, a narrow opening, in which a fleshy person, once on a time, became so tightly fastened as to require force to rescue him. The next place of interest was the Cliffs, with a descent of seventy feet. Ascending the opposite side, and threading our way through low, vaulted passages, we passed quickly and cautiously under the Dead Fall. This is a large, thin, flat rock, lying across the opening, one edge resting, by a few inches only, upon a projecting rock, and threatening, if slightly disturbed, the visitor's destruction. After the Dead Fall came the Screw Hole, a provoking little place, where one must twist and squirm to gain admittance into the Senate Chamber, the finest room, without exception, in the old cave, and a fitting finale to the visitor's explorations. Immediately before you rises a lofty hill, surmounted with a vast stalagmite, measuring, as the guide assured us, forty feet in hight and seventy-five feet in circumferance. Think how many ages have flown, how much history has been written, since the first drop of water trickled down the ceiling and formed the nucleus of this vast column! A writer in the Rushville Republican, says: "This enormous column exceeds in magnitude all the stalactites and stalagmites of the Mammoth Cave put together." Our candles giving too poor an illumination for such a picture, we ignited the magnesium light, when the appearance of the apartment was completely changed. The ceiling covered with numerous stalactites, was revealed by a perfect flood of light, while the Great Pillar of the Constitution appeared in all its splendor. One cannot view without amazement this evidence of the Creator's infinity, and a writer fitly observes, "a feeling of awe comes

over one as he stands in this mighty temple, and feels that the Great Architecht who planned its fretted vaults, its lofty dome, and who laid its rugged walls, shot its sparkling crystals, and reared this giant column, the ceaseless labor of a thousand years, all for Himself, is actually an inhabitant". Passing over Stillo's Mountain, upon which the Pillar stands, we noticed to the right the Chair of State, a remarkable formation, "looking, with its countless pipes and flutes, like a great church organ". After entering Pluto Ravine, the last of the old cave, we retraced our steps, being four hundred feet underground, and just three miles from the entrance. Stopping now and then to examine with more care the formations we had carelessly passed on entering, we at last reached Bnditti Hall.

Here two of the party consented to remain while the guide and our friend should return to the hotel to meet another party who were expected up from Leavenworth. After an hour's waiting, our eyes were gladdened by the glimpse of friendly lights away off in the distance, and soon our company of two was increased by the addition of three - the guide, our friend and lady, the party from the landing having failed to appear in time. The preliminaries being arranged that we should explore the northern branch of the new cave from Delta Island, we, one by one, crawled into Fat Man's Misery. And while so doing we mentally thanked our stars we were "not of that kind" after whom the hole was named. It is generally supposed the ladies find much trouble in exploring the intricacies of the cave; and lest some may think this true, I would say the lady of our party acquitted herself in a commendable manner, and wherever we men could go, she could go likewise without difficulty. Leaving Fat Man's Misery, we soon reached Delta Island, and taking the left hand passage, were in Sandy Plain, a long stretch of smooth road. Crossing the Plain, and clambering up a perpendicular opening among enormous rocks, we stood in Mammoth Hall. Never will I forget the feeling with which I gazed upon this sublime picture. In front rose a huge mountain, the summit lost from view in the perpetual darkness, while all around were massive rocks, weighing in many instances tons upon tons. Our guide clamored (sic) from rock to rock up the steep ascent, now lost to view, now seen mounting light in hand, higher and still higher. The candle seemed like a taper, illuminating, apparently, but a few yards, while the bearer, in appearance, was but a Lilliputian in the palace of the King of Brobdingnag. The guide at last reached the summit, and, on lighting a magnesium light, we could see very distinctly the immense size of the Hall and Mountain. The Mountain, by actual measurement, is one hundred and seventy-five feet high, and consists of a vast number of huge rocks thrown carelessly together, forming a stupendous pile.

Seventy feet above the Mountain is Wallace's Grand Dome, arching gently and fringed around the border with immense stalactites. A member of our party, in an article published some years ago in the Indianapolis Journal, thus describes Wyandotte Hall:

"This dome has hardly a superior in the world. Standing on the summit of the Mountain, which rises to the hight (sic) of one hundred and seventy-five feet, we looked upward, but the top was veiled in darkness. We cast our glance around us, and the same unilluminated sight lay beyond the dim light of our candles. But when we had ignited our fire works, then we could see far above us the bending arch of this majestic Temple, rising

two hundred and forty-five feet from the base of the Mountain, while around us, extended in vast proportions, a circular wall, one thousand feet in circumferance; within this Rotunda, the ancient Pantheon might be placed, or St. Paul, of London, and ample room******
The summit of the Mountain is a gigantic stalagmite, one hundred and twenty feet in circumference, rising above its common bulk in three points - six, five and three feet. These viewed from the Mountain's base, have the appearance of three persons clad in white. Hence the name Monument Mountain."

Passing over the mountain by a rough path, we reached Sulphur Spring. While resting here, preparatory to entering the Auger Hole, we ate our lunch, very inopportunely, someone remarked, seeing we were next to pass through such a small aperture. The Auger Hole is the smallest opening in the whole cave, and often visitors of size after coming thus far are compelled to forego the pleasure of further explorations beyond. After our repast we, one by one, including our lady friend, passed, with a squeeze and sundry evolution, safely through.

Continuing our examination, we entered Liliputian Hall, Spades Grotto, and the Hall of Ruins, places of no remarkable interest. Next came the White Cloud Palace, then through Journal office, into a large apartment containing the Bishop's Rostrum. Next, past Island No.2, Clypso's Avenue, Odgen's Meander and Talbott's Avenue. At this point the earth gave out a noticable hollow sound, as if more cave might be beneath. Cerulean Vault was next, then Rugged Pass, over a mile in length, with a very uneven floor. The Arcade was very interesting, with its splendid formation, covering the walls and ceiling; then came in turn, the Chapel, the Vestry, the Parsonage, and the Junction Room. From this point a branch starts out toward the southeast; following this, we entered Ewing's Hall, then the Frost King's Chamber, a large room, in which the rocks, the walls and ceiling were encrusted with beautiful formations of gypsum, presenting a splendid appearance when viewed with a magnesium light. Leaving this point rather reluctantly, we entered the Ice House, an elevated room with a rough, rocky floor, incrusted with carbonate of lime, caused by a constant dripping of water from above. Here, again, the cave separates, one branch going north and the other almost due south. The latter not being fully explored, we selected the northern branch. Dropping through a rough aperture, we were among the Frosted Rocks, and hurrying on past the Snowy Cliffs, soon reached the spot where the Indian footprints are so carefully preserved. Mr. Rothrock, our guide, pointed them out, and assurred us they were just as perfect now as when the cave was first discovered. The point of a man's foot, with a plain impression of the heel and five toes, can clearly be distinguished from among numerous obliterations of former visitors. We explored this part of the cave fully and retraced our steps into the main branch at the Junction Room, passing from thence into the Lone Chamber, across the Dry Branch, among the Islands of Confusion and Grand View, into Newhall's Forum and Grosvenor's Corridor, and then into the Gothic Chapel and the Gallery. At this point there are more Indian footprints. From this room we entered the den, and then into the apartment containing the Ship in the Stocks.

This is a large rock, weighing many tons, and which at one time, must have fallen from the ceiling, and now lies wedged among smaller stones, looking like a great vessel ready for the launch. A short distance beyond is Crawfish Spring, at this time perfectly clear, although our guide stated it was frequently muddy after after (sic) heavy rains. From this point the cave continues, but not caring to go farther, those of the party resolved to explore Wabash Avenue, a mile and a half in length, and then rejoining our friends, return home. Bidding adieu, and promising not to be gone long, we clambered up to the entrance over Crawfish Spring, and, getting down upon our hands and knees, proceded as rapidly as possible through the avenue. Reaching the termination, a large room, safely, after a tiresome tramp. Here our patience was rewarded by the many beautiful gypsum formations which we found upon the rocks, and which, through the kindness of the guide, we were allowed to bring away. Rejoining our waiting friends in the main cave, we continued our return and soon passed the intervening space to the Auger Hole, where, by dint of scraping and twisting, we crawled through into Mammoth Hall, at the foot of the mountain. Passing over the Mountain, going down the perpendicular entrance into the passage leading past Delta Island, into Counterfeiter's Trench, through Fat Man's Misery, we reached Banditti Hall. Stopping here a few minutes to rest, and gather a few specimens of Epsom Salts, which exudes in large quantities from the soil, we resumed our steps and were soon in the outer world, perfectly satisfied with our underground explorations of sixteen miles. Several of the party had been in the cave since a quarter to seven A.M., and were quite surprised to experience so great a change in the outside atmosphere. The temperature of the cave remains about 53° all the year, and in the winter Wyandotte Cave becomes the great potatoe cellar of the neighborhood.

We leave to-night by the regular cave coach for Leavenworth, highly pleased with our trip.

(from the Daily COMMERCIAL, Aug. 9, 1867)

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Editor's note: A Hovey letter in the Hovey Collection of the Wabash College library refers to these articles having been written by an individual named Smith, whom he does not further identify.. Still another letter strongly suggests that Hovey's sister Mary was a member of the party. A followup article (probably by one of the editors of the Commercial) appeared in the August 30, 1867 issue. Some research clarifying this sequence would be important Hoveyana. Why was it that at this time, the Rothrocks invited Hovey to stay with them and write a book about the cave, rather than Smith?