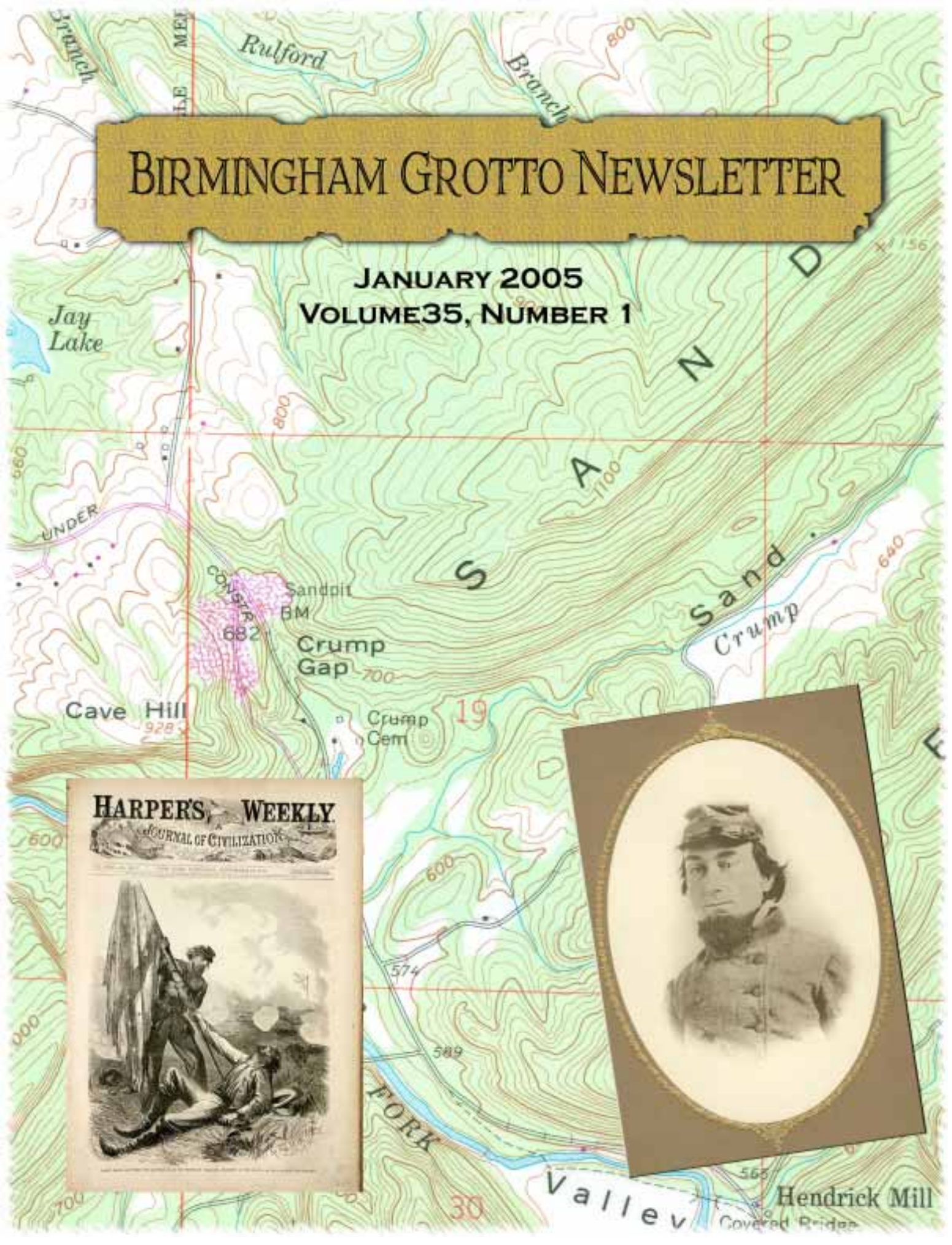


# BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2005  
VOLUME 35, NUMBER 1



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## Grotto Calendar

Disclaimer Caving trips posted are led by volunteers. No grotto committee reviews any trip leaders' qualifications. New cavers should inquire about the nature of the trip and the experience of the leader in advance. Those participating in the trips should be aware of their limits. On vertical trips all participants are expected to supply their own gear and be knowledgeable about rigging and safe practices.

Jan 20: GROBS starts at 7:30 pm. Ask a grotto officer for the current hot spot.

Jan 29: Grotto Ladies Camp-out on Scottsboro Mountain. Caving on Saturday and/or Sunday is a possibility. Contact Sharon Faulkner for more information.

Feb 3: Grotto Meeting at South-side Library starts at 7:00 pm.

Feb 25-27: Annual Guntersville Getaway and Grotto Auction.

Mar 3: Grotto Meeting at South-side Library starts at 7:00 pm.

Mar 5: NSS Spring Board of Governors Meeting in San Antonio, TX. See the NSS Website for more information.

Mar 17: GROBS starts at 7:30 pm. Ask a grotto officer for the current hot spot.

May 13-15 2005 SERA Summer Cave Carnival hosted by the Birmingham Grotto.

Apr 7: Grotto Meeting at South-side Library starts at 7:00 pm.

Apr 21: GROBS starts at 7:30 pm. Ask a grotto officer for the current hot spot.

*The Birmingham Grotto Newsletter is published twelve times a year by the Birmingham Grotto, Inc. of the National Speleological Society, Inc. Other NSS Internal Organizations may reprint material provided credit is given to this publication and the author.*

*Annual dues are \$15.00 per individual and \$20.00 per family which is payable on October 1st. Dues are prorated for anyone joining during the year. The subscription rate is \$15.00 per year. The Birmingham Grotto will exchange publications with other NSS Grottos. Exchange newsletters should be sent to:*

*Birmingham Grotto  
PO Box 55102  
Birmingham, AL 35255*

*Articles, Trip Reports, Graphics, Poetry, and any other speleo-related material should be sent to the Editor via email at the address noted below. Naturally, the Editor will accept typed text in practically any form or you can give written material to the Staff Typist noted to the left. Submission can also be done via e-mail to: scott@scottparvin.com. The deadline for publication is the 20th of the month; however, the Newsletter is limited to 12 pages and often fills up quickly.*

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## On the cover...

*The History of Crump Cave  
(Scott A. Parvin)*

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Thanks to our wonderful webmaster Terry Ragon,  
we have a new domain that's all our own!!!

## Birmingham On-Line!

Check out our web site: [www.bhamgrotto.org](http://www.bhamgrotto.org)

# John C. Riddle & James David Crump: Confederate Saltpeter Contractor and Confederate Soldier: Another Chapter in the History of the Crump Cave Complex

Marion O. Smith and Scott A. Parvin

On October 16, 2004, NSS member Alan Cressler found "J C Riddle 1861" and "J D Crump" scratched on the wall of tiny seventy-two foot long ACS 1114, Second Cave, Blount County, Alabama. Second Cave is one of the five caves in the bluff at "Cave Hill" next to Blackburn Fork of the Warrior River. Two of these caves, ACS 69, Horseshoe, and especially ACS 68, Crump, were mined for saltpeter in 1864-65 by the Confederate Nitre Bureau under the name Little Warrior Nitre Works. Second Cave is directly below Crump Cave.

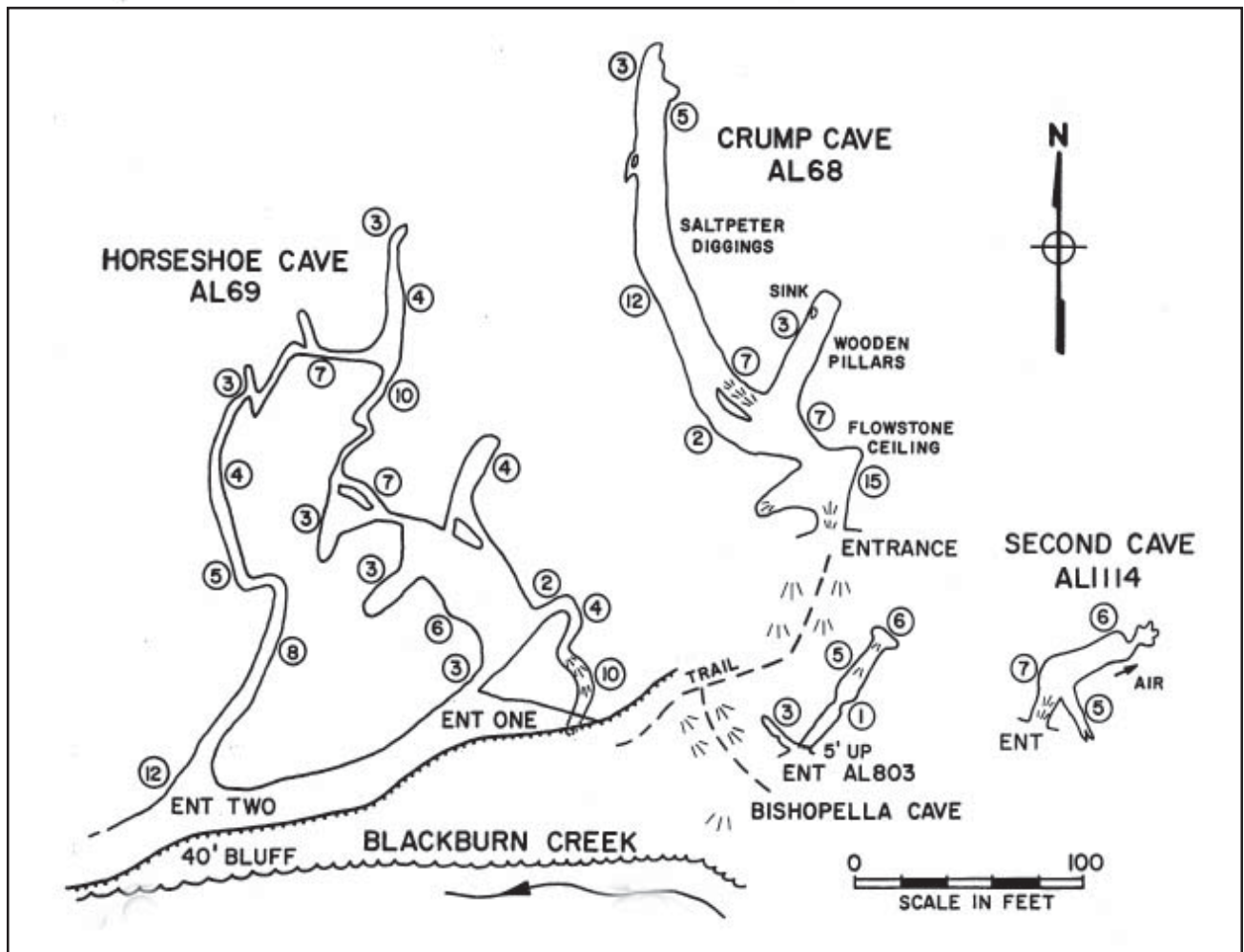
In early May, 1861, John C. Riddle was sent as a confederate agent "to examine several caves on Little Bear

Creek, in Franklin County, and another in Blount County." It is unclear if he made it to Franklin County, but for twenty days, until May 25, he did travel from Montgomery through Shelby, Blount, and Jefferson Counties "exploring and testing for Saltpetre." There were several J.C. Riddles in Alabama, but the one in question was probably the forty-five year old Pennsylvania born contractor who had variously resided in Montgomery, Montevallo, and Chambers County.

The confederate government offered him "Ample inducements" and he made a contract with Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Gorgas, head of the Ordinance Department, for "the

production of niter." Between September 9, 1861, and April 1, 1862, Riddle forwarded 7,960 pounds of Saltpeter to the ordinance depot in Montgomery, overseen by the military storekeeper, Captain Charles G. Wagner. One voucher indicates that 543 1/2 pounds were "manufactured prior to 1<sup>st</sup> Novr in Blount Co Ala."

In June, 1862, Riddle informed Dr. Socrates Maupin of the University of Virginia, who was in Alabama searching for raw resources, that caves were "numerous in central or North Alabama." Further, Riddle claimed he had "examined as many as 160" and had "worked a number of them for nitre." He "was last engaged in



## Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

procuring nitre from the caves of Blount County, from which he withdrew on the occupation of Huntsville by the enemy." This statement, plus the discovery of his name in one of the "Cave Hill" caves, supports the possibility that Crump and Horseshoe Caves were also mined early in the war by Riddle and that probably more than just 543 ½ pounds of his saltpeter came from there.

As is evidenced by the presence of the Crump name associated with several geographical features in the area, this family has a rich history in Blount County. The name "J D Crump" which was discovered in association with John C. Riddle's name refers to James David Crump. James D. Crump was born on March 31, 1842 in Alabama, son of William Newton and Martha Crump. Interestingly, the same year in which James D. Crump (at the age of 19) left his name in Second Cave, he enlisted in the Confederate Army. His enlistment date was August 12, 1861, and his name appeared in the muster rolls as early as August 14, 1861. James Crump was a member of Company K, the Blount Guards, of the 19<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry. The company was organized in Blountsville, Alabama, and marched to Huntsville under order of the Governor of the State. The Nineteenth Alabama Infantry served at Mobile and Pensacola until February 1862. They fought brilliantly at Shiloh where 219 soldiers were killed and wounded and also participated at Chickamauga. The Nineteenth fought through Georgia, Tennessee, and eventually was forced into surrender in North Carolina early during the year of 1865. An older brother of James D. Crump, John Pinkney Crump also served in Company K of the Alabama 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry.

Surviving the battles, James D. Crump was paroled from Salisbury, North Carolina on May 2, 1865 and returned to Alabama to marry Mary Annie Gurley on March 28, 1872. Unfortunately, Mary Gurley Crump died only months later in December of 1872 due to unknown causes. James D. Crump moved to the western United States until contracting Brights Disease, and returned shortly thereafter to pass at the home of his brother in Oneonta, Alabama. James David Crump died on December 25, 1916.

William Newton Crump, the father

of James D. Crump, was the original owner of the property containing the entrances to Crump Cave, Second Cave, Horseshoe Cave, Bishopella Cave, and Sewer Cave, and most certainly was the namesake of Crump Cave itself. He became the original private owner of the 246 acre tract of land on March 1, 1858, when he purchased it from the United States of America.

William Newton Crump also had a very interesting career in the Confederate States Army. He joined in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1862, and was assigned to Company I of the 49<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry. He was commissioned as Captain and the Company became known as "Crump's Company" as almost all its soldiers were natives of Blount County, Alabama.

As Colonel John D. Weeden stated in a 1903 letter addressed to *The Southern Democrat*, "Company I was one of the best companies in the 49<sup>th</sup> Alabama Regiment. They were a fine body of stalwart young men and their first Captain was dear old Captain Wm. N. Crump, a Methodist minister, and I believe every member of the Company was a member of the Methodist Church. Such a thing as playing the old soldier was not countenanced among them. The Company was always for duty. They emphasized the fact that one could be a good soldier, and at the same time a christian gentlemen."

Company I fought bravely at Shiloh where it lost 113 killed and wounded and subsequently played a key role in the defense at Vicksburg. William Newton Crump was eventually promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, but had to resign due to "chronic nephritis and asthma" on February 27, 1863.

On his return to Blount County, he served as the second preacher at Clear Springs Methodist Church (founded in 1822) and was also an Alabama State Senator from 1876-1877. William Newton Crump died on October 15, 1882 and was buried at the Crump Family Cemetery which is located less than one mile from Crump Cave.

The rich history of the Crump Family has added another dimension to the storied past of the caves in that region. The magnetism of the area has attracted the Native Americans, the homesteaders, and the saltpetre miners and each have left a bit of their history and heritage for us to explore and appreciate.

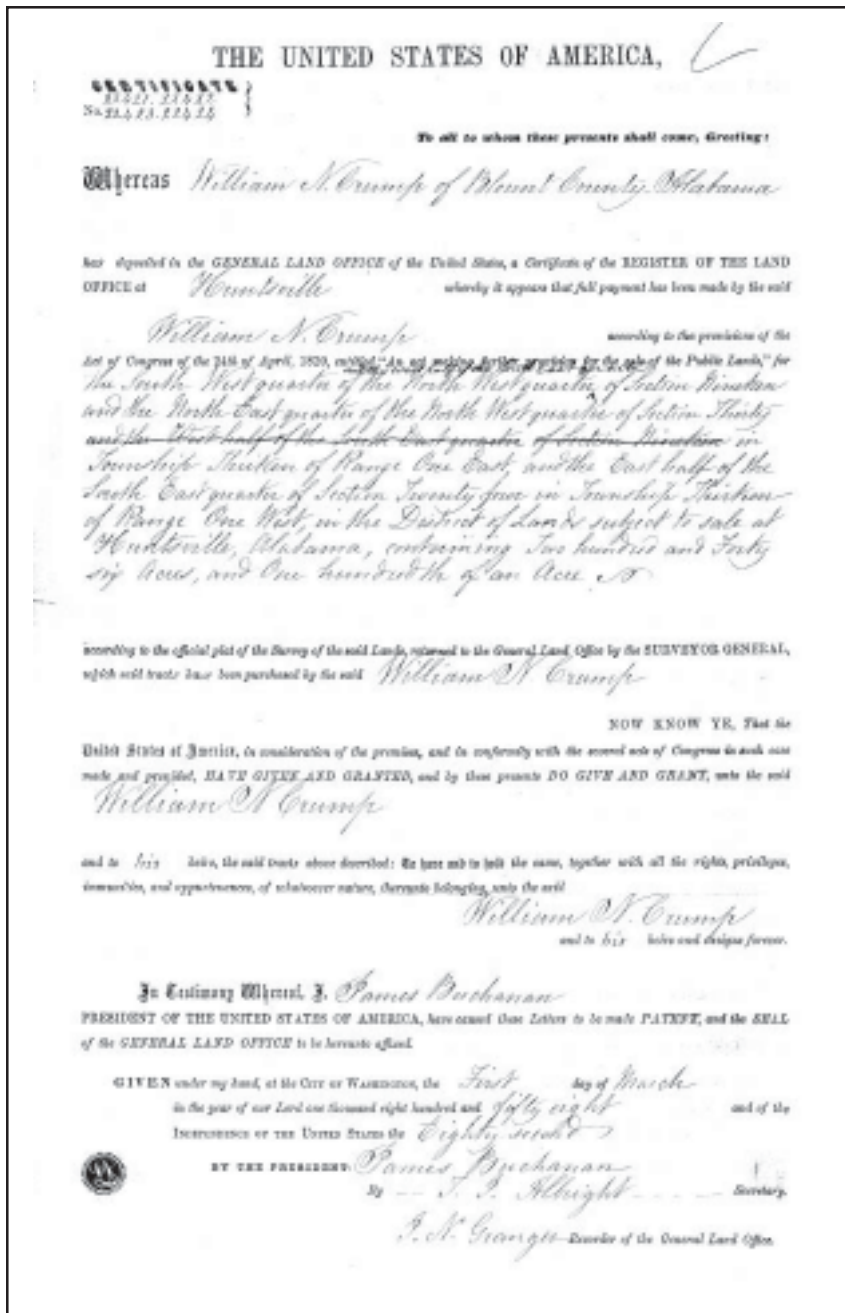


William Newton Crump

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5. Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens or Business Firms, RG109 (M346, Rolls 668, 864), National Archives, Socrates Maupin, John C. Riddle Files.
6. Evans, Clement A., *Confederate Military History* (Confederate Military Publishing Company, 1899, 1987), Vol. VII, pgs 117, 118, 662.
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8. *The Southern Democrat*, January 11, 1917.
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# Birmingham Grotto Newsletter



The original document transferring ownership of the land containing Crump Cave from the US Government to William Newton Crump.

The Crump home as it stood in 2000. It has been added to the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage. It is located very near Crump Cave.



## The Wookey Hole

Margaret Money

In May of this year, my brother Joe McCain, his wife Dotty, Larry, and I went to England for a couple of weeks. After spending a few days in London, we rented a car and drove out to Bath, Stonehenge, Avebury, and Cheddar about 40 miles south west of Bristol. Then we went to the Wookey Hole about 20 miles south east of Cheddar out from the town of Wells. Getting an early start one morning, we drove to Cheddar and toured the commercial caves there. Several caves in the Cheddar Gorge area were used for a long time as a place to store and cure Cheddar cheese. There was a problem with mice and other varmints getting in and eating the cheese before it was "ripe". The British call Cheddar Gorge "The Grand Canyon of England". There is no comparison between the two places. The Cheddar Gorge is nowhere close to being anything like The Grand Canyon. The Cheddar Gorge is only about a mile long and about one-quarter mile wide.

Commercial caves leave their lights on all day during tours. It seemed very odd to see green ferns and other plants growing deep in a cave. When I commented on this to the guide he said that it was easier to give tours and not have to worry about turning lights on and off.

The formations in the caves were similar to the caves in TAG country, bacon rind, curtains, flow stone, rimstone dams, etc. Like many of our caves uncaring and unknowing people have broken off some formations over the years. Thank goodness they left enough to enjoy today.

There is a story that goes along with the Wookey Hole about a witch and her dog. It seems that during the 1700's an old woman lived with her dog in the cave. Local lore says she was turned to stone by a monk as she was casseroling a child. Since people during that era were superstitious caves were thought to be evil places. The formations in the cave like others took on the shapes of various images. There is one point in the cave where if the light is right the formation looks like a woman with a long nose and a long chin. In another area there is a formation that looks like a small dog. The woman had a kitchen, bedroom

and living room all furnished inside the cave. Unfortunately there is no longer any evidence of her accommodations remaining.

The Wookey Hole was first explored in the early 1900's at which time human bones, an alabaster ball, and a dagger were found. Exploration continued further as under water diving gear became better. Unfortunately the cave's depth has never been measured due to it having so many deep pools. The cave has 25 chambers above and below water level. The total depth at the deepest part is 220 feet below water level. Graham Balcombe was the first cave diver in the British Isles to use breathing apparatus in 1935. The first divers used the same diving gear as the deep-sea divers. Getting air to them in the same manner by way of pumping air into the hoses. Penelope Powell the only woman on the team said, "Leaving the surface and the dazzling glare of the powerful lights, and slipping down from the enveloping brown atmosphere, we suddenly entered an utterly different world, a world of green, where the water was as clear as crystal.

Imagine a green jelly, where even the shadows cast by the pale green boulders are green but of deeper hue; as we advanced, light green mud rose knee high and then fell softly and gently into the profound green-ness behind. So still, so silent, unmarked by the foot of man since the river came into being, awe inspiring, though not terrifying, it was like being in some mighty and invisible presence, whose only indication was the saturating green-ness".

In 1948 using equipment developed during WWII, chamber 9 was reached. The chamber is 100 feet high and the water is 70 feet deep. Over the next 30 years it was used as the forward diving base. In 1981 a diver reached a depth of 200 feet in chamber 25, yet not the bottom of the void. As Martin Farr wrote "Like the legendary witch who once inhabited the entrance chambers the exploratory prospects offered by the Wookey Hole are impossible to forget.

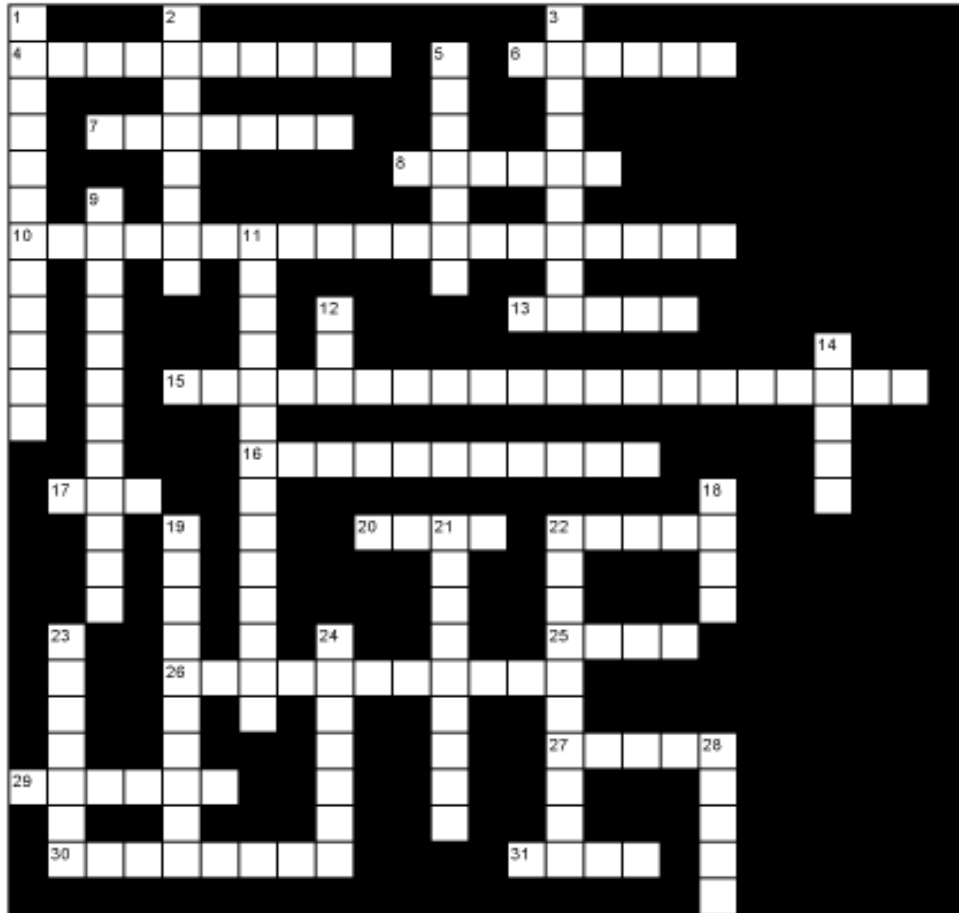
This was a very beautifully decorated cave and a very nice way to spend an afternoon in the western part of England.



Larry accepts his doorprize at TAG 2004.  
(Jimmy Sims)

Birmingham Grotto Crossword January 2005

Scott A. Parvin



**Across**

- 4. The First Grotto Publication (2 words)
- 6. Current Grotto Treasurer
- 7. Biblical caver found in Cathedral Caverns.
- 8. The call before a descent. (2 words)
- 10. Annual Lake Rendevous (2 words)
- 13. Meeting between the meetings.
- 15. Longest Cave in Blount County, Alabama (3 words)
- 16. Rare Formation in Tumbling Rock Cave (2 words)
- 17. NSS Top Dog
- 20. Caver supported organization which owns multiple TAG caves.
- 22. \_\_\_\_\_ Happens!
- 25. Amphibian or climbing system?

- 26. Grotto's July 4th Party Locale (2 words)
- 27. Current Grotto Secretary
- 29. Grotto Librarian
- 30. First Grotto President
- 31. A little get-together on May 11-15, 2005

**Down**

- 1. Deepest Pit in Blount County, Alabama (2 words)
- 2. Current Grotto Vice-Chair
- 3. 1860's resource found in some caves.
- 5. First Grotto Female President
- 9. Surveying Instrument
- 11. Previous locale of the TAG Fall Cave-In (2 words)
- 12. Caving Rope
- 14. Grotto Webmaster Extraordinaire
- 18. Part of LRUD

- 19. Home of the NSS National Headquarters
- 21. Site of 2005 SERA Cave Carnival (2 words)
- 22. Site of a major Grotto film production (2 words)
- 23. Part of TAG
- 24. Abundantly sized Ring-Tail
- 28. Current Grotto Chairperson

*Answers will appear in next months newsletter.*

## A Book Review by Milo Washington

### LOST WORLDS IN ALABAMA ROCKS: A GUIDE TO THE STATE'S ANCIENT LIFE AND LANDSCAPES

*Book Information:* Author: Jim Lacefield, 2001. Alabama Geological Survey, Tuscaloosa, 123 p. (no longer available there: try PaleoAlabama Project, 251 Loop Road, Tuscumbia, Alabama 35674 phone 2563816301), paperback \$25.00

This glossy booklet is the most visually stunning and quickly informative, popular guide to rocks and fossils that I have seen. Its colorful graphic design offers much in the way of teaching aids: full-color, annotated outcrop illustrations, numerous paleogeographic reconstructions, Photoshop-composited environmental reconstructions, and montages of classical fossil illustrations.

Alabama turns out to almost have it all: fossiliferous Paleozoic sections in the Cumberland Plateau and Valley-and-Ridge; Cretaceous chalk in the upper Coastal Plain, Cenozoic marls in the lower Coastal Plain and common Pleistocene vertebrates in sinkholes and streams. The work was designed as a resource for Earth Science teachers in Alabama, but is

also an easily digested guide to the state for the rest of us.

This booklet breaks the mold of such introductory texts with a variety of new approaches and captivating asides. Geobotanical concepts, such as the limestone indicator species redbud and eastern red cedar, are illustrated in color, and bring home the importance of geology to life. The local Wetumpka Impact Crater brings down to earth the concept of bolide impact at the end of the Cretaceous. The origins of the Suwanee terrane from West Africa and the Wiggins terrane from South America, place Alabama within an international context of Pangea and its subsequent continental drift.

The book also does not shirk terminology or detail. Paleosol, liesegang rings, chernozem, bioclastic, bentonite, rhyniophyte, catagenesis, kerogen are just a few of the words and concepts not commonly encountered in a book pitched to a secondary school audience. There are many fossils and fossil sites illustrated, and this book is a good first guide to

fossil hunting and identification in the state. Iron ores, coal, oil and agate are all of public interest, and each gets concise treatment. I would have added a section on nodules and concretions, as these are the main source of pseudofossils brought in for identification. I feel so guilty and unconvincing when I explain that someones precious heirloom fossil turtle or coconut is really just a nodule. It would help to have an informative, well-illustrated book to recommend for these disappointed, but good-hearted, folks. You probably wont need this book to help with your research, but if you are driving through Alabama I wouldnt be without it.

Gregory Rettack

*( I had intended to review Jim Lacefield's book for the BGN but I ran across this article written for a paleontological journal in Oregon by Gregory Rettack. He said everything that I wanted to say but has said it much better.*

*This book is a MUST HAVE for Alabama cavers.*



*Who could that be caught caving in pajamas?  
(Scott A. Parvin)*



*TAG 2004 Bonfire Explosion.  
(Jimmy Sims)*



*Scott Becker and Friend  
(Sharon Faulkner)*



*Alabama Caverns during the Grotto Halloween Party.  
(Scott A. Parvin)*

*Pictures are GREAT, but a trip report, cave map, or poem would fill these pages nicely. Please submit any and all material to the editor at [scott@scottparvin.com](mailto:scott@scottparvin.com).*



*Judy Ranelli admires Ice Formations in Blowing Saltpeter Cave.  
(Scott A. Parvin)*

Birmingham Grotto Meeting Minutes  
December 2, 2004

Steve Sills opened the meeting and the November Minutes were approved as written.

**VISITORS:**

None.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Gary Barnes reported a total of \$6,319.90 in our checking and savings accounts.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Cissy is providing cake for Joel's birthday at Club South after the meeting.

December 11 is the Cumberland Caverns Christmas Party and the clean up at Rocky River cave.

December 11 is tentatively scheduled for the Grotto ladies' campout/caving weekend at Scottsboro Mountain but anyone is welcome to attend.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Joel briefly discussed SERA planning. There will be another meeting scheduled for January 13. Location of the meeting will be announced soon.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

The Guntersville Getaway is going to be held February 26, 27 and 28th. Steve will arrange to get 2 kegs of beer.

**TRIP REPORTS:**

Several grotto members briefly discussed trip reports and Don Harter went ridge walking the weekend after Thanksgiving. He found a cave not yet surveyed which consisted of a 10-foot pit with sloping passage at the bottom.

**PROGRAM:**

Jimmy Sims showed many slides including: TAG 2004 slides and he showed slides from Donna and Jimmy going to Lost Sea Cave in Tennessee the Sunday after SERA 2004.

He then showed 1995 and 1996 slides from Big Bone Cave, having saltpeter works which is several miles from Cumberland Caverns.

He also showed slides from the Cumberland Caverns party in 1995 hosted by Roy Davis.

Next, he showed slides from Pettijohn's when the three Sims brothers, Jimmy, Bob and Mark went caving in January 1996.

Next, he showed the Dave Howell ridgewalk at the 1996 Guntersville Getaway in which Dave and Jason discovered DJ's cave. They named it DJ's which stood for their initials. This was Jason's first virgin pit.

He also showed slides in which Martha Hendrix and Michael Gilbert walked down a hill and discovered Bear Hollow Cave. Dave Howell and Danny Cobb found a bolt in the cave and discovered it was not a virgin cave.

The last of the slides were in March of 1996 from the Boy Scouts trip to Tumbling Rock, the ACS meeting/party in April of 1996 with Bubba Smith, a biker and caver from Huntsville, Limrock Blowing and Russell Caves.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeannie Cates, Secretary

## News & Notes

by Dave Howell

\*\*\* The New Year 2005 dawns bright and clear, glittering with promise, possibility, and new beginnings! What subterranean realms, never before seen by human eyes, will be illuminated by our lamps for a brief moment in time before being plunged back into the velvet peace of eternal darkness upon our passing?

Did you ever contemplate Hell? The ancients viewed the underworld as dark, mysterious, and awesome, but the Christians portrayed it as a vast torture chamber, a place of everlasting punishment and eternal pain. Surely the nature of Hell's punishments must be individualized; different things bother - or don't bother - different people. Did you ever consider that what we do, you and I - crawling into dark, muddy holes, into the unknown, pursuing the thunder of a distant unseen waterfall through crawlways so tight that a deep breath scrapes your back against the ceiling, or descending spiderlike down a gossamer web into a gigantic hall devoid of light save what we bring, the nearest wall fifty feet away - are the stuff of some people's nightmares. We spend our weekends trekking into Hell - and enjoying it! William Blake said, "When thought is closed in caves, then love shall show its root in deepest Hell."

\*\*\* It is the start of a new year, right? The time for making NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS. And a common resolution is to lose weight, which normally involves an increase in physical activity or exercise combined with some sort of diet adjustment. I can't help you with the diet, particularly with JASON's smoker operating with such regularity at Grotto campouts

and functions, but I can offer assistance with the planning of your 2005 exercise regimen. In surfing the net recently, VALERIE happened onto an Activity Calorie Calculator presented by the Fitness Partner Connection. This consisted of a list of popular physical activities and the number of calories each typically burns in the course of a 30 minute session of that activity. Of course caving was not on the list - that's too broad a category, anyway, caloric consumption would depend on what cave you're doing, where you're going in it and what caving maneuvers you're doing, etc. So. Selected below are a few activities that may have an application in the caving community, or in our own Grotto. Choose wisely, and watch those inches melt from your waistline!

Billiards - 120  
Hang Gliding - 168  
Martial Arts:  
judo, karate, kickbox - 480  
Bicycling: mountain biking - 408  
Bicycling: 14-16 mph - 480  
Bicycling: > 20 mph - 792  
Frisbee - 144  
Hiking: cross country - 288  
Kayaking - 240  
Orienteering - 432  
Laying Carpet - 216  
Watching TV - 36

\*\*\* Maybe another New Year's Resolution might be to clean out the clutter that has accumulated in your attic or garage. But wait! Don't put your unwanted junk out on the curb for the City Sanitation Department to clear away! Instead donate that dusty old Picasso that doesn't look

right in any of your rooms, that battered Gutenberg Bible that won't fit on your bookshelves and you can't read German Fraktur anyway, or that hideous Ming vase that you've hoped would get broken in each of your last 3 moves but hasn't, to the Birmingham Grotto for our annual fundraiser auction to be held the Saturday night of the GUNTERSVILLE GETAWAY this February 25-27. Then, after you've done that, be sure to come to the auction and bid! See you there!

\*\*\* Caves are dark, mysterious places where daylight does not exist. For thousands of years people have entered caves to feel the power of the earth and gain access to the enigmatic spiritual world. In the past, the cave functioned as a primordial sacred place, with its passages leading to the dark unknown - the very bowels of the earth. Caves also served as the entrance to the spirit world, the gateway through which shamans journeyed and flew through the domains of the otherworld. The art of being a shaman involved controlling altered states of consciousness within society. In the flickering darkness with rhythmic drumming and bone flutes and other instruments imitating animal and bird sounds, the "multimedia effect" may have been mesmerizing, as human chants resonated off the cave walls. After a time, the quester's visions may have projected themselves on the cave walls like a slide show.

Cool, huh? The preceding is quoted from *From Black Land To Fifth Sun* by Brian Fagan. (Sounds like a description of a Birmingham Grotto meeting.)

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Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

P.O. Box 55102

Birmingham, AL 35255-5102

Forwarding & Address Correction Requested