

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter



May 2005: Volume 35, Number 5

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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.

May 7: SERA Work Day at Camp Comer.

May 13: Fern Cave Quarterly Survey Trip. Contact Kelly Norwood for info. Kelly_Norwood@ dnr.state.ga

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

May 19: GROBS starts at 7:30 pm. Ask a grotto officer for the current hot spot.

May 27: Speleofest at the Lone Star Preserve in Kentucky.

June 2: Grotto Meeting at South-side Library starts at 7:00 pm.

June 4: The Annual Huntsville Cave Rescue Tyrolean Traverse at Desoto Falls.

July 4-8: NSS Convention - Huntsville, Alabama. Registration and information...contact Jim Hall jimehall2@cs.com (256-772-9829) or CharlesLundquist lundquc@email.uah.edu (256-824-2684) for any questions!

July 14 (DATE CHANGE): Grotto Meeting at South-side Library starts at 7:00 pm.

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

Aug4: Grotto Meeting at South-side Library starts at 7:00 pm.

Aug 18: GROBS starts at 7:30 pm. Ask a grotto officer for the current hot spot.

Sept 1: Grotto Meeting at South-side Library starts at 7:00 pm.

Sept 15: 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.

On the cover...

*Group photograph from the Grotto Trip to the Walls of Jericho.
(Jeff Harrod)*

Birmingham On-Line!

Check out our web site: www.bhamgrotto.org

Amazing & Bitter Sweet Hazard Bryant

Amazing, that's the only word that fits. It was an amazing ending to a fabulous weekend when I found myself looking down on a prize eight point buck, standing not 15 feet away. I was amazed.

The buck had fallen into a pit approximately 12 feet deep, spent itself in useless rage, and now stood defiantly awaiting its fate. The rack was massive and tall, the buck was in his prime and would go 250 pounds. Here, deep in his private domain he had slipped, missed some detail, and become trapped in a very deadly place. The entire crew assembled on the lip of the pit and excitedly talked of rescue but we knew we could not save the animal. We called it a day and headed out with Frank taking the responsibility for notifying the authorities of the buck's plight.

After seeing Lisa off to Atlanta I turned my truck toward "The Magic City" and let the hammer fall, thinking all the time, what a great weekend it had been, and what a lucky guy I am.

That's the happy ending; the beginning (the Sweet) goes like this. The weekend started easily with me arriving on top of the mountain around noon.

I quickly grabbed my attack pack and walking stick and I hit the woods. I was as happy as a beagle pup chasing rabbits. It was dark before I returned to camp tired but happy. I built a fire and settled in to wait for my girl, Lisa, the North Star on my journey through life, who should be arriving soon.

It was nice to see the familiar faces start to show up, Chuck, Ben & Kim, Danielle & Joe, Michael & Tamara, Andy "Z" and several others arrived in short order. It was a comradely group of people, on a quest to satisfy their dreams.

The fire crackled and the yellow flames danced and another magical night slipped into the past.

With the sun came the risings and departures. We all had our own agendas, our missions to fulfill, and so we scattered to the four winds for the day.

Lisa and I grabbed a quick breakfast and headed for the high country. We were out to take a closer look at a few points of interest found on an earlier trip. The day was bright and transparent and we saw many things that affected us, like the view point at the head of the valley. Standing on the eighty foot cliff that overlooks most of the valley and drawing in the area makes one feel small but essential. This is what I love and live for. Before the day was done Lisa and I had a couple of qualifiers and several suspects. We were elated with the day, and the dues we had paid, so off we flew to the #1 Buffet.

Returning to "The Mountain" we all gathered around the fire. We luxuriated in the knowledge that we had done our best and our worlds were the richer for it. In the morning, when the fire had burnt to a gray ash and the sun was setting fire to the sky, we parted, each having his own path to follow.

Lisa and I headed back to the high ground. We jumped off with a load of gear and a hank of rope. This time we would travel a different route to the other side of valley. We were a mile out and close to the jump off point on the lip of the plateau when a vintage, jolly, Toyota caught up to us. At the controls sat Dave "H", friend & cohort. We discovered that we were pursuing the same feature, what a small world it is, so our trips merge into one with seamless ease.

The lead was a 28 foot pit with a window of black at the bottom. I rigged the rope and descended with a one hundred foot tape in hand. A rather large rock blocked the way to the passage beyond the black window. With super human strength I rolled the rock, which

weighed hundreds of pounds, out of the opening, to reveal a climbdown of fifteen feet. Nasty is the word that comes to mind for this climb down. Nasty rocks hanging over my head and nasty, tight, sharp, and crooked climb down under my feet. The belly crawl at the bottom of about 15 feet was anti-climactic after all the effort, but then that's also a part of caving. With work it may go further but at least for now it qualified.

We were all pumped and ready to walk. We qualified one more nice feature thanks to Tom Haygood's perseverance, but in the end it was the massive deer that stole the show. Amazing.

Now it is time for the end (the Bitter). The Management Authorities investigated and determined that the deer was too far gone, and so he was dispatched. It was a much better outcome than letting nature take its course.

I can still see that magnificent deer standing straight and tall in the face of death, and it affects me, and that's good.



*The Grotto Trip to the Walls of Jericho.
(Jeff Harrod)*

Trip Report - Walls of Jericho, April 9-10, 2005

Dave Howell

On the morning of Saturday, April 9, Lisa Andrews, Myrna Attaway, Hazard Bryant, Jeff Harrod, Dave Howell, Brandon Hughes, John Roberts, and Amy and Ryan Strickland met for the April Grotto trip to the Walls of Jericho.

If you are not familiar with the Walls, it is a dramatic limestone gorge astride the Tennessee-Alabama state line in the upper Hurricane Creek Valley. The Walls feature a major waterfall disappearing into a sinkhole near the top of the gorge and reappearing as a gush of water from the entrance to Jericho Cave (listed on the Tennessee Cave Survey) within the gorge. Below this and the related stunningly beautiful rocks and streambed configuration of the gorge, there are a series of terraces and slopes that the stream falls over, an excellent spot to swim or play in the natural water slides. Just below the mouth of the gorge is the Clark Cemetery (the only marked grave is that of Joseph Clark, born 1835, died 1881) and several old home sites (buildings gone, they're mainly just foundation stones now).

Having been traveling on business nearly all the preceding week and having been away on vacation to the Florida Keys the week before that, I do not start getting my gear together until the night before, and do not pack my backpack until Saturday morning.

I arrive at Pardue's 20 minutes late, but Myrna is waiting there, and John, Jeff, and Brandon (Jeff's cousin) show up shortly after. Everybody has already eaten, so we head on up to the parking place. I change into shorts for the hike down (specifically for the wading of the creek) and go barefoot, not even taking footwear with me. The hike down is easy, with a stop at Robert's Folly Cave, an impressive trailside sink with an entrance in the bottom; the cave is just one big room. We observe other sinks and karst features from the trail, but none of these appear to qualify. We meet many other hikers on the trail, but only a few are overnights. I had been apprehensive about the river crossing at the valley floor because of rains the previous week, but the river is only a bit more than knee deep on me, swift but easily negotiated. A pleasant surprise: Hazard and Lisa are waiting for us on the other side! We set up camp beside the Clark

Cemetery then go to the Walls.

The Walls are as beautiful and breathtaking as I recall. Jericho Cave is gushing water, and a major waterfall is disappearing in the upper pool as usual. Several other people are here, including a group of kids playing in the slides and shallows. We linger here most of an hour, enjoying and absorbing the ambiance.

We build a fire and eat dinner as dusk turns to dark. Star gazing from the field nearby - the Big Dipper rising, with Arcturus visible through the trees to the northeast. At least 2 satellites, maybe 3 - (did one really change directions?) - and quite a bit of commercial traffic tonight. Stories around the fire, some starting



*Hazard and Lisa at the Walls of Jericho.
(Jeff Harrod)*

SERA Registration Volunteers Needed!!!

Leigh Dudrow will need many volunteers to work registration. Friday afternoon/evening and late into the night, along with the first half of Saturday being the most crucial times (registration opens 8:00 a.m. Friday and stays open until 6:00 p.m. Saturday). Registration will also be open from 2:00 p.m. till midnight on both Wednesday and Thursday for early arrivals, but staffing needs won't be as critical on those days. Leigh will have a shift schedule for volunteers to choose which shifts they can help with. Shifts will be 2 to 4 hours and the more volunteers we have, the shorter the length of shifts will be. Friday from around 5:00 p.m. till 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. we will need at least 4 people, preferably 6 people working. Contact Leigh to sign up for registration shifts at caverleigh@hotmail.com or 205-365-1078.

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

ominously with "Right after my Grandma died..." We all go down relatively early to sleep peacefully beneath the starry night... except for the shrouded skeletal figure that carries a lantern through the Clark Cemetery as I arise to answer a call of nature... it is a calm and restful night.

Sunday morning the sun in my eyes awakens me. Coffee and breakfast around the revitalized fire. Leisurely departure. Beautiful day! River has gone down a full 3 inches since yesterday. The trail out is not as harsh as I'd expected. We reassemble at the parking area right at noon. After a short après-trip break, we go our ways. Excellent trip!

***Please Mark
Your
Calendars!!!***

*The July Birmingham
Grotto Meeting has
been moved to July
14th to avoid
confliction with the
NSS Convention being
held in Huntsville!*



*John Roberts preparing for a picture.
(Jeff Harrod)*

**Answers to April's
Caving Word
Scramble**
Julie Fee

Clinometer
Carabiner
Hodag
Rope
Mud
Nalgene
Polypro
Troglodyte
Flowstone
Grotto
Rack
Boots

Roller
Fleece
Topo
Map
Squeeze
Borehole
Entrance
Pack
Climbup
Canyon
Webbing
Headlamp

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

Jess Elliot and Tate Cave Trips

Sharon Faulkner

Our Sunday, March 13, 2005 grotto trip led by Tamara Hughes and Michael Greene morphed into a surprise opportunity to visit Jess Elliot Cave (AJK 323) and Tate Cave (AJK 324). Tamara phoned me on Saturday night, March 12, asking would I have an interest in exchanging our ridgewalking plans for a trip to Jess Elliot without the long hike, which I readily agreed to. Alan Cressler was leading a trip to the Iron Hoop entrance of Jess Elliot for a group of folks and our grotto trip crew was invited along.

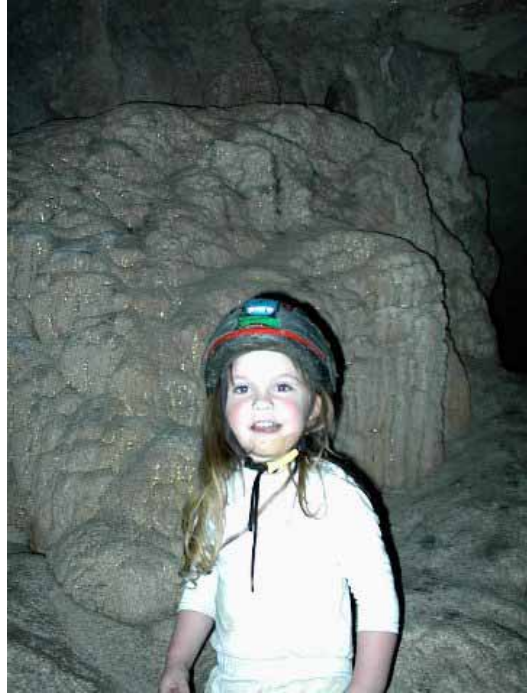
Casey and I arrived on Scottsboro Mountain early Sunday morning and found a full house. After chatting with the various groups, including Hazard and Chuck's large entourage, Casey and I joined Michael and Tamara for a quick breakfast at Krystals, the breakfast of champions no doubt. We then met Cressler, Doug Strait, and a couple of Indiana cavers back at the road leading up to Scottsboro Mountain, and our caravan took off in the direction of Stephenson where we met up with Scott and Julie Fee. Scott had contacted Alan to arrange the trip to Iron Hoop and Alan had received permission for folks to drive very close to the cave,

sparing us the usual long hike. We were able to drive and park within 50 yards or so of the Blue Hole, where we stopped to take a few photos on the way to the caves.

Shortly past this point, Casey and I made the turn off to visit Jess Elliot E-1 and Tate Cave as the rest of the group continued on to the Iron Hoop

entrance. Casey will have to wait a few more years before attempting the 12-foot climbdown entrance of Iron Hoop, but this was her first visit to Jess Elliot, no small feat for a three-year-old. I had been to Jess Elliot before, so had no trouble finding the large openings of both caves, though I think it would be nearly impossible

to miss them. We passed Tate and began our day of exploration in Jess Elliot, taking photos and admiring the rimstone dams and pools of water. Upon exiting JE, we walked back to Tate cave and crawled over the massive pieces of breakdown inside the entrance for a brief visit. After exiting Tate's, Casey and I walked back to the trucks, changed clothes, and enjoyed the beautiful weather. We only had to wait an hour or so before Tamara, Michael, and Doug returned from their adventure, leaving the rest of the Iron Hoop group behind for a photo session. The five of us eventually made our way back to the Stephenson Depot where we parted ways, Tamara and Michael left for dinner and Doug and I made sandwiches and coffee, while waiting for the rest of the group to return. Michael and Tamara were in the right place, at the right time to make this fun trip happen. Thanks to them both.



Casey in Jess Elliot Cave.
(Sharon Faulkner)

What is a Publisher???

Over the past few months, I've meant to take a little time and let everyone know what a wonderful job *Leigh Dudrow* does as publisher of our newsletter.

Typically, I deliver the master copy of the newsletter to the printer on Thursday one week before the meeting, and Leigh picks up the finished newsletter sometime early the next week. She prints, applies the labels, and delivers the finished product to the meeting for our reading enjoyment. The uncollected copies are mailed. I encourage you to join me in personally thanking her for her dedication to the Birmingham Grotto Newsletter and our Grotto.

Scott A. Parvin
Editor

Bell and Graves: Calhoun County, Alabama, Saltpeter Contractors Marion O Smith

In late April, 1861, Samuel D. Morgan of Nashville, as chairman of the "Executive Committee of the Central Military Bureau of Supply" in behalf of the state military and financial board, began a letter writing campaign urging the Southern populace to begin mining caves for saltpeter to supply the powder mills in Tennessee. One of Morgan's letters was soon reprinted in the *Jacksonville Republican*, and the editor, James F. Grant, asked "the attention of all persons who own saltpeter caves, or who knows of any." He also noted that "Mr. Alfred Wright, of this county, owns a cave containing an extensive deposit of the 'nitre earth,' which has been sufficiently tested to prove that it is rich." Wright was actually Wightt or Wyghtt (c.1805- fl 1870), a native South Carolina farmer and a long-time resident of Calhoun County.¹

The following September the *Jacksonville Republican* twice more alluded to Wightt's cave. The first reference was, "We have...about six miles south of this place, near the railroad track, a very fine and extensive saltpeter cave." Then a week later the paper's editorial staff

indicated that they had "seen specimens from the cave exceedingly strong, said to be in quantities almost inexhaustible," and they understood there was a plan "to commence the manufacture of Saltpetre to a considerable extent."²

Apparently, sometime soon afterwards, J.T. Bell and B.F. Graves, non-residents who have not been further identified, bought or leased Wightt's cave and obtained a contract to make saltpeter for the Confederate government. Presumably, they made their agreement with Captain Charles G. Wagner, the Ordinance Department military storekeeper at Montgomery.³

The earliest surviving record of saltpeter delivered by Bell and Graves were two barrels and two kegs containing 767 pounds, January 24, 1862, for which they received forty cents a pound. That and the next four known shipments, 2,352 pounds April 28, 674 pounds May 26, both at fifty cents, 1,107 pounds June 26, and 1726 pounds August 11, at seventy-five cents, were all made to Captain Wagner. On June 27, 1862, a new agreement was made between Bell and Graves and Captain Wagner whereby the former consented "to make and deliver

...Fifteen hundred pounds of Saltpetre each and every month" until January 1, 1863, and the latter promised to pay seventy-five cents a pound or more if the government raised the price.⁴

During April, 1862, the Nitre Bureau was created by the Confederate Congress and the South was divided into districts to better attend to the acquisition of Saltpeter. Captain William H. C. Price, a former teacher at Auburn, was appointed superintendent of District Ten which consisted of middle and south Alabama. Less than two months later, on June 5, he wrote Editor Grant to urge "the attention of the citizens...to the great necessity...for the immediate development of all the resources of this region for the production of nitre." He plainly announced that people "must make saltpeter, or stop fighting...A day or two's work on the part of everybody throughout the State and we will get enough." He also expressed an interest in the cave "now being worked by Messrs. Bell & Graves which is producing about 60 lbs on an average day." He believed the "yield might be increased easily to 200 lbs daily, if these gentlemen could get force enough," and pleaded with the

Thanks to Larry Money, Scott Fee, and our friends from DCG this announcement did appear in the DCG's monthly. We should also make arrangements for sandwiches, chips, and beverages for lunch. See everyone there, be sure and see Kitty at the meeting and VOLUNTEER for your grotto.

Birmingham's Bodacious Barbeque

Now that we have your attention, why not consider helping your caver friends during the SERA site preparation workday? On Saturday, May 7th, the Birmingham grotto will provide a feast of feasts* for those folks who stop by to lend a hand helping us prepare Camp Comer for the SERA weekend festivities. We feel confident the work day will be mild compared to the TAG Work Weekends, and may even be like a vacation for some of you! During the work day we hope to build the hot tub and sauna area, cut and haul firewood, run the power lines for the vendors, and set up registration. That is pretty much it; however, we might do some general clean up and grass cutting if we think that will be necessary. So bring your boots, gloves, good attitude and chainsaws and enjoy a day with your Birmingham Buddies.

* The feast will be at the TAG Site comprised of Burgers and Dogs and should start around 6:00 pm central, or when the work is done....

Furthermore, we are pleased to announce that thanks to the gracious hospitality of Chuck Henson and the Dogwood City Grotto TAG Fall Cave In Advisory Board, you will be permitted to camp at the TAG Property on Friday and Saturday night if you plan to participate in the SERA site preparation workday.

Never been to Camp Comer?

http://www.bhamgrotto.org/SERA_2005/directions.htm

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

"patriotic citizens of Calhoun" to notify them "that they can get hands enough."³

About the same time Professor Socrates Maupin of the University of Virginia was making investigations in Alabama for lead and saltpeter in behalf of the Ordinance Department. On June 30, 1862, in a report to Colonel Josiah Gorgas, he also alluded to the cave Bell and Graves were working, without directly mentioning the name he was giving much the same information:

I was informed by a Mr. Adams of Jacksonville that certain parties are now and have been for some time working a cave about six miles south of the town, and that with 10 or 12 hands they have obtained about 60 lbs. of nitre per day.⁶

The Nitre Bureau took charge of the Bell and Graves contract by late August, 1862. However, the monthly output never again reached the stipulated quota. Further, the place of delivery varied, indicating that Calhoun County was not exclusively in just one niter district. On August 28 and September 30 Captain Price received 999 and 1,120 ½ pounds at Auburn. Thereafter, October 14, 1862 through April 24, 1863, Captain William Gabbett of northern Alabama's Ninth District received shipments totaling 2,532 ½ pounds at either Huntsville or Larkinsville. The Bell and Graves partnership lasted until the last day of 1863, when they took 286 pounds of saltpeter, "made from caves in Dist. No. 10", to Captain Price at Selma. It is unlikely that this last contribution was made at Wightt's Calhoun County cave, since in November, Captain Gabbett sent T. J. Byrne with a select group of laborers to that county to work "Bells Cave" on government account. However, all the saltpeter Bell and Graves sent in previously, 11,278 pounds, was made at Wightt's cave, making it after Sauta in Jackson County Alabama's second most productive Civil War saltpeter mine worked by contractors.⁷

The grotto Alfred Wightt owned undoubtedly is today known as Lady-Weaver Cave. Until recent times it was actually considered two caves, and only during the late 1980s did explorers make a physical traverse

between the main sections. Now the entire system has six entrances and a total length of 6,100 feet.⁸

Three early descriptions of the Lady-Weaver Cave have been located. The earliest was in 1888, when it was called Highland Cave:

The cave [Lady] is at the foot of the spurs of the Blue Mountain... The main chamber is nearly an acre in size. The floor is comparatively level, except where broken by stalagmites, in all stages of formation and all sizes... From this chamber numerous passages, varying in size, lead out and on to others, all beautiful as the one mentioned, which is known as the Council Chamber...

Of the four caves known...on this property, the one [Weaver] easiest to see...has as entrance and an exit on opposite sides of a high hill and from one point to the other the cave is fully a third of a mile, in almost a straight line. The ceiling is high, the passageway wide, and through its whole length runs a creek, deep in places, entering on one side of the hill and flowing out of the mouth of the cave at the other.

A state geological report in 1897 gave specific locations and expanded descriptions of the two caves, which were almost a half mile southeast of Weaver Station:

[I]n the N.W. ¼ of N.W. ¼ of S.9, T.15, R.8E...there is a cave from which flows one of the prongs of Cane Creek. This cave [Weaver] is nothing more than a sub-terranean channel through the ridge for a stream that drains a considerable territory to the north-east of the ridge. The sub-terranean channel is near ½ mile long from the mouth of the cave to where the water sinks at... the N.E. ¼ of N.W. ¼ of S.9... It can be followed for about ¼ mile, to where there is a sink down to it from the top of the ridge... This cave has in it large heaps of nitre earth that were worked for saltpeter during the late war...

To the south-east a short distance of the sink down to the cave [Weaver] from the top of the ridge, there is another sink on top of the ridge, that leads down to an

other cave [Lady], with a comparatively level floor, some 60 feet below the surface. The cave also has in it heaps of nitre-earth that were worked for salt-peter during the late war. To get the earth out, a shaft was sunk down to the cave. This cave consists of a room about 180 ft. x 75 ft. and 10 to 20 feet from floor to ceiling..., with passages extending out from it in all directions to smaller rooms. It has some beautiful stalagmites [sic] and stalagmites, though the other cave has none.

A 1929 observer recorded more about the caves, beginning with Weaver:

Because of low water it was possible to follow the creek upstream from the mouth for a distance of about 500 feet. Throughout this explored distance the cave ranges in width between 8 and 30 feet, and the ceiling attains a maximum height of about 35 feet... The walls...are fluted and show evidences of long-continued solution...

Two sinks connect Weaver Cave with the surface; the larger one opens into the Ball Room, a hall about 100 feet long and 50 feet wide which is 30 feet above the stream channel; and the smaller one, 30 feet downstream from a passage connecting with the Ball Room, is a pipelike passage which opens at the surface...

Lady Cave is about a quarter of a mile northeast of Weaver Cave and a short distance south of the sink into which Cave Creek flows before passing under the ridge... The entrance...is an artificial shaft 40 feet deep which was sunk during the Civil War, when the clay accumulated upon the floor...was mined, brought to the surface, and leached... In mining...a number of small passages were...exposed.

It was also noted that some of the "small passages" led "to the south and west and probably connect with the unexplored portion of Cave Creek." Ultimately, the two caves were connected by a wet crawl.⁹

The Lady Cave shaft entrance still

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

shows two to three foot long drill marks. The passage off the Big Room have many signs of saltpeter earth excavation, including pick marks, rocks piled on passage shelves, and small dug trenches. Generally, this portion of the system is now damp and rather "guttred" in appearance from many years of abuse, rendering it difficult to envision the significant role of the cave and its nearby counterpart played during the Great Rebellion.¹⁰

Sources

1. *Jacksonville Republican*, May 16,

1861; 1850 Census, Ala., Benton, 29th Subdiv., 726; (1980), Calhoun, Ranges 8 & 9, Jacksonville P.O., 34; (1870), 4th Precinct, Oxford P.O., 2.

2. *Mobile Advertiser and Register*, September 11, 1861, and *Charleston Daily Courier*, September 17, 1861, each quoting different issues of the *Jacksonville Republican*.

3. Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens or Business Firms, RG109 (M346, Roll 55), National Archives, Bell & Graves File.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Jacksonville Republican*, June 12, 1862.

6. Citizens Papers (M346, Roll 668), Socrates Maupin File.

7. *Ibid.*, Bell & Graves, T.J. Byrne Files.

8. Alabama Cave Survey

9. *Anniston Hot Blast* September 3, 1888; Henry McCalley, Report on the Valley Regions of Alabama (Paleozoic Strata), Part II, on the Coosa Valley Region. Geological Survey of Alabama, Special Report No. 9 (Montgomery, 1897), 704-5; William D. Johnston, Jr., Ground Water in the Paleozoic Rocks of Northern Alabama. Geological Survey of Alabama, Special Report No. 16 (University, Ala., 1933), 69-71.

10. Notes by Marion O. Smith.

How Do I Get to Camp Comer?

Taken from the SERA 2005 Website by Terry Ragon

From Chattanooga, Tennessee:

- * Travel toward S Pittsburg (west) on I-24
- * Continue toward Birmingham (south) on I-59
- * Exit from I-59 onto AL Hwy 40 turn left (east)
- * Travel 1 mile to US11 and turn right (south)
- * Continue 300 ft to AL Hwy 117 then turn left (south)
- * Continue 2.8 miles to Tutwiler Gap Rd and turn right (south)
- * Continue 1 mile to Co. Rd 89 and turn right (south)
- * Continue 2.4 miles to Camp

From Decatur, Alabama:

- * Go toward Huntsville (east) on US 72A
- * Continue (east) on I-565
- * Continue (east) on US 72 to Scottsboro
- * Right (south) on Ala 35
- * Left (east) on Ala 40 IMMEDIATELY after crossing river, — Notice the road to Camp Jackson on the left. Don't take it when going to Camp Comer! Ala 40 covers over a mountain and through farms, just be patient.
- * Cross I-59 (and continue till 40 dead ends)
- * Ala 117 joins US 11 for a moment, so Right (south) on US 11 AND Ala 117
- * After a mile or so, make a Left (east) off of US 11, following Ala 117
- * As you go up the mountain, HAIR PIN Right (south) on a De Soto Parkway, that wanders through a lot of houses and woodland, to eventually County Rd 89. If you miss this turn, don't worry, you will go into Mentone. Just find County 89 and go Right (south).
- * Right (south) on County 89
- * Left (east) into Comer Scout Reservation
- * If you get to De Soto State Park, you went too far

From Trenton, Georgia

- * Continue toward Birmingham (south) on I-59
- * Exit from I-59 onto AL Hwy 40 turn left (east)
- * Travel 1 mile to US11 and turn right (south)
- * Continue 300 ft to AL Hwy 117 then turn left (south)
- * Continue 2.8 miles to Tutwiler Gap Rd and turn right (south)
- * Continue 1 mile to Co. Rd 89 and turn right (south)
- * Continue 2.4 miles to Camp Comer

2005 SERA

Birmingham Grotto



Scott A. Parvin
NSS 29279 RL



STAFF

Staff ID badges are available.
See Scott Parvin to get your
name on the list for printing.
You will need to supply your
own ID holder.

Welcome To SERA 2005!!!

Hosted by the Birmingham Grotto

This 3 foot by 8 foot banner will welcome our guests to SERA 2005

The time has finally arrived and we are about to undertake what will surely be one of the greatest SERA Cave Carnivals in history. Over the last few months, many diligent Birmingham Grotto volunteers have been attacking the mind boggling array of tasks required to bring SERA 2005 into reality. Pre-registration was outstanding, with the banquet being a big hit. As of the last report, the Guidebook was finished, the buttons were ready, and the T-shirts and decals were nearing completion. The vendors have been lined-up, and the campsite plan has been fabricated. The fireworks will light up the night and the band will fill the air with music. Almost everything is prepared....but we have one remaining problem! We need your help!!! Please make it a point to help out on the SERA work day, and especially all during the weekend of SERA itself. This event reflects directly upon us, the Birmingham Grotto. Only you can make this event something we can all be proud of. SERA 2005 will be great because of YOU!!!

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

Birmingham Grotto Meeting Minutes April 7, 2005

The Meeting was called to order and a Motion passed to accept the March Minutes as written.

VISITORS:

Danny Smith, a Boy Scout trip leader. Ally Parvin.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

\$5,091.47 in checking.
\$3,976.87 in conservation CD's.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Steve Sills announced that tonight is the last night to pre-register for SERA.

Scott Fee discussed the SERA Winter Business Meeting and that he spent \$50.00 for our grotto. A Motion passed to reimburse Scott.

SCCI has been talking to the new land owner of Byer's cave. Byer's cave will be the cleanup cave at SERA. Graffiti removal, garbage haul out and the access road tunnel will be utilized. Myrna discussed looking for a Huntsville cave to have a graffiti removal clean up and she is asking for suggestions. SKTF will be doing presentations on graffiti removal and giving lift lessons.

MONTHLY GROTTTO TRIP:

Sharon Faulkner was absent from the meeting but Dave Howell announced a grotto trip to the Walls of Jericho on Saturday. If it rains he will reschedule in two weeks. Meet at Pardues at 9:00 or the hiker's parking lot at 11:30 - 12:00 at the Walls. It is on State Road 79. It is approximately a 6-mile hike to the Walls.

OLD BUSINESS:

Joel discussed SERA. The next SERA meeting is tentatively scheduled for next Thursday either at Dr. Barnes' office or at the Fee's house. He will announce the place at the first of the week and he expects all the staff committee to attend.

There will be a clean up/work weekend the weekend before SERA and we will also advertise in the Dogwood City newsletter. We have

permission to camp both nights at the work weekend. Joel said be ready to volunteer for various positions and bring various tools to use during the work weekend.

Sewanee Mountain Grotto is planning on placing a trailer near the dumpster at SERA to store aluminum cans picked up during SERA.

Jimmy Sims volunteered to oversee the trash committee.

Dave Howell stated that the guidebook is in good shape.

220 people have pre-registered for SERA and the banquet is selling well.

NEW BUSINESS:

Larry Money discussed that he has been having trouble with the old tarp. The ends and sides do not fit correctly and he is working on trying to get it fixed, but he decided to buy a new tarp and he proposed that the grotto give him the old tarp in exchange for buying the new one. A Motion passed to accept his request and give him the old tarp.

Scott Fee gave thanks to Larry and Margaret Money for the tarp donation.

In Leigh's absence, Scott Fee announced that Leigh needs many volunteers to work registration in 3 and 4-hour shifts. You can call or email her to schedule your shift.

TRIP REPORTS:

David McRae, his wife, niece, cousin and Shane Stacy went to Varnado, Pretty Well, Cagles Chasm and Gourd Neck.

Myrna went to the SKTF cleanup and a sink hole at Sewanee.

Jimmy Sims attended Dr. Gary Barnes' annual Guntersville Getaway trip to Old Blowing, along with Andy Zerbe, Milo and Frank Case. Andy suggested they visit some other caves around Old Blowing, so the group headed to Pea Ridge Cave. Milo waited at the entrance while the group went in. The group quickly determined they were in Kavenaugh Cave instead of Pea Ridge and nearly did a through trip. However, the through trip was not possible due to a new road built by TVA below one of the lower entrances. The group was unable to get out, but upon further investigation from the outside by Andy and Frank, it was determined that the entrance is not lost and can be dug back open.

PROGRAM:

Scott Parvin gave a presentation on cave surveying and showed some slides from TAG 2004.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeannie Cates, Secretary

Notice!!!

The October Birmingham Grotto Meeting has been rescheduled for September 29, 2005, because of the TAG Fall Cave-In.

News and Notes

Dave Howell

*** May is upon us, and you all know what that means: the 2006 SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL, hosted by the Birmingham Grotto, looms before us, only a week away as you read these words. Coming up May 13-15 at BSA Camp Comer near Mentone, Alabama, this year's SERA promises to be a milestone event. Camp Comer will be an excellent venue for SERA, with plenty of camping space (you don't even have to bring your tent, there are tenting accommodations already there courtesy of the Boy Scouts, and also chalets available for rental, all first come first served), a big lake with boats available for our use (don't bring your own, no outside boats are allowed), a rappelling tower, generous vendor space, and various other amenities including showers that never run out of hot water! (Yes, that really is true.) In addition, this year's SERA will revive an old tradition almost lost in the mists of the distant past, that of a meal as part of SERA. (Years ago the Saturday evening meal was included in your entrance fee; now you pay for it separately.) Although we have been planning and discussing this event for months, we still need volunteers to do the various jobs and tasks that will make SERA work, so please - plan on not only attending SERA, but working to help us make this the best Summer Cave Carnival since 1996! To volunteer, or to learn where volunteers are needed, contact KITTY WOOLDRIDGE, Custodian of *The List.* Hosting a SERA is always a milestone Grotto event, and never fails to be a lot of fun. See you there!

*** A couple of our friends have, I hear, been hospitalized recently. AMY PARVIN was in for a few days for a relatively minor procedure, and FORREST KING's Mom was in for a slightly longer stretch undergoing a triple coronary bypass. The Grotto's best wishes for a speedy recovery to you both, Amy and Mrs. King. We hope that by the time these words see print you are both on your feet again and back to your regular routines and lives. Hospital stays are just no fun at all.

*** Last month brought us the annual meeting of the ALABAMA CAVE SURVEY, on April 16 in Gadsden. In contrast to previous ACS meetings this one was relatively uneventful, and was not well attended: only 28 people were there, total. The annual data update was relatively uneventful too, adding only 13 new caves and 17 new cave maps to the Survey, a record low since the inception of the present-day ACS, I think. (This brings the Survey up to number 4194, by the way.) JIM HALL, who is in charge of the ACS Cave Files, noted that of the first 500 caves in the Survey, 84 are without cave maps, and urged mappers to place these on their list of projects for the coming year. Several new maps by our own TERRY RAGON, cave mapper extraordinaire, were displayed. Also there was discussion of the need for GPS confirmation of older cave locations currently listed in the Survey only by topo section coordinates originally reported by map reading in the field and, in some cases, seat-of-the-pants reckoning. If you are so inclined, these would be creditable ridgewalking projects for the coming year. I must confess that, due to the timing of our vacation this year and the press of

other obligations, I did not get my own new cave reports in by the deadline this year. Oh well, they will appear in the 2006 update, then. I think one of my personal ridgewalking goals for the coming year is going to be to turn in at least 13 new caves. Won't it be cool to say, "Why, yes, I personally turned in more new caves this year than were reported in all of 2005."

*** Here is a most interesting tidbit. It seems that our Republican Senator JEFF SESSIONS recently secured federal funding in the amount of \$1.2 million for the purpose of - get this - public land acquisition for environmental preservation in Jackson and Madison Counties! Yes, the Southeastern Cave Conservancy has been made aware of this, but as of this writing there is no word on what actions might transpire as a result. Watch this space for further updates. Just think, Republican-sponsored governmental funding of the SCCi - it's enough to get your salivary glands working, yes? I am one of the harshest critics of the Republican administration, so here is my challenge: come on, Republicans, this is your chance to make me say something positive about you for a change!

*** The sad news reached me this month of the passing of a former Grotto member. LES BURYN died November 1, 2004 after a battle with cancer. He was 67. Les was active in caving in the 1980s, along with his daughters. He was an intelligent and personable man, and a good friend and fellow caver. With Les gone, the world is poorer.

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