

RKC NEWS

Volume II, Issue II

Fall 2006

Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, Inc.
www.rkci.org



It's Official!

**The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy is the New Owner of
the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve!**

**THE GREAT SALTPETRE CAVE
COLLECTOR'S SPECIAL EDITION**



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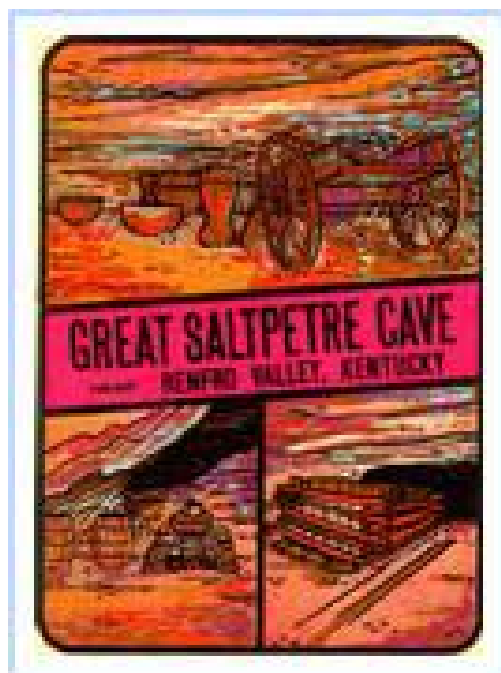
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On the cover:

Ellie Schiller, Executive Director of the Felburn Foundation, Andy Niekamp, Chairman of the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, and RKC members at the August 20th deed transfer ceremony, held at the GSP shelter.





The RKC News is published during January, April, July and October. Deadline for submissions is the 10th of March, June, September, and December. Send submissions to:

mhcaver@aol.com

OFFICERS

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------|--|
| Chairman | Andy Niekamp | andyniekamp@gmail.com |
| Vice Chairman | Pat Hutson | caver723@aol.com |
| Treasurer | Werner Jud | orion@one.net |
| Secretary | Lisa Pruitt-Thorner | batscout@aol.com |

DIRECTORS

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Werner Jud | orion@one.net |
| Andy Niekamp | andyniekamp@gmail.com |
| Pat Hutson | caver723@aol.com |
| Lisa Pruitt-Thorner | batscout@aol.com |
| Mark Moore | markles@bellsouth.net |

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Membership | Andy Niekamp | andyniekamp@gmail.com |
| Newsletter Editor | Mike Hood | mhcaver@aol.com |
| Karst Monitoring Coordinator | Deb Bledsoe | debcaves@yahoo.com |
| Community Liaison | Deb Bledsoe | debcaves@yahoo.com |
| Education Coordinator | Tammy Otten | tammyotten@yahoo.com |
| Fundraising | Jo Hutson | joettarn2000@aol.com |



***From the Editor:***

Welcome to the special edition of the *RKC News!* This big issue is devoted almost entirely to the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve. This edition contains numerous reprints from various publications about GSP, including one that a lot of you probably have not seen. I hope you enjoy this collector's edition of the *RKC News*.

Cave softly,

Mike Hood
RKC News Editor

From the Chairman:

Greetings RKC Members,

I would like to thank all of you for your support of the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy! And especially those of you that have worked hard to make RKC's ownership of the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve (GSP) a reality. It has been a tough 33 month effort and a dream come true. As you have already heard RKC accepted ownership of GSP on Sunday, August 20, 2006. We are most fortunate to have this property donated to us by the Felburn Foundation. This is RKC's first karst acquisition.

During the 30-minute ceremony, a number of documents were signed and presentations were made. Here is a list of them:

- The lease of GSP between the Felburn Foundation and the Greater Cincinnati Grotto was terminated by mutual consent.
- RKC approved and accepted a Felburn Foundation corporate resolution authorizing the donation of GSP to RKC.
- Ellie Schiller, Executive Director of the Felburn Foundation, signed the deed to GSP. I signed the deed on behalf of RKC.
- The RKC Board of Directors approved a new management plan for GSP. The new management plan contained only minor modifications to it from the previous version. The new management plan is on the GSP website at:

<http://www.caves.org/conservancy/gsp/info/mgtplan.shtml>

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by Bob Dobbs on behalf of GCG and me on behalf of RKC. It is also to be signed by the chairman of the Dayton Underground Grotto and the Blue Grass Grotto. The MOU is an agreement between the landowner and land users of GSP. GCG will continue to be the primary managing entity of GSP along with assistance from DUG and BGG.
- Ellie Schiller was awarded the first ever Honorary Membership in RKC for her outstanding contribution to RKC.
- The Greater Cincinnati Grotto was awarded the first ever organization Honorary Membership in RKC. GCG's excellent stewardship of GSP over the last 17 years us what made RKC and the ownership of GSP possible. Bob Dobbs accepted the award on behalf of all GCG members.
- Werner Jud was presented a Life Membership in RKC by Mark Moore. This award was given to Werner by Mark and Ellie to recognize his countless contributions to GSP and RKC.

Not much will change at GSP or with the management of GSP. The three main changes are that the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve Committee is now a committee of RKC, the finances of GSP will be reported through RKC and the RKC Board will approve any changes to the management plan. The Preserve Manger of GSP will continue to be appointed by the GCG Board and the management of GSP will be performed by GCG members along with assistance from the members of DUG and BGG.

(Continued on page 6)

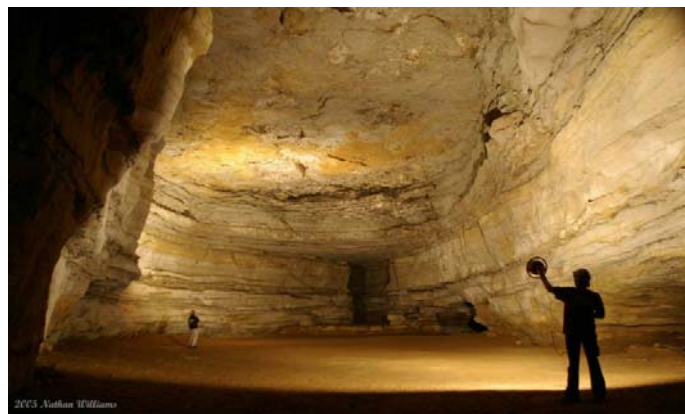
The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy is the New Owner of the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve

A Rockcastle County cave preserve will now be owned by a Kentucky non-profit organization composed of members who have managed it for the past 17 years. The Felburn Foundation of Yankeetown, Fla., a nature preservation group, on Sunday transferred ownership of its 300-acre Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve to the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy.

The RKC was formed two years ago by members of several area caving organizations who first dedicated themselves to maintaining the historic cave and its grounds when the Felburn Foundation purchased the property in 1989.

“Our ownership will not only preserve this unique habitat and geological area for generations, but also marks a bright future for what is considered the ‘crown jewel’ of caves in Rockcastle County.” said Andy Niekamp, RKC chairman. “We thank the Felburn Foundation for their many years of preservation


First discovered in 1798, the cave has a long and colorful history. It was mined for saltpeter, a prime ingredient in gunpowder, during the War of 1812 when as many as 70 men worked inside it. After that need subsided and following the Civil War, it became the site of dances and picnics; and after 1939 was the site of the Renfro Valley Barn Dance’s opening night broadcast on CBS radio. But, later commercial tour ventures were never successful. Since the Felburn Foundation’s purchase of the cave 17 years ago, the Greater Cincinnati Grotto, a chapter of the National Speleological Society, had leased and operated it as a preserve. And through a GSP Committee of Greater Cincinnati Grotto, Dayton Underground Grotto, and Blue Grass Grotto members, many improvements to the quality of the cave and the grounds were achieved.



Great Saltpetre Cave’s Echo Auditorium

More recently, expressing a need for continued land stewardship and the long-term advantages a locally-held deed would bring to the preserve the foundation entered talks with the grottos over the formation of a non-profit conservancy with the specific goal of transferring ownership. This winter, the RKC achieved that non-profit 501(c)3 status with a goal to permanently protect caves and karst lands throughout the Rockcastle County area through education, land acquisition and resource management.

On Sunday, August 20th, the conservancy accepted its first deed, that of Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve from the Felburn Foundation. “The RKC will continue to manage the preserve as it has been,” Niekamp said. “No major changes are planned.” “The three grottos have done an outstanding job of land stewardship and we are extremely confident that the property is in excellent hands.” said Ellie Schiller, Executive Director of the Felburn Foundation.

While the RKC will administer a management plan, the preserve itself will continue to be managed by the Greater Cincinnati Grotto with assistance from the Dayton and Blue Grass grottos. 



From the Chairman (continued from page 4)

We are hoping to receive media coverage about the property transfer. A press kit on CD containing a press release, fact sheet and photos was given to the Mount Vernon Signal, Berea Citizen and Lexington Herald-Leader newspapers. So far nothing has been reported. Those of you living in areas covered by these newspapers will probably be the first to see any media coverage.

An article will be written for the *NSS News* about the history of GSP and RKC. If we meet the deadline and it gets printed timely the article will appear in the November edition of the *NSS News*.

The RKC booth at GCG's Karst-O-Rama in July raised over \$1,000 for RKC. Thank you for your support! I hope you enjoyed the complimentary bottle of Climax Water and won a raffle prize.

We are counting on you, the RKC members, to be our eyes in the field. If you hear of a cave property in the Rockcastle region that is for sale please let us know. Don't assume that the RKC Board already knows. There is much work to do yet in the area. We have already approached one cave owner and let them know RKC is interested in acquiring their cave.

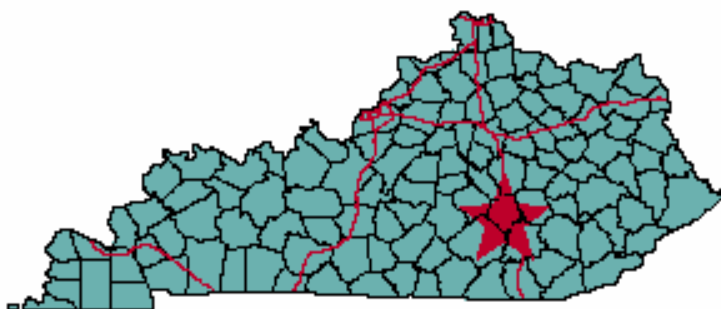
Once again thank you for your support of RKC! We've had our critics and we will continue to have them. They will help keep us on our toes. However I feel our actions will speak louder than their words.

Best Regards,

Andy Niekamp
RKC Chairman
www.rkci.org

The New GSP Management Plan is Now On-line:

<http://www.caves.org/conservancy/gsp/info/articles/mgt2006.pdf>



New Felburn/GSP Deed Restrictions

The deed to the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve came with restrictions from the Felburn Foundation. The deed restrictions are below. These restrictions are forever in place on the property and a violation of a deed restriction could cause the property to be taken back by the Felburn Foundation. All visitors to the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve are expected to comply with the deed restrictions.

“Provided, however, this conveyance is made subject to all easements, restrictions and conditions of whatsoever nature which may appear of record affecting the Property, and this conveyance is made subject to the following express conditions and restrictions:

1. The Property shall be used exclusively for charitable, scientific, educational, conservation, environmental, preservationist, or recreational purposes for the public benefit.

2. Except to the extent prudent and necessary to the proper management, protection, preservation and conservation of the Property or the safety and well-being of persons on the Property from time to time, no one shall engage in or permit the harvesting of timber on the Property.

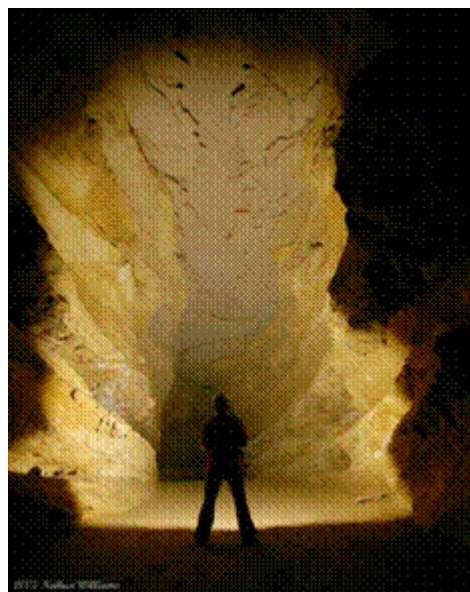
3. No one shall engage in or permit any type of commercial activity on the Property, including, but not limited to, development of the Property for residential or commercial purposes, mining, farming, hunting, fishing, commercial hiking or exploration operations, operation of camp grounds, operation of assembly grounds, exhibitions, and similar activities engaged in for profit.

4. No one shall use fireworks of any kind on the Property, and no hunting shall be permitted on the Property.

5. Motorized vehicles shall be permitted on the Property only on designated roads and parking areas and only to the extent necessary and appropriate for fulfillment of the charitable, scientific, educational, conservation, environmental, preservationist, and recreational purposes of the Property. Dirt bikes, all terrain vehicles, and other similar vehicles used primarily for off-road recreation shall not be permitted on the Property. Emergency, safety and maintenance vehicles shall not be prohibited.

6. First Party, its successors and assigns, shall have the right of inspection of the Property for a period of thirty years from the date of this conveyance.

In the event any of the conditions and restrictions numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 above are broken, First Party, its successors and assigns, shall have for a period of thirty years from the date of this conveyance the right to enforce these conditions and restrictions, the right to re-enter the Property, and the right to have title to the Property revert to First Party, its successors and assigns, by proceedings at law or in equity.”





NEW RKC MEMBERS

As of this Publication

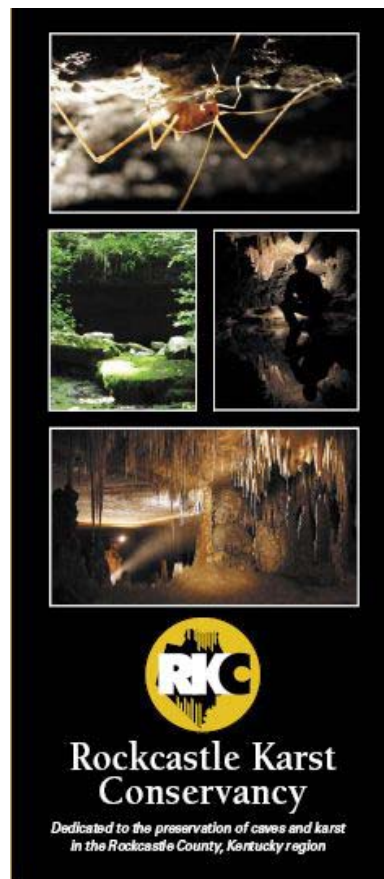
(RKC Membership Number in Parenthesis)

- Cat Kennedy (92), Austin, TX (Individual)
- Tony Sonderman (93), Cincinnati, OH (Individual)
- Leslie Moore (94), Yankeetown, FL (Lifetime)
- Dalene Smith (95), Louisville, KY (Individual)
- Connie Flamm (96), Cincinnati, OH (Individual)
- Phil Davis (97), Kettering, OH (Lifetime)
- Matt Keller (98), Terrace Park, OH (Individual)
- Roger Brucker (99), Beavercreek, OH (Individual)
- Tom Cottrell (100), Xenia, OH (Lifetime)
- Nancy Seaberg (101), Mt. Vernon, KY (Individual)
- Gary Bush (102), Canal Winchester, OH (Individual)
- Gregg Robben (103), Cincinnati, OH (Individual)
- Tabka Coomer (104), Batavia, OH (Individual)
- Kelly Huron (105), Maysville, KY (Individual)
- Ron McCamey (106), Cincinnati, OH (Individual)
- Dennis Green, Dayton (107), OH (Individual)
- Mark Poe, Beavercreek (108), OH (Individual)
- Steven Kelsey (109), Kettering, OH (Individual)
- Sarah Bowers (110), Columbus, OH (Individual)
- Duane Kendell (111), Livingston, KY (Individual)
- Michael Doughty (112), Knoxville, TN (Individual)
- Mike Crockett (113), Pineville, KY (Individual)
- Peter Michaud (114), Sewanee, TN (Individual)
- Jerry Parson (115), Crestwood, KY (Individual)
- Preston Forsythe (116), Browder, KY (Individual)
- Carl Swanigan (117), Fremont, OH (Individual)
- Mike Michalack (118), Ft. Wright, KY (Individual)
- Marc Cammack (119), Cynthiana, KY (Individual)
- Matt Simpson (120), Lexington, KY (Individual)
- Sarah Bell, Lexington (121), KY (Individual)
- James Currens (122), Versailles, KY (Individual)
- Teresa Currens (123), Versailles, KY (Individual)
- Mark Whitney (124), Ann Arbor, MI (Individual)
- Jim Perkins (125), Cincinnati, OH (Individual)
- Michael Rzesutock (126), Fayetteville, OH (individual)
- Nathan Williams (127), Huntsville, AL (Individual)
- Allen Blair (128), Catlettsburg, KY (Individual)
- Brian Shinno (129), Fairborn, OH (Individual)

**The RKC now has
123 Individual Members
And
6 Organization Members
Welcome!**

RKC Awards Honorary Memberships

On August 20, 2006, RKC Chairman, Andy Niekamp, awarded the first two Honorary Memberships in the history of the Conservancy. Felburn Foundation Executive Director, Ellie Schiller was presented the first individual Honorary Membership in recognition of her contributions to the RKC. The Greater Cincinnati Grotto received the first Organization Honorary Membership in recognition of its 17 years of outstanding stewardship of the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve.



Tell people about the RKC!

Give them a brochure!

GET YOUR BROCHURES AT:
www.rkci.org/brochure.htm



The History of the Great Saltpetre Cave According to Richard Mullins

As told to Sheryl Hilton and Lou Simpson 6/24/90.

From the July 1990 *Electric Caver* of the Greater Cincinnati Grotto.

Richard Mullins, caretaker and manager of the Great Saltpetre Cave during the last 16 years of its public operation sits on his porch spring less than a half a mile from the entrance to the cave and talks about the problem that they've been having with a red fox who's been stealing their chickens. "Chickens are worth a whole lot," Mullins says. "The eggs are good and fresh. These lay enough for me and my wife and my kids' family too."

Finally the conversation turns to the cave. The Great Saltpetre Cave was on Calloway Mullins' original 7500 acres of land 150 years ago. Calloway Mullins, (Richard's great- grandfather) was a blacksmith for the railroad, and divided his vast expanse of land into smaller parcels for his ten children and their families. Calloway died at 73. "Back then old fellows worked themselves to death." Calloway had ten or eleven children and divided the land up among them. Calloway had lived three miles from the cave, on Crooked Creek, on land that Burgess Abney owns now. "There's lots of caves around there, too, he says."

Richard's great-uncle John Mullins, was fortunate enough to inherit the portion with the two entrances to the Great Saltpetre Cave. Unfortunately, John Mullins' luck did not protect him that terrible day when a rope broke. The huge 36-footlong log beam that was being hoisted into place at the top of a house he was building for his brother came crashing down on his spine, leaving him paralyzed for the rest of his life. After John died, his daughter Ella, an older woman finally married an old widow man, Bill Carpenter. After Ella died, her husband moved back to his old house and tried to sell the property (cave included) for \$1,500. Then came the small legal problem. John had never signed the deed over to Ella so there was a question of ownership and homesteading rights since Bill was no longer living on the property. When the courts finally ruled, the cave reverted back to the Mullins family, to Richard's grandfather Charles Anderson Mullins, a tower of a man nicknamed "Biggie."

Biggie sold the cave the John Lair, the father of country music in Renfro Valley, who arranged for some of his famous barn dance talents to perform in the cave. John Lair also encouraged the local churches to hold as many services in the cave as they wanted, free of charge. Lair was a World War I veteran who had been a disc jockey on a radio station in Chicago before coming to the Renfro Valley area. John Lair was well liked and it was during this time that Richard managed the cave and campground and gave guided tours, while his wife Francis Isabel Mullins sold tickets, soft drinks, and souvenirs in the shop close to the main entrance. "Many grey-haired women who took the tour of the cave said that they remembered square dances, and even church services that had been held in the cave when they were young girls," said Mrs. Mullins. "They really enjoyed seeing the cave again because it reminded them of how much fun they'd had there." Richard says that the admission for a guided tour was \$2 for adults, \$1 for children, and the little ones (under eight years of age) were admitted free. "We gave them a guided tour, but some had been in so many times we just turned them loose. They didn't need a guide."

The great iron gates to the cave are remnants of the old Mt. Vernon jail. "Many a prisoner has been behind those gates," Mullins says. Bill, a stone mason who built the gift shop, installed the gates. Bill lived there for about three years, but liked to drink, and didn't stay long. Before the electric lights were installed (about 20 years ago) 15 kerosene lanterns hung on posts to provide light for the cave. Even after the electric lights, the guides carried at least two lanterns in case of a power failure.

(Continued on page 10)



The History of the Great Saltpetre Cave According to Richard Mullins (continued from page 9)

Mullins has seen more than a half a dozen houses rise and fall on the Great Saltpetre cave property and almost as many different owners. During Mullins' management, the campground had pit toilets, and a nice block shower house was added with water supplied by the same spring that provided his own water.

There was a charge of \$1 per tent for camping in the campground.

The huge shelter house was also added. "We even had a woman who cooked and sold food near the back of the shelter for a year or so," Mullins says. But that didn't go over so well, so it didn't last long and I turned that part into a tool shed and work area."

John Lair also built a clay dam with a concrete bridge over the top of it to expand the campground to the other side of Crooked Creek. Richard says, "I told him that it would washout and sure enough, three years later, when the water was really high, it came crashing down, and the water just washed it away."

The cave was open to the public from April 1 to November 1 each year, and closed about five years ago when John Lair died. The new owner, Steiner Rain, just didn't want to fool around with the public enterprise aspect of cave ownership, so Richard moved back to his original homestead a half a mile away.

Mullins was not sure about exact dates in the older history of the cave, but knew that the cave had been mined for saltpetre to make gun powder during the Civil War. During that time he said that the Union soldiers slept on a couple of ledges in the North end of the cave near his property. You can still see the soldiers signatures there. The soldiers found the cave more comfortable that the extreme temperatures outside "because it stays about 58 degrees all year," he says. "It's warm in the winter and cool in the summer."

"According to history," Mullins says, Dr. Sam Brown from Lexington, was the first one to start the mining when he was awarded a contract from the government. Later another fellow, John Baker from Tennessee, took the mining business over. "Baker, his wife, and kids are buried in a cemetery down there where Calloway, his wife, and several other Mullins are buried as well."

Link with Daniel Boone? Most Kentuckians agree that Daniel Boone helped make America the great country that it is today. And his name is written in Great Saltpetre Cave, says Richard Mullins, whose family owned the land around the cave for over 150 years. "Daniel Boone's name is in there. I can show you right where to find it, in the North section of the cave near Fat Man's Misery," Mullins says.

"You have to know where to look-in a little cove area-up about as high as your head. It used to be very easy to see if you had a good light."

"The last time I saw it-it was faded so bad I could hardly see it," he says. It was spelled 'D Boon'." Mullins doesn't speculate about what might have happened to the "e" on the end of Boone. But it's well known that the legendary Boone knew more about wilderness survival skills and how to deal with Indians than knew about reading, writing, and arithmetic.

(Continued on page 11)

The History of the Great Saltpetre Cave According to Richard Mullins (continued from page 10)

"My grandfather swears that there was a hemlock tree near the entrance of Mullins Spring Cave with 'D. Boone' carved into the bark. Everyone said that was where the Indians captured Daniel when they found him hiding in the cave," Mullins says. According to local folklore, Boone was tied with rawhide strips, then the Indians started a fire and went to gather more wood so that they could bum him. While they were gone, he held the rawhide strips binding his hands near the fire until they gave loose, untied his feet, and was gone before the Indians returned.

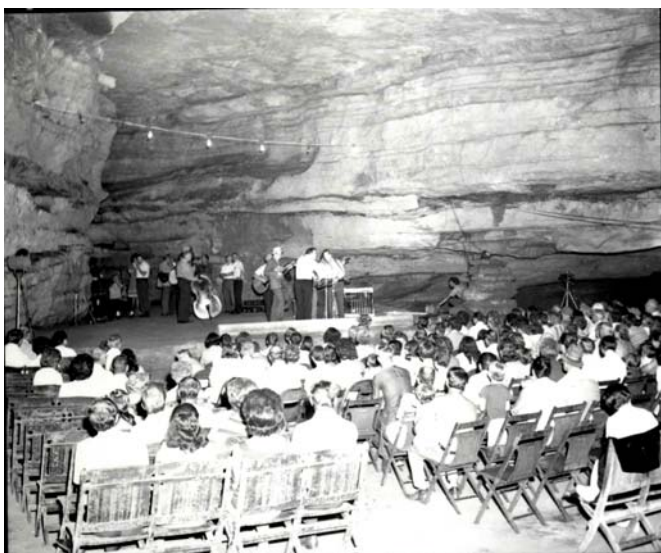
Whether Daniel Boone was the originator of the letters in the cave is something for historians to decide. Born in Pennsylvania in 1735, he moved to North Carolina where he was married and tried to settle down. But in 1769, at the age of 35, the wilderness of Kentucky lured and kept him until nearly 1800.

He retired to Missouri at the age of 65, and died in 1820. Most of the cave graffiti dates back to the early 1800s. Boone could have written his initials just before moving to Missouri. I'm looking forward to finding the faded inscription and looking for a date.

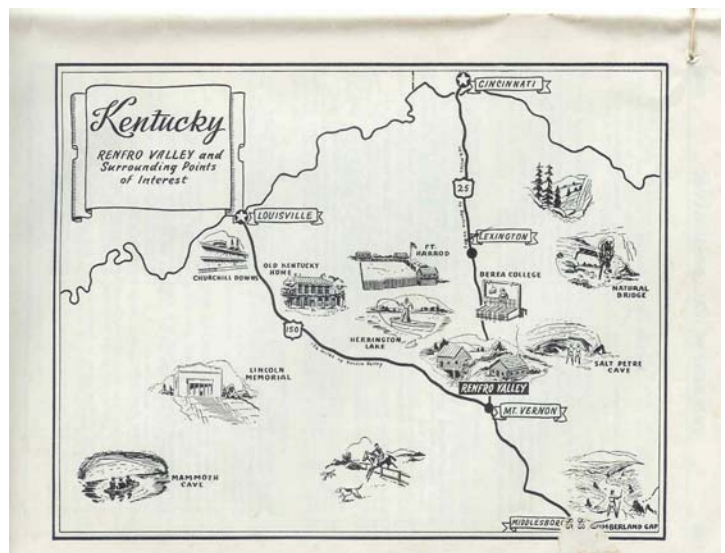
The weather is sunny, but cool and breezy. Two wild beehives hang from the large porch roof that protects the swing. A calico kitten and tiger striped cat wander down the path between Mullins' home and his daughter's next door. Lou and I thank him for taking the time to meet with us and give us so much information in so little time. He tells us of another larger cave, Mullins Spring Cave, that is only a half a mile from the concrete bridge that crosses Crooked Creek. It has three waterfalls, 50 foot pits, and the most beautiful formations you ever looked at," he says.

Evidently the Great Saltpetre Cave also used to have formations, but it was open to the public so long, without gates, that people broke the formations and carried them out. Some would even lag behind on the guided tours to write their names on the walls. "You couldn't keep them from it," he said.

"Lots of caves in this area, beautiful country," Mullins says. We'd like to stay and find out more, but still have the three hour drive to Cincinnati. We promise to come down again during the annual meeting on July 13 to talk further.



Performing in Echo Auditorium in the 1960's



1953 Renfro Valley Tourist Map



From the history book titled *Rockcastle County, Kentucky and Its People 1992*

Great Saltpetre Cave History

In 1798, John Baker discovered a large cave opening from the hillside along Crooked Creek, in what was then still part of Madison County. The next day, he brought his wife and two children back to the cave to explore its depths by the aid of torches. What began as a lark became a terrifying experience when the torches burned out and left them stranded in the lightless depths of the earth for two days. Baker and his family finally reached safety, but the long and colorful history of Great Saltpetre Cave was just beginning.

James Kincaid of Madison County had purchased property in Rockcastle County in 1796; five years later, in 1801, he mortgaged 9,500 acres including "Kincaid's Cave" to the Lexington firm of Trotter and Scott. Meanwhile, the Madison County court issued a certificate to George Montgomery for 'two hundred acres of land lying and being in the County of Madison on Crooked Creek emptying into round stone.' This land also included the same cave. During the winter of that year, the mining of saltpeter began in the cave on a small scale. Within two more years, Montgomery had sold his interest in the cave to Kincaid. Large-scale mining would soon begin.

Kincaid's early operation employed about twenty workmen (slave labor) in the cave, with furnaces and vats at both of the cave entrances. About 1,000 pounds of saltpeter were produced each week. Kincaid foresaw the potential for greatly increased production, and began to seek partners who might have the wealth to expand his operation. Among those who expressed an interest in such a partnership was Dr. Samuel Brown of Lexington.

The odds were against James Kincaid, however. Long on vision but short on cash, he remortgaged the property again to Trotter and Scott in March, 1804. Unable to meet his payments to that firm, a large piece of his property, including the cave, was sold at a sheriff's auction in Lexington in May of that year. Alexander Scott, co-holder of the mortgages, purchased the cave and property for \$400. Later that year acting on a motion from Scott, the Madison Court issued an order to build a road from the State Road to the Great Saltpetre Cave.

Dr. Brown had not forgotten about the cave. He formed a partnership called Brown, Hart & Company and purchased the cave property, about 1,000 acres, from Scott in November, 1804. At about this time, Brown ran an advertisement in the Lexington Kentucky Gazette, stating that his company wished to hire:

15 or 20 NEGRO MEN

To be employed at their Salt Petre Works in Madison County. For each of whom they will give 80 dollars, and they will in addition to the above, give to each negro 20 dollars at the end of the year, provided he conducts himself with propriety.

Brown intended to turn the saltpeter works into a major operation.

He promptly hired John James DuFour of Jessamine County as an engineer to construct a greatly improved and expanded operation. Over a period of a few months, DuFour made many improvements and innovations. The saltpeter mining operation later built at Mammoth Cave by Charles Wilkins of Lexington was copied from the DuFour designs.

(Continued on page 13)



Great Saltpetre Cave History (continued from page 12)

In 1805, Brown wrote a paper on the manufacture of saltpeter and gunpowder and sent a copy to President Thomas Jefferson. This paper describes Great Saltpetre Cave and the method of production, and mentions several other saltpeter caves in the region. His paper was read before the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia in 1806, and describe the cave:

The general level of the cave is about 80 feet above the creek. The average height of the arch is ten feet, though in many places it rises to fifty or sixty. The breadth of the passage is generally about forty feet, in some parts it is seventy or eighty feet. The floor has the appearance of a large public road, which has been much frequented. The ceiling is in most places smooth, with but few incrustations or stalactites. In some of the chambers however there are appearances of Gothic rudeness and irregularity which are truly sublime. When these vast chambers are sufficiently illuminated by the torches and lamps of the workmen, they present scenes so uncommon and romantic, that the most stupid beholder cannot contemplate them without expressions of the greatest astonishment.

Production at the cave went from 1,000 pounds per week to over 1,000 pounds per day.

Unfortunately, Brown was caught up in scandal; his family had been involved in Aaron Burr's plot to overthrow the United States government. Brown was forced to leave Kentucky and abandon his several enterprises, including the cave. In other hands, the cave produced saltpeter during the War of 1812, with as many as 60 or 70 workers employed in the operation. With the end of the war in January, 1815, the bottom dropped out of the saltpeter market and Great Saltpetre Cave was never again mined on large scale. During the Mexican War and later the Civil War, only small-scale mining was conducted in the cave.

About 1860, according to traditions of the Mullins family, the cave property was purchased by Calloway Mullins for \$50 and a rifle. For a long time following the Civil War, little use was made of the cave except for occasional picnics and dances. About 1939 John Lair and Dr. Walker Owens purchased the South entrance tract. The Renfro Valley Barn Dance was begun, with an opening night broadcast made from the cave on CBS radio. The two men attempted to open the cave for commercial tours, and built a lodge for guests. Only two days after it was finished, though, the lodge was burned to ground by persons unknown. The cave was closed to the public.

Lair again opened the cave for public tours in 1966. In 1970, Richard Mullins became the resident caretaker on the property (Richard still owns the north entrance). The remote location of the cave, however, was its downfall as a commercial enterprise. By 1976, tours of the cave were self-guided. In 1985, the cave property was auctioned off to Stanley and Jeanette Rein of Pine Hill, and the cave closed to the public. In that same year, John Lair passed away at the age of 91 years and Richard Mullins moved off the property. During the next year, the cave property was again put on the market.

Great Saltpetre Cave was purchased in 1989 by a private historical foundation, who subsequently turned the management of the cave over to two regional chapters of the National Speleological Society, those of Cincinnati and Lexington. The goals of the present cave management are to preserve and protect the cave and the land about it. Every year, an open house is held at the cave to allow the residents of Rockcastle County to visit and learn about an important part of their heritage. Other than this, there are no regularly scheduled tours of the cave, but interested groups may arrange for special tours by contacting the cave management.

The preceding account is based in large part upon extensive research by Angelo I. George of Louisville. Submitted by: Gary A. O'Dell.

Place Names Changes, Cultural Geography And Distribution Of Saltpeter Hoppers In Great Saltpetre Cave

By: Angelo I. George

From the July 1990 *Electric Caver* of the Greater Cincinnati Grotto

INTRODUCTION

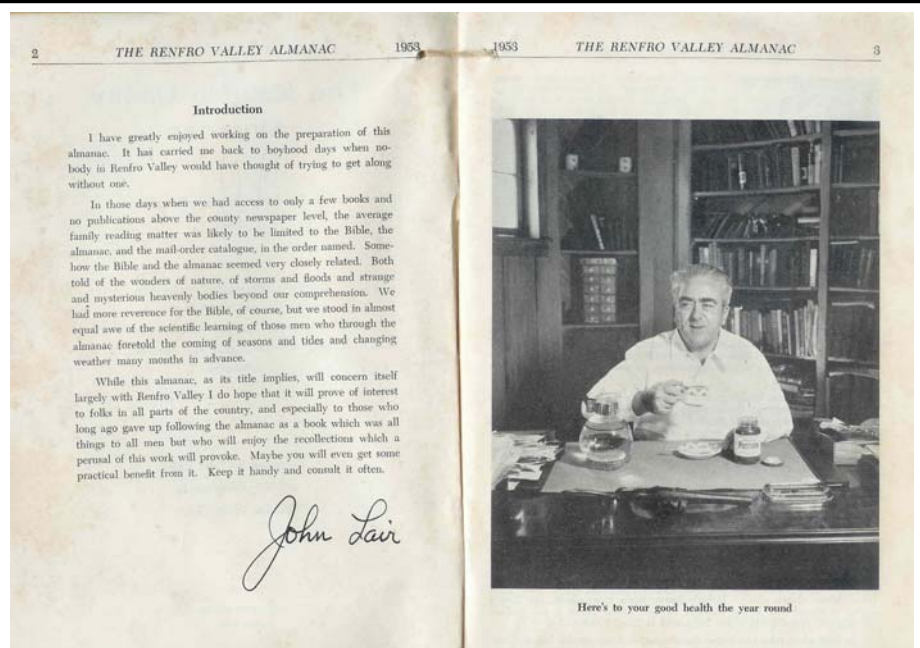
Great Saltpetre Cave in Rockcastle County, is the second most famous cave in Kentucky. The cave has been known since 1798, and since that time has been used as a saltpeter mine, distiller church, public meeting house and commercial; exhibited as a tourist attraction (George, 1988). Historic records connected with the cave show a pattern of place name changes. Some of the place names current in 1802 and 1805 are still in use today. Contemporary changes in place names are the result of exhibiting the cave as a tourist attraction since the early 1940s. The cave contains historically valuable saltpeter artifacts from the early first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Nine cave maps are known to be associated with this cave. The first cave survey was made in 1805 by John James DuFour (George, 1987a, p. 10). This consists of a high quality compass and chain survey of the cave. The map is the first instrument survey of a cave produced in America. DuFour (n.d.) also drew a pencil sketch cave map during the same time period. The pencil map is probably older (by a few months) than the compass and chain map. The DuFour maps were made to exploit the saltpeter resources in the cave. Thomas Jefferson's 1782 sketch map of Madison's Cave, Virginia, is the first cave map in America (Jefferson, 1790; Halliday, 1968, p. 22). A sketch map copy of the DuFour instrument survey was made by Eleuthere Irenee du Pont from a Samuel Brown manuscript text dated November 10, 1805. An instrument vertical survey probably was conducted by DuFour. Such was needed to design an operational hydraulic pipeline and pumping system. This survey has not been located.

You can read the remainder of this fine article at: <http://www.rkci.org/library/gsp/angelo.htm>



John Lair, Former Owner of GSP



Samuel Brown 1804 Letter Announcing Purchase of Great Saltpetre Cave (Padgett, 1937b, p. 124)

To James Brown

Lexington Novr. 10, 1804

Dear Brother

To remain here inactive would have been as improper as to have gone without any possible prospects of success -I have therefore formed a Partnership with Mr Thos Hart purchased Kenkards [Kincaids] Salt Petre Cave & intend to go largely into the Manufacture of that Article & of Gunpowder. Our prospects are very flattering. We shall have 20 hands employed in the course of two weeks if we meet with no accident & expect to make lb 1000 per day of Salt Petre which we can exchange for half that quantity of Powder. We are offering to supply Govt & Hope to obtain the Contract. In my present circumstances it would have been very improper to have refused such offer as Mr Hart made You know his address, his industry, & management If we are not disappointed this business will enable me to enjoy your Society much sooner than I could do were I now to go in quest of a settlement on the Missis[s]ippi. More of this in my next. In the mean time I beg of you to endeavor to make some contracts for Powder. We can afford it at 37/100. Write to us if any contract offers -- John Clay can sound the Spanish March!

With affection to you both I am

Sam Brown



Samuel Brown

Renfro Valley Almanac 1953 Excerpt

Great Saltpetre Cave, located near Renfro Valley, Kentucky, and owned by John Lair and Dr. Walker Owens, was explored and recorded nine years before Mammoth Cave was discovered by white men. It is believed that members of the Daniel Boone party occasionally used Great Saltpetre Cave as a shelter and hiding place on one of their first visits to Kentucky. The skeleton of Stewart, Boone's companion shot down by the indians, was found in a hollow sycamore tree on Rockcastle River, not far from this cave.

In 1799 sixty men were engaged in producing saltpeter crystals here for the manufacture of gunpowder, making this at that time possibly the biggest single industry in this section of the Kentucky Mountains. Work in Great Saltpetre Cave continued in to the Civil War, when the project was abandoned. Old vats and wooden pipes marking the location of the saltpeter works in use during the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War are still to be seen in this cave. Many old relics removed from it in past years are now on display in the Pioneer Museum at Renfro Valley.

At first the saltpeter crystals were taken by pack horse and canoe to Pittsburgh powder mills and later to a mill in Lexington, Kentucky. Still later a powder mill was erected in nearby Powdermill Hollow to use the entire output of the cave.



The Speleography of Great Salt Peter Cave

Reprinted from the September 1967 NSS News

Wayne R. White

NSS 8768

Eastern Kentucky University

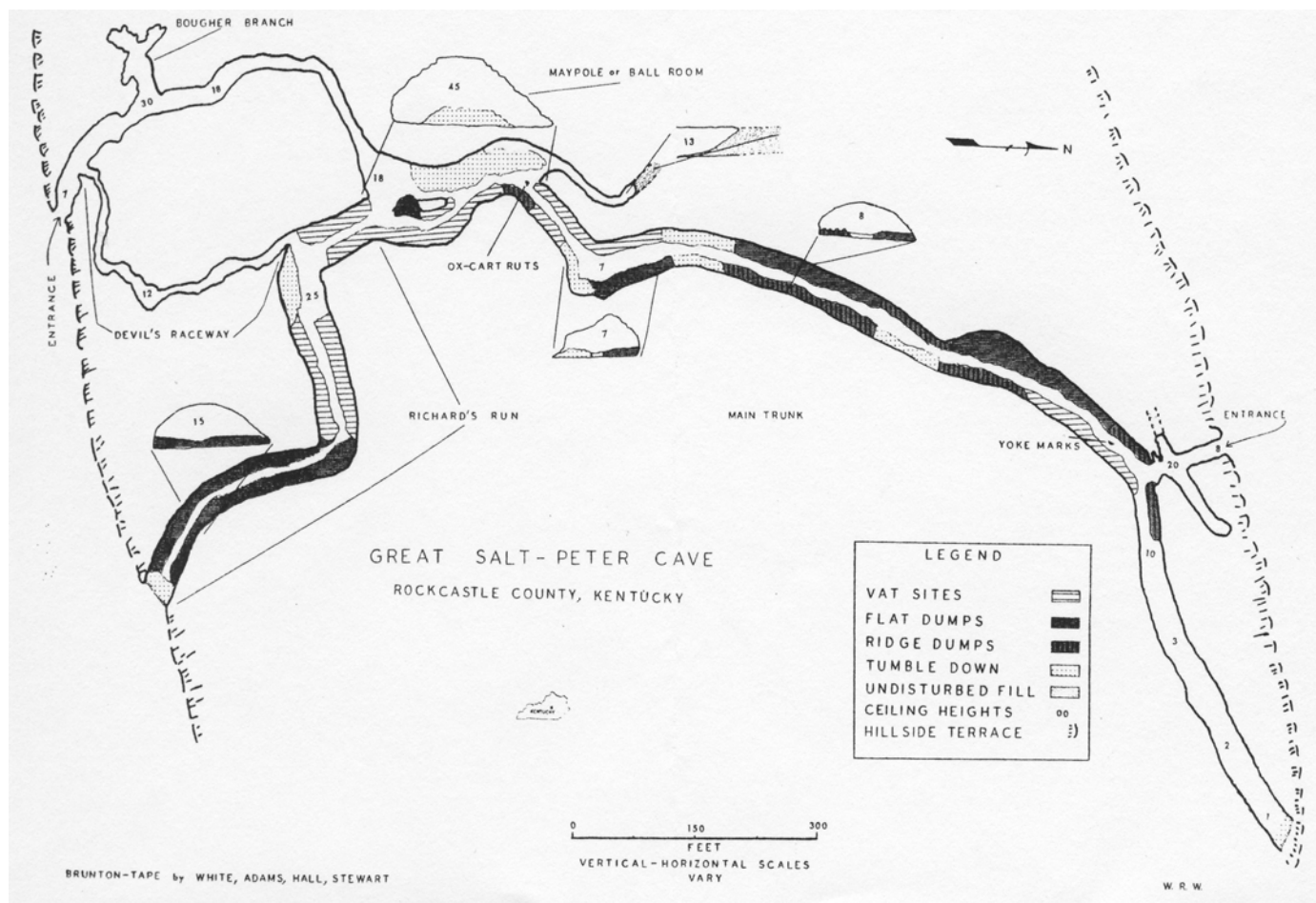
Edited from a longer manuscript by H. L. Block

One of the best known of the many caves of Kentucky is Great Salt Peter Cave. For several decades during the past and on into the present century, this cave has been as well known as is Mammoth Cave. To the observant and inquisitive speleologist the aura of many past eras is reflected in its passages.

General Geology and Topography

Great Salt Peter Cave is located in the escarpment of the Cumberland Plateau known to geographers as the Ridgetop and Limestone Valley Settlement Area and to the geologists as the Eastern Kentucky Karst Region (see chart). The cave is in the drainage of Crooked Creek, a tributary to the major regional stream, Roundstone Creek. It is approximately thirty miles southeast of Richmond, Kentucky. The USGS (1:24,000) Livingstone Quadrangle indicates the location of the cave by name and symbol. A gravel road from State highway 1004 at Orlando leads directly to the south entrance.

(Continued on page 17)



The Speleology of Great Salt Peter Cave (continued from page 16)

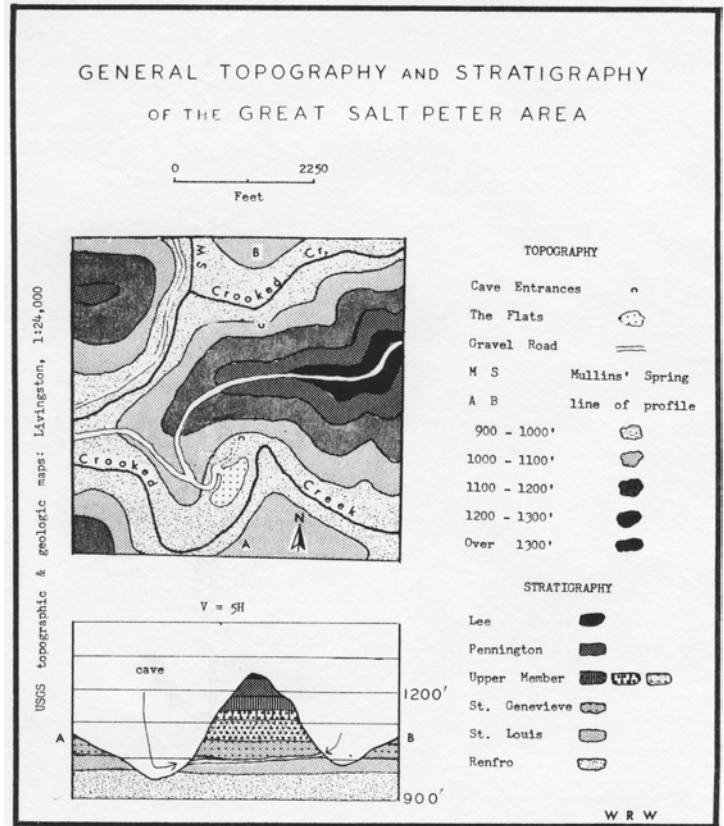
The Karst region is formed by an outcrop of Mississippian limestones which dip gradually to the southeast where they are overlain by Pennsylvanian sands, shales, and conglomerates, interspersed with a few thin coal seams. The principal limestones, St. Genevieve and St. Louis, are the same as those in which most of the caves of the western part of the state have been formed. The Pennsylvanian materials, being highly resistant, are the major ridgetop formers throughout the area and it is due to their occurrence and persistence that the caves of the region still remain.

Regional relief throughout the general vicinity of the cave varies between 200 and 300 feet with ridgetops averaging about 1200 to 1300 feet above sea level. Generally streams have eroded to the base of the Mississippian limestones and several feet into the underlying shales at elevations of 900 to 1000 feet. The greatest local relief occurs near the tops of ridges where the Pennsylvanian conglomerate forms vertical bluffs up to seventy-five feet in height. Below the conglomerate contact, the slope to the valley floors and streams is about twenty degrees.

Most of the first-order streams of the area are ephemeral unless fed directly by resurging waters. Crooked Creek, although apparently dry in late summer, actually always carries water. The water usually accumulates in discontinuous pools and/or moves slowly beneath alluvial sands and gravels of the creek bed.

The Cave

Great Salt Peter Cave lies in the contact area of the St. Louis and St. Genevieve limestones at an elevation of approximately 1000 feet, about 80 feet above the bed of Crooked Creek. The cave has two entrances; the south entrance is at an elevation of 980 feet, and the north at 1010 feet, at opposite sides of the hill. The accompanying map of the cave shows prominent features and area names.



Discovery and Exploration: 1799-1801

According to Brown, 1806, John Baker discovered and partially explored Great Salt Peter Cave in 1799. When he discovered the cave, Baker proceeded only a short distance into it; perhaps only through the twilight zone. The following day he returned with his wife and two or three of their children. They entered the cave through the north entrance; Baker carried a pine torch. After penetrating several hundred yards, Baker became excited by the sound of a "thundering torrent" and dropped the torch. The thunder was a 20-foot waterfall. The torch was extinguished and the family, without flint and steel, was enshrouded by the darkness. For about three days they wandered about in the cave, fearful of approaching too close to the "torrent." It was finally Mrs. Baker who "saw the light of day" and the family found their way out of the cave. Ironically, had the Bakers approached to within 50 feet of the "frightening torrent," they would have been able to see the south entrance.

(Continued on page 18)





The Speleography of Great Salt Peter Cave (continued from page 17)

Although no other references to exploration within the cave during this era were found, one can conjecture that many other residents of the area explored the cave. The cave is located near one of the better-traveled roads of that period and so it was, after initial discovery, readily accessible.

First Period of Major Importance: 1801-1813

The events during this period projected Great Salt Peter into regional and national importance. No longer was the cave just a hole in the ground. Great Salt Peter Cave was to become one of the country's major resources. The whole community adjacent to the cave was caught up and entwined in the economic and military necessity of transforming the cave into its present state, which is as much a manifestation of human endeavor as it is of natural processes of solution and deposition.

With the shortage of gunpowder before and during the War of 1812, saltpeter was extracted from the cave in large quantities. The manufacture of saltpeter on a commercial basis began about 1801, increased until the year 1812, and began to diminish immediately after. The method of manufacture, as reconstructed from evidence in the cave, and from Brown, was in most instances similar to that used elsewhere. Vats were constructed from easily available timber. The peterdirt was dumped into the vats. Water poured through the dirt was subsequently drained into a collection trough. The solution was carried outside the cave and boiled. The sodium nitrate, the product of the leaching process, was then mixed with ashes and altered to potassium nitrate, one of the ingredients of gunpowder.

On closer observation, however, there were several practices different from those used in other manufacturing sites. The leaching vats were constructed of a foundation of logs over which were placed wooden slabs about two inches thick. On the slabs, wood shingles were fitted together to make the bottom of the vat water tight. The sides of the vats were constructed from slabs about two to three inches thick, fastened with pegs between four corner-post logs. The average dimensions of the remaining vats are 38 inches high,

96 inches wide, and 84 inches deep. At the bottom and alongside of a series of adjacent vats was built a collection trough. This trough was generally a log which had been split and then hollowed out. The best preserved trough is 22 inches wide, 9 inches deep, and 33 feet long. It served nine leaching vats.

According to Brown, the source of water for the leaching process during the winter was the waterfall near the south entrance. The water was piped in through logs. However, this source of water was apparently not sufficient during the summer and water was brought to the vats from Crooked Creek. From the topography of the area, it appears that it would have been more feasible to bring the water, possibly by cart, from the nearest point of Crooked Creek into the cave via the south entrance. Here the distance is slightly longer, but the slope is significantly less than that of the north entrance. Also, no signs of a trail or road exist on the north slope.

After one vat-full of dirt was thoroughly leached, the spent or sterile dirt was removed from the vat and new dirt placed in it. After this process used all the easily accessible dirt in the vicinity of the vats, and if the vats were still useful, dirt was brought from other parts of the cave.

After a long period of use, the vats frequently became sufficiently deteriorated, or the location of the new dirt was sufficiently distant from the vat site, that new vats were constructed. The site of the old vats was generally used as a dumping place for the spent dirt removed from the newer vats. By this process of constructing and then abandoning vats as the peter-dirt supply shifted, the manufacturing process migrated throughout the cave. However, the migration was neither random nor haphazard. From the evidence in the cave, the vats of this period were constructed in the sections of passages somewhat removed from the major (south) entrance. The first vats were constructed either in Richard's Run or in the northern end of the Main Trunk. Old vats are still present in both of these sites, but buried beneath several feet of dumpings. As the manufacturing process continued and the dirt in these sections was used, the vat sites migrated toward the Maypole Room. The buried remains which are farthest from the Maypole Room are generally the least preserved.

(Continued on page 19)



The Speleography of Great Salt Peter Cave (continued from page 18)

During the height of mining immediately before and during the War of 1812, there were 60 to 70 men employed in the cave. Most of these laborers were people living near the cave. Since this number of men would, at this early date, represent a rather large portion of the total male labor force available, it is quite possible that many of the traditional occupations of the region were abandoned. Also taken out of the traditional economic system of the region were large numbers of oxen, carts, and wagons which were used in the operation.

The oxen and vehicles were used to haul the new dirt to the vats and to haul the spent dirt away from the leaching process. Collins describes the scene thus: "Carts and wagons passed through (the cave) from one side of the mountain to the other, without difficulty. The way is so level and straight, that oxen were soon taught to pass through in perfect darkness, without a driver."

In several parts of the cave there is evidence of the passage of the oxen and carts. The location of the best preserved tracks is indicated on the map. Also visible in the place indicated on the map are stria caused by the yokes as the oxen passed through a part of the cave with a five-foot high ceiling, the lowest ceiling height in the main passage of the cave. At other parts of the Main Trunk are pieces of breakdown which bear testimony to the iron-rimmed wheels which passed over and left smoothed-out grooves as witness to their passage.

Other remnants of the mining are the dumps, which are indicated on the map. The "ridge dumps" were undoubtedly produced by unloading two-wheeled carts by allowing the weight of the load to tilt the cart backwards. The average volume of these dumps is approximately one cubic yard. The flat-type dump was probably produced by shoveling the dirt from four-wheeled wagons.

The source of light used by the miners was primarily pine torches and oil burning lamps. Examples of the lamps are preserved in the museum of Renfro Valley. Evidence of pine torches is preserved in the cave itself. Soot streaks appear on the walls at intervals of approximately each fourth vat. The torches were set in place

either in man-made ledges or nooks, or naturally-occurring nooks.

During this period, most of the saltpeter produced was shipped either to Pittsburg or Lexington, Kentucky, by wagon and boat. As early as 1805, a "rather large gunpowder mill" had been erected in Lexington. By 1810, there were 63 gunpowder mills in Kentucky which produced 115,716 pounds of powder from 201,937 pounds of saltpeter. Kentucky produced an even larger quantity in 1812, and on a national scale was followed by Virginia with 48,175 pounds and Massachusetts with 23,600 pounds. Following the War of 1812, the production of saltpeter from the cave fell off sharply, continuing primarily in response to local and regional demands.

Inter-War Period: 1815-1843

The events of the cave through this era are relatively obscure and appear to be similar to those of the pre-1801 era. However, it seems plausible that the cave did not lapse into complete obscurity or that it remained without visitors or local producers of the saltpeter.

Period of the Mexican War: 1844-1848

Shortly before 1845, commercial working of the deposits of the cave commenced anew: woodsmen felled trees for new vats, and for ashes; miners went to work with pick, shovel, ox-cart, and lights. Again the cave began to hum with the sounds of the mining activities.

During this period, however, the activities of the cave were not as important as the 1812 era. Only a few men were employed and only a few oxen. From evidence gleaned in the cave, there appears a distinct change in the method of vat building. The new vats were constructed almost wholly from logs with no slabs, even for the sides. This change in vat construction maybe interpreted in several ways: 1) it might be due to an increased demand for saltpeter which required a faster method of vat construction; or 2) it may have resulted from a shortage of laborers for the hewing of logs into slabs. Whatever the major reason for change, we do find a series of vats constructed in a radically different manner from that of an earlier era.

(Continued on page 20)

*The Speleography of Great Salt Peter Cave (continued from page 19)***Period of Local Function: 1850-1940**

For approximately ninety years, only small amounts of saltpeter were mined. Even though this interval includes the period of the Civil War, and several battles were fought in the vicinity, very little attention was given to the cave as a potential source of saltpeter. It was during this period the names Ball Room or Maypole Room became attached to the largest chamber in the cave. During each year, usually at spring planting, the residents of the region would forget many of their common problems by celebrating the beginning of summer with an all-day outing on the "flats" near the south entrance of the cave. Here the people would gather, and bringing foods, beverages, and musical instruments, pass the day. Two of the main events of this Summer Day Celebration took place in the Ball Room. One was a dance in the southern end of the chamber. Here the passage is relatively smooth and level and "fit for dancing." Another major event of the day was the competition to climb the May Pole, a popular sapling. The log was trimmed of branches and peeled of its bark. The pole was placed in the large chamber so that its upper end was jammed against the ceiling and the lower end into the dirt floor. At the top of the pole was a dollar bill which belonged to the first man to climb it.

The cave during this era was also a scene of two conflicting activities: moonshining and religion. The major house of worship within the immediate vicinity was a branch-and-vine-covered shelter of logs. On days of inclement weather, the members of the congregation would meet in the Ball Room of the cave. At several times during this era there was also moonshining activities within the cave. According to the present residents of this area, the latest and most popular site for the still and associated equipment was in the southern end of the Main Trunk on the west side of the passage near the ceiling height figure of "7." As a by-product, swine were brought into the cave and fattened on the mash from the whiskey-making process.

It was during this era that many of the old vats were destroyed and were used for firewood. During winter or rainy periods, those people who had not accumulated a supply of wood stored in a dry place found a

ready supply of seasoned wood in the cave. During a span of several decades almost all of the wood was removed from the cave.

Thus, although during this period the cave completely lapsed from national or even state-wide attention, it was one of the dominant centers in the affairs of the community. This era in the history of Great Salt Peter came to an abrupt end with the transfer of ownership from Mrs. Morris, a widow, to John Lair, owner of Renfro Valley.

The Period of Commercialization for Tourists: 1940-1943

In the early part of 1940, John Lair purchased the cave with the intention of promoting it into a major tourist attraction of Kentucky. It was well known throughout the state and is located only about eight miles from one of the major north-south highways in the eastern part of the United States: Highway 25, the Dixie Highway. Also, Renfro Valley, through its nationally-known Barn Dance, fine cuisine, and museums, was a major tourist attraction which could be used to attract attention to Great Salt Peter Cave.

(Continued on Page 21)



GSP Tourists, Circa 1960's

The Speleography of Great Salt Peter Cave (continued from page 20)

The commercialization of the cave involved restoration of a few vats, a slight leveling of the floor in a few places, and the placing of flagstones to form a walkway from the road into the south entrance of the cave. Also a series of steps was built from the main passage near the entrance to the Bougher Branch. To bring attention to the cave, CBS radio made a nationwide broadcast from just inside the south entrance on "opening night."

For several reasons the attractions of Great Salt Peter Cave were not sufficiently strong to warrant a continuation of its activities on a commercial basis. In 1943, the cave was abandoned commercially and again lapsed into relative obscurity.

The Recent and Modern Period: 1943-1966

Though Mr. Lair did abandon the cave commercially, it was not abandoned by those few who were attracted by its lure. Richard Mullins (Richard's Run) tells of leading groups of people, mainly from southern Ohio and northern Kentucky, through the cave almost every weekend. During the weekend of July 4, 1966, we met approximately 60 people during the course of the afternoon inside and outside the cave; the guide was Richard Mullins. It appears that the cave has not completely lost its function nor has it lapsed into complete obscurity.

The State of Kentucky has expressed interest in the cave for making the area into a State Historical Park and commercializing the cave. However, it is obvious that permission from Mr. Lair would be needed and he has plans for again commercializing the cave himself. In August 1966, a bulldozer was clearing the trees and other vegetation from the edge of the "flats" to make a parking lot, area for picnic tables, and recreational sites. Ideas and plans are being discussed as to what renovations or restoration should be undertaken in the cave. Although most of the plans have not been made public, it is apparent that perhaps Great Salt Peter Cave is again awaiting for the resurgence of visitors to view and recall these eras of its past.

Acknowledgements

Special acknowledgement is made to Professor William Adams for his assistance in gathering the material for this paper. Also, appreciation is extended to Charles R. Hall and Donald Stewart of Eastern Kentucky University and the Central Kentucky Speleological Society, without whose aid this paper could not have been completed.

References

Brown, Samuel. *A Description of a Cave on Crooked Creek, with Remarks and Observations on Nitre and Gun-Powder*. This paper was read before the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia on February 7, 1806. Dr. Brown was a native of Lexington, Kentucky, and visited the cave several times between 1801 and 1806. A photostatic copy of the paper is in the library of The University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky.

Collins, Lewis. *History of Kentucky*. No publisher given. Covington, Kentucky, 1874. Especially relevant to this topic are pages 690-692.

Extant relevant records of Madison and Rockcastle Counties, Kentucky. Most of the tax records of the 19th century were destroyed by fire. However, some records were found which did mention the mining activity of the Great Salt Peter Cave.

Maxson, Ralph Nelson. *The Niter Caves of Kentucky*. This paper read before the Division of History of Chemistry of the American Chemical Society, March 31, 1931. Original is in the library of The University of Kentucky.

Personal interviews with Mr. John Lair of Renfro Valley, Kentucky and with Mr. Richard Mullins of Orlando, Kentucky.

Extensive field work by the author, William Adams, Charles Hall, and Don Stewart.





**GREAT SALTPETRE CAVE, ROCKCASTLE COUNTY, KENTUCKY
A Geology and Archeology Field Guide.**

Authors:

Scott A. Engel

NSS 32520

and

Dr. Annette Summers Engel

NSS 31319

This is a very good technical article about Great Saltpetre Cave. You can view the entire article on the RKC website by visiting: <http://www.rkci.org/library/gsp/engle.htm>

**Memorandum of Understanding
Between
The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, Inc.
And
The Greater Cincinnati Grotto
Dayton Underground Grotto
Blue Grass Grotto**

This **Memorandum of Understanding** (MOU) is hereby made and entered into by and between the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) and the Greater Cincinnati Grotto (GCG), the Dayton Underground Grotto (DUG), and The Blue Grass Grotto (BGG), hereafter referred to as The Grottos.

A. Purpose

The purpose of this MOU is to put in place a framework for cooperation between RKC and the Grottos, which will allow current activities, projects, and programs (hereafter referred to as Activities) to continue and to develop or expand mutually beneficial Activities at the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve (GSP). These activities currently comprise major portions of the efforts at GSP in its mission of Ecological and Environmental based conservation. RKC, in accordance with its charter, will continue these activities. Additionally RKC will serve to support the needs of the Grottos, and the public in activities related to The GSP property. Activities conducted at GSP have, in the past, been regulated via a lease agreement between the GCG and the past property owners, The Felburn Foundation. With the transfer of the ownership to RKC this MOU will serve as a foundation to insure the Grottos has continued access to the Cave, property and programs from RKC and in return RKC will have continued support from the Grottos. This is intended to be a fluid document with refinements and modifications as deemed necessary. It will also insure that strategic planning for the property conservation will be accomplished with input from all concerned stakeholders.

B. Statement Of Mutual Benefit And Interests:

RKC and the Grottos have a major mutual interest in the conservation of Caves and their associated properties, to insure future populations may enjoy the same activities and intangible benefits that we now hold.

RKC will benefit in that personnel expertise, manpower, and financial support from the Grottos is necessary to continue the high degree of stewardship the Cave and its associated Property have seen in the past.

(Continued on page 23)



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (Continued from Page 22)

The Grottos will benefit through this cooperative effort in as much as the Cave and Preserve will continue to be available for Activities and access as contained in the former lease agreement and management plan and will insure the continuation of current and future Activities.

Continuing existing and developing new mutually beneficial programs insure a level of conservation will be achieved that will be of value to the general public in addition to the specialized activities of Speleological concerns. Maintaining the Preserve in a high state of stewardship for future generations to enjoy saves a valuable and unique resource. Well planned management and joint conservation activities provide an outstanding public service benefiting everyone.

C. RKC Shall:

1. As the Preserve owner, have ultimate responsibility for the safe, efficient operations in accordance with all Laws, Rules, and Regulations and Deed commitments, including maintaining insurance coverage.
2. Maintain control and provide direction for financial matters.
3. Provide guidance to users and stakeholders, via a GSP Management Committee and Management Plan which will insure activities conducted at the GSP are in full compliance with all Local, County, State, and Federal Laws and Regulations and the guiding principals of ecological and environmental property management.
4. The Management Committee shall be approved annually by the RKC Board of Directors from nominations by the various Grottos concerned.
5. The Management Plan will include such items as:
 - a. Cave and Preserve Access and Usage Regulations.
 - b. Fees, Funds and Financial Activities
 - c. Group Access
 - d. Caretaker and Caretaker Activities
 - e. Security
 - f. Facilities and Facility usage
 - g. Special Events
 - h. Campground Rules and Regulations
 - i. Cave Access
6. Include and utilize technical expertise developed by nationally recognized organizations in developing rules and regulations that will insure activities are conducted in a safe and reasonable manner in the cave and associated properties.
7. Support Recognized Scientific and Educational activities when possible in areas related to the Cave and Preserve Properties.
8. Provide to the general public, the appropriate rules and regulations pertaining to the cave and associated property activities when such activities are open to the public.
9. Coordinate and approve all maintenance and construction activities providing the guidance and proper specifications, and restrictions necessary as delineated in the Management Plan.
10. Provide, as available, supplies, tools, and equipment as necessary for maintenance and construction needs as delineated in the management plan.
11. Approve all publication or printed materials intended for public distribution regarding the Cave Property or any activity for which the principal point of the publication is the cave (or associated property) or RKC.
12. Provide locally or make available any pertinent educational programs necessary to members for required certifications for property use.
13. Coordinate and approve any special uses or administrative activities within designated cave or preserve prior to the date of the activity that are outside normal activities covered by the Management Plan.
14. Review this agreement no less than every two years and modify as necessary.
15. Review and approve any changes to this document or any document published on behalf of, prepared by, or modified on behalf of RKC as necessary.

(Continued on Page 24)



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (Continued from Page 23)

D. The Grottos Shall:

1. Abide by all GSP rules and regulations, adhere to cave and nature conservation ethics and encourage safe a courteous demeanor by all members while on GSP property.
2. Work with RKC to identify appropriate partnership opportunities and jointly pursue such projects.
3. Provide assistance to RKC and visiting Special Project personnel involved with scientific projects, Educational Activities, Speleological or any other related activity of a professional nature.
4. Encourage members to work with RKC to identify, discuss, and participate in opportunities for cooperative work or mutually beneficial projects or activities, when appropriate.
5. Make information of interest to RKC concerning the GSP or activities available to appropriate personnel.
6. Obtain RKC approval prior to implementation of any significant construction, maintenance, educational projects or publication or distribution of any printed material regarding the GSP.
7. Provide technical expertise to address issues of concern to RKC.
8. Serve as ambassadors for cave and nature conservation activities and encourage cooperation with all property visitors and users.
9. Maintain as appropriate, certifications such as First Aid or CPR commensurate with activities and current Preserve Insurance Regulations.
10. Will not attempt to enforce any local state or federal laws while on Preserve property. All enforcement and follow-up action will be made by local, state or federal law enforcement officials.
11. Review this agreement with the RKC no less than every two years and modify as necessary.
12. Nominate individuals to serve on the GSP management committee as delineated in the management plan.

E. It Is Mutually Understood And Agreed By And Between The Parties That:

1. Modifications Modifications within the scope of the instrument shall be made by mutual consent of the parties. A review of this document shall be conducted every second anniversary.
2. Participation In Similar Activities This instrument in no way restricts the RKC or The Grottos from participating in similar activities with other public or private agencies, organizations, and individuals.
3. Termination Either of the parties, in writing, may terminate the instrument in whole, or in part, at any time before the date of expiration
4. Principal Contacts The principal contacts for this instrument are:

//Signed//
Andy Niekamp
Chairman, Rockcastle Karst Conservancy
For the RKC Board of Directors

Date: Aug 20/2006

//Signed//
Bob Dobbs
Chairman, Greater Cincinnati Grotto
For the Board of Directors

Date: Aug 20, 2006

//Signed//
Mike Hood
Chairman, Dayton Underground Grotto
For the Board of Directors

Date: Aug 20/2006

//Signed//
Jerry Dixon
Chairman, Blue Grass Grotto
For the Board of Directors

Date: Sep 6, 2006

Celebrate Friday the 13th and Help Preserve Caves and Karst

Above+Below Appalachia is a collection of photos and artwork by Robert Coomer that reveal mysterious and beautiful images from beneath the Earth's surface and the natural beauty of forgotten rural barns and back road landscapes of Appalachia. The images capture the world of natural light and color and then contrasts it with a world of complete darkness, of alien shapes and forms that are rarely seen. Above and Below Appalachia is a study of light, both natural and artificial and its interaction with the familiar and the unseen. A portion of the proceeds from work sold during this show will go to help preserve caves and karst through a donation to the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy. (RKCI.org) Robert Coomer has been awarded a grant from the Ohio Arts Council's Appalachian Program to help make this show possible.

The show runs from October 3rd through the 30th at the U.C. Clermont College Art Gallery in Batavia, Ohio. A reception will be held on Friday the 13th. from 7:00pm to 9:00pm. Celebrate "Black Friday" with an unusual look at the beauty hidden beneath Appalachia and help preserve caves and karst.

Robert Coomer grew up in Southwestern Ohio, and is nationally recognized as an award winning cave photographer. Last month he received the best of show medal for the 2006 B+W print salon during the National Speleological Society's annual photo competition. This makes his 4th national award for cave photography. He also received best of show for their graphic arts salon for the best non-photographic newsletter cover design. As editor for the Greater Cincinnati Grotto, he has received many national awards for his cover artwork.

Robert Coomer's photos are also on display at Row House Gallery in Milford and at the Pendleton Art Center in Cincinnati.

For more information about the show or the artist, visit his website at www.RobertCoomer.com

Scene from the 1997 motion picture *"Fire Down Below"*

**This scene from the movie,
starring Steven Segal,
was shot in Great Saltpetre
Cave's Echo Auditorium**

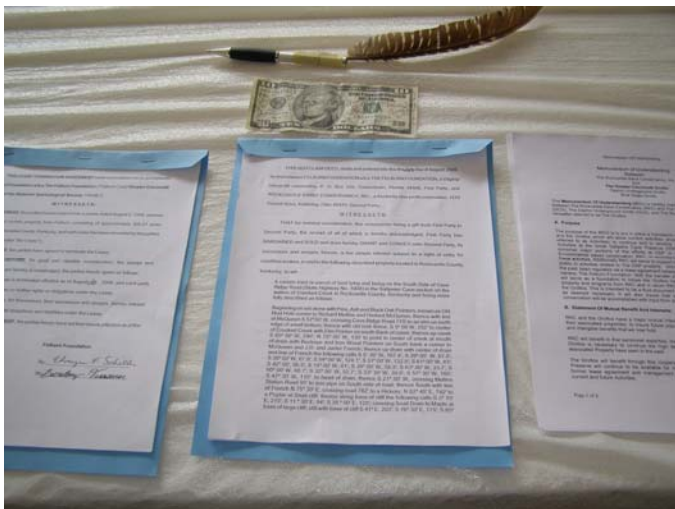




GREAT SALTPETRE CAVE OWNERSHIP HISTORY

| DATE | GRANTEE (BUYER) | GRANTOR (SELLER) | COST |
|-------------------|--|--|-----------|
| August 20, 2006 | Rockcastle Karst Conservancy | The Felburn Foundation | Nominal |
| July 26, 1989 | The Felburn Foundation | Janette Rein (widow) Stephen Rein and Lucinda O'Brien | \$135,000 |
| October 19, 1985 | Stanley and Janette Rein (wife) Stephen Rein and Lucinda O'Brien | John Lair | \$100,000 |
| July 26, 1963 | John Lair | Loda M. Owens Committee for Walker Owens, an incompetent | \$3,250 |
| February 26, 1947 | John Lair | Mary Alice Barnett (widow) | \$1 |
| July 5, 1938 | Mary Alice Barnett (widow) Walker Owens | Bette Morris (widow) | \$2,550 |
| July 5, 1938 | Bette Morris | | |
| May 30, 1932 | Roscoe Morris | W. M. Carpenter | \$135 |
| December 19, 1925 | Roscoe Morris | W. M. Baker and Chessie M. Baker (wife) | \$2,000 |
| January 21, 1924 | William M. Baker | Plaintiffs: <i>Eleven People</i> Defendant: William Carpenter | \$1,425 |
| September 3, 1912 | W. M. Carpenter Ella Carpenter (wife) | C. A. Mullins Lucy J. Mullins (wife) | \$100 |

Photos from the Felburn/RKC Deed Ceremony





Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, Inc.
Revenue & Expenditures
January through August 2006

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 4 - Contributed support | |
| 4010 - Individual Contribution | 1,218.00 |
| 4210 - Organizations, Businesses | <u>1,500.00</u> |
| Total 4 - Contributed Support | 2,718.00 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| 5 - Petitioned revenues | |
| 5210 - Membership dues | 3,190.00 |
| 5220 - Fund Raisers | 1,035.00 |
| 5250 - RKC Merchandise | 155.00 |
| 5310 - Interest short-term inv. | <u>90.69</u> |
| Total 5 - Petitioned revenues | <u>4,470.69</u> |

Total Income 7,188.69

Cost of Goods Sold

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| 5000 - Cost of Goods Sold | <u>182.80</u> |
| Total COGS | <u>182.80</u> |

Gross Profit 7,005.89

Expense

| | |
|---|-------------|
| 8100 - General Operating expenses | |
| 8110 - Supplies | 88.74 |
| 8120 - Contracted services | 2,500.00 |
| 8140 - Postage, shipping, delivery | 34.27 |
| 8170 - Printing & copying | <u>3.00</u> |
| Total 8100 - General Operating expenses | 2,626.01 |

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| 8500 - Misc expenses | |
| 8590 - Other expenses | <u>0.83</u> |
| Total 8500 - Misc expenses | 0.83 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 8600 - Business expenses | |
| 8680 - Transaction fees | <u>425.59</u> |
| Total 8600 - Business expenses | <u>425.59</u> |

Total Expense 3,052.43

Net Ordinary Income 3,953.46

Net Income 3,953.46

**Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, Inc.****Balance Sheet**

As of August 31, 2006

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings

1000 - Bank One Chase 5,464.31

1005 - Community Trust Bank 2,619.00

1010 - Bank One CD's 4,087.01

Total Checking/Savings 12,170.32

Accounts Receivable

1110 - Accounts receivable 5.50

Total Accounts Receivable 5.50

Other Current Assets

1120 - Inventory Asset 134.30Total Other Current Assets 134.30

Total Current Assets 12,310.12

Other Assets

1130 - RKC Equipment 245.00Total Other Assets 245.00**TOTAL ASSETS****12,555.12**

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Equity

3010 - Unrestricted (retained earnings) 8,601.66

Net Income 3,953.46Total Equity 12,555.12**TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY****12,555.12**

Respectfully submitted,

Werner Jud
RKC Treasurer



Become a Member of RKC

Join RKC and help preserve caves and cave access in the Rockcastle County, Kentucky region! Your membership dues go directly to efforts to purchase and manage caves.

Date _____

Name - Please print clearly _____

Street _____

City, State & Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

Telephone _____

MEMBERSHIP FOR INDIVIDUALS - VOTING

- _____ Individual Member \$15/year
- _____ Sustaining Member \$75/year (After five consecutive years a sustaining member becomes a Life Member (along with a special T-shirt)
- _____ Life Member \$300/one time

MEMBERSHIPS FOR ORGANIZATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS - NON-VOTING

- _____ Supporting Member - Non-profit, grottos, and youth organizations \$25/year
- _____ Supporting Member - All other organizations \$50/year
- _____ Benefactor Member - \$1,000/one time



Dues expire on January 1 of each year. Individual and Supporting Member dues are half the amount after June 30.

Membership Amount \$ _____

Additional Donation \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Make checks payable to the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy.

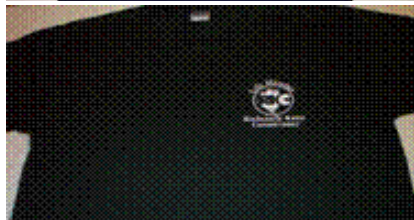
Mail completed form and payment to:

Rockcastle Karst Conservancy
1515 Cordell Drive
Dayton, Ohio 45439



RKC T-Shirts!

Price: \$15.00, RKC member price \$10.00
100% Pre-shrunk Heavy Weight Cotton, Navy Blue / Gold
Designed by Robert Coomer
Sizes: M, L, XL, (sorry no XXL or S). Quantities are limited.
All proceeds benefit The RKC. Order on line: <http://www.rkci.org/tshirt.htm>



RKC Life Member T-Shirt

Green with RKC logo
See membership details for more information



Rockcastle Karst Conservancy
1515 Cordell Dr
Dayton, Ohio 45439

FIRST CLASS

Deliver To: