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By: Walter Fry, In Charge
Nature Guide Service,
Sequoia National Park.

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SEQUOIA NATURE GUIDE SERVICE

CAVES OF SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK AND THEIR DISCOVERY

(This bulletin is issued for the general information of the public about the attractions and beauties of the Sequoia National Park. Those who read it are requested to note the park regulations against entering the caves except on special permission in each case from Superintendents office.)

This special regulation is necessary both for the protection of visitors from dangers in the caves, and to protect the beautiful formations in the caves.

Many caves in California have had their beauties ruined by vandalism and carelessness, and several of the park caves have already suffered in this way.)

There are five caves within Sequoia National Park, each of which has its own peculiar attractions. Owing to lack of funds, none of the caves have yet been developed and explored thoroughly enough for any accurate estimates to be made of their true size and beauty. But enough has already been seen of their many ornamental hallways, galleries, and chambers to show that they offer majestic beauties.

The caves are situated in a mountain ledge or strata of white crystalized limestone and marble formations, which traverses the western portion of the park in a north and south direction for a distance of some ten miles. This ledge or strata ranges from one-half to one mile in width, and in many places shows a depth of over 2,000 feet. The caves are scattered along the ledge at intervals of from one to three miles apart.

Taking up the caves in the order of their discovery, naming, location, etc., they are as follows:

PALMER CAVE

Discovered by Joseph Palmer, a hunter and trapper, on November 12, 1872. Mr. Palmer named the cave in honor of himself at the time of discovery. This cave is situated on the south side of and near the top of Salt Creek Pinery Ridge, in the southwestern portion of the park at an elevation of 5,200 feet. The cave is entered through an irregular opening in the roof about 10' x 20 feet. This opening widens like an inverted funnel and drops sheer 60 feet into the end of a cavernous vault 150 feet long, roof about 50 feet high at the highest, and side walls about 50 feet in width at the widest. Through a low opening, well back on the right side, one passes into another large cavern, circular in shape, 100 feet in diameter, and about 30 feet high. Here are found beautiful stalactites and stalagmites and one beautiful pillar. Beyond this is yet another room, long, narrow, and of no particular interest. The beauties of this cave are unimpaired and the specimens quite perfect. It has been visited by but few people, due to the hardship now attending its entrance. Further exploration of this cave in its present condition is out of the question, owing that the main entrance on the first landing has been filled up from rocks falling from above. However, enough has been seen to warrant further development and exploration.

CLOUGH CAVE

Discovered by William O. Clough, a miner and prospector on April 6, 1885. Mr. Clough named the cave in honor of himself on the date of his discovery. This

cave is situated in the southwestern portion of the park in the side of a mountain along the north bank of the South Fork of the Kaweah River, at an elevation of 3,500 feet. In formation this cave is but a circular tunnel some 1,000 feet in length, varying in width and height from 12 to 15 feet. The first 100 feet are perpendicular to the face of the cliff, the floor practically level. It then turns to the left and parallels the face for about 400 feet, the last 150 being on a plane some 8 feet higher and ending in a circular loop 100 feet in circumference.

When first discovered, this was a beautiful cave for its stalactites, stalagmites, and pillars. But these have been broken and carried away the hundreds, while all are blackened by the smoke of the pine torches used in its exploration, all of which occurred prior to the creation of the park in 1890. Since the cave has been taken into the park, it has been protected and is gradually and slowly restoring itself by the dripping waters from the ceiling which is continuing to deposit its load of dissolved lime carbonate in the building up of new crystals, stalactites, and stalagmites. Owing to its ease of access and its location on a main route of tourist travel, this cave is visited by a great number of park visitors annually.

PARADISE CAVE

The entrance to this cave was discovered by H. R. Harmon, a farmer, on June 25, 1901. The cave was explored throughout, and officially named on June 2, 1906, by Charles W. Blossom and Walter Fry, park rangers. The cave is located on the south side of the ridge which separates the middle and east forks of the Kaweah River near the center west boundary of the park, elevation 5,400 feet. The cave is tunnel shape in formation, dipping at about 45 degree slope from northwest to southeast a distance of about 380 feet. In some places the general passageway is low and narrow, widening at intervals into five circular cells or chambers ranging from 10 to 40 feet in height and width. Two of the chambers have a greenish tint with natural rock exposed, but the rest of them have their sidewalls beautifully lined with alabaster and gypsum formation. They also contain abundant supply of stalactites, stalagmites, and pillars. There are many small openings that lead out from the cave that are too small for a person to pass through. Undoubtedly these openings lead to other large chambers, as there is a heavy current of air passing through them. Furthermore, at the time Ranger Blossom and I explored the cave we found a small opening on top of the ground about 500 feet to the northeast of the cave. We dropped rocks in this opening about the size of our fists, and could hear them rolling downward for over two minutes. Owing to proximity to settlement, this cave has suffered greatly from hands of vandals, and much of its former beauty has been impaired; but it is still a beautiful cave, and well worthy of protection and further development.

MARBLE CAVE

Discovered October 14, 1906, by Ralph Hopping, a park concessioner, and Walter Fry, park ranger. It was named on the following day by Walter Fry. This cave is situated in the north central portion of the park, at the base of a high mountain of marble formation, and near the water's edge of the Marble Fork River, elevation 3,400 feet. While this cave is of least importance of any cave yet discovered in the park, nevertheless, it is one of fascination and striking beauty. The cave is tunnel shaped in formation, ranging north and south a distance of some 130 feet and practically level. The cave proper ranges from 4 to 12 feet in height and width. This main passageway is diagonally crossed by a creek of water about six feet below the floor level and five feet in width. The lining of the cave is solid marble throughout. The side walls are of white and gray marble,

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concave and convex; while the roof is of white and pink marble heavily grooved and fluted. This cave owing to its marble formation, does not contain either stalactites or stalagmites.

CRYSTAL CAVE

Discovered April 28, 1918, by A. L. Medley and C. M. Webster, at the time employees of the park. The cave was officially named by Walter Fry, Superintendent, April 30, 1918. The cave is situated in the northwestern portion of the park along the water's edge of Cactus Creek, on the south side of a large mountain of white limestone formation at an elevation of 3,500 feet. The cave is formed by two tunnels which lead out separately from near the main entrance in a northeasterly direction to distances of 2,500 and 1,500 feet, respectively. These tunnels range from 10 to 20 feet in height, and 12 to 40 feet in width. They have somewhat a zigzag course and much broken ascent, but raise about 160 feet from start to finish. Along the course of these tunnels are found 8 separate and distinct circular chambers that range all the way from 40 to over 100 feet in width, and from 20 to 60 feet in height. It is in this cave that nature has lavishly traced her design in decorative glory. Throughout the entire cave the stalactite formations are rich and wonderfully varied in size, form and color. In some of the chambers the ceiling is a mass of stalactites, some very large, others tapering down to needle points. Others drop down from the roof's great folds of massive draperies, while in yet others are great fluted columns of stalagmites of surpassing symmetry and beauty. Some people who have visited the cave and claim familiarity with noted caves of the world assert that this cave surpasses all others in the beauty and variety of the decorations. There are many small ramifications branching off from the main cavern that undoubtedly lead to other large chambers, as it is evident that the entire mountain is honeycombed by caverns.

The beauties of this cave have not been impaired, as the National Park Service has kept the cave closed ever since the discovery, pending an appropriation from Congress for the installation of an adequate lighting system.

From a close study of the 10 mile strip of limestone formation which courses through the park, it would seem that the caves we have are simply the outcroppings from larger caves, and that it is probable that the entire mountain ledge is honeycombed with subterranean recesses only awaiting their opening and development. However, the caves we now have are an underground wonderland, and seem to surpass in sublimity and beauty anything of the kind hitherto known. The caves are a noteworthy addition to Sequoia National Park, and it is hoped that Congress may soon appropriate sufficient funds for their development and protection.

Until the caves are developed, park visitors are forbidden to enter without special permission from the Superintendent's office in each case. Whenever a park ranger is available he will be assigned to conduct parties through the cave.