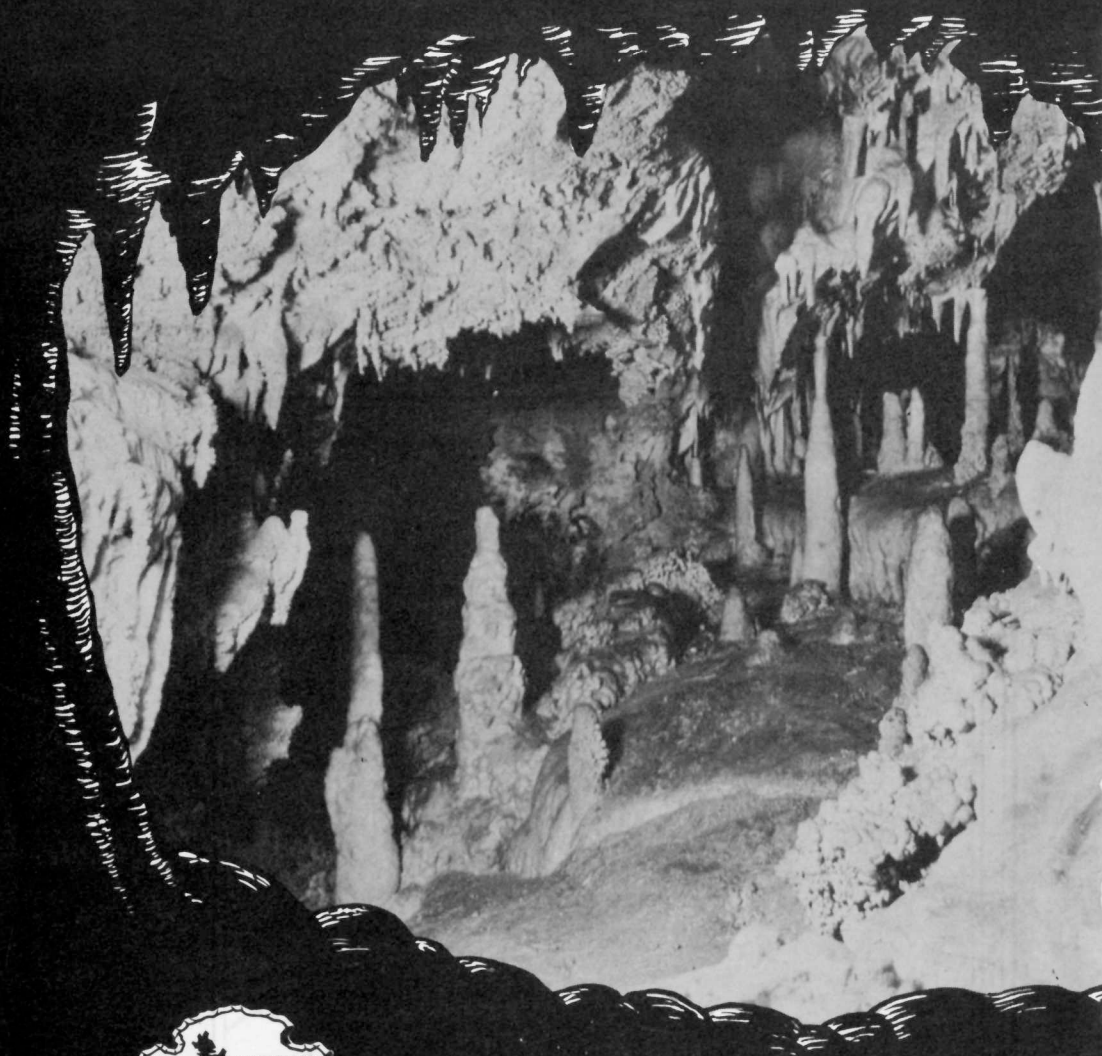
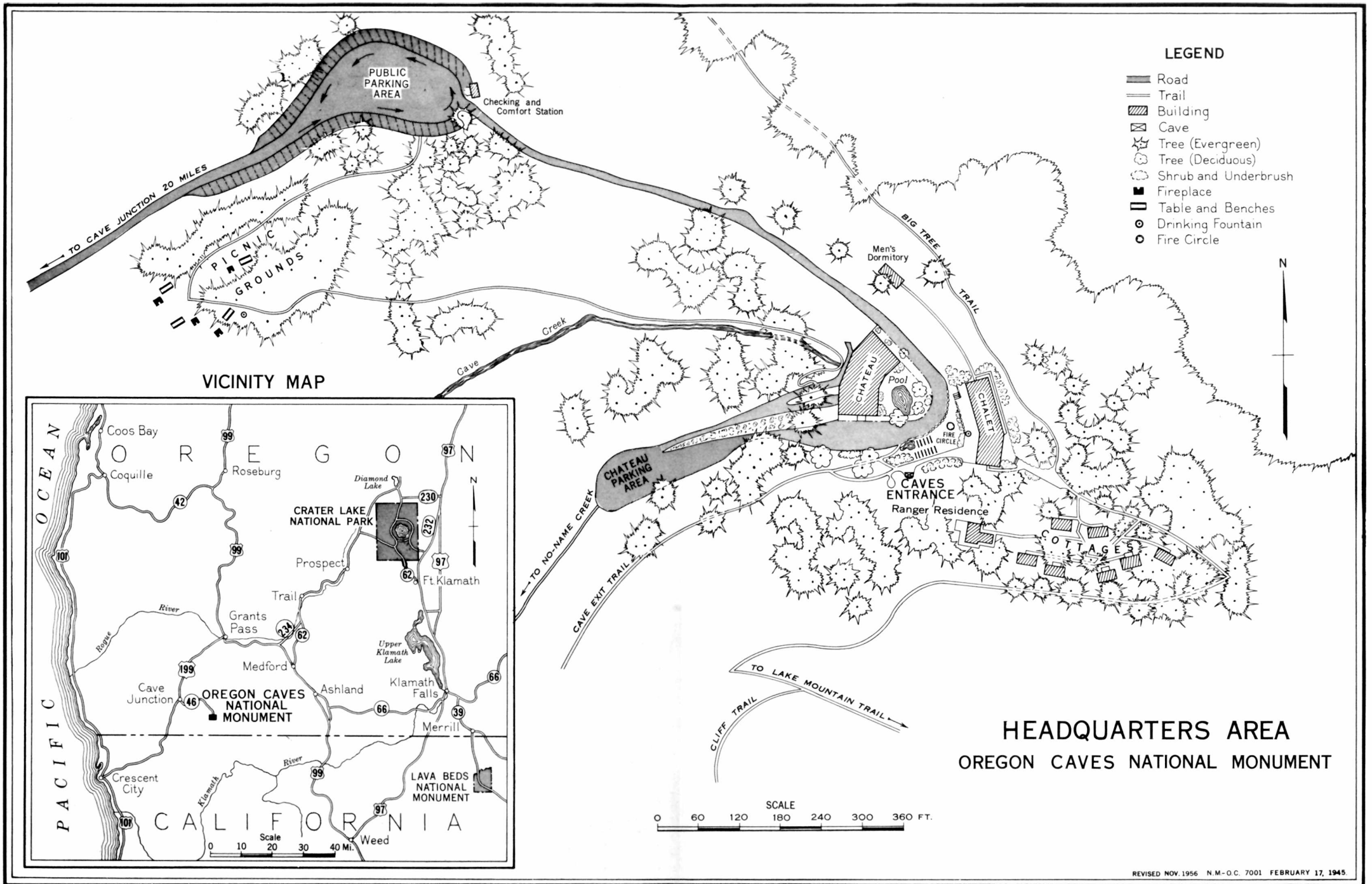


# Oregon Caves

NATIONAL MONUMENT — OREGON





*The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.*



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fred A. Seaton, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE • Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*

## History

The caves are said to have been discovered by Elijah Davidson, in August 1874, while hunting. A bear, wounded by one of his shots, sought refuge in an opening in the rocks. Davidson hastily gathered a few splinters of pitch for a torch, and, with an old muzzle-loading rifle, followed the bear. It was then that he made his remarkable discovery. Soon after this the caves became an attraction for the adventurous, and portions of them were explored and opened; but to date they have not been completely penetrated. In 1877, Frank M. Nickerson, of nearby Kerby, Oreg., found four different floors or levels. He opened a number of the galleries which had been blocked by stalactites.

In 1907 the caves were visited by Joaquin Miller (the Poet of the Sierra), C. B. Watson, and Jefferson Meyers, who were deeply impressed with the beauties of the region. Joaquin Miller did much to attract public attention to the area by his many references to the caves as "The Marble Halls of Oregon."

## Geology

The geological story of the Oregon Caves goes back over a vast period of time to an age when an ancient ocean covered this area. In this ocean a thick deposit of lime was formed which later hardened into limestone. This limestone, during a period of mountain building, was transformed under the terrific pressure and heat generated within the earth into marble and was raised above the sea as part of a mountain range.

During the mountain uplift the marble was broken and fractured in many places. The actual openings along these fractures may have been very small, but they were sufficient to allow the passage of water through them. Rainwater falling upon the surface of the ground and charged by carbonic and other acids from decaying vegetation found its way along the small fracture planes. This dissolved out the marble which in composition is almost pure calcium carbonate. As the fractures were enlarged, they admitted more water which increased the rate of solution.

The lime dissolved in one place by the water was redeposited wherever the water was subjected to evaporation. This occurred particularly where the water dripped slowly from the ceiling of the cavern, for here each drop as it clung to the rock lost some of its water to the air, and the lime which it carried

was left as a deposit on the rock. This deposit grew downward forming a stalactite. Where the drops of water fell to the floor and there evaporated, a stalagmite was built upward by the deposit of lime. In some places the stalactite and stalagmite joined, forming a column which extends from floor to ceiling. These deposits assume in some cases, odd and fantastic, or grotesque shapes, and in others, beautiful inspirational forms. Here and there are exquisite miniatures of waterfalls created in stone. Descriptive names are given to some of the main features and chambers in the caverns, such as the Garden of the Gods, Paradise Lost, Neptune's Grotto, Joaquin Miller's Chapel, Ghost Chamber, and Satan's Cradle.

## General Information

Oregon Caves National Monument, of 480 acres, is in the heart of the Siskiyou Mountains, 4,000 feet above sea level. It was established in 1909. The Superintendent of Crater Lake National Park is in charge. Inquiries should be addressed to him—in summer, at Crater Lake, Oreg.; in winter, at Box 672, Medford, Oreg.

From Cave Junction on U. S. 199, it is only 20 miles to the caves over State Route 46. The necessary guide service is furnished by the Oregon Caves Co., under contract with the Department of the Interior. Because of moist conditions within the caves, coveralls and rubber footgear are advisable. These are available for rental from the concessioner. Canes, sticks, tripods, etc., must be left outside the caves to avoid accidental damage to cave formations.

During the summer season, the concessioner also provides meals and lodging, and also nursery service for small children whose parents make the caves trip. Children under 6 years of age are not permitted in the caves. Lodging is available in the modern, well-appointed mountain chateau, and in modern sleeping cabins.

For visitors who remain overnight, an evening campfire program is provided. This consists of a brief talk on some interesting phase of the monument story given by a member of the National Park Service staff, and entertainment presented by employees of the concessioner.

There is a picnic area nearby, but no camping is permitted in the monument. The U. S. Forest Service Grayback Campground is only 8 miles from the monument on the approach road, State Route 46.

The caves are electrically lighted and have a temperature of about 48°.