

## DEVIL'S SINK IN TEXAS, OREGON CAVES RIVALRY

Recent Exploration Plains Caverns Reveals One of the Greatest

By L. B. SMITH

What once was merely a great hole in the ground, and nothing but a scourge to Rancher Clarence Whitworth, the Devil's Sinkhole in Edwards county, 12 miles east of the little town of Rocksprings, has been declared the greatest cave of its kind in America, and a rival to the great Padriac cave of southern France, and somewhat reminiscent of the Carlsbad caverns in nearby New Mexico and the far-off caverns near Grants Pass, Oregon, known as Oregon caves.

This natural wonder of the southwest is rich in beauty, the picturesque formations of massive stalagmites and stalactites in the many rooms and corridors being nothing short of marvelous. To make these formations the more interesting, embedded in the stratum beneath the surface of the earth are fossils of bug-like and shell-like denizens of the Comanchean sea, which is said to have covered west Texas millions of years ago.

Few Have Explored

No one knows the extent of Devil's Sinkhole, known by old-timers to exist, but which few ever dared to enter because of its threatening appearance and forbidding walls. No one knows whence its many labyrinths and caverns lead, but explorers believe they lead many miles in every direction. This they will learn in months to come. That part of the Sinkhole which has been explored, however, was found to contain walls and ceilings of gorgeous formations, trickling streams with water as clear as crystal, and as cold as the icy waters of the Arctic. The bottoms of these ponds and lakes, sometimes 50 feet deep, are as white as snow, with the rock formations resembling springtime flowers. In walking through the cavern, one must watch his footing, else he will step into one of these crystal pools and be submerged in waters that maintain a constant temperature of 38 degrees Fahrenheit.

Devil's Sinkhole, destined to become one of the major attractions of Texas, has been suggested by west Texas civic leaders as a national park. Located in the Texas hill country, the rolling mountains and hundreds of streams fed by many giant springs, combine to form picturesque scenery long to be remembered.

Old timers in this section have known about Devil's Sinkhole all these years, but they all doubt of its ever having been explored until a crew of men under Dr. Frank Nicholson started charting the underground recesses recently. It has been known by these pioneers that there were daring men who now and then were lowered into the giant hole, only to be hauled back to the top without exploration because of the treacherous nature of the big black hole.

Its Mouth An Hour Glass

Located on a plateau, which has an elevation of approximately 2500 feet, Devil's Sinkhole is in the center of a bed of flat rocks. It is a great, gaping hole in the earth, 80 feet in diameter, that opens up into the form of a huge hour-glass. As one edges himself to the lip of the cave, there is a catch in the throat and a step backward, for it gives the appearance of a bottomless pit. But as one gathers courage, standing on the brink a moment, eyes become focused and in the darkness below can be dis-

tinguished a mountain top, 271 feet below.

A mountain within a cave; how ridiculous it seems. But such is the case of this natural wonder, which makes it one of the most unique and wonderful of all the caverns Dr. Nicholson has explored, and these include not only several other Texas caverns, but Carlsbad cavern in New Mexico, and other famous caves in the United States and foreign countries as well.

In the shape of a huge hour-glass, the mouth of Devil's Sinkhole opens wide, its concave walls coming together some 200 feet below to form a funnel, the diameter of which is approximately 30 feet, and then opens wide to spread over the mountain top, seen from the brim. The lower part of the hour-glass is hidden from view by the blackness of the cavern. The concave walls of the upper half of the glass reveal in formations small part of what has not been touched by erosion.

A Mountain Below

The mountain 271 feet below the surface of the earth has been fully explored by a party of geologists, workers, and they found it to be about 600 feet high, and approximately a mile in circumference. Standing atop of the limestone-wall cavern, one can drop a large rock from the edge, see it almost disappear from sight before it strikes the top of the mountain. Then, unless it lodges atop the pinnacle, it can be heard as it rolls onward and downward into the far reaches of the earth until sound is no longer audible.

That canyons and corridors radiate for miles in every direction is the contention of Dr. Nicholson, and his belief is verified through the fact that numerous wells have been drilled in the little town of Rocksprings, only to be abandoned because caves were struck from 100 to 200 feet underground. These wells, of a certainty, failed to produce water, but today they are used by their owners as sewage disposal places. Within the next few months Dr. Nicholson and his party hope to ascertain whether these caves, 12 miles westward, radiate from Devil's Sinkhole.

There are numerous mountain springs throughout this section of west Texas, most noteworthy among these being Seven Hundred springs, midway between Rocksprings and Junction, where millions of gallons of water gush forth daily from a mountainside. A few miles from Devil's Sinkhole are found numerous large springs, with cold water bubbling out of mountain sides, and Dr. Nicholson is of the opinion that the icy waters of Devil's Sinkhole find their way to the surface of Mother Earth in some of these little geysers.

In addition to proving a great attraction to tourists of the southwest, Devil's Sinkhole is providing remuneration to Dr. Nicholson because of the immense quantity of guano. Several tons have been extracted from the cavern and shipped to rectifying plants, yet the main bat chamber has not yet been discovered. For this reason, and also because of the fact that literally millions of the winged mammals emerge from the darkened chambers toward nightfall each evening, Dr. Nicholson places the guano deposits in the cave at more than 150,000 tons. It is, therefore, upon the main deposits that Dr.

Nicholson and his cohorts pin their hopes of finding a fortune.

Guano is valuable as a fertilizer and for the manufacture of gunpowder. It is now worth \$30 a ton, delivered to rectifying plants in the United States, but during war times its price has risen to as high as \$100 a ton.

The method of entering and leaving the cavern is hazardous, and only crude machinery is used to lower and hoist a basket carrier in and out of the hole. Its concave walls are impossible to scale, and rope ladders are out of the question. A few years ago a crew of pipeline workers, disillusioned by the depth to the mountain top, with a long rope lowered themselves into the cavern on an impromptu exploration trip, and it almost ended disastrously, only one member of the party being able to climb the upward distance, 271 feet, hand-over-hand fashion.

Has Its Dangers Also

Backers of the project may change the means of entrance, they point out. Instead of an elevator lowering the sightseers, a rustic stairway and trail circling down the precipitous walls of the upper chamber and then swinging out to the mountaintop may be constructed as a means of preserving the thrills of going down into the vertical hour-glass shaped hole.

The dangers of exploring the cavern have been evident, and persons entering at this time do so at their own risk. Jagged rocks may pierce one's scalp one instant, and the next the explorer will find himself stepping into a seemingly bottomless pond of icy water. It is difficult for one to watch his footing constantly, and at the same time keep from marveling at this natural wonder. Speechless, one gazes in bewilderment at the glistening formations, the white crickets, the mute swimming life, hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth. Emerging from the cavern, one ponders, hours it seems, wondering how long it took the deft fingers of the Creator to mold such artistic designs and patterns as Devil's Sinkhole rooms and corridors offers.

Today, thousands of people around here are wondering what the broad expanses of Devil's Sinkhole hold in store for Texas, for the southwest. No one can predict the future. But take the word of Dr. Nicholson, Devil's Sinkhole is far bigger than Carlsbad cavern, or any other cavern that has ever before explored. — Brady (Texas) Standard.

● Henry Enders went to Eugene to pick up Jack Enders, last Friday. From there they went to Portland to the auto show and the football game between the coast all-stars and the New York Giants.

● Mr. and Mrs. George Daly and Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Angel were business callers in Ashland and Medford Wednesday. While in Ashland they were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. E. F. Miller.

● C. A. White returned to his store Monday after a siege of flu, which kept him at home for 10 days.

● Robert Dodge left Wednesday night for San Francisco and Los Angeles to be the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Rafferty and Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Abbott. He plans to be gone about three weeks, and will visit many different furniture houses in both cities.

## Dogs' 'Income Tax' Now Being Collected As Canine Drive On

The barbering business was expected to pick up tremendously, or the smart-crackers who always say they'll either have to get clipped or take out a dog license will have to think up a new gag, for dog license collections are being made at a rapid pace by the county clerk, with aid of state police and county authorities, who have been seeing Fido's proud owner down to the courthouse to part with his fee or his flea circus.

According to County Clerk George R. Carter, more than 150 dog licenses have been issued by his office since first of the year and business continues at the rate of 25 or 30 a day. No license is required for husbands who think they live a dog's life, pointed out Carter. You have to actually be a dog to qualify, which preserves, somewhat, a dog's life for dogs.

So beware, you canine carers, the man with beady eyes, a net and screened truck. Mr. Dog Catcher to you!

## 364 Inches Snowfall Recorded at Crater Lake Near Record

Far ahead of last year's total, 364.7 inches of snowfall have been recorded at park headquarters in Crater Lake national park up until February 1. This compares to 289 inches last year, but is behind the mark of the heavy winter of 1932-33 with 511 inches.

However, this year holds the record for the amount of precipitation, 50.35 inches. Last year the figure was 35.41 and in 1933, 40.21, despite the heavy snowfall of the latter year.

Last month had a snowfall of 117 inches and precipitation of 10.16, as compared to 256 inches snow and 16.25 precipitation in January, 1933. The 50-inch mark of this year is attributed to more rain and mister snow.

Park roads are closed as they have been for numerous weeks past and it is not likely that removal operations will begin much sooner than early May or late April. Four men—Douglas Roach, Good, Burrell Sexton and Frank Briscoe—make up a winter maintenance crew.

Roads leading from Ashland to the east and south, over Greensprings and the Siskiyou mountains, have been kept open during the entire year by the highway commission.

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## SAINT MAKERS

The Olivia (Minn.) Times gives the following the once over: "A preacher came into the office of a busy newspaper man and said: 'You editors do not tell the truth. If you did, you couldn't live; your newspapers would be failures.' The weary editor replied: 'You are right. And the preacher who will at all times and under all circumstances tell the truth about his members, alive or dead, will not occupy his pulpit more than one Sunday. He will find it necessary to leave town in a hurry. The press and pulpit go hand in hand with white-wash brushes and pleasant words, magnifying little virtues into big ones. The pulpit, the pen and gravestone are the great saint-making triumvirate.' And the editor turned to his work and told of the unsurpassing beauty of the bride while in fact she was as homely as a mud fence."

● The Wineland Beauty shop has moved from 161 East Main to 69 East Main, in the Ashland hotel building. A formal opening for the newly located shop is expected some time next week, said Mrs. Wineland yesterday.

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Ground Pork and Veal, for loaf or frying, 2 pounds.....	25c	Country Sorghum, 5-pound pails	55c
Hamburger, lean and good, lb.....	10c	Honey, 5-pound pails.....	45c
Round Steak, from fat cows, lb.....	12c	Vermont Maid Maple Syrup, 20c, 35c	
Rib Steaks, fancy beef, lb.....	15c	Raisins, 3 1/2 pounds.....	25c
Pork Chops, from choice young pigs, per pound.....	18c	White Figs, for stewing, Saturday, 4 pounds .....	25c
Veal Chops, from No. 1 milk fed veal, per pound.....	17c	Onions, 15 pounds.....	25c
Codfish, just in, 1-pound brick.....	20c	Large White Cauliflower, Spinach, Rutabegas, Parsnips, Turnips, Carrots and many other fresh vegetables.	
K. C. Baking Powder, 50c tin.....	35c	Large Juicy Lemons, Saturday, per dozen .....	15c
Corn Starch, 3 for.....	25c	Oranges, good sweet ones, doz.....	15c
Arm and Hammer Soda, 3 pkgs.....	25c	SATURDAY ONLY—One ring and stick of candy with each loaf bread.	
Coffee, it's good, 2 pounds.....	35c	Light Potato Yeast Buns, some- thing different, per dozen.....	19c
Coffee, Hills red can (Saturday and Monday) 1-pound tin.....	31c	Cakes, Pies and Rolls, so good you want more.	
Citrus Soap, 2 8-ounce bars.....	5c		
White Eagle Soap, 13 6-oz. bars.....	25c		
Peets Washing Powder, per pkg.....	25c		
Purex, 1/2-gal. jug.....	25c		
Ginger Snaps, 10 dozen.....	25c		

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