

SOUVENIR OF
WONDER CAVE
SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

FOREWORD:

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A. B. ROGERS, Owner of Wonder Cave,
San Marcos, Texas.

The Wonder Cave of San Marcos

(By JOHN JAY ARTHUR, JR.)

Near San Marcos, Texas, is *Wonder Cave*, one of the greatest natural attractions in the Southwest. Compared with Carlsbad Cavern, New Mexico, it is not as expansive, but is the equal of any cave in geological features and cosmic beauty. It is described as an outcrop of the Edwards Limestone, and some geologists who have studied the cavern think it probable that the underground structure extends to the Gulf Coast.

Mr. Hurley, the chief guide who conducts sightseers through the cave, is of opinion that it is the old river bed of the San Marcos River. He says: "I have explored several hundred yards of this subterranean area not yet open to the public on account of its dangerous cliffs and ravines that would

expose the unwary to accident, but that part of it which I have explored and which is open to the public is remarkably interesting and is safe from accident or harm to sightseers."

The discovery of Wonder Cave dates back to 1894. Mark Beavers, digging for water, had reached a depth of 125 feet, when the bottom of his well fell out. He had struck water, but it was a stream flowing through a cavern. He stopped digging and it was two years later that he discovered the opening through which the cave is now entered.

The cave abounds in rocky formations; some of these resemble figures of animals and of human beings. The figures have been named for the objects which they resemble. There is the "Bison Head", so much like the head of a buffalo that the name is strikingly appropriate. Then there is a shape so like the head of a human that it might have been carved by the chisel

of a sculptor. A curved arch over a wide fissure has been given the name of "Natural Bridge."

Deeper into the cave are other curious formations, the effect of water erosions from limestone and chalk minerals. There is a perfect impression of a human foot, stained by the iron in the water. *Curious Formations* There are rooms from whose roofs are pendant stalactites of all sizes and shapes. They are like coral. Many of these are exquisitely beautiful. Mr. Hurley pointed out the "Totem Poles", the "Fringed Shawls", and other odd things.

A sharp descent is over steps hewn out of flint rock. Here are great beds of pure black flint, from which prehistoric man's tools were fashioned. "This flint", explained Mr. Hurley, "cuts almost like a diamond. It is a pure black flint, although there are beds of several degrees of hardness."

The show place of the cavern is the "Big Room". Turning on a searchlight, Mr. Hurley pointed out the stalagmites—in great numbers—some resembling totem poles, fringed shawls, etc. One particular fringed shawl looked like an old Spanish lace silk shawl; another group of stalagmites looked like a big blanket. Mr. Hurley pointed out his "pretzels", which were countless in number.

Rounding a corner, we were confronted by stalactites that lined the passageway. Here we found frozen fountains, the splashcup being filled with clear onyx. Some coral-like formations resembled men and women, and Mr. Hurley referred to them as his "Men and Women."

Entering another large chamber, we came to numerous formations of flowstone and dripstone. Here we found the "Cascades", but suddenly I recoiled from a mountain lion—a big fellow he was, too. Mr. Hurley's

Striking Animal Forms laughter rang out. "That's all right, Mr. Arthur, he won't bite—on my word, he won't. He's my pet. See how I stroke him. It's a petrified lion." The contour of the neck is strikingly lifelike, as well as the claws, eyes, head, and arch of the back. At a distance one would declare it a live cougar or mountain lion.

Then there is the "Hippopotamus", a reclining life-like figure of a hippo. Next we come to a pit, and lower ourselves carefully to a shelf beneath it. We climb over rough rocks, and many times Mr. Hurley admonished me to "watch my step", as well as my head. Next we begin the ascent. There are more stalactites in many shapes and sizes. Sparkling onyx resemble so many jewels, scintillating magnificently, with every color of the rainbow.

Mr. Hurley smiles as he points out the "Dragon". Here also is the "Devil's Potato Patch", a fantastic formation. Next we come to the

“Devil’s Fireplace”, as well as the “Devil’s Backbone”. And then there is the “Strip of Bacon”, clearly showing the lean and the fat meat.

Further and further we penetrated into the cavern, finally coming to a room with the formation much like a caramel ice caking. Further on there is more cascades, looking like ice that forms on a cold winter day. There are flowstone cascades—a most astonishing sight. Then on through winding passages is another room, the roof dripping with slender stalactites that glitter prettily in the rays of the flashlight.

Now we come to the “Crystal Palace”. “Students of the San Marcos Academy and the Southwest Texas Teachers College take special delight in visiting this room”, said Mr. Hurley. In the “Crystal Palace” we saw ribbon stalactites, no larger than an oat-straw. Back of this room is an alcove, called the “Big Hollow”, which is unexplored. Here in the Big Hollow are

countless seashells of various sizes and shapes. In particular I was impressed with shells that looked like perfectly formed conch shells.

8 Leave the "Crystal Palace", we come to "Canopy Hall". Here used to be "Diana's Fountain", but it is destroyed. More stalagmites—countless numbers of them. Most of them are the chalky white surfaced ones, with frost-work. Then smooth-surfaced, dark colored ones. They are all shapes and sizes; some of them resemble masses of ice; some thin sheets of onyx looking like toadstools, or lily pads, whichever you may choose to call them.

200 Answering a question as to how stalactites and stalagmites are formed, Mr. Hurley explained briefly: "Forming of stalactites and stalagmites have been going on for thousands of years. A drop of water carrying an infinitesimal quantity of lime seeps through minute cracks in the roof of the cave, and before it falls to the ground leaves some of this solid on the rock

from which it fell. In the process of ages these billions of drops of water form the stalactites. They also build up columns of the same substance from the floor of the cavern, and these are known as stalagmites.

With four distinct levels and nine different formations, "Wonder Cave" is a cavern worth seeing. A. B. Rogers, owner of Spring Lake Hotel, owns "Wonder Cave". Mr. Rogers is a man who likes to push things. He has had many offers to sell "Wonder Cave" but says: "The cave is priceless to me. It is not for sale."

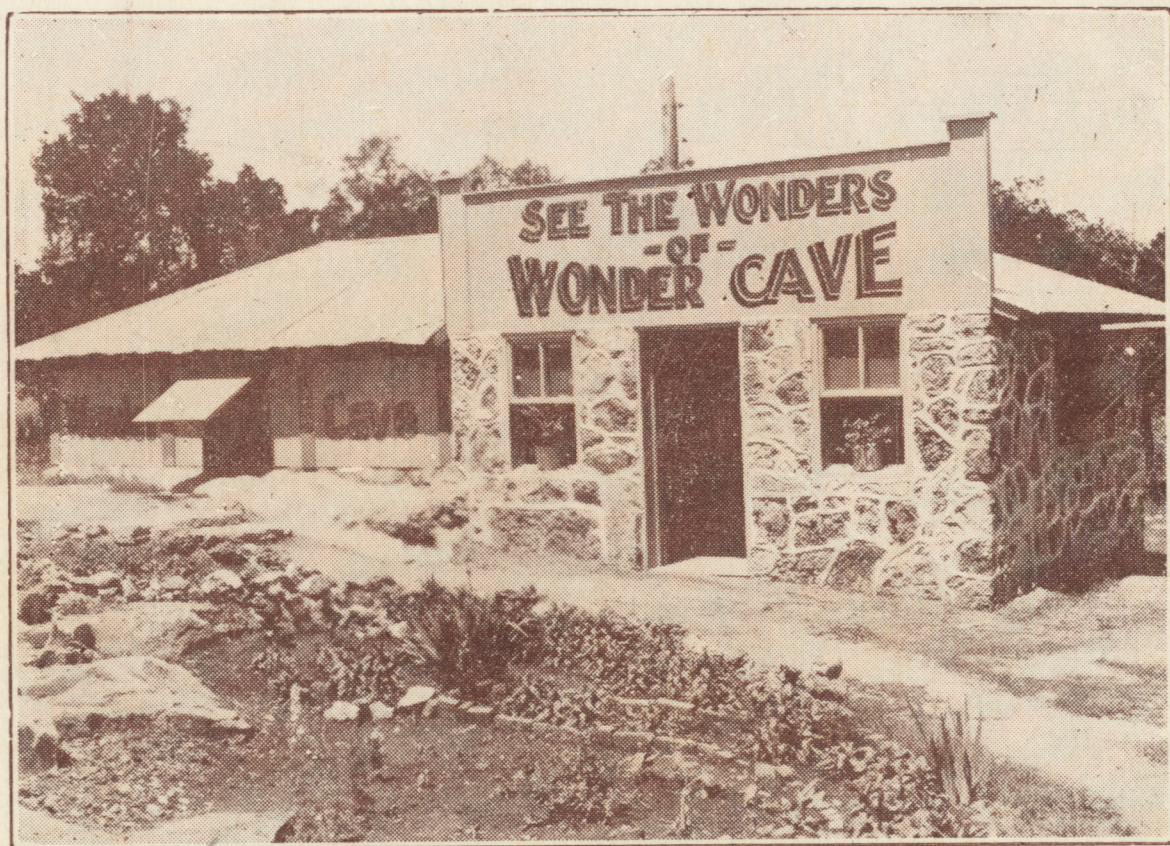
Other things of special interest to popular fancy and to scientific research are to be found in this underground world. The temperature at the point where Mr. Beavers first dug his well that led to the discovery of the cave is constant at 68 degrees, summer and winter. The water from the well is pure, cold and soft.

A system of electric lighting has been installed throughout part of the cave, with searchlights here and there, to bring out points of special interest.

CAMP RIO VISTA . . .

. . . SPRING LAKE HOTEL

Vacationists, tourists or week-enders have in store for them pleasures untold in the delightful surroundings of Camp Rio Vista and Spring Lake Hotel, both under the same ownership as Wonder Cave, and both within a mile of the cave. Spring Lake Hotel is situated at the head springs of the San Marcos River from which flows more than 88,000,000 gallons of pure water daily. Camp Rio Vista is about a mile down stream. Delightful rooms and excellent cafe service at the hotel and cool cottages and cafe service at Camp Rio Vista, with bathing, boating, fishing, at both places, and a sporty golf course will round out your vacation activities for a few days or all summer long.



Very pretty -