

MARENGO CAVE, MARENGO, INDIANA

W. N. SPECKMAN, ELMHURST COLLEGE

Marengo Cave is situated within the corporate limits of the town of Marengo, Crawford County, Indiana, on the Louisville, Evansville, and St. Louis Division of the Southern Railway, thirty-eight miles west of Louisville, Ky., and twelve miles north of the Ohio River.

It is said to have been discovered accidentally by hunters in pursuit of a rabbit which took refuge in a hole which led into the Cave. Others say that parents, missing their children while at play during the day, watched their disappearance into an opening in the ground which was found to descend gradually into the mouth of the Cave, the first room of which had furnished an excellent hiding-place and playroom for the children.

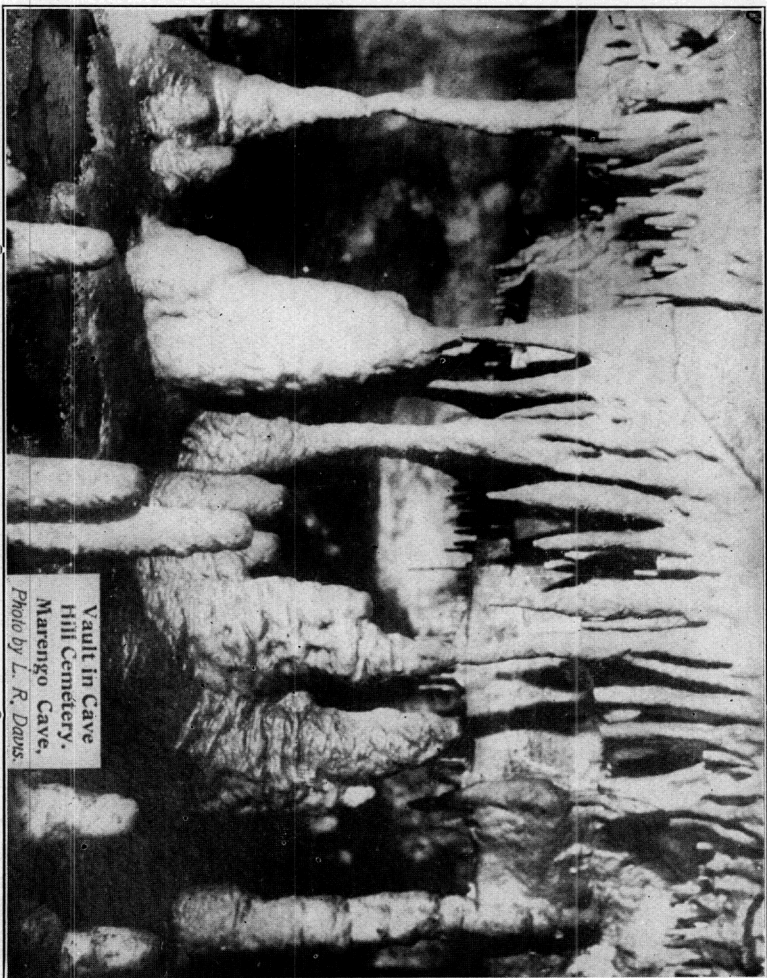
The formation of the rock about Marengo is of limestone. A large limestone quarry has been opened on another side of the town adjoining the railroad track and a considerable quantity of material has already been removed. The existence of the Cave has been known but forty years, having been discovered in 1883. A writer says, "Although this land has been the center of civilization for more than three fourths of a century, and a little town with its places of trade and shops of industry had existed for nearly half a century, yet not until the year 1883 was it known that this grand work of Nature lay hidden beneath the surface here."

The hill under which the Cave lies is rolling and gradually elevated above the surrounding country. On its sides are outcroppings of limestone formation. The present entrance is near a beautiful grove about two hundred yards north of a sparkling stream which is fed by the water of two large springs in North Marengo. These springs issue from small caves in the sides of elevations. The one has a semi-circular entrance with sloping stone ceiling from which stalactitic formations depend and is in itself worth seeing. Quite a stream of water flows from it and plants grow at the entrance. The original entrance to Marengo Cave has been closed and another made, which descends at an angle of about

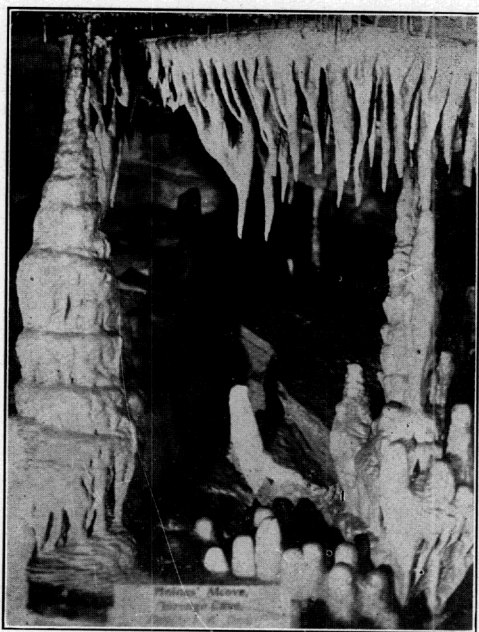
forty-five degrees and is some sixty feet in length. An upright door secured by a lock opens into a cemented arch covering the stairway. Lanterns and torches are used to light up the crimean darkness. On the sides of the stairs one finds cave crickets, *hadaenuci subterranei*, which are colorless and blind. The temperature of the Cave is noticeable especially on a hot day, remaining the same summer and winter, namely fifty-six degrees Fahrenheit.

The interior consists of avenues, chambers, domes, and grottoes. Most of the walls, floors and ceilings are of limestone ornamented with formations in grotesque shapes. The floor of the greater portion of the Cave is dry; but where the most of the limestone formations are taking place, it is damp. At the foot of the stairs is Grand Entrance Hall, which leads into the portion of the Cave known as the Long Route. There are four grand divisions of the Cave called respectively, The Long Route, Washington Avenue, Western Avenue, and Crystal Palace. A picture cannot do justice to Crystal Palace with its stalactites and stalagmites. One must see it to appreciate it. Tourists consider it "the most beautiful of any natural underground room that has ever been discovered." Crystal Palace is about twenty feet wide, forty feet high, and two hundred feet long. The whole Cave varies in width from ten to seventy-five feet, in height from eight to forty feet, and the total length of the chambers and passages is about three and one-half miles.

The four divisions of the Cave are subdivided into halls which have been named, usually by visitors, for their resemblance to the original: Statue Hall, Congress Hall, Odd Fellows Hall, Mammoth Hall, Music Hall, and Elks Hall. Many of the beautiful formations have also been given names. The Vault in Cave Hill Cemetery is an interesting example. Others are Charleston Jail, Prison Cell, Statue of Liberty, Tower of Babel, Baby Elephant, Jumbo, Elephant's Head, Diamond Dome, Leopard Ceiling, The Gods of Athens, Solomon's Temple, Fish Market, Lovers' Retreat, Niagara Falls, and Mt. Vesuvius. The Railroad Crossing is a strange formation on the ceiling, consist-



Vault in Cave
Hill Cemetery,
Marengo Cave,
Photo by L. R. Davis.



Plains Above,
Barringer Cave.



Washington's Plume,
Barringer Cave,
Photo by L. R. Davis

ing of what seem to be parallel tracks. One of the most wonderful formations is that of the Pipe Organ. The Manager, who guided me through the labyrinthian passages of the Cave, struck several of the stalactites which resounded with musical tones. Other beautiful and curious stalagmites are Washington's Monument and Washington's Plume.

In one part of the Cave beautiful stalagmites resembling bouquets of flowers or stalks of celery may be seen. To me they were the most wonderful of all formations. The way in which calcium carbonate trickling from the ceiling forms crystalized stalactitic and beautiful stalagmitic columns with glittering domes is certainly interesting, and the floral-like formations are exceedingly wonderful. The underground water of that locality contains much dissolved limestone. Upon seeping through the roof of the Cave it begins to evaporate, losing its carbonic acid, and limestone is deposited on the ceiling around the edge of the drop of water. Other drops form below this one until a tubular pendant develops, which at first is hollow but later the opening is filled and successive layers are formed on the outside. When the stalactite thus formed reaches a certain stage, if the seepage is sufficient, the drops will fall to the floor and build up a stalagmite. These, meeting the pendants from the ceiling, form columns as shown in The Visitor's Wonder or Haines's Alcove. The general yellow color of cave formations is caused by the presence of iron oxide. Most of those in Marengo Cave are translucent and some are almost snow white.

Marengo Cave is one of Nature's greatest works of art. It is a sight of beauty and of wonderful ornamentation that makes a lasting impression on the mind of the observer. J. S. Diller in a Governmental Publication says: "All caves are not so beautifully ornamented. Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, although remarkable for its size, contains a very small amount of cave deposits such as are shown by the two illustrations," referring to Luray Cave in Virginia and Marengo Cave in Indiana. A trip to Marengo Cave is well worth one's time. The expenses while there are reasonable.