

A person wearing a blue shirt, dark pants, a helmet, and gloves is standing in a cave. They are holding a flashlight that illuminates the surrounding rock formations. The cave walls are made of reddish-brown rock, and the floor is covered in light-colored, rounded rocks. The person is looking up at the ceiling of the cave.

MARCH, 2024

RMC

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CAVING

**RIP Jens Munthe
North Delta Caves
France's Berger Cave
Gunnison Gorge Caves
Sordid Early CoW History**

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FRONT COVER

Garrett Jorgensen Olague uses a lidar unit to collect data to create a 3D model of Snowy River in Fort Stanton Cave, New Mexico. Two other cavers (Todd Roberts and Norm Thompson) then took photographs of all surfaces in this same section of the cave to create a model using photogrammetry. These two models get combined to create a very accurate rendition of the cave. Photo by Norman R. Thompson.

BACK COVER

Cavers in the bunkhouse, participating in the October, 2023 Fort Stanton Cave Study Project expedition. In the foreground, entering and processing data, are (L-R) Ron Lipinski, Pete Linsley, and John McLean. In the background are John Cochran and Sam Bono. Photo by Norman R. Thompson.

Colorado Cave Rescue Phone Numbers:

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- **Cave of the Winds incidents:**
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- **Colorado Search and Rescue Board 24 Hour Hotline (ask for SAR Coordinator):** 303-279-8855.
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<https://coloradosheriffs.org/resources/counties/>

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EDITOR'S NOTES

We're finally caught up with the calendar for *Rocky Mountain Caving* publication. Of course, that means the cache of articles to publish has now dwindled to a pair of articles by Rick R. Without submissions, the next issue is in limbo. Feel free to submit prose of any kind or photos, individually or in bulk for essays.

I journeyed to Big Bend Park in south Texas for a superb eclipse-viewing experience. Subpar weather sort of reduced it to just an experience. We had a fantastic perch in the sideyard of Uvalde's "Old Cemetery," alone in a 10-acre field. Not the other-worldly experience of Wyoming a few years ago. C'est la vie, eh?

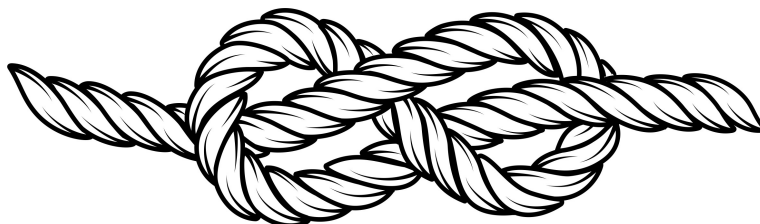
Whitenose syndrome has been identified in a couple more Colorado caves. This can't be good. More on that as news trickles in.

Spring seems to be arriving so perhaps the serious outdoor caving season can begin soon. Let's hope so!




The 2024 NSS Convention is slated for the premier site of Sewanee, Tennessee on July 1-5, 2024. Early-bird discounted registration ends on April 30, 2024 (i.e., **soon**).

Our covers this month showcase some of Norm Thompson's adventures in Fort Stanton Cave, New Mexico. This extraordinarily well-organized project includes resistivity mapping (to find new cave), cave radio experiments (to expedite cave↔surface communication), an in-cave digital network (for data reporting), and a length of 44.59 miles (#11 on the USA long cave list, just 750 feet shy of #10, the underwater Wakulla Cave System in Florida).

RK



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ROCKY MOUNTAIN CAVING

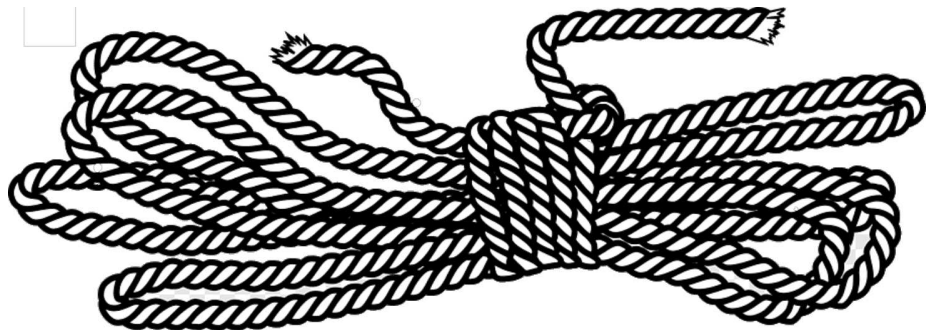
Volume 42, Number 1

March, 2024

Table of Contents



- 4 Remembering Jens Munthe: 1945-2023** by Richard Rhinehart.
Rick Rhinehart's obituary for the late former Colorado Grotto Member Jens Munthe.
- 5 Small Caves in the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area** by Doug Medville.
Doug Medville's explication of half a dozen caves and pits in the claystone and shale gullies and badlands of the Gunnison Gorge NCA, complete with a map for each one.
- 10 Exploring France's Gouffre Berger Cave** by Tristan Stahl.
Tristan Stahl's travelogue of his trips (with Derek Bristol) to France's Berger Cave and its 1,000 m depth.
- 15 Cave of Sorrow** by Richard Rhinehart.
Rick Rhinehart has penned an absolutely fascinating early history of the Cave of the Winds and all the surprisingly acrimonious business dealings around establishing it (among other caves in Williams Cañon) as the premier tourist destination in addition to resolving its ownership and stewardship issues.
- 23 Caving in North Delta, Colorado** by Doug Medville.
This article details more discoveries of non-limestone caves in Western Colorado by Doug Medville. This time, it's the Adobe Badlands north of Delta where bare hills on shale soils are found.



Call for Publishable Material

Please submit your articles about exploration, science, research, gatherings, interviews, original poetry and music, people, notes and happenings, and anything else cave-related. We'll try to print everything of quality. Keep it this side of R-Rated and please have patience with editing/condensing.

Please don't hesitate to submit your best vertical and horizontal photographs, cartoons, art, etchings, and other graphics.

Deadlines

RMC is currently published quarterly in March, June, September, December. That means editing and typesetting *should* commence around the 15th of the previous month so the magazine is ready for distribution at Grotto meetings.

Rolling deadlines seemed like such a great idea but, alas, no joy. For your planning purposes, the deadlines for material to be included are: November 15, February 15, May 15, and August 15.

Renewals

Don't forget to renew your subscription if it's coming due! Just \$20/year for grotto delivery; \$25/year for first-class mail delivery; \$9.99/year for a digital subscription.

Credit card users can renew at <https://rockymountaincaving.com> when it's back in service. Others can mail check/money-order (pay to "Rocky Mountain Caving") to P. O. Box 101091; Denver, CO 80250-1091.

Many grottos now have automatic digital subscriptions for their members.

Remembering Jens Munthe: 1945-2023

by Richard Rhinehart

Former Colorado Grotto member Jens Munthe, NSS 6410, passed away in Utah on May 16, 2023. At 78 years of age, Jens had lived in the small community of Escalante for many years. He was an avid natural arch enthusiast, authoring the 2002 book, *A Guide Book to the Natural Arches of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument*. As recently as 2019, Jens was the subject of a *Wall Street Journal* article regarding natural arches of the region. Reportedly, he maintained a database of nearly 2,000 sandstone arches in south-central Utah. Jens noted he had discovered more than 700 of these arches himself.

Prior to his retirement, Jens worked as a geologist and paleontologist. He also worked at the University of Colorado at Boulder and later, the Department of Paleontology at University of California Berkeley. He was also an active caver and contributor to both the Colorado Grotto's *Caving in the Rockies* newsletter, the *Journal of Spelean History*, and the *NSS News*. He also contributed to *NSS Bulletin 41*, the July 1979 Alpine Karst Symposium.

Jens was active in Colorado caving from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s. He participated in trips to many caves throughout the state, including the caves of the Cañon City region, Lime Creek, and the White River Plateau. On a July 1969 Plateau trip, a large group of Colorado Grotto cavers visited the Blair Lake Bench. At Shadow Lake Sink, the group joined Donald Davis to explore the full cave. "Davis disappeared into the cave in his usual manner (much like a crawling ghost)," Jens noted in his report in *Caving in the Rockies*, "and five unfortunate cavers followed."

Jens participated in many exploration trips to the Plateau, including the 1969-1970 exploration and survey of Premonition Cave in Deep Creek Canyon.

In July 1966, Jens joined Ed Crawford and Alan Elder in a cave hunting trip to Lime Creek Canyon north of Aspen. The team discovered Lime Creek Cave while walking the limestone cliffs that rim the canyon. He coordinated the first survey of the cave in August 1968, noting in his report in *Caving in the Rockies* that digging could be worthwhile in the cave. This was later proven to be a good observation.

Crawford and Jens undertook the first survey of Fulton Cave on the White River Plateau in 1966. The 1,620-foot-long alpine stream cave had been discovered and explored by Donald Davis and members of the Colorado Grotto four years earlier, in July 1962. South Dakota's Wind Cave National Park welcomed members of the Colorado Grotto to explore the cave in 1968 following a hiatus. Jens led and joined many trips with Colorado cavers such as Ken Carpenter and Rich Breisch into the multi-mile system.

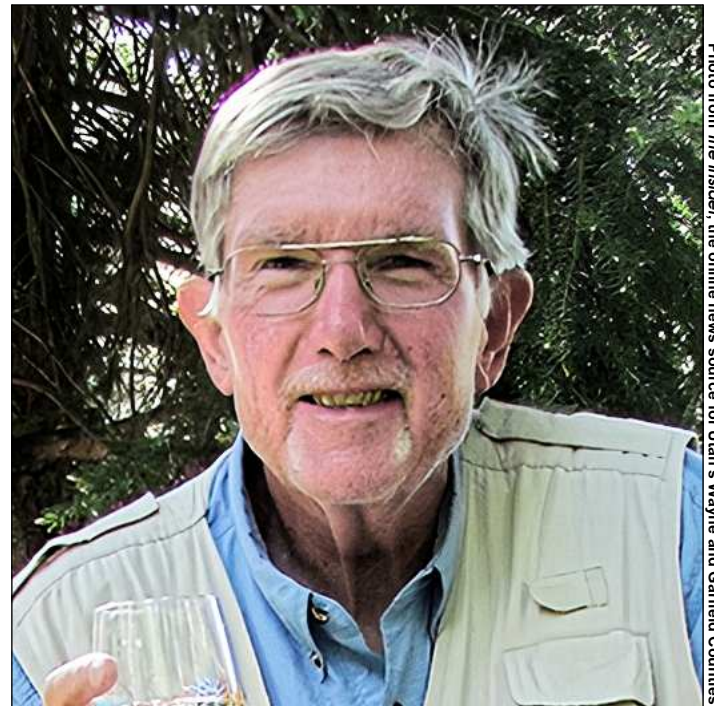
In 1973, Jens drafted a map of the Xerox Room region of Wind Cave, discovered by Colorado Grotto members in 1969. Jens served as the director of the White River Plateau Project of

the National Speleological Society for 1969 and 1970. Members of the project from the Colorado and Colorado School of Mines grottos searched for and documented caves across the alpine Plateau, increasing the number of known caves to 24 by the end of 1969. Three of these caves had greater than one mile of surveyed passage.

Jens was an active participant in the early exploration of the limestone of Montana's Scapegoat Wilderness. In 1972, he participated in the first known trip to Green Fork Falls Cave with Jim Chester, Newell Campbell, Steve Lewis, Chuck Lyon, and others. Jens drafted the first map of Green Fork Falls Cave and adjacent Kathy's Icebox Cave, named after Jens' wife, Kathy.

Jens returned to Scapegoat in 1973 with Donald Davis, Norm Pace, Bill Yett, and other cavers. This expedition notably extended the known caves and surveyed significant passageways. In 1975, Campbell and Jens used an aerial reconnaissance flight to review karst in Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness, spotting karst features in the remote Una Mountain region.

By 1976, Jens and Kathy had moved from Colorado to California. There, they contributed to caving in that state and in the Pacific Northwest prior to retirement and a move to Utah, inspired, Jens reported, by *National Geographic* articles about the canyon country. 🇺🇸



Jens-Munthe, 1945-2023.

Photo from *The Insider*, the online news source for Utah's Wayne and Garfield Counties.

Small Caves in the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area

by Doug Medville

Doug has been poking around the Conservation Area near Gunnison and discovered half a dozen caves. This article serves to document them in the Rocky Mountain journal of record.



The Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area (GGNCA) is west of U.S. 50 between Montrose and Delta. Although there isn't any limestone there, numerous small caves are found in sandstones, shales and claystones. With one exception, none of them is significant or photogenic but they're fun to find. Six of these caves, surveyed in 2021-22, are described below.

Fee Station Cave

This is a trivial cave that wasn't worth the effort to get to – a 320-vertical-foot climb up a rocky stream bed to a short, two-entrance stoop-crawl that went all of 64 feet. The most interesting part of the hike was the discovery of a BLM fee station (informally, an Iron Ranger) sitting out in the gully. The fee station is a post containing a slot where campers insert their camping fee in



Photo by Doug Medville.

BLM fee station found in GGNCA gully.

FEE STATION CAVE

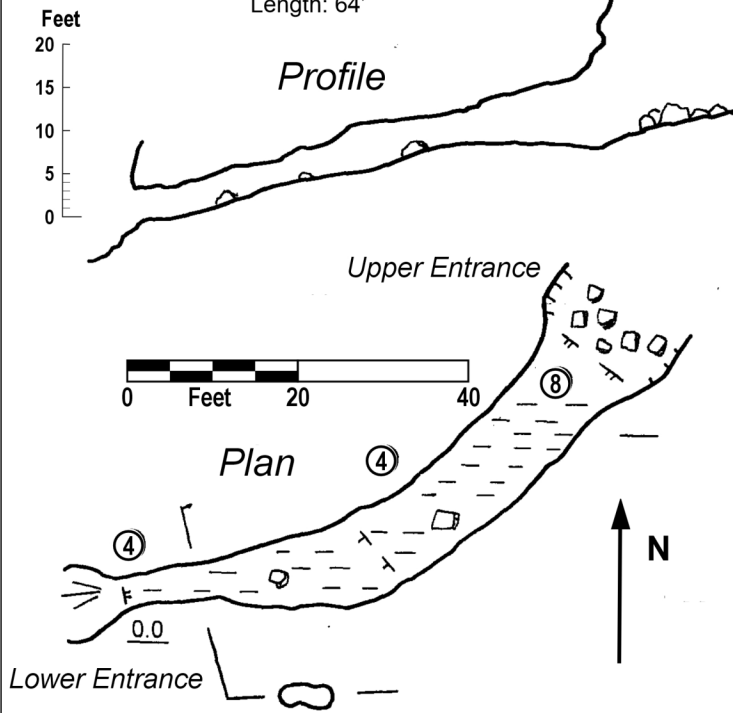
Gunnison Gorge NCA

Montrose County CO

Surveyed 9/19/2021

B. Richards, D. Medville, H. Kalintz

Length: 64'



Fee Station Cave map.

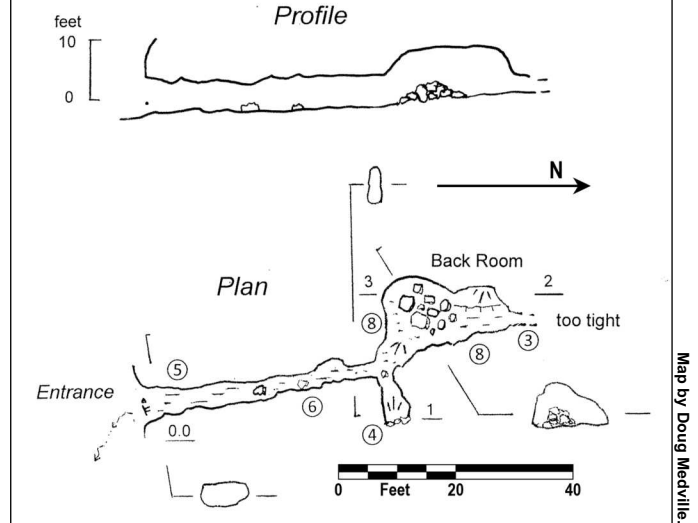
HIDDEN CAVE

Gunnison Gorge NCA

Montrose County, CO

Surveyed 7/3/22

Length: 79 feet



Hidden Cave Map.

an envelope. It was obviously out of place and we took pictures of it and recorded its location.

When I contacted the BLM office in Montrose to tell them about it, they said that two or three of these are stolen each year from local BLM campgrounds. They thanked me for reporting our find and said that they would send a crew out to retrieve it. The one we found was pretty beat up as a result

SELIG DITCH CAVE

Length: 148'; Depth: 19'

Map by Doug Medville

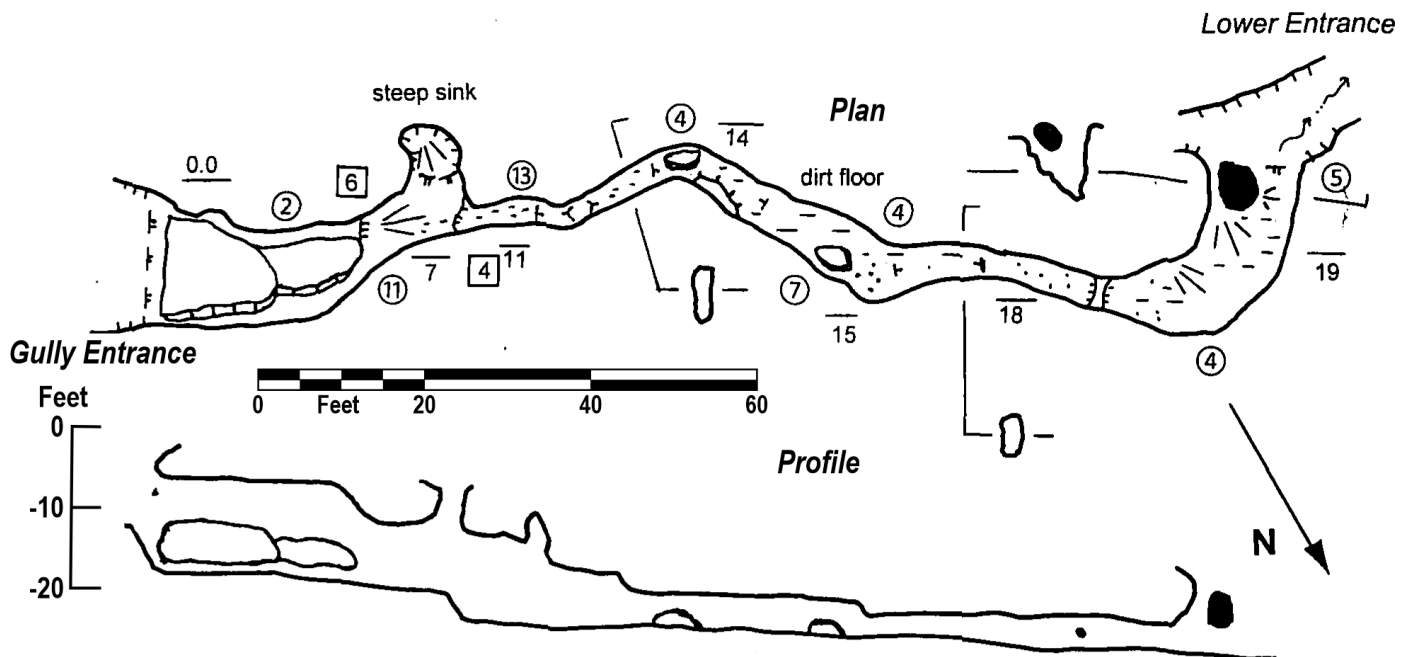
Montrose County, CO

Surveyed April 19, 2021

Ed La Rock, Doug Medville, Bob Richards

Length: 148'; Depth: 19'

Selig Ditch Cave is developed in the Cretaceous Mancos Shale.



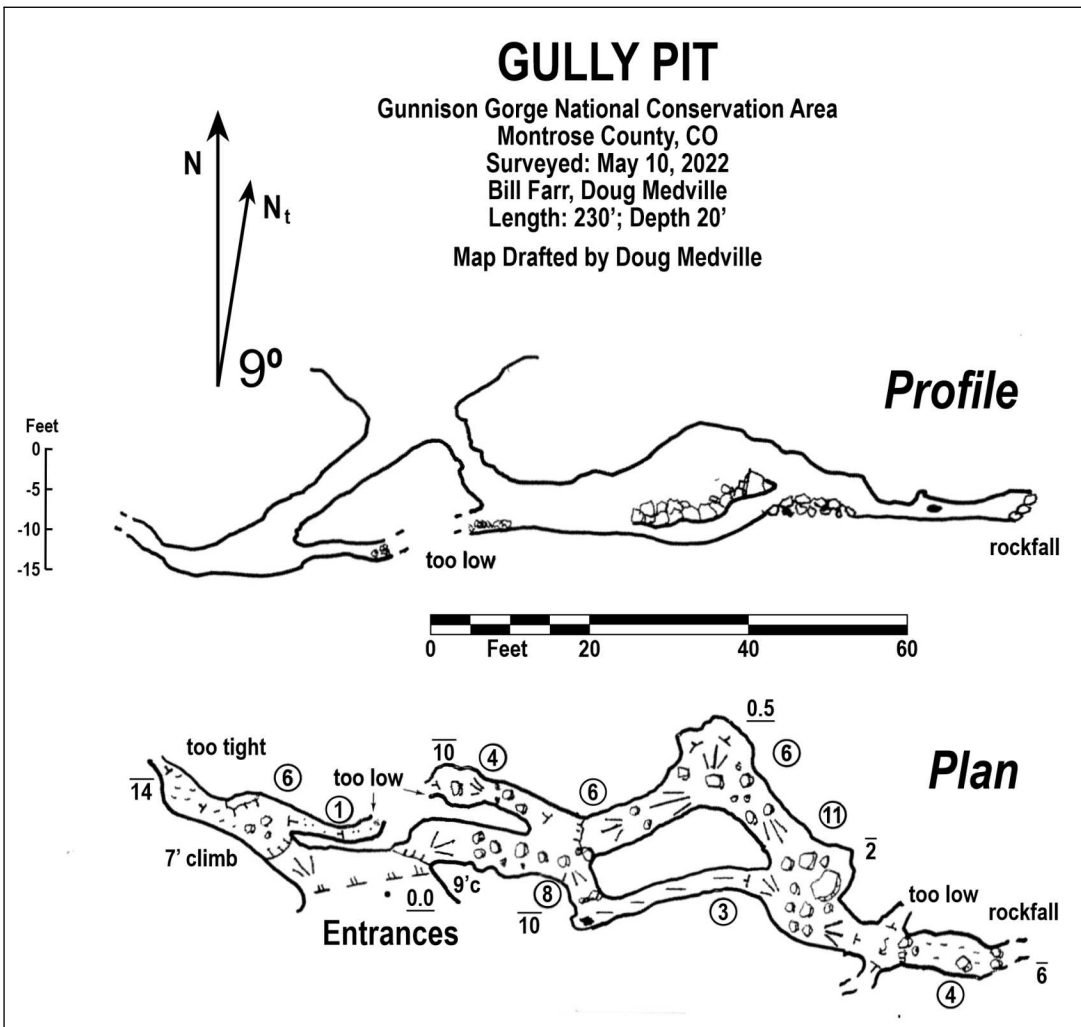
Selig Ditch Cave map.



Carol Vesely in entrance to Gully Pit.



Hidden Cave entrance passage.



Gully Pit map.

of efforts to get into it but whoever took it wasn't able to break in so BLM got its money back.

Selig Ditch Cave

The Selig Ditch runs east-west across the badlands east of Olathe and, when it has water in it, it's difficult to cross without getting wet. In 2021 we found a crossing where the ditch was under a dirt bike trail so we were able to get over it and hike about 3/4 mile out onto shale badlands to some nice-looking sinks that I saw on Google Earth. "We" were myself, Ed LaRock, and Bob Richards, who drove up from Cortez to join us. We found one decent cave (Selig Ditch Cave) and numerous sinks.

Selig Ditch Cave is a piping cave in the Mancos Shale and, as usual with these caves, it underdrains a small arroyo. The cave's upper entrance is about 15 feet wide and four feet high. A passage slopes down over large rocks, goes past a skylight to a sink above, and continues downstream as a dirt-floored stoopway, ending at a lower entrance. We got almost 150 feet out of it – whoope!

BAD AIR CAVE

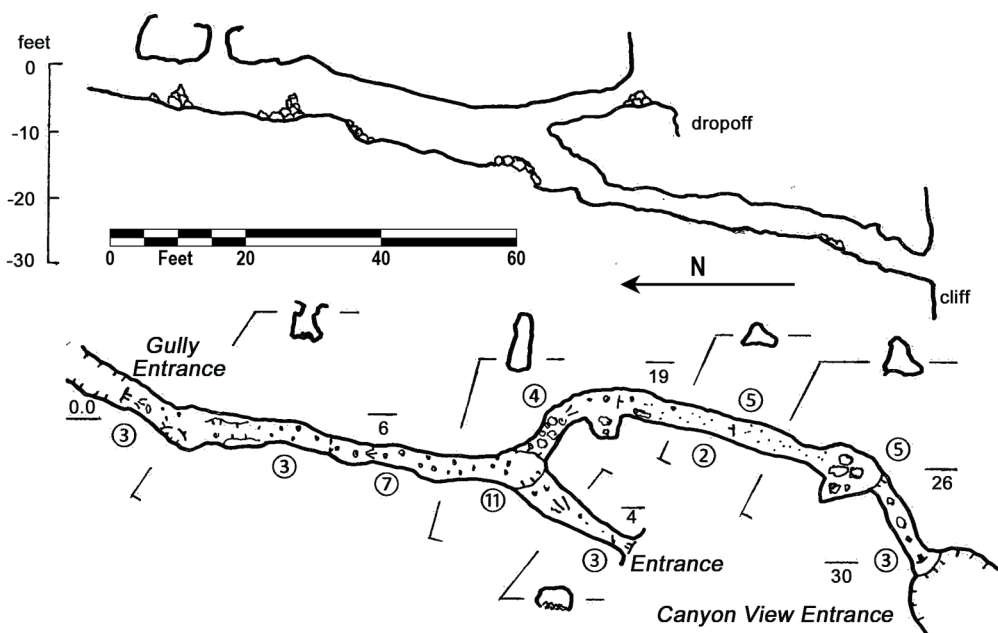
Length: 163'; Depth: 30'

Map by Doug Medville

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

Surveyed May 12, 2022

W. Farr, H. Kalnitz, D. Medville



Bad Air Cave map.

TYRED CAVE

Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area

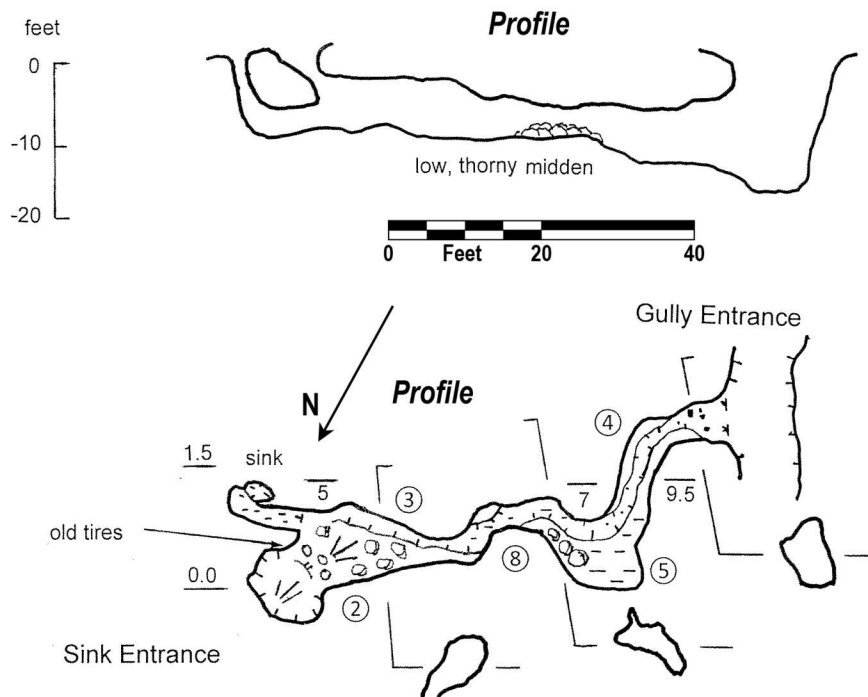
Montrose County, CO

Map by Doug Medville

Surveyed May 10, 2022

Carol Vesely, Bill Farr, Bob Richards

Length: 79'; Depth: 11'



Tyred Cave map.

Gully Pit

The Mancos has lots of gullies with lots of 15-20-foot-deep pits in it so the name is unimaginative. We found this one on a hike with Carol Vesely in a very sinky area with lots of entrances. Carol did a tricky climb down into the cave, took off, and came back saying that it had some nice passage in it.

A few months later, I returned to this pit with her husband, Bill Farr, to survey it. Two passages were seen below the entrance sink. The one to the left required a handline for a steep, awkward downclimb that led to a short segment of low passage. The one to the right, which Carol had downclimbed, was more vertical and exposed so we tied off and threw down my 15' cable ladder; useful for these short nuisance drops.

The passage below was actually quite nice – up to 12 feet high and wide. When we came to a passage junction, we went up a slope, then back down another slope and returned to the junction via a stream crawl, closing a loop. Our closure error was 0.89% vs. an expected error

of 2.28%, thanks to Bill's excellent Disto reading skills. Neither of us had thought to bring in a cell phone or camera for taking pictures so the only picture of this cave is one of Carol at the top of the entrance.

Bad Air Cave

This one is in the Morrison Formation and is two miles up a steep canyon with an exposed climb needed to get to the top, which is where the cave's upper entrance is. The cave was named not for any bad air in it but for the fact that cold air blasts through it, chilling us as we surveyed its crawls.

A rocky entrance crawl at the bottom of a blind gully leads to passage going downhill toward the canyon in which we had climbed up. Partway through the cave, an upsloping side passage goes to a middle entrance. Beyond this entrance, the cave continues downhill to a lower entrance, about 3 feet wide and high. *Good, I thought, we'll go out this entrance and avoid crawling back upstream through the cave.*

Wrong. The entrance was in a cliff face at the head of the canyon that we had hiked up and there was no way out of it – cliff above, cliff below. We even saw this entrance while hiking up from



Hidden Cave entrance.

Photo by Doug Medville.



Looking down into an unentered 20-foot pit.

Photo by Doug Medville.

below but thought that it was inaccessible. Once again, we didn't have a camera to take pictures looking out and we're not going to go back there to do that.

Tyred Cave

The full name of this miserable hole is "We're Tyred of this Cave." Several old truck tires are half-buried in the mud in the entrance to this little cave. Crawling over them, a very short segment of walking passage leads to an uncomfortable crawl over thorny midden, brought in by cave rats.

The passage beyond this leads to a walk-out entrance in a gully. This was the last cave surveyed at the end of a three-day trip to the area and we were getting tired of surveying in these uncomfortable thorny mud caves. That and the tires, gave the cave its name.

Hidden Cave

After surveying Tyred Cave, we walked around the area; a sinkhole-filled meadow below the Elephant Skin Road in the GGNCA. Bob Richards found a nice arch between two of the sinks but he missed a 4'-high by 3'-wide entrance with a small stream coming out just around the corner from the arch.

Walking past his arch on a trip in July 2022, I rounded the corner and saw this entrance. I did a solo survey into it and ended up with a pleasant little cave ("pleasant" means no crawling) that ended in a room of sorts where the passage was up to 15 feet wide and 8 feet high. The usual rat midden and poop covered the tops of the rocks in the back of the cave.

Conclusion

There are lots more of these small caves and pits out in the claystone and shale gullies and badlands in the GGNCA; an example of one of them shown in the last image. When we return there, we'll keep on poking around, hoping to find something a bit bigger. Our largest cave in the area, Rock Pigeon Cave, has 1,022 feet surveyed with passages up to 50 feet high and 20 feet wide. I wrote about this one in the August 2022 issue of the NSS News. This cave is in the Mancos Shale so finding another big one out there isn't out of the question and we'll keep looking. 🐉

Exploring France's Gouffre Berger Cave

by *Tristan Stahl*



Tristan has been caving for 18 years and has participated in expeditions to Mexico, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, USA, Greece, and Turkey. He now lives in Denver and is always looking to get underground.

Introduction

As a young, eager caver I would often find myself in YouTube rabbit holes watching grainy caving videos during the week while I was waiting to see the forecast for the upcoming weekend. If it was raining, I'd go caving. If it was dry, I'd go climbing. If it was snowing, it depended on what crazy adventure either camp of friends had in store.

One such evening, while sitting around watching caving videos with my roommates (both climbers, who would occasionally go caving), a video popped up in the queue: "Immersion." The video started and was soon showing cavers walking through large passages with ivory-white formations and the occasional vertical drop. I started googling this cave whose name was Gouffre Berger.

Over the years I'd meet people who had been, some to the bottom, some to only -600 m. Everyone I met, regardless of the depth they ventured to, said it was one of the coolest cave and caving trips they had been on.

As I became more active in caving, I kept the goal of going to the Berger, getting to -1,000 m, and seeing the vast system.

After wrapping up a five-week trip to the Mediterranean to go caving (many of my fellow cavers had been to the Berger), I came back and decided to commit to going to the Berger in July, 2023. I emailed the organizer, joined the Facebook group, and began examining all the travel logistics.

The registration opened December 1 and closed at the end of the month. My S.O., Georgia Schneider, and I registered along with Carl Bern and Derek Bristol. Next we booked flights and accommodations for the night before and nights after we were done camping. Then we waited.

Travel

Finally, the morning of July 18th arrived and we grabbed our duffels and headed to the airport with Carl. Derek was already in France with his wife.

Carl parked his Tacoma in long-term parking at Denver International Airport. The three of us, with our heavy bags, wob-

bled like penguins over to the shuttle stop and were soon on our way to the airport. Once inside DIA we found the Lufthansa line and waited, occasionally moving forward and tossing our duffels as we discussed the upcoming trip.

Even arriving 3.5 hours before our flight, we still found ourselves speed-walking towards our gate with less than a half hour



Carl handles all the baggage on our way to Grenoble.

Photo by Georgia Schneider.



Photo by Georgia Schneider.

Group photo on morning of trip to 1,000 m. Left to right: Carl Bern, Tristan Stahl, Georgia Schneider, and Derek Bristol.

to spare. We sat and waited for our boarding class to be called and then began the 9.5-hour journey from Denver to Frankfurt.

After sleeping and getting caught up on recent Hollywood releases, I found myself in the EU visa line, with only 45 min. to catch my next flight to Lyon, France. I was through in just five minutes, a testament to German efficiency.

Once again, I found myself on a Lufthansa flight, only two hours away from France!

We landed and soon were waiting at the baggage claim. Sure enough our duffels made it, and we were able to get onto the next task, acquiring a SIM card for our phones. I stood in line and soon was trying my best to translate my request when the cashier said "How long are you staying?" in perfect English.

"Twelve days," I replied.

"OK, here is the best option; unlimited data and texting." She slid the SIM card package to me and collected my payment.

That was easy. Next waypoint: the train station. We loaded a trolley and headed to the train station where we changed our tickets to an earlier departure time for the train. Then we headed down to a terminal and again waited.

Our train arrived right on time, and we were on our way. It was a cozy excursion, as we had booked first-class tickets for our journey. Only an hour later, we were in Grenoble and walked two blocks and checked into our hotel.

We then had the task of picking up some odds and ends before heading up into the mountains for eight days.

We headed towards the local Decathlon store (the European version of REI). We perused and found camp fuel, grabbed two canisters, and checked out. Once again, we were out on the streets of Grenoble, which is a mix of tourists, both from other countries and France in addition to locals going about their day.

We walked until we saw a beer garden and sat down to continue discussing caving plans and other things we'd like to see while in the French Alps. After the afternoon beers, we decided to grab some food.

After my alarm buzzed at 6 am, I groggily sat up, still jet-lagged, and dressed. I journeyed to the hotel lobby directly to the espresso machine. I checked my email while sitting with a strong coffee and downloaded some maps. I then downloaded 'Google Translate'.

Once Georgia and Carl were up and had had some espresso, we walked and grabbed a croissant before heading off to the bank to grab some cash.

Then it was off to rent a car in the basement of the train station. Deposit placed, keys in hand, we took the stairs down to the basement and soon spied our car, a Cupra hatchback.

We drove back to our hotel, loaded our gear, and checked out. We started down the main road and soon exited onto the highway. Before we started up into the Alps, we stopped at a grocery store, separated to shop and then met back up, sorted our supplies, and checked out. We spent 120 euros for three full grocery bags and two cases of beer; not bad.

Back on the road we were soon on winding one-lane roads weaving through a small village, with the occasional chair lift visible in the background. The trees quickly changed to almost entirely pines. Our Google maps navigated us towards a small fenced-in field with a large shelter tent, bathrooms, and a sink.

Camp

After walking around the camp we sat and waited to see who would show up. Some French cavers arrived eventually, and then camp organizer Remy and his assistant showed up. He told us that the briefing for our warm-up trip would be that evening at 6 pm.

We set up camp and headed into the nearby town of Autrans for an early dinner. We soon learned that in France, there are bakeries that serve croissants and assorted breakfasts and maybe a meal from 10 am-12 noon, but early dinner isn't a thing. Dinner is 7-10 pm. We found a beer joint with a limited menu.

After our meal, we drove back to camp. Several more vehicles had arrived, and fellow cavers were milling about. We went to the group tent and sat down at a picnic table while we waited for Remy to arrive.

Remy walked in and stood to the side of a large plan-view map of the Berger. He spoke in French and pointed to certain areas; I picked up bits and pieces of what he was saying. After Remy went around and spoke to each group, he finally approached us. He clarified any questions we had, and we put our group on the board for the following day.

We decided on a name for our group: "TEAM AMERICA!" We put our start time as 7:30 am, wound down for a bit, talked with some fellow cavers, and went off to bed.



Photo by Georgia Schneider.

Remy gives us the briefing before our first trip into the Berger.

Caving Trip I

We rose early and made breakfast, coffee, and then packed snacks for the first day of caving. We all piled into the Cupra and began driving up the winding mountain road to the parking lot.

Once there we donned our packs and started hiking. Derek (who had joined us a bit earlier) and Carl had the GPS point and directions. A quarter mile down the path we veered right and started winding down through the woods. After 20 minutes, we found ourselves in a karst area with lots of exposed limestone.

A group of three Spanish canyoneers was in front of us. They looked stout, so we figured we'd let them go first. Once we were all geared up, we continued to wait for the Spanish team to begin, getting a little annoyed as time passed.

Finally, I got on rope and went down and kept getting to the pitch heads and waiting with the Spaniards, to give them the idea of "hurry up, we traveled a long way to see this cave." We got down -100 m to some big borehole. It was amazing, finally seeing the giant rock cairn in person, the large walking passage trending down, and eventually tightening into a canyon.



Georgia traversing The Confines.

Photo by Carl Bern.

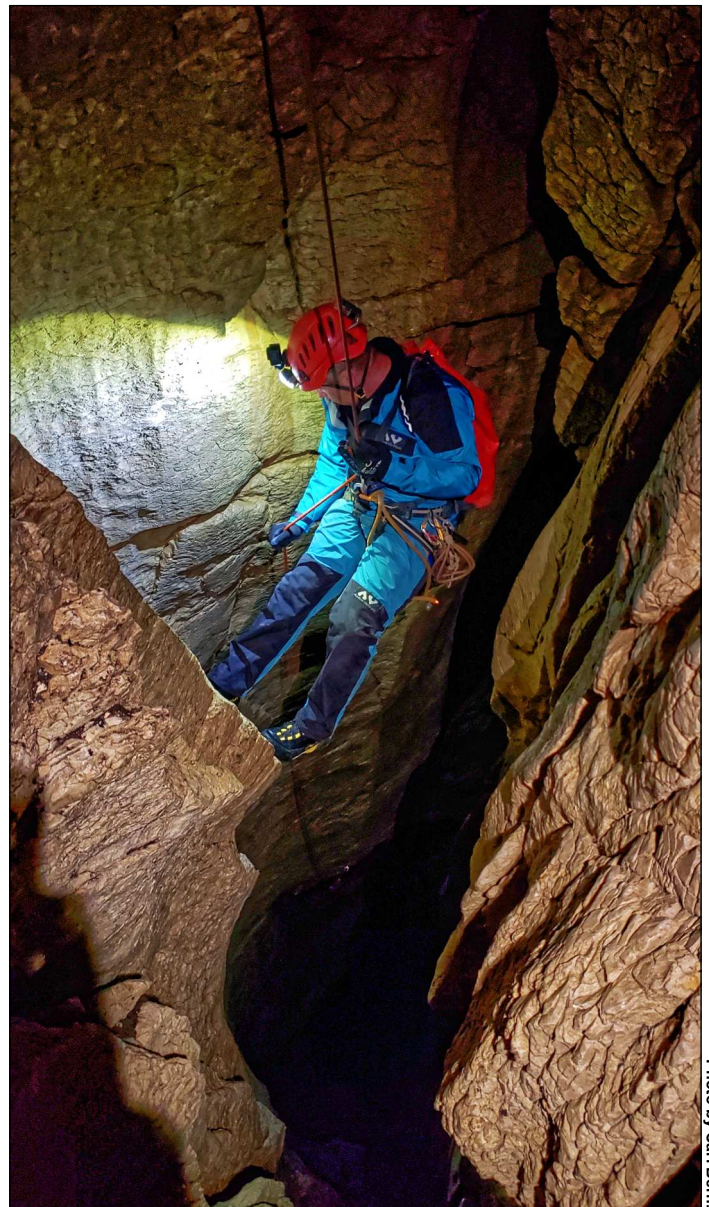


Photo by Carl Bern.

Derek abseiling down the second drop in Berger.

We found ourselves again waiting behind the Spanish team. Finally, we realized one of their team was stuck crossing a rebe-lay causing us to wait some more. We finally got on rope, went on down to another meander, and found ourselves waiting for a team that was exiting the cave. They took a long time climbing the ropes.

We were getting concerned about our time. Getting down to -500 m should take about five hours; at this point we'd been in the cave close to four hours as a result of slower teams.

Finally, we were going down the next drop and eventually popped into an amazing passage, perhaps 30 m. high and 60+ m. wide. We started walking and found the large borehole doesn't take long to traverse. We finally passed the Spanish team at the -500 m camp where we chatted for a bit. It seemed they'd be OK, but they mainly do canyoning, which explains why they were moving slowly past the deviations and rebelay.

We kept moving, as we were quite behind our schedule. The water picked up as we got closer to the beginning of the "Con-fines." Eventually we rappelled down some amazing flowstone

and walked down to where the Confines begin. Damp, exhausted, and cold, we headed out. Going out is when you start to realize how deep you are, all the boulder-hopping does start to wear on you.

Once out, we changed, packed up and hiked back to the car. We threw our bags in, and everyone cracked open a Kronenbourg. Derek passed around Pringles. Once we were done with our snack, we returned to camp. I checked-in with the volunteers and let them know we were out. It wasn't good timing; it took 12 hours as a result of the slower teams ahead of us.

The next morning we got up, made breakfast, and began discussing the next move. We were scheduled two days later to go into the cave for our trip to the bottom and out. However, that is when a large rainstorm was supposed to move in and flood the cave below -700 m.

We decided to go the next day with only one rest day. We figured we would get into the cave first: wake up at 4:30 am, leave camp by 5:30, then enter the cave by 7:00.

We stopped by the Croque Montagne gear store and picked up some odds and ends. I got a fancy new cave suit for the big trip.

Caving Trip II

Back at camp we got to bed early. I drifted off to sleep, but soon was woken by some Bach playing from my phone. Oof I felt

tired. I put my jacket on, left the tent, and headed to the group shelter with my cook kit. I started a pot of water and was soon joined by Carl and Georgia. Once we'd had several cups of coffee, devoured a bowl of oatmeal, eaten toast, and packed snacks for our big day, we saw Derek pull up. We crammed into a car together and began the drive up. Once at the parking lot, we saw a French caver who quickly hiked ahead of us.

We started the hike and were soon at the cave entrance. We all began changing. Once geared up, we snapped a group photo, stashed our packs, and headed in.

We were moving very quickly and soon found ourselves at -500 m after about three hours. We were all very excited as we had a time constraint of being back through the Confines on our way out well before the rain started, which was projected to hit at 1 am. It was not even noon and we felt very good about our timing. We continued on.

Eventually we popped into the Confines, a narrow canyon passage with water at the bottom. The traverse lines weave along the wall about 10 to 15 feet above the water. We moved along the traverse lines until finally rappelling down 5 meters and getting our feet wet.

We encountered an intimidating drop after a few feet. I got on the traverse line, rigged in, began down, quickly reaching a rebelay, then another with a Tyrolean traverse. I continued to rappel down, with my feet only a few feet above a large pool. I soon landed on a rocky beach.

Derek arrived shortly thereafter and we regrouped. We headed down a few more nuisance drops until we were suddenly in a large room, bigger than anything we'd seen in this cave so far.

The route finding began and continued until we finally discovered a handline rigged around an odd natural boulder protruding out of the ground. The handline meandered down a mud slope for several hundred feet which brought us to the bottom of the slope at -900 m.

We picked up our pace and arrived at a rocky passage with a low ceiling. As we stooped through, the way on was not obvious. We arrived at a pool; I soon ducked through and arrived in walking passage. We then heard the intimidating roar of the hurricane drop. We looked to our right and saw the waterfall, then a lead-in line. We proceeded to clip in and traverse on our hands and knees to the side of a large waterfall.

Ahead of me, Georgia swung out on her cowstails, clipped her ascender into the rappel line, rigged in, and started down. Once we were all at the bottom we walked until we saw the "Affluent," a waterfall to the right, marking -1000 m in depth. We sat, took photos, and checked the time: only 7.5 hours to the bottom!

We conducted a modest photo shoot then looked ahead to the stream passage. Derek tried to cross and stay dry; I tried, finally thinking we wouldn't reach the sump (an additional 300 m in length and 22 m in depth). We decided to see if Georgia could traverse the canyon. She plopped herself in, and we decided we'd all had enough. Soaking wet (Georgia drenched in 33F water), we started out. Back at the bottom of the hurricane drop we passed an older man with a young man. In a thick French accent he said "He is only 13 and made it here!"

We congratulated them and continued the slog out.

Being honest, I have to say that on the way down you are enamored; at every turn you are seeing some amazing formations, but the way out feels hard. You are cold, wet, and the main redeeming factor of the spectacular features is that you know



Photo by Carl Bern.

Tristan and Georgia at the affluent at -1100 m.

you are closer to being out. I was cold, so I stormed ahead. Remembering that we had a time that the water would begin to rise, I wanted to be past the Confines.

Out of breath, I stopped and peered at the large flowstone, marking the beginning of the dry walking passage. I was so excited and relieved.

We made our way up some ropes and began walking. Excited and tired we soon arrived at the -500 m camp. I put on a fleece hoodie, and we all sat and drank some tea then opted to take a cuddle pile nap in one of the shelters. We warmed up but soon began to shiver after about 30 minutes. We again continued our trek out of the cave. Luckily, it was all walking until the ropes at -250 m. I stooped down and saw the bright orange rope leading out.

I clipped my basic in then my Croll, followed by my Pantin and started ascending. Carl was behind me, then Derek, and finally Georgia. We made our way out.

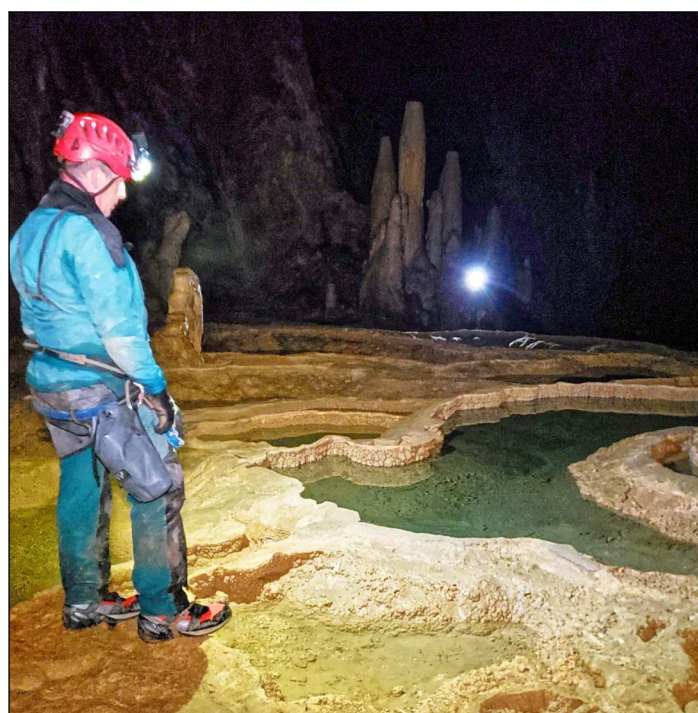
I arrived at the entrance clipped into the traverse line, walked out, unclipped and collapsed on the ground. Taking a moment to myself, I teared up. A goal was achieved. I checked my phone: 18 hours! I continued to recline, finally gathering the strength to grab my bag and change out of my wet clothes.

After 45 minutes the others arrived: Carl, Derek, and then I saw Georgia's lovely face peer at me from the entrance.

I drank almost a liter of water while everyone changed. Once organized, we performed a dumbass check (looking around for potentially lost gear).

Then we started the overland hike back. The stars were amazing, minimal light pollution, and fatigued legs. It felt like a dream; once out of the forest, we could see the incoming storm. We walked faster and faster until arriving finally at the Cupra where we cracked some Kronenbourg beers. Derek produced a sleeve of Pringles. We chilled, all excited and relieved that we had done it.

As we sat, raindrops started to fall on our heads. We wrapped up the festivities, and Carl drove us off the mountain. We dropped Derek off at his Airbnb and headed to camp.



Derek looks at one of several dozen rimstone pools.

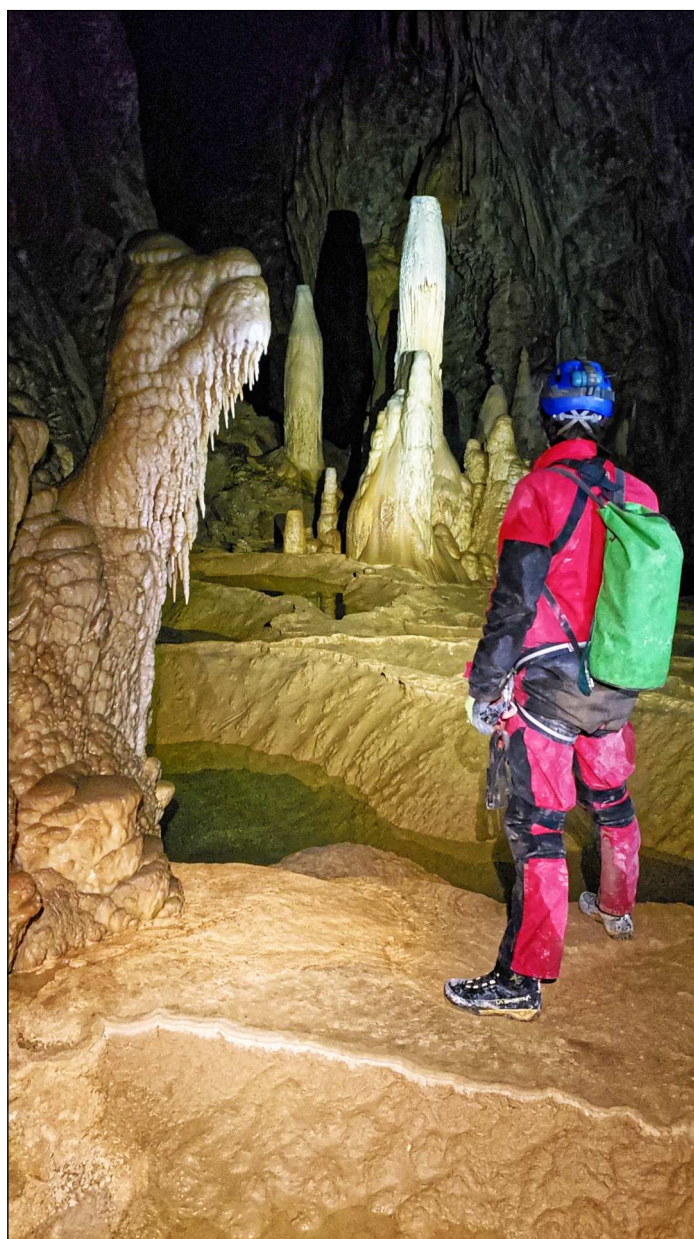


Photo by Carl Bern.

Tristan looking at 'The 13.'

Back at camp, we dumped our gear, grabbed our food bag, made a lovely dinner of canned food, had another beer, and headed off to bed.

The next morning, my whole body ached, but it was the good kind of tired.

Epilog

The Berger is a very impressive cave, and I encourage everyone to visit. The two trips I did into the cave are forever burned into my mind, and I was so thankful for everything in my life that led me to the point where I could bottom the cave and come out.

It is a truly odd sport for which to travel to the French Alps, a dream destination for many. I hope more Americans will make the pilgrimage to the classic cave and keep our presence up. Many of the French cavers were excited to see an American team and we spent several nights up late drinking with the other Europeans. 🍷

Cave of Sorrow

by Richard Rhinehart

Richard Rhinehart has long held an interest in the history of Colorado and the American West. He has extensively researched and documented the history of numerous Colorado caves since 1985, including Glenwood Caverns, Fulford Cave, Spring Cave, and the many caves of Williams Canyon at Manitou Springs. In 2011, Richard participated with Donald Davis and Norman Thompson in the project that created the Big Earth Publishing book Cave of the Winds: Then & Now. That year, he also received the National Speleological Society's Peter M. Hauer Spelean History Award at the Colorado convention.



Sorrow is knowledge, those that know the most must mourn the deepest, the tree of knowledge is not the tree of life.

Lord Byron

On Saturday, January 22, 1881, George W. Snider led his brother Horace, Charles Hunter, and fellow Ohioan Charles Rinehart along the rocky wagon road leading north of the small resort community of Manitou into scenic Williams Canyon.

It had snowed only the day before, part of a fast-moving arctic weather front that dropped more than eight inches of snow in Boulder, closed the High Line rail line above Georgetown, and plunged area temperatures into the low teens. In the canyon, the high walls shaded the canyon floor from the morning sun. Passing beyond the silent, shuttered lime kiln and the narrows in the canyon, the men could see the sunshine on the western wall ahead.

George had arrived in Manitou in the fall of 1879 from Ohio. Skilled as a stone cutter, he secured a position in the construction of the scenic Cumbres and Toltec line of the Rio Grande Railroad west of the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. With the arrival of winter in the high country, George returned to Manitou in the fall of 1880.

He was intrigued with the stories he heard about the discovery of a cave in Williams Canyon. A large natural arch known as the Cave of the Winds was a visitor attraction during the summer months, a scenic location George had examined himself the previous year after arriving in Colorado. On June 26, the young Pickett brothers pushed beyond the cave's dusty entrance chamber, finding spacious chambers decorated with stalactites and stalagmites. This discovery convinced the Boynton brothers to lease the cave and open it as a commercial attraction for summer visitors.

The brothers cleared pathways, installed ladders, and opened the cave for business by early August 1880. Given its late season launch, the attraction failed to leave much of an impression in the resort community during the few weeks it was open. Perhaps Mammoth Cave in the lower canyon, which opened in 1875, had satisfied the curiosity of visitors. By September, the Cave of the

Winds closed for the season. At some point later, vandals broke open the cave's wooden entrance door, leaving it vulnerable to unsupervised visitors.

After climbing the steep primitive trail up the canyon wall to the arch, both Snider brothers, Hunter, and Rinehart found the entrance door broken and neglected. They lit candles and entered the closed attraction. George later reported he had visited the cave earlier that month and found two extensions that he dug into.

On his January 17 visit, he found what appeared to be a "rat hole" leading west from an ascending passage. Placing his candle in front of the hole to have a better look, the flame was quickly extinguished by a strong draft of wind. Relighting the candle, he removed some rock from the small hole, tossing the debris down the slope into the chamber below. Soon, he had an opening large enough to squeeze through.

Candle ahead, he entered a long, low passageway. At the far end of this crawl, he found a crevice about two feet wide by six to eight inches high, leading upward. George poked into this opening, and reaching an impassable point, he tied together several sticks and attached his candle. He held it above, illuminating what appeared to be a larger chamber.

Excited at the prospect of discovery, George invited the others to help him on this dig project. Their January 22 return allowed George to squeeze and push his way up the slope, pushing dirt and debris below him. This debris was removed by his companions.

Soon, George was at the top of the crevice. He later wrote, "I knew that I had made a great discovery, and as I lay there, with my head and shoulders out of the hole, holding my candle above my head to light up the room in all directions as far as possible, the sight was so deeply imbedded in my memory it can never be effaced. It was as though Aladdin with his wonderful lamp had effected the magic result."

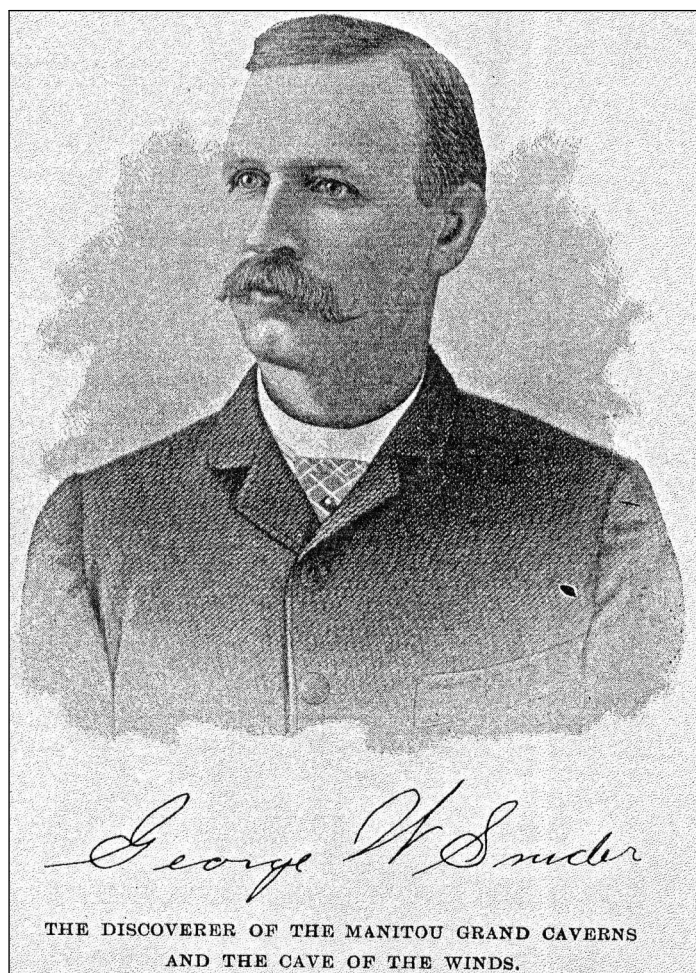
This was Canopy Hall, a well-decorated, canopied chamber that is today the largest room on the cave's Discovery tour route. Deciding as he examined the room that he could potentially purchase the cave and open it as a visitor attraction, George considered

his options. Since his father in Akron, Ohio had not responded to a previous written query regarding providing funds to open a lime kiln, he thought of Rinehart. The older man, an acquaintance of his father, had previously confided in George that he had several thousand dollars for investing in a business.

Following the trip, George approached Rinehart with his idea. Rinehart was also enthusiastic at the prospect of the business. He agreed he could provide the capital to purchase the property. George and his brothers Horace and Hunter would undertake the necessary work to prepare the cave for public exhibition. For this, Rinehart suggested splitting the business in two, half interest for himself, and the others splitting the other half. Within days, however, Rinehart reconsidered his offer and said he would split the business only between himself and George.

They purchased the property from the Hemenway family in Colorado Springs for \$1,000 without providing details as to their interest. The property deed was signed on January 29. George and Horace then undertook a vigorous exploration of the cave, following a low, wide passage leading west from Canopy Hall which led to additional chambers and corridors. Many of the rooms now shown on the Discovery Tour were found during this period. About this time, the Hemenway brothers, having regretted their sale after learning about the new discoveries, tried to occupy and seize the cave. George drove them away at gun point.

Working daily on improvements, a hired force of men joined George and Horace in the development. By February 15, the expanded cave was nearly ready to begin public visits.



Engraving of George W. Snider (1895).

The *Colorado Springs Gazette* announced the new discoveries in its February 27 edition. "During the winter, Mr. Rhinehart [sic], the owner of the cave, has been making improvements to make it more accessible. On his invitation we visited the cave yesterday and give the following description of what we saw..." reported the paper in a page four article.

The report ended with a promise. "In the near future these wonders of nature will be more easily seen. Mr. Rhinehart [sic] and the Messrs. Snider are constantly at work enlarging the now narrow passages, placing ladders up steep places, and in general rendering the cave easy of access to those who may wish to study or observe the wonders so long concealed within the Rocky Mountains."

The March 1881 *Congregational News* of Colorado Springs provided an update on the new venture:

Messrs. Reinhart [sic] and [the] Snyder [sic] brothers have bought the cave and are busy at work getting it ready for visitors. They are building steps and ladders and are blasting the rock in narrow places, so that ladies can go through without difficulty. Of course they will not allow visitors to break off specimens. When several persons go together the charge for admission and the service of a guide will be only fifty cents for each person. The wagon road from the Cliff House up Williams' canon will be much improved, so that persons can ride nearly to the entrance of the cave. The hardest part of the trip will be the climb of about 150 or 200 feet up the side of the canon at an angle of about 40 degrees. Steps will be constructed for part of this climb. After entering the cave it takes about two miles travel to explore every part of it, but the temperature of the cave is so even, the air so exhilarating, and the delight so great that one does not notice fatigue. No more gentlemanly or accommodating guides can be found than Messrs. Reinhart [sic] and the Snyder [sic] brothers.

Despite the growing interest in the attraction in the region, George began to resent his older partner. In his book about the discovery of the Cave of the Winds, he wrote, "Rinehart at once took upon himself the post of doorkeeper to which he stuck tenaciously."

As the weather warmed in the spring, George welcomed Samuel, his father, and brothers Perry and Charles to Manitou. The brothers were provided positions in the cave as guides, while Samuel developed a lime kiln business.

Samuel, who knew Rinehart from Ohio, quietly warned George about the older man. George recalled he said "to keep a sharp eye on Rinehart as he was known to be a dishonest old scoundrel, being then a fugitive from justice. He went on to explain that Rinehart had been administrator for several estates and had gotten away with most of the money, besides defrauding one of his law partners, and being involved in other crooked schemes."

George grew more suspicious when money coming in from tours never seemed to make its way to him. Business expenses were generally the responsibility of George. "[Rinehart] was a lawyer by profession, and just clever enough to keep within the law in the matter by paying his share of the taxes and doing a little now and then towards paying expenses," wrote George.

By 1884, the business relationship between the partners was nearing the breaking point. George had discovered the Manitou Grand Caverns on June 9, 1881, on his land across the mountain from Cave of the Winds. Exploration of this new cave had found

Cave of the Winds archive image.

many remarkable and impressive chambers, including the largest known chamber in the canyon.

Meanwhile, the final payment for purchasing the Cave of the Winds was coming due. At the same time, an Ohio bondsman hired Judge McMorris to recover an old debt of \$2,000. Judge McMorris, who was also George's attorney, filed an attachment on Rinehart's Cave of the Winds interest to gain restitution.

George later recalled, "Rinehart had to pay up or lose his one-half interest; but he came to me with blood in his eye, holding me responsible for having the deed made in his name, which I had done according to the original contract drawn up by himself in the beginning. The wily fellow had been intending all the while to put it in the name of his wife, by which, of course, he would have saved himself. Shaking his fist in my face he vowed he would hound me to my grave for this; and that when he himself should be dead he would have on my track the keenest scented old hound that ever lived."

Following the final payment for the Cave of the Winds, George's brothers Charles and Perry demanded that he release the business to the family. They reasoned that since their mother's loan had been used to make payments for the purchase and other expenses, the half percentage was rightfully the family's, and not George's alone.

Recognizing the uncomfortable position he found himself in, George decided it was time to get out of the Cave of the Winds business. He would develop the Grand Caverns as an attraction on his own. On January 12, 1885, George agreed to trade his half interest in the Cave of the Winds to his mother, in exchange for 40 acres of land that his brother Perry owned, which contained a portion of the Grand Caverns.

George noted the agreement came with a provision. "I, on my part, reserved the right to all caves then known, and hereafter to be discovered, on the Cave of the Winds lands, outside of the Cave of the Winds itself. This was done for my protection, as it was supposed that some of the Grand Caverns would extend into the Cave lands."

The Rineharts

Charles B. Rinehart came west to Manitou from his home in Lawrence Township, Ohio in late 1880 when he was 58 years old. Charles was a lawyer by profession and had served as Summit County Clerk for six years until 1870. Accompanying him was his wife Rose and daughter Mary Emma. Mary, who went by her middle name Emma, was 23 years old and was asthmatic. The decision to move to Colorado likely was related to Emma's medical condition.

Rose was Charles' senior by two years. They married in Stark County, Ohio on March 28, 1850, when Rose was 30 years of age. Her father was a cooper, making wooden barrels. Her brother David was a doctor.

Charles had traveled to Ohio for his education from his family home in New York state. After receiving his degree, he lived in the greater Akron region for more than three decades. Akron was also home to the Snider family, so during this time, Charles might have come across George's father Samuel.

When the Rinehart family arrived in Manitou, they met George, who was seeking employment. On a bitterly cold day in December 1880, Charles and George were hunting in a broad valley north of Manitou later known as Cavern Gulch. Wounding a deer, they followed the animal up the steep eastern canyon wall. Near some limestone cliffs, George noticed a peculiar plume of steam hanging in the still mountain air. Investigating, he found it issued from a tight crevice in the slope. On an adjacent juniper tree frosted white from the moisture, he tied his handkerchief, believing it was a hot spring. He then set off after Rinehart and the deer.

Nearly seven months later, on a warm June day, George came upon his tattered handkerchief still tied to the tree. Investigating the crevice, he felt a cool flow of air. Since his exploration of the Cave of the Winds earlier that year, he understood this was clearly a cave. He returned with a pick and shovel and worked the hole. Prying away some rocks, some of which tumbled into



Cave of the Winds archive image.

Historic 1885 view of the Manitou Grand Caverns by William Henry Jackson. While the entrance to the cave was undisputed to be on George Snider's property, the southeastern portion of the cave was alleged to be on Cave of the Winds property.

the hole, he squeezed into the opening. With his candle, he could see he was the first to enter what he called the Manitou Grand Caverns.

The opening of this cave to public tours in March 1885 was not a surprise to Rinehart or to George's family. George had been open about his new cave and likely had shown them all the spacious corridors and chambers. Yet, the opening was troublesome for the owners of the Cave of the Winds since it was a competitor. The opening of the Cave of the Winds four years earlier was apparently enough for the owner of Mammoth Cave in the lower canyon to close it to the public. Could Cave of the Winds suffer the same cruel fate?

The Grand Caverns was objectively a better, more suitable attraction for the public. The cave had larger chambers and profuse decorations. It also was largely on one level, rather than three like the Cave of the Winds. This made it easier for visitors to traverse.

Learning from his experience at the Cave of the Winds, George hired a force of men to build a carriage road up Cavern Gulch to the level of the cave's entrance. Rock masons built a large retaining wall for the carriage parking lot. While miners excavated a horizontal tunnel into the cave, carpenters built a wood-frame entrance building with a broad deck that provided a view of the Pikes Peak summit. The years of development within the Caverns allowed a mostly horizontal tour with only a few short stairways. A ladder and platform was constructed to a group of musical stalactites on the wall of the cave's largest chamber. This natural musical instrument would prove to be exceedingly popular with visitors.

With George promoting the Grand Caverns extensively, visitors found themselves choosing between the two cave attractions. More often, they chose the Caverns. This increasingly troubled the Rineharts, who retained half interest in the Cave of the Winds but had relocated to Denver. The Grand Caverns in 1885 and the following year outdrew the Cave of the Winds in paying visitors and public awareness.

On October 1, 1886, the Rineharts decided they must aggressively address this injustice. Dependent on income from the Cave of the Winds, the Rineharts filed a lawsuit against George to extend their half interest in the Grand Caverns. The October 1 filing claimed that portions of the Caverns crossed over the property line onto Cave of the Winds land. By the terms of an 1884 agreement with George that ended their partnership, this meant that the Cave of the Winds owners would receive half the income from the Grand Caverns.

On November 30, 1887, a Colorado Springs jury found that the cave did lie entirely within George's property. Rose Rinehart, listed as the owner of the Cave of the Winds, appealed. On April 12, 1888, a second jury determined from presented evidence the Caverns did pass into Cave of the Winds property. This jury ruled that George would have to split his Caverns proceeds evenly with his former partners. Not surprisingly, George appealed this decision.

During this new trial at the District Court, George reported to the court that the surveyed section corner, from which local property boundaries were drawn, had been mysteriously lost between the first trial in 1887 and the second five months later. It was said that the original marker, next to a tree along a fence



Photograph by Richard Rinehart

Surveyors in the 19th century were faced with challenging terrain for their range and township surveys. This view is from just west of the 1871 corner marker; in the distance to the south is the upper parking lot at Cave of the Winds, with the city of Manitou Springs in the far distance.

line, had been lost when the tree had been cut down. A pile of rocks indicating the corner also had been scattered about, making it difficult to determine the corner's true location. The official monument, a stone about 9 inches by 11 inches by 16 inches, protruding from the ground about 9 inches, was found, but in disturbed soil suggesting mischief.

George suggested it was likely the surveyed line used in the second trial therefore did not use the original federal survey corner that he used when filing his homestead claim in 1881.

Charles Liebold owned the adjacent property to the north. In 1884 or 1885, he constructed a fence along the boundary between his land and Snider's property to the south. After visiting the corner prior to the second trial, he testified the marker "looked as though it had been tampered with or moved recently." Two additional witnesses suggested the same. E. H. Kellogg, a federal government surveyor who directed the original township survey in 1871 agreed it appeared the corner stone had been moved. One report suggested it had been moved hundreds of feet, potentially indicating fraud. Surprisingly, Kellogg was not subpoenaed for official testimony.

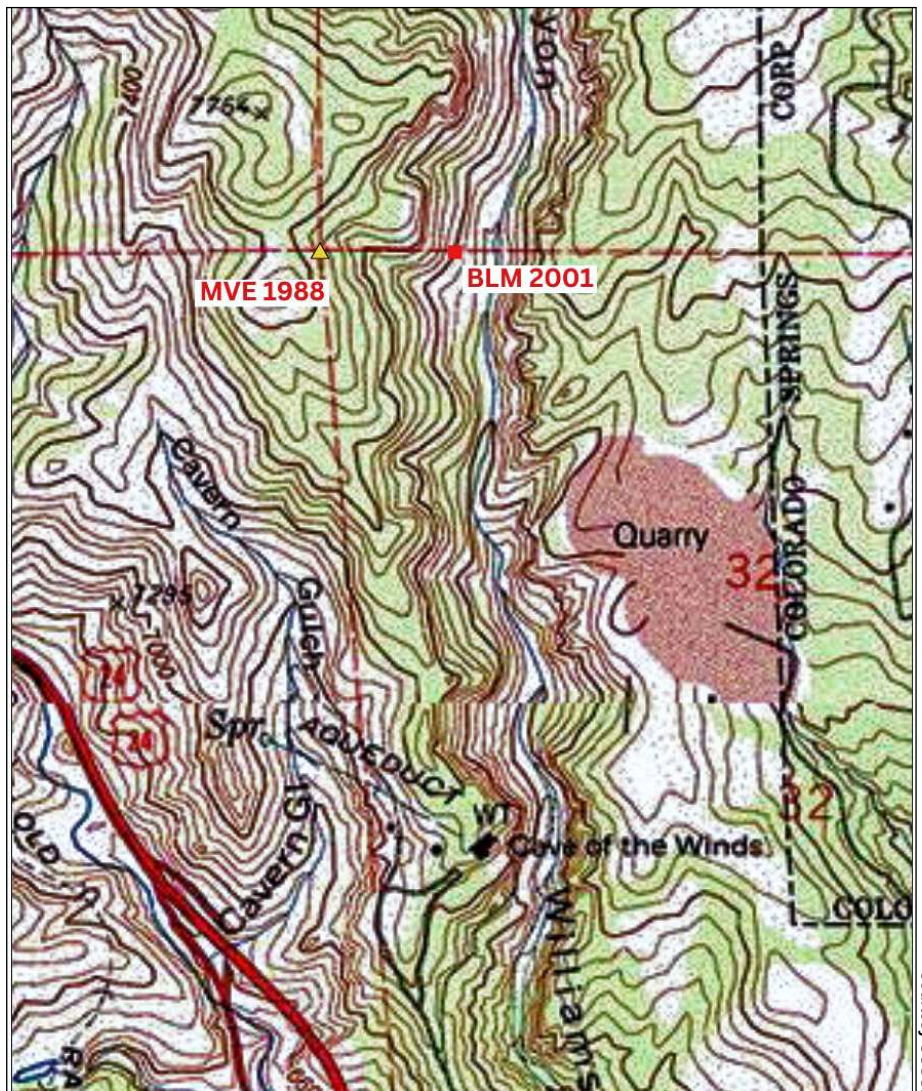
Following a long review of evidence and new testimony, on June 10, 1889, the Supreme Court ruled the motion by George's lawyer to vacate the previous judgment would be denied. This action reaffirmed the previous jury decision from April 1888 that Rose would receive half ownership of the Grand Caverns.

Although George's legal team had paid the court costs to appeal following the unfavorable decision in district court, the appeal was denied solely on the grounds that the team did not specifically state in writing that the appeal to the Colorado Supreme Court was based upon discovery of new information.

Although practices in 1888 and 1889 allowed appeals by simply paying the court costs prior to the next term, the delay in formally requesting a hearing by the Court was felt to be too long. In September 1892, the judgment of the lower court was again affirmed when the Supreme Court declined to take up the case.

The decision confirmed that Rose was part owner of the Grand Caverns. The funds that had been placed into receivership at the Bank of Manitou would be released to her account. According to an October 8, 1892 *Manitou Journal* report, this amount totaled some ten or twelve thousand or more dollars, the equivalent in 2024 dollars of \$337,083 to \$404,500. Another report suggested the amount in receivership was \$20,000, or \$674,167 2024 dollars. This is a significant windfall in a time in which there were no corporate or individual income taxes.

Unfortunately for the Rinehart family, the money was not coming anytime soon. In December, the Colorado Supreme Court affirmed the previous District Court ruling creating joint ownership of the Caverns. On December 19, George's petition for a re-hearing by the court was again denied. He subsequently filed a new suit on January 6 1893 at District Court in Colorado



Topographic map showing the boundary between section 31 and 32. Notice that the 2001 BLM section corner is significantly to the east of the 1988 corner.

Courtesy USGS.

Springs. This filing stated new evidence should be considered, as a new survey line from the rediscovered corner stone proved the Caverns are not on Cave of the Winds land.

This new case was filed against Charles Rinehart and his daughter Emma Austin. This change in defendants was because Rose had died in February 1890. Emma was an only child, and she had married Charles H. Austin in Colorado Springs on December 24, 1882.

The District Court agreed to hear George's request for a new trial, and during a special session on July 13, the court heard the new evidence regarding the corner stone and survey. The evidence was convincing. The following day, the court agreed the case could be tried again.

On November 28, the new case was opened in District Court. Testimony was heard from E. H. Kellogg, the 1871 government surveyor, who reported he had relocated the corner in 1893. He confirmed there had been tampering with its location. Another witness testified the same.

The boundary dispute relied on the location of the corner-stone at the NW corner of section 32 and the NE corner of section 31. Different surveys at different times, including more recent surveys in 2001 and 1988, move this point by hundreds of

feet east or west. At its farthest-east location, the section 31/32 boundary is east of most of the Grand Caverns. At its farthest-west location, all of Cavern Gulch to the west of the Caverns is within section 32.

The confusion about the corner and boundary lines was compelling to the court. They ruled in favor of George's testimony that the Caverns was located only in section 31 and therefore was his property. Owing to the ongoing boundary confusion, they sent the case to the Colorado Supreme Court for review of the decision.

While the case waited for the Supreme Justices to review, on July 1, 1894, 70-year-old Charles Rinehart died in Denver at his daughter Emma's home. This added complexity to the case, which the Supremes noted in their review. Since both the original plaintiffs were deceased, apparently dying with no clear directions as to disposition of any funds from the case, the justices were split in a decision.

Each of the three justices delivered opinions on the case. Chief Justice Charles Hayt was clear as to the reasoning to again not take up the case in 1895:

Here we are asked to set aside a judgment upon a finding that the newly discovered corner is established by a preponderance of the evidence only, in a suit instituted years after the judgment was rendered and the new evidence discovered. The controversy has already been before the courts for upwards of eight years. Two of the original plaintiffs have died since its commencement. Should a new trial be awarded, counsel will not only be deprived of their advice and assistance in conducting the litigation, but their lips are also sealed. It is true that the testimony of these parties, as taken upon a former trial, is preserved in the record, but I apprehend that this testimony would be of but little avail upon a new trial upon the question of the authenticity of the alleged newly discovered corner, as their testimony upon the former trial was not directed to this point.

The case appeared to the media to be finally settled. Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* noted in a January 8 report that "At

last reports \$10,000 were in the hands of the receiver to be turned over to the rightful claimant." This represents a significantly lower amount than the 1892 estimates, but in the previous three years, the 1893 Silver Panic likely reduced bank funds held in stocks or bonds.

In Colorado Springs District Court on March 7, 1895, Emma Austin filed suit against George Snider as heir to the Rinehart estate. Since the original lawsuit named the Rineharts as half owners of the Grand Caverns, Austin and her husband Charles were unable to receive the funds held by receiver M. A. Leddy at the Bank of Manitou. This matter was quickly resolved by the court, and the following day, the El Paso County Sheriff served a writ of joint possession of the Caverns to both Austin and George's mother, who had owned half interest in the Cave of the Winds since 1884.

This action also released the funds held by Leddy. Newspaper reports at the time estimated there was about \$12,000 in the account.

With George back as a partner with his mother and the Austins, he suggested the released funds could be put to good use. He suggested building a scenic road from the Grand Caverns to the western rim of Williams Canyon north of the caves, which he estimated would cost only \$300. For another \$1,200, George said this road could be dropped down from the rim to the existing road in the canyon, which ended near Bridal Veil Falls. This would create an appealing loop road for visitors.

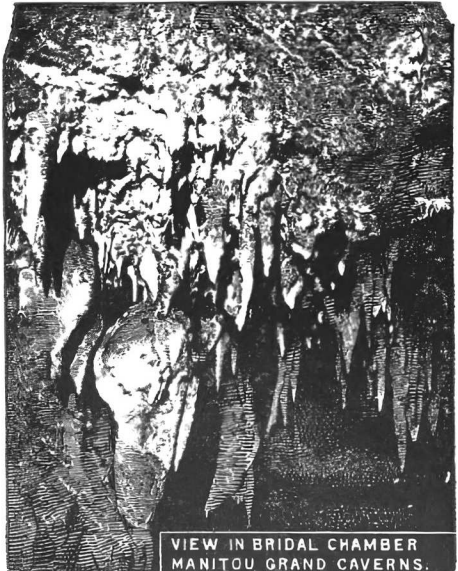
Perhaps wisely, at the beginning of May, the court appointed a representative to independently review the receivership account at the Bank of Manitou. Emma Austin had reviewed the receipts in the account and objected to some of the bills that were paid in the previous eight years.

Meanwhile, at the Cave of the Winds, Charles Austin and Charles Snider developed a list of improvements for both caves. The most significant of these was the construction of a road from the Williams Canyon floor to a new tunnel entrance to the Cave of the Winds that would be constructed from Curtain Hall. This improvement would eliminate the long stairway to the cave's natural entrance, along with stairs in the cave leading to Canopy Hall.

Construction of the road and the tunnel began, with the road being completed by mid-June. A wood-framed building was constructed on the wall of the canyon at the tunnel portal, overlooking the natural entrance. The building and the tunnel were opened to the public on July 1.

While harmony might have ruled at the new combined attraction, the years of mistrust and anger kept the joint managers at odds. In April 1896, it was announced that Charles Snider would represent the Snider interest at the caves, rather than George, and Charles Austin would represent the Rinehart interest. The two decided that father and son H. C. Brown and son Stephen Brown would manage the caves.

By July 1896, the two families were again in court. Almira Snider, George's mother, filed a suit in District Court against Emma Austin. According to an article in the *Rocky Mountain News*, Mrs. Snider "alleges that the Browns have acted in a very disagreeable way and that they are driving trade from the caverns and that they have turned the Manitou hotel people against them, so



**Your Colorado Springs
and Manitou Visit**

would be incomplete without
the underground trip through

**Cave of the Winds
and Manitou
Grand Caverns**

Three quarters of a mile from
daylight They are the most
interesting in the world

C. H. Austin,
O. P. Snyder, } **Managers.**

Historic 1900 advertisement for the Cave of the Winds and the Manitou Grand Caverns following joint ownership.

Cave of the Winds archive image.



Photograph by Richard Rhinehart

The burial site of the Rinehart family in Denver's historic Riverside Cemetery. The plot is in the immediate foreground, with no marker.

that the caves are not well patronized. She asks that the court take charge of the caves and conduct them in a proper manner.”

Apparently, among the issues with the Browns was gambling. A private investigation requested by Rose and her husband found H. C. Brown was deep into gambling at local saloons. Money, it seems, was at the root of the ongoing disagreement between the families.

In July 1898, the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that a court-appointed referee, Normal Campbell, determined that the Austins should receive \$92.63 in past funds owed from Cave of the Winds entrance receipts for the four years beginning 1881. This was despite George's recollection that Charles Rinehart handled the receipts personally.

In March 1899, Alvira Snider died at her home in Manitou following a lingering illness. Her will called for her assets to be split between her five living children – \$10,000 each. Less than a week later, another court case was decided that Emma Austin had no grounds to recover costs spent on the bond given by the Sniders when the original suit was filed in 1886.

Undeterred, Emma filed a new suit in District Court on October 6, 1899 alleging that she was owed two previous court judgments by George. These were sums of \$6,125, and another of \$4,650 from March 1892, both of which had not been paid. In addition, she alleged George later conveyed his interest in the Caverns to his mother Alvira. Emma was therefore suing the Snider brothers collectively for these amounts.

By June 1900, George responded to the suit. He had moved from Manitou four years prior, and in April of that year purchased a marriage license with Nellie Huntoon of Cleveland. In a filing with the court, George noted he had not conveyed his interest in the Caverns to his mother but had traded his Cave of

the Winds interest for land at the Caverns originally held by his brother in November 1884.

This was well before the original lawsuit or the court judgments. Emma, however, petitioned the court to have the original transfer of interests between George and his mother set aside, so she could claim an additional \$10,000 in damages. Litigation regarding this suit was not resolved until November 1908. Each of the five sons received \$10,000 from Alvira's estate, while an additional \$37,500 was provided to the Cave of the Winds.

During the January 1901 term, the case was considered by the District Court in Colorado Springs to determine which side would prevail. Reviewing volumes of material, a year passed.

On the morning of Friday, January 17, 1902, Emma Austin traveled from Manitou to her Denver home. Her husband Charles, in addition to duties for the Cave of the Winds, served as the travelling auditor for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. He was in Salt Lake City on company business. Emma told friends she was preparing to take a trip to the south, or perhaps to California.

The day after her arrival in Denver, she became ill with pneumonia. Emma was taken to Mercy sanatorium in downtown Denver for observation and treatment. The facility under the direction of the Sisters of Mercy was one of Denver's newest.

Perhaps owing to her lifelong asthma, Emma did not recover from this illness. She died Monday morning at 45 years of age. Charles arrived home the same day and was told by waiting friends of his wife's passing. The illness was so sudden that he had been unaware she had even been sick.

With Emma leaving no will, Charles inherited her possessions and properties. Grieving at his loss, Charles told a reporter for the *Rocky Mountain News* about the Cave of the Winds and how his

family had been so involved with the business. The reporter noted "he wished that an earthquake would swallow up the whole property as it had been such an ill-fated investment to the family."

The *News* also reported that "Mrs. Austin's lawyer wanted her to make her will last week, but she laughed at the idea, saying she was not going to die and that there would be plenty of time to do that later."

Emma was laid to rest in Denver's Riverside Cemetery along the South Platte River, in a plot that contained not only the remains of her parents, but also the remains of her stillborn baby from November 1883. The cemetery provided a commanding view of the mountains to the west, and being outside of the city, was quiet and peaceful.

For unknown reasons, the plot contained no grave marker. Possibly, the expense of maintaining two homes, one in Manitou, the other in Denver, and associated costs with running the Cave of the Winds, led to tight finances for the Austins. Despite a leadership position at the cave, Austin maintained a second job.

In April 1905 the ongoing litigation between the Austins and the Sniders finally ended. The *Colorado Springs Gazette* in its April 25 edition reported the Austins would receive \$10,000 in cash and confirmed their half interest in the Grand Caverns. With the Rineharts and Emma Austin gone, Charles Austin received the funds. "It is considered probable that a company will be organized to facilitate the handling of the immense property, and the various heirs of the two estates will receive stock for their interests," reported the *Gazette*. "Many improvements will be made in the property now that it is released from litigation, and the whole interior will be lighted with electricity before the opening of the tourist season."

In his role for the cave, Charles traveled to Virginia's Luray Caverns in May to examine their electrical lighting system.

Trouble continued for the Sniders and the Austins. In May 1905 Vera Snider, George's divorced wife, was taken into police custody. Vera lived alone in the house in Manitou that George had built nearly 20 years earlier. Neighbors reported she shared the house with chickens and pigeons and "the interior of the building was in a shocking condition."

Vera had become so unstable that neighbors grew afraid to walk by the house. Authorities decided to pay her a visit, sending the county physician, the town marshal, and the deputy sheriff to have a talk. According to the newspaper report, Vera drew a "big carving knife from her bosom and flourished it at the approaching men." She was "removed to the county jail where she was placed in the padded cell to await a hearing in the county court today." No further news was reported about the former proprietress of the Grand Caverns, who regularly attended the attraction for many years.

On December 7, 1905, the entrance building of the Cave of the Winds burned to the ground. The building was valued at \$1,000 and contained \$100 worth of products, all of which was uninsured. A new building would need to be constructed for the coming season. Across the ridge, along the Grand Caverns road, the cottage at today's spring house burned in mid-March 1906. Elmer Snider and his family had been living in the home for several years.

Charles Austin remained active at the cave for several years. With the assistance of Perry Snider, George's younger brother, Charles spent money on opening new rooms in the cave, including the Crystal Palace. The cave's entrance building was reconstructed with a fine veranda overlooking Manitou. At the Grand Caverns, the entrance tunnel was retimbered in 1906.

In 1907, the Cave of the Winds received electrical lights. The current was officially turned on for visitors on July 4. Funding being tight, the Grand Caverns was "temporarily" closed to public tours until a later date on which lights would be installed. This closure lasted until 1980, when wild tours began in the long-abandoned cavern.

Eastern capitalists approached the owners in 1907 with an offer of \$175,000 for the caves. This offer was denied by the owners, and subsequently was not completed. In September 1908, a New York syndicate proposed purchasing the Cave of the Winds, Seven Falls, and the Manitou Cliff Dwellers Ruins for \$500,000. The Cave of the Winds itself was valued at \$200,000. While an option was placed on the properties, the deal was never completed.

By November 1910 Austin was ready to move on from the Cave of the Winds. A group of California capitalists offered \$100,000 for his half-interest in the cave. This deal also failed to close.

In June 1914, Austin finally sold his half interest to J. F. Campbell and A. M. Wilson of the Bank of Manitou, and Oliver H. Shoup of the Reed-Shoup-Hopkins group of capitalists. The purchase price was not made public. This sale led to the creation of the Cave of the Winds Company, which incorporated and was capitalized at \$300,000. This allowed for the construction of Serpentine Drive from Manitou to the Cave of the Winds, necessary to allow the travel of automobiles to the attraction. Building this high road was made possible by the acquisition of the Manitou Cave property which had competed with the Cave of the Winds in 1911 and 1912, blocking the lower end of the ridge between Williams Canyon and Cavern Gulch.

George Snider died in Los Angeles on June 26, 1921, 41 years to the day of the Pickett brothers' discovery of the lower chambers in the Cave of the Winds. During heavy rains in Manitou that week, the entrance tunnel to the Grand Caverns collapsed, requiring Cave of the Winds to deploy blasting caps to block it completely. Brother Perry, who had managed the cave with Charles Austin for many years, died just over a year after George, on July 2, 1922. Perry had retired from Cave of the Winds in the summer of 1921 owing to his health.

Following the loss of his beloved wife Emma in January 1902, Charles Austin never remarried. He lived nearly another 30 years. Following his death, he was buried next to his wife at Denver's Riverside Cemetery. While it is unknown whether Charles visited the grave of his wife, his stillborn son, and parents-in-law in the decades following their deaths, one can imagine him returning at least annually. Located immediately adjacent to the drive at the quiet eastern end of the cemetery grounds, Charles perhaps sat at the family plot and mourned the loss of those who were important to him in life.

The plot remains unmarked and sadly neglected nearly a century later. Tall weeds choke the site during the summer, mowing happens only once a season. Tall cottonwood trees that once shaded the land have long died owing to drought and limited resources to maintain the historic grounds. Just to the south, light rail trains to and from Denver International Airport travel along a viaduct overlooking the cemetery. Smokestacks for nearby oil refineries in Commerce City belch noxious fumes.

Few cemetery visitors today are aware of the relationship of the plot's occupants to the history of the Cave of the Winds and the Manitou Grand Caverns. Although the Sniders and the Rineharts had a complex, often combative relationship in life, one can only hope that in death, peace and understanding has come to each. ❀

Caving in North Delta, Colorado

by Doug Medville

Doug's discoveries of non-limestone caves in Western Colorado continues with recent finds in another unexpected place: the Adobe Badlands north of Delta where bare hills on shale soils are found. Although the caves are short and sparse, perseverance in looking for them is rewarded.



The town of Delta isn't exactly a hotspot of caving activity since there's no limestone anywhere close to the town. There is, however, a lot of eroded soil on the Mancos Shale as seen in a Wilderness Study Area north of town called the Adobe Badlands. Here, bare gray and yellow hills and ridges rise up forming a classical badlands topography. The most prominent feature is a spire called Devils Thumb. While hiking in the area a few years ago, I found a small cave in a blind valley just below Devils Thumb (see Photo 1). The cave wasn't much: a

narrow canyon passage with shale walls and ceiling that continued past where I stopped, only three survey stations in from the entrance.

Hoping to find more caves in the area, I looked at Google Earth images and found an area north of Delta pockmarked with sinks and blind valleys. This is about four miles north of the Delta airport and is adjacent to the East Pipeline Road, named for a water pipe that runs along the road. Driving up the road, we saw several soil sinks and after walking around a bit, found a



Photo by Doug Medville.

Photo 1: Devils Thumb.



Photo by Doug Medville.

Photo 2: Gully sinks near E. Pipeline Rd.



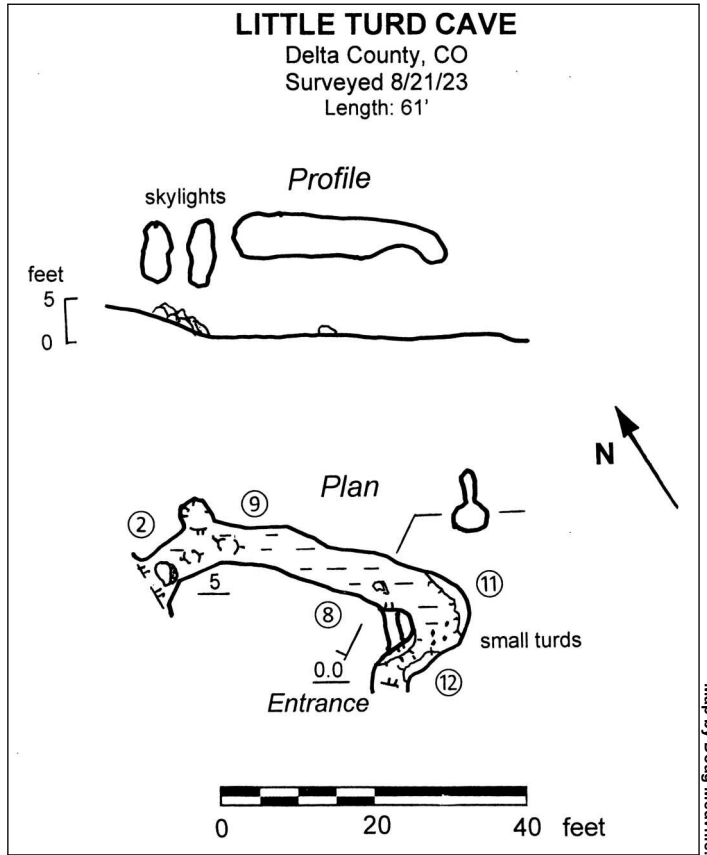
Photo by Doug Medville.

Photo 4: North Delta entrances.



Photo by Doug Medville.

Photo 3: Trailside pit and blind valley.



Map by Doug Medville.

Map 1: Little Turd Cave.

couple of entrances although nothing seemed to go in very far (see Photo 2).

The big attraction was about a third of a mile from the road and across a deep gully with an active stream flowing in it. On Google Earth I could see a streambed abruptly stopping at what appeared to be an entrance. Below that, the valley floor was smooth: no streambed until it reappeared about 300 feet further down the valley. Not wanting to cross the deep gully between the road and the one containing the hoped-for cave, I went down-valley until the stream crossed the road and took a hike up an old dirt bike trail.

After a half mile or so, the trail went by an overhung pit with decent looking passage below. A quick Disto shot down the pit gave a depth of 19 feet (see Photo 3). A deep blind valley across from the pit could contain an entrance to the passage but hiking solo without any vertical gear, I didn't try to go down. Continuing on, I saw a nice looking gully entrance and went down to take a look (see Photos 4 and 5). This led to a short two-

entrance cave with little balls of critter poop on the floor and 6-10-foot-high passage. Taking out the survey gear, I did a solo survey of this little cave (see Map 1 and Photo 6).

Continuing up the dirt bike trail, I walked by a couple of other entrances but left these alone since my goal was to get to the gully with the hoped-for cave in it. This was not to be, however, since I found myself at the top of a vertical-walled side gully that fed into the one that I wanted to be in. I could have gone to the upper end of this side gully and followed it down to the one of interest but decided to do that another day.

A few weeks later, California cavers Carol Vesely and Bill Farr were visiting friends in Cortez, about a three-hour drive from Delta. I asked them if they could join me on a return trip to the area and they agreed to come up for a day. Meeting up in Delta, we went to the area. This time we climbed down the side of the deep gully with the stream and crossed it. That turned out to be pretty easy to do and as a bonus, water wasn't flowing in the bottom. Our only problem was the dense brush in the gully which we beat our way through.



Photo 5: Gully with Little Turd Cave entrance in foreground.

Photo by Doug Medville.



Photo by Doug Medville.

Photo 6: Little Turd Cave entrance passage and poop.

After that, it was an easy hike up the gully with the cave possibility, and after working around near-vertical gully sinks and going beneath dirt arches, we reached a low entrance with a breeze coming out of it. This was about where the possible lower entrance to a cave was shown on Google Earth. The entrance was only a couple of feet high but since this was our objective, we took out the survey and caving gear and crawled in. Although I was hoping that the cave would be down in the Mancos shale bedrock, it was entirely in the Mancos soils so it turned out to be just another piping cave.

The cave did go, however, opening up here and there to walking height. We ended up with 21 survey stations and 345 feet of passage before coming out of its upper entrance, again where on Google Earth, the surface streambed stopped. There wasn't much of interest in the cave other than the usual animal poop and thorny midden, a damp floor, and some squeezes here and there (see Photos 7 and 8). I unimaginatively ended up calling it East Pipeline Road Cave since there wasn't anything of note in the cave to name it after (Map 2).

We hiked out by going up above the cave gully and following a very narrow ridge down to the larger gully. After crossing it, we found another breezy but very narrow entrance along the gully wall. Again taking out the survey gear we started a survey in but after four shots, the passage got more narrow and Bill in the lead, began to fart, causing me and Carol to gag and revolt so that was the end of the survey in what we called Bad Air Cave. After getting back to the vehicles, we poked around a bit more and then drove down to a nice Himalayan/Tibetan restaurant in Montrose for dinner before going our separate ways. Carol and Bill drove back to Cortez while Hazel and I camped out for the night and went to another area the next day where we found more caves but that's another report. 🦌

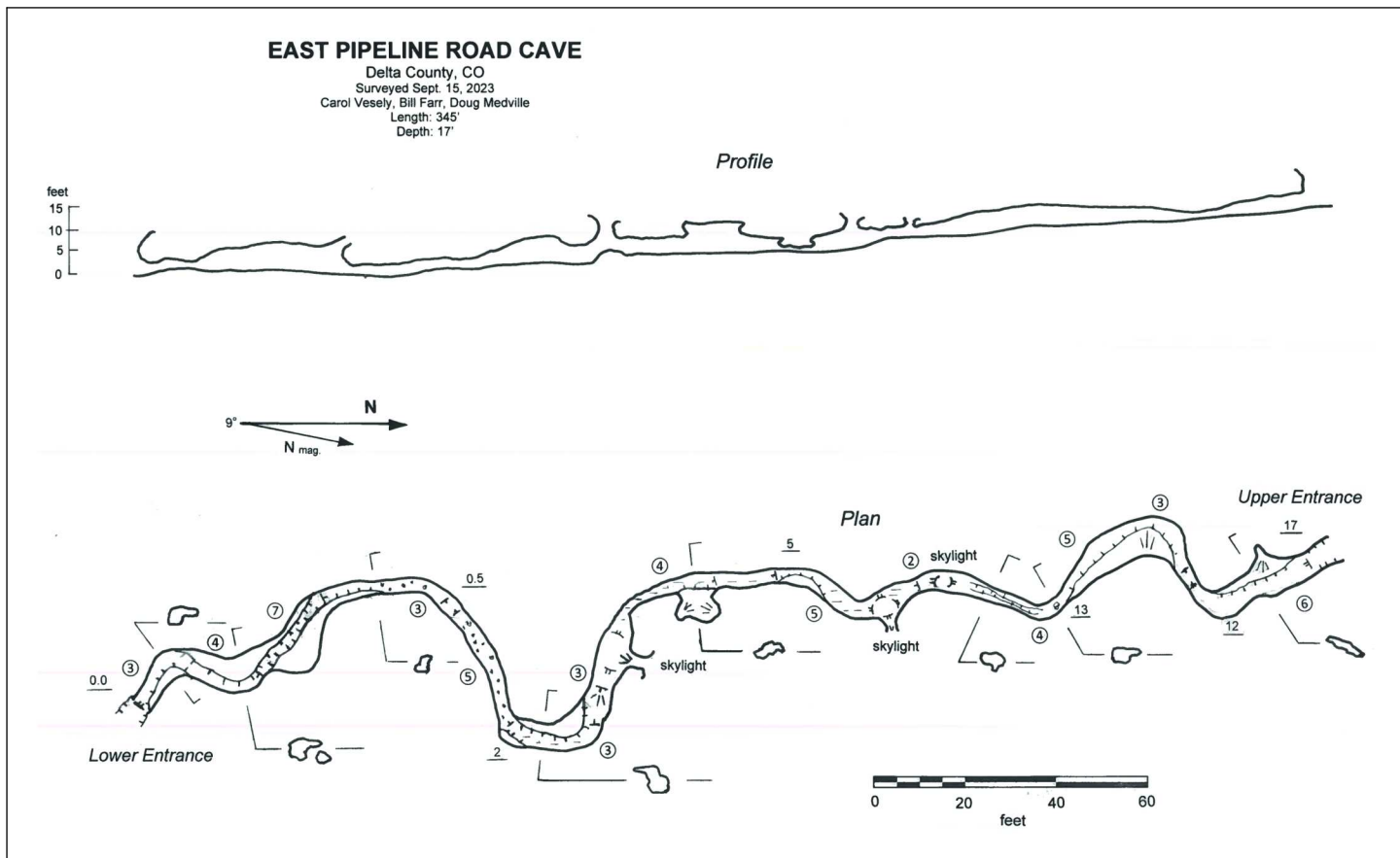


Photo by Doug Medville.

Photo 7: Bill Farr in East Pipeline Road Cave.



Photo by Doug Meville.



Map by Doug Medville.

