

CENTRAL  
OKLAHOMA  
GROTTO  
OF THE NATIONAL  
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC

# C.O.G.nizance

## Inside this Issue

<b>Announcements</b> .....	2
<b>Minutes</b> .....	2
<b>Treasurer's Report</b> .....	2
<b>Potpourri</b>	
Below the Surface :Reprint from National Parks; Winter 2007; pages 58-59; contributed by Jeri Ptacek .....	3-4

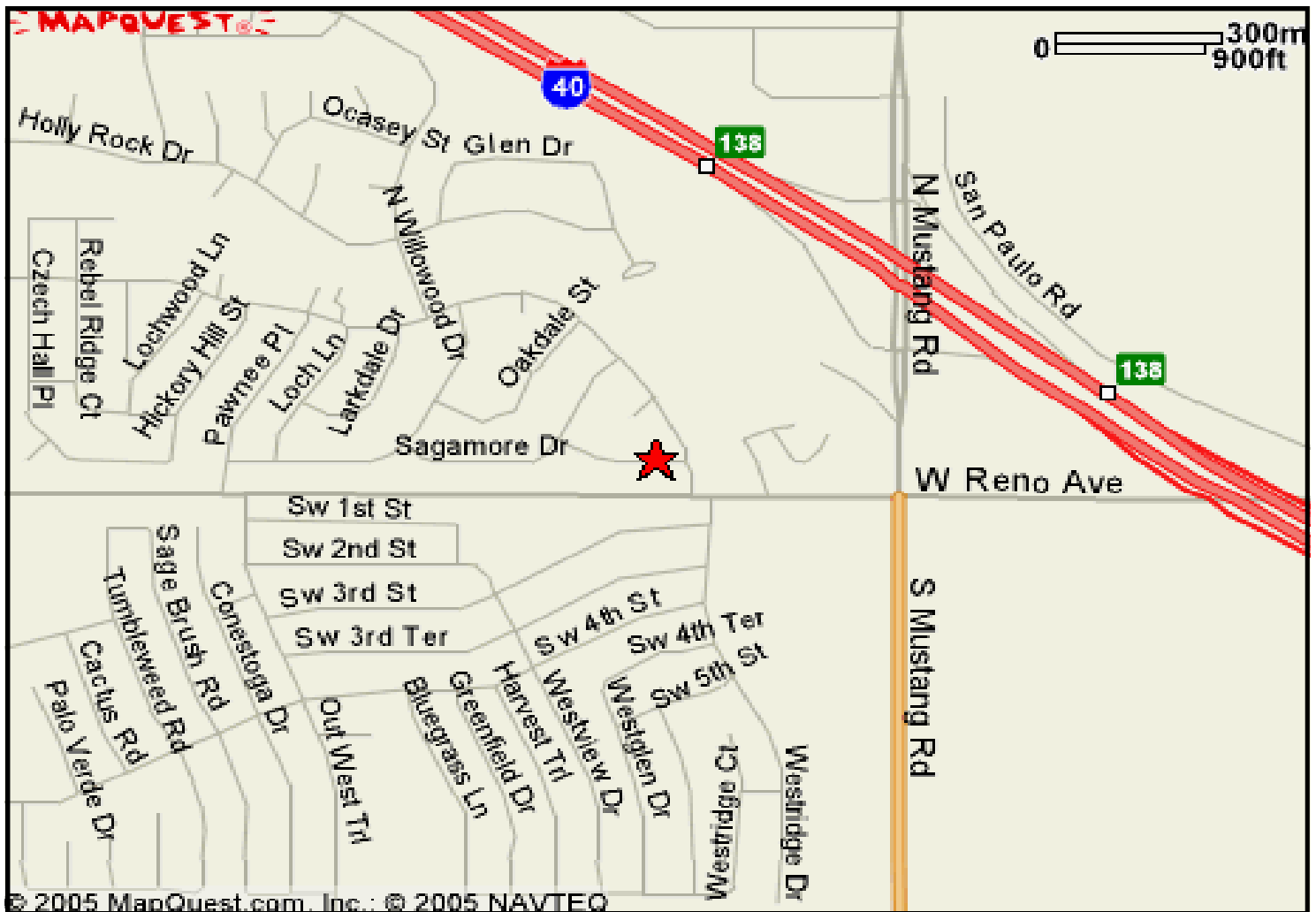
The February meeting of the Central Oklahoma Grotto will be held at 7:30, Friday, February 9, 2007. at the home of John VanDyke.

**Address:** 11625 Lochwood Dr.,  
Yukon, OK

**Telephone:** 405-324-8566



**Directions to John Van Dyke's House:** The exit number is 138. Turn south onto Mustang Road (hwy 4) and go to the second light, which is Reno. Turn right (west) onto Reno then turn right at the second street (Willowwood). Turn left at the first street - careful! it's a short block - which is Lochwood Drive. 6th house on the right (north side).



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

\*Northwest trips are scheduled the third Saturday of every month. Contact Sue or John Bozeman for details.

\*The 7:30 January meeting will be Friday, Feb. 9, at John Van Dyke's, house, 11625 Lockwood Dr., Yukon, OK. His phone number is 405-324-8566. Plans will be made for Feb. 17th's bat count.

## MINUTES

December minutes weren't taken because the December meeting was the Christmas party. There aren't any January minutes because the meeting was cancelled due to weather: therefore, the November minutes are republished to discuss at the February meeting! See you there. — The editor

### CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO

Minutes of the November 10, 2006 meeting

Host: Roy and Nicole Diehl II :

Members present: Dale Amlee, Anne Ault, Sue and John Bozeman, Duane Del Vecchio, Mark Miller, John Talbot, Lil Town, John Van Dyke, Jon Woltz, and Steve Beleu

Cassandra Diehl began the meeting at 8:13

#### OLD BUSINESS

Dale has yet to make any progress concerning our proposed summer 2007 work at Carlsbad Caverns, ahem.

Sue distributed copies of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's 2005 publication, **A Field Guide to Oklahoma's Amphibians and Reptiles**, by Greg and Lynnette Sievert, to current members in good standing. In 1999 COG had voted to contribute money to help pay for the printing and publication of this guide. Two weeks before our grotto meeting Sue had asked a contact at ODWC if COG could get the five copies that ODWC had originally promised us for our moolah. When I went to ODWC the week before our meeting they gave me 20 copies!

Treasurer Talbot reported that he had sent the \$50 to the NSS that we voted to contribute at our October meeting to help them pay for Great X Cave in Wyoming.

Great X Caving Expedition Lead Officer Anne Ault reported that she had been attempted to reach someone about our possible caving there in the summer of 2007, but she hadn't been able to contact anyone. She will continue trying. The NSS website for Great X Cave—

<http://www.caves.org/greatx/>

### NEW BUSINESS

Sue passed around a recent issue of *National Geographic* that included an article about a cave in Papua, New Guinea.

Here are our grotto officers for 2007. May they rest in peace—

Chairman—Roy Diehl Vice-Chairman—Jon Woltz

Treasurer—John Talbot

Secretary and Sergeant-at-Arms—S Beleu

Here are the locations for our monthly meetings in 2007. May they have adequate homeowners insurance—

January—John Talbot

February—John Van Dyke

March—Dale Amlee

April—Lil and Dale Town

May—Mark Miller

June—Duane Del Vecchio

July, August—no meetings

September—Jon Wolt

October—Art Wallace

November—Roy Diehl

December— Sue & John Bozeman

### TREASURER'S REPORT

John read his report, which is included in this newsletter.

### TRIP REPORT

We talked about our failed-due-to-bad-weather previous month's surveying trip to Broken Horn Cave.

Cassandra Diehl ended the meeting at 8:59

## TREASURER'S REPORTS

### INCOME

DIVIDEND	\$	7.31
DUES	\$	12.00

<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>19.31</b>
---------------	-----------	--------------

CASH ON HAND	\$	32.20
CHECKING	\$	599.82
SAVINGS	\$	2,641.26

### EXPENSES

PREPARED BY TREASURER  
JOHN TALBOT

TOTAL FUNDS AS OF 12/31/04 \$ 3,085.15

## POTPOURRI

### Below the Surface

By Amy Leinbach Marquis

Reprinted from **National Parks**: Winter 2007: pages 58-59

Contributed by Jeri Ptacek

*Centuries ago, Kentucky slaves interpreted Mammoth Cave's history. And in the process, they became a part of it.*

In the depths of Mammoth Cave National Park, visitors walk with heads lowered, feeling their way along a crooked path that winds through dark, narrow passageways. The air is cool and moist, and the ranger's last story hangs in the air, sustained, like notes, in the previous chamber. Famous people have walked this path: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jenny Lind, Elton John, and others whose names are written in soot on smooth, sandstone ceilings.

Suddenly the tunnel opens up into a grand rotunda reaching heights of 60 feet, where massive walls echo with memories of elaborate banquets, dancehalls, weddings, and the first ever "air-conditioned" Methodist church service. Years ago, musicians fresh out of school and desperate for work hauled clunky instruments through the same tiny spaces to perform for visitors, in hopes of being discovered and touring with *the* wealthy. Nineteenth-century women—without husbands in tow—crawled through cave dirt to reach this spot, finding liberation from a stifling society in a most unlikely way.

But perhaps the most fascinating story belongs to the early cave guides: slaves. "Mammoth Cave doesn't jump into your mind as an African-American park, but it's a primary story here," says Joy Medley Lyons, chief of program services at the park.

This cave system, spanning 350 miles (and counting), lies beneath Western Kentucky's karst landscape and formed hundreds of millions of years ago, well before dinosaurs ruled the earth. After the Woodland Indians, there were few permanent residents in the area until the late 1700s when explorers like Daniel Boone pushed farther west. Settlers soon learned that the region offered a valuable commodity: nitrate-rich cave dirt, or saltpeter, used to produce gunpowder and preserve meat before the dawn of refrigerators.

The first official owner of Mammoth Cave claimed a 200-acre federal land grant in 1798, like many Americans setting out to own a slice of the "American Dream." Small-scale saltpeter mining operations began and continued with subsequent owners. When England blocked America's ports before the War of 1812, production went into high gear, allowing the nation to defend itself despite being cut off from the rest of the world.

After the war, saltpeter operations slowed to a halt, but Mammoth Cave held promise as a tourist attraction. In 1839, Dr. John Croghan, a brilliant businessman with a medical degree and a hearty sense of adventure, purchased the cave

— and with it, Stephen Bishop, a slave who was a cave guide under his previous owner. They quickly began converting the home that had housed the managers of the mining operation into the spacious Mammoth Cave Hotel, with plans to build on the entertainment appeal below ground, too.

But Croghan's push for fame came to a halt in 1842 when he decided to pursue a subterranean hospital for tuberculosis patients, hoping that constant cave temperatures and moist air would cure their disease. About a dozen patients moved underground, living there in huts built of stone and wood. The project failed after two years.

Bishop, along with two other slaves, continued leading tours in the cave, charming celebrities and rich European tourists who flocked to this spectacular place. Visitors often left as enthralled by their smart, gracious, well-spoken guide as they were by the cave. The guides, Bishop in particular, were quite observant and eager to learn. "They were hearing conversations about culture and government, food and clothing styles — things that my own white ancestors in Owensboro, Kentucky, weren't hearing a darn thing about," Lyons says.

In time, the guides began pushing the limits of exploration, seeking out new passageways with little more than a candle to light the way. One visitor challenged Bishop to take him calling a treacherous drop-off that he'd once encountered, Bishop lugged a ladder into the cave, positioned it over the gaping hole, and crossed to the other side with his visitor. That breakthrough opened up a whole new wing of the cave that had never been explored.

The deeper they pushed, the more bizarre their discoveries became: eyeless fish; translucent crickets; gypsum that took the form of flowers, cottony tufts, and delicate tendrils. Guides learned to identify these cave dwellers by inviting scientists on tours, sharing their newfound knowledge with the cave visitors that followed.

In 1849, Croghan died from tuberculosis, leaving the cave to his nieces and nephews. Seven years later, Bishop was given his freedom, as requested in Croghan's will. But Bishop had little time to savor it; he died the following year. Mat Bransford, another prominent slave guide, continued to lead tours—a family legacy that would last 101 years.

In 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed legislation designating Mammoth Cave as a national park, but five years would pass before its dedication ceremony, delayed because of World War II. A few families from the original homesteads relocated nearby, and to this day their descendents keep close ties to the park.

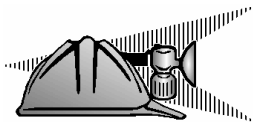
"There's so much here," Lyons says. "It's not just cave mileage waiting to be discovered. There are *people* waiting to be rediscovered."

*Amy Lainbach Marquis is assistant editor for National Parks magazine.*



Central Oklahoma Grotto is a non-profit organization and a chapter of the NSS (National Speleological Society), Cave Avenue, Huntsville, AL., 35810. Dedicated to cave conservation and safety, C.O.G. published general information in a monthly newsletter (\$6.00/year) and detailed cave surveys and related Speleological items in a yearly publication, *The Oklahoma Underground* (\$3-\$8/issue) Membership is by sponsor and is \$12 per year for adults, \$6 for spouses and students, and \$3 if under 18. Central Oklahoma Grotto meets once a month on the second Friday of each month. For information, write 3208 Gettysburg Dr., Altus, Oklahoma, 73521. All submissions to the newsletter should be sent to the editor: Lil or Dale Town, 3208 Gettysburg Dr., Altus, OK 73521: Telephone: (580)477-4027: E-mail: [oklmt@cableone.net](mailto:oklmt@cableone.net). The deadline for submissions for any particular month's issue is the 20th day of the previous month. If you wish material returned. Please include a SASE with submission. All materials in this newsletter is available for reproduction, provided proper credit is given with the article when you print it. Trade publications are welcomed. *Cave softly and safely!*

*Don't forget to come to the February meeting  
at John Van Dyke's place, Friday, February 9.*



**Central Oklahoma Grotto  
C/o 3208 Gettysburg Drive  
Altus, Oklahoma 73521**