



# Down in the Cave:

1800's TB Hospital in Mammoth Cave, KY



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# Down in the Cave



Mammoth Cave was authorized as a national park in 1926 and was fully established in 1941. At that time, just 40 miles of passageway had been mapped. As surveying techniques improved, great strides were made in describing and understanding the overwhelming extent of the cave system.



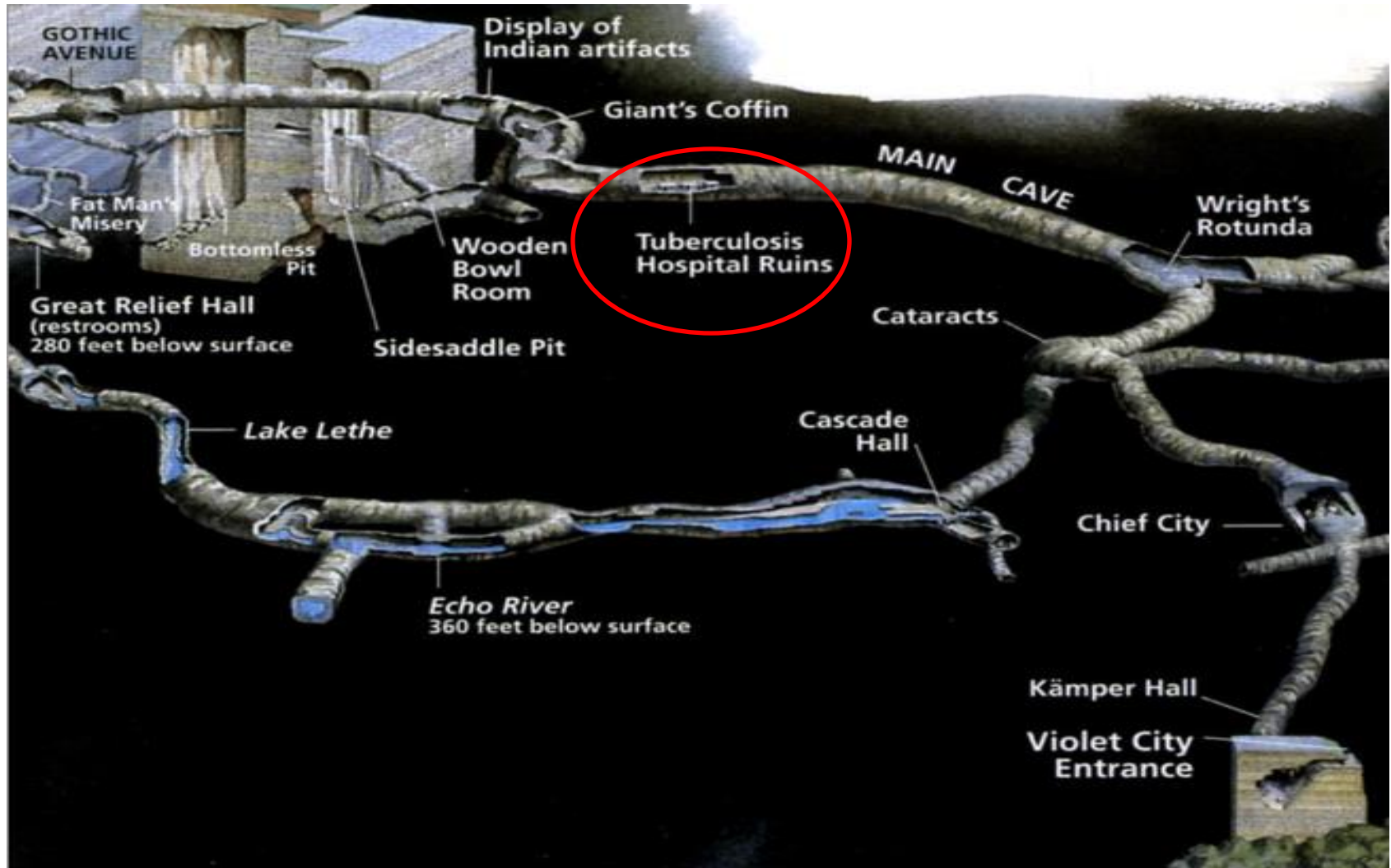
# Down in the Cave

Several caves in the park were shown to be connected, and today, the cave system is known to extend well beyond the national park boundary. The park was named a **World Heritage Site** in 1981 and became the core area of an **International Biosphere Reserve** in 1990. With its 53,000 surface acres and underlying cave ecosystem, Mammoth Cave National Park is recognized as an international treasure.





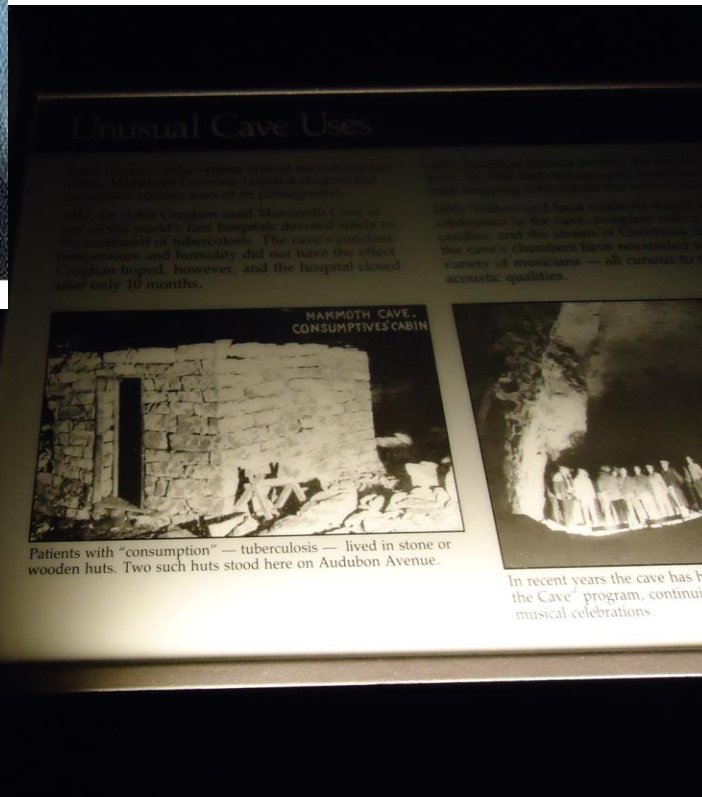
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# Down in the Cave



Dr. John Croghan



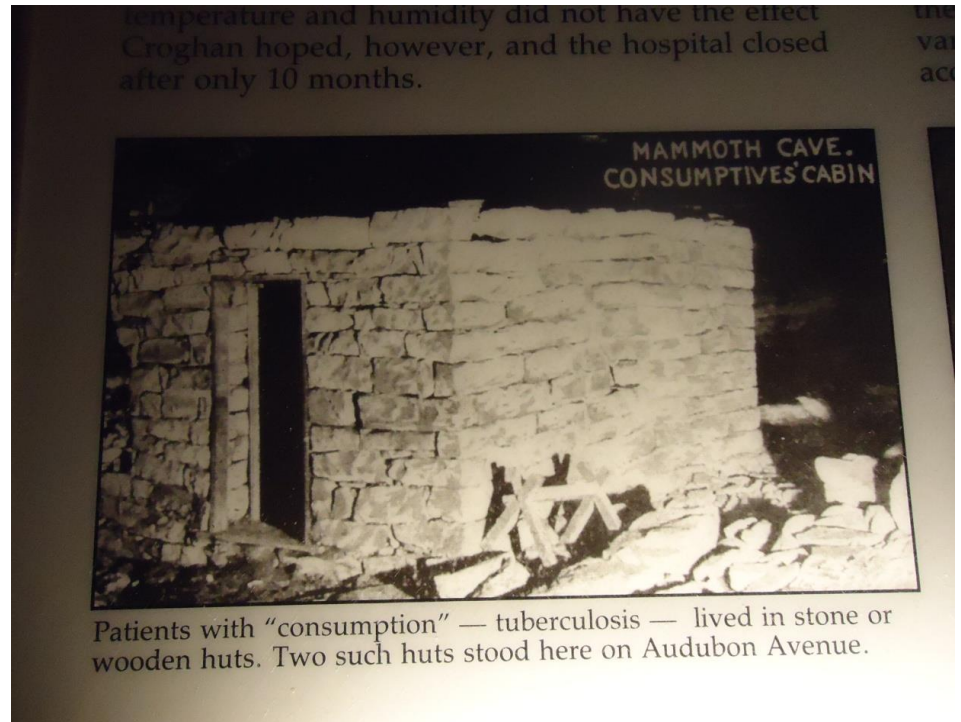
In 1839, a new owner—Dr. John Croghan—extensively developed and explored the cave, exploiting it commercially as one of the great wonders of the world. He built roads, improved buildings and constructed a large hotel to lodge tourists. Dr. Croghan also established an **underground tuberculosis hospital** in the cave in 1842.

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He believed that the stable temperature and humidity and apparent dryness would have a curative effect on patients. Volunteer patients lived in the cave in small stone structures with canvas roofs. The experiment was a failure.



Tuberculosis cottage (from an old postcard)





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## Unusual Cave Uses

Since the first white settlers arrived here in the late 1790s, Mammoth Cave has inspired creative and sometimes curious uses of its passageways.

1842: Dr. John Croghan used Mammoth Cave as one of the world's first hospitals devoted solely to the treatment of tuberculosis. The cave's constant temperature and humidity did not have the effect Croghan hoped, however, and the hospital closed after only 10 months.

MAMMOTH CAVE.  
CONSUMPTIVES' CABIN

Dr. John Croghan's original interest in Mammoth Cave began when he read, in the journals of the day, accounts of the preservative qualities of the cave – how the timbers from the old nitre mine, now more than 30 years old, had not even begun to rot; how the bodies of dead bats, and even the bodies of Indians which had been found in the cave, remained perfectly intact and undecayed. The agent, the doctor surmised, must be the cave air. His interest intensified after his brother Nicholas visited the cave, and in 1839 he purchased it from Franklin Gorin for \$10,000, slaves and all.

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Dr. Croghan specialized in "pulmonary consumption" – known today as tuberculosis – and had 16 patients in his care in the winter of 1842-1843. As no cure or effective treatment had yet been found for tuberculosis, their grave condition seemed to Croghan to call for desperate measures. He sent his slaves into the cave to construct a series of buildings, along Main Cave near the Star Chamber, two of stone and eight of wood, to function as a sanitarium where his patients could "take the airs."





# Down in the Cave



Croghan led his patients into the cave, to their new residence, and there they remained for some weeks.

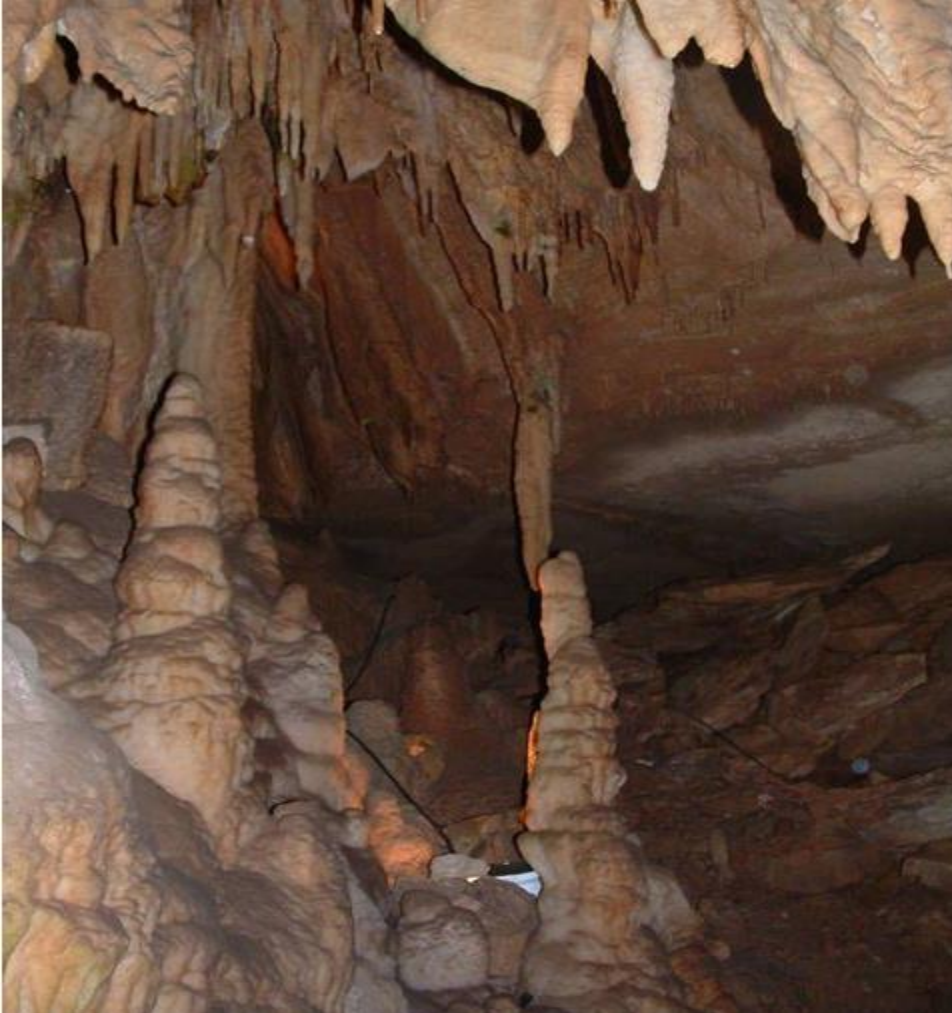
Tours would pass a bizarre scene. Pale, spectral figures in dressing-gowns moved weakly along the passageway, slipping in and out of shadowed huts, the silence of the cave broken by hollow coughing and muttered conversations. Withered bushes could be found by the paths, the failed attempts to bring living plants to cheer the surroundings.

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At first, the patients claimed to be much improved. Dr. Croghan, anticipating success, began to draw up plans for a hotel to be built inside the cave at the Cross-Rooms (now called Wright's Rotunda) to house all those who were bound to come when the word spread, and a stagecoach route into the cave to bring them inside in comfort.



# Down in the Cave



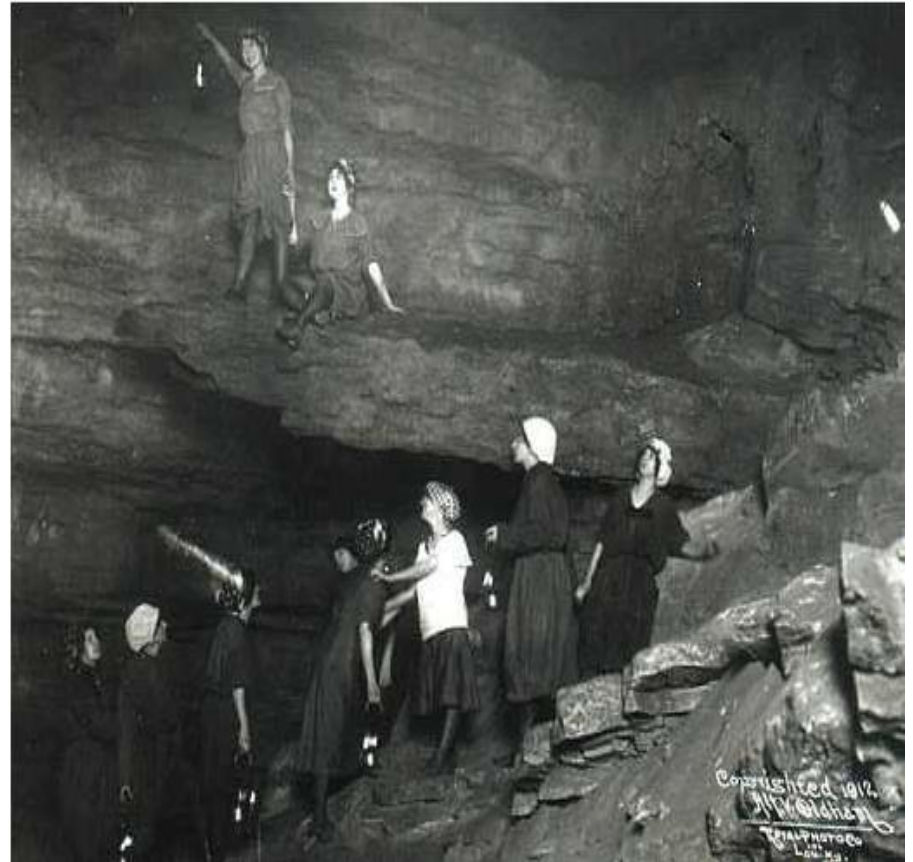
But as time passed it became obvious that the patients' claims of improvement came only from an improved morale. The smoke of cooking and heating fires, and the coolness and clamminess of the cave air began to ravage lungs already weakened by disease. In time, some of the patients began to ask to return to the surface, but Dr. Croghan persuaded them to remain, for the sake of their health. Only Oliver H. P. Anderson departed – and by then the deaths had begun.



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The patient who left, Oliver Hazard Perry Anderson, wrote:

*I left the cave yesterday under the impression that I would be better out than in as my lungs were constantly irritated with smoke and my nose offended by a disagreeable effluvia, the necessary consequence of its being so tenanted without ventilation.*



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In all, five patients perished underground, their bodies laid out on the long, flat stone now called Corpse Rock. Admitting, at last, that the experiment had failed, Dr. Croghan brought the surviving patients to the surface, where they met their ends in the normal course of their disease.



# Down in the Cave



Dr. Croghan himself would struggle against tuberculosis for only six more years before it would launch a personal attack on the doctor, and claim his life in 1849. His will would grant ownership of the cave to his seven nieces and nephews, the "Croghan heirs," and would remain in that family until the 1920s.



# Down in the Cave



The Bottomless Pit.

The *Guide Manual* of 1860 explains that:

*The proper costume for a gentleman consists of a jacket, heavy boots, a cloth cap and woollen pants.*

*The Bloomer or Turkish dress is the proper costume for a lady. It may be plain, or fancifully trimmed to suit the wearer. When trimmed in lively colors, which is always advisable, the effect is beautiful, particularly if the party be large. Flannel or cloth is the proper material. It must be borne in mind that the temperature in the Cave is fifty-nine degrees.*

*Every lady carries a lamp, and in no case, except that of illness, should she take a gentleman's arm. It is fatiguing to both parties, and exceedingly awkward in appearance.*

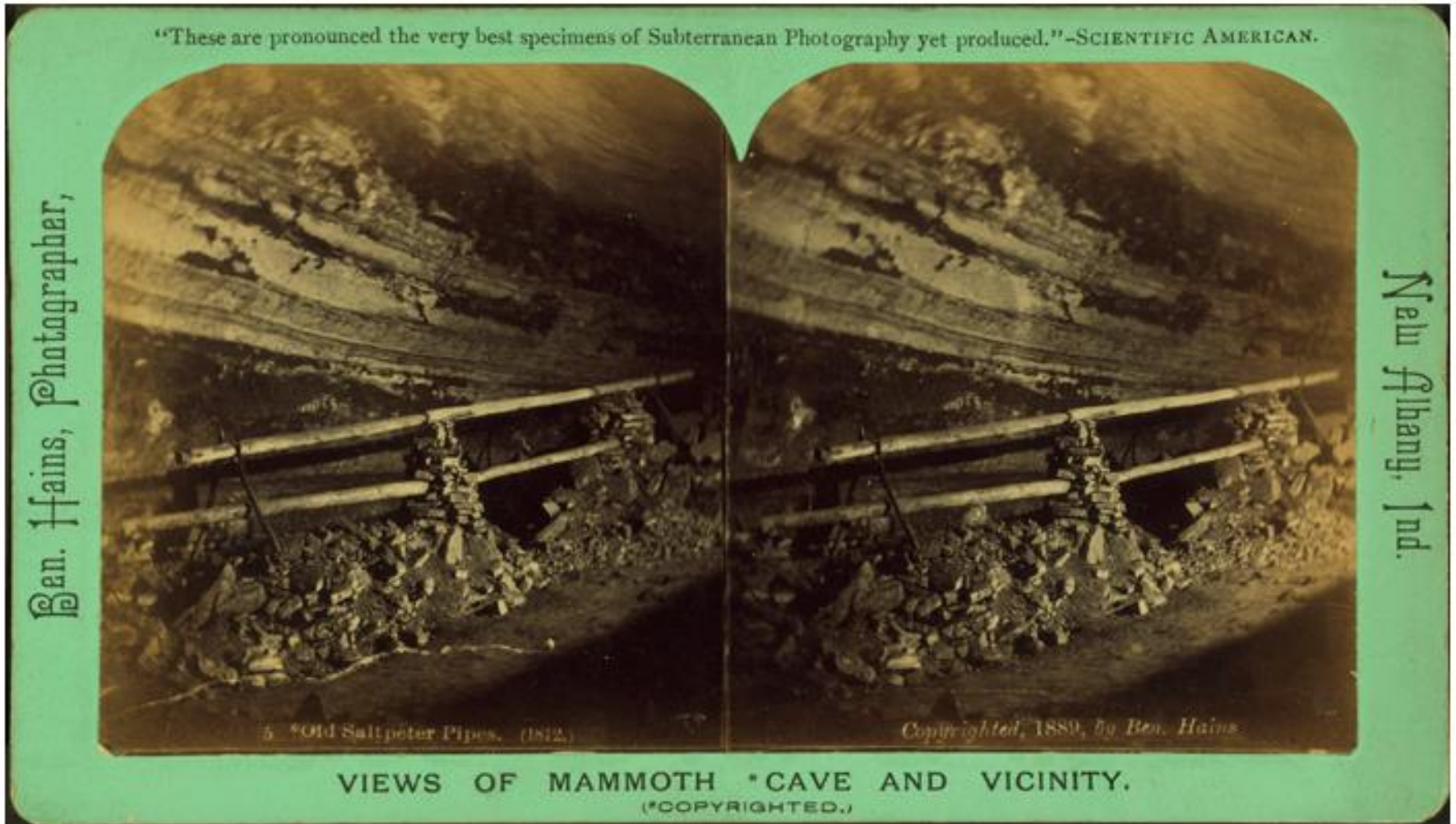
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Mandeville Thum, Mouth of the Cave, Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, 1876-1877.



# Down in the Cave



Ben Hains, Old Salt peter Pipes, Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, 1812, 1889.



# Down in the Cave



Cave crawfish (*Oronectes pellucidus*) and cave cricket



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"I call it 'Masterpiece Theatre.'"



"Very nice, but will it put mammoth meat on the table?"



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Helpful web sites for research on Mammoth Cave:

<http://www.hsl.virginia.edu/historical/reflections/tuberculosis/cave.html>

<http://www.nps.gov/macahistoryculture/physicianhealthself.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/macaindex.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammoth\\_Cave\\_National\\_Park](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammoth_Cave_National_Park)