

KENTUCKY GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

WILLARD ROUSE JILLSON
DIRECTOR AND
STATE GEOLOGIST

OFFICE OF THE
DIRECTOR AND STATE GEOLOGIST
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Dr. Harry B. Thomas,
Horse Cave, Ky.

My Dear Sir:

The study of the varied formations in Mammoth Onyx Cave August 10-12, 1922, was a great delight to me. There is in the Cave an abundance of Mexican Onyx, or Onyx Marble, that is susceptible of a high polish, fine grained, banded, translucent, and of delicate colors. The stalactites and stalagmites are indeed beautiful, and every tourist will be well repaid for his trip through the Cave.

Yours very sincerely,
CHARLES H. RICHARDSON,
Assistant Geologist.

as light and airy as any cobweb that was ever spun in the forest—animals and birds, fabled creatures of the past, the tiger and the lion, the nymph and the faun—they are there together. Never was there such profusion of the beautiful and the grotesque, the fragile and the rugged, perfection of form and ludicrous caricature all jumbled together in one heap. On the one hand you will find the peasant maid in solemn attitude of prayer as the angelus breaks over the rustic dell; on the other, a rollicking monkey, bubbling with mischief and ready for a romp; and no sooner have you expressed awe and admiration at the perfectly chiseled features of the poet or philosopher than you turn to find yourself cheek to cheek with a mirth-provoking buffoon making wry faces at you in the dark.

But perhaps the most charming feature of this fascinating cavern is the chamber so appropriately named, Diana's Grotto. Surely not even a goddess queen could wish for more sumptuous quarters. At the entrance to this chamber the massive walls of the cavern come very close together forming a narrow crevice, or doorway, through which the visitor must pass before descending into the chamber proper. Immediately upon entering this grotto one is struck by the extravagant beauty of the stalactite formations which hang from the roof like inverted cones, and flow down the walls with the heavy folds of massive drapery, all richly coruscated with crystal onyx, travertine and coral. At the far end of the room, at the bottom, lies a pool of bright water, clear

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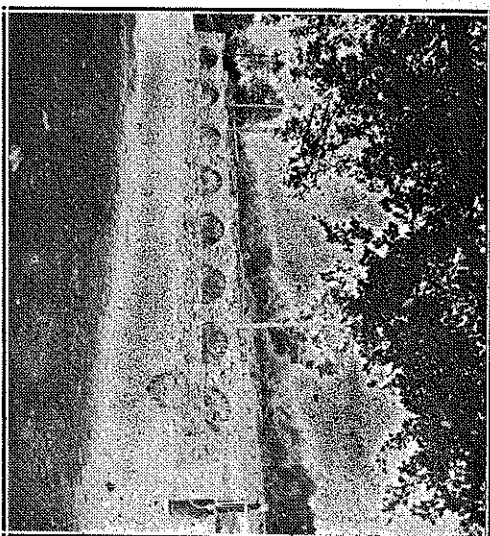
and translucent, that twinkles with the lights above, and reflects the massive decorations of the room; while around the edge, half visible in the shadows, nymph-like forms are standing as though in readiness to assist their mistress in her bath. Here the duldest imagination may be stirred into lively activity and easily witness the beautiful and amusing drama of Diana and Acteon all over again; for certainly there is no grotto in the mountain fastnesses of Parnassus, or elsewhere more worthy of dedication to Pan and the Nymphs than this fairy grotto in the hills of Kentucky.

Such were my impressions at *Mammoth Onyx Cave*. I do not know how it will be with you, but I will say this:

If the glories of an autumn sunset have no power to move you; if you do not love to drowse and dream on the shores of a northern lake; if you are WHOLLY unresponsive to the charms of nature, then it will hardly be worth your time to visit this or any other cave, for you will see only a hole in the ground and a pile of rocks.

But, if you are one of Nature's own, if you love the starlight of a winter's evening, the witchery of yellow moonlight on the woodlands; if you are thrilled by the melodies of Chopin, the mighty concords of a Bach or Handel, then for you and all like you, Nature will light her magic torch, and *Mammoth Onyx Cave* will be a fairyland of dreams. The hours you spend in this nocturnal land of wonder will be among the happiest of your life and you will want to go again—as others have done.

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Mammoth Onyx Cave

Only Onyx Cave in Kentucky

*The Cleanest and Prettiest Cave
in the World.*

ONLY CAVE IN KENTUCKY THAT
IS ELECTRIC LIGHTED THROUGHOUT

An Old Kentucky Moonshine Still
on Display.

5 Miles South of the Green River Bridge,
2 Miles North of Horse Cave, Kentucky,
ON THE DIXIE HIGHWAY

Free Camp Grounds, Wood, Water and Lights.

MAMMOTH ONYX CAVE

BY LEON FOSTER

When Dr. Thomas first asked me, a stranger to his beautiful country, to write my impressions of *Mammoth Onyx Cave*, I shrank from the task with uplifted hands, because I appreciated the utter futility of trying to achieve the unachievable.

It is not possible to paint a word picture of this cavern.

Through any attempt of this nature hyperbole and exaggeration might march with the justifiable dignity of truth; simile might vie with simile, metaphor with metaphor; the adjective and the superlative might struggle fiercely for ascendancy and still the picture would not be revealed. For how is a man to compare without a standard of comparison? Draw parallels to that which has no parallel? Where is the intellectual Rosetta Stone that will furnish a key to those mysterious symbols which nature has chiseled on the walls of this cave? What power of clairvoyance has he that can help him divine the motive that prompted her through the long reaches of eternal midnight to carve this exquisite cameo in the heart of a mountain? It is only as an effect produced, rather than a picture presented, that anything like an adequate notion of this cavern can be conveyed.

To enter this cavern is like walking into the heart of a star. Monster stalactites sprouting from the roof like huge icicles as white as alabaster; prodigious stalagmites rising from the floor like the spires of fairy cathedrals; colossal colonades looming in the

half-light with the columns of an Egyptian temple with grotesque capitals of corroded onyx swelling under the roof, all



Garden of the Gods. This appropriate name was suggested by J. W. Porter, D. D., Louisville, Ky.

gleaming, glittering, scintillating as though powdered with the dust of a vagrant meteorite—THESE are things that scoff at the infinity of words, and render all attempts at description pale and palty.

Everywhere you turn you are mystified, appalled, by the wondrous witchery of this land of eternal night which is so far

from the ordinary experience as to be of another world. Now you are gazing upon the golden mountains of the moon sparkling with the diamond crystals of a hoarfrost; now you are stealing Actaeon-like into the private chamber of a goddess, hung with transparent tapestries of fluted onyx, fringed with glittering pendants of snow-white gypsum more delicate and ethereal than the marble lace-work of a master sculptor; and now you are ushered into the beautiful Paradise Garden, where marvelous formations and delicate traceries, taking the forms of known and unknown flowers variegated with all the colors of the rainbow suggest a petrified botanical garden sparkling with silvery dewdrops just as it was caught and imprisoned by capricious Nature on a rosy dawn millions of years ago. Rustic bridges winding over crystal pools; silver-toned stalactes chiming with sylvan sweetness under the gentle strokes of the guide; Arcadian landscapes etched by rills of shining dew racing like molten silver over shimmering sheens of rainbow onyx—all these combine to overwhelm you with amazement.

Nor does astonishment decrease or wonder subside when you turn from these more obvious beauties to the almost microscopic miracles that everywhere abound. From the very entrance to the deepest extremity the walls and ceilings are frescoed with patterns of the most fantastic design. Tropical fruits and gorgeous flowers, gnarled vines twisting their sinuous tendrils among the tangled branches of the jungle, delicate fabrics starred with points of shining dew