

Defiance Cave Preserve Signature Record Project

n.b: This location is on private property; we travelled with permission to carry out the work being done. All parties involved with this project believe that obscuring the location details is in the interest of the cave and our preservation efforts. If any of you recognize the location, please keep it to yourself.

Originally dug open in the late 1800's, this cave became a tourist destination until the mid 20th century when it became a less official destination for adventure seekers, hobos, and/or n'ere-do-wells. In all that time it was fashionable to sign one's name in the cave, the means one chose to do so seems to follow trending social fashion as well. To encourage a commercial venture, pedestrian explorers were allowed to remove any formation they could break and haul away. Both actions eventually fell out of favor, but the vandalism continued.

Through multiple conservation projects over the last two years we have already begun to see improvements to the cave environment. The temperature and humidity of the interior chambers have both increased. A rough baseline for caves in this area is 55°F (≈12.5C) and 80% humidity. The closer we can recreate this environment, the better the cave can heal itself. In doing so, we risk of losing the signature record of the early explorers. Historically significant names of this valley, such as "M. Hallard 1899" as well as more esoteric travelers, such as "Cosmic Space Pig 2008", might one day be washed away through a natural process.

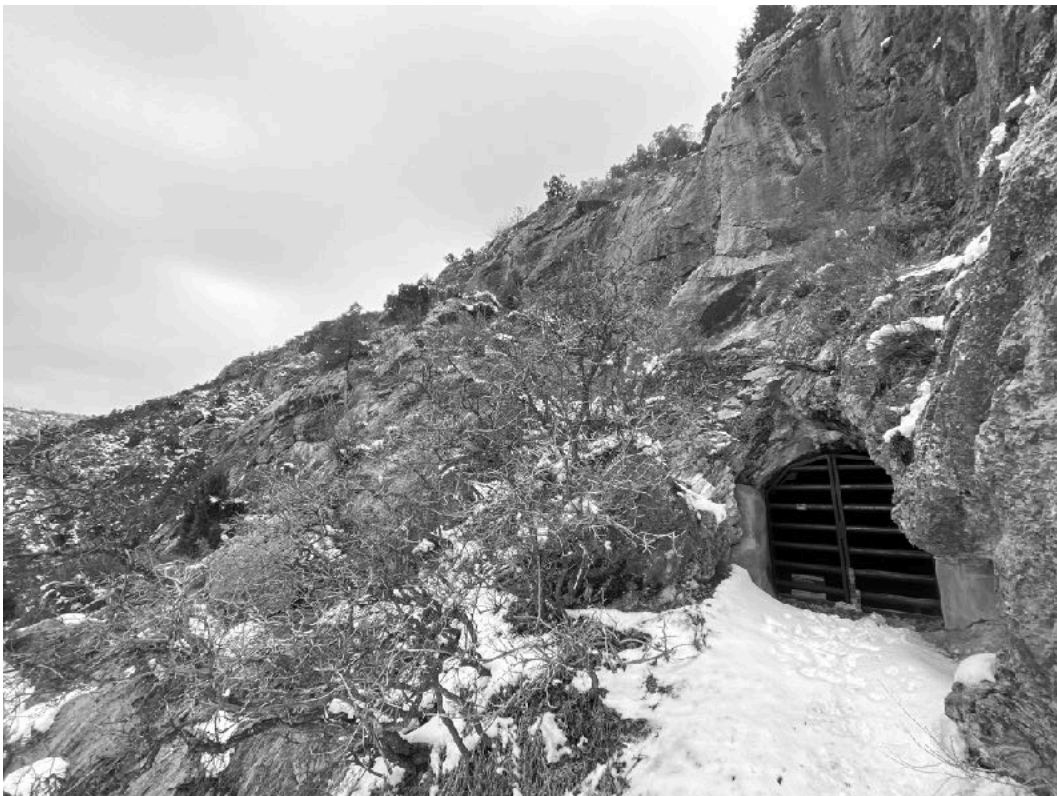
In light of this we have begun the project of recording the names, as best we can, and will work with the local Historic Society to determine any significance. Yesterday was Day One, Book One. We started at an obvious position in the entrance chamber. The names are often illegible or damaged creating a real puzzle of work. In several instances, it seems the signature was collected with the formation on which it was written. After a few hours we catalogued only about 30 feet. Slow work to be sure and we both had a pretty good chill. Without much hope for warmth on the hike down, we agreed; Day One was done.

- Plates follow article.

The approach hike offers significant elevation gain.



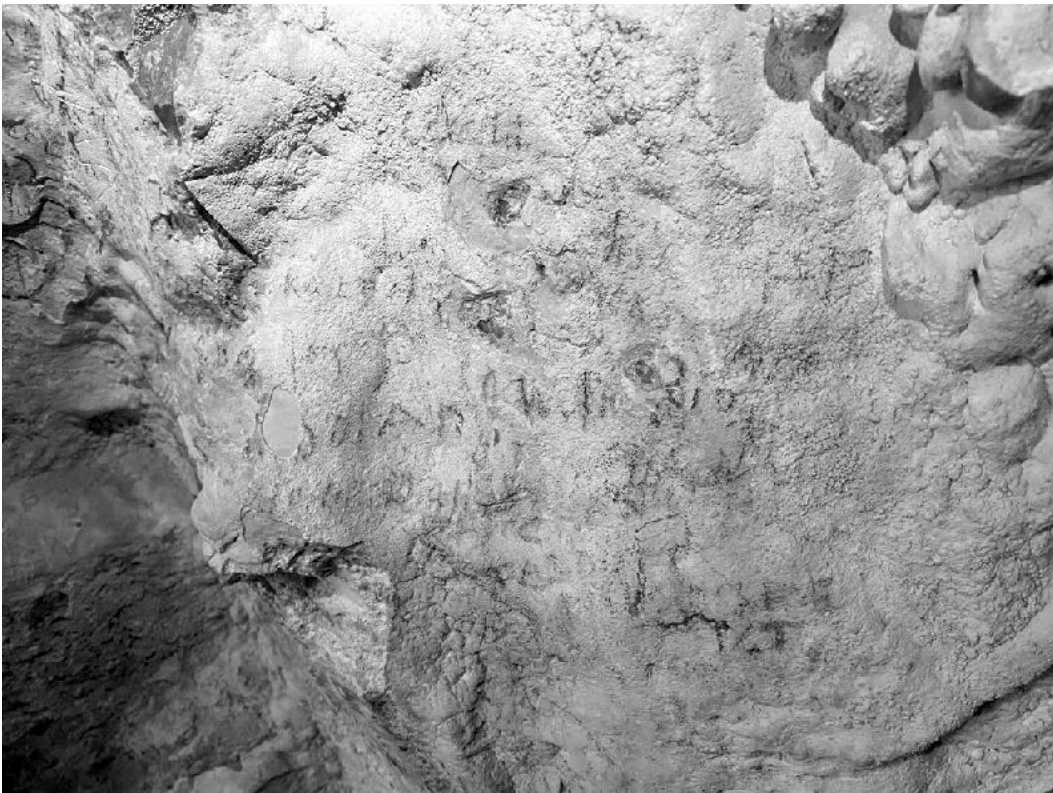
The original entrance was the size of "a large fist" and has grown exponentially in size since discovery.



Our lead scientist in the entrance chamber.
What appear to be water bottles standing near the
gate are actually translucent ice stalagmites.



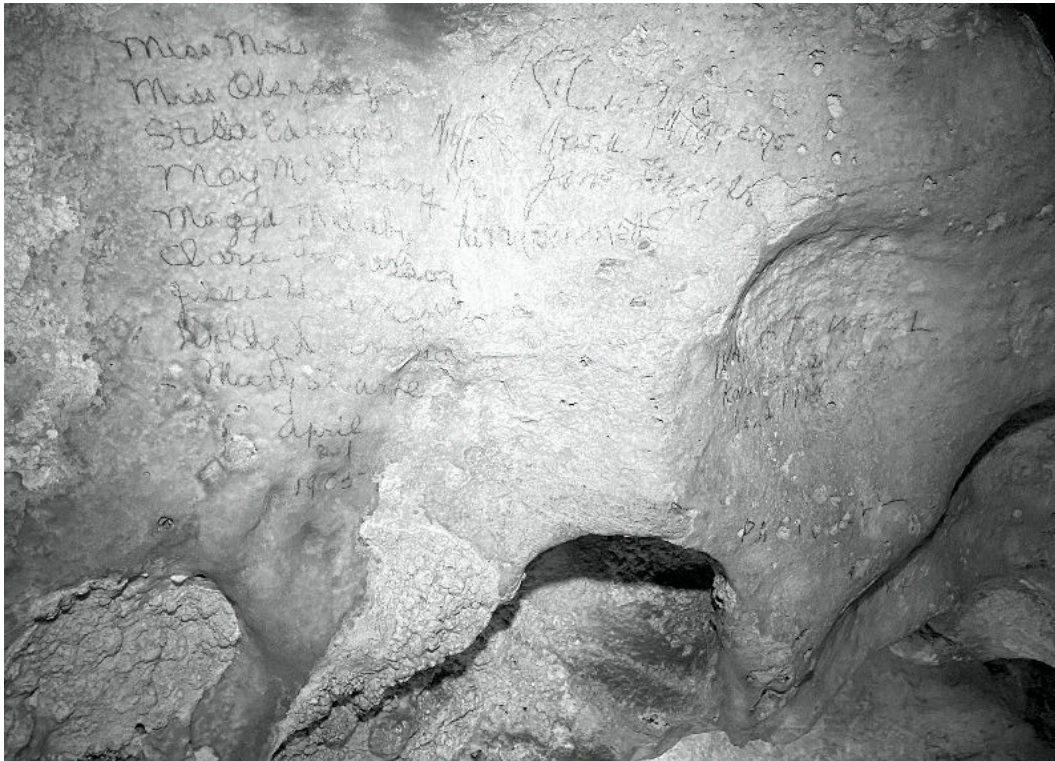
A panel of degrading signatures near the entrance.
Using different coloured LED lights we're able to
affect the legibility.



Just inside the entrance, this formation wall climbs over twenty-five feet. Also visible is our gear for the day and the picnic blanket basecamp.



This signature panel is a bit easier to read. The increased humidity in these rooms threatens to wash away panels such as this.



Tools of the trade and the work of day.

