



Old Man's Cave

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

Old Man's Cave is a recess cave on in Hocking Hills State Park, Hocking County, Ohio. The bedrock in this gorge is made of three layers of Black Hand sandstone, named for the American Indian petroglyph near Newark, Ohio where the sandstone was first documented. The middle layer of the sandstone in Old Man's Gorge is softer than its upper and lower layer neighbors, and so erodes more easily, creating the recess. Although the glaciers that flattened other parts of Ohio never arrived in this area, the geology in Old Man's Gorge maintained that cool climate, which allowed birch, hemlock, and yew trees to cover the area—uncommon species in the rest of the state. The first inhabitants of the Hocking Hills area were probably members of the Adena culture around 7,000 years ago. More recently, the Delaware, Shawnee and Wyandot peoples lived here. The name of the cave, however, comes from a hermit named Richard Rowe, who lived in the cave and is said to haunt the area. He wasn't the only old man who lived here, though: before him, a more mysterious figure by the name of Retzler supposedly stayed at the same spot in the eighteenth century. It is now one of the most popular hiking spots in Ohio, and open to the public year-round.

Important Dates

- 1750: About 20 to 25 English trappers move to the Old Man's Gorge area, then called "Clearwater" in Hocking Hills, Hocking County.
- 1778: One of the trappers, "Retzler," dies and is buried with his dog and gun in Old Man's Cave.
- 1795: Brothers Nathaniel and Pat Rayon build a cabin 30 feet north of Old Man's Cave. The cabin was later relocated to Iles Farm nearby.
- 1796: Richard and David Rowe move to the region from Tennessee. David marries a Shawnee woman and moves to the Ozarks; Richard takes up residence in Old Man's Cave after the War of 1812.
- 1857: Richard returns from his visiting the Ozarks, and accidentally shoots himself while breaking ice on the stream.
- 1924: The State of Ohio purchases the Hocking Hills area to make a nature reserve.
- 1972: Cabins are built nearby to promote vistration.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in a proximity search: Old Man's Cave, Old Man's Gorge, Richard Rowe, Hocking Hills, Cedar Grove, visit, picnic, ghost.
- Limit your search by date to find information about anyone you know who might have visited.
- Search newspapers in all states, not just Ohio.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[News About Your Friends](#)" *Logan Ohio Democrat* (Logan, OH), August 28, 1902, Image 2, col. 4.
- "[The Wonders of Hocking](#)" *Hocking Sentinel* (Logan, OH), June 22, 1905, Image 4, col. 4.
- "[Interesting Story of Old Man's Cave](#)" *Logan Democratic-Sentinel* (Logan, OH), March 28, 1907, Image 6, col. 1-2.
- "[Cedar Grove](#)" *Logan Democratic-Sentinel* (Logan, OH), August 15, 1907, Image 7, col. 4.
- "[Cedar Grove](#)" *Logan Democratic-Sentinel* (Logan, OH), August 12, 1909, Image 4, col. 5.