



OCS Officers

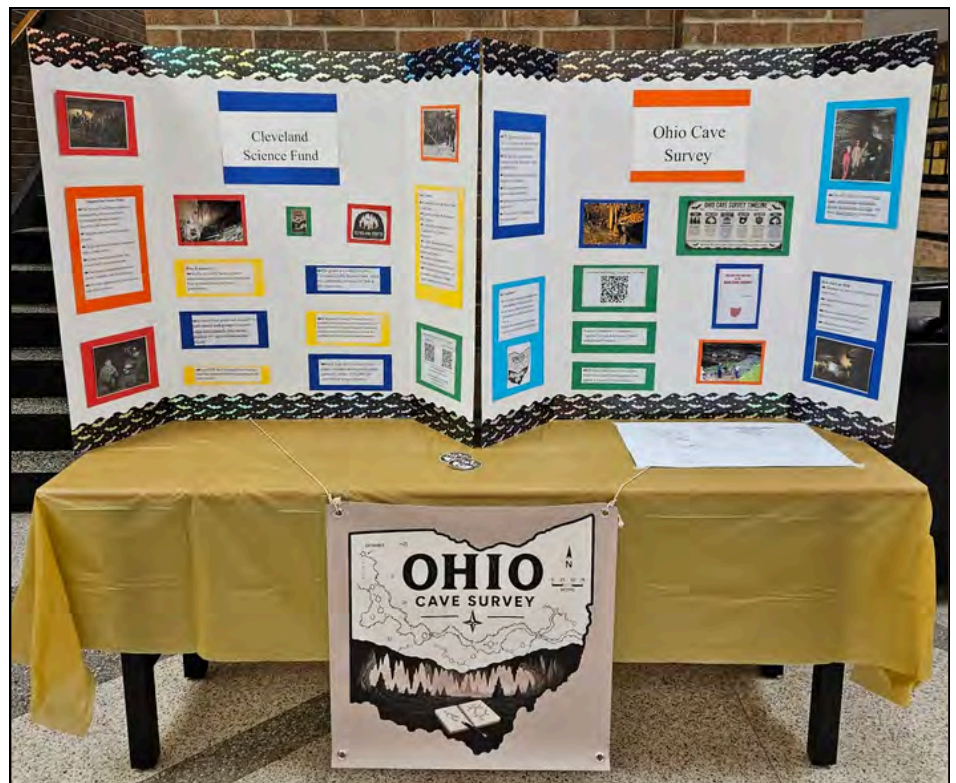
President: Frank Vlcek
Vice President: Curt Harler
Secretary: Sarah Cayse
Treasurer: Wm. Gary Bush
Director: Adam Batson
Director: Ryan Braga
Director: Dennis Green
Director: Mandy Mooter

Mission Statement

The purposes of this organization shall be to maintain a collective and current survey database of caves within the state of Ohio, and to further the exploration, research, and conservation of our state's caves.

OCS at the NSS Convention

by Frank Vlcek



The 2026 National Speleological Society convention was held in Corydon, Indiana. It was billed as the Ohio River Valley Convention, which covers the states of Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio. The Ohio Cave Survey decided early on that since we are a third of the region, we needed to have a presence. We acquired a table in the hall with the rest of the non-profit organizations. It featured our new logo on a banner. We shared this table with the Cleveland Grotto. Maggie Mole, OCS member Josh Mole's wife, made two display boards. One board was an informational display about the Ohio Cave Survey, and the other was about the Cleveland Grotto's Science Fund grants. The table was intermittently staffed by members in their spare time to answer questions and promote our work. Promotional magnets were given out to people interested in what we do. >>>

Dues Information

Membership is open to all persons and similar-minded organizations interested in speleology and caving.

Regular (18+): \$15/yr

Associate (18-): \$5/yr

Organization: \$30/yr

Dues are prorated (half price) if new and joining between July - November.

Paypal, credit card, or mailed check are accepted. Follow the link below to become a member today!

**Ohio Cave Survey
Membership**

Minutes

Miss a meeting?
Minutes are available here:

OCS Minutes

Links

[Central Ohio Grotto](#)

[Dayton Underground Grotto](#)

[Greater Cincinnati Grotto](#)

[Wittenburg University
Speleological Society](#)

[Cleveland Grotto](#)

[National Speleological Society](#)

Newsletter

Editor: Brittany Parrick

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First thing on Monday morning, Frank Vlcek gave a presentation in the Regional Exploration and Survey Session. It covered an overview of caves in Ohio, a short history of the Ohio Cave Survey, and what we have been up to recently. Also during the Regional Exploration and Survey Session, Ryan Braga gave a presentation on the "Exploration and Survey of Courtesy Cave," and Frank gave one on the "Sandstone Caves of Northeast Ohio." In the History Session on Thursday, Curt Harler gave a presentation on "The 130 Year History of the Ohio Cave Survey." All presentations were well received and sparked interest from cavers from other parts of the country.



Dan and Frank strategizing at Big Skylight. Photo by Mandy.

Log Lurker Survey Continues

by Frank Vlcek

After wrapping up our survey, Dan Peter, Mandy Mooter, and I returned to Log Lurker Cave in September to investigate the possible caves attached to it by a large skylight. It was immediately obvious that there was more cave passage and all of it was connected to Log Lurker by what we now call the Big Skylight. It's not unusual to encounter skylights here and there in these Sharon Conglomerate sandstone caves. But Big Skylight is so named because it is 60 feet long. But you can't travel between the several cave passages that intersect through Big Skylight unless you want to swim. It is filled with water that we measured 6 feet deep or more and it is 26 feet to the ground above from the surface of the water.

The one passage in Log Lurker Cave that connects to Big Skylight is also filled with water at least 5.5 feet deep. Where it dumps out into Big Skylight there are the remnants of a wooden walkway. None of us wanted to swim so in order to connect to our existing survey, I rappelled down to the old walkway. With Dan making his way through



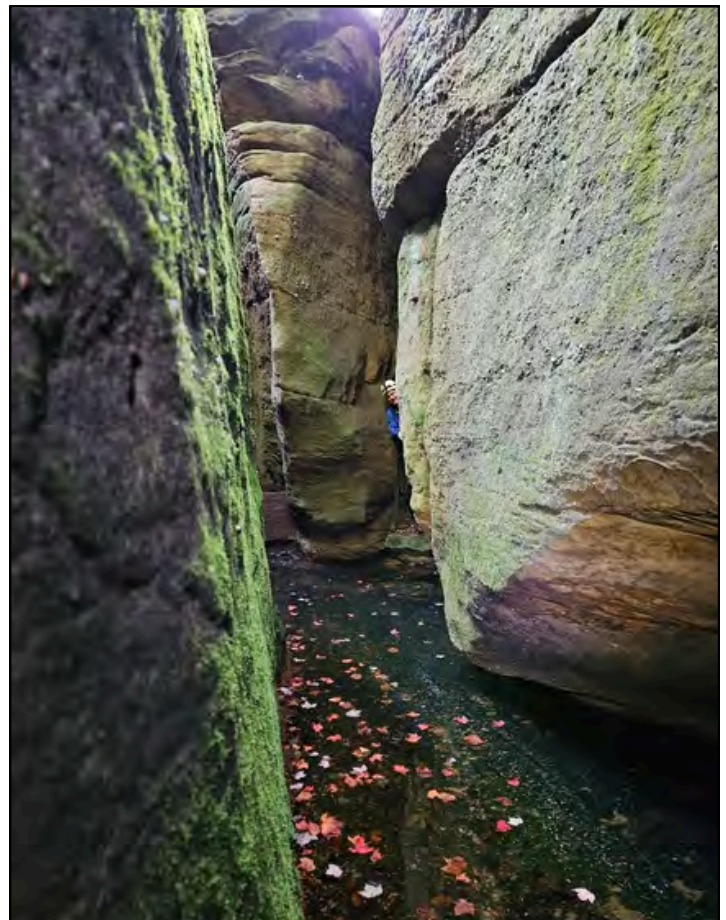
Log Lurker to the closest station, Big Skylight was connected. We then made several survey shots across Big Skylight to connect to and survey the cave beyond. These passages included lower and upper levels, one of which leads to an entrance near the surface high above the water in the Big Skylight. But the best was yet to come.

The three of us returned two weeks later to complete the survey around the Big Skylight and explore some more holes Dan found. One of these holes led to a passage very different from any Sharon Conglomerate cave passage we had seen anywhere. Instead of the usual narrow passage with high ceilings, this one was 10 feet wide and only 2–3 feet high. As we worked our way through it, Dan said there's a piece of wood in the ceiling. When I joined him, what we were looking at was a 6-foot-long, 4–6-inch-wide, flat piece of fossilized wood. As we continued, we found many more wood fossils. The three of us were beyond excited. While fossils in sandstone aren't really rare, they aren't very common either. And these were so well preserved because they were protected from weathering being in a cave. After showing photos of our find to several geologists, their best guess is that the fossils were of a plant called *Calamites*. *Calamites* were a horsetail that grew up to 75 feet tall when the sandstone formed during the Pennsylvanian 315 million years ago.

What we call Fossil Alley also has an interesting skylight that has been converted into a yard drain near a corner of the cave owner's house. We were able to tie this passage into the rest of the Log Lurker Cave System through a very narrow tunnel. And after Mandy and I returned one more time to re-sketch some areas, we declared the survey complete. The Log Lurker Cave System ended up being 1,090 feet long. That is a significantly long cave for the state of Ohio and the fossils it contains makes it even more special. And because it is so close to the owner's home, it will remain well protected into the future.



Closer look at *Calamites*. Entire specimen was 6 feet long.
Photo by Frank.

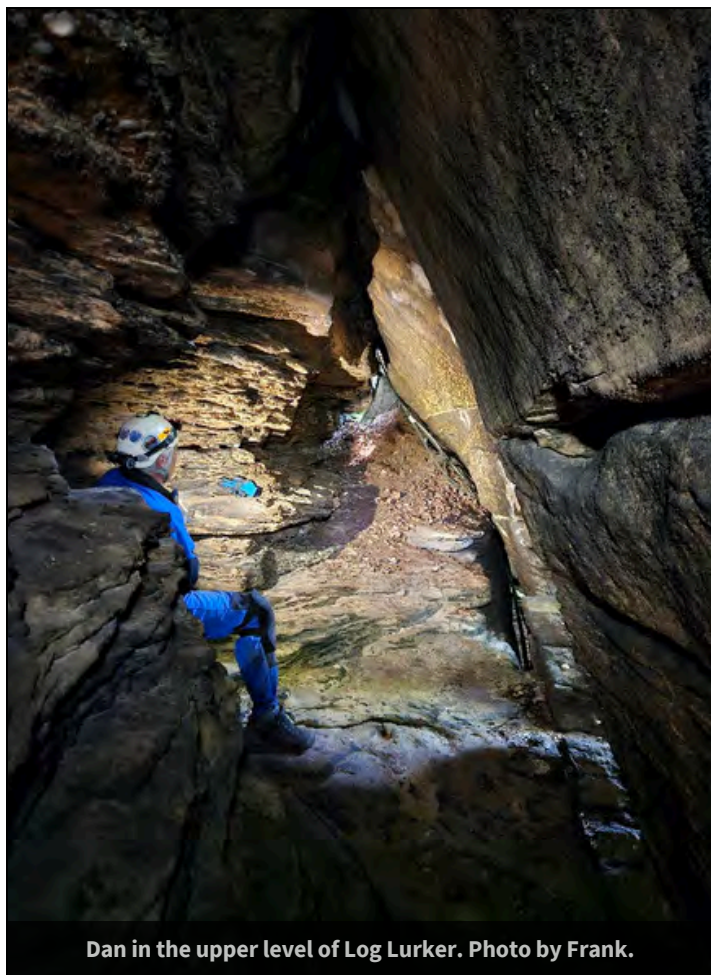


Dan peers across Big Skylight. Photo by Frank.

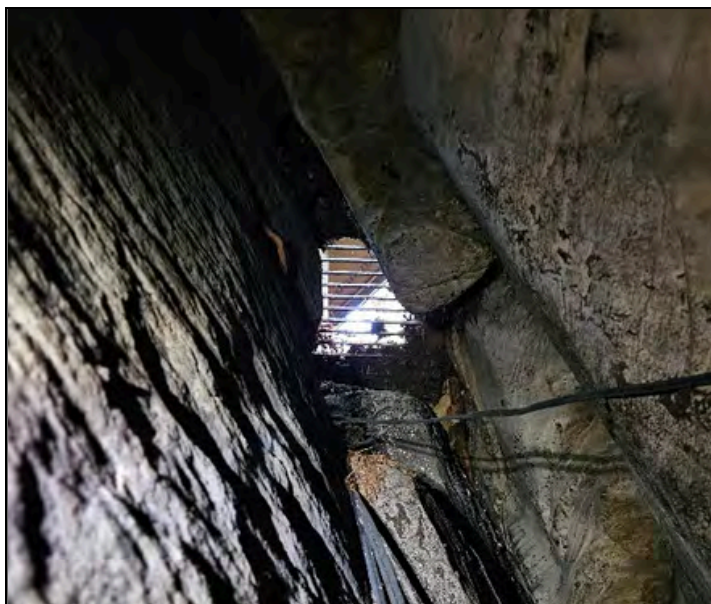


Dan in Fossil Alley. Photo by Frank.

More photos from Log Lurker Cave



Dan in the upper level of Log Lurker. Photo by Frank.



Looking up into yard drain. Photo by Frank.



Frank rappels into Big Skylight. Photo by Mandy.



For Clarification

In the November 2025 article "Geologizing with an ODNR Expert," it is retired geologist and Holden Arboretum volunteer guide Pat Biliter who found the seismite at Little Mountain.

Eight Degrees in Erie County

by Curt Harler

When Douglas Aden, a geologist with the Ohio Geological Survey (part of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources), heard a group of Cleveland Grotto members, in support of the Ohio Cave Survey, planned a trip to document caves in Erie County, his reply was, "Super cool you folks are going out there!"

Ah, yes - "super cool" was the word of the day! Most of the crew left home with the temperature just cracking the 1°F mark. By the time we got to the Castalia area, things were a balmy 8°F. On the trip were Cherie and Karin Cassavar, Nicklas Humphrey, Josh and Maggie Mole, and myself.

Much of the property, all within a few miles radius, is owned or farmed by Mike Kuns, a wonderful person. He welcomed us to his place, hand-drew a map to one cave location, and circled another on a map that I had. He texted his niece to let her know we'd be coming past her house and barn. We'd still be chatting if a baby pig (less than 24 hours old) didn't need more eye-dropper feeding attention. My apologies to the rest of the crew left outside waiting for me.

With the help of Mr. Kuns, we promptly located Kuns Cave. It actually surveyed to 49.5 feet total...a great start to the day. The cave has two entrances adjacent to one another. It sits in a low wall of Columbus Limestone and is well protected by briars and brambles.

The second cave is Oyster Swallow Cave, also in the Columbus Limestone. We knew we were at the right place for three reasons. First, the GPS coords said the cave was right on a curve of a road. The road curved. Second, Chad Waffan had swung by the cave the day before to confirm it wasn't a wild goose chase. I followed his tire tracks off the asphalt knowing that, if Chad got out, both Josh and I could get our vehicles out. Third, on the rockface someone spray painted "Oyster Swallow Cave." At both Kuns and Oyster Swallow we took measurements with either tape or Disto. Oyster Swallow is just 14 feet.

Oyster Swallow is home to one cool geocache with lots of better-than-average souvenirs, including a silver dollar, a regular dollar bill, and a pocket knife. Nick claimed the former, Karin the latter. We left some cave stickers in return. Hardly an even swap but the best we could do on short notice.

By now, the temperature had risen to nearly 10°F. There was some sun so it felt much warmer: maybe even 14°F! Off we went to find our third, and possibly fourth, caves. We looked all over for the one cave and came up empty. And I mean ALL OVER. This cave is reported to be at the bottom of a uniquely shaped triangular field past a tall radio tower and many satellite dishes. We walked the field. We walked in the woods. We walked through briars that kept pulling my hat off and one that slapped Maggie in the eye. We walked the perimeter of the triangular field and didn't see anything that suggested "cave" to us. Since our self-imposed callout time was 2pm and it was just a bit before that, we called it a day.



Nick Humphrey shows Karin Cassavar a box he found in Oyster Swallow Cave. Photo by Curt Harler.

It was well past lunchtime and Maggie was aware of a pancake house in nearby Sandusky. Great call.

Finding, measuring, and sketching two of three caves isn't a shabby outing. Even though we documented under 60 feet of Ohio cave passage, keep in mind that some survey teams in Sarah Furnace only surveyed that much in a day's work there. Bonus: nobody lost any digits!

And the next time you see Cherie, ask her if she got any whipped cream with her pancakes.



Ice feathers decorating the entrance area to Kuns Cave.
Photo by Cherie Cassavar.

One Trip Triples Logan County Caves

by Curt Harler

With the exception of Zane's Shawnee Indian Caverns (aka Zane Caverns, Unangst, or Unagst Cave), the Ohio Cave Survey had no reported caves in Logan County. It seems strange that nothing significant had been reported in the entire area between Zane's to the northeast and Ohio Caverns to the south, just over the line into Champaign County. However, some fieldwork by ODNR geologists Douglas Aden and Brittany Parrick provided a couple of solid leads on caves in sinkholes. The first I'm calling "Tammy's Cave," after the current landowner.

Tammy said her dad was working on the property and figured that the sinkholes were in a line with Ohio Caverns, which is not far as the crow flies. He figured there had to be a cave on their land. There is. Tammy said her father had put a door on the entrance but it now was gone. That had to be some time ago since a good-sized tree now grows in the middle of the sink and any door could only have been a plank of sorts. Or, maybe it was another speleo-legend to keep curious kids away.

After a couple of phone calls, Tammy generously gave the Ohio Cave Survey the go-ahead to check things out after I promised to share photos, a cave map, and to give her anything we found inside the cave. Frank Vlcek and I exclaimed, ROAD TRIP! And we were off.



Douglas Aden peering into Tammy's Cave.
Photo by Brittany Parrick.

ODNR's Aden warned Frank and I, "This one is going to be an adventure to find amidst the brush." Going north through the woods, the secret is to find an old quarry and follow the drainage up slope north. The sink is in the dry gulley on the west side, he advised. Adventure it was. Tammy accompanied us and provided directional advice from time to time, although she never had been into the cave. She also indicated that she thought there might be cave art inside. There isn't.

A neighboring farm granted us permission to cross their fields and avoid about a quarter-mile of extra bushwhacking...but there were plenty of briars and brambles to negotiate the rest of the way. At one point, the long bright pink hank of webbing that Frank brought was snatched out of his pack by some briars or branches. When we retraced our steps, it was nowhere to be found. But we did find the cave.

We were advised to bring a shovel and a timber saw. The latter came in handy as I sawed away at several substantial roots from the towering tree above the sinkhole. The roots blocked the cave entrance more effectively than a door would have. We did some desultory digging and dirt shoving and were a bit downcast about our prospects until I picked up a 7-foot-long branch and started poking around the edges of the hole. I lost my grip and was shocked when the whole thing dropped vertically into the hole and was gone. What the heck?!?!

Lids and lights went on. On our bellies, we were able to reach down and grab the probe. Frank pushed aside a few more slender roots and was into Tammy's Cave. The whole time, Tammy herself watched from above.



Frank Vlcek climbs up out of the one known room in Tammy's Cave. It was not as easy as his smile makes it look.

The floor of the cave is about seven feet below the base of the sinkhole. The sink itself is about seven feet from rim to cave. There is a single room at the bottom of the cave about big enough to crouch in. Another small passage drops down from the floor for another 3 or 4 feet, which Frank fit half his body in, but ended the humanly passable extent of the cave. The cave walls are all mud. There was no sign of the expected Columbus Limestone. The cave definitely takes water but there was no significant or obvious outflow port.

Frank identified a few beetles and worms in the cave. The beetles are likely Bigheaded Ground Beetles (*Scarites subterraneus*). Thanks to Erin Hazelton for ID help.

The loss of the pink webbing was felt on the way out. The entrance drop bells slightly and there are few good footholds.

If someone is looking for a dig project, Tammy's might hold promise. There is another cave in Logan County, however, which holds more promise for expansion. That is Duff Cave, about 7 miles from Tammy's Cave and the subject of another article. And there is a third cave, Grytko Cave, that Frank and I totally whiffed on. It must be close by...the similarity of GPS coords confused us. I think. Maybe...



The beetles in Tammy's Cave are likely Bigheaded Ground Beetles (*Scarites subterraneus*).



Another Logan County Cave

by Frank Vlcek

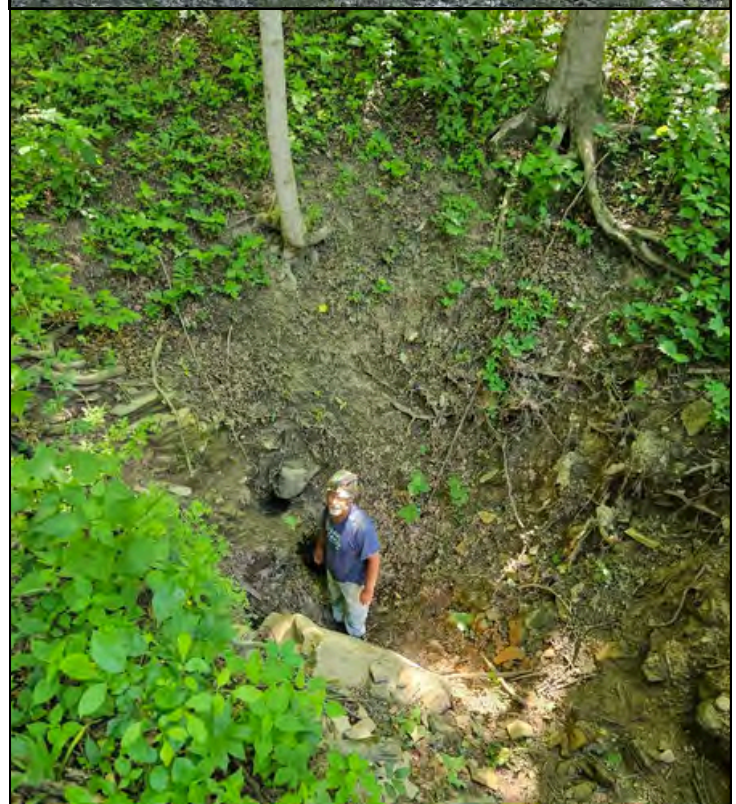
After investigating Tammy's Cave, Curt Harler and I had several more targets to look into. Douglas Aden and Brittany Parrick had given us coordinates they recorded during their sinkhole research for ODNr. We thought we were getting a grand tour of the county as we turned from county road to county road with nothing to show but corn fields just beginning to sprout. Eventually the Google lady said to turn up a driveway that seemed to disappear into the horizon. That long drive finally deposited us at a feed store among a group of buildings including a house. Behind the house we could see a team of draft horses working the fields. We were definitely in Amish country. Curt exited the car to see what he could find out and was greeted by a young Amish boy. The lad said he knew about the cave but we would have to ask his grandfather about going there.

Next thing I knew, Curt returned and said we had a guide to take us right to the cave. As it turned out, we had three guides. They were the original boy who was 10, his 7 year old brother, and their 4 year old sister, who was cute as could be and tough as nails. We hiked for probably a mile, not only through pastures, but also woods, through briars, and over every sharp stick the forest has to offer. And she did it all in her bare feet!

Our guides showed us a shallow sink with nothing much to see. Then, not far away, we could see a pile of rubble, and when we got to it we saw what we were looking for: Duff's Cave. There was what Douglas had called a sinkhole and an excavated hole next to it. Curt checked out the dug hole while I looked into the sinkhole. At one end of the sinkhole was a U-shaped rock face with an obvious cave about 4 feet off the ground. The passage was 4-6 feet wide and 2 feet high and wet. I could see no side leads off it but there was light at the far end where Curt was investigating the dug sinkhole. I shined the Disto down the passage and Curt spotted the laser in a small hole on the side of the sink. More exciting was another hole 5 feet away. This hole was actually a pit, in limestone, with a Disto measurement of over 21 feet deep. We could see water on the bottom, so its true depth depends on the depth of the water. Unfortunately, we determined that we will need a rope and vertical gear to safely explore this one.

As we were doing a rough survey, the grandfather joined us to see what we were finding. He gave us as much history of the property that he knew. He did not know anything about some of the history we had heard of caves in the area being used by the Underground Railroad. It's hard to say if these two caves were connected before the excavation took place. For now, we're counting them as one. It also looks like the natural sink may have been quarried long ago. OCS researcher Mandy Mooter has found

Amish guides plus their grandfather leading Frank.
Photo by Curt with permission of grandfather.



Curt looking up from down in excavated sinkhole. Photo by Frank.

some historical accounts that say a cave that could house 18 slaves was right in this area. If this is that cave, it makes sense that some of it was quarried away so it's now much smaller. That is, unless the pit opens up into some sizable passage. That will be determined in the future.

We wrapped up our day by navigating over to Zane Shawnee Caverns. We had read that the once-commercial cave was closed, but that the campground was open. All accounts indicated that the cave would be reopened in the future and we wanted to see when that might be. As we drove up the drive we noticed there weren't many camp spots occupied. We found our way to the store just as someone was leaving. That someone was one of the owners. She was also once a cave guide and knew all the history we could possibly want to know. When they had bought the property, their intentions were to fix it up and reopen the cave as a commercial venture. But they came to the conclusion that it was going to be too much work. The cave is now permanently closed with no intention to ever open it again. They are not letting anyone in no matter how much sweet talking Curt could muster. They are just leaving it as a home for bats. And the campground is no longer public. It is just a rather large parcel for use by the Shawnee Nation. Some tribe members have built homes there and some just use it as a private campground. As we drove away, Curt commented that it was a shame the cave was closed, but at the same time kind of cool that it had been turned over to the tribe.

One of the sets of coordinates Douglas gave us was very close to Zane. They may be for what we hope is Grytko Cave, but Curt and I mixed up our emails and looking for it got lost in the shuffle. We'll just have to check that one out when we return with a rope to check out the pit. All in all it was a successful and fun day. We knew there had to be more caves in Logan County and now we're proving it.

Additional photos

These additional photos were taken by Brittany Parrick during winter fieldwork with Douglas Aden. In the left photo, the excavated hole is in the foreground with a large glacial erratic partially visible, and the natural sinkhole is on the distant side of the saddle, to the left of Douglas Aden. The tree in the foreground matches the tree by Curt on the previous page. The right photo was taken from the saddle, looking down at the erratic. Note the Columbus Limestone outcropping on the sides of the excavation.

