



CAVE OF THE MOUNDS®
National Natural Landmark

Our Geology & History

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Audio Tour Available

Cave Temperature 50°F/10°C

BELOW GROUND



3 different colors can primarily be seen in our cave due to the presence of different minerals. The mineral calcite is white; iron oxide gives us red, orange and browns; and manganese gives us hues of black, blue, purple and gray.

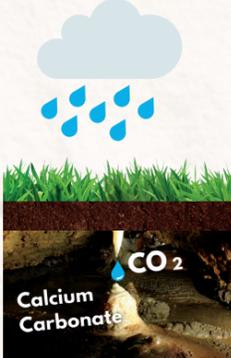


Dream River extends back 250 feet and was opened in 1957.



What is a Stalagmite?

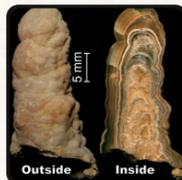
Stalagmites form from water. Rainwater seeps through the ground and into the cave. Along the way, it picks up carbon dioxide gas from the soil, which creates carbonic acid. This dissolves the surrounding rock (limestone) as the water percolates through the ground, and when it reaches the cave, it releases CO₂ (much like when a soda can is opened). After the CO₂ is released, the remaining calcite in the water (from the dissolved limestone) is precipitated as part of a stalagmite.



As rainwater drips into the cave, calcite growth "rings" form inside stalagmites:



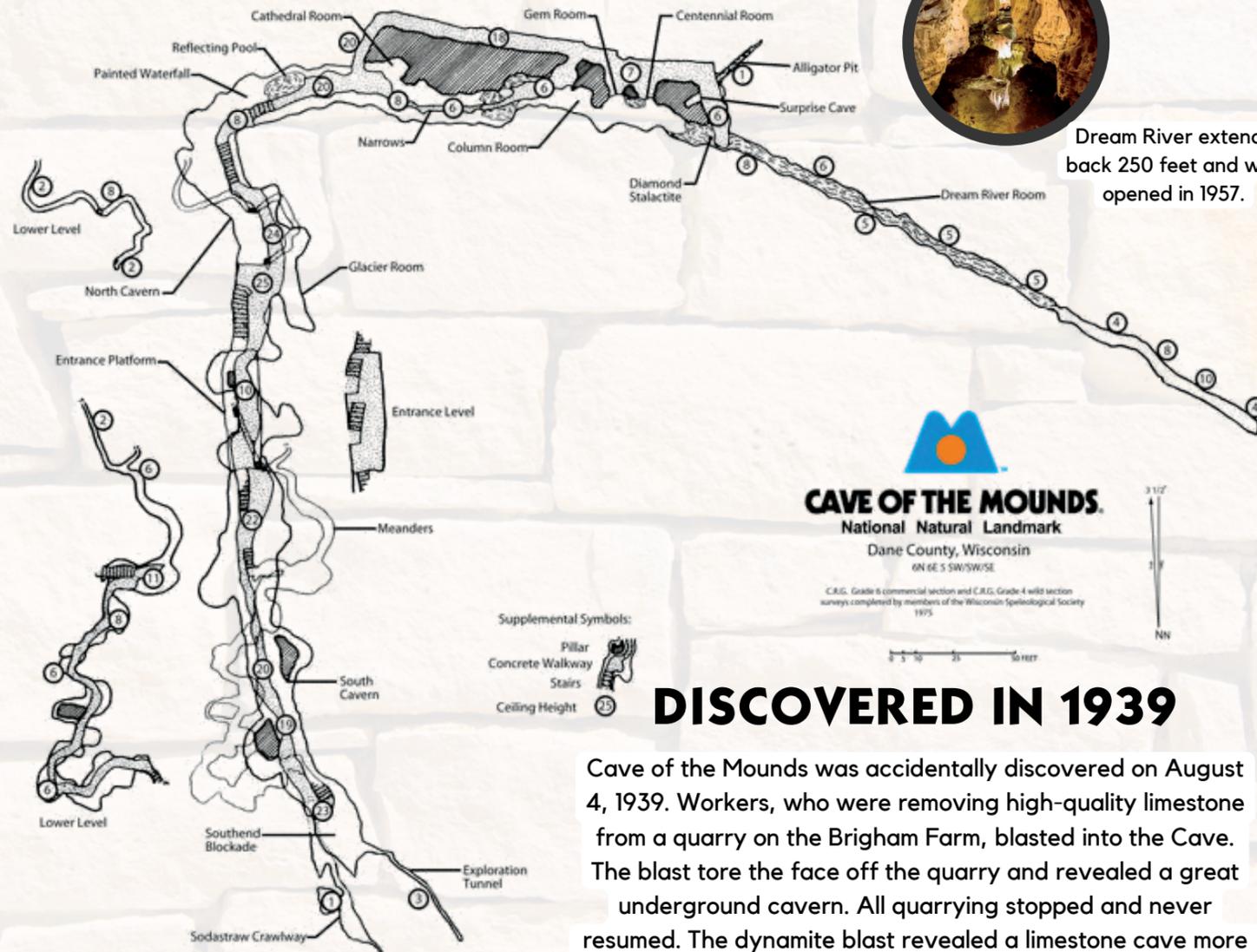
How do we know when calcite is growing?



Rain water contains the element "Uranium" (U) that's in the atmosphere, which decays to the element "Thorium" (Th) through time. The ratio of U-to-Th can be measured in calcite growth rings to determine out how old a stalagmite is!

Fun Fact

The age of the stalagmite (pictured above) is roughly 257,000 years is the oldest recorded age of stalagmite growth in the Midwestern United States!



CAVE OF THE MOUNDS
National Natural Landmark
Dane County, Wisconsin
ON 66 S SW/4 SW/4
C.R.G. Grade 6 commercial section and C.R.G. Grade 4 wild section surveys completed by members of the Wisconsin Speleological Society 1975

DISCOVERED IN 1939

Cave of the Mounds was accidentally discovered on August 4, 1939. Workers, who were removing high-quality limestone from a quarry on the Brigham Farm, blasted into the Cave. The blast tore the face off the quarry and revealed a great underground cavern. All quarrying stopped and never resumed. The dynamite blast revealed a limestone cave more than twenty feet high opening into other rooms and galleries, all containing numerous mineral formations. The excitement of the discovery brought so many curiosity seekers that the Cave had to be closed in order to preserve it.

For your safety and to protect our fragile cave:

- Please leave strollers and framed backpack carriers in your vehicle.
- Please do not touch the walls or formations in the cave.
- Please do not eat, drink, chew tobacco, or smoke in the cave.
- Please leave large bags and backpacks in your vehicle.
- Cameras allowed - please leave tri-pods, mono-pods and selfie-sticks in your vehicle.

Thank You!

To Do at the Cave

- Discover Treasure at the Gem Mine
- Crack a Geode
- Get certified as an Adventure Ranger
- Hike Nature Trails
- Walk along Geologic Timeline
- Search for Fossils in the Foundation Fossil Find
- Explore Rock & Fossil Gift Shops



ABOVE GROUND

Cave of the Mounds was discovered on August 4th, 1939 on the site of historic Brigham Farm. Since then, millions of visitors have come to see the fragile underground treasures that you will see today.

In 1988 the National Park Service and the United States Department of the Interior designated the Cave of the Mounds a National Natural Landmark, stating that "this site possesses exceptional value as an illustration of the nation's natural heritage and contributes to a better understanding of our environment."

While you enjoy your visit with us, please remember that we have a responsibility to protect this fragile geologic wonder. Remember the Cavers motto: "Leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but photos, kill nothing but time."

We welcome you to enjoy your visit to Cave of the Mounds, please remember:

- Collect memories and photos – not flowers or plants.
- Paths and benches are for people – please stay out of the gardens.
- Share your visit with children – but supervise at all times.
- Enjoy a picnic – please use the appropriate containers to dispose of trash, recyclables & cigarette butts.
- No pets please.



Find Us on the App:



Park Map

Map Key

Prairie Terrace Trail	—	Paved Area	▬
Karst View Trail	- - -	Building	▭
Oak Valley Loop Trail	—	Stairs	≡
Grass Walking Path	—	Bridge	≡
Sinkhole	⊙	Creek or Stream	~
Bench	⌚		

