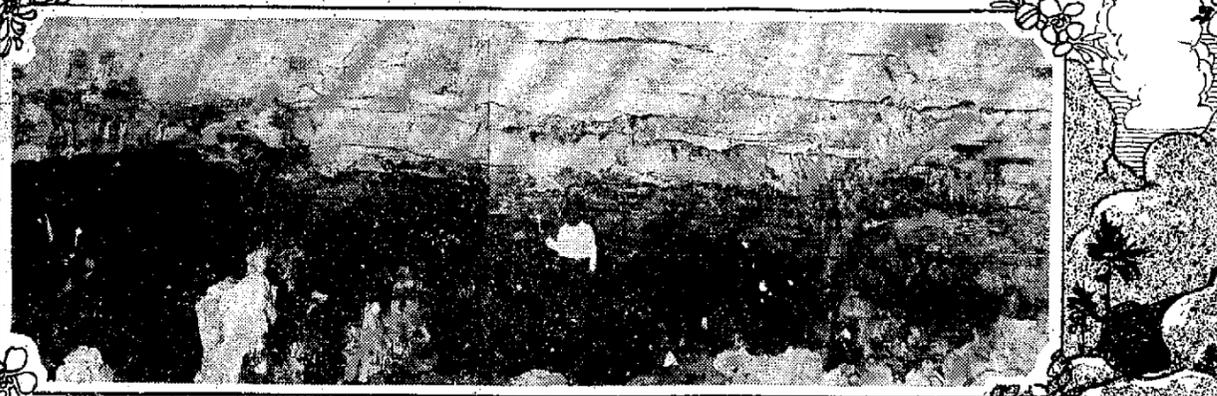
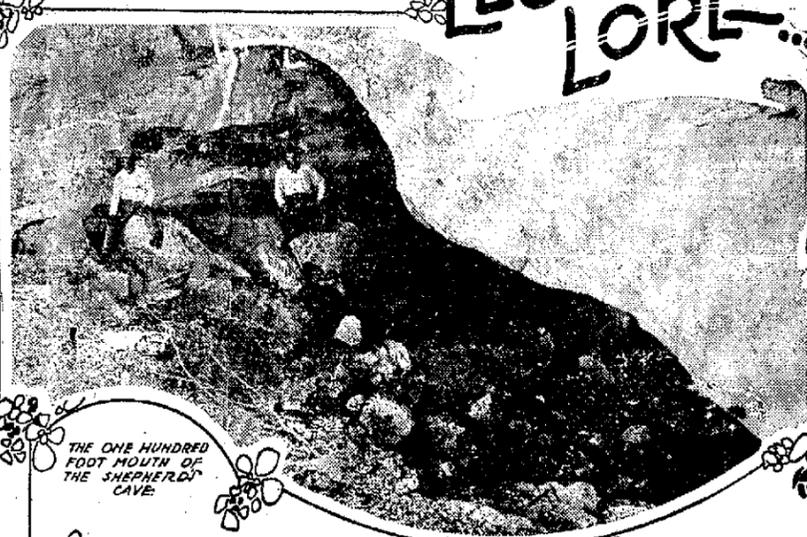


# Caves Near San Antonio

## RICH IN LEGENDARY LORE



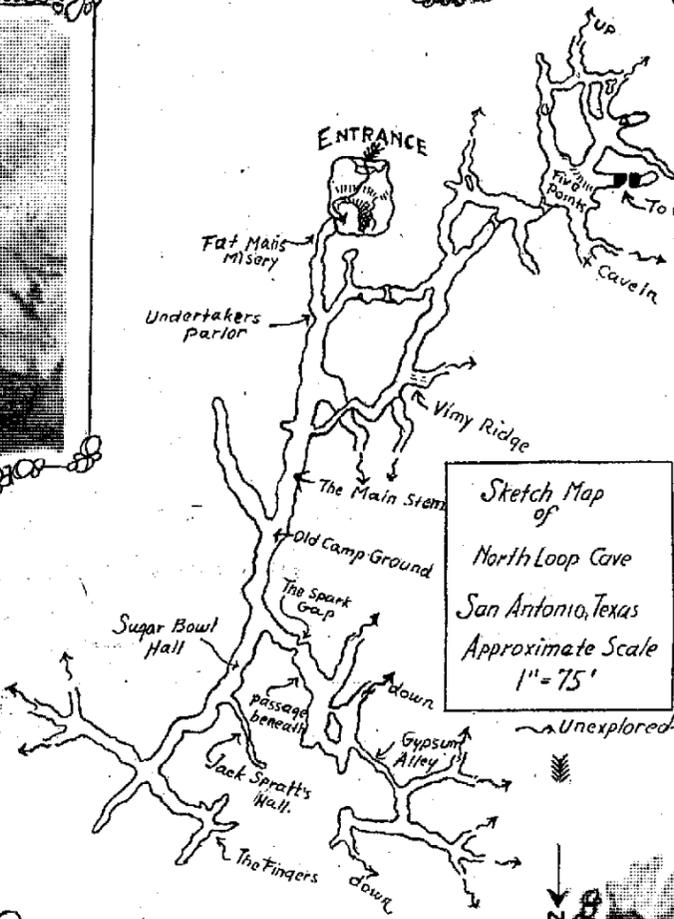
A CAVERN IN THE THE SIMON DE LA PEYNA CAVE. NOTE THE STALAGMITES AND THE SMALLER STALACTITES.



THE ONE HUNDRED FOOT MOUTH OF THE SHEPHERD'S CAVE.



INTERIOR OF THE SHEPHERD'S CAVE. WILLIAM B. KREMPKAU, LEFT, ROJARIO ROBLES, RIGHT.



Sketch Map of North Loop Cave San Antonio, Texas Approximate Scale 1" = 75'

MAP OF THE NORTH LOOP CAVE. DRAWN BY U.S. SIGNAL CORPS.

**Treasure, Robber Bands, Indian Massacres and Lost Men All Figure in Romantic Tales Concerning the Great Caverns North and Northwest of San Antonio — These Treasure Stories Are Still Given Credence and Every Year Searchers Dig in Subterranean Passages.**

Of robber bands and buried treasure, of dark Indian massacres and Spanish doubloons, of missing men and bloody crimes, is the texture of the stories that are whispered about the caves that eat into the country north and northwest of San Antonio.

Somewhere in some subterranean room is hidden thousands of dollars worth of gold and silver, looted by the Spaniards under Cortez, says an old legend and in another subterranean cavern is a fortune hidden by desperadoes of the early days who met death before the secret of the hiding place could be learned.

Whose bones are those which were found in the old Simon de la Peyna cave? Does some dark passage hundreds of feet below the ground hold the key to the mysterious disappearance of persons from this section of the country?

The country lying north of San Antonio is honeycombed with caves that stretch for miles and miles. While this is not known generally among the growing generations, yet old time residents are fully acquainted with the underground caverns having learned of them from the Indians and early characters of the wilderness who used them for various purposes.

**Fat Men Are Barred.**

The North Loop cave is the best known in San Antonio. This cave is located on the Wetmore road seven miles from the city. It may be found about 200 yards further along the Wetmore road where the North Loop branches off and heads north. The cave entrance is immediately off the road. A hole 50 feet wide and 70 feet deep marks the opening. To enter the cave one must go to the bottom of the hole and then slide face downward for about 20 feet through a narrow opening. This cave was not designed for fat men. Once inside, however, you can stand up for a long hall stretches for several hundred feet northward. The interior of this cave is mostly limestone formation with gypsum and quartz lining the walls. It has never been fully explored. One story tells of an engineer having followed a passage for two miles and returning without having found the end. Another goes that a man once entered the Laurel Heights cave during a drought and emerged 12 hours later from the North Loop cave.

The country in the vicinity of the cave is underlaid with passages for every well that has been driven in that section has at some time passed through a cave. One well drill dropped 40 feet before striking solid ground again. In this cave are thousands of blind crickets colored a light brown.

Many people have been lost in the North Loop cave for its winding passages are treacherous and one may become lost 50 feet from the entrance.

Two boys from a military academy were lost in the North Loop cave once and were not found until midnight after a searching party had left town and entered the cave. The boys were found huddled in an out of the way passage and had about given up hope of rescue. Another story goes that two men got lost in the cave and ran out of candles. They had one match left but feared to use it. After hours of crawling on their hands and knees in the darkness, their hands struck something that sounded like tin. After a consultation they struck their last match to see what it was. It was a San Antonio undertaker's sign. Their lanterns, already heavy, sank to despair as the match burned out. Then they crawled a little farther along and a faint glimmer shone from above. They ran forward and saw the light streaming from the entrance. You can still find the sign near the entrance of the cave.

**Scenic Loop Caves Larger.**

Up in the hills along the Scenic Loop are larger caves, but not so long. Probably the best known is the Shepherd's cave, about a half mile south of the home of William B. Kremkau, near Krummhorn Divide. This cave was named for its ability to shelter over a thousand head of sheep from the weather. The cave has fallen in since the memory of living man but at one time the interior of this cavern was as large as San Fernando cathedral. Its only entrance was a round hole which dropped down for 30 feet and which the Indians used. Before the middle part of the roof fell in, old settlers believe that the Indians used it for a dwelling place in bad weather. Thousands of persons could have lived in it with ease. Even the west end of the cave which is still intact will shelter a thousand head of sheep.

On Mr. Kremkau's ranch, about a mile east of the house is the 'Treasure' cave which has the legend of buried gold entwined in its history. The story goes that Spanish adventures under Cortez, pushed their way northward in search of gold for which the 'Cow World' was famous. They carried with them a huge fortune of Spanish doubloons and pieces of eight and other coins which are associated with similar tales. Getting up in the hills they were surrounded by Indians. They hid their gold in the 'Treasure' cave and were later captured. They were taken, many miles from the cave, most of them eventually being killed. A few, however, escaped and made their way to Mexico where they are said to have left charts of the cave and the exact place where the gold was supposed to be hidden.

Hundreds of people have searched the cave for the hidden gold. Some have charts said to have been made by the early Spaniards. They claim that the

passage in which the treasure is hidden has been locked by huge rocks. Persons have come all the way from Mexico to look for the gold. The cave is a dangerous one to enter. A smooth passage leads almost straight downward for twenty feet. Once down here several large chambers lead off and passages strike out in every direction. People who live in the hills nearby put no faith in the treasure legend, but when The Light photographer, in company with Mr. Kremkau, went to photograph the cave, fresh dirt could be seen near the entrance, showing that the lure of gold still draws men to the cave.

Fifty yards south of Kremkau divide is another cave which has been stopped up with a large rock. This cave is located at the base of a large back-slope which can be seen from the Scenic Loop road.

About a mile southeast of this on a ranch owned by Rojario Robles is the old Simon de la Peyna cave. In this cave are the best specimens of stalagmites and stalactites. The cavern which is entered by crawling under a huge rock in the side of a hill is about 100 feet wide and 150 feet long. Huge stalagmites two feet thick stand from the ground and join in some cases stalactites forming columns which rival the sculptor's art.

In this cave many years ago, Mr. Robles found a large number of human bones which are believed to either have been Indians or their white victims.

**Robbers' Cave on Babcock Road.**

The famous Robbers' cave is located about a mile northwest of the intersection of the Babcock road and the Hans man road on the west bank of Leon creek. This cave was once the hiding place of a band of bold train robbers and at other times of famous desperadoes. At times they hid their ill gotten gains in the dark recesses of the cave. A man was once lured to this cave by desperadoes and murdered, but history says that the murderers paid the penalty.

There are innumerable other caves scattered over this section of the country and all have their tales of adventures, treasure, romance and death. Many persons who have disappeared are believed to have fallen in some uncared-for ravine in one of the hundreds of caves that wind and twist in the bowels of the earth.

In the Leon Springs reservation there are many caves, including another 'treasure' cave.

In the early days when San Antonio was a village scattered along the meandering San Antonio river, a Mexican bandit loaded with loot came to the hills north of the city. Wishing to

come to San Antonio to take a wife in the bright lights of the little town, he hid his fortune of gold and silver in one of the caves on the reservation.

**Soldiers Made Thorough Search.**

To San Antonio he came on his prancing horse and tied to the hitching rack in front of the wildest place he could find. After a few drinks, he had a craving to dance. He selected a senorita and dragging her to the dance floor, started to show the villagers a few new steps. But he failed to use discretion in his selection. He picked the wrong senorita. A knife flashed and the bold robber died in his tracks. And all during these years, says the legend, his treasure has been waiting for him. But there is no use to look for the treasure. During the war when thousands of soldiers were out at Camp Stanley the tale got around, and every man jack combed the caves for the missing treasure.

Another story goes that during the cholera epidemic about 70 years ago, so many people died that their bodies were thrown in the caves north of the city for lack of time for proper burial.

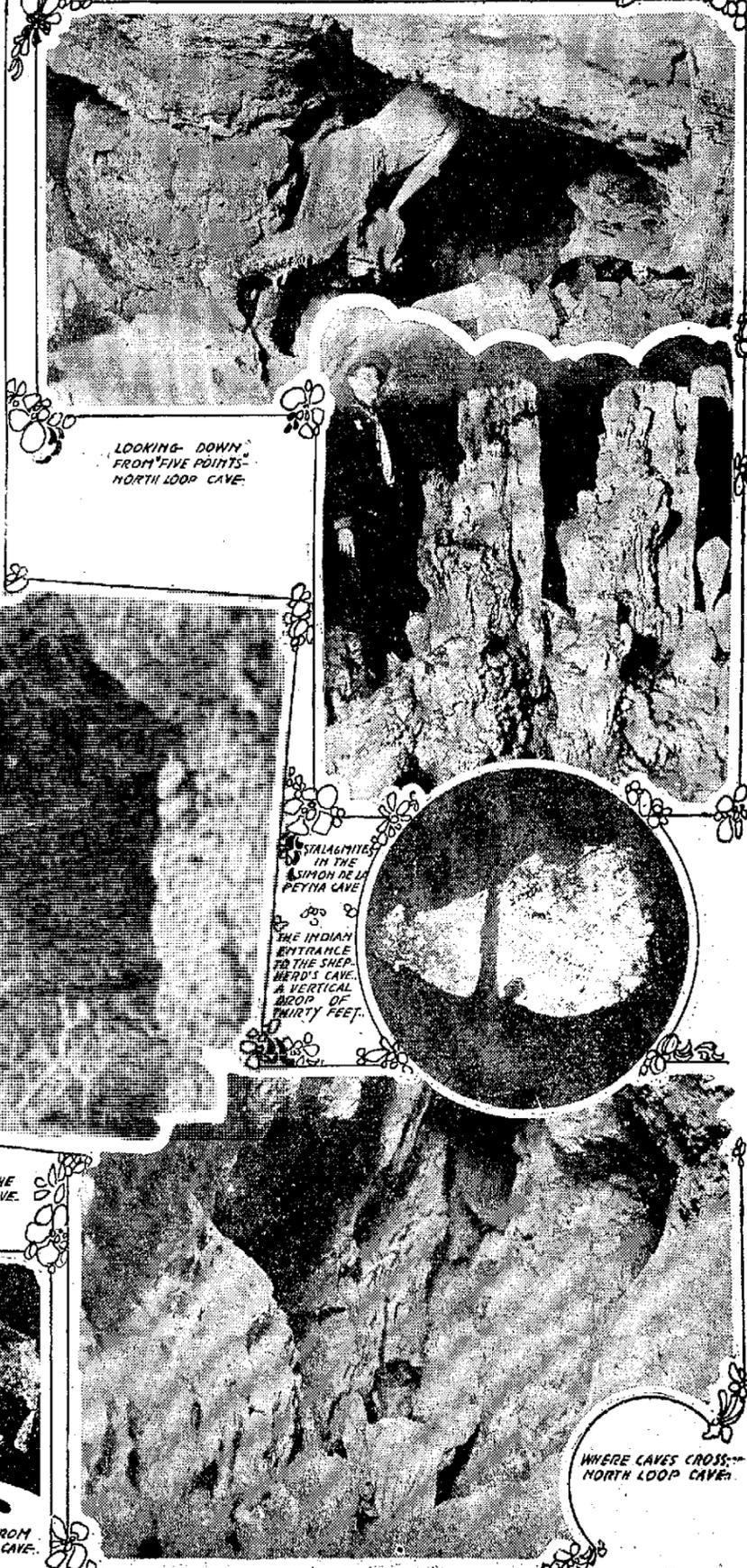
So the caves have a great dramatic background. Spanish doubloons, dead men, treasure, had robber men, gold and silver, missing men, Indian burial grounds, all put together are the warp and woof of their history.



ENTRANCE TO THE TREASURE CAVE.



LOOKING OUT FROM THE SHEPHERD'S CAVE.



LOOKING DOWN FROM FIVE POINTS NORTH LOOP CAVE.



STALAGMITES IN THE SIMON DE LA PEYNA CAVE. THE INDIAN ENTRANCE TO THE SHEPHERD'S CAVE. A VERTICAL DROP OF THIRTY FEET.

WHERE CAVES CROSS—NORTH LOOP CAVE.