

The Canyon of McCormick's Creek.

The government agents and engineers, in the selection of areas, which the Federal Government has set aside as national parks or natural recreation grounds, have kept in mind one underlying principle and that principle is that each area selected shall have distinctive features of its own. In other words, that it shall have an individuality or a personality of its own.

People who make pilgrimages to regions of beautiful, natural scenery are attracted always by the rugged and the picturesque. There is not an area in Indiana, with the possible exception of Turkey Run, that is more marked in its distinctive features than the canyon of McCormick's creek, two and one-half miles east of Spencer, Owen county, Indiana. Geologists, who have made a study of the region, have conceived a unique theory as to the formation of the canyon.

A few miles to the west of Spencer is a region known as the Flat Woods, lying partly in Owen and partly in Monroe counties. The underlying rock formation of the Flat Woods is the Mitchell limestone, which is known to be the caverious limestone of Indiana. The entire area of Mitchell limestone, reaching from Montgomery county on the north to the Ohio river on the south, is a region of sink holes and subterranean drainage. The Flat Woods is supposed to be the bed of an ancient glacial lake. When the ice sheet moved down over the Flat Woods, the glacial debris choked up the sink holes leading to the subterranean caverns and the result was the formation of a lake in the area known as the Flat Woods. The Flat Woods itself is well worth a trip to Owen county. There is a distinct shore line or ridge entirely encircling the area, and a road follows the top of this ridge almost entirely around Flat Woods. In driving over this road one is looking continuously down into the basin-shaped area that was once a large glacial lake, though later the area was covered with forests and is now an area of cultivated farms. After the ice sheet retreated, drainage, what is now McCormick creek, began.

McCormick's creek started at White river northwest of the Flat Woods and gradually cut its way back toward the ancient lake until it tapped it on the northwest corner. The volume of



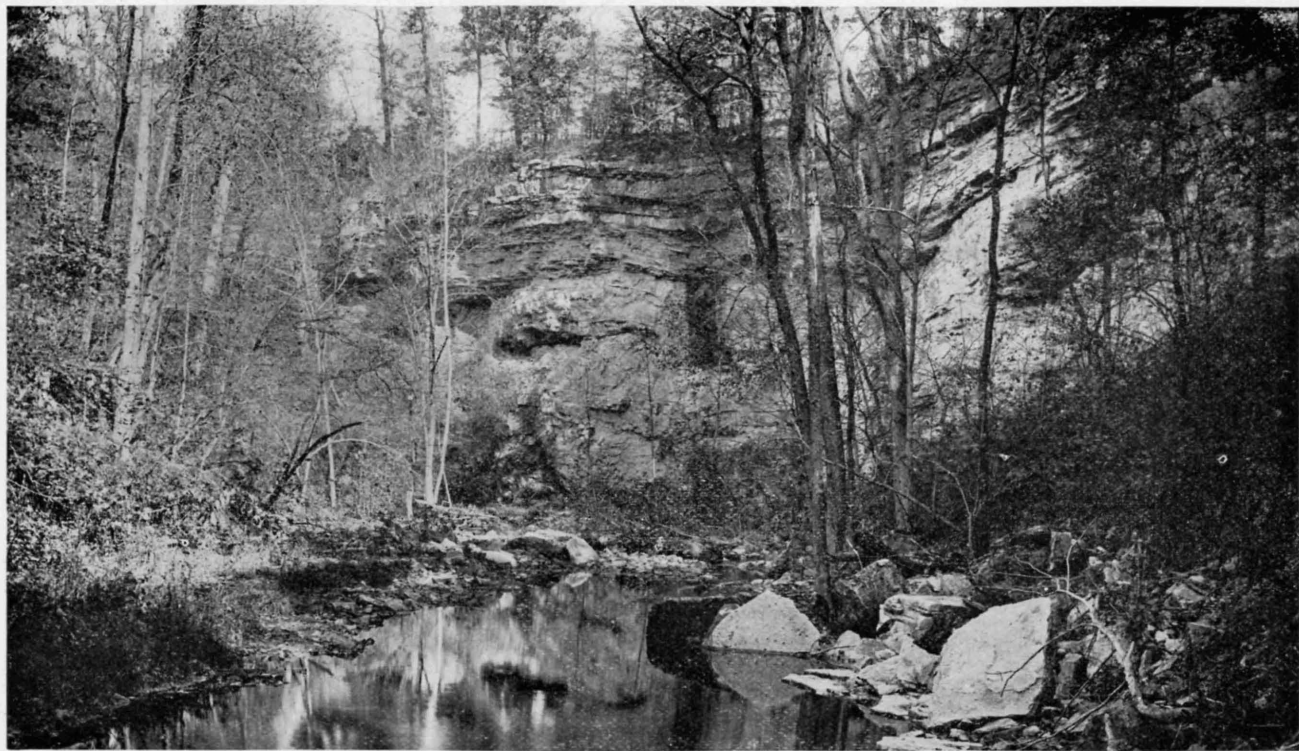
View on White River approaching canyon of "McCormick's Creek," near Spencer, Indiana.



Head of "McCormicks' Creek" canyon, known as "Hell's Half Acre."



The cascade near head of canyon of "McCormick's Creek."



Massive wall of Mitchell lime stone. 75 feet high. Canyon "McCormick's Creek."

water from the lake, which was increased by the drainage on either side of McCormick's creek, cut and eroded the channel down almost to its present depth before the lake was fully drained. The



"The Mirror." Wall of Mitchell lime stone 100 feet high. "McCormick's Creek" canyon.

canyon has cut through the Mitchell limestone, one of the hardest formations in Indiana, indicating that the volume of water must have been considerable to have done the work of carving out this canyon. The canyon itself is beautiful in the



Wall of massive lime stone, showing undercutting of stream. Canyon "McCormick's Creek."



Massive lime stone wall near old quarry. "McCormick's Creek," canyon.



Old quarry of Bedford lime stone from which was taken stone for the construction of present State Capitol Building at Indianapolis.
"McCormick's Creek" Canyon.

extreme. The gray walls of Mitchell limestone, rugged and angular, reach up from forty to one hundred feet in height, for a distance of a mile and a half. Mosses and lichens cover the walls of the canyon in places, and over-hanging vines, that droop in festoons from the brow of the cliffs, give portions of the canyon the appearance of vine-clad castles and turrets. Two beautiful cataracts occur in the canyon and they add to the picturesqueness and the ruggedness of the region.

As the visitor enters the head of the canyon, well up toward Flat Woods, there is but little to indicate the beauty of the canyon proper, but as one descends deeper and deeper, the canyon increases in depth and the walls in height, and the visitor scarcely realizes the change until he finds himself enclosed in the gray and white castellated walls. Geological agencies seem to have played hide-and-seek in this beautiful region. In places the sides have the appearance of a solid wall of masonry. In other places the stream has undercut the bluff for several feet and to a length of hundreds of feet. In the bottom of the canyon there are shady nooks, grass plots and giant trees. The tops of the cliffs above are fringed with native trees and vines that almost shroud the canyon in perpetual shade. Cool springs bubble up here and there, furnishing clear, sparkling water for the thirsty. The entire canyon is a riot of wild, rugged walls, cliffs, slopes, forests and over-hanging vines, making the region indescribably beautiful.