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Hugh Amick, District Supervisor
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Part of assigned topic covered in this report Cave on Rutherford Farm

Questionnaire categories incomplete or missing: list below with reasons for omission, i.e. whether material is still to be covered or whether the questions are not applicable to your territory.

Signed Hugh Amick
Area Supervisor

CAVE ON RUTHERFORD FARM
by: Phil Aherne, Research Editor

S-144

300 words

Within an hour's drive of Wichita is an unfathomed cave out of which flows a subterranean stream. This cave, with its many cavernous chambers and formations, is located on the F. R. Rutherford farm, 27 miles east and three north of Wichita on US 54.

Several attempts have been made by a few of the more daring to explore the cave to its full depth and to find the source of the stream, the temperature of which is 50 degrees the year round, but all have had to turn back. Harold V. Lyle, a Wichita Eagle photographer, and James Fullerton, an Eagle reporter, made an expedition deep into the cave in the summer of 1936, but were forced to turn back before they discovered the source of the stream when they were confronted with a narrow and low channel that would not admit passage of their photographic equipment. They made an interesting camera record of the scenes in the section of the cavern they were able to explore, however.

In 1906 an eastern university sent an expedition to the cave to study the formations and to ascertain whether the stream is a branch of the subterranean river which is believed to run under the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas. According to reports from farmers who lived in the vicinity at the time, a distance of six and one-half miles was traversed by members of the party, but the explorers turned back in fear of the dreaded "black damp."

Since that year students of several geology classes of midwest universities and colleges have gone into the cave, but none have succeeded in penetrating its depth more than 6,000 measured feet, a record made by a group of University of Kansas students in 1934.

Passage through the main tunnel which leads from the primary, or entrance, chamber of the cave is difficult, as a huge boulder hangs down to within a foot of the water at this point and extends back a distance of 75 feet. Within the cave, the explorer finds many interesting stalactites and other stone formations in the numerous chambers.

The only specimens of animal life to be found in the cave are a few crawfish in the stream and a few mule-eared bats, small, light brown bats which derive their name from their long ears.

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SOURCE:

Harold V. Lyle, Wichita Eagle photographer, Wichita.

Wichita Eagle, September 6, 1936.

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