

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1896, the Ruskin Co-operative purchased this site (originally known as Cave Mill) and two farms of 384 and 121 acres adjacent to it. The site offered "good building and lime stone, brick clay, timber, 300 acres of plow land, a store, grist mill, fine springs and two useful...beautiful caves of large size." A saw-mill was in operation here and the Colonists constructed small wooden homes for families and bachelors. They next built a large one-room building to be used as a kitchen and dining hall and later as the schoolhouse, then constructed a larger main (or central) building which housed the "printery" and office for The Coming Nation (newspaper), dining hall, library, stockrooms, barber shop, work shop and bookstore. The large limestone cave at the site near Yellow Creek, now called Ruskin Cave, led to smaller caverns, each linked to another and another, stretching into the hillside for more than a mile. The second cave, now called Jewel Cave and not included in the present grounds, is located about one mile north of Ruskin Cave on Yellow Creek Road; near it stood the Ruskin post office and general store.

The only building remaining which was built by the Colonists is the old "printery" or central building. It was built of poplar drop-siding, with clapboard roofing; it stands three stories high and measures 50 x 100 feet. The dining hall on the third floor includes a built-in stage for recreational use. Although the building is weathered and worn, with the front porch roofing destroyed, the present owner states that the structure is "as sound today as when it was built."

Joseph C. Gibson purchased the large, main cave and surrounding 80 acres of land in 1958. The floor of the cave has been concreted in the entrance hall (except for "Bottomless Lake" which penetrates its center) and Gibson erected a planked-floor to facilitate dancing. There is a small stage to the side of the main entrance hall and lines have been strung for electricity. Other than those additions, the cave is as it was originally. Most of the fine old trees remain intact, Yellow Creek still circles the site, and a few small buildings have been erected to house a general store, refreshment stand and caretaker's quarters. The site is used today as a campground and recreational facility.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanities | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Moundbuilders and other forebears of the Southeastern Indian inhabited Ruskin Cave and surrounding land in prehistoric times. The Chickasaw Indians probably inhabited this site prior to its being called Cave Mill by Tom Rogers, first known white settler in the area.

The Ruskin Co-operative Association purchased this site in 1896 and named the place Ruskin, Tennessee, establishing their own post office. The name was chosen to honor John Ruskin (1819-1900), English author, art critic and social theorist. On this site was conducted Tennessee's "first noble experiment" in socialism. The venture appeared successful in the late 1890's when the Colonists were operating a leather suspenders factory, chewing gum factory, cotton gin, blacksmith shop, wagon shop, photo gallery, saw-mill and a factory where a coffee substitute was made from toasted grains, in addition to their "printery"/publishing activities. They inaugurated their own system of compensation, where they earned remuneration in "hours" rather than in cash money. The labor checks, Ruskin Script, constituted the community money and were redeemable for clothing, food and other items from the community/general store. The limestone cave was regularly used for dancing, with music furnished by the R.C.A. Orchestra; it also served a practical function for the Colonists: food was canned in the entrance hall and the smaller caverns were used for storage of food.

The Socialists boasted of an extensive library and high educational standards. They provided their own entertainment with picnics, sewing bee's, and various communal activities. The Ruskin Dramatic Company presented plays in R.C.A. Hall (the third floor of the central building), the Ruskin Mandolin Club and the Ruskin Orchestra provided musical concerts and dances.

In 1899, "individualism" and internal friction brought about the disbanding of the Colony. Since that time, the Ruskin grounds have facilitated, in sequence, Ruskin-Cave College ("The Village School"), Ruskin Cave School, Ruskin Resort (twice, two separate ventures), Ruskin Clinic and, at present, Ruskin Cave recreation and campgrounds.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Casson, H. N., "Life In The Ruskin Colony," in The New Time, Chicago, 1898.
 Southworth, John. "The Co-Operative Colony at Ruskin," in The Home Magazine, Vol. IX, No. 4, Binghampton, N.Y., 1897.
 (Author not listed), "'One Hoss' Wayland, Dreamer and Philosopher," in The Anaconda Standard, Anaconda, Montana, March 29, 1903.
 Corlew, Robert E., "A Socialist Colony Comes and Goes," in A History of Dickson County, Tennessee, Nashville, 1956.
 Leech, T. G., A Brief Sketch of the Settlement of Ruskin Co-operative Association in Tennessee, U. S. A., Inglewood, Taranaki, New Zealand

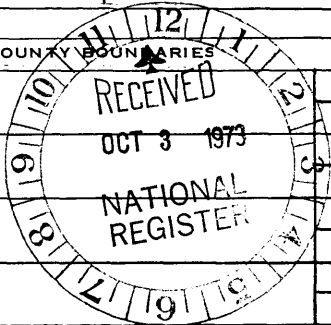
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA 1897

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	36 ° 09 · 42 "	87 ° 31 · 15 "				
NE	36 ° 09 · 40 "	87 ° 31 · 00 "				
SE	36 ° 09 · 34 "	87 ° 31 · 02 "				
SW	36 ° 09 · 36 "	87 ° 31 · 17 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 15

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Ilene (Mrs. James H.) Cornwell, President

ORGANIZATION: Bellevue Historical & Literary Society DATE: 9/21/73

STREET AND NUMBER:
1004 Harpeth Valley Court

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville STATE: Tennessee CODE: 47

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>Michael J. Smith</u></p> <p>Title <u>Executive Director</u> <u>Tennessee Historical Commission</u></p> <p>Date <u>September 28, 1973</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date <u>10/29/74</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>10-25-74</u></p>
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Tennessee	
COUNTY	Dickson	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE
		OCT 29 1974

(Number all entries)

8. Significance

According to historian Robert E. Corlew in his A History of Dickson County (published in 1956 by the Tennessee Historical Commission and the Dickson County Historical Society), the tribe of Indians known as Moundbuilders left "evidence of its presence in Dickson and other counties of Middle and West Tennessee. . .the exact locations of the villages is not known, but at least one trail was well-known and widely used at the time the white man came, and later became known as the 'Chickasaw Trace.' In 1920, in order to determine as nearly as possible where the Moundbuilders had lived, an extensive survey was made by William E. Myers, a Washington archaeologist; William L. Cook, Charlotte lawyer and circuit judge; and J.B. Fuqua of Waverly. They determined that several villages had been erected along the Harpeth[River], and that a trail had been established, which moved in an east to west direction across Dickson County, and connected the various Indian villages. The trail crossed the Cumberland[River] at the mouth of the Harpeth," and passed through three small communities, then "followed a ridge north of Charlotte, through the vicinity of Sylvia, across Yellow Creek, thence through the present town of Ruskin. . ." (These findings are included in "Indian Trails of the Southeast" by William E. Myers, in Forty-Second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, 1924-1925.)

Milton McClurkan, an elderly native of Dickson County who lives in an old log home not far from Ruskin Cave, has been collecting Indian artifacts "all his life" and has found numerous relics in the cave on the Ruskin property; many have been identified as remainders of the Moundbuilders' culture. These relics, and those of later Indian cultures, are displayed in the small "McClurkan's Archaeological Museum" near Yellow Creek Road and Ruskin Cave in Dickson County.

