

12 THE ROAD TO HUNTSVILLE

The Road to Huntsville, Alabama, leads to the NSS national office, which has been the headquarters of the Society for the past twenty years. The office provides a central location for not only the formal office and business functions of the Society, but the library, the archives, the bookstore, and a host of other activities which were once in various members' homes, scattered

Fig. 12.2. First NSS office, 4912 43rd Place, Washington, D.C. (home of Bill Stephenson). Used during the early war years.

around the United States.

This chapter will paint a picture of these functions as they have developed over the years since their infancy in 1941.

Genesis of the Office

On July 3, 1971, two U-Haul trucks pulled up to the former Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses on Cave Avenue and Pulaski Pike in Huntsville, Alabama.

Whether the trucks had "Jesus Caves" bumper stickers is not known, but it is recorded that they were filled with office equipment and files of the National Speleological Society. The drivers, Doug Rhodes and Alex Sproul, arrived somewhat before expected. Everyone who was to help them unload and set up in the first office building the NSS ever owned was out caving. An appropriate beginning to a history of the NSS Office? Hardly. The story stretches much farther back.

For thirty years the Office had functioned in the homes of cavers. Between 1941 and 1949, an elected secretary was expected to keep track of corre-

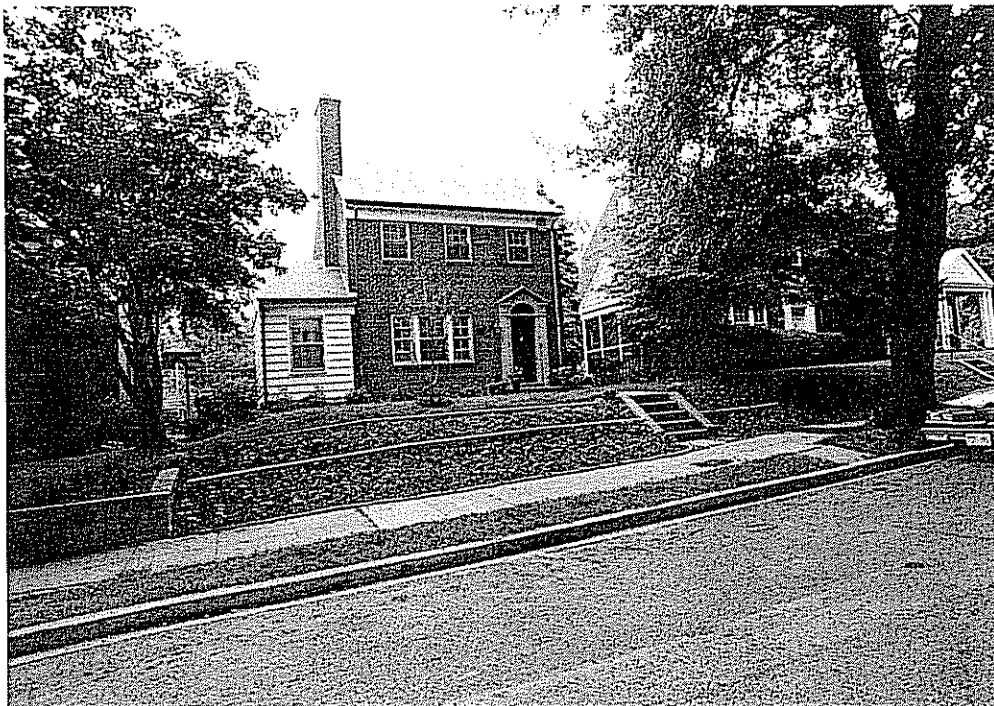
spondence and office files.

By 1949, the membership was pushing 1000, and the job was no longer spare time business. Ellen Moffit was hired to help Bill Stephenson and became the first NSS paid employee.

In 1951, a reorganization was necessary. Burton Faust was elected Administrative Vice President.

Members scrounged a desk, typewriter, adding

NSS Photo Archives



machine, file cabinets, and miscellaneous office supplies to set up the first real Office. It was in an unused bedroom at the Fairlington Apartments in Arlington, Virginia. Ellen Moffit was appointed secretary.

By 1955, the membership had grown to 2,800. This was merely an estimate at the time, since no one had ever been dropped from the rolls. The records for payment of dues and member lists were scattered along the East coast and so confused that it was difficult to even know how many copies of the *NSS News* to print.

Lois Cutler had taken over as secretary, and promptly had a set of twins. George Moore and Don Cournoyer pitched in to help, both as pseudo-secretaries and pseudo-moms. Cournoyer drew the line at changing diapers! He also drew the line at not paying dues. He and Moore managed to sort out the records, and found that some members had not paid dues since 1948. Nine hundred members were dropped in two months.

Mary McKenzie was appointed secretary in December 1955 after Lois resigned. Cournoyer then became office manager. His wife, Martha, did the monthly billing on a volunteer basis to avoid overtime or hiring a second person. In June 1956, Frances Cross took over as secretary and the office was moved to Tapawingo Street, Vienna, Virginia.

A Permanent Address

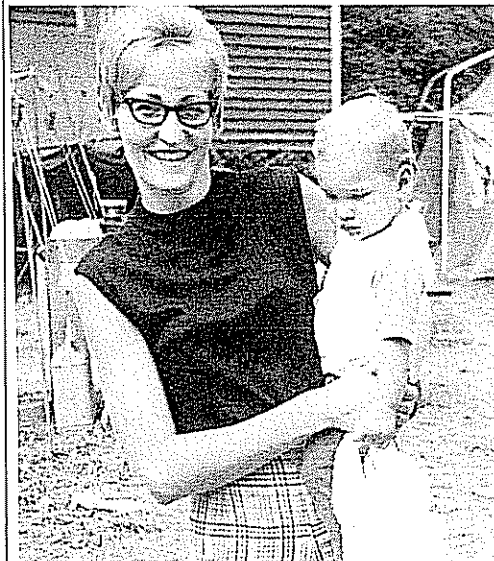
The Board of Governors, recognizing the mounting problems with a constantly shifting office, established the Headquarters Fund in 1957. The Fund raised money through the sale of back publications, and invested it. Meanwhile, in 1958 the office moved to the home of Dorothy Kincaid in Alexandria, Virginia. At this point, the office had been moved six times in ten years and mail was often delayed or lost. The Board came up with a solution, and in

1961 made Don Cournoyer's home the permanent and official NSS address. For more than ten years, Cournoyer received fifty or more pieces of mail a day. Many Society members began to think that his home was NSS property and that he and his family lived there by the generosity of the Society and its membership.

The next secretary was Betty Harmon. She lasted only seven months, from late 1961 to the spring of 1962. She found that out-of-town members dropping by at all hours was disturbing. That brought back Mary McKenzie who had moved into a new house in Arlington, Virginia. Lyle Conrad had become the office manager. In 1964, Jerry Frederick took over that position. When Frederick had to find a new secretary in 1964, he appointed his wife, Bev, the first caver to be a paid employee of the Society.

Don Cournoyer recalls that the early secretaries between 1954 and 1966 shared one curious event. Except for Betty Harmon (who did not last nine months), each secretary became pregnant while in the Society's employ.

In 1956, the NSS was offered property on Columbia Road in Washington, D.C. for \$17,500. The membership was deemed too small to assume a debt of



The Board of Governors, recognizing the mounting problems with a constantly shifting office, established the Headquarters Fund in 1957

Fig. 12.3. Beverly Frederick, office secretary, 1964 to 1971. She's holding NSS No. 10,000.

Photo by Jack Speece

The NSS started out to buy the other entrance to Shelta cave, but ended up buying its first permanent home with a cave in the basement.

that magnitude, prompting the establishment of the Headquarters Fund.

Shelta Cave Property

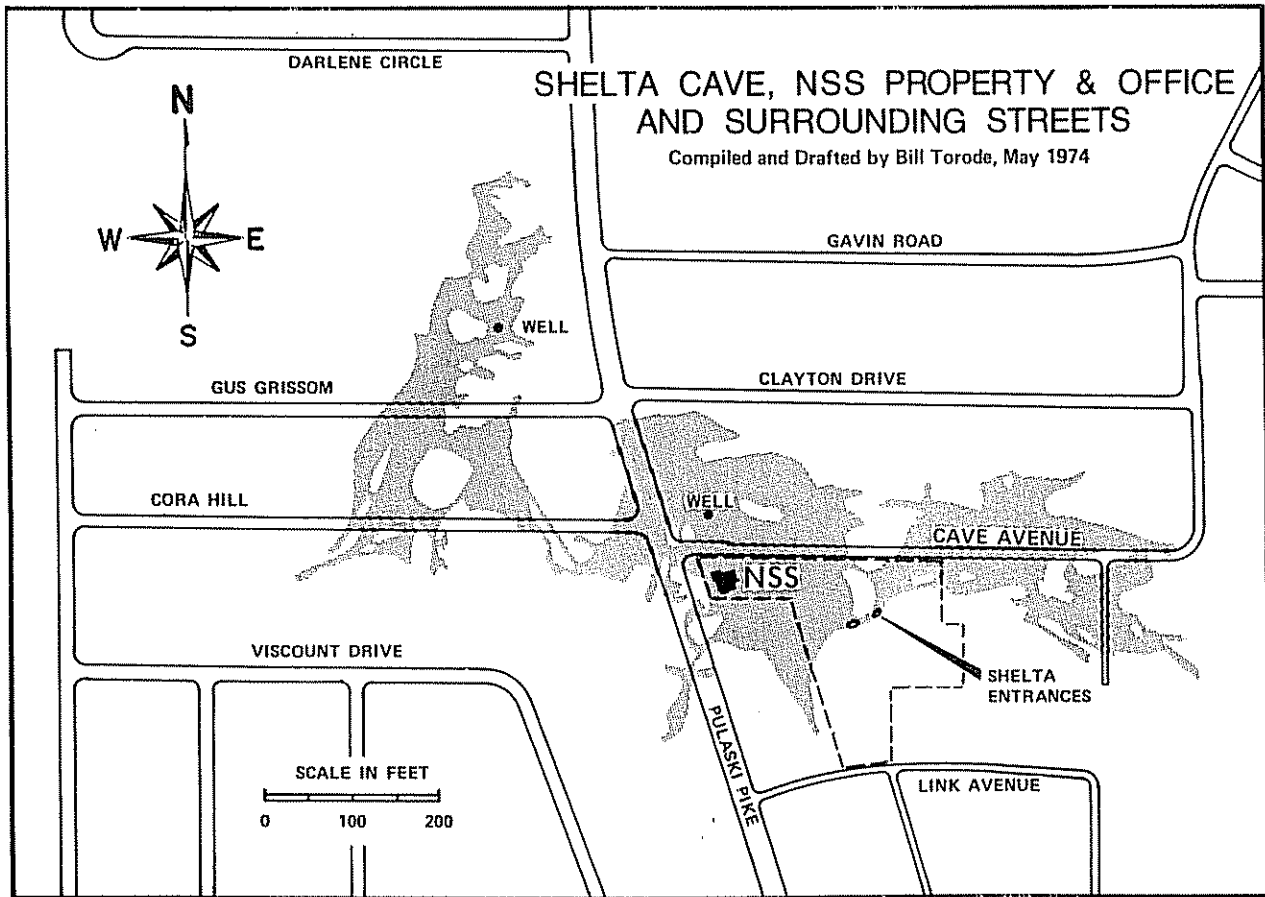
Ten years later, there was still criticism when the NSS purchased the Shelta Cave property in Huntsville, Alabama. This was mostly in the form of skepticism that the money could be raised to meet the debt schedule. However, the membership donated the money to retire the loan in just twenty months. Buoyed by the success, Jim Johnston and Doc Jones began working on purchasing the Bafford property, so that the NSS could control both Shelta sink hole entrances. Instead, a more exciting offer came to light.

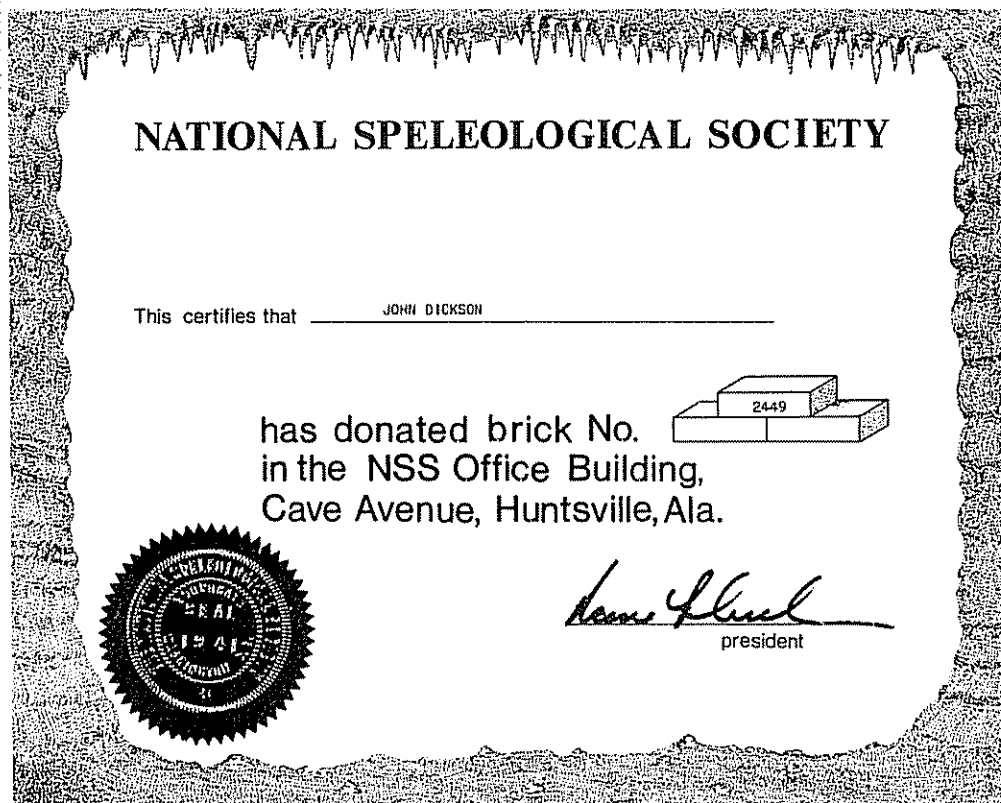
The church adjoining the Shelta property wanted to expand, but needed more land to do so. In the Spring of 1970, they tracked down the owner of

the Shelta property, which was the NSS. The church group contacted the Huntsville Grotto, offering to buy a part of the Shelta property. When they found that the property could not be sold because of an agreement with the Nature Conservancy, they turned around and immediately offered to sell the existing church to the NSS.

Don Cournoyer was appointed Chairman of the Office Headquarters Committee with Jim Johnston and Mason Sproul as members. There was a great deal of opposition among the board members, especially those from the west coast. However, the Congress of Grottos took a straw vote at the Convention in State College, Pennsylvania, and the results were two thirds were enthusiastic about the purchase, one third was not opposed, and only two grottos were opposed.

Fig.12.4. Bill Torode's map showing where NSS property and Shelta Cave are located in Huntsville, Alabama.





Six months later, in one of the longest Board of Governors meetings ever, held at the church in question in Huntsville, the Board debated for two and a half hours before approving the purchase.

McClurg championed the opposition: "I'm not against Huntsville...I'm against a Headquarters of any kind...We should be spending money on conservation, communications, and services. Since we have trouble with volunteer help now, I wonder that we could find any one grotto...over the long term...that could support the number of activities needed in a HQ."

The overwhelming advantages to this purchase assured approval. Jim Johnston summed them up best in his original proposal: "It was a good investment. Besides, where else will we find an attractive building that is almost as cheap as renting, located on a major road, sitting atop a sizeable and biologically significant cave, on Cave Hill, with an address on Cave Avenue?"

Fig.12.5. In 1971, NSS president Rane Curl came up with an ingenious scheme to pay off the mortgage on the recently purchased office. Called Buy-A-Brick, it was enormously successful. A total of 5193 brick certificates like this one were sold at \$5 each. This and other fund raisers brought funds to quickly retire the mortgage.

In addition, the Huntsville Grotto has proved to be an unflinching resource over the past two decades.

Betty Mayo was hired as the first full time secretary. Jim Johnston became the first office manager in the first permanent home for the office, taking over for Doug Rhodes.

NSS Buys an Office

On March 6, 1971, the Board approved purchase of the property on Cave Avenue with a \$2,400 down

payment and a \$21,600 mortgage. For six months, contributions to help pay off the mortgage dribbled in.

Then president Rane Curl, inspired by Sergeant Preston's *Buy a square inch of Alaska* promotion, proposed a *Buy a Brick* program. The bricks would be offered for \$5 each, which included a certificate signed and sealed and "suitable for framing" indicating that the contributor donated a certain brick in the NSS office. The bricks had to remain in place. A curious point to have to make! Considering the wisdom which inspired the program, perhaps Rane foresaw the possibility that some "quality dig" type caver might try to open a private entrance into the office through buying bricks.

Bill Torode was asked to count the bricks in the facade for assignment. It came out to 5193, give or take a brick, although some bricks are underground, and others are actually two half bricks. Curl needed to have every brick drawn

in a chart to track who bought which brick. Torode told him he must be crazy wanting 5000 bricks drawn. Irene Ludwig Forney took up that challenge and devised a matrix chart, so that every brick could be assigned without being drawn. Torode recorded each brick sold. The mortgage was paid long before the half-bricks were needed. Torode still gets cavers stopping in to locate the brick they bought.

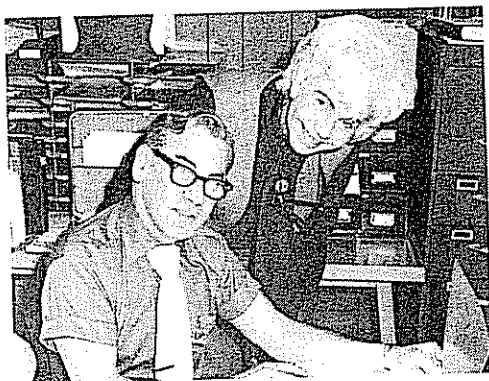


Fig 12.6. Betty Mayo NSS office secretary 1970-74 with Don Cournoyer, NSS Secretary/Treasurer, in 1972. (NSS NEWS)

Fig 12.7. Still getting organized at the NSS Office, 1971. (NSS Photo Archives)



Other Fund Raisers

Many other fund raisers were undertaken during the year previous to retiring the loan. Bill Mixon organized a Speleomemorabilia auction. Bill Zarwell conducted a cave ballad contest, selling the resulting record and donating the proceeds. T-shirts were produced by Diana Emerson. Joe Saunders made

bumper stickers. Don Shofstall held a Rapellstein drawing and wine tasting. The hardhat was passed at grotto meetings, so that virtually all NSS members could claim: "I gave where I cave."

In the meantime, the office staff was expanding to meet the increasing workload. In June, 1972, Jeanne Pridmore stepped into an office through a door falling off its hinges, using picnic tables for desks, and sporting a 1940



Fig 12.8. Long-term NSS secretaries—Vickie Nixon (left) since 1974, Jeanne Pridmore since 1972. (NSS Office)

Fig 12.9. Jim Johnston, Office Manager, filing membership cards, 1972. (NSS PA)



vintage refrigerator in the middle of the room. Ms. Pridmore "had her doubts about this new job." The office was handling the mailing of the *NSS NEWS* and the *NSS Bulletin*, and a bookstore with ten titles, in addition to the normal office responsibilities. Ms. Mayo and Pridmore were both busy full-time along with two students part-time, and

The mortgage was paid long before the half-bricks were needed. Bill Torode still gets cavers stopping in to locate the brick they bought.

many volunteers from the Huntsville Grotto.

Vickie Cothren hired on part-time while in school in July 1973, and accepted a full-time position in August 1974, after Ms. Mayo resigned to move to Washington D.C. Phil Winkler also took over for Johnston as office manager until he was transferred to Germany in 1976.

Amanda Stokes assumed the responsibility next. Along with her husband John, she helped the office convert from an old handcrank Addressograph to an off-site computer system. With this improvement, and moving the mailing operation of the *NSS NEWS* to the editor, two full-time employees could handle the workload. When Winkler returned from Germany, he resumed his job as office manager.

Office Addition

As the library and bookstore expanded, the office became more and more cramped. It was again necessary to store records and books at member's homes.

The most serious problem was the safety of the library. It had at this point grown to include thousands of volumes from all over the world. Many publications would have been impossible to replace. A printing press was being operated in the same area with its mounds of loose paper, and volatile inks and cleaners. The possibility of a fire was an increasing concern.

In the spring of

1981, Administrative Vice President Janet Thorne convinced the Board of Governors that an office addition was needed and they created an ad hoc committee to study the problem. The report recommended a 2000 square foot addition to the existing office, after looking into various alternatives. One controversial suggestion was to donate the library to a university, or other public institution. Only Mike Dyas and Bill Mixon cast dissenting votes to the office addition and plans were set in motion.

Mike Dyas chose not to quit so easily and tried to raise a grass roots movement against the addition by publishing an open letter of dissent in the *D.C. Speleograph*. The letter accomplished just the opposite. Emotionally charged, the tone of the letter prompted many cavers to respond in defense of the original decision.

References to "Huntspatch being small and out of the way" for cavers, and the original building being structurally unsafe because "it was originally

References to "Huntspatch being small and out of the way" for cavers, and the original building being structurally unsafe because "it was originally designed for people expecting the imminent end of the world" raised more laughter than support.

Fig. 12.10 .NSS Office addition in the early 1980's.



Susan Sweeney

designed for people expecting the imminent end of the world" raised more laughter than support.

A budget of \$70,000 was set. The construction would include 2000 square feet of office space, designed to accept a second story in the future. A new heating/cooling system and fire/burglar alarm would be installed. Construction was at a low ebb in Huntsville at the time, making the permit for the office addition the largest contract for the week of July 11, 1982. Braving a warm rain, Joe Domnanovich, the new Administrative Vice President and Janet McCormick Thorne, retiring Administrative Vice President, shared the task of moving the first shovelful of earth at the groundbreaking.

"Buy a Brick" was back, but at a new and improved price. The ant was raised to \$10. A limited edition of Tom Culverwell's "Hodag Room" drawing was offered to anyone donating \$75 or

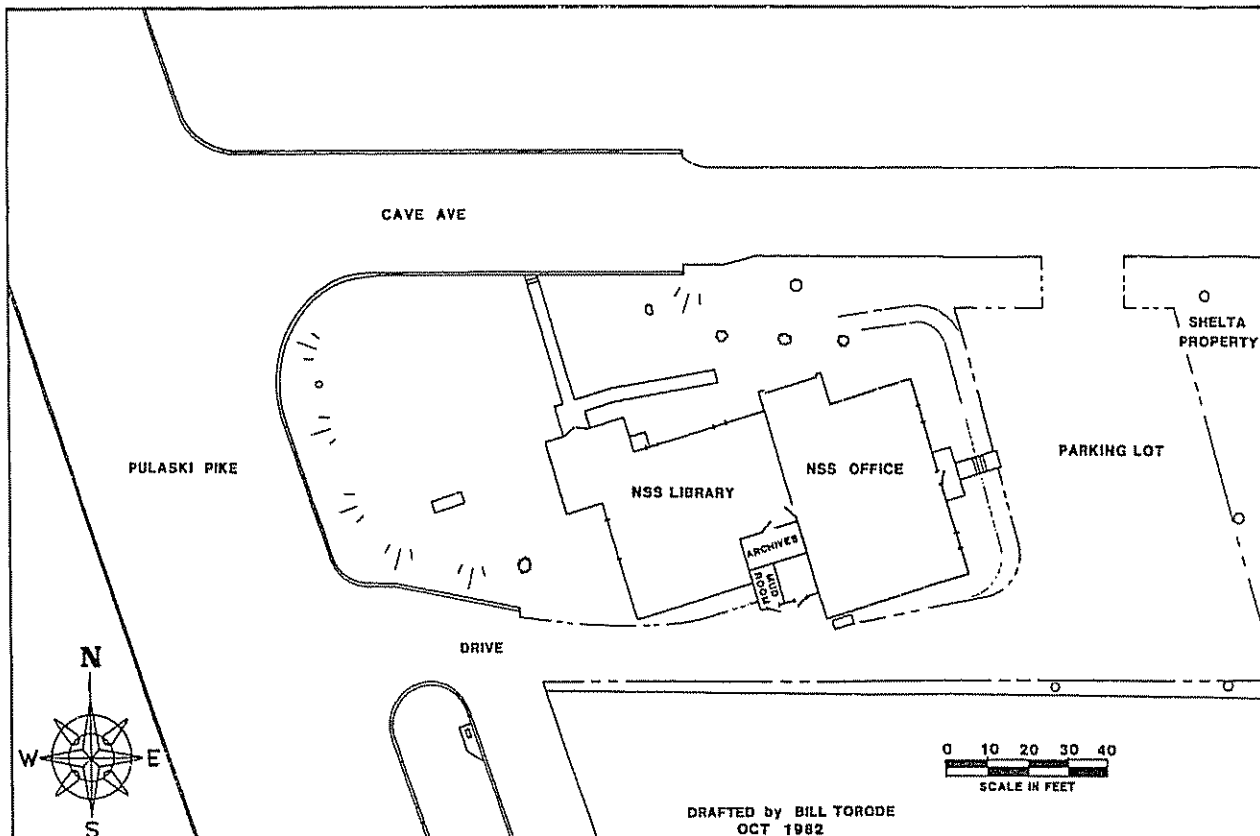
more. Construction was completed in November 1982. Two and a half years later the debt was paid in full. At the March Board of Governors meeting in Huntsville in 1985, President Paul Stevens put a Petzl lamp flame to the mortgage.

In 1985, office manager Phil Winkler was transferred to Washington D.C. and handed the reins to Greg Andrews. Greg implemented the "Quarter technique" for calibrating the progress of a crack in the east wall. The procedure is to squeeze as many quarters (U.S.) as will fit into the crack. That procedure is still being used today. Grey resigned in 1986 due to conflicts with his paying job, and Bill Hanson was appointed.

NSS is Sued

The office needed to obtain insurance, since our previous insurer had dropped our policy. State Farm had written the original policy and had not really com-

Fig. 12.11. After the office additions were completed, the NSS headquarters complex looked like this. This facility should be adequate to serve the Society as it begins its second 50 years.



Bill Torode

prehended the definition of "speleological." Then in 1985, a girl fell to her death in Natural Well, an open air pit 187 feet deep, located on state land. A lawsuit was filed against the NSS for negligence in failing to prevent the accident.

Our mistake, according to the suit, was allowing our members to repair the fence, which the State Park had erected to protect the pit. It was clearly a nuisance suit, the parents of the girl trying to find someone to blame for their loss. However, the ramifications were surprising in their scope.

State Farm paid for the defense lawyer's fees and dropped the policy, even though the NSS was cleared of any wrong doing. Individual cavers were named in the suit, and spent many days in court defending themselves. It was realized that even the Board of Governors could be individually sued in such a case.

It was more than two years before the case was thrown out of court, requiring hundreds of hours of attorney Jay Clark's time. Fortunately, Clark is a caver and defended without fee all of the individual suits.

Joe Domnanovich was concerned enough to research the cost of personal liability protection for the Board. The insurance premiums were prohibitively expensive for a group policy, so BOG members had to obtain it on their own insurance policies.

In the 1940's, Society members were at risk from falling rock and sumping entrances. As the NSS approaches the

age of fifty, those risks are being replaced by unprincipled law suits. The loss of volunteers, willing to risk life and limb but not their family's home, could prove to be the growing challenge in the future.



Fig. 12.12. At the NSS Office in Huntsville—L to r: Tom Rea, Jeanne Pridmore, Vickie Nixon, Joe Domnanovich. (Photo by Bill Torode)

More Services
The office continues to expand services to the membership today.

The Audio-Visual Library was moved to Huntsville to distribute the shows in this extremely popular collection and free up volunteer time to develop new programs. The number of titles in the Bookstore continues to increase, and new items such as recordings and videotapes are kept in stock. The administration of a growing property portfolio including three caves, is handled in the office, as are very successful publishing efforts.

The office has been one of the most hotly discussed issues throughout NSS history. There was a sense of purity lost when the Society moved from volunteer labor to its first paid position.

Cavers are more interested in knowledge of caves and the ability to explore them, than in investment properties.

Perhaps the yearning for that lost simplicity made the delving into property ownership (first of caves, then of a place for administration, then for a central library, and finally for merchandizing) touch a guilty nerve. The *office* is still just an office.

It is not the headquarters of the NSS. That place is only in the collective hearts of every member.

What the Office Does for NSS Members

For members, the office—among other things—maintains a list of members, processes dues, and prints mailing labels for all official needs.

Tracking down other cavers has always been one of the more important sidelines—sometimes for caving trips, or survey information. Once a woman sent a manila envelope containing a handful of letters to the office with a note that said she did not know where her husband was. But she thought that if anyone knew it would be the office staff. In the note she added: "If he tells anyone his address, it will be the NSS. When he does, send him these bills."

The office is a central point of contact for cavers. Messages are often taped to the door. Hundreds of pieces of mail are processed every day. With the Audio-Visual and book-lending libraries and the Bookstore to manage, the mail is both intricate and bulky. The mail carrier is gun-shy, so the office staff regularly hauls the larger shipments down to the central post office. The Board of Governors' minutes and correspondence, the treasurers report, and all committee reports are published by the office and then filed. If all of this sounds like work, it is. The reward is to be in rumor central of Cavedom.

Cavers could form a Characters Anonymous and as a result there are many stories to tell. In the early 1970's, a young man had ordered a 1968 Speleo Digest when they were first advertised. Due to some publishing problems, the issue was not released until four months later. Meanwhile, he had become very impatient and returned the back order notice with a few obscenities added. Ms. Mayo immediately issued a refund check and included a letter, explaining very clearly what she considered an acceptable behavior and how he had missed the mark. Years later a fellow showed up in the office with a familiar

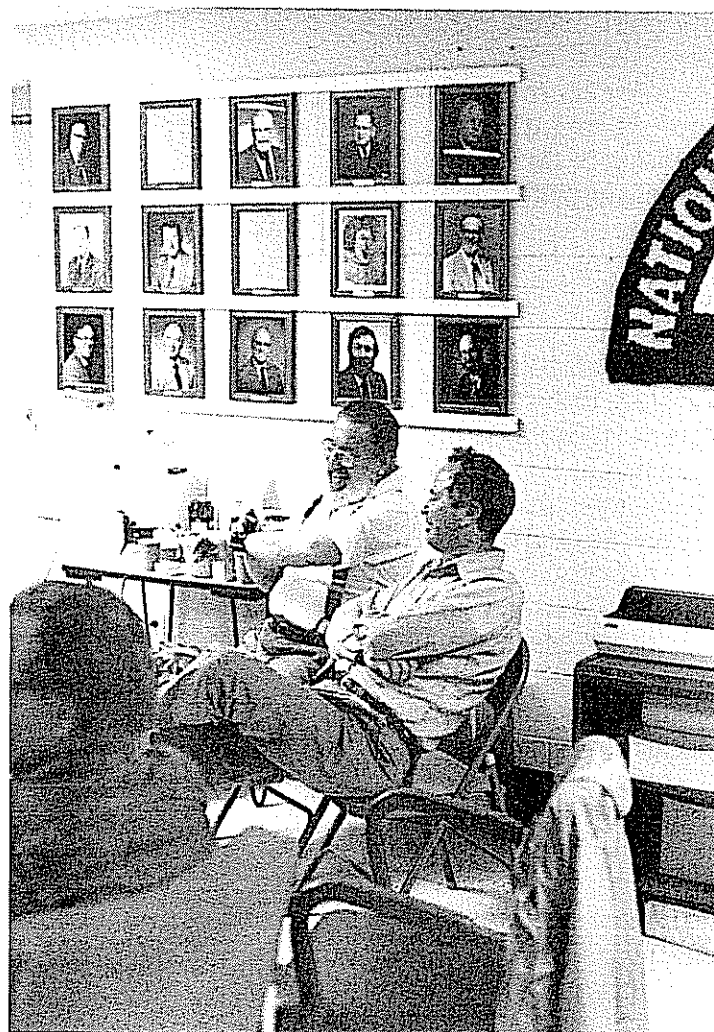
last name. When asked, he told Betty that the book-order hothead was his brother. "He is out in the car, afraid to come in." At that, Ms. Mayo walked out to the car and marched him inside.

For more stories, stop by the NSS Office, Cave Avenue, in the middle of the deep cave country.

The NSS Bookstore

The NSS Bookstore had its beginning in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Several caving-related publications available on the open market were purchased and sold through the NSS Office to the Society members. However, the establishment of a bookstore per se was not formalized until the appointment

Fig. 12.13. Former president Jack Stellmack and former administrative vice president Bill Mixon visit the Society office in 1985.



Bill Torode

of its first manager, Doug Rhodes, in 1971. Doug served until 1975 and was instrumental in expanding the range of publications and making the bookstore available to members at the annual convention through "Consignment Sales."

Jack Speece managed the Bookstore for the 1975-76 period and was followed by Jim Hall in 1977-1981. Under both of these managers, the Bookstore continued to expand and began to sell NSS symbolic items such as arm patches, T-shirts, and car tags. The role of the Bookstore expanded when the Office secretaries started to attend Conventions and bring the Bookstore to promote its sales. Reynolds Duncan managed the store in 1983 and 1984. Ronnie Nixon became manager in 1984, and continues to the present.

The Bookstore now has more than 160 different books (including 28 NSS publications), 40 caving information monographs, 20 symbolic items, and back issues of both the *NSS NEWS* and the *NSS Bulletin*. The Bookstore is present at the convention and the Old Timer's Reunion each year, advertises widely, conducts special sales, and offers all the latest caving books to the society membership.

NSS Archives

The NSS Archives, an accumulation of past papers and documents of the Society, is located in its own 112 square foot fireproof room adjoining the library. There were nine file cabinets full of material by 1986. Included in the collection are unpublished material, letters, written reports, correspondence, and other forms of memorabilia.

When former NSS librarian Julia Staniland's home was sold in 1986, Paul Damon retrieved close to 1500 lbs of archival material from her house and arranged for transfer to Huntsville. This did wonders for archival preservation. Julia was the ultimate cave pack-rat for

many years. But it stretched the limits of the space in Huntsville. Included in this material was a special donation made to the Society many years ago from well-known cave writer and Society founder Clay Perry. Also, Janet Thorne, when she started work on this fifty-year Society history, requested material from several past officers and others in the Society. Fortunately (or unfortunately) she was inundated with close to 200 lbs of additional files and archival material which also has made its way to Huntsville.

NSS Audio-Visual Library

The NSS A/V Library got its start in the late 1950's. In 1959 the library included a collection of prints of various caving scenes and personalities that Howard Sloane circulated to grottos upon request. When Dorothy Reville became chair in 1960, the library had six slide shows for circulation including *Caving Techniques* by John Parker, *Cass Cave* by Huntly Ingalls, and *Speleothems* by George Moore, which are still available.

James Pritchard was chair of the library for much of the 1960's and greatly expanded the number of slide programs that were available. From 1970 through the early 1980's chairmanship of the library passed to Ellen Gold, Carolyn Herel, Paul Kouts, Dave Luckins, and Norma Peacock. They spent much of their time repairing programs and shipping them to grottos upon request. Since all expenses were donated, the library typically had only one copy of each program and most grottos found it difficult to borrow the most popular ones.

In late 1987, the Office assumed responsibility for distributing A/V Library programs. In 1988 Paul Stevens took over the Library with a single mission—greatly expand program quantity and quality. The late 1980's saw a surge in new slide programs, many created by Stevens. With a larger budget, the Library

The Bookstore now has more than 160 different books (including 28 NSS publications), 40 caving information monographs, 20 symbolic items, and back issues of both the NSS NEWS and the NSS Bulletin.

Under the enlightened guidance and hard work of Paul Stevens and Alex Sproul, the number of A/V programs doubled from 60 to over 120 in 1987, and jumped to 299 in 1989.

began to aggressively ask cave photographers to develop programs with the NSS covering duplication costs. Alex Sproul concentrated on producing videos. The NSS purchased a video camera with associated equipment and loaned it to members to produce cave videos. Sproul used post-production equipment purchased by RASS to create videos for the Library. The number of programs doubled from 60 to over 120 in 1987, and jumped to 299 in 1989. The A/V Library occupies over five file cabinets in the Office, and program distribution is now a major function of the Office staff.

NSS Library

The NSS library specializes in fields of activity related to speleology, the scientific study and exploration of caves. This special library provides information primarily to the membership of the NSS. However, the library also assists other researchers who have a need to use its special resources. The librarian provides information service for the user in response to requests, acquires publications, and organizes the library. The library has a volunteer staff of one, and is housed in its own building adjacent to the NSS office. Since 1974, Bill Torode has been the NSS Librarian.

The librarian provides three basic services: answers simple reference questions, performs literature searches usually resulting in a bibliography, and provides copies of articles.

Early History of The Library

In the first *NSS Bulletin* (1940) the first annual report states: "one of the chief objectives will be the accumulation of a permanent library." The first librarian was William Schlichtig (NSS #5). He was a draftsman at the government printing office. In February 1940, Bill produced a catalogue of 53 items in three categories: books, pamphlets and folders, but this list was never pub-

lished. In June of that year, a second list of 16 items was published and in mid-1941 an additional 26 items were listed. Such was the size of the library at this early date. Members of the Society were requested to donate any literature about caves or related subjects, and money was also requested.

At the cave symposium held in October 1941, Bob Bray, the new librarian, gave a short talk on the library. He was a bibliographer by profession who worked at the Library of Congress as a reference assistant, and had a better idea of what the library should be. In 1943, a list was issued containing 183 items in the library. When Bob enlisted in the service, his wife, Virginia, took over the duties of librarian.

The next major step forward on the library occurred when Major Thornton Perry was stationed in London during World War II. He purchased about \$100 worth of British cave books from a used book dealer, and donated them to the Society. It is also interesting to note that just after the war, a large collection of cave literature that was once the property of a high ranking Nazi was donated to the NSS.

Virginia Bray published a report of the Committee on Bibliography and Library in late 1945, which listed five suggestions encouraging the use of the library by members, and asking for regular funding from the NSS.

After the war, Bob returned, and became librarian again. However, he resigned in October 1946, and the library went into storage. Sometime after June 1947, Hugh Stabler took over the responsibility of the library. Some of his earliest work was establishing card files on the material in the library. However, in early 1949, Wilma Moyer, a professional librarian, was appointed to the position. Wilma typed catalog cards and assigned Dewey classification numbers to the books.

The end of the 1940's found the col-

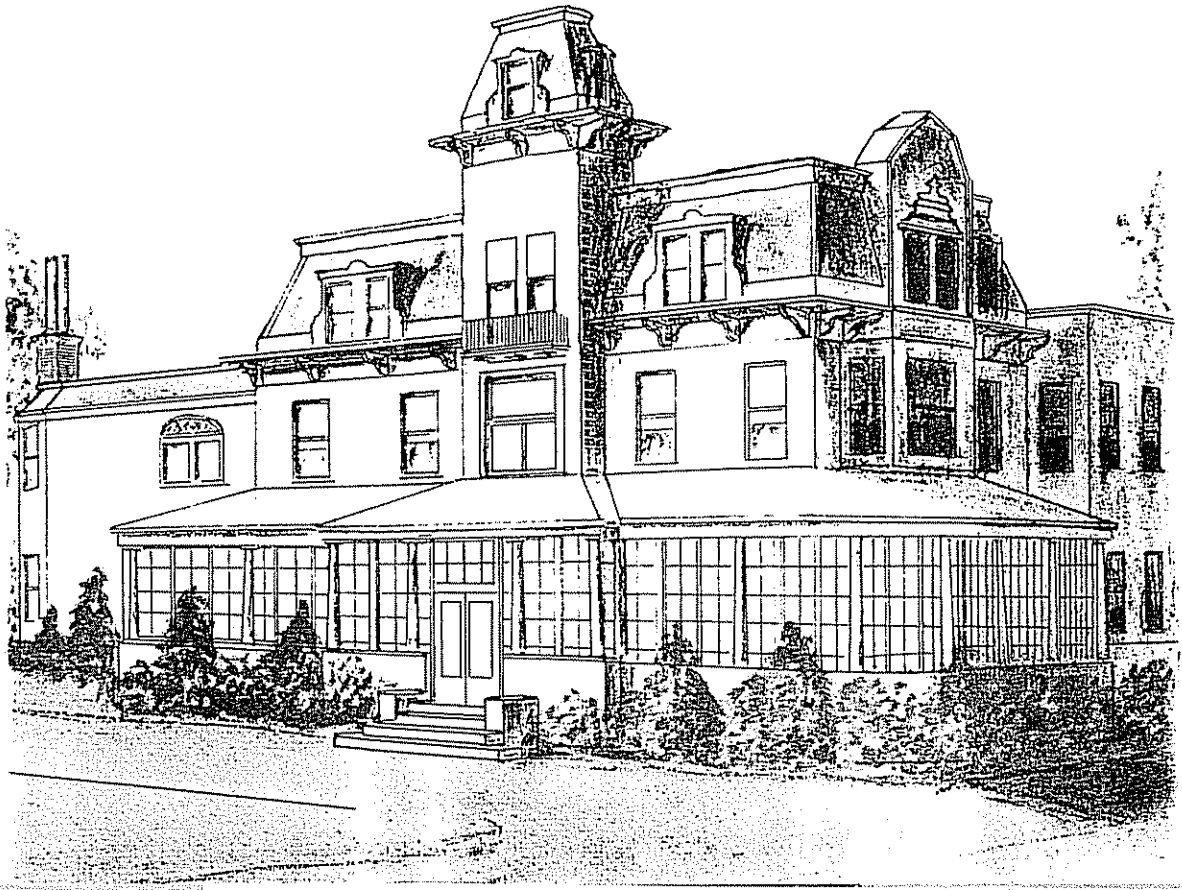


Fig. 12.14. King Conservation Center, Pittsburgh, Penn., Home of the NSS Library in the 1950's.

lection stored in the attic of Alexander Robertson in Richmond, Virginia.

In 1951, Burton Faust became executive vice-president in charge of administration. He moved the library collection to his home in Washington, D.C. With the interest he had, the library was able to move forward again instead of floundering as it had for most of the 1940's.

The foreign exchange program that had been started by E. F. Moore was expanded. A newspaper clipping service was subscribed to, for world-wide coverage of the subject. The Society scrap-books on caves were maintained by Frances Snell in Illinois, and A.D. Therrien in Indiana.

In 1952, definite guidelines for the

library were accepted by the Board and put into the bylaws.

The Society will maintain a library of speleological subjects and topics for use of members, including technical publications, textbooks, charts, maps, photographs, prints, transparencies, and periodicals, both domestic and foreign.

This also included five sets of bound copies of all NSS periodicals.

For several years, people such as Chrissy Mansfield, Sylvia Craig, and Wilma Moyer continued various aspects of the library work, and much of

the material was moved to the Craig home in Falls Church, Virginia.

By 1953, the grottos were being asked to send six copies of their publications to the Society, for retention by the library and the cave files. They were also asked for missing back issues of newsletters.

In 1955, Burton Faust, Marguerite Klein, and Chrissy Mansfield continued the library program, especially a special binding program.

Thus ended the first phase of the NSS library history, covering a fourteen-year period.

The Turning Point—King Estate

In late 1955, at a Mid-Appalachian Regional Meeting in Hagerstown, Maryland, the Pittsburgh Grotto suggested to Burton Faust that the NSS headquarters be moved to Pittsburgh and housed at their King Estate. This was a large former mansion (city-owned facility) operated for the benefit of outdoors organizations such as the NSS. It contained quite a bit of unused space. This facility had been deeded to the City in 1949 for the purpose of housing scientific and cultural societies. No rent was charged. The Pittsburgh Grotto had three large rooms on the third floor and other storage area. It seemed ideal.

In early 1956, the Grotto formally offered the King estate for a new NSS headquarters. Instead, the Board suggested moving the library to Pittsburgh.

A New Day for the NSS Library—Julia Staniland

The NSS library was thus placed in the custody of the Pittsburgh Grotto. Julia Staniland, a member, volunteered to be librarian. Julia was a graduate of the Carnegie Library School, and she grew up to "be behind a library desk."

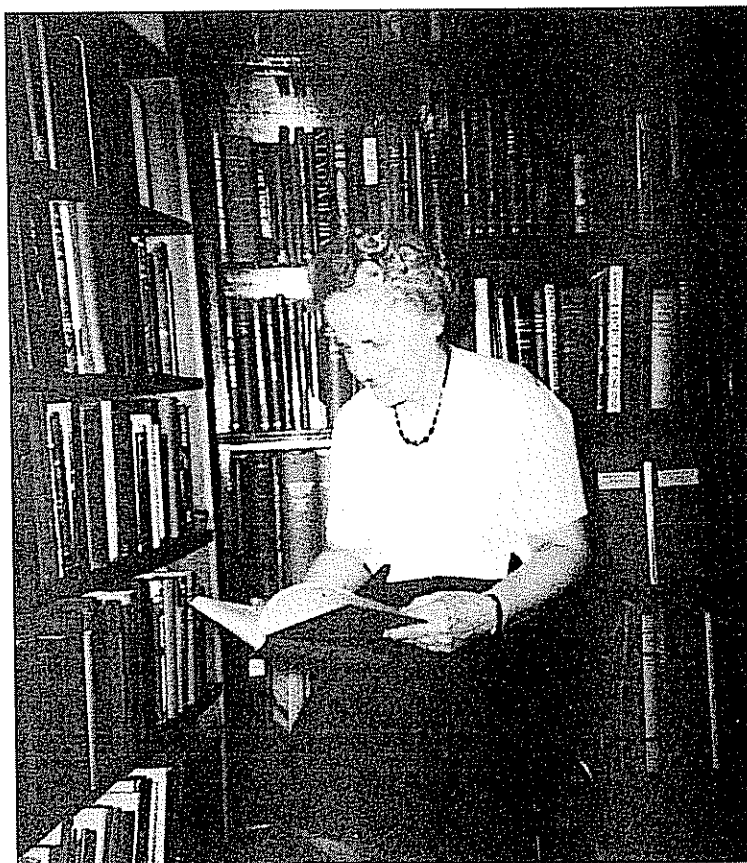
On February 25, 1956, Will White, Ralph Bossart, and Jack Leppla drove to Washington to obtain the cave library.

At the time it contained three bookcases, a file cabinet, and many boxes of books which were all brought to the King Estate.

A completely formal organization was set up for the library. A budget of \$283 for the year was set by the Board. A library committee, consisting of Allen McCrady, Bob Dunn, Will White, Dick Hoffmaster, and Ralph Bossart was established to aid the librarian. Julia was employed as a technical librarian at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and worked evenings and weekends in the NSS Library.

In April 1958, the Grotto wrote that a new larger room will be used specifically for housing the library. Julia reported that slow but steady progress was being made in organizing the material, mostly by volunteers from Pittsburgh. A new column on the library was written for the *NSS NEWS* between

Fig. 12.15. Julia Staniland, early Society librarian in Pittsburgh, Penn, 1950's and 1960's.



Pittsburgh Grotto

1957 and 1963.

In 1960, twenty years after the start, the library contained 325 books, 1000 pamphlets and reprints, and 150 serials. Julia Staniland and Lucy Nelson then wrote a much-needed article with eleven recommendations for standardization and uniformity for grotto newsletters, trying to teach amateur grotto publishers good journal format. More material was being donated.

Since a large amount of foreign-language material was in the library, Staniland asked for volunteers to translate some of these periodicals. Some help was received. More volunteer help in all areas was requested, as well as more speleological donations and money.

For her efforts, Julia Staniland received the 1962 Honorary Membership award. The March 1963 issues of *The Pittsburgh Press* contained an article entitled "The Angel of the Cave Men," about her, and her role as librarian for cavers all over the world.

In 1965, the library report noted that the Board had allotted extra funds to purchase equipment and supplies well beyond the usual budget allotment. The collection was now stored in Staniland's home, near the King Estate. She had a small mansion of her own which was very adequate.

However, more standard equipment was purchased for the time when the library had its own quarters.

All good things seem to come to an end. In January 1967 Staniland announced that due to lack of staff

the book collection was in dead storage. The Board had to take quick action, so as not to lose the momentum that had been generated over the past ten years.

Library Moves to New Jersey

A Future of the Library Committee studied the situation and concluded the library should be housed in a national headquarters building. A second committee recommended that the collection be given to a professional library to be maintained and kept together. Fortunately this did not happen.

In early 1969, Staniland resigned as librarian. Russell Gurnee was appointed the new librarian, and the library was moved to a new building owned by him in Closter, New Jersey. The reprint collection was moved separately to Will White's home.

By fall, the library reopened for use with the help of Catherine Gleason, with regular hours for the first time. This lasted for a while, but the open hours decreased, as did Catherine's time. It was becoming obvious that this was not a final solution either.

A Major Step Forward

In 1971, the Society voted to purchase a building in Huntsville to serve as the

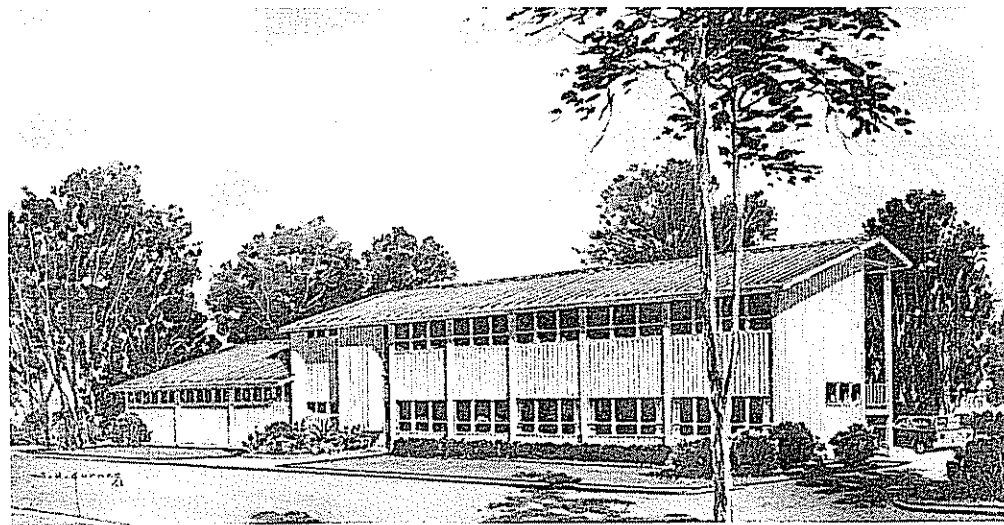


Fig.12.16. Second formal NSS Library in Closter, New Jersey. Russ Gurnee was the librarian.

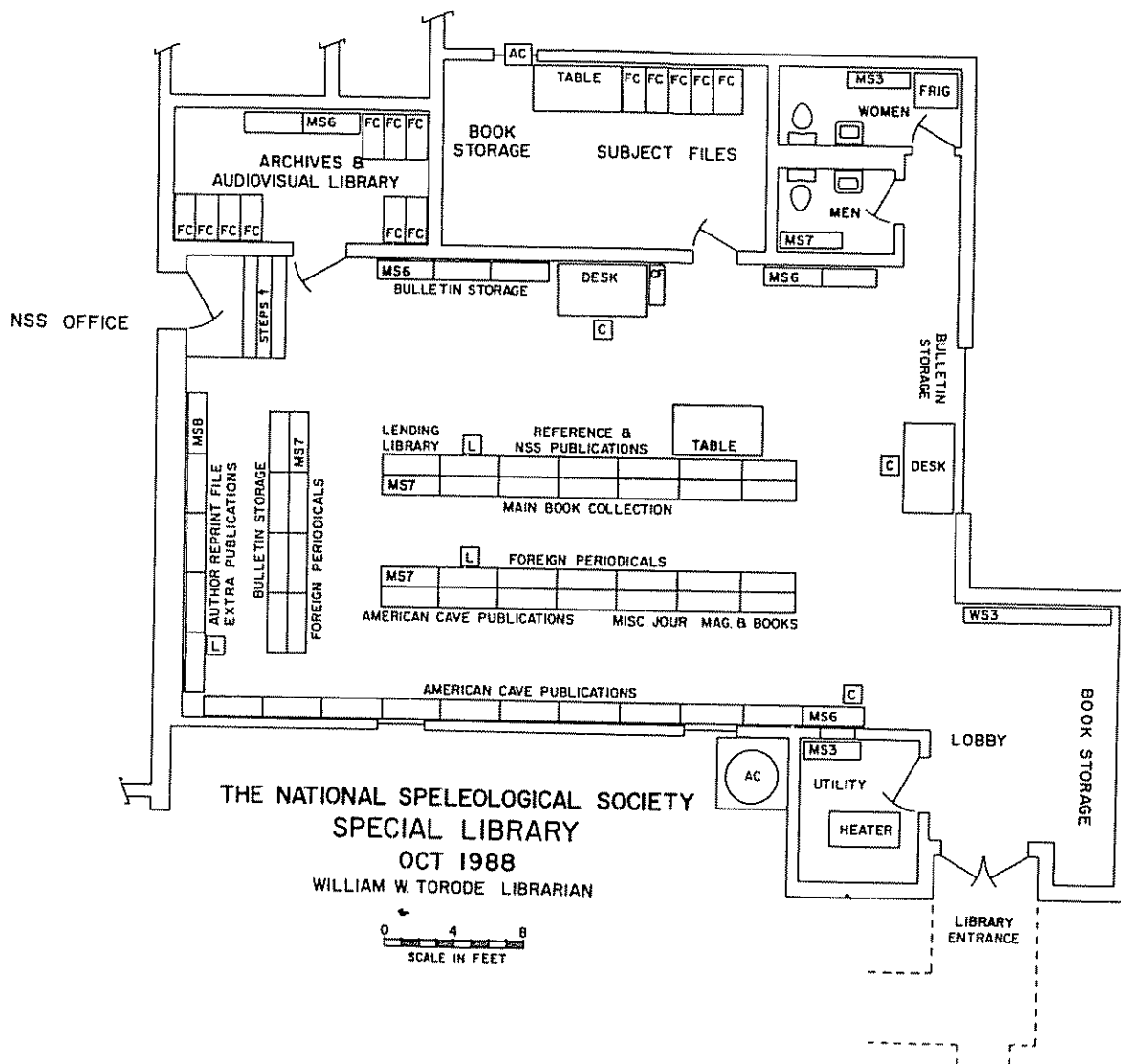
headquarters of the Society. Part of the plan, was the idea that the library would be a major part of the new office facility. Shortly after opening, the office staff started looking for library shelves. A shoe store going out of business sold the Society its metal shelves for \$600.

Bill Torode and Don Myrick had to remove a concrete stage inside the building, which the former owners had used, in order to make room for the library. They then assembled the shelving. Ray Meyers and Harold Steen rented a U-Haul truck and drove to the old

library in New Jersey, where 10 members of the Met Grotto loaded 6000 lbs of library material. They then drove back to Huntsville, with only minor breakdowns along the way. The Huntsville Grotto unloaded the truck and set up the library. Amanda Stokes agreed to be the new librarian. The reprint collection in Will White's basement in Pennsylvania was also transferred. The library now had a single cohesive library operated in an adequate facility apart from members' homes.

Amanda resigned as librarian in 1974,

Fig.12.17, Floor plan of the Current (1988) NSS Library. It is adjacent to the NSS office in Huntsville.



NSS Archives, Bill Torode

Bibliographies on special cave subjects or certain areas have been prepared for use by special interests within the society. Topics have included cave photography, cave surveying, electric cave lighting, and much more.

and another local grotto member, Bill Torode, took over the job. He has continued in this capacity ever since. Because of his dedication the library is the success it is today.

In 1975, Gerry Forney and Irene Ludwig (Forney) came to Huntsville for a week and cataloged all the foreign periodicals. This was the first such catalog, and proved to be an invaluable resource. Forney later collated a complete book catalog, with 960 titles listed.

In 1977 many of the *NSSNEWS*, *Speleo Digests*, and grotto newsletters were bound by the Library Binding Company of Waco, Texas. A Society member, James Jasek, who was involved with the company, helped make the project economically possible.

In the late 1970's, many titles were added to the library, especially through a purchase from Tony Oldham, a cave book dealer in England. Donations of materials also had a major effect, especially donations from John Cole, Bill Varnedoe, Mike McEachern, George Moore, Robert Morgan, Bill Stephenson, Bill Halliday, Henry Douglas, and Charles Mohr.

Today the reprint file has about 1200 individual authors and over 4200 reprints. There is a separate reprint collection on the subject of bats with 160 authors of 400 papers. There are also

about 50 cave-related theses, and a special file cabinet of cave articles by subject and state.

Bibliographies on special cave subjects or certain areas have been prepared for use by special interests within the society. Topics have included cave photography, cave surveying, electric cave lighting, and much more. Some special bibliography work has also been done on various states. The one on Alabama caves covers the years 1798 through 1950.

In November 1982 the office addition was completed and the NSS business functions and bookstore were moved into the new area, permitting the library to expand to fill the old building.

The main library covers a large area, with some of this area used as publication storage by the Office. There are 1048 feet of shelves used for the book and newsletter collection, and another 200 feet of shelves for *NSS Bulletin* storage. A formal lending library system was put under the control of the office secretaries so that duplicate material could be checked out by members.

In no small part due to Bill Torode, the library operation is smoother now than it ever was in the past, in spite of space constraints and an ever-increasing volume of material.