

SILOAM SPRINGS STATE PARK¹ROBERT EVERS² AND C. CLAYTON HOFF³
Quincy, Illinois

The recently created Siloam Springs State Park is of general interest to residents of Illinois and of special interest to people residing in the west central part of the State. As few people are acquainted with the park or, indeed, are even aware that the park exists, the writers have assumed the responsibility of directing attention to some of the more interesting aspects of the park, its history, and its present condition.

Siloam Springs State Park is located in the southwest part of Brown County and the eastern part of Adams County, with approximately one-half of the park in each county. The park may be reached by automobile from U. S. Route 24, leaving the route in the vicinity of Clayton and traveling nearly 12 miles south. It may also be reached over a road about six miles long from State Route 104, turning off the route between Liberty and Chambersburg. The local roads are not greatly improved at present and some difficulty may be experienced during very wet weather. In the summer and early fall, however, the dirt and gravel roads are fairly good.

HISTORY

The Siloam Springs area has long been used for recreational purposes, being very popular between 1880 and 1900, but gradually declining in

popularity during the more recent years. The early records relative to the park area are concerned chiefly with the curative nature of the water from the springs. According to a newspaper article (*Quincy Daily Whig*, May 28, 1882), the people of Siloam Springs reported the water helpful in the treatment and mitigation of a number of diseases. The water was reported to have cured several individuals of such diseases as cancer and kidney trouble. These reports in part may have been promoted by a business venture since, in 1880, the property in the region of Siloam Springs was purchased by Mr. Quincy Burgess, who in 1881 began to develop the area for recreation and in 1882 began to build a hotel. Requests for reservations at the hotel were so numerous that it was decided, after construction had already been started, to increase the size of the hotel far beyond the original plans. This caused some delay and the hotel did not open until 1884.

The immediate popularity of the hotel and resort is indicated by newspaper articles in later issues of the *Quincy Herald Whig*. According to the register of the Forest Hotel, the early visitors included Phil Armour, founder of the Armour Packing Company, who was registered on June 28, 1887; C. E. and A. G. Ringling of circus fame,

¹ The writers wish to thank Mrs. H. Swope of the *Quincy Herald Whig* for making available newspaper articles relative to Siloam Springs State Park. The writers also wish to express their gratitude to Mr. William F. Gibbs, Representative to the General Assembly, for information, including a map, concerning the size and location of the park.

² Quincy High School to September 28, 1946. Now Assistant Botanist, Illinois State Natural History Survey, Urbana, Ill.

³ Quincy College to June 1, 1946. Now Professor of Zoology, Colorado Agric. and Mech. College, Ft. Collins, Colo.

FIG. 1.—Map showing the location of Siloam Springs State Park in Adams and Brown Counties.

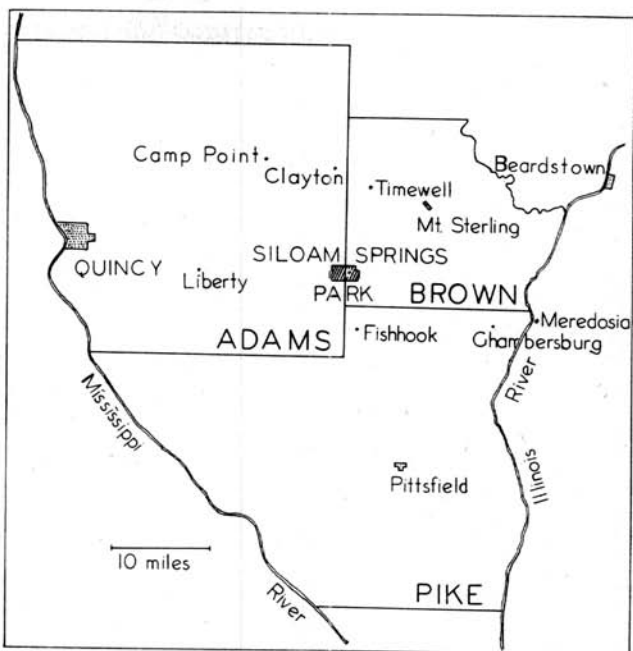
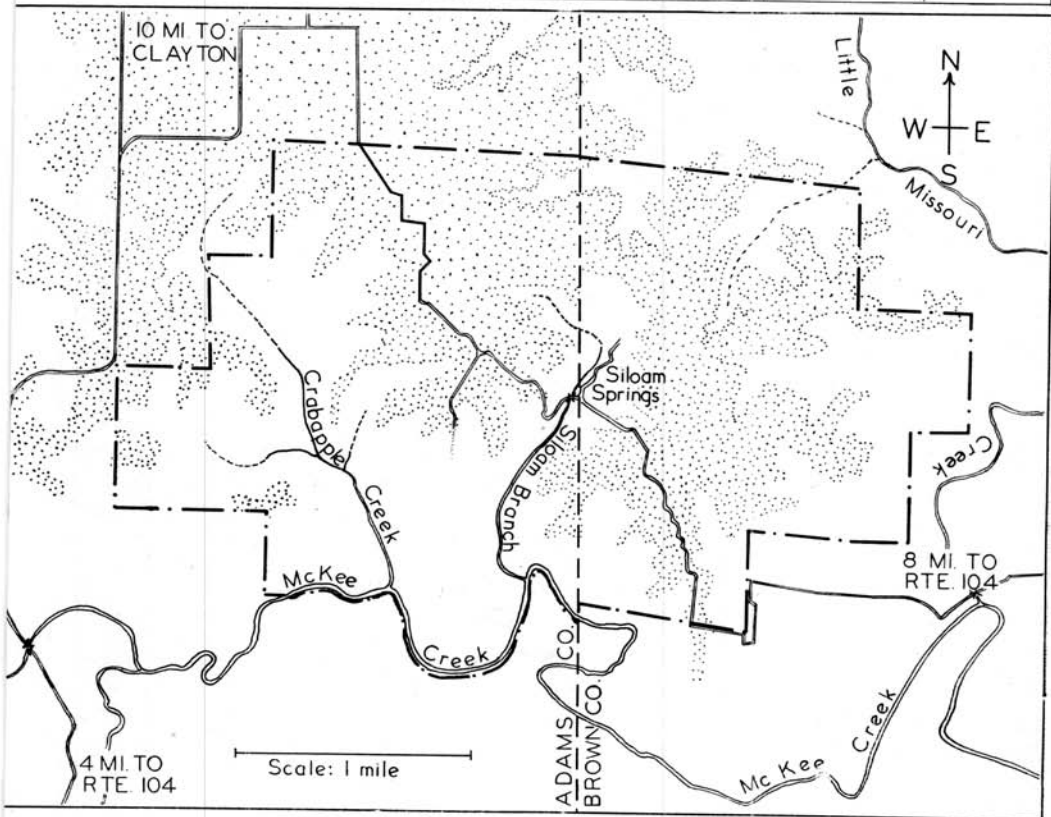


FIG. 2.—Map of Siloam Springs State Park showing the streams and bluffs. The heavy boundary shows the limits of the park. The upland areas and the bluff tops are indicated by stippling. In making the map, the lower limit of the upland area was arbitrarily taken at the 10-foot contour line in the region west of Crabapple Creek and at the 20-foot contour line in the region east of Crabapple Creek.



who were guests beginning October 23, 1887; and P. T. Barnum, also of circus fame, who visited the hotel on July 28, 1888. After this time, the popularity of the hotel gradually declined, perhaps as a result of several changes in management.

The history of the plan to create a park and public recreation area at Siloam Springs begins perhaps in 1935, when the Siloam Recreation Club was founded and incorporated for the purpose of building a club house and improving the grounds, and in addition, for the purpose of interesting state and federal bureaus in fostering a park or game refuge in the area. On Sunday, August 29, 1937, newspaper accounts (*Quincy Herald Whig*) indicated that the Recreation Club had succeeded in renovating the hotel, purchasing playground equipment, and generally improving the area for recreation purposes. On the same date, a gravel road to the springs was dedicated. In the years immediately following 1935, the club grounds were leased by the day to such organizations as churches, the Y. M. C. A., and the Boy Scouts.

The park area remained in private hands for a few years until, in 1940, an agreement was reached with the State of Illinois to create a state park. Citizens of the City of Quincy, as well as local residents of Brown and Adams Counties, raised money to match state funds for the purchase of the necessary land. At the present time, more than one-half of the proposed 3472 acres has been acquired and additional land is being secured as rapidly as conditions permit.

As land is at present still being purchased, little work has been done towards improvement of the park. The old hotel was sold at auction in November 1943, to a private individual, who tore down the structure to

secure the building materials. Plans have been made to build better roads to the area, with one road entering from the west, one from the east, and one from the north. In some instances, this means only the improvement of existing roads rather than the development of new roads. Included in the present plans for the park is the development of an artificial lake, to be made by damming the waters of Crabapple Creek, a branch of McKee Creek which flows along the south border of the park. This dam will be located in the western one-third of the park and will furnish a fairly extensive water area for recreational purposes.

NATURAL HISTORY

The Siloam Springs area is well suited for a park. Topographically, the land is rough, being cut in many places by series of gullies or ravines, many of which are more than 100 feet deep. These ravines are so extensive that few areas of the park are level. The rough topography of the park is associated with McKee Creek and its tributaries, the ravines having been cut by water flowing over the easily eroded Illinoian glacial drift. In the lower portions of the ravines and along McKee Creek and its large tributaries, the erosion has exposed the Pennsylvanian and Mississippian rocks.

Associated with this topography, as is usually the condition in central and western Illinois, is the deciduous forest, which covers the immediate vicinity about Siloam Springs. The forest belongs to the oak-hickory association and appears to be near the margin of this association, since the prairie is extensive in northern Brown and northeastern Adams counties.

Although the entire park area was originally forested, the trees were early removed from areas that could



FIG. 3.—The larger spring house at Siloam Springs.

be cultivated and used for farming. The level bluff tops especially have been cleared. The deep ravines and gullies, on the other hand, as well as some of the hillsides were not suited for farming, and as a result, the original biota has been less disturbed. The entire area, however, has undergone considerable and serious change from the original condition. From the general nature of the vegetation, it is apparent that many of the trees were cut from the ravines and that the ravines were used as pasture. The pasturing of the land, logging operations, and farming have no doubt hastened erosion in this area and made the topography more rough.

PRESENT FLORA OF SILOAM SPRINGS

Although the Siloam Springs State Park is a part of the oak-hick-

ory association of the deciduous forest, there has been sufficient interference with and disturbance of natural conditions to make profitable a few notes on the present conditions of the biota. The most seriously altered areas are to be found on the bluff tops, where there are a few more or less level areas. Here the trees were removed so that the land might be tilled. Most of these upland fields now have been out of cultivation for one or more years. In some of these fields may be found, as the first stage in seral succession, dense and almost pure stands of goldenrod (*Solidago*) and asters (*Aster*). In fields that have remained idle for a longer period of time, there may be found various grasses, and in some places such shrubs as smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra* L.). These plants appear to become es-



FIG. 4.—View of a typical ravine at Siloam Springs.

tablished very soon after the land is no longer cultivated. In the marginal zone between the idle fields and the wooded areas may be found, in addition to the smooth sumac, such shrubs as the prairie willow (*Salix humilis* Marsh.) and the fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica* Ait.) and small trees and sapplings of sassafras and hickory. Also in this marginal zone, Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans* (L.) Nash.) and the bluestem (*Andropogon furcatus* Muhl.) are somewhat abundant.

The climax upland woods is composed predominantly of the shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata* (Mill.) K. Koch), the white oak (*Quercus alba* L.), and the red oak (*Q. borealis* Michx. f.), along with scattered sassafras (*Sassafras albidum* (Nutt.) Nees.), ironwood or hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana* (Mill.) K. Koch), and numerous seedlings of the rock maple (*Acer saccharum* Marsh.). In the Adams County area, the post oak (*Quercus stellata* Wangh.) is abundant in the upland woods. The shrubs in this habitat are the rose (*Rosa carolina* L.), the fragrant sumac, the smooth sumac, and the gooseberry (*Ribes missouriense* Nutt.). In the herb layer of the climax forest is found the blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium albidum* Raf.) as well as the gromwell (*Lithospermum canescens* (Michx.) Lehm.).

The dominant trees of the upper part of the ravines are similar to those of the upland climax forest. Here are found abundantly the red oak, the white oak, the black oak (*Quercus velutina* Lam.), and the shagbark hickory. Scattered in some areas are found the flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida* L.). On the side of one ravine not far below the upland forest was found a somewhat extensive area covered with the hop-hornbeam. That this partic-

ular area had been cleared is indicated by the great number of old stumps. At present, the hop-hornbeam appears to be the dominant woody plant in this local area and probably is important in succession.

Of considerable more botanical interest than the upland forest and the flora of the upper parts of the ravines, is the plant life of the bottom and lower sides of the ravines. Here is an area of fairly dense shade, high humidity, and considerable soil moisture. Such areas are well adapted to the growth of ferns, especially brittle fern (*Cystopteris fragilis* (L.) Benth.), the Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides* (Michx.) Schott.), and the maidenhair (*Adiantum pedatum* L.). The last is found in the bluff woods through the entire park area. The silvery spleenwort (*Diplazium acrostichoides* (Sw.) Butters) is relatively abundant and in the summer months attracts attention when its silvery fronds wave in the breeze. The purple trillium (*Trillium recurvatum* Beck), the bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis* L.), the mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum* L.), the liverleaf (*Hepatica acutiloba* DC), and the spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica* L.) are common as are the rue anemone (*Anemone thalictroides* (L.) Spach.) and the strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana* Duch.). The bird-foot violet (*Viola pedata* L.) is also abundant, occurring in extensive and nearly pure stands towards the upper margin of some of the ravines. In one location east of the spring house in the old village of Siloam, the bird-foot violet was found to cover approximately two thousand square feet with an average of forty blooms per each square foot in this almost pure stand. This violet is commonly associated with abundant growth of mosses, especially the

hairy cap moss (*Polytrichum commune* L.).

At the base of the bluffs and near the bottoms of the ravines, especially where the ravines open onto the flood plains, may be found other plants not mentioned as typical of the higher parts of the ravine sides. These plants include the white elm (*Ulmus americana* L.), the buckeye (*Aesculus glabra* Willd.), the sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis* L.), and the black willow (*Salix nigra* Marsh.). In these lower parts of the ravines, the elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis* L.) and the burning bush (*Euonymus atropurpurea* Jacq.) are common shrubs. At lower levels, along the streams and in the flood plains may be found still other plants. Among these is the closed gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii* Griseb.). A few specimens of this species were found in bloom along the Siloam branch (in Brown County) of McKee Creek during September.

Other local areas and associations are also of interest. For instance, the cliff brake (*Pellaea glabella* Mett.) was collected from the rocks at the location of the proposed lake. Unfortunately, time did not permit a thorough study of the plants of the rock outcrops, the most extensive of which are along McKee Creek and its tributary Crabapple Creek in Adams County. Further collection is planned in order to secure more information on the flora of this habitat, especially in the area that will be inundated by the proposed lake.

Besides being of interest as far as the higher plants are concerned, the park site should be of interest to

students of the lower plants. In the ravines on decaying logs and tree stumps are found many kinds of Myxomycetes and fleshy fungi. Mosses are abundant, and the interested student of bryology should profit much by exploring the Siloam Springs Park area.

Specimens of most of the plants mentioned as occurring in Siloam Springs State Park are to be placed in the herbarium of the Department of Botany of the University of Illinois and also in the herbarium of the Illinois State Natural History Survey.

CONCLUSION

As a fitting conclusion, it seems not at all out of place to suggest the complete preservation of certain local areas within the park. As already mentioned, the semi-level uplands have been so much altered that the original biota has been completely destroyed. Little can be done to restore these formerly tilled areas to the primitive condition. On the other hand, the deeper ravines, gullies, and some of the hillsides still contain remnants of the original fauna and flora. These areas, provided meddling improvement is prohibited, may long serve as an indication of the original biotic conditions. To preserve these areas, the trees and gross vegetation must be left undisturbed and the areas must no longer be used as pasture for livestock. With suitable care, many of the smaller and less disturbed local areas of the park may be adequately conserved for the future use and enjoyment of biologists, naturalists, and nature lovers.