

INFORMATION ON NELSON KENNEDY LEDGE STATE PARK

GEOLOGY:

The large blocks of stone at Nelson Ledges were once pebbles brought to this region as river-borne material. The pebbles settled to the bottom as the rivers slowed their pace, forming rocks, extending for miles in north east Ohio. A long period of time elapsed, during which this area was submerged, but it gradually emerged from the sea bottom to rise approximately to its elevation of 1000 feet above sea level.

During the period of lifting, and while the land is at its present elevation, weathering has taken and still takes away the fine particles and chemicals composing the rocks. This happens at a very slow rate. An interesting feature of the present landscape is a Divide here. Water on the north side of the park is destined to find its way via the Grand River to the St. Lawrence River. Water in the stream on the south side of the park enters the Mississippi River by way of the Ohio River.

During the weathering of the rock in the area a large valley was formed; Nelson Ledge as the one side Kennedy Ledge as the other. During the last "ICE AGE" the Wisconsin Ice Sheet partially filled in this valley.

The park is composed of two major classifications of rock: the most visual is the sandstone / quartz which form the ledges; this "rock" is correctly called Sharon Conglomerate. Underlying the Sharon layer is a thin layered "rock", this is the Meadville Shale. The caverns and overhangs observed in the park were caused when the Meadville Shale being a "soft rock" eroded away undermining the Sharon, gravity then took over causing parts of the Sharon to fall and tilt. This type of formation is called a "Slump Rock Formation." This process takes thousands of years and a visitor today should not expect to witness any dramatic structural changes to the ledges during their visit.

HISTORY:

The ledges and surrounding area was inhabited by several different native tribes before the arrival of European immigrants. Still today the odd flint point can be found by the more observant hiker. By the Revolutionary War most of the native inhabitants had moved to the lands west of the ledges. The first settlers in the area did have some conflicts with the remaining native tribes.

Kennedy Ledge is named for the Thomas Kennedy family of Massachusetts who arrived in 1804. About 1840 the first hotel was built in the ledge area. In 1870 a "gold rush" developed when someone claimed to have found gold in the ledges but analysis showed it was only "fools gold". The area continued to be used by the locals as a recreation site and in 1869 the Cascade House opened. Travelers came by way of the Erie Railroad to Garrettsville and then by buggy out of town.

The area today is still a favorite destination for travelers. The park offers the visitor four hiking trails and a picnic area. During the summer there is a guided walk through the ledges conducted by a staff member.