

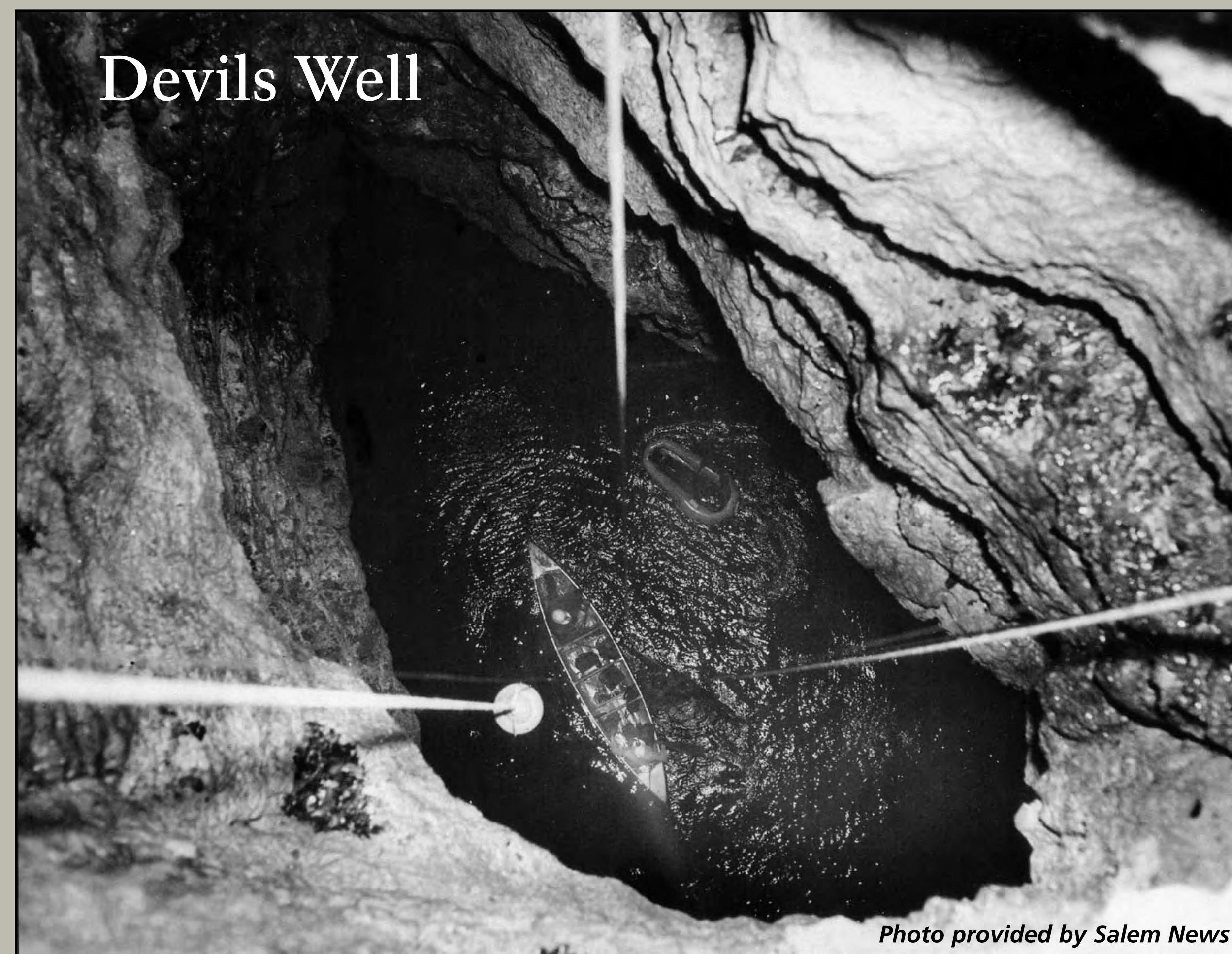


Early Exploration

Native Americans must have been mystified by the unexplored deep dark hole. Early white settlers were aware of the deep hole, but the first known exploration of the well was in 1954. The owner, Bill Wallace, lowered his brother Bob into the hole using a hand powered winch attached to steel cable and a “bosun’s chair.”

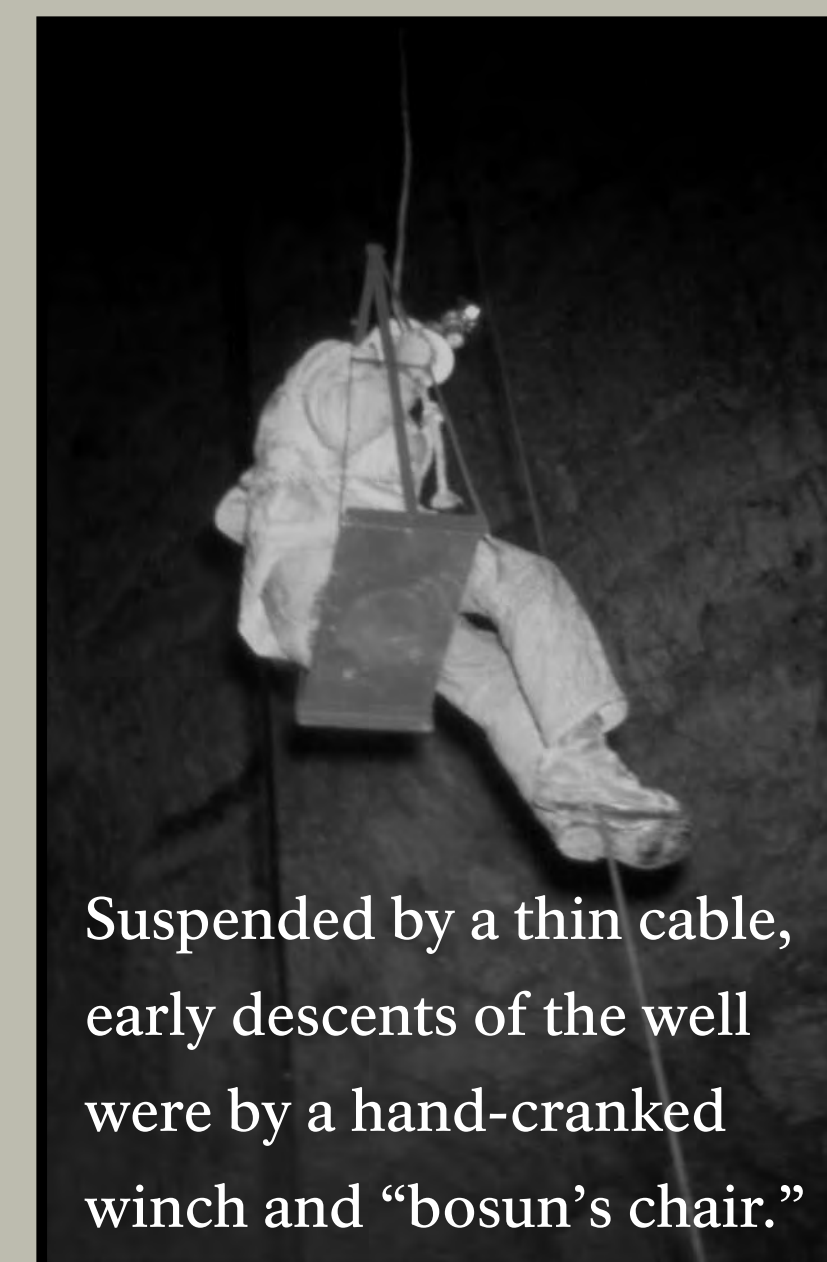
As Bob entered the hole, by an extremely hazardous method, he saw a cave chamber containing an underground lake. The chamber measured 400 feet long and 100 feet wide, larger than a football field! The surface of the lake seemed motionless, although several waterfalls fell into the lake from heights of up to 75 feet.

The brothers had discovered the largest known natural underground lake in Missouri. The opening, which resembles a well, is a valuable “window” into a subterranean spring system. It has allowed geologists to explore the underground pool and chambers. This has led to a better understanding of the fascinating underground workings of Missouri springs.



Researchers entered Devils Well by making a 100-foot vertical descent from the bottom of the well sinkhole to the surface of the underground lake. A seventeen foot research canoe is visible in this photograph.

There is no exit from the lake and researchers must climb back up the cable. Because of the cold waters and no flotation devices on the lake, a person who fell in would soon die of hypothermia.



*Photo provided by
Jerry Vineyard*

