

MAQUOKETA CAVES

Maquoketa Caves State Park is located northwest of the town of Maquoketa in Jackson County, Iowa and may be reached by driving out of Maquoketa north on Highway 61 and then taking Highway 130 directly to the park.

The caves themselves are formed in dolomitic limestone of the Niagaran Series, Silurian System. This places the age of the rock in which the caves are formed at 400 to 430 million years old.

During the many years since the Silurian was made part of Iowa's system of sedimentary rocks, water moving through the rocks has dissolved and eroded parts of it away. In the area of the Maquoketa Caves it appears that this process of solution and erosion has progressed more rapidly than at some other places. It may be that there was more water available to do the work. At any rate, solution is quite evident. As a result, there are several large sinkholes in the area approximately 100 feet deep. These sinks have been connected by underground streams. These streams have carved tunnels or natural bridges from one sink to the other, creating the system we now know as Maquoketa Caves State Park.

When you visit the caves, notice not only the erosional work of the water, but also the depositional work. Films of calcium carbonate can be seen coating the rock at several places in the caves. This is constructional deposition, also the work of the groundwater.