



An American Tour: 47



Coudersport's Ice Mine



“Coudersport Ice Mine is a pit or shaft, which shows a typical example of a coldness trap, also called Glacière. The cold air in winter is heavier than the warmer air in the pit, so it falls into the pit and cools it down. In summer the outside air is warm, but the heavier cold air in the pit is unable to leave it. The whole hill is called Ice Mountain, supposedly after the ice in this shaft. In 1897 a strange ore was found, which was thought to be silver ore. The Coudersport Ice Mine shaft was built in this time in search for silver. But the ore turned out to be worthless and the mining activity was ceased.

When the shaft was built, the cracks in the rocks were already filled with ice. The miners joked, that they found an ice mine instead of a silver mine. So the mine got its name. One thing about the coldness trap effect was very strange for the visitors: the cave has little ice in the spring, but in summer the ice grows. This seems rather strange, and is different to natural ice caves. But the explanation is rather easy: the cave is always cold enough to freeze water. The temperature rises slowly during summer, until in late autumn it gets at least warm enough, that the ice melts again. The amount of ice depends on the water in the shaft. In winter all the water is frozen, the cracks in the rock are sealed by the ice. It takes rather long until some water enters the pit, freezes, and thus produces ice.

The site was open to the public for many decades. It seems that it is closed at the moment due to personal reasons of the owner. Still this site is so freaky that numerous sites on the web provide information about it.”

[<http://www.showcaves.com/english/usa/mines/Coudersport.html>]