

plateau mountains extends from central Alabama to the upper Hudson River. Geologists characterize the fault and caves as a spectacular example of process called gravity tectonics... It is doubtful whether a finer example of gravity tectonics exists anywhere else in the United States.”

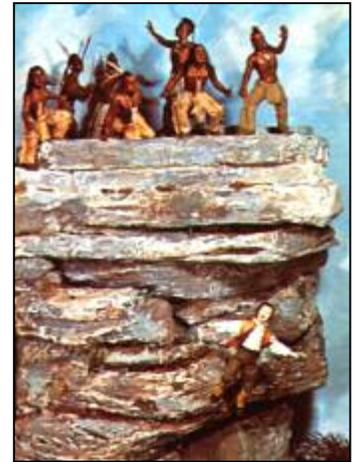
The landmark area was cut back in 1977, excluding the “original” ice caves and a large fault known as Sunken Valley. The designation was limited to the immediate area of the **Ice Caves Mountain** loop road (*photo, above*) as a result of a boundary study report compiled by Paul Favour, park ranger for Natural Landmarks.

In a Kaatskill Life article (Summer 2003), author Bob McElroy described “yawning rock chasms, which are called ‘ice caves’ for the deposits of snow and ice that lie in their frigid depths through much of the summer. High above the **Rondout Valley**, violent forces have torn gaping wounds in the mountain’s bedrock, rending a system of deep fissures (*photo, “Great Crevice” below*). Geologists call these events fault-block fissures.” He concluded his account: “There are ice caves at other locations in the northern Shawangunks. The **Shingle Gully** group or ‘**Greater Ice Caves**’ is the most spectacular.” Heidi Wagner, Manager of the *Sam’s Point Preserve*, cautioned



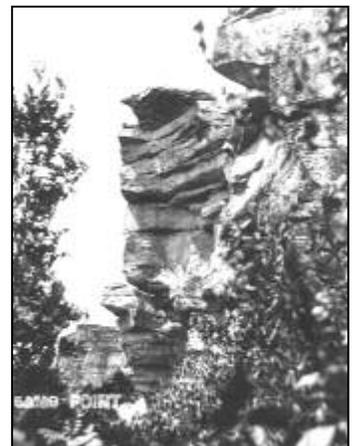
that the particular cave system described is an especially ecologically-sensitive area and the number of visitors is tightly monitored.

When the **Ice Caves** are mentioned, nearby **Sam’s Point** and the legend concerning its name frequently become part of the conversation. Sam Gonzales (sometimes spelled “Gonsalus”) was a trailblazing trapper in the **Shawangunks**. Local Indians disliked him because he would alert settlers when the Indians were near. One day a small band of Indians cornered Sam at a 200-foot cliff. Sam had to choose between the cliff and the uncertain hospitality of the Indians. He chose the cliff, leaping off into open space (*right, from model in Ellenville Museum*). Fortunately for him, his fall was cushioned by shrubs and trees, leaving Sam unharmed and able to return to his home. In honor of that daring leap, the cliff was thereafter called **Sam’s Point** (*photo, below*).



The Ellenville Tract, consisting of approximately 4,623 acres on the **Shawangunk Ridge**, was acquired by the Village of Ellenville between the years 1899 and 1921 in five separate transactions for a little over \$10,000.

Until the 1930s, the non-watershed part of the property was treated as park land and a substantial network of trails was created. During the 1930s, the Village began to explore the potential of the non-watershed land for potential revenue, from mineral exploration, an underground storage facility for gas, a glider port, and radio transmission sites. Fifty years later, the Village investigated the possibility of establishing a wind-power project in the interest of acquiring cheaper electric rates. The conflict between the financial gain and the unimpaired ecosystem and panoramic view (*photo, next page, top right*) defeated that proposal.



The decision by the Village Board to lease the 4,081 acres that included the **Ice Caves** area, outside the Village corporate lines but an area where the Village owned its secondary water supply in the form of **Lake Maratanza**, was hotly debated in April of 1967. The pros and cons of the leasing agreement were so thoroughly debated that it took until 2:30 a.m. before the Village Board agreed to lease the specified area to *Ice Caves Mountain, Inc.*, composed of Clifford Forman of Cooperstown, NY, and Fred W. Grau of Walker Valley, NY. (*photo, next page, top left, with landmark plaque*)

The term of the lease was for 15 years (plus an option to renew for 10 more) at \$3,000 per year rental, plus 10% additional on ticket admissions, plus 5% additional on future possible development. The 1970 audit reported \$65,327 in admissions, resulting in income to the Village of \$6,532.70 from their 10%, an increase of \$997.51