The Association

The American Spelean History Association (ASHA) is an Internal Organization of the National Speleological Society and exists for the study, dissemination, and interpretation of spelean history, and related purposes. All persons who are interested in these goals are cordially invited to become members. Dues are $2 per issue of the Journal of Spelean History. Dues can be paid for up to 20 issues ($40). Checks should be made payable to “ASHA” and mailed to the treasurer.

The Journal

The Journal of Spelean History (JSH) is the Association’s publication and is mailed to all members. JSH includes articles covering a wide variety of topics relating to man’s use of caves, including historical cave explorations, saltpeter and other mineral extraction, and show cave development. All members are strongly encouraged to contribute material and to comment on published material. ASHA assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

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Back Issues

JSH began publication in 1968 and copies of all back issues are available, although many early issues are reprints. The cost is $2 per copy for 1-2 copies, $1.50 per copy for 3-6 copies, or $1 per copy for 7 or more copies. Add $0.50 postage for one copy or $1 for two or more copies ordered at once. Order back issues from the Treasurer.

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This is Part Three of a series on the spelean post offices of the United States, alphabetically arranged. Part One, covering the states from Alabama through Hawaii, was published in issue No. 126. Part Two, covering Idaho through Montana, was published in the last issue (No. 127). Part Four, along with a bibliography, will be published in a future issue.

NEBRASKA SPELEAN RELATED POST OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lost Creek</td>
<td>1879 – 1885</td>
<td>Platte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NEVADA SPELEAN POST OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cave Creek</td>
<td>11/5/1887 - 4/30/1929</td>
<td>Elko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cave Valley</td>
<td>6/24/1926 - 2/15/1933</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cave Creek established a post office November 5, 1887, at Cave Creek Ranch, which was owned by Thomas Short and situated at the south end of Ruby Valley. An icy cold river flows through the cave. In the early days, A. G. Dawley and Thomas Short built a boat within the narrow opening of the cave. They had passed from one huge cavern to another, perhaps a quarter of a mile beyond the opening, when at last they discovered a large formation resembling a pipe organ which they named “The Great Organ.” On their return to the entrance the boat capsized and one of them drowned. Further exploration took place several years later.

The post office was discontinued April 30, 1929, and relocated in Ruby Valley. The Cave Creek Ranch and nearby marshlands were later sold to the government, establishing the Ruby Lake Migratory Water Fowl and Game Refuge. In addition, forty acres were set aside for a replacement fish hatchery on Trout Creek. Elko County ran the Ruby Valley Fish Hatchery, stocking fingerlings in streams and lakes throughout Nevada until it became a county and state entity in 1947. The state officially purchased the facility in 1963, and on August 26, 1967, changed its name to the Dr. Harry M. Gallagher Fish Hatchery. At its peak, the hatchery produced over 200,000 pounds of fingerlings a year, and continues to be one of the most productive hatcheries in Nevada.

Remaining buildings from the Cave Creek Ranch are now within the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge, one of the most popular recreation sites in Elko County. The Cave Creek School, which served southern Ruby Valley until the 1970s, still stands. A private cemetery contains a number of graves including that of the soldier who drowned in the original exploration of the cave.

The George M. Wheeler Survey (1869-1873) named Cave Valley, the area east of the South Egan Range in Lincoln County. During the same period, George Washington Bean explored the valley and included a description of the caves in his report to Brigham Young. “The main cave is half mile in length and varying in breath from five to sixty
feet. The smaller caves or branches are from ten feet to one hundred yards in length and from ten to twenty five feet wide; they are seven to twenty-five feet high.”

Cave Creek, NV U.S.P.O.D. Registered Package left the post office on August 8, 1909. The Record of Transit shows it was received on August 10th in Palisade, from the Railway Mail Service Clerk Frank P. Costello on the Ogden and San Francisco Train #3, and delivered to the postmaster at Eureka on August 11th. The handstamp is a Doane - Type 3bf.

NEW HAMPSHIRE SPELEAN POST OFFICES

There are no spelean or spelean related post offices in New Hampshire.

NEW JERSEY SPELEAN POST OFFICES

There are no spelean or spelean related post offices in New Jersey.

NEW MEXICO SPELEAN POST OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La Cueva</td>
<td>1868 – 1961</td>
<td>Mora</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the early 1800s, Vincent Romero began ranching and farming in the Mora County, New Mexico, area. A post office was established in the nearby town of La Cueva, which is situated in the Organ Mountains along the Mora River. The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the La Cueva National Historical Site. The actual “cueva” or cave is a volcanic rock outcropping named for a 10-foot tall cave at its southeast end. Excavations have revealed that it was inhabited as long ago as 5000 BC, most likely as a shelter from rainstorms for early hunters in pursuit of rabbit, deer, antelope, and bighorn sheep. The postmark shown is a territorial postmark dated July 28, 1869, before New Mexico became a state in 1912.
NEW YORK SPELEAN POST OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grotto</td>
<td>1882 - 1902</td>
<td>Tompkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howe (s)(s) Cave</td>
<td>1867 - OPEN</td>
<td>Schoharie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NEW YORK SPELEAN RELATED POST OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>1850 - OPEN</td>
<td>Cattaraugus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Bridge</td>
<td>1829 - OPEN</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest and most celebrated cave in the northeastern United States is Howe Caverns, located in Schoharie County, New York. Known to the Iroquois and Seneca Indians as Otsgaragee, or Cave of the Great Galleries, it was commercialized by Lester Howe in 1842. Opened first as a local curiosity, it later achieved fame when a hotel was built nearby and its owner conducted weddings and dances within the cave. Occasionally, Lester Howe would play his violin in the resonant chambers. Economic problems eventually caused the cave to close and subsequent quarrying of the limestone at one end removed part of the original entrance. In 1929, a group of local businessmen constructed an elevator shaft into the area which originally was the rear of the cave. This portion, still visited today and includes an underground lake with boat rides.

The post office, still in operation, was opened in 1867, with Washington D. Zimmer as the first postmaster. There are several cancellation types known to have been used here, with examples below of the ones with which this author is familiar. The interesting features of these examples are the differences, or errors, in the post office name. Type One is HOWS CAVE—a single circle date stamp (example dated October 14, 1896) with target killer. (An example of this postmark is seen in Part One.) Type Two is HOWE CAVE—a Steel Duplex Type D-1 postmark used from 1893 – 1924 (example dated January 1, 1908), when Mr. Judson Eckerson was postmaster.

Type Three is HOWES CAVE, a Four-bar Killer Type A. Subtype A/3 postmark has been used from 1924, when Ernest J. Bellinger was postmaster, to the present (example dated May 25, 1935). Type Four, HOWES GAVE, is another Four-bar Killer Postmark (example dated July 3, 1991). Type Five is HOWE’S CAVE, a double outer/single circle date stamp with target cancel, was used from 1867 to 1893 (example dated September 21, 1885). This last example is an advertising cover from the Lime and Cement Company that operated the quarry at Howe’s Cave.
Examples of cancellations shown below are for Natural Bridge, which opened September 12, 1829, with Charles R. Knight as its first postmaster. Natural Bridge Caverns is a unique area named for the Indian River's transit through a limestone cavern, which resulted in the formation of a natural bridge.

Natural Bridge has several “precancels”, or postage stamps that have been canceled before being used on letters or packages, typically with two lines, plus the city and state where they were mailed. PSS 473, issued May 1927, is a 25-subject rubber hand stamp with lines and condensed block upper and lowercase letters of 3 mm lines, 12 mm apart. PSS 705, issued in the summer of 1932, is a Wide Hand Electro Stamp with condensed font, wide spaces between letters in 2½ mm blocked capital letters, and 1 mm between town name and state abbreviation. PSS 843, issued June 1973, was a new vinyl hand stamp with lines, no punctuation, 2½ mm blocked capital letters with upper and lower case used, and a two letter state abbreviation.

Limestone is a farming community located in Cattaraugus County, New York. Its post office, opened May 11, 1850, with Chase Fuller as postmaster, is still in operation. Although open from May 13, 1892, to July 31, 1902, with Edwin W. Van Master its only postmaster, there are no known examples from Grotto, New York. When this post office was discontinued, mail was sent to the nearby Groton Post Office.
Bat Cave Preserve is a 93-acre National Natural Landmark near the community of Bat Cave in Henderson County, North Carolina. Owned by the Nature Conservancy and a private landowner, it is accessible only through the North Carolina Chapter’s fieldtrip program. The Bat Cave system consists of ten entrances which lead into a complex underground network. The cathedral-like main chamber is more than 300 feet long and approximately 85 feet high. Fissure caves, like this system, are formed by rock splits, boulder movements, and other earth movements, while most other caves are formed by water dissolving or abrading rock. A 1984 survey measured the total length of the passageways as 5,560 feet, making Bat Cave the longest granite cave in North America and the second longest known granite fissure cave in the world.

The Bat Cave Post Office, first located in Rutherford County with Louisa T. Duvall as postmistress, was relocated in Henderson County when county boundaries changed.

This author could not find any information on Grotto, North Carolina, other than that its first postmaster was Judson C. Thomas.

There are no spelean or spelean related post offices in North Dakota.
OHIO SPELEAN POST OFFICES

CITY / TOWN / ZIP  DATE OF OPERATION  COUNTY
Ash Cave  1857 - 1866  Hocking

OHIO SPELEAN RELATED POST OFFICES

CITY / TOWN / ZIP  DATE OF OPERATION  COUNTY
Lost Creek  1831 - 1845  Miami
Rockhouse  1895 - 1907  Hocking
Saltpeter  1851 - 1859  Washington
Saltpetre  1872 - 1914  Washington
Sinking Spring  1817 - OPEN  Highland
Limestone  1887 - 1918  Ottawa

Hocking Hills State Park has been traveled and inhabited by Indians for centuries, beginning with the Adena 7,000 years ago to the Wyandot, Delaware, and Shawnee in the 1700’s. Over the years, their fires left behind a bed of ash 6 feet deep inside one of the caves. Early settlers first discovered what was later named Ash Cave in the late 1700s. In the 1830’s, a powder mill was built within the present park boundaries near Rockhouse and a gristmill at Cedar Falls. By the early 1900's, Rockhouse had both a hotel and post office and Ash Cave had become a popular gathering place for churchgoers whose preachers used the large rock near the entrance as a pulpit. The State of Ohio purchased the first parcel of 146 acres in 1924, of what would later become Hocking Hills State Park, which included Ash Cave. Until the Department of Natural Resources was created in 1949, and a new Division of Parks assumed control of the park, the land was managed by the Department of Forestry. A dining lodge and cabins were opened in 1972 and today the park offers camping, hiking, picnicking, and year round naturalist programs.

OKLAHOMA SPELEAN RELATED POST OFFICES

CITY / TOWN / ZIP  DATE OF OPERATION  COUNTY
Limestone  1897 – 1901  Atoka
Limestone Gap  1875 – 1922  Atoka

JSH No. 128  45
OREGON SPELEAN POST OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cave Junction (Zip 97523)</td>
<td>1936 – OPEN</td>
<td>Josephine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cave Junction Oregon Caves Rural Station</td>
<td>4/1/1956 - 9/1/1977</td>
<td>Josephine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cave Junction Holland Rural Station</td>
<td>9/1/1958 - 12/1/1960</td>
<td>Josephine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cave Junction Kerby Rural Station</td>
<td>9/1/1958 - OPEN (summer)</td>
<td>Josephine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caverhill</td>
<td>2/7/1916 – 10/15/1927</td>
<td>Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon Caves</td>
<td>1924 – 1956</td>
<td>Josephine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OREGON SPELEAN RELATED POST OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lost River</td>
<td>1875 – 1876</td>
<td>Klamath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sink</td>
<td>1911 – 1920</td>
<td>Lake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cave Junction is a small, scenic town located approximately 30 miles southwest of Grants Pass, Oregon. It is considered the “Home of the Oregon Caves,” which are located about 20 miles east of town. It serves as a home base for visitors from around the world, many of whom travel to the Illinois Valley specifically to see the unique geologic wonder.

What is now Oregon Caves National Monument was found in 1874 when Elijah Davidson was chasing his dog Bruno, who in turn was pursuing a bear. The dog followed the bear into a dark hole high on the mountainside, but Davidson stopped at the entrance. He could see nothing, but an agonizing howl lured him into the mysterious, pitch dark cave to save his dog. Although without light, he was able to wade down a gurgling, ice-cold stream and eventually find his way back to daylight, with Bruno at his heels.

Later, other brave, better-prepared souls explored deeper into the cave, returning home to tell of its great beauty and mystery. In 1907, a party of influential men, including Joaquin Miller, the “Poet of the Sierras,” visited the cave. Charmed by it, Miller wrote of the “Marble Halls of Oregon.” The ensuing publicity alerted federal officials to the possibility of preserving the cave and in 1909 President William Howard Taft proclaimed a tract of 480 acres as Oregon Caves National Monument. It took until 1922 for an automobile road to reach the park and another 12 years before a six-story hotel, the Chateau, was constructed. The very same year, 1934, Oregon Caves National Monument was transferred from the Forest Service to the National Park Service, which still administers it.

Workers blasted tunnels and widened passages in the cave during the 1930s, putting waste rocks in side passages, covering many limestone formations. Changes in airflow patterns altered the growth of formations, caused greater swings in temperature, while freezing water cracked rock layers. Lights in the cave promoted the growth of algae, which dissolved some formations and turned areas of the cave green, while smoke from torches blackened other portions.

Since 1985, the National Park Service has removed more than a thousand tons of rubble in its effort to restore the cave. Transformers, asphalt trails, and cabins were removed to prevent sewage or oils from leaking into the cave from the surface. Thousands of formations previously buried under rubble were uncovered and some that were broken have been repaired with epoxy and powdered marble. Airlocks have restored
natural cave winds by blocking airflow in artificial tunnels. Spraying with bleach keeps the algae under control. The new lighting and trail system will reduce evaporation and non-native food sources, which have attracted surface insects and driven out native species. Crystal clear water once again cascades over white marble. One can now see a much-renewed cave.

Tours of Oregon Caves have been traditional for more than a century and today they are conducted by the Oregon Caves Company, a private concession. The tour lasts about 75 minutes and follows about one-half mile of often low and narrow passages, up and down more than 500 steps.

Oregon Caves Post Office was established July 30, 1924, with George C. Sabin as its first postmaster, and discontinued March 31, 1956, with mail rerouted to Cave Junction, Oregon. It used a variety of postmarks including a type "D" Four-bar killer. Cave Junction was established in 1936 and is still in operation. There have been four rural stations of Cave Junction. Oregon Cave Rural Station was established April 1, 1956, as a summer (June–September) post office, and was discontinued September 1, 1977. Holland Rural Station, named after pioneer James E. Holland, operated from September 1, 1958, to December 1, 1960, and was located 7 miles east of Cave Junction. Takilma Rural Station, open from September 1, 1958, to September 16, 1967, was named for the Takilma Indians and was located on the east fork of the Illinois River. Kerby Rural Station was opened July 1, 1965, and is the only rural station still operating.

Caverhill, Grant County, Oregon is named after a family, rather than a cave, but speleophilatelists may want to retain this postmark in their collections. It was established on February 7, 1916, and was discontinued October 15, 1927, with Nellie Caverhill as its only postmaster.

On April 20, 1996 the USPO issued a #10 postal stationery envelope with an imprinted 32-cent stamp. The stamp depicts a sea cave 600 feet south of Hug Point, and nearby Falls Creek Falls, near Cannon Beach. The Cave Junction cancel is a Four-bar. The other stamps are precancels (PSS 843 issued June 1973 and PSS 704 issued May 1937).
Pennsylvania Spelean Post Offices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hunter's Cave</td>
<td>2/1/1850 - 11/1/1872</td>
<td>Greene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter's Cave</td>
<td>7/13/1886 - 12/1/1894</td>
<td>Greene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Cave</td>
<td>12/1/1894 - 3/15/1904</td>
<td>Greene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn Cave</td>
<td>1892 - 1903</td>
<td>Centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pennsylvania Spelean Related Post Offices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>1828 - 1839</td>
<td>Armstrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>1839 - OPEN</td>
<td>Clarion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limestone Valley</td>
<td>1828 - 1828</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limestoneville</td>
<td>1852 - 1907</td>
<td>Montour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Creek</td>
<td>1877 - OPEN</td>
<td>Schuylkill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lostcreek</td>
<td>1895 - 1905</td>
<td>Schuylkill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinking Spring</td>
<td>1827 - 1960</td>
<td>Berks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinking Valley</td>
<td>1854 - 1901</td>
<td>Blair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Penn’s Cave is located near Centre, Pennsylvania, in the farmland of the northern Nittany Valley, named for the Indian princess, Nittanee. According to legend, the princess fell in love with a white trader, Malachi Boyer, and her seven brothers forced him to flee when they discovered this love. Boyer was captured by the angry braves and thrown into the sinkhole at Penn’s Cave to die. His cries of “Nittanee, Nittanee” resounded throughout the cavern, and after a week, exhausted from his efforts, he crawled into one of the furthest recesses of the cavern and died. Later, the seven brothers weighted the body with stones and dropped it into the deepest water of the cavern.

Penn’s Cave and Hotel, opened to the public in 1885, was advertised as “America’s only all water cavern tour.” Arrowheads, pottery, and beads dating back to ancient times were found in the Dry Room. The first recorded exploration of the cave was in 1795 by the Reverend James Martin, the first Presbyterian minister of Penn’s Valley. Penn Cave Post Office was established September 5, 1892, with Jesse Long as postmaster, but its name was altered to Penncave on December 1, 1895, and it was discontinued in January 31, 1903. In 1908, the Campbell family purchased the property at auction and it still remains in their hands.

Hunter’s Cave Post Office was established February 1, 1850, with William Paul as postmaster. Service was suspended on October 1, 1872, with mail delivered through Waynesburgh until July 13, 1886, when it was re-established with Simon C. Cowin as
postmaster. On December 1, 1894, the apostrophe was dropped, altering the name to Hunters Cave. On March 15, 1904, service was once again discontinued with mail rerouted to Rutan, and eventually to Holbrook, PA. Mr. John L. Kay, secretary of the Pennsylvania Postal History Society, stated that: “in checking two histories of Greene County, the town was called Hopewell until they applied for the establishment of a post office and were told there already was a Hopewell Post Office in Pennsylvania. Hunter’s Cave was their second choice.”

Limestone, PA Four-bar Cancel and Hunters Cave Manuscript Cancel dated October 5, 1886

RHODE ISLAND SPELEAN POST OFFICES

There are no spelean or spelean related post offices in Rhode Island.

SOUTH CAROLINA SPELEAN POST OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cave</td>
<td>1899 - 1916</td>
<td>Abbeville</td>
</tr>
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SOUTH CAROLINA SPELEAN RELATED POST OFFICES

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<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>1832 – 1836</td>
<td>York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>1883 – 1889</td>
<td>Edgefield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limestone Springs</td>
<td>1836 – 1879</td>
<td>Cherokee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limestone Springs, SC CDS.
SOUTH DAKOTA SPELEAN POST OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY / TOWN / ZIP</th>
<th>DATE OF OPERATION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cave Hills</td>
<td>1884 – 1894</td>
<td>Ewing/Harding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind Cave</td>
<td>10/18/1893 – 12/8/1908</td>
<td>Custer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Native Americans may have known of Wind Cave, white settlers did not discover it until 1881 when two brothers, Jesse and Tom Bingham, heard a loud whistling noise. The sound led them to a small hole in the ground, the cave's only natural opening. A wind, which was created by a difference between the atmospheric pressure inside and outside the cave, was said to be blowing from the hole with such force that it blew off Jesse's hat.

It was left to later adventurers like Alvin McDonald to follow this wind and discover the cave's extensive network of passageways containing boxwork, frostwork, popcorn, and other delicate, irreplaceable features. McDonald and others who explored the cave before the turn of the century were fascinated by what they found—chocolate-colored crystals, formations resembling faces or animals, and chambers that inspired names such as the "Garden of Eden" and the "Dungeon."

You might wonder if after more than a century of exploration there is anything new to discover in Wind Cave. Barometric wind studies suggest that only 5 percent of the total cave has been explored. In 1891 McDonald wrote in his diary: "Have given up the idea of finding the end of Wind Cave." The better-equipped cavers of today have not given up. They are continuing to push farther and farther into the cave's cool, dark recesses.

Wind Cave, SD CDS with Target Killer dated August 7, 1905. It reached Chicago two days later as shown by the receiving stamp.

End of Part Three
Dr. Talbot's Account of Wyandotte Cave

By William R. Halliday

Angelo George’s 1991 publication, *Bibliography of Wyandotte Cave*, significantly advanced the history of that notable cave. Inevitably, however, it could not contain all extant accounts. In May 2002 I found an important two-part article by D. L. Talbot, M.D., whose 1853 map was revised by Horace C. Hovey and included in the latter’s *Celebrated American Caverns* and several articles (Hovey 1882, p. 127). Although Hovey wrote of Dr. Talbot as being a resident of Jeffersonville, Indiana, the account was submitted to and published by the *Fort Wayne Times*, and I found it in the Allen County Library of that city. Its two parts appeared on Saturday June 18, and Monday June 20, 1859, respectively, six years after his mapping of the cave. The style suggests that it was written as a favor to the Rothrock enterprise, but it also gives useful information on the status of the cave at that time, e.g., mention of moccasin prints beyond the Auger Hole. It also reveals something about the writer as one of the numerous M.D. cavers of this period:

This cave I have surveyed and mapped a distance of 20 miles in length…there are numerous avenues I have never penetrated to their end, although I have visited the cave over a dozen times—spending on one visit over four days and nights within its darksome halls.

Regrettably, however, he was no more a cave conservationist than others of this period:

I have made extensive collections of the curiosities of Wyandotte and some 8 or 10 other caves…

Dr. Talbot’s account gives then-current names of many features of this far-flung cave; it is interesting to note how many of them remain essentially unchanged after nearly 150 years. Other names in his account seem to be unknown today and may merit historical research in their own right. Biographical research on Dr. Talbot and his other caving adventures certainly will be worthwhile; but I had no time to pursue this topic further while in Fort Wayne.

A subsequent 1859 editorial in the same newspaper refers to a longer, recent account in the *Cincinnati Times* by Mr. E. A. Smith. When located, this also will be a valuable addition to Angelo’s useful bibliography.

**REFERENCES CITED**


I allude particularly to the Pillard Palace, which is situated about three miles from the outer door and in the southern branch. It is a hall several hundred yards in length, by about twenty in width—its height varying from five to ten feet.

The entrance from the north end presents one of the most beautiful sights imaginable. Across its entrance, are suspended from the ceiling, and reaching to the floor, a number of huge stalagnites of a peculiar formation. They appear as vast Pillars supporting the roof, (from which the name,) but are evidently formed—from their peculiar shape and configuration—not as ordinary stalagnites, by the gradual deposits of lime in solution from dripping water, but by crystallization. They assume every imaginable form and direction, not pendant merely from the ceiling, but shooting out lateral branches—some straight, but mostly curved and exceedingly irregular—some of immense size, but mostly small—not larger than a common quill and of various lengths from a few inches to several feet, many of them forming clusters of intricate net-work of indescribable beauty. This palace has ever been considered, by all visitors, the most beautiful in this part of the cave, and has nothing like it in the Mammoth or other known caves.

In this vicinity also are, Purgatory, the Creeping Avenue, the Throne, Fairy Grotto and Hermit's Cell. In approaching Pillard Palace there are two avenues—one leading through creeping Avenue, about seventy yards long, and from two to three and a half feet high, (a break-back operation)—the other around the continent, which contains about twelve acres. This avenue is large and spacious—in width on an average twenty-five or thirty feet, and its height from twenty-five to several hundred. In it are passed the Dining Room, Gen. Scott's Reception Room, Wright's Laboratory and the Hall of Representatives. This latter room contains about an acre—is circular and has a vaulted dome of 130 feet in height, and, except for its vastness, not otherwise remarkable.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)
For the Fort Wayne Times.

THE WYANDOTTE CAVE, CRAWFORD CO. IND.

BY D. L. TALBOT M. D.

CONCLUDED.

Mr. Editor:

Emerging from this avenue, in which many days might be spent by the scientific investigator with both pleasure and profit, we return to the main cave, and proceeding about half a mile in a north-east direction, we arrive at Monument Mountain and Wallace’s Grand Dome—one of the wonders of Wyandotte Cave. You approach the mountain by a perpendicular ascent of about eight feet through an opening, fortunately not closed by the falling rock above. You stand now at the base of the hill which you ascend over broken stone at an inclination of about forty-five degrees to the height of one hundred and seventy-five feet. This hill is formed in the centre of the room (which is several thousand feet in circumference) by the rocks falling from above. The top of the hill is a solid rock, made so by the deposits of lime from the dripping water above.

Standing on the brow of the hill as you enter, you see before you, in the gloomy distance, three beautiful stalagmites, as white as Parian marble, and about eight feet in height. Fancy readily pictures them as the genii of the place, guarding its everlasting solitude. On lighting up the room from the summit of the mountain (which must be done by some chemical light to see its wonders) you perceive Wallace’s Grand Dome, an ellipsoid of over one-hundred yards in its long diameter, and still eighty feet above the top of the mountain. From the edge or cornice of this dome, hang innumerable stalactites of various colors and varying from a few inches to twenty feet in length. So high are these above you that even the largest are not seen by any ordinary lights. Those intending to visit the cave should provide themselves with a small phial of phosphorus, which will be needed, particularly in this room, in the Senate Chamber and in Marble Hall, and Beauty’s Bower—for no one can imagine the gorgeousness of these two latter rooms, until they are seen under a brilliant illu

mination. Descending the mountain on the opposite side from the ascent, you find at its base a beautiful basin of water, highly impregnated with sulphur—called the Sulphur Spring. This for three years after its discovery, was considered the termination of the cave in this direction; but some six years ago a small crevice in the side of the wall a few feet from the spring gave indication of a further extension. This had once been an extensive opening, and had by gradual process become nearly obliterated from the deposition of lime from the water trickling down the side of the wall. On enlarging the opening, the following day, a party of near sixty gentlemen and ladies passed through what is termed and will ever be remembered by those who enter it, the Augur Hole. Here were discovered a number of charred sticks of wood—the evident remains of torches used by the aborigines who had once fenced these extensive openings, and further on some six or seven miles may still be seen the mocassin foot prints of the Wyandotte Indians, who inhabited this portion of the “Far West.” Soon after emerging from the Augur Hole, you come into extensive avenues and most beautiful halls. Spade’s Grotto is first, and is a circular room about forty feet in diameter—the ceiling hanging with most beautiful stalactites and the floor bestowed with corresponding stalagmites. Descending underneath a huge arch, you come into the Hall of Runis, White Cloud Room, and pass the Pulpit, Oxden’s Meander, Talbot’s Amphitheatre, and the Junction Room. At this point you may pass on beyond the islands towards Crawfish Springs and the Don, some two miles further, or you can turn back, down an avenue nearly parallel with the main cave, when you speedily come to the most beautiful of all the rooms. From the Ice House emerge two avenues, one leading directly to Queen Mary’s Retreat, the other to Marble Hall and Fairy Palace. A visit to Queen Mary’s Retreat is alone worth all the fatigue and labor of the journey thus far. Its walls are covered with various crystalline formations white as snow. Some simple coatings of crystallized carb. of lime, others taking the form of beautiful rosettes, while the ground is everywhere sparkling with needle-shaped prisms, giving forth when well illuminated a reflection as from thousand diamonds, which must be seen to be
appreciated. Language fails in giving anything like a description of the gorgeous magnificence of this and Fairy Palace still a short distance further on. In the latter, the incrustations upon the walls take the form of flowers of every hue, or branching off in various directions form a miniature forest of crystalline trees and shrubs, sparkling with the brilliance of innumerable diamonds, while in Beauty's Bower just by, the ground is covered with prisms from an inch to a foot in length clear as transparent as purest glass;

The cave abounds in sulphate of magnesia, and sulphate of lime, the latter frequently hanging from the crevices as fibrous gypsum as white as snow and as fine as cotton. Saltpeter is also abundant, especially at the entrance, and the rocks in some portions highly fossiliferous. Pentameris floraria, Cyathophyllum, and several species of crinoids are abundant in the old cave.

The cave is mostly dry. A few springs at distances of two or three miles afford ample means of quenching the thirst of the weary traveler.

No animal life has been seen within the cave except white, blind crawfish, and in the winter time, innumerable bats. Footprints however of raccoon, opossum, wild cat and other animals are numerous, but all those animals disappear in the crevices of the rocks as lights appear and have never been seen by any explorer. The country around is wild in the extreme. The sportsman can here find abundant amusement in gunning, fox hunting or fishing, while the naturalist will be abundantly repaid by an examination of the various strata of the upper Silurian deposits exposed along Blue river or the Ohio back of and below the town of Leavenworth. As I have made extensive collections of the curiosities of Wyandotte and some eight or ten other caves, it will give me pleasure to exhibit them to the scientific portion of your readers who desire to examine them.

Wyandotte Cave may be most conveniently reached by taking steam boat at New Albany or Louisville, and in four hours thereafter you may be at the cave.

Parties of pleasure or others will find the proprietor, Mr. Henry Rothrock, an agreeable gentleman who, with his family, will exert their utmost to render their stay at his house pleasant and agreeable. Skillful guides are constantly in readiness to conduct individuals or parties throughout the cave.
W. F. Sesser’s Brilliant and Eloquent Lecture
On the Mammoth Cave Illustrated

By Bob Thompson

While doing research at the University of Louisville (Kentucky), caver Bill Napper found, on microfilm, a promotional flyer from Mammoth Cave photographer W. F. Sesser. The flyer was in a discarded Mammoth Cave guest register from 1886-1887, which was used as a scrapbook. According to the flyer, Sesser was to give a lecture presentation in Chicago, on Mammoth Cave. The illustrated flyer provides an in depth look at Sesser’s presentation as well as his photographic work at Mammoth Cave.

W. F. Sesser of St. Joseph, Michigan, visited Mammoth Cave in August 1886 at the request of the Louisville and Nashville (L & N) Railroad. Photographs were needed to help promote Mammoth Cave and the new Mammoth Cave Railroad. For nine months, Sesser spent his days, and some of his nights, taking pictures inside the cave. Sesser signed the Mammoth Cave Hotel register at least seven times during his nine-month stay. His first entry in the hotel register was August 26, 1886; his last was June 8, 1887. Sesser’s work was published as a volume of prints for the L & N Railroad. Sesser copyrighted his work October 21, 1886, and November 6, 1887.

Soon after his departure from Mammoth Cave, Sesser, under the management of Slayton Lyceum Bureau, made a lecture appearance in Chicago at the famous Central Music Hall. A four-page flyer was printed to promote Sesser’s lecture. A small photo of Sesser appeared on the front cover with the title, “100 MILES UNDER GROUND, W. F. SESSER’S BRILLIANT AND ELOQUENT LECTURE ON THE MAMMOTH CAVE, ILLUSTRATED, SCENES FROM A LAND WHERE THE SUN NEVER SHINES” (see cover of this issue). The flyer was illustrated with photos of The Bottomless Pit, The Maelstrom, Echo River, and guide William Garvin. Presented below are the contents of that flyer.

W. F. SESSER, ON THE MAMMOTH CAVE.
ONE HUNDRED MILES UNDER THE GROUND.
A BRIEF SKETCH.

“Perhaps none of the great and natural wonders in the world are more widely known than the Mammoth Cave and yet so little known for its miles and miles of avenues, its countless domes and terrible pits. Its lofty ceilings and grand arches, winding passages and beautiful chambers, its dark deep mysterious subterranean river with eyeless fish make it one of the most intensely interesting subjects. Perhaps no one has so great and varied experiences in this cavern as Mr. Sesser. To him the subject is so familiar that his descriptions are fascinating in their delivery. Mr. Sesser’s lecture on the cave will be illustrated by reproductions done in black and white on canvas, from photographs made of the cavern by himself, and of which he owns the copyright. Each illustration is 5 feet by 7 and is absolutely correct, enabling the audience to obtain a well formed and clearly defined idea as this most marvelous work of nature. Never before have the public been able to have this subject presented to them in so clear a way.”
“A large amount of valuable information is to be gained from the study of this subject. The cave considered scientifically presents many interesting questions. Its temperature, its structure and formation, and the general character of some of its apartments present subjects of absorbing interest. Its stalactite and gypsum formations are of the most marvelous construction. Floral Hall, Mary’s Bower, St. Cecilia’s Grotto, where the walls and ceilings glisten like diamonds are beautiful and all graphically described by Mr. Sesser.”

“Echo River, a deep, dark, subterranean stream flowing along for three quarters of a mile, 328 feet below the surface, is in itself of intense interest. The generation of a species of eyeless fish that have generated, as is held by high authority, since the cavern was formed is an interested subject of thought. Mr. Sesser has a fine specimen of these fish, that the audience will be able to see, also the eyeless crab, which is found in the same river. A great many thrilling experiences are heard of in the cavern where people have been lost for forty-eight hours wandering around miles under the ground, also some startling situations in Mr. Sesser’s own experience. All are graphically told in such a way as to make the lecture more acceptable and pleasing.”

“W. F. Sesser was, in the interest of the Louisville & Nashville Railway, engaged to make the attempt to scientifically photograph the interior of the Mammoth Cave. In this work he was engaged for over nine months, staying days and a large portion of the nights in the cavern, going to remote localities and to parts of the cavern never before visited by man, until this work was most successfully accomplished.”

“In the execution of his work such an opportunity was offered that has not been had by any one heretofore to become familiar with this subject. In the procuring of some of the results, the greatest danger was incurred and many thrilling experiences had.”

“In securing the desired negatives of Bottomless Pit, it became necessary for Mr. Sesser to climb over the railing that is placed along the walk to prevent visitors from going too near the edge, and to come out on a point of rock that projects over the pit. On this same point of rock, Mr. Sesser stood and operated the lights, while his assistant, Mr. Collins, operated the instrument for over thirty minutes. To enable one to fully realize what this was to do, we can compare it to shoving a plank out four or five feet from the top of a six story building, and then walk out to the end of the plank and stand there thirty minutes.”

**THE MOST EXTENSIVE EXPLORER OF NATURE’S WONDER**

**ECHO RIVER. A SUBTERRANIAN STREAM,**
**328 FEET BELOW THE SURFACE, ¾ OF A MILE ACROSS**

“That deep, dark, mysterious stream that comes up through the bottom of the Cave, flows along so silently, and then disappears again as mysteriously as it came three hundred and twenty-eight feet below the sod. Upon the surface you float along over three-quarters of a mile, under great hanging rocks that seem ready to drop at any moment and crush you to atoms, yet they have been hanging as they are for countless ages. You reach the other shore and continue on, through Sillman’s Avenue and the Pass of El-Ghor, through miles of the most beautiful avenues, halls, and chambers, whole apartments studded with beautiful snow white gypsum that reflects the light of your lantern in countless rays of
dazzling whiteness. Stopping for a moment to contemplate the wondrous beauty, the marvelous structure, and intricate formations, one becomes bewildered with the multitude of thoughts that come rushing to his mind as he attempts to reason how this was all formed, and how many years have rolled by since the first little stream of water began to dig out this mighty cavern. The original way in which Mr. Sesser illustrates his lectures is worthy of a detailed description."

“How the Lecture is Illustrated: Mr. Sesser has the original negatives made in the Cave by himself. From these negatives he has prepared on muslin reproductions five feet by seven, done in black and white, made under his personal direction and mathematically correct. At points where the negative could not properly develop the subject, the enlarged production has been made nearer the original. These illustrations are shown from an easel, and are so clear, bold and well defined, that they can be seen easily from any part of the room. By illustrating in this way the distressing effect caused by looking at illustrations shown by instruments need for that purpose, were the light is so strong that it is painful to look very long at the object, is entirely obviated. Mr. Sesser carries with him some very fine specimens from different parts of the Cave, also a fine specimen of the Eyeless Fish found in Echo River, and all are cordially invited to examine. Another feature of Mr. Sesser’s lectures is an opportunity is given the audience at the close each evening to ask any question they may wish in relation to the subject, and he will take great pleasure in answering it if he can.”

**A DELIGHTFUL EVENING SPENT IN NATURE’S PALACE:**
**THE “MAMMOTH CAVE”**

“One of the most novel experiences one could imagine is in witnessing what is called a “stone-storm” in the caverns. It is caused by burning the torches for a short time under portions of the ceiling on the way to Chief City, where the cavern is thickly coated with soda salts. The heat causes the deposit to free itself and fall in flakes like a real snow-storm.”

“The beauty of the white gypsum in Floral Hall and that portion of the Cavern from Martha’s Vineyard to the Rocky Mountains is beyond the power of language to describe. Whole rooms seem ablaze with glistening diamonds, floral formations of snow-white gypsum of the most delicate structures, rivaling in their beauty the flowers of the outer world.”

**THROUGH ONE OF THE WORLD’S GREATEST WONDERS, THE MAMMOTH CAVE**

**Acknowledgements:** Bill Napper, for permission to publish the contents of this flyer.

**REFERENCES CITED**


Mammoth Cave Hotel Register, MACA 3752, Mammoth Cave National Park
Charles A. Muehlbronner and John Nelson: Heroes of Mammoth Cave’s “Echo River Club”

By Dean H. Snyder and Dale R. Ibberson

Taking a boat ride on the Echo River in Kentucky’s Mammoth Cave has long been a popular part of visiting the longest cave in the world. The water was promoted in the nineteenth century as a wonderful underground river hundreds of feet long that was filled with eyeless fish. The half-mile boat ride was part of the “Long Route” or “River Route,” which was more than nine miles in length, taking at least eight or nine hours to complete. The boats were constructed of wooden planks dragged into the cave through Fat Man’s Misery or the Crevice Pit and Mammoth Dome. Twenty passengers had seats on the gunwales, with their lamps placed in front of them in the boat’s center. The guide was positioned at the bow and moved the boat with a long paddle and by pushing off of the cave’s ceiling.1

Charles A. Muehlbronner

Charles Arthur Muehlbronner was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 10, 1856. Soon after, the family moved to Lagrange, Ohio, and after the War Between the States, the family relocated once again, to Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. Charles’ father was in the milk business, and as a young boy he delivered milk to his dad’s customers in the neighborhood. His next job was a clerk at a grocery store, which prepared him to set out on his own as a produce dealer, when he established the Iron City Produce Company. His first political job was as a tax collector. In 1881 he became a member of the Allegheny City Council and in 1890 he was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. He was reelected in 1893 and 1894. He served two terms in the Senate and served as secretary of the County Republican Executive Committee for three years. Muehlbronner married Amelia Bahn and the couple had two sons and four daughters.2 Physically, he was a large, well-built man with a handlebar mustache. He enjoyed swimming in the ocean while on vacations to Atlantic City, New Jersey.3

Muehlbronner was the secretary of the Pittsburgh branch of the National League of Commission Merchants, a trade organization for produce wholesalers.4 He and his wife attended their convention in Louisville, Kentucky, in the middle of January, 1904. As part of the convention activities, a trip was organized to visit the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, located just 75 miles to the south.5
John Nelson

Born in 1867, John Marion Nelson moved to Glasgow, Kentucky, in 1880 after the death of his father. In the summer of 1894, Nelson was hired to paint and paper the old Mammoth Cave Hotel. While there, he became friends with the other workers. He accepted their invitation to visit the cave after-hours and soon became familiar with most of the points of interest in the cave. Later that summer, a special train of soldiers came to visit Mammoth Cave. All of the regular guides were already inside the cave, so manager Henry Ganter asked Nelson to take some of the soldiers on a tour. With a waiter from the dining room assisting him, Nelson successfully guided the group through the cave. Later, Nelson remarked that the soldiers never would know how much of Mammoth Cave they hadn’t seen. After this experience, Nelson continued guiding visitors, as well as making his own exploratory trips. By 1904, he had worked at the cave for 10 years.

The Echo River Boating Accident

On January 17, 1904, Charles Muehlbronner and John Nelson met at Mammoth Cave and became part of its long history. Five women and 13 men from the convention entered Mammoth Cave with guide John Nelson. Besides Muehlbronner and his wife, S. P. Craig came from Pittsburgh. The others lived in Cincinnati, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Boston, and Chicago. The group followed Nelson through the Iron Gate, which guarded the entrance to the cave. They advanced two by two, with Nelson and Senator Muehlbronner in the lead. Nelson described the features of the cave along the way, pausing at Jenny Lind’s Arm Chair and the Bridal Altar. By the time the party reached the banks of the Echo River, they were well-acquainted with one another.

For the most part, Echo River completely filled the cave passage from wall to wall, with occasional mud banks. At some sections of the river, the ceiling height was 100 feet above the boats, while at other places there was hardy enough room for the boats to pass through. On this particular day, the river was high as warm surface temperatures for several days before had melted the snow cover. At the river, the group took their seats, with Nelson standing much like a Venetian gondolier. As their boat glided through the nearly still river, blind fish were seen as flashes of white darting in the frigid water. Finally, the ceiling height decreased so far that Nelson was forced to sit down. As the trip continued, all members of the party had to stoop to avoid hitting their heads on the ceiling. Nelson remarked that it would just be a short time until the cave roof would be higher and that everyone’s discomfort would then be over.
At this point, one of the men suggested that the cave ceiling should be raised so that the next party along would have more headroom. Without warning, he put his back against the cave ceiling as if he could push it up. Instantly, the bow of the boat went under the waterline and the craft filled with water. Every light was extinguished, except for Nelson’s, who held it high above him. Most of the 17 people were now blindly thrashing in the cold, icy water of the Echo River, estimated to be eight to 18 feet deep and 360 feet below the earth’s surface. Startled and terrified cries of help echoed through the passage.5

The boat ride on the Echo River in Mammoth Cave was a popular tour for many years. This photo was taken by Frances Benjaman Johnstone in 1892 and appeared in Demorest’s Family Magazine.

With his light in hand, Nelson tried to reach a nearby mud bank, but before he could do so, several pairs of legs and arms became attached to him. “Turn me loose or we will all drown!” Nelson shouted, but the panicked tourists continued to hold on. Nelson just started to work himself clear when the resounding voice of Senator Muehlbronner was heard above everyone. “Attention! Do as the guide says, or none of us will get out of here alive!” Again, Nelson pleaded for his release, and was relieved when they finally did so. Leaping for the bank, he landed in mud so deep that it went over his shoes. Thrashing though the water, Senator Muehlbronner followed him to the mud bank. Nelson was able to grab the mooring chain of the boat, which was submerged, with most of the passengers still in it or hanging onto its sides. Tugging at the chain, Nelson was able to bring the bow
of the boat close to the mud bank, but he suffered a deep cut on the palm of his hand. He handed his light to Senator Muehlbronner with but one admonition: “Don’t let it go out!” Nelson waded into the water to assist each passenger to the security of the bank. He returned three times until all of them were deposited safely on the muddy but almost solid earth. Strewn on the bank, some passengers were too exhausted to stand and just lay prone in the mud. Others wept openly; a few were heard offering prayers of thanks.6

Nelson, with the help of Senator Muehlbronner and two of the men, bailed the water from the boat and loaded their weary, wet, cold, and mud-caked human cargo. Nelson the guide led his rag-tag troop the two miles back to the cave entrance without further incident.5

The Echo River Club

At the Mammoth Cave Hotel, after a much needed change of clothes, Nelson was summoned to Muehlbronner’s room. There he found all 17 members of the group, and the Echo River Club was born, with membership limited to Nelson and his passengers. Muehlbronner was elected as the club’s lifetime president. At dinner that night, Nelson was toasted as a hero. The group decided to meet annually to remember their harrowing experience.5

Muehlbronner, ever the politician, reported the underground boating mishap to newspapers in Pittsburgh, where the story appeared on the front page the following Monday morning. In each account, the role of Muehlbronner was enhanced, while Nelson’s efforts were secondary. The Pittsburgh Times headline read, “Alleghenian Saves Party of Friends from Drowning in Echo River.”7 Meanwhile, the Pittsburgh Post exclaimed that “many lives would have been lost but for the bravery and strength of Charles A. Muehlbronner,” and reported that the passengers had to scramble over his prostrate body to reach the muddy bank.8 The Pittsburgh Gazette proclaimed, “Charles A. Muehlbronner Saves Seventeen Lives in Mammoth Cave,” and that he used “herculean strength to hold the prow of the sinking boat above the water level.”9 The event even appeared on the front page of the New York Times.10

Epilogue

After the accident, John Nelson resumed his guide duties at Mammoth Cave. At the first anniversary meeting of the Echo River Club in New Orleans, he was presented with a silver medal to honor his courage.11 A scar on the palm of his hand also served as a reminder of his underground adventure on the Echo River. Before retiring from guide duties in 1907, he made 4,540 trips into the cave with 31,807 people. Nelson moved to Glasgow where he worked in the wallpaper and decorating business. Part of his Mammoth Cave collection of Native American artifacts was purchased by the Mammoth Cave National Park Association in 1942 and was presented to the park. Nelson returned to work as a summer guide for many years. John Nelson died on July 31, 1956, at the age of 89. His wife Orpha, honored by “Orpha’s Flower Garden” in Mammoth Cave, had died in 1919. He and his wife lie in the Glasgow Municipal Cemetery.5 The silver medal is still treasured by his family.
After their underground adventure at Mammoth Cave, Charles A. Muehlbronner and his wife continued on their vacation by heading south to Florida, where they spent a month. After returning to Pittsburgh, Muehlbronner continued running his produce business. He served as an officer in several business and non-profit enterprises, but never served again as a state legislator. At the Echo River Club meeting held at the Monongahela House in Pittsburgh on January 11 1907, he was presented a loving cup with the story of the accident engraved on it. Muehlbronner died at his home on Northside on September 8, 1929 at the age of 72. His wife Amelia died in 1943. They are buried in the Union Dale Cemetery in Pittsburgh.

After the accident, Horace Hovey, foremost 19th Century American speleologist, was compelled to alter a statement in his Mammoth Cave guidebook. In 1897 he had written, “We have never yet heard of any mishaps on the rivers,” while in 1912 he wrote, “Once a party of journalists swamped their boat, but were rescued by the courage and presence of mind of both themselves and Nelson, their guide. Such mishaps are rare;” and “the voyage is replete with pleasure” was changed to “the voyage is usually replete with pleasure.”

The Echo River Club continued to meet for annual reunions in various large cities across the country, including Boston and Philadelphia, for several more years. One of the most unusual cave clubs in American spelean history thereafter came to an end.

Acknowledgments: Chuck DeCroix and Colleen O’Conner Olson supplied the authors with references to the Echo River Club. Carolyn Cronk and Rich Rosevear participated in field trips to Pittsburgh or Glasgow to view the tombstones of Muehlbronner and Nelson.
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3. “Muehlbronner was Going to Florida.” *Pittsburgh Gazette*, January 18, 1904.


10. “Tourists Near Death in Mammoth Cave.” *New York Times*, January 18, 1904. This article does not indicate that the accident was caused by horseplay, but states that “the boat got beyond control of the guide for a moment.” It also reports erroneously that the group waited several hours for another boat to rescue them.


16. Joseph Maden, Special for the *Courier-Journal*, manuscript found in the Nelson Family Collection.
Charles A. Muehlbronner and John Nelson:
Heroes of Mammoth Cave's "Echo River Club"

Dean H. Snyder  
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In January, 1904, the annual convention of the League of Commission Merchants was held in Louisville, Kentucky. As part of their activities, a trip was organized to visit Mammoth Cave. During the Echo River tour inside the cave, seventeen passengers on guide John Nelson's boat were dumped into the icy water due to the horseplay of one of the men. Only the quick thinking and heroic action of Nelson and Charles A. Muehlbronner, former Pennsylvania state senator from Pittsburgh, saved the group from drowning. Back at the Mammoth Cave Hotel, the grateful passengers formed the "Echo River Club" with membership limited to those people on the trip. Muehlbronner was elected as President for life. The group held annual reunions in different cities for several years.

Dunbar Cave—Home of the Willapus Wallapus

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Dunbar Cave was one of the first caves to be developed into a viable commercial underground attraction in Tennessee. J. M. Rice, C. P. Warfield, and J. P. Gracey purchased the Dunbar Cave property in 1882 and developed Dunbar Cave into a tourist attraction. Only four years later, Goodspeed’s *History Of Tennessee* (1886) describes the cave in glowing terms. Many of the chambers and formations had already been given their current names. Interestingly, one of the formations in Independence Hall was named the “Willapus Wallapus.”

Many of the other rooms and formations in the cave have names that are easily recognizable from typical commercial operations. However, extensive research has failed to reveal the origin of the name “Willapus Wallapus.” It is believed that this may be some mythical beast described in literature, mythology, or even children’s stories. One person located a comic strip from the 1930’s that ran under the name of the “Willapus Wallapus.” A Google search turns up a record with that name recorded by a Canadian singing group. Despite these leads, no actual description of what a “Willapus Wallapus” is or was has been located!
Old post cards exist that show some of the named features of Dunbar Cave. Unfortunately, no postcard of the Willapus Wallapus has yet been located. If you go to Dunbar Cave keep your eyes open for the “Willapus Wallapus.” He is somewhere in Independence Hall.

**On White Fish and Black Men: Did Stephen Bishop Really Discover The Blind Cave Fish of Mammoth Cave?**

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Some of the chronology of discoveries at Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, is marred by contradictory reports and legends. The first published reference to a blind cave fish (“white fish”) in Mammoth Cave appears to be by Robert Davidson in 1840; however the chronology given in his book is contradictory. We did archival and field research aimed at identifying the first person to have seen (and probably collected) this blind cave fishes at Mammoth Cave. We also researched all the known specimens of the two species of blind cave fishes ever found at Mammoth Cave to see if that information could provide evidence of which of the two species was seen first. We conclude that: (1) Davidson’s chronology in his book is probably wrong and that he did not visit the cave until 1838 or 1839; (2) it is possible that Bishop was the first person sighting the fish, but others cannot be definitely excluded from having been involved in this discovery; and, (3) that although there are two species of blind cave fish that inhabit the waters of Mammoth Cave, the first one sighted was likely *Amblyopsis spelaea*, also the first one to be recognized in the scientific literature. We finally conclude that the facts surrounding Stephen Bishop’s fame need to be further investigated under the perspective of the romantic movement of the mid-nineteenth century that gave rise to the “noble savage” mythology as well as on the perspective of race in the United States prior to the Civil War.

**The Start of the Kentucky Cave Wars**

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Spelean historians are acquainted with the Kentucky cave wars and its many and varied feuds among the show caves of the region competing for the tourist dollars. Previously hidden in obscurity is the start of the cave wars. In 1871, David L. Graves, formerly of near Lebanon, Kentucky, leased the Mammoth Cave Hotel and grounds from the Croghan heirs. He was also the proprietor of the Cave City Hotel, and ran a stage line in opposition to Andy McCoy, an established stage line operator. Rival drivers were faced with assault and battery that went to court in 1873. A monetary judgment failed to solve
the feuds and a few months later shots were fired by both parties, mortally wounding David L. Graves himself, or did it? The stage had been set for factions of the Mammoth Cave area to defend their turf and individual caves for years to come.

Diamond Caverns: Jewel of Kentucky’s Underground

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Salt peter was being mined in Short Cave and Long Cave on the west side of a karst valley near Three Forks, Kentucky during the War of 1812. Beneath this valley was a beautiful cave discovered when landowner Jessie Coats’ slave was lowered down a 35 foot pit on July 14, 1859. He saw sparkling calcite that resembled diamonds.

The Kennedy Bridal Party was the first to enter the new show cave a month later. Joseph Rogers Underwood, a renowned Bowling Green lawyer, senator, and managing trustee of the Mammoth Cave Estate bought Diamond Cave and 156 acres from Jesse Coats. A close relationship existed between Mammoth Cave and Diamond Cave with cave literature describing both caves. Mammoth Cave Railroad opened in 1886 with Diamond a stop.

Amos Fudge of Toledo, Ohio, and his son-in-law, Presbyterian minister Elwood A. Rowsey purchased Diamond in 1924. The fledgling National Speleological Society organized an expedition to Diamond in October, 1942. Dr. Rowsey and his son, Elwood, and Rowsey’s niece, Jan Alexander McDaniel and her husband, Vern on, ran the cave and campground adjacent to Mammoth Cave National Park until 1982. NSS cavers Gary and Susan Berdeaux, Larry and Mayo McCarty, Roger and Carol McClure, Stanley and Kay Sides, and Gordon and Judy Smith purchased the cave on July 7, 1999 to promote the cave as a historic attraction and develop a national show cave museum. Virgin passages have since been discovered and a new cave found on the property.

Preserving the History of Timpanogos Cave National Monument

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Tour caves are often managed for their geological and biological values, historical significances can often be overlooked. The history of Timpanogos Cave National Monument is one of the park’s unique resources and is in need of protection. In the mission statement of the monument, it states the need to preserve the cave as well as its historic value. We are preserving human history by using photography to document current and historical changes, inventorying historic signatures, writing an Administrative History, and maintaining a museum collection and archives.
A 300-year old mystery in spelean history may recently have been solved. In September 1700, the French fur-trader Pierre-Charles Le Sueur reported saltpeter caves along the shores of Lake Pepin, a widening of the Mississippi River, in what is now Minnesota. This is the earliest record of cave saltpeter in the United States. Although these caves have been a topic of discussion at major saltpeter symposia, no one has actually searched for them, to the best of our knowledge. In 2004, small, narrow, crevice caves were identified in Ordovician-age Oneota dolomite outcrops along the river bluffs in Goodhue County, Minnesota. The caves match Le Sueur’s description as well as could be expected given several centuries of slope-wasting processes. While Le Sueur’s journal suggests that he found actual saltpeter, rather than “petre dirt,” no efflorescent salts were seen in the caves. But analyses of floor sediments from these caves and others along the bluffs on both sides of the Mississippi River reveal nitrate concentrations up to over one weight percent—comparable to those of Mammoth Cave.

Grand Caverns, in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley, was known as Amonds Cave when it was discovered by Bernet Weyer on Mathias Amond’s property in 1804. The cave was commercialized in 1806 and has been operating ever since under a variety of names, including Weyers Cave and Grottoes of the Shenandoah. The cave was modified for trail improvements over the years, but most of the current commercial trail was in place by 1808. The cave’s formations and rooms have had a variety of names over the years. Early names were based on parts of a house (the Ballroom and Balcony) and some features were named for political figures (Washington and Jefferson Halls) or religious figures (Solomon’s Hall). The names of the features have varied over time based on the cave owner’s whim and, perhaps, political correctness.
CAVE CLIPPINGS

The following clipping is from the St. Paul Daily News, July 20, 1933. The first sentence is rather confusing, as if words had been omitted. The whole thing seems to be a “shaggy dog story” in reverse, as you’ll see!

Mystery Cave is Unexplored

Mississippi Has Subterranean Wonder

WAYNESBORO, Miss.—Subterranean Mammoth Cave only by the famous Mammoth Cave and Carlsbad caverns, await adventurous explorers at Pitts Cave, three miles northwest of here.

Situated on the Pitts’ plantation, its contrasting natural beauty and legendary treachery provide awesome thrills to visitors. A maze of winding passages, “bottomless” pits, phantomlike stalactites and ghostly vaulted domes add to its mysteries.

Probable unexplored sections of the cave include a long passage said to extend under the Chickasahay river. Tales of men, who entered the long passageway never to return, are told by J. O. Pitts, grandson of the late Dr. J. R. S. Pitts, the original owner.

The Short Route.

Pitts delights in showing visitors through the short route and relating legends connected with the cave.

The entrance on the side of a hill, resembles somewhat the mouth of a gaping prehistoric monster. A flight of steps provided by Mother Nature guides the visitor into a vestibule about 10 feet wide, approximately the same height and extending back into the hill 40 feet.

Forty-five minutes are required to make the trip through the short route. The explorer, after crawling, walking, climbing natural stairs and wedging through narrow passages, finally will exit into another vestibule, similar to the one at the entrance.

Indian Legend.

Pitts said an Indian and his dog once explored the long route. The Indian returned but his dog was lost, according to the story. Returning into the cave in search of the animal, the Indian never was seen again, but the dog finally emerged with all the hair gone from his body. The supposition is that the dog’s hair was removed by some form of gas, which probably killed the Indian.

Later, an uncle of the present Pitts plantation owner equipped himself with a mass of twine and candles; and unwinding the twine explored a portion of the long cave. His string supply ran out when he had gone about three miles and he returned with his eyes and face swollen, probably from the same gas which removed the hair from the Indian’s dog.

All members are invited to contribute material to the “Cave Clippings” department!
The Great Cow Bone Cave Flying Saucer Incident

In the summer of 1972 Father Spinler, former cave guide Fahy Schleusner and I spent over six hours fighting our way over steep hillsides that were thickly covered with raspberry, gooseberry and assorted vines. At that time we were searching Finley Ridge for a pit that a cow had fallen into many years before. As with all cave rumors, this cave was to be at least as big if not bigger than Mammoth Cave. The farmer was said to have lowered a lantern on a rope for at least 90 feet. We finally found the sinkhole, but it was plugged with dirt and logs.

The next weekend found us back at the sinkhole with rope and shovels. Being the hard workers that we were it only took us seven hours to dig the entrance open. In the process of digging we found that more than one cow had fallen into the hole. It even crossed our minds that perhaps a few had been pushed. As we came across each bit of fossil evidence the person doing the digging would fling the bone out while naming that particular part of the cow’s anatomy it was thought to have come from.

After opening the hole we had to make a 60-mile round trip to the supply shack at Mystery Cave for ropes and cable ladder. It was not until 7:30 that night that we arrived back at the cave.

We brought with us Father Spinler’s panel milk truck which was equipped with assorted caving equipment including a portable electric generator, many feet of electrical cord and an electric hammer capable of delivering 40,000 hard blows per minute. The truck could not climb the hill, but we got it to the top by driving up the hill as far as possible, then driving sideways to gain speed before turning up hill again and by repeating the operation in reverse we finally gained the top of the hill.

We found that the entrance was too narrow for us let alone for a cow. Even with Father Spinler’s electric hammer it was after 2:00 that night before we entered the cave. It was a somewhat disappointing 30-foot crevice with 50-100 feet of passage at the bottom. We noted that several cars had stopped on the road about ½ mile away, but did not realize until then just how a white panel truck may have looked from that distance. A large white object with a string of lights along its side was perched at the top of a hill that no vehicle could possibly climb. Add to this the roar of the gas powered generator, the sound of 40,000 hammer blows per minute, and strange figures with helmets and lights on their heads and you have the country party lines buzzing with excitement. As we passed the figures standing along the road we grinned at them as only tired, dirty, and contented cavers could do under the circumstances.

Roger Kehret, *Minnesota Caves of History and Legend.*
Doug Plemons (NSS#22889) is working on updating the United States Saltpeter Cave Survey, a list of all known, suspected, or lost saltpeter caves. Results of the last survey were published more than a decade ago in the *Journal* (Plemons 1995).

Doug requests that you send him the names and locations (by county) of any caves that you know or suspect were mined for saltpeter, along with any additional pertinent information, even if the cave is presently inaccessible. All who help with the survey will be properly credited in the resulting publication.

Specifically, Doug is looking to clarify information from the earlier list, such as the saltpeter caves of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Missouri, and Ohio. Many caves are listed there simply as “saltpeter cave,” and he suspects that many of them are repeats.

Doug’s address is: Doug Plemons, Fairlight Knoll, Sevierville, TN 37862

His email address is: [ijmusicman@yahoo.com](mailto:ijmusicman@yahoo.com)

**REFERENCE**

This is a call for presentations at the Spelean History Session at the 2006 NSS Convention in Bellingham, Washington. The session provides a good way to tell other spelean historians what you are doing and to solicit input to assist your research.

The session is informal and the audience friendly. There are no requirements to provide fancy visual aids or to provide a written paper (other than an abstract to include in the Convention Program). Of course, the Journal of Spelean History would be glad to consider any resulting full-length papers for publication.

Presentations can be on any topic related to spelean history, including historical exploration of caves, show caves, early cave science, human use of caves, etc.

The session will be chaired by Dean Snyder. However, Dean has rather erratic e-mail so abstracts should be sent to Bob Hoke, who will get them to Dean and to the person responsible for the Convention Program. In addition to the abstract, Hoke (or Dean) will need to know the amount of time you will require and what audio-visual equipment is necessary. Abstracts can be e-mailed to Hoke at bob@hoke.net or mailed to 6304 Kaybro Street, Laurel, MD 20707.

Abstracts are limited to 250 words. Be sure your abstract is a summary of results and conclusions, not merely an advertisement for what you are going to talk about. Properly written abstracts will be printed in the Journal of Spelean History and the Journal of Cave and Karst Studies.

If you have questions about the History Session, contact Dean Snyder or Bob Hoke. Dean's address is 3213 Fairland Drive, Schnecksville, PA 18078. His phone number is (610) 799-5030. Bob Hoke's phone is (301) 725-5877. The deadline for receiving abstracts will likely be around June 15, but the exact deadline has not been set by the convention staff.