Cave Post Offices
in
Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio

by Thomas Lera

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The American Spelean History Association

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May, 2018

Cover

Upper image: Folded letter with John McCreery postmaster manuscript postmark and “10” dated Nov 2. The letter inside is dated 1850.

Lower image: Registered letter with circular, 26mm date 10/03/1884, handstamp and target killers.
Cave Post Offices in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio

Thomas Lera

When reorganizing my collection of United States cave postmarks, I was inspired to research the history of existing and discontinued cave post offices, which included those in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. This is one of the monographs which updates and expands on my 2011 book Cave Post Offices, published by Cave Books.

The major source of information regarding the postmasters and post offices can be found at:

- Reports of Site Locations 1837 – 1950, from Records Group 28 – Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio


Historical maps were found at the University of Texas Libraries, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/topo/virginia/, Red arrows point to the location of the post office.

I would like to thank Robert Hoke of the American Spelean History Association, who provided comments on the organization and layout, and posted it on their website (http://www.cavehistory.org), Baasil Wilder, NPM Librarian, for his research on Illinois and Indiana Post Offices, and Sandy Fitzgerald who edited the article. I appreciate all their help.

If after reading this monograph, if you have postmarks of these caves in your collection, I would appreciate a scan sent to me at: frontier2@erols.com.
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CAVE, ILLINOIS POST OFFICE
(09/27/1847 – 03/26/1879)

On 09/27/1847 in the town of Cave (figs. 1 - 3 left) John McCreery was appointed postmaster. Then on 03/26/1879 the name was changed to Thompsonville with Samuel Hamilton as postmaster. At that time, the Post Office was about 175 feet from the Belleville & Eldorado Railroad train station which is now a stop on the Illinois Central Railroad.

Figure 1. Portion of the 1863 Map of the State of Illinois showing the Cave Post Office in Franklin County.¹

Figure 2. Portion of the 1874 Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky Map showing “Cave” on the road from Pinckneyville in Perry County, next county to the west.²
The Belleville & Eldorado Railroad (fig. 3 right) was chartered on 02/22/1861. By 1877, the line reached West End from Eldorado. Later it became the St. Louis Alton and Terra Haute Railroad, which later merged into the Illinois Central Railroad. In 1879, the town of Cave served about 400 residents, and by 1904, Thompsonville, postmaster Joseph A. Hogan stated it served about 3000.

Figure 4 shows a 1850 manuscript postmark from Cave, Illinois.

Figure 4. Folded letter with John McCreery postmaster manuscript postmark and “10” dated Nov 2. The letter inside is dated 1850.
Cave-in-Rock (previously known on maps and in literature as Rock Haven, Rock Cave, Rock and Cave, Rock in Cave, Big Cave, Ford’s Ferry, and Robbins Ferry), is now located in Hardin County on the north bank of the Ohio River in southeastern Illinois (figs. 5 – 9). A lot of local history is associated with the village, mainly revolving around the cave from which the town got its name.
In 1814, Lewis Barker bought the section of land where Cave-in-Rock is located. He planned to build a new road to connect with Barker's Ferry and the Kaskaskia Road. This road, which ran through Crittenden and Hardin Counties, Kentucky, would become Ford's Ferry Road. In its early days, it was the main road across this section of the country for settlers travelling from the Kentucky.

A plat map of Cave-in-Rock was recorded in 1839, but the village was not incorporated until 1901. Early records often refer to the town as Rock and Cave, however in 1849, the post office changed the name to Cave-in-Rock. The village was in Pope County until 1839, when it became part of Hardin County which was created from the counties of Pope and Gallatin.

Until the late 1870s, the main street of Cave-in-Rock was Water Street, which ran in front of the businesses facing the Ohio River. However, when the town burned, the businesses were rebuilt facing away from the river, and Water Street became Main Street, where the post office is still located. Mail was delivered six times a week by packet boat as late as 1903.

Figure 7. Portion of the 1839 Map of Illinois and Missouri exhibiting the Post Offices, Post Roads, Canals, Railroads, etc. showing Rock in Cave

Figure 8. Portion of the 1884 “Southern Part” of the Post Route Map of the States of Illinois, Iowa and Missouri showing Cave in Rock in Hardin County
Figure 9. Portion of the 1891 Post Route Map of the States of Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri showing Cave in Rock post office. The black line along the Ohio River indicates six days a week delivery, the blue line three times a week.⁸

### POSTMASTERS⁹

**CAVE IN ROCK POST OFFICE**  
**HARDIN COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date Appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rock and Cave Post Office (listed in <em>Official Register</em>)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John W. Herod</td>
<td></td>
<td>1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel Stokley</td>
<td></td>
<td>1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rock Cave Post Office (listed in <em>Official Register</em>)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wingate</td>
<td></td>
<td>1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rock and Cave (listed in <em>Official Register</em>)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wingate (Gallatin County)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wingate (Hardin County)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Brents</td>
<td></td>
<td>09/30/1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George P. Evertson</td>
<td></td>
<td>08/12/1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew J. Love</td>
<td></td>
<td>06/08/1847</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CAVE IN ROCK Post Office 10/24/1849

Ross Latimer 10/24/1849
William H. Brent 04/21/1852
Commodore D. Miller 12/02/1854
Isiah Gustine 08/10/1861
Commodore D. Miller 01/02/1862
Nelly P. Miller 04/22/1863
Moses L. Shelby 04/05/1865
John Mitchell 08/05/1865
John H. Caldwell 03/28/1869
John D. Goodwin 09/29/1871
John Mitchell 02/22/1878
John Jack 10/22/1885
Daniel W. Pell 05/24/1889
Virginia Frayser 05/23/1893
Daniel W. Pell 06/29/1897
Harry Frayser 03/14/1914
Ira A. Coltrin Postmaster 03/22/1922
Richard Tyer Postmaster 06/16/1926
William C. Herrin Acting Postmaster 01/13/1936 (Acting); 06/17/1936 (Permanent)
Mrs. Nigel B. Herrin Acting Postmaster 05/11/1943 (Acting); 05/10/1944 (Permanent)
John Warren Hill Acting Postmaster 08/29/1951 (Acting); 06/19/1952 (Permanent)
Henry W. Gustin Acting Postmaster 12/08/1964
Gordon R. McDowell Postmaster 10/05/1967
Shirley Lewis Officer-In-Charge 12/23/1994
John M. Fuller Postmaster 07/22/1995
Ann Johnson Officer-In-Charge 08/14/2000
Donna Kay Drone Officer-In-Charge 12/15/2000
Pamela L. Hicks Postmaster 02/24/2001
Frances Hardin Officer-In-Charge 01/06/2012
Debra Cubley Officer-In-Charge 07/25/2012

Converted to a Remotely Managed Post Office under the direction of the postmaster of the Elizabethtown Post Office on 01/26/2013.

Figures 10 – 16 show manuscript postmarks, handstamps, and machine cancellations used by the postmasters.

Figure 10. Cave in Rock, Illinois, 1868 manuscript postmark with pen cancel.\(^\text{10}\)
Figure 11. Registered letter with circular, 26mm date 10/03/1884, handstamp and target killers.

Figure 12. Registered letter with circular, 27½ mm date 07/05/1885, handstamp and target killers.
Figure 13. Circular, 30mm date 07/02/1906, duplex handstamp cancellation.

Figure 14. Type D 4-Bar, 30mm cancellation with san serif letters.
The Cave Valley post office was in Section 16 T10S, R2W in Jackson County, two and one-half miles northeast from Pomona, three miles southeast from Etherton by Cave Creek, and two hundred feet from the Mobile and Ohio Railroad tracks (figs. 17 & 18). There was a natural bridge and saltpeter cave nearby. Mrs. Cassie Robertson was the postmaster for 17 months.

There are no known postmarks from this post office.
Figure 17. Portion of the 1895 post route map of the State of Illinois showing approximate location of Cave Valley post office. ¹¹

Figure 18. Portion of Pomona Illinois Topographic Sheets showing the approximate location of Cave Valley post office. ¹²
ALUM CAVE, INDIANA POST OFFICE
(01/22/1884 – 05/31/1905)

Indiana town name information is limited; however, most of their names were derived from nearby natural features. While detailed information on the post offices and postmasters can be found in *The Postal History of Indiana*, a brief synopsis follows.\(^\text{13}\)

Alum Cave post office was established in Clay County on 01/22/1884, with Milton C. Dell as its first postmaster. The county boundaries eventually changed, and Alum Cave became part of Sullivan County. The post office was located four and one-half miles east of Hymera and five miles southwest of Coffee (figs. 19 & 20).

The town was owned by the New Pittsburg Coal & Coke Company and consisted of a post office, depot and railroad, which was a branch of the Evansville and Terra Haute Railroad, hotel, school, stores and saloons. The railroad named the town after Alum Cave named after the spring in the cave which tasted like salty alum water.\(^\text{14}\)

Figures 21 & 22 show handstamp cancellations used by Alum Cave postmasters.

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Figure 19. Portion of the 1884 post route map of the States of Ohio and Indiana showing Alum Cave in Clay County. The dashed line indicates “Special Mail Supply” from Shelburn three times a week.\(^\text{15}\)
Figure 20. Portion of the 1891 post route map of the States of Ohio and Indiana showing Alum Cave. The black line indicates six day a week mail delivery.\textsuperscript{16}

**POSTMASTERS**

**ALUM CAVE POST OFFICE**

**CLAY and SULLIVAN COUNTIES, INDIANA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milton C. Dell</td>
<td>01/22/1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorenzo D. Griffith</td>
<td>02/25/1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discontinued mail to Hymera 11/28/1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John H. Plew</td>
<td>03/13/1888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard D. Connor</td>
<td>04/26/1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John W. Davis</td>
<td>07/20/1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Gambill</td>
<td>06/24/1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George F. Schuberth</td>
<td>10/05/1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discontinued 05/09/1905 with mail to Lewis, effective 05/31/1905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21. Partial circular, 20 ½ mm date 03/13/1895, with cork obliteration.
Figure 22. Two Alum Cave circular date handstamps, left is 1890, right is 1895. (courtesy of Arthur Handley and Indiana Postal History Society, Decatur County, p. 22)

CAVE SPRING, INDIANA POST OFFICE
(06/19/1854 – 8/15/1862)

Cave Spring post office in Decatur County was established 06/19/1854, in Decatur County with Edward A. Jocelyn as postmaster. Its location is not known, since it is listed in Decatur County, but the Cave Spring Cemetery is in Jennings County (fig. 23).

There are no known postmarks.

Figure 23. On both maps, the left red arrow shows the location of Cave Spring Cemetery in Jennings County, the right red arrow is the probable location of the town of Cave Springs.
POSTMASTERS
CAVE SPRING POST OFFICE
DECATUR COUNTY, INDIANA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edward A. Jocelyn</td>
<td>06/19/1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Pratt</td>
<td>11/29/1856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luther F.B. Jocelyn</td>
<td>11/11/1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathanial J. Loyd</td>
<td>11/28/1859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Pratt</td>
<td>08/07/1861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discontinued 8/15/1862</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KING’S CAVE, INDIANA POST OFFICE
(06/29/1870 – 07/10/1873)

On June 22, 1870, Acting Postmaster William H. Pfrimmer completed the site survey of King’s Cave post office in Harrison County. It was established 08/29/1870 and would be on mail route 12108 four miles east of Corydon and five miles west of Lanesville. The Kings Cave Quarries were east of the town noted for their light-gray limestone used in buildings. Some maps indicate the town; other times the quarries (figs. 24 – 26).

There are no known postmarks.

Figure 24. Portion of the 1876 Map of Harrison County showing the approximate location of King’s Cave post office.18
Figure 25. King’s Creek at the end of a spur of the Louisville, New Albany and Corydon Railroad.\textsuperscript{19}

Figure 26. Portion of the 1899 \textit{Map of Indiana}, from Cram’s \textit{Standard American Railway System Atlas}, showing Kings Cave Quarries at the end of the Louisville New Albany and Corydon Railroad (Number 53).

**POSTMASTERS**

**KING’S CAVE POST OFFICE**

**HARRISON COUNTY, INDIANA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William H. Pfrimmer</td>
<td>06/29/1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel B. McRae</td>
<td>07/15/1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discontinued 07/10/1873</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPRING CAVE, INDIANA POST OFFICE
(06/15/1866 – 11/12/1866)

The site survey for the Spring Cave post office in Owen County on 06/04/1866, was completed by James F. Nicholas, who was to be its only postmaster. The post office was established 06/15/1866 and located on mail route 12105 between New Albany and Michigan City, four miles southeast of Quincy, and four miles north of Gosport (figs. 27 & 28). It is possible it was a summer post office for a resort at Spring Cave. The post office serviced 60 families in a two-mile radius; however, it was closed November 12, 1866.

There are no known postmarks.

Figure 27. 1875 Map of Owen County, showing Cave Spring and Cave Station on the Louisville, New Albany and Chicago Railroad. 20
Ash Cave derives its name from a great quantity of ashes which littered the floor of a nearby rock shelter until as late as 1886. It was thought the ashes were the remains of Indian campfires which had accumulated over centuries, as excavations of the rock shelter floor have revealed arrows, flint artifacts, pottery, and numerous bones of animals that would have been consumed by Indian occupants of the cave.

The post office (fig. 29) opened 05/26/1857 with Edward M Brown postmaster, and it was discontinued 07/18/1866.

At the turn of the century the town was located at the end of the Columbus, Wellston and Southern Railroad line, and received their mail from South Bloomington. In 1924, the State of Ohio purchased the first parcel of 146 acres of what would later become Hocking Hills State Park, which included Ash Cave.

There are no known postmarks from the Ash Cave Post Office.
Figure 29. Portion of the 1902 Rand McNally & Company Map of Hocking County showing Ash Cave.

POSTMASTERS
ASH CAVE POST OFFICE
HOCKING COUNTY, OHIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date Appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edward M. Brown</td>
<td>Postmaster</td>
<td>05/26/1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Martha Jane Brown</td>
<td>Postmaster</td>
<td>12/12/1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Parrish</td>
<td>Postmaster</td>
<td>04/22/1865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discontinued 07/18/1866

2 David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, Taintor Brothers and Merrill. 1874 Portion of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky Map showing “Cave” on the road from Pinckneyville in Perry County, next county to the west.
5 Burr, David H. Portion of the State of Illinois Map showing Pope County and Rock Cave” David Rumsey Historical Map Collection from the A New Universal Atlas published in 1840. (accessed May 7, 2018).
6 Burr, David H. portion of the 1839 Map of Illinois and Missouri exhibiting the Post Offices, Post Roads, Canals, Railroads, etc. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection. (accessed May 7, 2018).
Portion of the 1884 “Southern Part” of the Post Route Map of the States of Illinois, Iowa and Missouri showing Cave in Rock in Hardin County from the Osher Sheet Map Collection. [link](http://www.oshermaps.org/map/47038.0001) (accessed May 7, 2018).


Postmaster Appointments. Accessed May 2, 2018; year dates are from the Official Register; month, day, and year dates are from U.S. Postal Bulletin and U.S. Postal Laws and Regulations. From the United States Postal Service, a list of the postmasters, acting postmasters, and officers-in-charge reported to have served at that post office. Acting postmasters and officers-in-charge are listed only when they served in between postmasters [link](https://webpmt.usps.gov/pmt002.cfm) (accessed May 7, 2018).


Email communication with Dr. Richard Leonard regarding the Mobile & Ohio Rail Road, [link](http://www.railarchive.net), and Topoquest Map Viewer USGS map Pomona IL. N37.66073° W 89.33092° Zoom 8 meteres per pixel. Cave Valley is in Jackson County at 37.65866° W89.33231° dated 05/07/2018.


Harris, Walter, 1936, “Ghost Town of Alum Cave or New Pittsburgh Coal & Coke Company” Federal Writer’s Project, Ninth District. pp.2-5.

Roeser, C. (Charles), and United States. Post Office Dept. *1894 Post route map of the states of Ohio and Indiana* with adjacent parts of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Kentucky, and West Virginia showing post offices, with the intermediate distances between them and mail routes. [link](http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps996.html) (accessed May 5, 2018).


