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 of Spelean History

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, salt peter and other mineral extraction, and show cave development. Members are invited to contribute material and to comment on published material. ASHA assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

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JSH began publication in 1968 and copies of all back issues are available, although many early issues are reprints. The cost (postage included) is $2.50 per copy for a single copy, $2 per copy for 2-3 copies, $1.50 per copy for 4-7 copies, or $1 per copy for 8 or more copies. Order back issues from the treasurer. A complete index to JSH is available at the ASHA website, www.cavehistory.org.

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Cover: Early twentieth century visitors pose in the “Main Room” of Mark Twain Cave in Hannibal, Missouri. (From a postcard published for S.H. Knox and Company)
MARK TWAIN CAVE'S OLIVER

Joe Light

The ground was soggy and muddy from the previous day’s rain and the air was crisp and barely above freezing as Oliver Krafft, 23, a barber from St. Louis, Missouri, entered Mark Twain Cave [Weather]. With candle in hand, like thousands before him, he would enter, explore, and leave his mark. During his adventure, Oliver would take his candle and with its sooty smoke, smudge his name, date, and city of origin across the ceiling. From this simple smoky script, the story of Oliver Krafft can be told.
Three scribbles, one of thousands in Mark Twain Cave, represent incredible snapshots of history. Oliver Krafft's name is the first listed. The other visitors with Oliver remain unknown. The date and city information allowed Oliver's history to be researched and retold. (Photo by the author, September 14, 2013)

Oliver’s journey begins on June 2, 1902, 23 years before the cave trip, when he was born. Oliver’s birth, like most births of the time, was probably at home [University of Houston]. The 1920 Census tells us that Oliver was born in Missouri to August and Isabel Krafft. Isabel was a naturalized German immigrant who arrived in 1869. August Krafft was born in Missouri and he was 37 years old when Oliver was born. In addition to fathering, August Krafft would set Oliver on his profession. He and Oliver were both barbers. [Census 1920].

The young barber’s journey from St. Louis to Hannibal would have probably been more of an adventure than exploring the cave. To get to Hannibal Missouri, he would have had two options. He could have taken the Chicago – Burlington and Quincy Railroad to Hannibal, for its tracks paralleled the Mississippi River, but this was 1928. This was the roaring twenties.

More than likely, Oliver would embrace the roaring twenties and its symbol of attainment, the car. A year before Oliver’s trip, the 15th millionth Model T rolled off the assembly line [Bourne 116-117]. Cars and the exuberance of the decade created the age of car tourism [Bourne 119].

Whether Oliver was the driver or passenger, chaos reigned on the roads. There was no uniformity, and a road could change mile by mile [McNichol]. The roads were so chaotic, that 20,000 people died on the nation’s roads in the mid-1920s. In reality, this number would have been significantly higher, but only eight states were tracking road fatalities at the time [McNichol 72]. Getting Oliver to Mark Twain Cave from St. Louis would have been significantly more dangerous than exploring it.
This map from 1928, shows the collection of road types that Oliver would have endured on his trip to Hannibal from St. Louis. He would have driven on concrete, gravel, all weather, and not all weather roads. The not all weather roads were probably a polite way of stating that vehicles would be consuming mud.  

1928 Map of the State Road System of Missouri, compliments of Modot.org.  

For Oliver to obtain a car, it would be simple. The 1923 City Directory for St. Louis lists a couple of car manufacturers, dozens of car sellers, many used car sellers and hundreds of service stations [Directory]. Cars were everywhere in the 1920s, and the decade saw car ownership triple. The growth and social energy the cars represented mirrored the decade of exuberance. They were new, fast, and liberating [Kyvig 27].

Beside cars transforming the landscape, the roaring 20’s were altering the social landscape that Oliver lived in. By the time that Oliver stood in Mark Twain Cave, his country had seen vast changes in the preceding years. Oliver was now living in a world where alcohol had been made illegal and a massive criminal infrastructure had risen around it. The decade had granted women the right to vote, and electricity, a relatively new novelty, would be made available to 80% of the population by the end of the decade. A madman in Europe had written Mein Kampf, and set the stage for the next
world war. The decade would pit religion against science in the Scopes Monkey Trial [Kyvig 3-4, 27] [Wikipedia].

Whether Oliver was experiencing the fast and changing times of 1928 by himself is a little fuzzy. Seven years before visiting the cave, he had married Ellen Garlock [Missouri]. Ellen was from Macon, Missouri. Like Oliver, her father, Lucian Garlock, was a native born Missourian, while her mother was an immigrant [Census 1910].

Why wasn’t Ellen Krafft’s name written next to Oliver on the ceiling of the cave? Did she elect not to write it? The reason Ellen’s name is not listed was her marriage to Oliver was probably already over by the time he visited the cave [Census St. Louis 1930].

This photo shows what the entrance to Mark Twain Cave would have looked like when Oliver visited it in 1925. (From a real photo postcard)

The 1930 Census, two years after Oliver’s trip to Mark Twain Cave, shows Ellen Krafft living with her mother and her status is divorced [Census St. Louis 1930]. Oliver’s marriage was over and with it went any chance of Oliver returning to Mark
Twain Cave. For with the divorce, Oliver moved to Detroit in 1930 and he is listed as living with his sister as single man. [Census Michigan 1930].

Although a divorce would explain why Ellen’s name is not immortalized in the ceiling of Mark Twain Cave, there could have been another name etched upon the ceiling, Oliver’s and Ellen’s son, Oliver Jr. He was born one year after his parent’s marriage in 1922. Oliver Jr. would have been three years old, when his father visited the cave [Vital].

The cave and the surrounding land would have been kid friendly. In 1923, five years before Oliver’s trip, the cave and land were purchased by Judge E Cameron. He improved the grounds, constructed several buildings and had a daily guide at the cave [Weaver 43].

If the divorce happened prior to Oliver’s visit to the cave, he probably did not have custody of Oliver Jr. Little Oliver would have been living with his mother and grandmother by 1930 [Census St. Louis 1930]. In fact Oliver Jr. would never have the chance to visit Mark Twain Cave. In 1934, at the age of 12, Oliver Jr. would die. The cause of death is listed as meningitis and encephalitis [Vital]. This form of death had to be horribly tragic for young Oliver Jr. A viral or bacterial infection migrated from his blood and infected his brain and spinal cord. The resulting inflammation would have caused nerve cells to die and it would have been a slow ghastly death [Light] [NIH].

The death of Oliver’s son and all the events in Oliver’s life built the story of Oliver Krafft, but Oliver’s story is just one story, for the walls and ceiling of Mark Twain Cave are covered with thousands of names, and each name has a story to tell.

Works Cited


Census 1910. Missouri Census Roll T624_796. Page 12A.


Census 1930 St. Louis. Missouri Census Roll Sheet 3A. Pg 223.


ACCOUNT OF A MYSTERIOUS CAVE NEAR CARTHAGE, TENNESSEE

Donald B. Ball and John C. Waggoner, Jr.

For the public at large, caves can evoke any number of feelings ranging from romantic adventure to abject horror. The following article which appeared in the August 14, 1868, issue of the *Bristol News* (Bristol News 1868) abundantly exemplifies the latter reaction:

Strange Discovery

A gentleman from the neighborhood of Carthage, Tenn., gives us some particulars connected with the recent discovery of a robber’s cave on the river bank, a few miles distant from that place, which have not been hitherto published. He says the discovery was first made by a party of small boys, who were bathing or fishing on the bank of the river opposite the cave. Their attention was attracted by seeing baskets lowered by means of ropes from the rocks above. When they observed this, the children concealed themselves and patiently watched for further developments. The baskets continued to ascend
and descend, finally when night was nearly come, a suspicious looking man came out of the cave, got into one of the baskets, and was drawn to the top of the precipice. That night the boys imparted this information to men in the neighborhood, and early the next morning the place was besieged by persons anxious to learn something further about this most extraordinary place. Most of these persons were armed and ready for any sort of wild adventure. Upon removing a pile of old logs, a large opening in the rocks was discovered, and into this place a party of the men at once ventured to go, while others remained outside on watch. Those who went in found that the opening led into an immense cave, of the existence of which nothing was previously known by the honest people in that locality. This cavern the men explored but a short distance until they came to a point which had evidently been used as a human habitation, and, horrible as it may seem, was still the home of a human creature. After finding a few articles of clothing, some washing utensils, a couple of fine bed-quilts, a mattress, and three or four old guns, they were startled by the groans of a human voice, coming from a dark recess in the cavern.

The men determined upon sifting the mystery to its very bottom, went with a light in the direction of the sound, and who can imagine their horror upon finding the emaciated and almost lifeless form of a man stretched upon a heap of straw, and securely tied with ropes. He was immediately taken from his terrible prison-house, and conveyed to the residence of Mr. Owen Long, three miles distant from the cave, where he was at once provided with medical attention, and the nourishments his condition required. As yet it has not been possible to get from him the awful secret of his grave-like prison house. He speaks but little, and appears to be either unable or unwilling to give any further account than is above furnished. Other developments are anxiously looked for, and when received shall be speedily laid before our readers.—Nashville Gazette, 25th ult.

Despite the editorial promise that “other developments” would be “speedily” reported, efforts to date have failed to locate any subsequent news items relating to either this cave or the fate of the unfortunate man held prisoner there. Working within the constraints of the information appearing in the 1868 news account simultaneously provides some leads while requiring that certain assumptions be made. As the article clearly states that the cave was in the “neighborhood of Carthage, Tenn.,” the first working assumption is that this formation was located in Smith County, Tennessee, of which Carthage is the county seat. In light of Smith County having two sizable rivers (the Cumberland which general flows from east to west and the Caney Fork, a substantial tributary to the Cumberland, which flows from south to north) within its borders one might further assume that the referenced river is the Cumberland, the larger of the two. A total of 16 caves have been formally reported in Smith County by Barr (1961:416-430) and Matthews (1971:85, 87-91) and it is known that yet additional caves exist within the county. Taking into account that all of the caves reported by Matthews (1971) are situated in the southeastern corner of the county, it is possible (but by no means confirmed) that the “robber’s cave” reported in 1868 might be one of the
sizable caves recorded in Barr (1961). None of these, however, appear to be accessible only by means of entering a mouth situated on a vertical (or nearly so) bluff.

Other potentially productive sources remained to be investigated related to identifying the location of “...the residence of Mr. Owen Long, three miles distant from the cave.” As it seemed reasonable that Mr. Long might have been interred in a cemetery near his home—a not uncommon nineteenth century practice in this rural area—an examination of cemetery records for Smith County (Key et al. 1984; Smith County Historical and Genealogical Society 1983) was undertaken. This proved to be less than fruitful with but three individuals with the surname Long being recorded. One of these was a Nancy Ellen Long (July 7, 1947-January 14, 1964) buried in Carthage whereas two, Nin and Tom Long, were infants interred in undated graves near the Dixon Springs community in western Smith County (Smith County Historical and Genealogical Society 1983). A review of the 1860 and 1870 Federal census records for Smith County (accessible at: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~tnsmith/tngeo/census.htm>) also proved to be unrewarding. The 1860 census recorded several individuals with the surname Long (Amanda, C. S., Hamilton, Mary J., Sarah, Sarah D., Stephen, Susan, Thaddeus, and Wm. A.) but no one with the given name of Owen. The 1870 census listed no individuals with the surname of Long. Likewise, no mention of an Owen Long has yet been discovered in records filed with the Smith County Archives in Carthage.

Pending further investigation, three interpretive options emerge: this engaging and sensational story was no more than a journalistic hoax concocted by an imaginative reporter; it was an event which occurred in a neighboring county and was erroneously attributed to the “neighborhood of Carthage, Tenn.”; or it actually had some validity as an incident which unfolded in the hill country of Smith County. Available evidence suggests that this tale was most likely a creative fabrication with no basis in reality.

REFERENCES CITED


Bristol News, 1868. Strange Discovery. *Bristol News*, Friday, August 14, 1868, pg. 1, col. 7. Bristol, Tennessee and Virginia. This same article titled “A Dismal Cave and Its Fearful Developments” appeared in the July 30, 1868, edition of the Memphis *Public Ledger* (Public Ledger 1868). The original article credited to the *Nashville Gazette* has not been verified.


KARL GORDON HENIZE AND HIS LIFE OF ADVENTURE

Charles A. Lundquist

Youthful Experience

Karl Gordon Henize was born on October 17, 1926 near Cincinnati, Ohio and spent his youth there on a farm. In his own words, he “grew up exploring the hills and valleys of Plainville and Marimont.” His parent’s property covered a hill top above the Little Miami River. He was eight years old when his father died. Thereafter, he had to help his mother and older brother, Wilson, operate the farm during the 1930s Depression. He reached high school age during the height of World War II. Before completing high school, he accelerated his education by enlisting in the Navy’s V-12 Program which took him initially to Dennison University in Cincinnati and later to the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. After the war ended, he continued at the University of Virginia.

NSS Membership

Another student in Charlottesville was Terry Tarkington. In an obituary for Karl, Terry tells how they became cavers and National Speleological Society (NSS) members: “Hitchhiking up the Shenandoah Valley one weekend, he (Karl) was picked up by Bill Stephenson and other cavers from Washington, D.C. who were going caving in Virginia. He was invited to go along for the trip, and did so. His enthusiastic report of the trip to several of his friends resulted in the formation of the University of Virginia Grotto.”

In those early days of the Society, the membership record was kept in a handwritten logbook. A section of the logbook page with entries for Karl and Terry is copied in Figure 1.
Bill Stevenson is well known as the first President of the NSS. Thus, Karl Henize had the distinctions of being recruited into caving by the first NSS President and of being a founding member of the U of VA Grotto. In Karl’s obituary, Terry Tarkington goes on to describe the situation during the first years of the Grotto: “Karl was a very active caver during this period when many climbing and caving techniques were being developed”. This assertion is verified by items in the NSS Newsletter. One is an article titled, “Charlottesville Grotto Growing Fast, Taking Many Field Trips, Meets Twice Monthly” in the May 1947 Newsletter has a paragraph, “The Grotto has also taken special interest in Gibson’s Hole Cave, Augusta Co., VA, says Karl Henize, unofficial reporter for the group. ‘The stream channel leading off to the north is in the form of a cleft 10 ft. wide and some 60 to 70 ft. high – an impressive sight. It can be navigated by boat back about 200 ft. where it narrows to a width of one foot. Soundings in the rear portion indicate a depth of over 50 ft. . . . By virtue of a one-man, homemade raft and some chilly swimming, three members (Martin Votav, Terry Tarkington and Karl Hinize) reached the rear and climbed the walls. Near the top a heretofore unsuspected part of the cave was discovered’. . . .”

The July 1947 Newsletter has another item about the Charlottesville Grotto that is reproduced in Figure 2. And still later in 1947, another item mentions Karl, Figure 3.
By 1948, Karl had expanded his range of caving activities. Paul Damon in his review of caving in America for the 50th anniversary of the NSS, notes that “Pete Neely and Bill Halliday first explored Liburn Cave, California in 1948, along with Fusselle, Karl Henize and other California cavers.” In a 2015 private communication, William Halliday relates “I first knew Karl when he was briefly doing something at Mount Wilson Observatory in 1948. We both went on the grotto’s (Southern California Grotto) first trip to Lilburn Cave.” Much later, when Karl was at the Johnson Space Center, Bill recontacted Karl and they had brief correspondence. Still later, after Karl’s death, Bill wrote a memorial for Karl published in the South California Grotto newsletter, *The Explorer*s.

Also in 1948, Karl completed his studies at the University of Virginia, receiving an MS in astronomy, having received a BS in mathematics in 1947. He had now become a professional astronomer with caving as one hobby.

**University of Michigan**

Karl’s life of Adventure next took him to South Africa. In 1948 he was employed by the University of Michigan to work at the Lamont-Hussey Observatory in Bloemfontain to make spectral observations of objects in the southern sky. This was a three year assignment. In his own words¹ while in Africa, he “worked, played rugby, organized a small baseball league, made friends, explored, hiked and generally had a good time”.

Upon returning to the United States in 1951, he became a candidate for a Ph.D. in astronomy at the University of Michigan. The astronomical survey plates of the
southern sky that he had taken provided data for his thesis and also a basis much of his later life’s work.

While in Michigan, in summer 1952, Karl met his future wife, Caroline Rose Weber. They were married in 1953. Karl completed his Ph.D. in 1954 and accepted a post-doctorate position at Mount Wilson Observatory in Pasadena, California. While Karl and Caroline were in California, Caroline became a member of the NSS, #3331 on October 1, 1955.

Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory

As the July 1, 1957 start of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) loomed in the near future, on January 1, 1956 the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) in Cambridge, Massachusetts was funded to establish a world-wide network of cameras to photographically track artificial satellites launched during the IGY by the U.S. and other nations. Establishing such a network in only 18 months was a daunting task. The newly appointed Director of SAO, Dr. Fred L Whipple sought to recruit an astronomer with international experience to lead the urgent deployment of the cameras. In September 1956, Dr. Karl Henize was appointed as astronomer in charge of the network of now-named Baker-Nunn cameras for their designers.9

Karl was now engaged in a new adventure, the start of the Space Age. When Sputnik 1 was launched in October 1957, only one Baker-Nunn camera was completed, still at its manufacturer in South Pasadena. An observing team led by Karl operated the camera there in October to get its first photographs of Sputnik 1.

While Karl was working in Cambridge, he and Caroline changed their NSS address to that of SAO, at 60 Garden Street, Cambridge.

Northwestern University

In 1959, Karl accepted a position as Associate Professor of Astronomy at Northwestern University in Illinois and at its Dearborn Observatory. He was promoted to full Professor in 1964. While at Northwestern, Karl continued his involvement in space activities. During the Gemini manned missions X, XI and XII in 1966, he was the Principal Investigator for Experiment S013.

NASA Astronaut

After earlier being told he was too old to be an astronaut, in August 1967 Karl was selected as a NASA scientist-astronaut at age 40.10 Following an initial five months at the Johnson Space Center (JSC) in Houston, Texas, he was sent to Vance Air Force Base in Enid, Oklahoma for jet pilot training, then required for all astronauts. He
completed the eighteen month training and returned to JSC. He then began a long wait for his opportunity to fly in space. During the Skylab Program, while an astronaut, Karl was the Principal Investigator on Experiment S019, which was a sequel to his experiment on the Gemini missions.\(^{11}\)

Finally, in July and August, 1985, Karl Henize flew on the Spacelab-2 Mission on the Challenger Space Shuttle. This Mission had astronomical objectives. He retired from the astronaut corps in 1986.

**Johnson Space Center and Death on Mount Everest**

After retiring as an astronaut, Karl continued employment at JSC as a senior scientist. In early 1993, while still working at JSC, an opportunity arose to join an expedition to climb Mount Everest. At that time, the Loel Guinness Foundation, operating out of Geneva, Switzerland, was sponsoring various expeditions. Loel Guinness heard of an instrument developed by NASA to measure the effectiveness of radiation from space on human tissue, called the Tissue Equivalent Proportional Counter (TEPC) and he suggested that an astronaut might join one of his Foundation’s expeditions to Mount Everest and check the TEPC performance as a function of the increase in radiation with altitude. For such tests, NASA desired operation of the instrument for up to a week at each chosen altitude.

The idea appealed to Karl Henize, who had a lifelong fascination with climbs on Mount Everest. Thus, JSC gave him leave to join a Guinness Expedition and test the TEPC. The circumstances that followed are related in detail by Nish Bruce in his book, *Freefall*,\(^{12}\) written under the pen-name Tom Read. Nish Bruce was on the expedition, which was organized and led by his longtime friend, Harry Taylor. Nish and Harry met Karl in Bangkok Airport. They first climbed to a Base Camp at 17,000 ft., where Nish and Karl shared a sleeping tent. They spent a week there to acclimate. Then Harry, Karl and others set out for a next camp at 19,500 feet. Nish started with them, but due to a severe headache, returned to the Base Camp.

After a few days, Nish resumed the climb and was resting at 20,000 ft., when Harry and three other climbers came down the trail carrying Karl. When Karl had become very ill at the Advanced Base Camp at 21,500 ft., the four members of the team began carrying him down the trail. At the 19,500 ft. camp Karl was put in a ‘Gamow bag’ that can be pressurized by a foot pump to the equivalent of 6,000 to 8,000 ft. Also an oxygen mask was used within the bag. Karl and the bag were in a two-man tent with Nish and his sleeping bag.
At first, Nish relates, Karl was able to carry on a conversation. However, by 1:00 am on October 5, 1993, after 13 hours in the bag, Karl had died. His illness was described as high altitude pulmonary edema. Karl had asked that he be buried on Mount Everest if he failed to survive the expedition. In accordance with his wish, he was buried there.

Thus ended a unique life of adventure that had begun with cave exploration.

Footnotes
3. NSS Membership Register, NSS Archives, Huntsville, Alabama.
J-4: THE “SHORT AND SORDID” STORY OF A PENNSYLVANIA CAVE

Dr. Paul Riggs

Now closed by its owner, J-4 has been one of Pennsylvania’s most visited caves in recent decades. For many cavers J-4 was either their first cave or their first serious underground experience. Its particular challenges, starting with an exposed climb to the entrance, tight squeezes, and notorious three dimensional route-finding puzzles, made J-4 a memorable and sporting trip. Sadly but perhaps predictably, heavy visitation led to vandalism, rescues of flashlight cavers, and J-4’s eventual transformation into a “sacrifice cave” – essentially given up by the responsible caving community as a lost cause. As the chair of the local grotto lamented in 1974, less than a decade after the cave’s discovery, “J-4 cave has had a short and sordid history – passing from dream to a heavily travelled and vandalized hole in a quarry in just 10 years.”

Although it is no longer pristine and is under closure, we can still explore the cave’s interesting history: its industrial genesis; its discovery and initial exploration; the strenuous efforts made by the local grotto to gate and protect the cave; the “social history” of J-4 and its use by cavers and others; and its ultimate decline and closure.

Caves are often revealed by quarrying, yet the history of these operations is rarely described in the caving literature or appreciated by cavers. In this case, the history of J-4 starts with the history of the sprawling industrial operation that once defined the landscape. The cave opens in an old quarry above the village of Pleasant Gap in Centre County, Pennsylvania. The site is situated along the base of the northern slope of Nittany Mountain and on the southern edge of the Nittany Valley, which is underlain by thousands of feet of limestone.

As the many limestone farmhouses and barns in the region attest, this abundant resource has been used since colonial times for building stone. Farmers also traditionally quarried and burned limestone to use as fertilizer, and many of the small quarries that are dotted across the state originated in these local economic activities. Later in the 19th century, the process of industrialization vastly increased the demand for limestone for railway building, glass-making, and steel production. The result was a transformation in the limestone industry and the opening of massive new quarries and mines in the limestone regions of Pennsylvania. In Centre County, the first modern limestone operation was established in 1901 in Bellefonte, and by the 1930s the county was singled out by a federal expert as the “most productive county in the State having several large well-equipped plants.”

The state was described as a national leader: “The limestone industries of Pennsylvania are far in in the lead of those in all other States. The preeminence is due to the presence of an abundance of high-grade stone and availability of very extensive markets…. Not only are its home markets extensive, but the State occupies a strategic position for supplying outside markets in many industrial centers.”
In 1905, local entrepreneurs in Pleasant Gap opened about fifty test holes on the slopes above the village, discovering a layer of high grade limestone along with “several million tons” of lower grade rock. The Whiterock Quarries Company was formed “with the view to supplying burnt lime, broken stone for blast furnace use, railroad ballast, ground limestone for glass furnace use, stone for road making, and in fact, every form of quarry product.” Eventually, the company opened several quarries along a three-mile stretch of the mountain. The western quarries, where J-4 was discovered in 1965, were the first ones opened after 1905 but are no longer in use. Today, limestone extraction continues east of the village in mines on former Whiterock land. Mining (as opposed to surface quarrying) in the region began in about 1920 as access to the best stone began to be restricted by “a thick overburden of residual clay.”

The Pleasant Gap quarries worked the so-called “Bellefonte ledge,” a 40-foot thick layer of almost pure limestone, along with “some of the massive blue stone of second grade quality.” In 1934, the annual output of the Whiterock Quarries was estimated to be about a half a million tons, including 60,000 tons of lime, 75,000 tons of pulverized limestone, and 400,000 tons of crushed stone. The company was the subject of two profiles in trade magazines published in 1929 and 1930. The articles describe, even in the early stages of the Great Depression, a thriving operation with several quarries in use as well as the original complement of six kilns, later increased to eighteen in 1914. Management in 1924 invested in the construction of new plant, the addition of new machinery, and widespread electrification of machinery in every department. The whole operation was linked together by about nine miles of railway track served by several locomotives, including both diesel and steam-powered models. The stone was blasted from the quarry face with dynamite in large “shots” and hand-loaded (the men being paid by the cubic yard) into open railway cars. Next, the stone was hauled by railway to the various shops for processing by an array of different machines. The hand-loading was necessary because different products called for different sizes of rock.

There were three basic processing areas of the plant. The highest grade stone was burned in vertical kilns to make lime, “all coal-fired, hand-stoked, and hand-drawn” and loaded from above “from a steel trestle over which all stone from the quarry runs.” In 1930, these kilns produced 8.5 tons of lime per day, with plans noted to add a more efficient rotary kiln. Once shipped to the quarry’s industrial customers, lime could be used in a wide range of products from mortar, plaster, bricks, and cement to dyes, paint, rubber, and make-up. “The uses of lime are so numerous that it is inadvisable to even attempt a complete enumeration of them and not possible to discuss each use.” Lower quality stone was sent to the crushing plant, where it was broken and screened into a range of sizes for various uses, mostly as road aggregate, railway ballast, and flux for steel-making. In 1929, the stone crushers in this part of the plant were driven by a 180-horsepower coal-fired steam engine. Lastly, some of the crushed stone was sent to the pulverizing plant where it was reduced in size to make agricultural fertilizer, grain-sized pellets of flux for glass-making, and asphalt filler. The plant also produced rock dust, which was applied to the walls of coal mines to dilute coal dust and reduce the risk of explosion. “In addition, the white color increases the visibility in the passage ways and thus renders them safer for the men passing through
them.” In 1930, it was estimated that the company produced about fifty-five railway cars of finished material per day for customers in eleven states and internationally. The workforce of the Pleasant Gap quarries and plant was estimated at about 240 men in 1929. The men in the quarry and crushing operations worked daytime shifts, while the kilns and pulverizing plants operated around the clock. In 1937, an accidental dynamite explosion killed three workers and injured four others, a reminder of the risks run by the quarrymen. The quarry, now a relict industrial landscape stripped of its buildings, kilns, railways, and other plant, thus has an interesting and complex history, and its products were important to the development of the region’s economy and to the history of American industrialization generally.

As successive shots of dynamite advanced the quarries into the flank of Nittany Mountain, several caves were exposed and explored. A 1953 publication on Pennsylvania caves identifies a group of Pleasant Gap caves: “Six present or former caves can be counted here. Some lack names.” It is unlikely that J-4 was among those reported since none of the descriptions match particularly well, and the writer focused on the eastern quarries, while J-4 lies to the west. Some of the caves were quarried away over time, including the so-called “Mammoth Cave,” which was reported missing in 1955. Exploration activity picked up in the 1950s and 1960s under the auspices of the Nittany Grotto of Pennsylvania State University, based less than ten miles from Pleasant Gap. The cave was discovered in 1965, but the grotto had been actively exploring the area for over a decade previously. Items in the very first issue of the Nittany Grotto Newsletter in October 1952, for example, made reference to two Pleasant Gap caves: a trip report on Mammoth Cave and a note in a project list (“Pertinent Projects Waiting to Be Done”). More prophetically, a report in 1953 described a surface survey in the area: “No new caves were reported, although nine possibilities were looked into. Keep up the good work guys and don’t be discouraged. Remember ‘Big caves from little holes grow.’” A field trip in 1956 reported a new cave: “In the wall, George entered a new cave which once had fine formations. About 70 feet back, he was stopped by a zone of great shattered blocks. Perhaps the cave will open up after more quarrying.” This bears some resemblance to J-4, but since the Pleasant Gap caves were spread among three different areas and at least eleven entrances were documented, it is hard to verify that this was an early J-4 report. However, with this much grotto attention focused on the area, it was only a matter of time before checking “little holes” would result in the discovery of J-4 in 1965.

The unique name of the cave originates in the party of four young men, all named John, who checked a lead in one of the Pleasant Gap caves in March 1965 and found that it went. According to an account by one of the Johns (Marsden), “The entrance to this cave was known and had been explored by us before. While John Frantz was digging at a mud plug, I climbed down a narrow chimney and John Kosinski disappeared for a while, then began shouting that he had found the cave.” The group scooped passage for several hours before returning to campus to consult with other members of the grotto. A second team returned a few days later: “This time we found the large section of the cave which has in it possibly the largest room in any Pennsylvania cave, many white formations, very little mud, and a strip of bacon slightly over a foot wide at its widest point. The passages were so big, and there was so much
to explore that we ran babbling, laughing, and shouting somewhat incoherently from room to room.” The cave then went secret for about a year as the grotto explored the cave before finally publishing its existence in the February 1966 issue of the grotto newsletter. In the meantime, the grotto began discussing access with the owners, although at the time of publication “access to the cave is not exactly permitted as of yet, but negotiations... are proceeding.” An editorial in the same issue lamented the secrecy and expressed concern about the unstable nature of the entrance rooms, which was attributed (probably accurately) to blasting in the quarry. During the next few years, the grotto finished mapping the cave (which eventually reached about 4,000 feet) and in 1970 published a “New Cave Report” accompanied by a map.

The months of February and March 1974 were eventful for the grotto and for the cave itself. The action began in January 1973 with the opening of negotiations between the grotto and the Martin Marietta Corporation, which owned J-4. The company agreed in March 1973 to allow access provided that the grotto followed a management plan that included a gate and a waiver form. Access was complicated by the fact that the floor of the quarry was leased to Mr. Ellis Hode, a scrap metal merchant, who did not want cavers traversing his lease on their way to the cave. In the meantime, the grotto acknowledged that the cave was formally closed, but urged members to be circumspect in visiting the cave “preferably at night.” A trip report from December 1973 noted the presence of “five neophyte flashlight cavers,” indicating that visitation was occurring. In fact, visitation appears to have increased dramatically in this period, although there is very little direct evidence to be found in the record. This silence was noted in 1974: “Following the publishing of the map, traffic, vandalism and discussion increased although little of it appeared in print.... Traffic to the cave was extremely heavy, although I could find only one published field trip report of exploration.” The grotto participated in a five-hour trip with the local public television station to film the cave. The show aired on WPSX on Halloween night in 1973. Whether the TV show had anything to do with increased visitation is, of course, unknown, but there is no doubt that local teens were visiting the cave in high numbers. In February 1974, four teenagers were rescued from the cave after their flashlight gave out. They apparently were looking for a flashlight that they had lost in the cave two days before. The case led to a story in the local paper and concern in the village for the safety of local teens. Two days after the story ran, on February 23, Ellis Hode placed a notice in the paper: “We wish to caution the public that trespassing, vandalism, theft, etc. will not be tolerated. Parents would be wise to instruct their children that a salvage yard is not a playground.”

Following the rescue, the pace of events picked up considerably. On March 6, 1974 a public meeting of the town supervisors heard from two local cavers about the recreational value of the cave. They also mentioned that access could be controlled with a gate. The meeting took up the issue of the cave after a police crackdown earlier that day that resulted in twelve teenagers in three different groups being caught at the cave. March 6 was a Wednesday, and ten of the youths were truant from school. The police chief noted that publicity about the February rescue had increased traffic: “Since then... visits to the cave have become more frequent.” On March 7, members of the Nittany Grotto began work on designing and building the first gate, which was installed inside
the upper entrance on March 15, 1974. The gate was a hinged metal door in a metal frame that was bolted to the rock. The grotto also closed the lower entrance with blocks of stone. On March 19, the grotto learned that the gate – door and frame together – had been ripped from its place and was missing and that the stone used to fill in the lower entrance had been removed.

The grotto went back to the drawing board and made two improvements. First, on March 23 the lower entrance was more thoroughly sealed using “nine bags of concrete, several thousand pounds of sand and hundreds of gallons of water…. In addition, a few tons of breakdown found scattered profusely in the entrance room and reinforcing rods donated by the Hodes were put to good use. The end result was a very impressive wall.” The grotto guarded the site for thirty-six hours and reported “several near confrontations” with people trying to enter the cave. The upper entrance received a new gate on March 28. The gate was welded to the end of a corrugated steel tube which was then cemented into place inside the cave. The grotto used what was left of the spring semester to do a clean-up of the cave, but could not erase “one-foot high orange-painted lettering.”

After designing and installing two gates in the upper entrance within the space of two weeks, the grotto settled in for what they hoped would be a long-term process of managing access to the cave. Within two months, however, the grotto reported: “At the end of the spring term 1974, the serious attack on the gate of J-4 was made. Someone managed to chisel or hack through the ¼” steel hasp protecting the inner lock of the gate.” Improvements to the gate were made. The grotto was also active in leading trips under the new waiver system. A report published in December 1974 reveals that, during the fall semester that year, the grotto sponsored no fewer than 19 trips involving 85 people with “only one serious act of vandalism… an individual, ‘D.C’, left his initials smoked and scratched throughout the cave.” On October 27, it was discovered that the gate had been broken open again, apparently by a party that simply “sat there and kicked the door until they finally smashed the lock mechanism.” The grotto discussed all options, including closing the cave “permanently (or semi-permanently for a year or two)” but decided to repair the gate, which was done a few days later. Less than a week later, it was again discovered that the gate had been attacked. This time the gate was found to be broken, but not operable: “This means that no one, not even NG members, could now get into the cave.”

Access to the cave was restored sometime during the following summer (1975) when the jammed gate was forced opened by an unknown party. The grotto’s hypothesis was that a car jack was used. During the 1975-76 school year, two trips are recorded in December and March. The December trip noted the presence of abundant trash, vandalism, and a room that “was obviously used as party room (a dozen or so candles ready to go with bottle and debris all over).” The March trip was organized “to examine the vandalism in the back sections of J-4.” In the meantime, the grotto had finished fabricating a new gate in early December 1975, but waited until March 1976 and better weather for the installation. This would be the grotto’s third attempt in two years. The new gate again used a section of corrugated steel tube. Whereas the previous tube and gate were installed a short distance inside the upper entrance, the
new tube was placed at the entrance itself. “This effort, two days of intensive masonry work and two weeks of intermittent guard duty, resulted in a solid, attack-resistant gate.” Actually, there were two locked gates at this stage, one in each of the steel tubes. Sometime during the summer of 1978, both gates were attacked. The hasp on the outer gate was “torched off,” while the lock on the inner gate was found to be broken. After repairs were made, the grotto went back to cleaning up and managing the cave. During the next few years, it is clear from comments in trip reports that the cave was still under lock and key. One trip leader complained, for example, in 1981 about spending time “screwing with the damn magnetic lock” during a trip in April.

It now seems inevitable that the gate would be destroyed again, and the final attack on the gate occurred late in 1981—“shortly after Christmas.” Visiting cavers from another grotto not only discovered the damage but reportedly “came upon two very suspicious characters equipped with tools, pry instruments, and various other ‘implements of destruction’.” The grotto investigated and found both gates destroyed: “the vandals must have used hydraulic jacks and hammers for most of the damage. Both doors had been broken off, the outer gate beyond repair.” The grotto met to consider what to do next, but after a few visits to assess the damage they decided that the new owner of the cave, Warner Limestone Aggregates, was “neither friendly nor tolerant toward cavers.” The report on this incident (which began with “And now, the bad news”) concluded in equally pessimistic terms: “So, the gates, which are now hanging precariously over the entrance pipe, are soon to be removed entirely. If Warner wants to blow it up, well, I guess they will.”

Once the gate had been destroyed, no more mention is made in the News about repairs. Fatigue had perhaps set in. Managing the cave, after all, was a huge undertaking that fell to the appointed key-holder. Comments after a year of this duty might reflect the lack of enthusiasm for carrying on: “As I look back I have mixed emotions as key-holder. I am glad not to have the phone calls at all hours of the day or night. I am glad not to have the responsibility of having to be around to make sure someone was able to take care of people. It sure has a habit of wrecking weekends. But I will miss the pleasure of talking to cavers from different areas who came to visit J-4. In all it was an interesting experience.”

After the battle over the gate ended badly for the grotto, the cave’s subsequent history is less eventful. The grotto and other organizations still took an interest in the cave, and trip reports continued to be filed. This comment seems especially appropriate for those familiar with the cave and the route-finding challenges that it posed: “We spent about four hours doing the standard tour. It’s amazing what you can learn about a cave when you forget the regular way through it.” A trip leader from the 1970s admitted to being quite lost on his sixth trip through the cave: “We proceeded out, finally, and I had to admit to confusion. I couldn’t remember how to get back to the Formation Climb!” Several dig trips in the early 1980s led to minor extensions. And there are reports of clean-up trips from time to time as well as continued visitation by organized cavers, Boy Scouts, college outing clubs, and flashlight cavers. Members of the grotto often noted the presence of other groups, as in this trip report from 1984: “We exited the cave via the lower level, where we tried to avoid the other groups we met in
Another grotto trip the next year encountered a group apparently without lights: “These high school aged ‘spelunkers’ were at the second breakdown room, using touch.” In 1992, the grotto placed registers in the cave to determine the scope of visitation. An article in 1995 reported the results: 1,032 names in the first register (in the Maze section) and 624 in the Dome Room register, which is farther from the entrance. The author of the report argues that the figures under-estimate actual visitation as he
had seen many people not bothering to register. The registers also asked interesting questions of the cavers about their experience and equipment. Some idea of the cave’s visitors can be gained from the fact that only 62% reported using a helmet, about 85% were male, and about half gave their age as 20-24. A few years later, a trip report noted the presence, “between all of the groups and miscellaneous spelunkers,” of about 60 people in cave. The grotto’s role, by this time, had changed from active management to monitoring the condition of the cave, responding to rescue call-outs, and organizing clean-up trips. Finally, in 2002, it was discovered that the owners of the cave posted the property with new signs. The title of the piece that appeared in the grotto newsletter, “J-4 is Closed,” summarizes the grotto’s conclusion at that time, and the piece ends with the plea: “I leave you with this one request. Please respect the owner’s wishes and stay away from the cave.” A 2004 article in the Daily Collegian reiterated the closure and quoted a company official to the effect that liability was their main concern. He added that “We have talked to local law enforcement officials, and they are patrolling the area.” The grotto had reached out to the company to discuss access, but had gotten nowhere: “They have refused to speak to us.” This appears to be where the matter currently (2016) rests regarding access, despite recent attempts to negotiate a new access policy. The grotto has not changed its stance from 2002 and urges cavers to respect the closure.

Fortunately, J-4 has not yet seen a fatality, although there have been reports of incidents and accidents, some involving full-scale rescues. We have already seen the rescue in 1974 that led to the gating of the cave. In 1983, a call-out took place for an overdue group that had entered the cave at 6:00 one night, got lost, and eventually emerged about 17 hours later. There have been several other documented call-outs in 1991, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1998 (2), 1999, and 2000. The 1994 rescue involved a 13-year-old Boy Scout who had fallen down a hole. This spot was the scene of the 1991 and 1993 accidents: “This vertical part of the cave... apparently exerts unusually high gravitational attraction on novices.” The boy was packaged and transported out of the cave by the team that had assembled. Given the three-dimensional nature of the cave, the potential for serious falls in a few places, and the heavy visitation by novices, the level of incidents and accidents could be higher.

The cave also had its own social history as generations of people – mostly young people it seems – used and abused the cave for recreation. A satirical piece from the grotto newsletter published in the early 1960s perceptively documents the “multitude of idiots which comprises a grotto” – the “Handbook of Caver Types: Being a guide to aid the Spelunker in recognizing the many and varied species of Undergroundlings.” The thirteen types ranged from the “Troglodyte” (a veteran caver with “an NSS number of 100 or thereabouts”) to two types of neophytes. There were also two distinct types of “Girl Cavers” identified: the “Suffragette” who “heads underground to prove her equality” and the “Lily Maid” who sought out and enjoyed “the charm, chivalrousness, virility, dash, and general loveliability of the male spelunker.” Other familiar types included the explorer (“has a vast number of cave discoveries to his credit, most of which average 10 feet in depth, 4 feet in width, and 2 feet in height”), geologist, naturalist, climber, photographer, etc. Members of the grotto took pleasure in initiating new cavers at J-4, and trip reports from the 1980s mention first-time cavers in
cowl-neck sweaters and ski jackets and complain about neophytes who forgot to bring a change of clothes for the ride back to campus. At least one generation of students also used the cave for tasteful nude photography as the *News* published a centerfold (featuring both male and female cavers) in several issues in the 1970s. And it is interesting to note that the cave was written up in Penn State’s student newspaper several times over the years as each generation of student journalists and student cavers collaborated to describe the cave (and caving) to the campus community.

In the end, the story of J-4 remains the tragedy of its “short and sordid history” – its rapid decline and fall into a sacrifice cave. Much of the damage to the inside of the cave can be attributed, no doubt, to visitors who were not members of the “organized” caving community of grotto and NSS membership. Yet it should be noted that the grotto had campaigned in the 1950s and 1960s against speleothem collectors within the ranks of organized cavers. A cartoon from 1957 depicts “The Cave Collector” as a well-equipped caver of his era with helmet and carbide cap lamp, who was engaged in stripping a cave of its formations with the tools of his trade, including (facetiously, no doubt) a conveyor belt. Also in 1957, future NSS president Jack Stellmack admonished his fellow grotto members about conservation. Although his main subject was carbide-dumping and trash more generally, he was concerned about bad habits within the organized caving community: “It has come as quite a shock to find that some cavers in this area (NSS’ers and Nittany Grottoers, too) are not as conservation-minded as I thought they were.... The caves in this area, such as they are, are our charge. We are trying to protect them from vandals and other sources of destruction. Let’s not make complete wrecks of them ourselves in the process.” An editorial published the next year lamented the destruction wrought by collectors “who will remove anything or everything for any number of personal motives be it: ‘I didn’t have any of those in my collection, yet.’ Or ‘I can get a good price for it or trade it for something I want’ or even ‘If I don’t take it, someone will.’” The article was accompanied by a before and after picture of another Pennsylvania cave documenting the destruction of formations.

An editorial published in 1963, just two years before J-4 was discovered, turns out to have been prophetic in its treatment of a broader danger to conservation and access. It warned that recreational caving was “slowly strangling the sport of caving.” The editorial continues in terms that clearly foretold the fate of J-4: “The fetish of new members, new grottos, new trips, and new interest can conceivably pull down the house of speleology.” The problem was wear and tear on the caves, even under the pressure exerted by organized cavers: “No policy of conservation can help any cave survive this influx of muddy-fingered crawlers and climbers.” The other problem was endangering access by wearing out the grotto’s welcome with landowners: “Two or three people climbing his fences and striding across his pasture, frightening his cows can be tolerated now and then; but every weekend? A dozen or two dozen people at a time? He stops to think... and realizes he should consult his insurance agent. And behold – NO TRESPASS signs! Beware of the organizer – he could be the ultimate vandal!” Anyone who has been around the world of organized caving can recognize the unfortunate truth of these comments.
The history of J-4 reminds us to consider the industries and workers that are gone from the landscape. We also can perceive in J-4’s story a curious social history dimension as generations of cavers discovered and rediscovered the cave’s virtues—and, as young people, also discovered themselves to a certain extent. But, in the end, the story of J-4 is mostly a cautionary tale of a cave suffering a quick and tragic death, despite the strenuous and best efforts of a competent, well-meaning, and highly-organized grotto of the NSS. In addition to the destruction wrought by vandals and gate wreckers, the cave was undone by its popularity and the core dilemma faced by the caving community worldwide: How is it possible to discover, explore, study, and use caves to educate the public about speleology while at the same time preserving them from vandalism and environmental degradation? This dilemma was apparent to the cavers closest to J-4 who tried, ultimately in vain, to protect the cave during the course of its “short and sordid history.”

Map of J-4 Cave. (Courtesy of Nevin Davis)
Endnotes:

The author wishes to thank the staff of the NSS Library, the Centre County Historical Society, the Penn State Earth and Mineral Sciences Museum and Art Gallery, and the interlibrary loan staff at Valdosta State University’s Odum Library. Thanks also to Ray Noll III, Keith Wheeland, and Art Pettit for their helpful comments on this project.

1. *Nittany Grotto News*, v. 22, no. 3 (May 1974), p. 73. Publication abbreviated hereafter as *NGN*. Authors of articles and article titles are given where known, but not for brief items of news and simple trip reports.


6. Miller, *Limestones of Pennsylvania*, p. 286. Mining was considered in the western quarries but never undertaken. This decision probably saved the cave from destruction.


15. “News Flash: Mammoth Cave Quarried Away,” *NGN*, v. 3, no. 3 (January-February 1955), p. 6. The cave was actually very small, and the name was intended as a joke.


24. All references to items in the *Centre Daily Times* in this section are from a special issue of the *NGN* which reprinted a series of newspaper clippings. See *NGN*, v. 22, no. 3 (May 1974), pp. 78-80.


38. *NGN*, v. 30, no. 2 (Spring 1983), pp. 11-16.
44. “Local cave closed to spelunkers,” Daily Collegian, February 17, 2004. Unfortunately, the article was accompanied with a map showing the cave’s general location.
45. Keith Wheeland, personal correspondence.
49. Those interested can track down those issues on their own.
CAVE HILL TENNESSEE

Thomas Lera

Since retiring, I have been updating and upgrading my cave and bat stamp collections. While doing so, I ran across Bruce Robert’s “Postal History Treasure from the East Tennessee Historical Society” in the December 2015 (Vol. 19, No. 3, P93) issue of Tennessee Posts, the tri-annual publication of the Tennessee Postal History Society. [1] I have excerpted the relevant sections.

Cave Hill, in Greene County, had a post office from 1831 to 1845, per Helbock [2]. Frazier [3], who list five postmasters, the first, Cain Broyles, appointed Oct 8, 1831, the last, Joseph Horton, appointed July 8, 1843 serving until the post office was discontinued May 16, 1845. Greene County is about half way between Knoxville and Bristol, with Greenville as the current county seat.

This cover from Cave Hill was mailed July 25, 1835 to Charles P. Nenney in Bent Creek, Jefferson County, Tennessee. It included a manuscript town name, date and 10 due rate, appropriate for a cover travelling 30 to 80 miles.
This cover is one of 278 in the Charles Grandison Nenney family correspondence housed at the East Tennessee Historical Society.

If you would like information about Cave Post Offices, please contact me at frontier2@erols.com.

Endnotes
1. For information about Tennessee Posts, email the president Jerry Palazolo at palazolo@bellsouth.net.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ASHA PRESIDENT

Dean H. Snyder

As you might have noticed on the front cover, this is issue #150 of the Journal of Spelean History. Our first issue appeared January, 1968, and was edited by Dr. William R. Halliday. It was the “Faust Memorial Issue,” as cave historian Burton Sherwood Faust had just passed the previous year. This issue also announced the appearance of a history session for the 1968 NSS Convention.

In late October, 2016 (with Gordon and Judy Smith and Doug Soroka), I had the pleasure of visiting Bill Halliday and his wife Sis in Nashville, Tennessee. Over lunch I commented to him that we were at JSH Issue #150. Bill commented that, “Maybe we have something here.” I think that we do.

I would like to thank all of the authors and editors who have made JSH possible over the last five decades.
Charles A. Lindbergh, the American aviator, visited the Mammoth Cave area in the summer of 1921. Even though it has been written in books and newspapers that Lindbergh was also present during the 1925 Floyd Collins entrapment, there are no photos or documentation to support this claim.

Lindbergh was an unknown at the time of his 1921 visit to the cave region. His transatlantic flight from New York to Paris was not made until 1927. Lindbergh’s 1921 trip would have gone unnoticed if it were not for handwritten notations that he kept of his trip, photographs that he took, and a book he wrote later in life.

Here is some factual information of what is known about Charles Lindbergh from 1920 to 1928, including his only visit to the cave region in 1921.
Before Minnesota native Charles Lindbergh became interested in airplanes and aviation, he was interested in motorcycles. While in high school in Little Falls, Lindbergh ordered a 1919 model Excelsior X motorcycle from a hardware store. In 1920, Lindbergh rode the motorcycle to Madison, Wisconsin, where he attended engineering school. Lindbergh spent a lot of time in his early years riding his Excelsior motorcycle around the country.

A young Charles Lindbergh on the road to Camp Knox, KY, with his two modes of transportation, 1921
(Minnesota Historical Society)

In June 1921, Lindbergh and two friends from school, O’Connor and Drewry, traveled to Camp (Fort) Knox, Kentucky, where they spent the first six weeks of their summer vacation attending an ROTC training camp. The men were free on Sundays to roam the Kentucky countryside and did so with their two modes of transportation, a Ford speedster car and Lindbergh’s Excelsior motorcycle.
Lindbergh and his two companions came to the Mammoth Cave area one Sunday hoping to explore some caves. They took the traditional tours available at Mammoth Cave at the time but that was not enough for them as they wanted to explore more. As they were resting, Homer Collins, Floyd Collins’ brother, approached them and asked if they would be interested in seeing Crystal Cave. Lindbergh wrote about his Mammoth Cave/Crystal Cave experience in his 1953 book, “The Spirit of St. Louis:”
See that gaping entrance to a cave of cloud...no, earth...See the moonlight gleaming on the mist...no, leaves in wind...I step down from my airplane's cockpit...no, it's my motorcycle that I leave behind...I am in Kentucky, with two other Field Artillery cadets. This is Sunday. We're free of Camp Knox's three-guns and classes. O'Connor and Drewry, in their streamlined "Bug," and I on my motorcycle, are out to judge the virtues of the state. At this spot, we'll stop to rest and eat a sandwich.

"You fellows been to Mammoth Cave?"

It's a local boy who comes up to ask us---grinning---high school age.

"Yes, we just came from there, "O'Connor answers. "We'd spent hours walking through the damp, cool passages."

"Quite a place isn't it?" the boy goes on.

"Sure is."
“This country’s full of caves,” he tells us. “Ya know, we think we got a better one. Like to take a look at it? “Isn’t far.”

“Well……sure, let’s go.”

We’ve been hunting for caves ourselves, climbing along the banks of a river, and crawling under rocky ledges where an opening might be. Here is a chance to do some exploring with the help of an expert and inexpensive guide.

“My name is Homer Collins,” the boy volunteers as we follow him. “We call ours ‘Crystal Cave.’ It’s a lot prettier and maybe it’s bigger than Mammoth. Some of the passages go further than we been.”

We take some lanterns and flashlights, and start through the mouth. The temperature drops. The air is moist. Weird formations surround us, crystalline and white. Water drips in puddles. Our voices return strangely from the walls. We pick our way between stalagmites, duck down as Homer enters a tunnel where there is no trail. It’s wet and slippery. In places, we have to crawl under stalactites on our knees. In others, our shoes sink down in muck.

“Have to watch this stuff,” our guide tells us. “Sometimes it caves in.”

Then the passage opens to a gallery, high, wide, white in our lantern light---it might well be a secret palace of the gnomes.

“Ya see the hole over there?” asks Homer, pointing to an archway in one wall, “Floyd---he’s my brother---he tried to reach the end of that, but he ran out of time and food.”

Time? Who knows what time it is inside this planet, shut off from stars and sun. Here time is meaningless. There’s no sign of earth’s rotation, no direction, twilight, dawn or day. It’s the surface of the world that belongs to man. Above or below, he finds adventure, but not sustenance. To the surface of the earth he must return to live…to live…to sleep…to wake…See the lanterns flicker on those crystal columns …no, it’s moonlight on the mist…See the shadow in that passage slanting down…no, it’s another gaping chasm in the clouds…..
Lindbergh left Camp Knox on July 21 and spent the second six weeks of his vacation traveling to Florida before he headed back to school in Wisconsin in September.

Charles Lindbergh’s interest in flying began in February 1922 as he made the decision to leave engineering school in Wisconsin to become a flying student at Nebraska Standard Aircraft Corporation in Lincoln, Nebraska. By March 1924, he enlisted as a U.S. Army Flying cadet in Texas and on March 14, 1925 (about three weeks after the Collins’ entrapment), graduated first in his class from the U.S. Air Service Flying School, Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas.

In 2001, a Floyd Collins Symposium was held at the National Speleological Convention in Kentucky and it was presented in a paper for the first time by Dr. Tim Donley of Bowling Green, KY, that Charles Lindbergh was not at Sand Cave during Floyd Collins’ entrapment. According to Donley’s research, in February 1925, “as part of his training, Lindbergh was completing an intense course of study at the Army Air Training School in Houston, Texas.” At the time, Lindbergh could not even take off to visit his ailing father.

It has been written in books and newspapers on Floyd Collins that Charles Lindbergh was present at the 1925 Collins’ entrapment delivering news reports and
photo negatives by air. The earliest mention of Lindbergh at Sand Cave comes from a Courier-Journal newspaper article from February 14, 1954, written by staff writer Joe Creason:

Before the cave was sealed, the newspapers wanted pictures of his [Collins’] body in the trap. A photographer from a Chicago paper was selected to make pictures and turn them over to the newspaper pool outside for the use of all papers. The photographer made the trip down, returned and handed a film holder over to the pool. Only trouble was, he turned over a blank holder. The waiting aviator took the blank holder and flew it to Chicago. The aviator’s paper lost out. The aviator was named Lindbergh.

The name of Ellis Jones of Cave City, KY, is often mentioned in newspapers about Lindbergh’s appearance at Sand Cave in 1925. Jones being a pilot, mechanic, and Lindbergh admirer himself, mentioned Lindbergh flying “in from Chicago with a photographer from the Chicago Sunday Tribune to get pictures of Floyd Collins’ entrapment in Sand Cave” in a Courier-Journal article from December 17, 1979, by staff writer Bryon Crawford,

Pilots at Sand Cave include Ellis Jones (second from right), but no Charles Lindbergh, 1925
(From the book Tragedy of Sand Cave)
An *Aviation Magazine* article from March 23, 1925 mentions the Floyd Collins tragedy and the airplanes and pilots who provided services to carry pictures, etc., but there is no mention of Lindbergh as being one of these pilots. Ellis Jones' name is even mentioned in the article as providing services for the airplanes at a new airport landing field, “Floyd Collins Field.”

Floyd Collins Field

The great crowd of newspaper men and photographers at Cave City, Ky., when Floyd Collins was trapped in one of the caves necessitated a number of airplanes to carry copy, pictures, etc. Among those there were, E. M. Laird with his newest ship, Jack Rodell with an overtanked Canuck, Hane Hoyt with an OX5 Thomas-Morse, John Leam with a Jenny from Dayton, Walter Lem with a Wichita Swallow, and Robert H. Gast with one of the Kentucky reserve corps Hisso-Jennie. While there they dedicated a new field as a memorial to Floyd Collins. It is located a mile south east of the railroad station at Cave City. This field has not been prepared but has a ridge down the center which makes a very fine runway. Service is provided by Ellis Jones of Cave City who will drive out from town whenever an airplane seems about to land and light a smudge to indicate the field and the wind direction. This field will provide a landing place for those wishing to visit the famous underground caverns in this neighborhood.

On August 6, 1927, after Lindbergh’s historical flight across the Atlantic, he went on a three month nationwide tour. Flying the "Spirit of St. Louis," he touched down in 48 states and visited 92 cities, including a stop at Lunken Field Airport in Cincinnati. From Cincinnati, Lindbergh flew to Louisville on August 8 and before he flew to Indianapolis on August 9, he flew over Camp (Fort) Knox. This is as close as Lindbergh ever came to Mammoth Cave again after he became famous.
After Lindbergh’s most publicized event at Lunken Field in August 1927, he occasionally used Lunken Airfield as a routine stop for refueling his plane including a stop in 1928. Ellis Jones, who had been a mechanic at Lunken Airfield since 1927, was present the day Lindbergh touched down. A picture was taken on March 28, 1928 of Jones filling the radiator of Lindbergh’s Curtiss Robin Monoplane with Lindbergh in the picture. This may have been the only time Ellis Jones met Lindbergh.

It is interesting to point out that books and newspaper articles on Floyd Collins state that Lindbergh was at Sand Cave at the time of Collins’ entrapment but books on Lindbergh don’t ever mention the name of Floyd Collins or Sand Cave. Lindbergh talks in detail about his 1921 trip to Mammoth Cave in his 1953 book, but does not acknowledge anything about the 1925 Collins tragedy. If Lindbergh was present at this 1925 historical event, it most certainly would have been well documented in books on Lindbergh.

To conclude, unless some documentation or photo is discovered, Charles A. Lindbergh was not at Sand Cave in 1925.
Sources:


*The Spirit of St. Louis* by Charles A. Lindbergh, original copyright date 1953, additional copyright and reprint dates 1981 & 1993.


*Aviation Magazine*, March 23, 1925.

Floyd Collins Symposium, 2001 National Speleological Convention, Kentucky. Subject: Lindbergh at Sand Cave by Dr. Tim Donley, unpublished paper.
