

Stagecoach on display at National Cave Museum and Library at Diamond Caverns

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Members of the Mammoth Cave National Park Association's board of directors take a look at the historic stagecoach that was brought to the National Cave Museum and Library at Diamond Caverns near Park City on Thursday. The stagecoach had been part of an exhibit about transportation in Kentucky at the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green. Shown, from left, are: Lewis Cutliff, executive board member; Bobby Bunnell, assistant secretary; Terry Bunnell, secretary; and E. Lee Davis, president.

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PARK CITY — A historic stagecoach that was one of two used to transport passengers from L&N Railroad stations to Mammoth Cave was brought to the National Cave Museum and Library at Diamond Caverns near Park City on Thursday morning from the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green.

The stagecoach had been on display at the National Corvette Museum for a little more than a year as part of an exhibit about transportation in Kentucky.

“We were very fortunate for them to allow us to display the stagecoach, because that was the first display the stagecoach had been on,” said Terry Bunnell, secretary of the Mammoth Cave National Park Association, which owns the stagecoach.

The remnants of the stagecoach were donated to MCNPA by the Garner Hanson family.

“Garner Hanson was head of National Park Concessions. They were the concessioner for several national parks, but they had their office at Mammoth Cave for a number of years,” said Bobby Bunnell, assistant secretary for MCNPA.

The organization spent about \$50,000 to restore the stagecoach a couple of years ago.

“We wanted to do that because it's part of the heritage of this area. It means a lot to this area in talking about where we came from and about our history,” said Terry Bunnell, brother to Bobby Bunnell. “We wanted to put it on display to let folks enjoy it and see what transportation was like years ago as far as Mammoth Cave went. We are very proud to be a part of it.”

The stagecoach line was operated by Andrew McCoy from 1859 to 1883.

On Sept. 3, 1880, one of the stagecoaches on the line left Mammoth Cave with eight passengers.

After traveling a little more than four hours into its trip, the stagecoach was robbed by men on horseback.

It is thought that one of the gunmen was Jesse James.

“The reason they think it was Jesse James who robbed the stagecoach is because when Jesse James was killed, on him was a pocket watch from one of the riders who was in one of the stagecoaches,” Terry Bunnell said. “That's why it is believed he robbed the stagecoach because he had evidence from someone and it possibly could have been this stagecoach, but we don't know 100 percent.”



Those who serve on the Mammoth Cave National Park Association's board of directors and who were on hand when a historic stagecoach was brought from the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green to the National Cave Museum and Library at Diamond Caverns on Thursday are, from left: Bobby Bunnell, assistant secretary; Lewis Cutliff, executive board member; E. Lee Davis, president; and Terry Bunnell, secretary.

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The stagecoach will be on display at the National Cave Museum and Library at Diamond Caverns for two years, but only by appointment.

"This is a great location, except there is not as many visitors who will get to see it because it's not always open. They have done a wonderful thing to help us out," said E. Lee Davis, president of MCNPA.

MCNPA hopes the stagecoach can eventually be put on display at Mammoth Cave National Park.

"The new superintendent is talking about those possibilities and that we might do that," Davis said.

There are others who are also interested in showcasing the stagecoach, but Davis said they don't yet have the capability to display it.

Eric Helton, general manager at Diamond Caverns, was on hand Thursday for the arrival of the stagecoach from the National Corvette Museum.

"We are excited to have it here. We know this is sort of a temporary home, maybe a long-term temporary home, but while it's here we look forward to being able to show it off and being able to care for it," Helton said. "It's such an incredible piece of local history to have. It's not in Bowling Green. It's back inside the park where it belongs."

