

WORLD WONDER SAVED

How Mammoth Cave Became A National Park

**By
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WORLD WORDER
TRAVEL

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Preface

The preservation of Mammoth Cave in Kentucky represents a living monument to the public-spirited determination of a large group of prominent Kentucky citizens and others from throughout the land. What makes this effort especially noteworthy is the prolonged attention and effort required to obtain legislative approval for the endeavor, to raise money and to acquire land necessary for a national park. My father, Paul W. Holman, Sr., was one of these far-sighted and determined leaders in the effort, which included Senator M. M. Logan, Congressman M.H. Thatcher, Max B. Nahm, Judge Huston Quin, Judge Blakey Helm, Robert J. Ball, Judge Robert M. Coleman, Judge John B. Rodes, J.L. Harman, Eugene Stuart, G.E. Zubrod, and many others.

The Mammoth Cave National Park Association was the spearheading organization that led to the establishment of the park which required twenty-two years of sustained endeavor to accomplish. I feel confident to say that without this nonprofit, selfless organization the park would not have come about and this wonder of the world would not have been saved as the property of all the people of our country. It is for this reason and the realization that practically all of the prime movers are now gone from the scene that the Association has for a long time planned to have a history prepared. This work represents the culmination of the Association's plan.

This book is dedicated to the thousands of people who led in the endeavor to create the Mammoth Cave National Park, to those who contributed of their energies and substance and to the millions of people who can now enjoy this national treasure.

Paul W. Holman, Jr.
President
Mammoth Cave National
Park Association

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Introduction:

KENTUCKY CITIZENS TAKE ACTION TO CREATE A NATIONAL PARK

In 1924 a group of prominent Kentuckians initiated action to preserve for future generations one of God's rare creations: Mammoth Cave. Mammoth Cave, one of the seven wonders of the world, had been visited since the early 1800s by the famous of the world who braved the privations of the time. There were practically no traversable roads and the cave was situated in a remote, forested and rugged area.

The Cave property had been preserved to a great extent by a forward looking physician who willed at his death that it be retained as a natural preserve until the last of his seven nieces and nephews passed to the beyond -- then it was to be sold at public auction. The estate carried on the Cave enterprise for 77 years, but by 1924 it was known that it would not be long before it would be disposed of in accordance with the bequest.

In 1924 the Mammoth Cave National Park Association was organized with the objective of making Mammoth Cave a national park. One of the organizers became the Association's first president and later a United States Senator. He himself was instrumental in securing 8,000 acres in his own name for the park. Another of the organizers, a wealthy and prominent banker, became the second president and continued as a foremost leader for many years in the effort to raise money and to purchase land for the national park. Others devoted thousands of hours of their own time, without any compensation, to promote the park and bring it into reality.

The Mammoth Cave National Park Association has continued in existence since the park's establishment, promoting and supporting the park. For several years, now, the Association has desired to record a history of the yeoman efforts of its leaders and members from 1924 to today. Why has the Association wanted to do this? Probably none of the original members are active today. Instead, it has second and third generation leadership now. The present president, for example, is the son of one of the original founders.

First, they realized that what the early promoters did constitutes a major achievement in preserving a natural endowment for present and future generations to enjoy. Much of the land for the park was bought with privately contributed funds. The project involved obtaining authorization from the U.S. Congress to establish a park when sufficient land

could be obtained without cost to the federal government; conducting a drive to obtain some \$2.5 million; negotiating with the owners to acquire the land; promoting the formation of a state vehicle to exercise the right of eminent domain; overcoming the many legal obstacles to achieving the objective; and actually operating the cave property until the National Park Service could take it over fully.

Secondly, the effort represented a dramatic case study of citizen action to achieve a desirable major civic objective. It is an example of how such spectacular achievement can be realized when dedicated leadership and hard work are applied. The association exercised an active role for 22 years in promoting the park project and facilitating its culmination. It was not until 1941 that the National Park Service took full charge of Mammoth Cave, the surrounding land and the caves encompassed by it; and it was not until 1946 that the park was officially dedicated. This was quite a period of time for sustained work of this nature. It demonstrated what can be done when there is a perceived objective, strong leadership and sustained follow-through.

I wish to thank the following for providing much essential information that has been used in this book: The National Park Service and the Mammoth Cave National Park; the Louisville Automobile Association; the Kentucky Library of Western Kentucky University, and the Mammoth Cave National Park Association. I want, also, to thank Mr. Lewis D. Cutliff and Mr. Garner Hanson for their assistance.

Cecil E. Goode

Glasgow, Kentucky
1986

CHRONOLOGY OF ACTIONS LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MAMMOTH CAVE NATIONAL PARK

- May 19, 1924 The Mammoth Cave National Park Committee was organized to promote the idea of establishing a national park. This committee led to the formation of the Mammoth Cave National Park Association.
- October 7, 1924 A public meeting of 200 interested persons was held at the Moorehead House, later named the Helm Hotel, in Bowling Green to consider the proposal for promoting a national park. The Mammoth Cave National Park Association was organized with M.M. Logan as the first president.
- May 1925 Members of the National Park Commission visited the cave area from Washington to evaluate its potential for a national park.
- July 16, 1925 The Association was incorporated as a non-profit organization.
- August 6, 1925 The Association named an Options Committee to begin taking options on cave lands.
- January 1926 A delegation from the Association, led by Dr. J.L. Harman of Bowling Green, went to Washington to promote legislation authorizing a national park. The group met with members of Congress, federal officials and with President Coolidge.
- April 8, 1926 Congressman M.L. Thatcher of Louisville introduced legislation to authorize a national park. Senator Richard P. Ernst introduced the companion bill in the Senate.
- May 25, 1926 President Coolidge signed the bill authorizing the establishment of Mammoth Cave National Park when sufficient land had been acquired.

- June 11, 1926 The Association sponsored a meeting in Louisville attended by representatives of civic and professional groups to consider actions to promote the park project.
- July 20, 1927 The Association met with several fund raising organizations. The Executive Committee subsequently selected Ketchum, Incorporated of Pittsburgh to direct a fund raising drive.
- March 15, 1928 The fund raising drive was to complete its work by this date.
- 1928 The Legislature established the Kentucky National Park Commission which had the authority of **eminent domain** to condemn land for the park.
- December 31, 1928 The Association contracted to purchase a two-thirds interest in the Mammoth Cave Estate comprising 2279 acres.
- February 9, 1929 M. M. Logan and his wife conveyed 8,000 acres to the Association for a consideration of \$24,000.
- March 1, 1930 Governor Flem D. Sampson signed a bill allocating 8% of the **ad valorem** property taxes for the purchase of land for the park.
- March 3, 1930 Judge Huston Quin proposed that, in appreciation of the favors granted by the Legislature and state officials in recent legislation, they be invited to visit the cave. This was done, and a special train was run from Frankfort to the cave at the Association's expense.
- January 5, 1931 The New Entrance to Mammoth Cave was acquired.
- July 16, 1932 Max Nahm, President of the Association, reported that 14,117 acres had thus far been acquired for the park. Nahm then became chairman of the Kentucky National Park Commission.

- July 19, 1933 The Association and Kentucky National Park Commission formed a Joint Operating Committee to manage the cave property.
- May 28, 1934 At a joint meeting of the Association, the Kentucky National Park Commission and the National Park Service, the National Park Service agreed to assume responsibility for the purchase of additional land but with non-federal funds; but the Association and Commission would continue to operate the property in conjunction with the Park Service. The Park Service then provided two members of the Joint Operating Committee.
- May 22, 1936 The park was formally accepted by the Secretary of the Interior for administration and protective purposes and it was given the status of a national park.
- July 1, 1941 The National Park Service took over full responsibility for Mammoth Cave National Park, and received its first federal appropriation for the park. This was preceded on June 20 by the deeding to the federal government of the crucial 23 acres containing the entrances to the cave and the hotel and cottage grounds. The National Park Concessions took over operation of the hotel and cave on June 21. On September 16, the National Park Service assumed operation of the cave.
- September 18, 1946 Because of World War II, which required our national attention, formal dedication did not take place until five years after the national park was fully operative - September 18, 1946. Secretary Krug, Senator Barkley and Governor Willis took part.