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Margaret M. Gripshover
Western Kentucky University

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From Board Games to Tobacco Products: U.S. Patents Related to Mammoth Cave

Margaret M. Gripshover¹

¹ Department of Geography and Geology, Western Kentucky University

Abstract

The archives of the U.S. Patent Office offer a unique window into the location, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit of millions of inventors. What might the Patent Office records tell us about Mammoth Cave? A search of patents issued since 1836 resulted in 34 inventions that mention Mammoth Cave in their descriptions. Of these 34 patents, four were for technical aspects of cave environments such as ventilation, six were games or educational products, and 23 were related to Mammoth Cave Twist, a brand of chewing tobacco. The first Mammoth Cave-related patent was granted in 1915 for a board game and the most recent patent (2011) for tobacco. Also examined were 10 patents granted to Edmonson County residents prior to the establishment of Mammoth Cave National Park. Edmonson County patents were not directly related to Mammoth Cave but rather reflected local agricultural and technological needs of residents prior to the Park's founding.