

12-16-2010

UA6/1/1 Lost River Cave & Valley - Oral History Project

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WKU Archives, "UA6/1/1 Lost River Cave & Valley - Oral History Project" (2010). *WKU Archives Collection Inventories*. Paper 234. https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_ua_fin_aid/234

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Western Kentucky University
UA6 Lost River Cave & Valley
Series 1 Project File
Subseries 1 Oral History Project

Contact information:

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Administrative History: In 1986 the Cave entrance and the 25-acre wooded valley was donated to Western Kentucky University by its owners: WKU professor Dr. Raymond Cravens, WKU Physical Plant Administrator Owen Lawson and Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Highbaugh. The donation served as the springboard for the restoration and preservation of Lost River Cave and the surrounding natural environment.

A 501(c)3 non-profit organization, The Friends of the Lost River, Inc. (dba Lost River Cave) was incorporated in 1990 to facilitate the conservation and sustainability of the Cave and surrounding area. In the spring of 1999, visionary board member Dr. Nicholas Crawford, Director of WKU's Center for Cave and Karst Studies, convinced the board to build a dam inside the Cave with the aim of providing float tours of the interior. His idea was to generate funding for the conservation effort; his logic was along the lines of "if we build it they will come."

In 2001, the threat of commercial development on land directly adjacent to the Cave and valley compelled the Friends organization to pursue protection of that land as well. Drawing on support from the City Commission and the Greenways Commission of Bowling Green and Warren County, an additional 42 acres was purchased. Since then, acquisition of additional parcels has expanded the park to 70-acres that offers trails, wetlands, meadows and a restored prairie.

Today, the income from the underground boat tour, gift shop and event rentals sustain the ongoing work to preserve and maintain Lost River Cave as a cultural and natural landmark. Local visitors to the park may decide to purchase a park membership, make a donation or volunteer service hours to contribute to the Friends' mission. [Lost River Cave website: <https://lostrivercave.org/our-story>]

Description: Unprocessed project files of the Lost River Cave & Valley. Projects include clean up days, climate station, education, landscaping, oral histories, scout projects, trails, tree inventory and wetlands.

Dates: nd

Extent: 1 audiotape

Subject Analytics:

Audio recording

Caves

Friends of Lost River Cave
Lost River Cave (Bowling Green, KY)

Oral history
Tourism

Digital Commons:

Oral History
Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration

Speleology
Tourism

Accession Information: These records transferred to the WKU Archives from Lost River Cave.

Access Restrictions: This record group is unprocessed and must be reviewed for potential restricted materials before access is granted. Please contact the WKU Archivist prior to your visit.

Allied Materials:

[UA1C11/12 Lost River Cave Photo Collection](#)

Preferred Citation: UA6/1/1 Lost River Cave & Valley Oral History Project, WKU Archives, Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA.

Processing Information: Records processed and collection inventory created 2010, revised 2019.

