



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cuyahoga Valley
National Park

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Cuyahoga Valley National Park News Release

For Immediate Release – Tuesday, January 12, 2010

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Mammoth Cave Ranger Shares Stories of Slaves

Brecksville, Ohio – On Friday, January 22, 2010, the National Park Service welcomes Mammoth Cave Park Ranger and author, Joy Medley Lyons, as she presents a program about the role enslaved African Americans had as guides and explorers in the world's longest cave. This program is part of the Lyceum Distinguished Speaker Series. The word "lyceum" has roots in ancient Greek, and became the name of the school where Aristotle taught. At Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP), we use it to describe our lecture series featuring national speakers who stimulate the heart and mind with compelling stories of our natural and cultural world.

Admission: \$8 adults, \$6 CVNPA members, and \$3 children ages 3 - 12. Attend any three for the subscription price of \$20 adults, \$15 CVNPA members. General seating. Advance sales are available by calling (330) 657-2909. Lectures occur at Happy Days Lodge, 7 - 9 p.m. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Ranger Lyons, an author recipient of the Award of Merit from the Kentucky Historical Society, will discuss the lives and loves of those who first served the Mammoth Cave Estate, during more than 125 years of private ownership. By 1840, the most affluent of travelers ventured into the cave's darkness. Young men, bound by slavery, led them into the majestic, mysterious, and sometimes frightening labyrinth called Mammoth Cave. These young guides provided comfort, humor, safety, and intellect. In return, visitors gave them news of places far removed from the cave-riddled realm of Edmonson County, Kentucky.

These African Americans played a vital role in the development of cave tour routes and the visitor experience throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Their discoveries and stories continue to live on within the avenues and guided tours of the cave today. While each slave guide eventually saw their freedom, their life was fraught with hardship in a time when the country divided itself on slaves' place in society. During their life, men like Stephen Bishop, Mat and Nick Bransford, Ed Bishop, Bob Lively, and Ed Hawkins may have never realized the importance of their existence. Today we regard them as legends.

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Happy Days Lodge, located at 500 West Streetsboro Road (State Route 303) in Peninsula 44264, 1 mile west of State Route 8, is a restored Civilian Conservation Corps structure that provides a rustic ambiance for folk and traditional concerts, theater, lectures, and special event rentals. For more information on rentals, call CVNPA at (330) 657-2909 ext. 119.

CVNP encompasses 33,000 acres along the Cuyahoga River between Cleveland and Akron. Managed by the National Park Service, CVNP combines cultural, historical, recreational, and natural activities in one setting. For more information about the park, visit www.nps.gov/cuva/ or www.dayinthevalley.com/ or call (330) 657-2752 or (800) 445-9667.

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