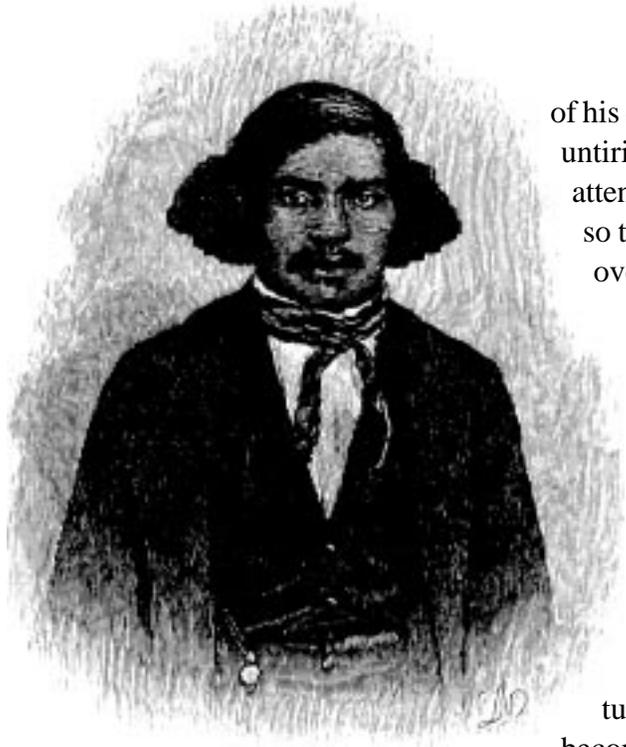


Mammoth Cave

National Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Stephen Bishop, Cave Guide



When Franklin Gorin and A.A. Harvey purchased Mammoth Cave in 1838, Gorin brought his young slave, the 17-year old Stephen Bishop, to be a new cave guide.

In October of 1839, Stephen met his new master. Gorin had sold Mammoth Cave to Dr. John Croghan.

“Stephen, handsome, good humored, intelligent, the most complete of guides, the presiding genius of this territory. He is a middle-sized mulatto, owned, as they say here, of handsome, bright features. He has occupied himself so frequently in exploring the various passages of the cavern, that there is now no living being who knows it so well. The discoveries made have been the result

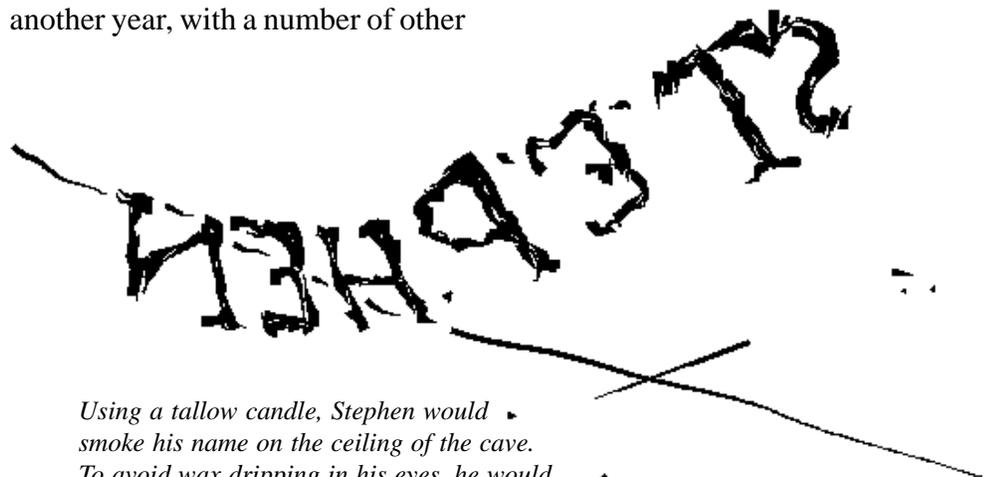
of his courage, intelligence, and untiring zeal. He is extremely attentive and polite, particularly so to the ladies, and he runs over what he has to say with such ease and readiness, and mingles his statement of facts with such lofty language, that all classes, male and female, listen with respect, and involuntarily smile at his remark. His business as a guide brought him so often in contact with the intellectual and scientific, that he has become acquainted with every geological specimen in the cave, and having a prodigious memory, has at his tongue’s every incident of interest that has transpired during his administration.”

“Stephen and Alfred belonged to Dr. Croghan, the late owner of the cave, and are to be manumitted in another year, with a number of other

slaves. They are now receiving wages, in order to enable them to begin freedom with a little capital, in Liberia, their destined home.” Stephen became a free man the following year, but he chose to remain at the cave.

Stephen died during the summer of 1857. He is buried in the “Old Guide’s Cemetery” on the ridgetop south of the cave entrance.

Quoted material taken from *Stephen Bishop, the Man and the Legend*



Using a tallow candle, Stephen would smoke his name on the ceiling of the cave. To avoid wax dripping in his eyes, he would use a mirror – and sometimes get the letters backward.