

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Rock Cabin Camp  
other names/site number Rock Cottage Court, Rock Cabin Court, Rock Cabin Court Café, BN-628  
Related Multiple Property NA

### 2. Location

street & number 5091 Mammoth Cave Road

NA	not for publication
X	vicinity

  
city or town Cave City  
state Kentucky code KY county Barren code 009 zip code \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X nomination    request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
   national    statewide X local

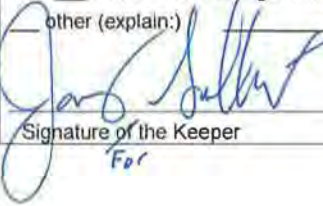
Applicable National Register Criteria:  
X A    B    C    D

 6-22-17  
Signature of certifying official/Title Craig Potts/SHPO Date  
Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.  
Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register    determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register    removed from the National Register  
   other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

 8-2-2017  
Signature of the Keeper For Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
10	4	buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
10	4	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

NA

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/hotel

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation

DOMESTIC/hotel

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other

foundation: Concrete

walls: Stone; limestone

roof: Asphalt

other:



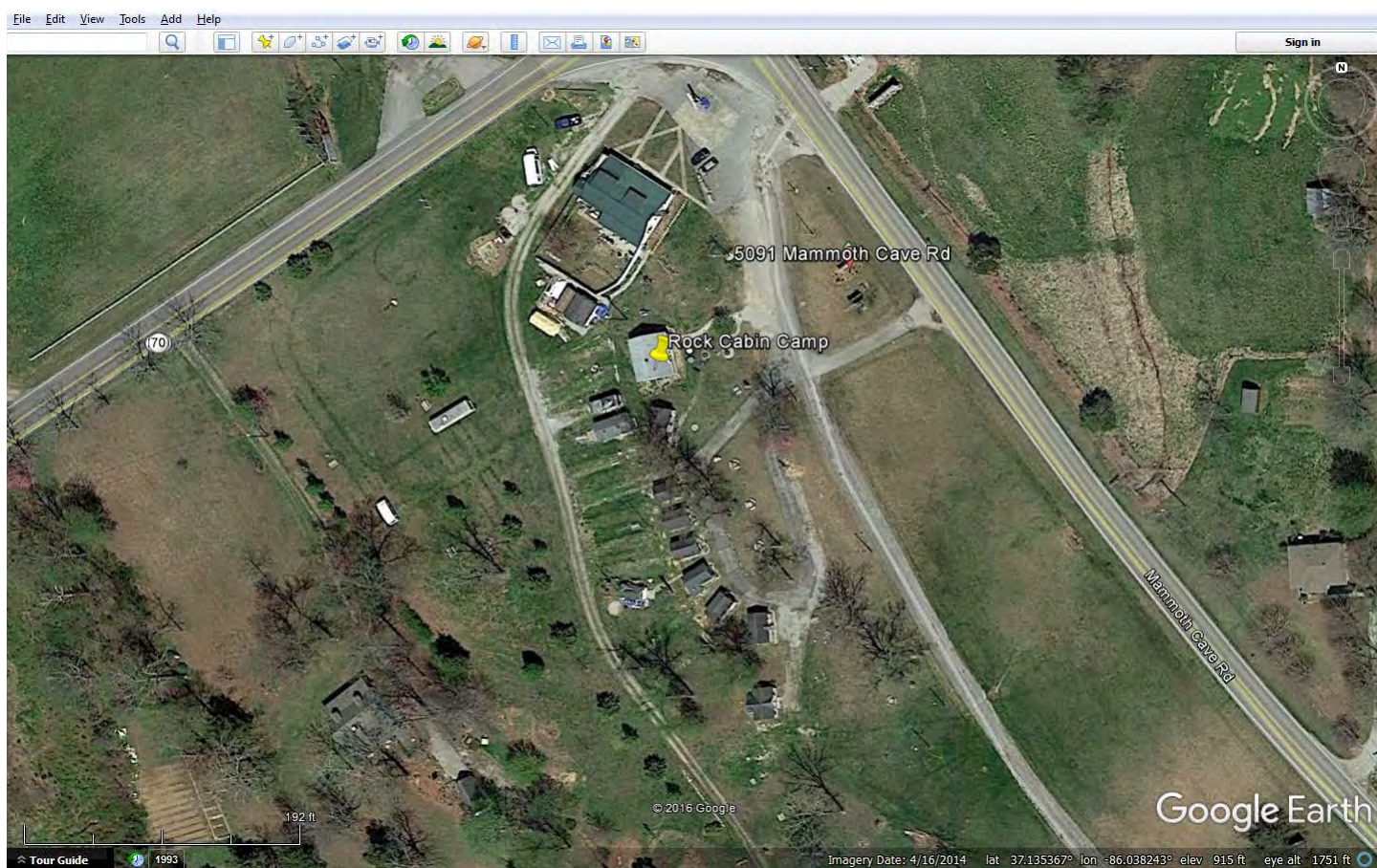
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## Narrative Description

### **Summary Paragraph**

Built in 1928, Rock Cabin Camp (BN-628) is located at 5091 Mammoth Cave Road, Cave City, Kentucky. The property is situated at the intersection of present-day Old Mammoth Cave Road and Mammoth Cave Road (State Route 70). Rock Cabin Camp is located approximately 1.4 miles southeast of Mammoth Cave National Park, and just 5 miles west of downtown Cave City (US 31 W). Rock Cabin Camp occupies a 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-acre tract of land on the south side of Mammoth Cave Road, and includes nine limestone cabins organized in a semi-crescent shape, with the exception of cabin #9, a 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-story home/office, and a noncontributing Bunk House, restroom facility, and two outbuilding. Designed with the automotive traveler in mind, each of the nine cabins features an adjacent parking spot.



**Rock Cabin Camp, Barren County, KY**

**Latitude: 37.135367°**

**Longitude -88.038243°**

### **Ownership and Use of Site**

Constructed in 1928, there is oral and photographic documentation that suggest that Francis Marion Self was the original owner of Rock Cabin Camp. Much of the information pertaining to ownership comes from questionnaires created and mailed to previous owners by the current owner, Ralph Skrovan. However, according to the available deed, Self purchased the property on September 4, 1935 from Rebecca Jane Neville and F.M. Self and his wife, Mrs. Sadie Self, owned the property until his death in 1943, when their son and two daughters, Eugene Self, Rebecca Self Baker, and Kathleen Self Binford, became sole heirs. Under Self family ownership, the name of the site was changed to Rock Cottage Court, then to Rock Cabin Court, and altered again to Rock Cabin Court Café, while the present day office was used as a restaurant and Mammoth Cave



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souvenir shop. Rock Cabin Camp remained in the Self family until it was sold in 1975 to Billy Renfro of Brownsville, Kentucky. According to Skrovan's questionnaires, Renfro sold the property to James H. Campbell of Cave City, Kentucky between 1988 and 1989, and the property remained under his ownership for approximately ten years. Campbell and family incorporated camping and renamed the property The Oakes Motel and Campground. Based on previous owner surveys, information on ownership between 1999 and 2010 is limited, but the current owners, Ralph and Adelina Skrovan, took over in February of 2011, and renamed the property Rock Cabin Camping.

### Description of Site

The current condition of the site has not changed dramatically since the Period of Significance, although an additional Bunk House has been added to accommodate visitors, an outbuilding behind Cabin 6, and an outbuilding is now located on the northwest side of the restroom facility, all of which are noncontributing structures. During the 1950s and 1960s, there was a Phillips 66 filling station on the northwestern end of the site, at the intersection of present-day Old Mammoth Cave Road and Mammoth Cave Road. While the filling station is no longer intact, the freestanding lighting unit still stands as a testament to the presence of automobile tourism to this area.



The original limestone gateposts still mark the entrance to the cabins, but the original archway, documented in historic photographs, has since deteriorated or been removed. Additionally, as the property changed hands and was renamed several times, an old blank metal sign still stands at the entrance of the site, with an electronic marquee display attached that is no longer in use. The new Rock Cabin Camping wooden sign, painted green with faux-stone text, stands at the entrance.

As the site is also used for camping, there are picnic tables, patio furniture, fire pits, and a grill behind (south of) the rock cabins. According to oral and photographic documentation, there was originally a tenth cabin, but it was sold or given to one of F.M. Self's sons and removed from the property. This removal occurred prior to Self's death in 1943. The current owner believes that the tenth cabin was only moved about a mile down the road in Barren County, but if that was the case, it has been modified beyond recognition. Rock Cabin Camp is located at the present day intersection of Old Mammoth Cave Road and Mammoth Cave Road, and a stretch of the original Old Mammoth Cave Road still runs directly in front of the cabins, parallel to Mammoth Cave Road. This paved tract of road, along with the site's proximity to Mammoth Cave National Park, demonstrate that Rock Cabin Camp was ideally situated as a site for tourist commerce.

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### Office/Owners' Dwelling/Former Café

The original office for Rock Cabin Court and dwelling for the owners, as well as the Rock Cabin Court Café, differs in appearance significantly from the rock cabins. A 1½-story home, similar in appearance to a duplex, the building has two distinct units, though these units are physically linked as one long building measuring approximately 50 feet in length along the front (north) façade. The left side of the building served as the dwelling for the owners while the right side served as offices. The right side is also where the Café was once located, discussed in more detail in the Narrative of Significance.



### *Front (North) Façade*

From the side, the building's form is that of the bungalow, with what appears to be an engaged front porch running the length of the front (north) façade. The building is sided in white vinyl, made to appear as wood lap siding. The roof is a side-facing gable with a break at the front porch, clad with green corrugated metal roofing. While the porch was later enclosed, a single brick column base exists at the left hand side, the northeastern-most corner of the building. It is possible that only the dwelling portion of the building (the left side) featured a porch, later enclosed, or that both sides had porches that were enclosed at separate times. Currently, there is a wall separating the enclosed porch on the left with the front-most room on the right side. Above both units of the building there are dormers with single-sash three-pane windows. Similar in size to each other, the left dormer features two of these windows, while the right features four. All are now covered with metal one-over-one storm windows.

With the porches now enclosed, the ground level of the building features one-over-one metal framed windows running the length of the front façade, broken only by two front doors and a small portion of structural wall between the original dwelling and office space. This character suggests that the front porch was not enclosed as one unit. The front door of the left hand side is a multi-paned white metal door with an aluminum storm door. The right hand door to the historic (and current) office space is an unpainted wooden nine-lite half-paneled door. Both doorways have three concrete steps leading to the door. The office door has a simple wooden handrail painted white to the right of the steps.

### *Left (East) and Right (West) Façade*



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The left unit of the building, the dwelling side, features a lean-to addition in the back with an uninterrupted roofline with a break, mirroring the front break. As a result, the left (east) façade, measuring approximately 42 feet, is longer than the right (west) façade, which is approximately 34 feet. With the back shed addition and the front-enclosed porch, the east façade can be broken into three parts visually, the back shed addition, the main massing of the building, and the front-enclosed porch.

The back shed addition has no windows on this façade. The middle section, the main massing of the house itself is broken into three bays. The far left bay of the main portion of the house features large paired windows, double hung with three-over-one wooden sashes. The middle bay of the main portion features a smaller window, also three-over-one. The far right bay of the main massing of the house also has a small three-over-one window. Between the matching middle and right bays, there is an exterior brick chimney that rises to the roofline but is covered by the overhanging eave of the roof. Because the structure is 1½ stories, a tall three-over-one window also stands in the upper story of the center bay. All ground-level windows now feature storm windows, though the upper story window does not.



**Self Family photographs in front of Main Office**

The far right portion of this façade, the enclosed front porch, has three metal windows matching those described in the description of the front façade, as well as the same brick column base also mentioned in the description.

The west façade of the building, which includes the office unit, features eight one-over-one metal-framed windows running the length of the façade, but interrupted by a wooden exterior staircase. The staircase steps face north, providing access to a small porch that runs along the west façade, above the first story of the building. While the staircase obscures a portion of the façade, a single one-over-one metal window is visible in the center of the west gable.

*Back(South) Façade*

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As mentioned, the south façade does not feature the same lean-to addition of the front (North) façade. With the exception of this observation, I was unable to access the back façade or provide a detailed description due to fence enclosure around the back portion of the house and yard.

### Cabin #1

Cabin 1 is the first cabin of eight cabins in a semi-crescent spatial organization, the farthest northwest cabin on the property. The roof of the cabin features asphalt shingle with a brick chimney just left of center. The cabin measures approximately 24 feet 9 inches wide across the front (north) façade and 28 feet 9 inches in length. The cabin features exposed eaves, with gutters on the front (north) façade. The cabin is a side-gabled building, but the front façade features a cross-gable (dividing the front façade into thirds, the front gable would only be as wide as the middle third), reminiscent of a three gable cottage. Divided into three bays, the central bay is located under the cross-gable. In the gable, just below the eave, there is a decorative cross-shaped design made of bricks incorporated into the stonework. The cabin is clad in textured limestone that is laid in a way that resembles fieldstone. The center bay features paired three-over-one vinyl windows set in wood casing, and the owner currently keeps a window air conditioner in the right window. The far left bay does not feature any windows or door openings. The full right bay is an engaged porch with a rounded archway. Three stone clad steps lead up to the engaged porch, with a simple wooden railing on the right-hand side, crafted out of two 4x4s and a 2x4 handrail.

Describing the porch in more detail, the engaged porch occupies the entirety of the far northwest corner of the structure. As a result, the west façade features the same rounded archway as found on the front façade. The engaged porch measures at roughly 10 feet squared. There are two front doors to the cabin, one on each interior wall of the engaged porch. In addition to the rounded archway on the west façade, this façade features two three-over-one windows, matching those of the front façade.



Cabin 1



Cabin 1

The back (south) façade of the cabin features three windows and a single door. The windows are spaced equally apart, dividing the back façade into thirds. The far left and far right windows match those on the front side of the cabin. In between the far left and the center window, is the back door. The central window is smaller than the far left and right windows, and the sill is located roughly six feet about the ground.

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The left (east) façade features two one-over-one wooden windows, evenly spaced on the façade. All the windows are doorway casing, as well as the eaves, feature bright yellow accent paint, and approximately a foot of gray painted concrete foundation is visible on all sides of the cabin.

## Cabin #2

Cabin 2 is a two-unit structure, with a floor plan reminiscent of two of the smaller cabins (cabins 3-7) combined. The cabin features a cross-gable in the center of the front façade, and the roof is covered in asphalt shingle. There is a small single bulb installed in the peak of the eave. The cabin is clad in textured limestone that is laid in a way that resembles fieldstone, and features exposed eaves that have been painted bright yellow. The cabin measures at approximately 26 feet across the front (north) and back (south) façades and 13 feet along the east and west façades.

The front façade is symmetrical. The right side of the front façade features a paneled white metal door to the left and a three-over-one vinyl window to the right. The left portion of the front façade features a white metal paneled door to the right and a three-over-one vinyl window to the left. Both doors have a white aluminum storm door, and all doors and windows feature hunter green headers. Two cement steps, painted the same hunter green color lead up to each door and the concrete foundation is painted gray.



Cabin 2

There is a single three-over-one wooden window just left of center on the right (west) façade. The left (east) façade mirrors the right (west) façade, with a single three-over-one window just right of center, and both wooden windows, window trim, and headers feature the bright yellow paint used on the eaves and on the rest of the cabins.

The back (south) façade is divided into three bays, with two brick chimneys dividing the three bays. The exterior brick chimneys rise to the roofline but are covered by the overhang of the eave of the roof. In the center bay, between the two chimneys, there is a small one over one white vinyl window, approximately six feet from the ground. This small window also features a bright yellow header.



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### Cabins #3-7

Cabins 3 through 7 are individual free-standing single-cell units, measuring at approximately 10 feet 3 inches wide on the front (north) façade and 16 feet in length. All five of these cabins feature a front facing gable, with a small single bulb installed in the peak of the eave of each gable, lighting the entrance to each cabin. The eaves are exposed on all of these cabins as well. Each cabin also features an asphalt shingle roof. Some of the cabins feature a small metal chimney to the right of center, but some have been removed, as the current owner has begun renovating the interior of cabins 6 and 7.



**Cabins 3-7**



**Cabin 3**

Dividing the front (north) façade into two bays, there is a three-over-one window on the left bay. The windows on the front (north) façade of all of the cabins are vinyl replacements, but they maintain the three-over-one design of the original wooden framed windows still intact on the rest of the façades. Each of these front windows features a plastic hunter green windowsill planter. The front door of each of the five cabins is on the right side of the front façade (right bay), and appears to be a paneled white metal door, and only cabins 3, 4, and 5 have aluminum storm doors. Both the door and the window casings feature the bright yellow accent paint found on all but cabin 2. The cabins are all clad in textured limestone that is laid in a way that resembles fieldstone.

The west façade of each cabin features no windows. The back (south) façade of the five cabins features two symmetrical smaller windows, raised approximately five feet off the ground. These windows are currently sealed off with plywood painted yellow to match the exposed eaves, and window and door casings, except in the case of cabins 6 and 7 where the windows have been removed and the hole permanently sealed with concrete. The east façade of each cabin features a single one-over-one wooden sash window, and air-conditioning units are currently installed in each.

Cabin 6 features a lean-to addition on the southeast corner of the cabin. The cinderblock addition adds approximately 2 feet 6 inches to the back (south) façade and spans approximately 5 feet of the 16-foot east façade. Just before the lean-to roof extension, there is a small metal chimney on the southwest corner of the roof, rather than on the right hand side of the cabin. The wooden door to this addition as well as the rafters are painted in the same yellow accent paint as the window wells. Cabin 7 also has a rear lean-to structure that houses the water heater for this cabin. It is detached from the building save for the pipes that connect the water heater. The addition is approximately 4 feet square and clad in wood siding with an asphalt shingled roof.

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The interior of cabin 6 has also been completely renovated down to the sheetrock. The ceiling was altered to be vaulted and covered in wood bead board and the floor was completely replaced and carpeted. The bathroom has been tiled and all the fixtures have been replaced. At this time, the interior of cabin 7 is being renovated and is currently stripped to the sheetrock. It will receive the same treatment as cabin 6. The current owner plans to renovate all of the cabins in a similar fashion.



**Cabin 4**



**Cabin 5**



**Cabin 6**

Two concrete steps, painted a hunter green color, lead up to the door of each cabin, and approximately 8 inches of the concrete foundation is visible on all sides of the cabins.

### **Cabin #8**

Cabin 8 is the last in the crescent pattern of cabins, and due to the crescent organization, the front façade of cabin 8 is west facing. Measuring at 12 feet on the front (west) façade, this cabin greatly resembles cabins 3 through 7, but the door is on the left hand side and the window on the right. This front window features the same hunter green plastic windowsill planter as cabins 3 through 7. Additionally, whereas the door and window on the front façade of cabins 3 through 7 are positioned equidistant from the edges of the façade, cabin 9 is longer on the right hand side. The door and window materials are the same as cabins 3 through 7, as are the paint colors and detailing, but this cabin features a one-over-one window on the right hand side of the front (west) façade, rather than a three-over-one window.



**Cabin 8**



**Cabin 9**



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The right (south) façade features no window or door openings. The cabin measures approximately 19 feet and 3 inches in length. The back (east) façade features two symmetrical smaller windows, raised approximately five feet off the ground. These windows are currently sealed off with plywood painted bright yellow to match the exposed eaves and windows and door casings. There is a chimney in the center of the right (north) façade, clad with the same limestone as the remainder of the cabin. To the right of the chimney, there is a one-over-one window, with the top sash removed to install an air conditioning unit.

Two concrete steps lead up to the door of the cabin, and approximately 8 inches of the concrete foundation is visible on all sides of the cabin.

### **Cabin #9**

Located outside of the semi-crescent organization, cabin 9 is the furthest east of the nine cabins, situated behind cabin 8. Due to this shift in location, cabin 9 is oriented similarly to the first seven cabins, with the front façade facing north. Cabin 9 is very similar to cabin 2 in terms of door and window positioning, and is also a two-unit structure with a floor plan reminiscent of two of the smaller cabins (cabins 3-7) combined. The cabin features a cross-gable in the center of the front façade, and the roof is covered in asphalt shingle. There is a small single bulb installed in the peak of the eave. The cabin is clad in textured limestone that is laid in a way that resembles fieldstone, and features exposed eaves that have been painted bright yellow. The cabin measures approximately 21 feet 3 inches across the front (north) and back (south) façades and 13 feet along the east and west façades. Similar to cabin 2, cabin 9 is reminiscent of a three-gable cottage, but the distance between the windows and doors on the front (north) façade is significantly less due to the different in width between the two cabins.

Dividing the front façade into two halves, each half mirrors the other. The right side of the front (north) façade features a paneled white metal door to the left and a three-over-one wooden sash window to the right. The left portion of the front façade features a white metal paneled door to the right and a three-over-one wooden sash window to the left. Both doors have an aluminum storm door, and both doors have windows that feature bright yellow headers. The door casing and windows sashes feature the bright yellow accent paint as well. Two concrete steps lead up to each door, and the concrete foundation is painted gray and only slightly visible on the front (north) façade.

On the right (west) and left (east) façade, the stone tapers off from the roofline at a diagonal with the remainder of the cabin, which is clad in vinyl siding. The west façade features a single one-over-one wooden sash window on the center, with an air conditioning unit currently installed in it.

There are no windows on the back (south) façade, but the center of this façade features a gabled ell addition. The ell extends approximately four feet from the south wall and spans 10 feet 6 inches off the back (south) façade. The left (east) façade also does not feature any windows or doors.

### **Noncontributing Buildings:**

There are four noncontributing buildings on the site: the Bunk House, located south of the semi-crescent row of cabins with a south-facing front façade, two outbuildings, and a restroom facility, both located west of the semi-crescent row. The Bunk House is a prefabricated wood structure and has been outfitted for additional accommodation. The Bunk House features unfinished wood planking and an engaged porch. One of the outbuildings adjacent to the restroom facility resembles a prefabricated shed. The other outbuilding is located south of cabin 6. This cinderblock outbuilding has been painted white and has an asphalt shingle roof in a green

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octagon pattern. The door to this outbuilding is vertical wood planking. Similar to the other outbuilding, this structure is used for storage. The restroom facility features a front-facing gable with two doors on the front (north) façade, and three doors on the back (south) façade which is clad in wood.

**Changes to the Property since the Period of Significance**

Although many of the wooden windows of the cabins are still intact, vinyl replacements have been installed on all front façade windows, with the exception of 9. Despite this modification, the windows retain the original three-over-one design of most of the wooden windows. The exterior of the cabins have not experienced any significant changes since the Period of Significance and retain the feel of the early tourist accommodation. As previously stated, cabin 9 has been partially sided, but according to historic photographs, the original building featured this partial stone form and partial vertical wood planking.

Cabins 6 and 7 have received extensive renovations to the interior, but these have not altered the exterior of the cabins or diminished their significance as tourist accommodations.



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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce

**Period of Significance**

1928-1965

**Significant Dates**

1928

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance**

Due to its proximity to Mammoth Cave and US 31 West, the property was a vital site for tourist commerce, and contributed to the commercial development in the Cave region from its construction in 1928 until the opening of Interstate 65 in 1965.

**Criteria Considerations NA**

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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

Rock Cabin Camp (BN-628) meets National Register Criterion A and is significant on a local level in Barren County, Kentucky, due to its association with and contribution to “Tourist Commerce in the Mammoth Cave Region, 1928-1965.” Rock Cabin Camp’s proximity to Highway US 31 W and Mammoth Cave National Park placed it in an ideal setting for tourist traffic. The development of Rock Cabin Camp paralleled the evolution of the motel in America, and it exemplifies the trend in commercial development in the Cave region and along US 31 W. Located at the intersection of Mammoth Cave Road and Old Mammoth Cave Road, Rock Cabin Camp afforded automobile tourists the feeling of a rustic escape to Mammoth Cave, while providing the amenities of home. Previous owners took advantage of this lively location and atmosphere, opening a café and souvenir shop in the present-day office.

The period of significance, 1928-1965 covers the two main events of the complex’s commercial life: the construction of the cabins in 1928 and the opening of Interstate 65 in 1965, which began the significant decline in motor tourism along US 31 W.

### **Historic Context: Tourist Commerce in the Mammoth Cave Region, 1928-1965**

Preceding the advent of automobiles and accessible roadways in Kentucky, the Old Nashville stagecoach ran through the Mammoth Cave region, providing access to the cavernous limestone rich attraction. As a testament to the lure of this region, prior to the completion of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in 1859, “travel over this road was greater than over any other road in Kentucky” (Kennedy 2004:52). Mammoth Cave’s popularity as a tourist destination continued to escalate after the mid-nineteenth century, and the introduction of the automobile drastically altered the landscape, granting visitors an opportunity to explore the Cave region on their own accord, and enhancing Mammoth Cave’s accessibility and popularity as a tourist destination. Once introduced, the public quickly invested in automobiles; “Across the nation, car ownership rose exponentially. In Kentucky, motor vehicle ownership rose from 20,000 in 1915 to 127,000 in 1921 to 1 million in 1958” (Kennedy 2004:4).

Paralleling the introduction and popularization of the automobile was the development and promotion of the Dixie Highway. The Dixie Highway was one of the first roads that linked different parts of the nation and “allowed freedom of movement not available through the railroad and riverboat network” (Ridington 2002:15). Upon completion, publicizing the new Highway and the attractions along this route was a top priority, and the Dixie Highway Association “published detailed local and national maps to assist the motoring traveler with main routes and detours” (Kennedy 2004:8). Complete with hard surfacing in 1930, the stretch of the highway that ran through south-central Kentucky, now known as US 31 W, provided access to the heart of Cave City and the Mammoth Cave region. In response to the significant change in landscape brought about by increased accessibility of automobile travel, commercial development arose along US 31 W, catering specifically to the motor tourist, who were now free to veer off the main route and take detours at will (Ridington 2002:16). While Mammoth Cave had been a popular destination for L & N Railroad and Mammoth Cave Railroad travelers since the mid-nineteenth century, this new route enabled significantly greater access to the region, spurring an increase in lodging and tourist accommodation.

Although Mammoth Cave National Park was not officially established until 1941, in 1928 the Kentucky legislature took a crucial step in paving the way for this establishment. The legislature established the Kentucky



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National Park Commission and granted this body the power of eminent domain (Lally 1990:53). Just two years after the 1928 authorization of Mammoth Cave as a National Park, US 31 W was completed, prompting tourist travel and commercial development in the region. Officially established as a National Park in 1941, Mammoth Cave was “actively marketed and promoted as a wonder of the world since the early 19th century” (Kennedy 2004:51). As the magnitude of Cave region tourism increased, the need to accommodate tourists became immense, and commercial establishments and lodging flourished as automobile tourist took root in the region. While the taverns and inns of the region housed travelers along the Old Louisville and Nashville stagecoach route, motels were instead oriented to this new demographic of automobile travelers.

As tourists flocked to the region for an opportunity to experience the wilderness and scenery of the National Park, motels catered to such desires, providing lodging that complimented the park experience. Overnight stays in cabin camps, cottage courts, and motor courts provided visitors with a feeling of the full rustic experience of visiting the cave region, while providing the amenities of home. Rather than spending the night in a tent, travelers could sleep in their own private cabin or cottage, affording tourists the illusion of ruggedness and self-sufficiency, complete with a private parking space, kitchenette, and bathroom. Along US 31 W in the Mammoth Cave region, motels like Horse Shoe Camp in Bowling Green (NRIS 97001346) and Wigwam Village No. 2 in Cave City (NRIS 88000180) have already been listed on the National Register for their importance to tourist commerce in the Mammoth Cave region (Brown and Sculle 1988; Johnston 1997). Operating during the same period, these properties, along with Rock Cabin Court and others, gave tourists easy access to Mammoth Cave, with a rustic kitschy lodging experience.

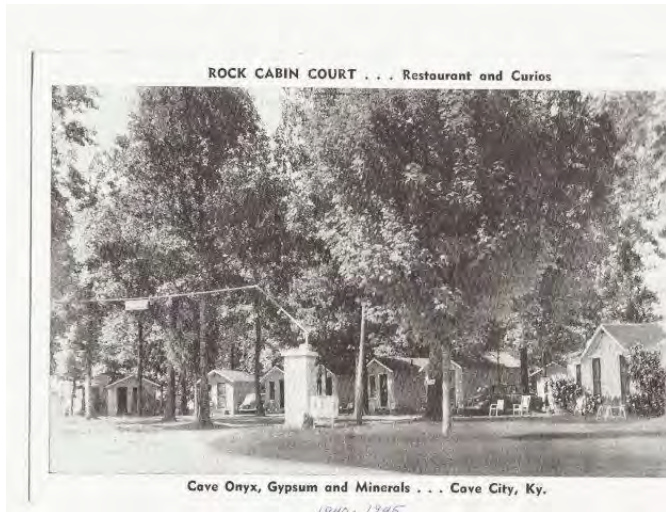
The opening of Interstate 65 through Warren and Barren counties in 1965 marked the beginning of the decline in commerce associated with automobile travel and a significant change in commercial land use patterns (Johnston 1997:11). Although many establishments attempted to adapt their services to the altered landscape, “numerous businesses, such as cottage courts and motor courts, ceased operations or converted their facilities into apartments,” thus 1965 represents the end of the Period of Significance (Johnston 1997:11).

### **Evaluation of the Significance of Rock Cabin Camp within the Context of Tourist Commerce in the Mammoth Cave Region, 1928-1965**

Rock Cabin Camp is located along Mammoth Cave Road (Rt. 70), and its proximity to the Cave region, specifically Mammoth Cave National Park and US Highway 31 W, made it significant for its contribution to commercial development in the Cave region between 1928 and 1965. Located only 1.4 miles southeast of the entrance to Mammoth Cave National Park, and directly off of US 31W, Rock Cabin Camp’s optimal location made it an integral accommodation site for motor tourists traveling from US 31 W to Mammoth Cave Road to reach their destination at Mammoth Cave. At the intersection of US Highway 31W and Route 70, downtown Cave City provides primary access to Mammoth Cave National Park. This critical point of intersection is considered “the favored route of the millions of tourists who visit Mammoth Cave and the scores of private recreational attractions, motels and gift shops lining US Highway 31W and State Route 70 in Barren County” (Brown and Sculle 1988:2). Exemplary of its significant position as a tourist epicenter in the region, Barren County currently has 37 listings on the National Register, including the Cave City Commercial District. Rock Cabin Camp’s significance derives from its commercial endeavors, including a lively café that catered to tourists and travelers, including Mammoth Cave memorabilia and material culture sold on site. These enterprises, coupled with the sense of rustic lodging that Rock Cabin Camp afforded travelers hoping for the full Mammoth Cave experience, made Rock Cabin Camp a significant site of tourist accommodation and commerce.

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**“Rock Cabin Court...Restaurant and Curios”**

**Back of souvenir plate from Rock Cabin Court**

The morphology of Rock Cabin Camp followed a national pattern. Outlined by Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers in *The Motel America*, the morphology of motels reflected a transition in the early 1930s from *cabin* to *cottage*, and they suggest that after 1930, “motel names increasingly included the word *court*” (Jakle 1996:41). As a viable site of commerce in the Mammoth Cave Region, the name changes of Rock Cabin Camp are parallel to these broader national patterns. Originally opened as Rock Cabin Camp, the information provided in the questionnaires prepared by the current owner, Ralph Skrovan, suggests that the name was altered in 1935 to Rock Cottage Court, and renamed again to Rock Cabin Court sometime prior to the mid-1940s. The owners retained this name until 1975, when new owners acquired it. Additionally, Rock Cabin Camp followed the pattern of the early motel design, in which owners maximized their available road facing property by utilizing the physical layout of their buildings; “configurations such as U-shaped, L-shaped, and row plans were all ways of taking up space along the roadside” (Kennedy 2004:52). Rock Cabin Camp exhibits this strategy, utilizing an adaptation of the recognizable semi-crescent spatial organization to maximize their space along the roadside.

Taking advantage of the Cave region’s lively tourist market, the Self family, who are believed to be the original owners based on oral and photographic record, opened Rock Cabin Court Café in the mid- to late-1930s, housing it in their office. Serving food at first, the café developed into a significant tourist stop for Mammoth Cave souvenirs. Coinciding with the popularization and increased accessibility of motor tourism, “many cabin camps were combined with gasoline stations, cafés, and other businesses” (Jakle 1996:40). In a questionnaire conducted by the current owner, Larry W. Self, great-grandson of Francis Marion Self, proclaims the commercial significance of Rock Cabin Camp, stating, “Business at this place was over running at times. [It featured] souvenirs and [a] gift shop, and [in] earlier days it had a café shop, and employed six or seven people to help with cooking and serving food, cleaning cabins and general upkeep” (Self 4). As tourists traveled to the Cave region, Rock Cabin Camp not only provided an overnight accommodation experience in exceptionally close proximity to Mammoth Cave. The site also contributed to the region’s economy by employing locals. Self’s recollection of Rock Cabin Court Café attests to Rock Cabin Camp’s significance in relation to the tourist economy, and as a motel site that generated commerce in the Mammoth Cave region. Additionally, indicative of

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the liveliness of Rock Cabin Camp, and the significance of its location, a Phillips 66 filling station was incorporated at the site during the 1950s or early 1960s. At the highly trafficked intersection of Mammoth Cave Road (Rt. 70) and Old Mammoth Cave Road, the filling station indicates the vital connection between Rock Cabin Camp's location and auto tourism.

Seeing this thriving tourist market, Rock Cabin Camp sold Mammoth Cave-themed souvenirs to tourists when the National Park opened in 1941. Mammoth Cave Snowball Dining Room Staffordshire plates were sold exclusively at Rock Cabin Camp. Produced in Staffordshire, England, these collectable souvenir plates were imported specifically for retail sale at Rock Cabin Court Café. Depicting the Snow Ball Dining Room, the back inscription reads "Imported for Rock Cabin Court, Cave City, K.Y." Additionally, various Rock Cabin Camp postcards were sold and circulated in the region, as well as across the country. This Rock Cabin memorabilia was updated through the 1930s and 1940s to follow the property's name changes over time. The creation and distribution of Rock Cabin Camp material culture demonstrates Rock Cabin Camp's commercial success and popularity among Mammoth Cave tourists.

### **Integrity of the Significance of Rock Cabin Camp in Light of its Current Physical Condition**

The significance of Rock Cabin Camp is interpreted according to the terms of Criterion A, in which its significance relies upon its association with Tourist Commerce in the Mammoth Cave Region, 1928-1965. The integrity factors that best demonstrate the property's significance within that context are location, setting, design, materials, feeling, and association.

The **location** and **setting** of Rock Cabin Camp made it a vital lodging site and tourism in the Cave region. Still intact at the intersection of Route 70 and Old Mammoth Cave Road, Rock Cabin Camp fully retains this integrity of location and setting. Although a tenth cabin was removed from the site in the early 1930s, the remainder of the property is intact. Situated on 5¾ acres, the campsite and sprawling property provided an ideal setting for tourist accommodation between 1928 and 1965.

The location, setting, and particularly the integrity of **design**, reflect the spatial organization and historical associations of early cabin and cottage accommodations. The semi-crescent organization of Rock Cabin Camp, as well as the designated parking spaces alongside each cabin, exemplify the development and organization of cabin camps and cottage courts in the 1930s. Rock Cabin Camp's design gave tourists the feeling of sleeping in a rustic cabin, while providing the amenities of home; this design remains intact. While the original entrance on the west end of the semi-crescent is still in use, with the introduction of US 31 W, Old Mammoth Cave Road was abandoned and the entrance on the east side, while still marked with limestone pillars, is no longer in use.

Situated in the cavernous limestone region of south-central Kentucky, the cabins' builders utilized this local resource. The use of limestone contributes to the site's retention of a high degree of **material** integrity. Although several of the original wood windows have been updated with vinyl replacements, the windows retain the original three-over-one design of most of the wooden windows, not significantly reducing the material integrity of the site, and retaining integrity of feeling and design.

Rock Cabin Camp's semi-crescent spatial organization, proximity to Mammoth Cave National Park, spacious landscape, and setting convey a strong sense of integrity of **feeling**. The nine individual cabins



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provided travelers the feeling of an escape to the expansive Cave region, yet with the convenience of modern amenities. This feeling and integrity of **association** remains intact, and the presence of fire pits and picnic tables continue to convey the original use of Rock Cabin Camp as a site of tourist accommodation and commerce. Although the Rock Cabin Court Café is no longer in business, the office and owners’ dwelling is still suggestive of its use during the Period of Significance. The portion of the filling station that is still intact remains indicative of Rock Cabin Camp’s association with tourist commerce and Mammoth Cave exploration.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Brown, Claudia R. and Keith Sculle. Listed January 1988. Wigwam Village No. 2. Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Jakle, John A., Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers. 1996. *The Motel in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Johnston, Janet L. Listed July 31, 1997. Horse Shoe Camp. Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Kennedy, Rachel M. and William J. Macintire. 2004. *Roadside Architecture of Kentucky’s Dixie Highways: A Tour Down Routes 31E and 31W*. Preservation Kentucky. (website)

Lally, Kelly A. Listed October 1, 1990. Mammoth Cave National Park Historic Resource Study. Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Ridington, Amber. 2002. “At the Crossroads Commercial Music and Community Experience The Quonset Auditorium – A Roadhouse on the Dixie Highway.” MA thesis, Western Kentucky University.

Self, Larry W. Rock Cabin Camping Questionnaire. Prepared by Ralph Skrovan.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_ BN-628 \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** 5.75 acres

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

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(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37 08 07 N

Longitude: 86 02 18 W

**UTM References**

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

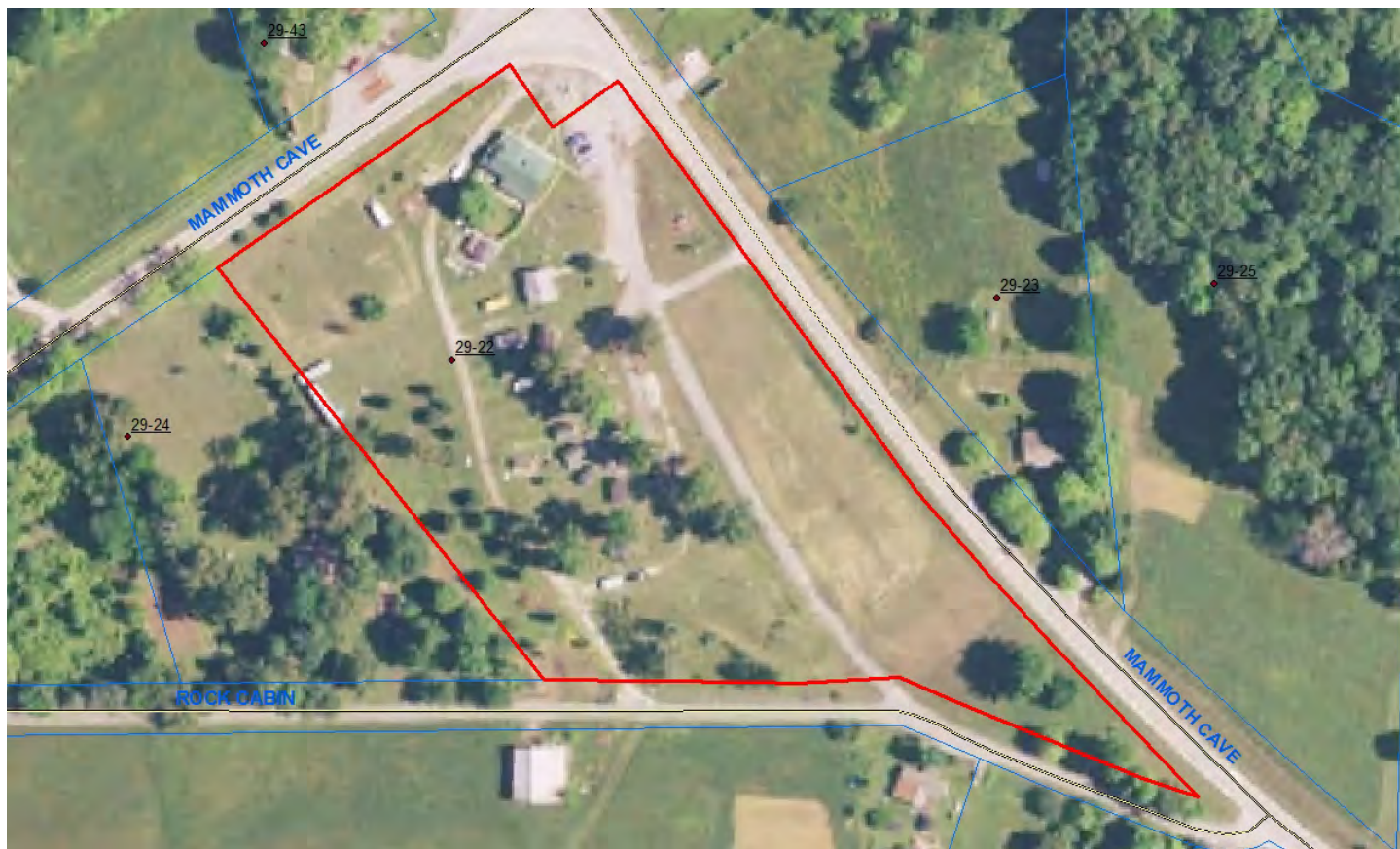
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The area proposed for listing is a 5.75-acre parcel defined by the Barren County Property Valuation Administrator (PVA) as 29-22, and depicted on the following PVA mapping:



**Boundary Justification**

This boundary was selected because it includes the major features of Rock Cabin Camp – the cabins, office/owner’s home, campsites, entrances, and remnants of the old gas station. The area selected maintains the integrity of the property from the Period of Significance.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Rachel Haberman and Kaitlyn Berle  
organization: Department of Folk Studies, Western Kentucky University  
street & number: 562 E. Main Ave. # A2  
city or town: Bowling Green state: Kentucky zip code: 42101  
e-mail rachelsianhaberman@gmail.com  
telephone: 720-648-9970  
date: November 29, 2016

**Photographs:**

**Name of Property:** Rock Cabin Camp  
**City or Vicinity:** Cave City  
**County:** Barren  
**State:** Kentucky  
**Photographer:** Rachel Haberman  
**Date Photographed:** November 23, 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- Photo 1 of 23:** Front façade of the office/owners' dwelling. Camera pointing south.
- Photo 2 of 23:** Front façade of Cabin #1. Camera pointing south.
- Photo 3 of 23:** Front (north) and west façade of Cabin #1. Camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 4 of 23:** Front (north) and west façade of Cabin #2. Camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 5 of 23:** Front façade of Cabins #3-7. Camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 6 of 23:** Front (north) and west façade of Cabin #3. Camera pointing southwest.
- Photo 7 of 23:** Front (north) and west façade of Cabin #4. Camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 8 of 23:** Front façade of Cabin #5. Camera pointing south.
- Photo 9 of 23:** Front (north) and east façade of Cabin #6 with rear shed addition. Camera pointing southwest.
- Photo 10 of 23:** Front façade of Cabin #7. Camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 11 of 23:** Front (west) and north façade of Cabin #8. Camera pointing east.
- Photo 12 of 23:** Front (north) and west façade of Cabin #9. Camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 13 of 23:** Rock Cabin Camp west entrance and front façade of Cabins #2-8. Camera pointing southeast.
- Photo 14 of 23:** Rock Cabin Camp historic east entrance and front façade of Cabin #9. Camera pointing south.
- Photo 15 of 23:** Historic postcard labeled "Rock Cabin Camp."
- Photo 16 of 23:** Historic postcard labeled "Rock Cottage Court."
- Photo 17 of 23:** Historic postcard labeled "Rock Cabin Court."
- Photo 18 of 23:** Historic photograph of the front façade of office/Rock Cabin Court Café. Camera pointing south.



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**Photo 19 of 23:** Historic photograph of the Self family and the front façade of the office/Rock Cabin Court Café. Camera pointing south.

**Photo 20 of 23:** Historic photograph of the Self family and the front façade of the office/Rock Cabin Court Café. Camera pointing south.

**Photo 21 of 23:** Mammoth Cave Snowball Dining Room Staffordshire Plate with Rock Cabin Court engraving.

**Photo 22 of 23:** Historic photograph of Francis Marion Self.

**Photo 23 of 23:** Historic photograph of Cabin #10. Also visible on the right is the original plank siding on Cabin #9.

**Aerial Map of Rock Cabin Camp (2016)**

**Map of Rock Cabin Camp (2016)**

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**Property Owner:**

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name Ralph Skrovan  
street & number 5091 Mammoth Cave Road telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Cave City state Kentucky zip code 42127



























































Rock Cabin Camp, Cave City, Ky.



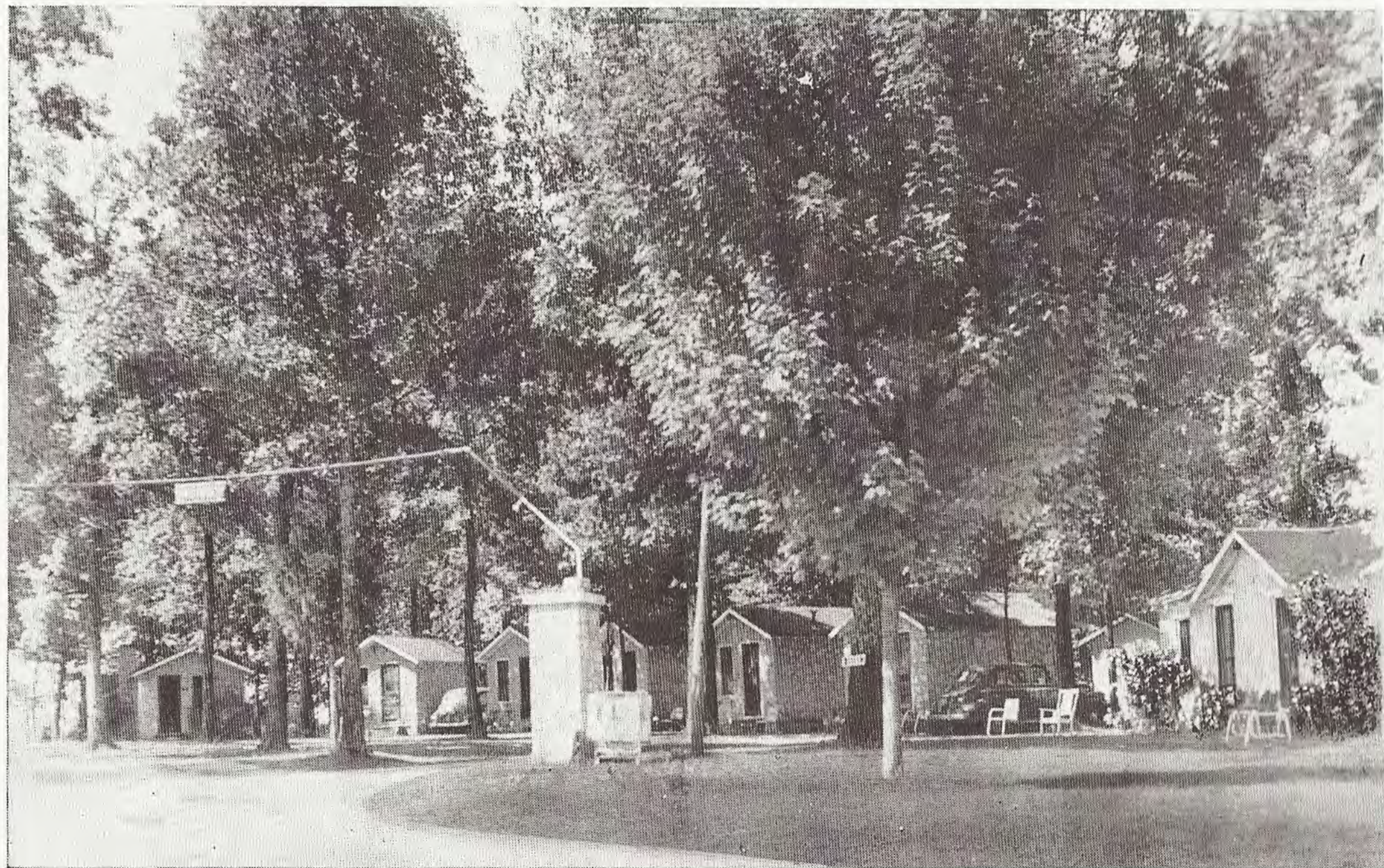
ROCK COTTAGE COURT . . . Restaurant and Curios



Cave Onyx, Gypsum and Minerals . . . Cave City, Ky.



**ROCK CABIN COURT . . . Restaurant and Curios**



**Cave Onyx, Gypsum and Minerals . . . Cave City, Ky.**

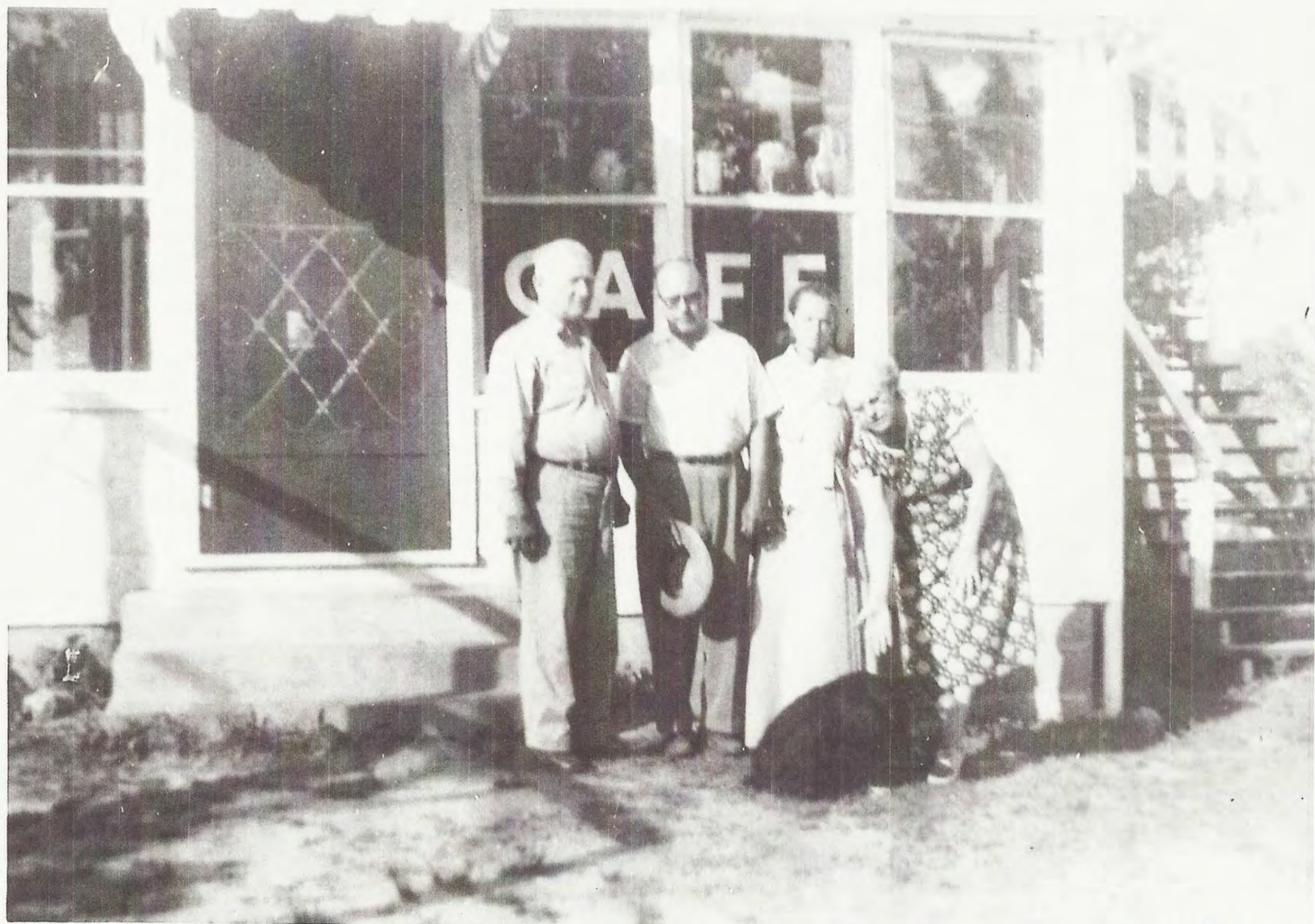
*1940 - 1945*





1945 - 1946





L TO R- Jesse Baker, Eugene Self, ELATA SELF, Rebecca SELF BAKER + Dog 'Sissy'





FRONT ROW- L-R Eugene Seif, Belle Neville  
BACK ROW my dad STANLEY SEIF, CCARA NEVILLE SEIF, HET-FATHER Jimmy G. Neville-  
1957/6





IMPORTED FOR  
ROCK CABIN COURT  
CAVE CITY K.Y.

52  
7





FRANCIS MARION SELF + DOG "WADE"  
1868 - 1943  
ORIGINAL OWNER







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 6/23/2017      Date of Pending List: 7/18/2017      Date of 16th Day: 8/2/2017      Date of 45th Day: 8/7/2017      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      8/2/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Jim Gabbert      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



Craig A. Potts  
SHPO  
Kentucky Heritage Council  
410 High Street  
Frankfort, KY.

Re: Rock Cabin Camp  
5091 Mammoth Cave Road  
Cave City, KY


Dear Mr. Potts,

I am honored to have the Rock Cabin property nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. We thought they were very interesting when we first drove by on a visit to Mammoth Cave National Park back in 2004. Imagine my surprise when I saw them listed for sale on a web site I was following. It didn't say where they were. Only "Cabins and a Campground for sale near a National Park" with a picture. I told Lina, my wife, "Those are the cabins we saw down by Mammoth Cave! Let's go check them out." That was in 2006.

We've been researching their history ever since we purchased them in 2011. With the help of Sharon Beemer, Rachel Haberman, friends, guests, local residents, and others, we've been able to gather a lot of information about the Rock Cabins, and we are constantly learning more. Just the other day I learned of a lady whose grandfather either built, or helped build the cabins. I'm still waiting to hear back from her. And we recently had a man stop by to take some pictures. He said his parents honeymooned here in the 1940's. He was going to check if they had any pictures from back then. We're not certain, but feel that Rock Cabin Camp may have been one of, if not the first "motor courts" in Kentucky.

If all goes well, I plan to be at the Review Board Meeting on 17 May. I consider it an honor and a privilege to have the property considered. And hope to meet you at the meeting.

Very Respectfully,

  
Ralph Skrovan  
Rock Cabin Camping

RECEIVED

MAY 18 2017

STATE OF KENTUCKY





MATTHEW G. BEVIN  
GOVERNOR

**TOURISM, ARTS AND HERITAGE CABINET  
KENTUCKY HERITAGE COUNCIL**

THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
300 WASHINGTON STREET  
FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY 40601  
PHONE (502) 564-7005  
FAX (502) 564-5820  
[www.heritage.ky.gov](http://www.heritage.ky.gov)



June 16, 2017

J. Paul Loether, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
Mail Stop 7228  
1849 C St, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

We enclose the following nominations, approved by the Review Board at their May 17, 2017 meeting, and asking that these Kentucky properties be listed in the National Register:

- ✓ **Rock Cabin Camp, Barren County**
- Middlesboro Jewish Cemetery, Bell County**
- E.O. Robinson House, Campbell County**
- Montgomery-Sandidge House, Green County**
- Kentucky Home School for Girls, Jefferson County**
- Devou Park, Kenton County**
- Kellog and Company Wholesale Grocery Warehouse, Madison County**
- West Second Street Historic District, Mason County**
- Westminster Presbyterian Church, McCracken County**
- Harrodsburg Downtown Historic District (Boundary Increase), Mercer County**
- Craig-Peak House, Scott County**

We enclose a revised nomination for a returned property, which we have revised according to the return comments:  
**Paducah City Hall, McCracken County**

We thank you for your assistance in listing these properties.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Potts  
Executive Director and  
State Historic Preservation Officer