

2005 NSS CONVENTION ABSTRACTS

was organized to visit Mammoth Cave. During the Echo River tour inside the cave, seventeen passengers on guide John Nelson's boat were dumped into the icy water due to the horseplay of one of the men. Only the quick thinking and heroic action of Nelson and Charles A. Muehlbronner, former Pennsylvania state senator from Pittsburgh, saved the group from drowning. Back at the Mammoth Cave Hotel, the grateful passengers formed the Echo River Club with membership limited to those people on the trip. Muehlbronner was elected as President for life. The group held annual reunions in different cities for several years.

ON WHITE FISH AND BLACK MEN: DID STEPHEN BISHOP REALLY DISCOVER THE BLIND CAVE FISH OF MAMMOTH CAVE?

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Some of the chronology of discoveries at Mammoth Cave, KY., is marred by contradictory reports and legends. The first published reference to a blind cave fish ("white fish") in Mammoth Cave appears to be by Robert Davidson in 1840; however, the chronology given in his book is contradictory. We did archival and field research aimed at identifying the first person to have seen (and probably collected) this blind cave fishes at Mammoth Cave. We also researched all the known specimens of the two species of blind cave fish ever found at Mammoth Cave to see if that information could provide evidence of which of the two species was seen first. We conclude that: (1) Davidson's chronology in his book is probably wrong and that he did not visit the cave until 1838 or 1839; (2) it is possible that Bishop was the first person sighting the fish, but others cannot be definitely excluded from having been involved in this discovery; and, (3) that although there are two species of blind cave fish that inhabit the waters of Mammoth Cave, the first one sighted was likely *Amblyopsis spelaea*, also the first one to be recognized in the scientific literature. We finally conclude that the facts surrounding Stephen Bishop's fame need to be further investigated under the perspective of the romantic movement of the mid-nineteenth century that gave rise to the noble savage mythology as well as on the perspective of race in the United States prior to the Civil War.