

Minutes of the Kansas City Area Grotto
November 2020 Business Meeting
Tuesday, November 17, 2020 – 6:30 to 8:00 P.M.
Meeting Held Remotely Via Zoom

The meeting was called to order by president Seth Colston. The following members and guests were present: Seth Colston, Jim Cooley, Jodi, Julie Cottrell, Ginny Friedrich, Bill Gee, Kristen Godfrey, Rick Hines, Gary Johnson, Jay Kennedy, Nick Kennedy, Becky Nelson, Jeff Page

Presentation: No presentation occurred at this meeting.

Officer Reports:

President: Seth reminded the group that board elections will take place in digital format at the January meeting. Seth, Jim, and Bill are willing to continue as president, vice president, and treasurer, respectively. I (Ginny) expect to be moving out of state in 2021, but if there are no other enthusiastic applicants for the role (as there weren't in 2020), I would be happy to continue as secretary until I leave, at which point an alternative could be found. Applicants for any positions can let Seth know prior to the elections, and he will make additions to the ballot.

A link to available Grotto apparel has been posted on the KCAG website. To order, contact Seth directly, and he will ship the apparel.

Vice President: Nothing to report.

Treasurer: Grotto dues are due from January 1st to March 31st. The rates are \$15 for individuals and \$22.50 for families per year. They can be paid by PayPal via the link on the KCAG website or by mail check. There is no longer a fee for using PayPal.

There has been no significant activity in the checking account, but the PayPal account has had some significant activity. Some of this influx is from recent KCAG merchandise purchases, while the rest is the return of the \$500 seed money for the now-cancelled 2020 MVOR.

October beginning balance = \$2671.37 (Commerce Bank)

Deposit = \$0.00

Checks = \$0.00

Debit card = \$0.00

Bank fee = \$5.00

End balance = \$2666.37

Activity:

Income: \$0.00

Expenses: \$0.00

Bank fee = \$5.00

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October beginning balance = \$427.16 (Paypal)

Merchandise purchase = \$35.00

Return the seed money for MVOR = \$500.00

Merchandise purchase = \$50.00

Fees = \$12.70

End balance = \$999.46

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October beginning balance = \$67.00 (petty cash)

End balance = \$67.00

Secretary: Nothing to report. The October meeting minutes were accepted.

Quartermaster: The DistoXs have been in high demand recently, so Seth will set up a Google spreadsheet with a list of items and dates requested. If the desired equipment is free for the relevant date, Seth can be contacted to reserve the equipment. Until the spreadsheet is available, contact Seth Colston directly to borrow gear.

Novice Trip Coordinator: No updates.

Fundraising: No updates. Contact Seth Colston (swcy92@gmail.com) or Bill Gee (bgee@campercaver.net) for more information.

Presentations: A fair number of people have postponed presentations until they can be held in person, so KCAG is in need of presenters for future meetings. Please contact Seth Colston at swcy92@gmail.com if you are interested in giving a meeting presentation or have a topic idea. Since all meetings will be held remotely for the foreseeable future, Seth suggests that future presentations should be in the half hour range rather than an hour long.

Carroll Cave Conservancy: Bill Gee recently led the annual bat census trip, with Kristen Godfrey, Seth Colston, Isaac Smith (Meramec Valley Grotto, St Louis), and two biologists, Vona Kuczynska with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Jeanette Bailey with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). They placed a sonic bat roost detector, loaned to the CCC by USFWS for one year, in the Mountain Room. This detector is aimed at the natural entrance to catch bats entering and leaving the cave, and it works by recording 1.5 minutes of audio out of every five minutes. This audio is analyzed to determine how many bats enter and leave the cave, and what species those bats represent. The sonic detector will continue measurements until the batteries run out, which is expected to occur next June; Bill intends to return to replace the batteries in March. In addition to placing the detector, the bat census group found several clusters of gray bats, and Bill reports that it was a successful trip.

David Griffith, a Carroll Caver from the 1960s, has 110 photographs from previous trips to share. These photographs document boats used in the cave, the denim jeans that were the standard caving gear of the 60s, and other "interesting stuff." Rick Hines has known Griffith for many years, and it was through Griffith that Rick was first introduced to Carroll Cave. Bill has posted Griffith's pictures on the CCC website.

The CCC work day took place on the surface on November 9th, with Julie Cottrell, Jim Cooley, Seth Colston, Jeff Page, Rick Hines, Cliff Gill and son, and Chouteau Grotto's Martin Carmichael, Rebecca Carpenter, and George Tengel participating. The group cleaned the late Bill Pfantz's side of the fence, removed some old fencing around Pfantz's little homestead, and put the debris into the landowner's dump truck. An old, partially burned boat was also pulled free and set up for removal by the landowner. After the work was finished, Seth led Carmichael, Carpenter and Tengel into Carroll Cave for a reward trip.

Missouri Speleological Survey (MSS) and Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy (MCKC): The MSS liaison went out a week prior to the meeting, sparking a discussion of whether MSS meetings are needed or not: Very little business is discussed in the meetings. The winter MSS meeting, which was scheduled for Jan 23rd in Rolla, has been cancelled. Jim suggested that future business meetings should be held remotely, so that participants don't have to travel a long distance for a short meeting.

The MCKC restoration trip at Washington State Park was cancelled. There are no other MCKC updates.

International Year of Caves and Karst (2021): Contact Seth Colston if you have ideas presentations or want to lead a trip in 2021.

NSS update: None.

Novice and Scout Trips: Seth has no novice trips planned for the remainder of the year but is considering leading some in 2021.

Hickory County: Gary Johnson intends to hold off on trips to Hickory County until the end of the pandemic.

Cloud 9 Ranch: Jim has not talked to Lee Krout about the February trip, but he expects that it will not take place. Kristen Alvey-Mudd usually leads this bat-focused trip, but she has been avoiding leading trips during the pandemic. Additionally, a February trip would be logistically difficult, since the date would be inflexible, the weather would likely be very cold, and the pandemic would mean that a trailer could not be rented for the trip, as usually happens.

Stark Caverns Survey Project: Bill Gee has emailed the manager of Stark Caverns to inform him that no trips will be scheduled until the state of the pandemic improves. The manager is understanding of this update.

Old Spanish Cave Restoration Project: No updates.

Cave Spring Park Association: No updates.

Devil's Icebox: No updates.

White Nose Syndrome: See <https://caves.org/WNS/> for the most current map of the spread of WNS.

MeetUp: Contact Seth (swcy92@gmail.com) to add trips to the MeetUp schedule.

New Membership Nominations: Becky Nelson was nominated for KCAG membership. Becky attended the 2019 MVOR, Seth's February trip to Perkins, Kristen's June trip to Perkins, and the recent Geronimo Cave survey trip, along with KCAG meetings in the fall of 2019 and the winter of 2020. The nomination was seconded and thirded, and Becky was accepted as a member. Welcome, Becky!

Nomination for George Tengel was discussed, but acceptance will wait until George attends a KCAG meeting.

Trip Reports and Other News:

Bill Gee notified the group that, as Yahoo Groups is being retired, the Carroll Cave Conservancy and the Pony Express Grotto (PEG) have been moved to groups.io. The MVOR and MOCave email groups were moved to groups.io last week as well.

The KCAG bonfire scheduled for December 5th was cancelled due to the increase in coronavirus cases in the region. Rick Hines hopes to reschedule the get-together to the spring of next year.

On November 1st, Bill Gee, Seth Colston, and Becky Nelson surveyed 250 feet of Geronimo Cave. This cave starts with a squeeze into a small entrance, around two feet by one foot, followed by 150 feet of crawling through water. It will be a long survey process. The initial crawl is cold even with a wetsuit. The next trip may occur in January, but it may be pushed back later depending on the state of the pandemic.

Gary Johnson found several potential caves near St Joseph that may be the answer to a historical mystery. Luella Agnes Owen was one of Missouri's most famous cavers and the writer of the classic *Cave Regions of the Ozarks and Black Hills*, published in 1898. Circa 1870, Owen reported entering caves along the Missouri River, and she published an account of her visit in a paper titled "Bluffs of the Missouri River." However, there are zero known caves in this region, and the only copy of her paper is held by a university in Germany, inaccessible to Missouri cavers. Was she wrong about the caves that she reported? Were they, in fact, only quarries?

Gary recently went hiking with Steve Potter in the Sunbridge Hills Conservation Area off of the Missouri River. This conservation area is a historic region, containing an old cemetery full of toppled headstones, a ruined building that may have been built by the Civilian Conservation Corps or the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s or 1940s, and what appears to be a small armory that Gary suspects was constructed by the Missouri State Guard around the time of World War II.

While hiking, Gary spotted several cavities in the exposed limestone bluffs. One is a hollow, presumably a quarry, known locally as a devil worshipper cave; this quarry has a small entrance that drops eight feet into a standing-height chamber with walls decorated with devil imagery. The area includes several other cavities, including a crawlway that appears to be an old mine, and Gary is awaiting confirmation that these are all manmade. One other potential cave has been sealed with concrete. The bluffs in this conservation area merit further exploration, and if a true cave is found in along the Missouri River, the historical mystery of Luella Agnes Owen's elusive caves may be resolved.

Jim Cooley, Bill Gee and Rick Hines visited a mine in Atchison, Kansas on December 9th. The mine is owned by Benedictine College, which hired a consulting firm to research possibilities for commercializing it. The consulting firm contacted the grotto through the NSS website. The college wanted to know, among other things, whether the presence of bats would impact their plans to commercialize the mine. The three cavers spotted only one flying bat and no concentrated guano, so endangered bats would not be a problem. But there is another issue: the ceiling is falling down. According to Cooley, the mine wasn't excavated high enough to reach a stable layer of rock, so limestone is falling off the ceiling in blocks. This mine was last active in the mid-1960s, and since then a wide variety of flowstone has developed, including rimstone dams, soda straws, pool spars, and popcorn. Rapid flowstone growth like this is not uncommon in mines. In addition to the flowstone and the blocks of collapsing ceiling, the mine contains an old drilling machine and quite a bit of water. Cooley has been in

contact with the consulting firm hired by St Benedict's Abbey. The grotto may have an opportunity in the future to explore the rest of the mine in kayaks and potentially survey it.

Jim Cooley, Julie Cottrell, Seth Colston, Rebecca Carpenter, and Joe Tengel returned to survey Joe Cave after the Carroll Cave work day. Jim completed as much work as he could in the upper passage, while Seth, Rebecca, and George made line plots for the back of the cave. The line plot reaches through the entirety of the lower passage, with the exception of a small 20-foot hole in the back that Seth was unable to fit through. One small side passage still needs a line plot, but otherwise the only work remaining is sketching. Jim hopes to fit in one to two more trips during the winter, before the bats return. On this trip, one gray bat was seen; there were no other bats, but the guano piles were covered in mold, which suggests they were used in the last season by up to 12,000 bats, based on the quantity of guano with recent mold.

New Business: Bill mentioned that the new KCAG website can display KCAG-related trip reports, which will make the website more useful and welcoming. Members who have been on recent trips are encouraged to send trip reports to Bill to post.

Unfinished Business: Seth Colston confirmed that there was no unfinished business and the grotto members returned to their daily lives, looking forward to a safe Thanksgiving.

Upcoming Trips and Events

COVID-19 update: Check with the trip leader before you set out to attend any of these events. Many of the “stay at home” restrictions have been lifted. Restrictions or not, please make your own decision regarding your health. The caves are not going anywhere.

January 9, 2021 – Carroll Cave data logger service trip – **Now full**

Contact Bill Gee bgee@campercaver.net for information

Attendance is limited due to coronavirus protocols.

January 19, 2021 – KCAG grotto meeting

Zoom URL is <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/268089722>

This meeting includes our annual election of officers.

February 16, 2021 – KCAG grotto meeting

Zoom URL is <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/268089722>

2021 – NSS National Convention in Weed California