



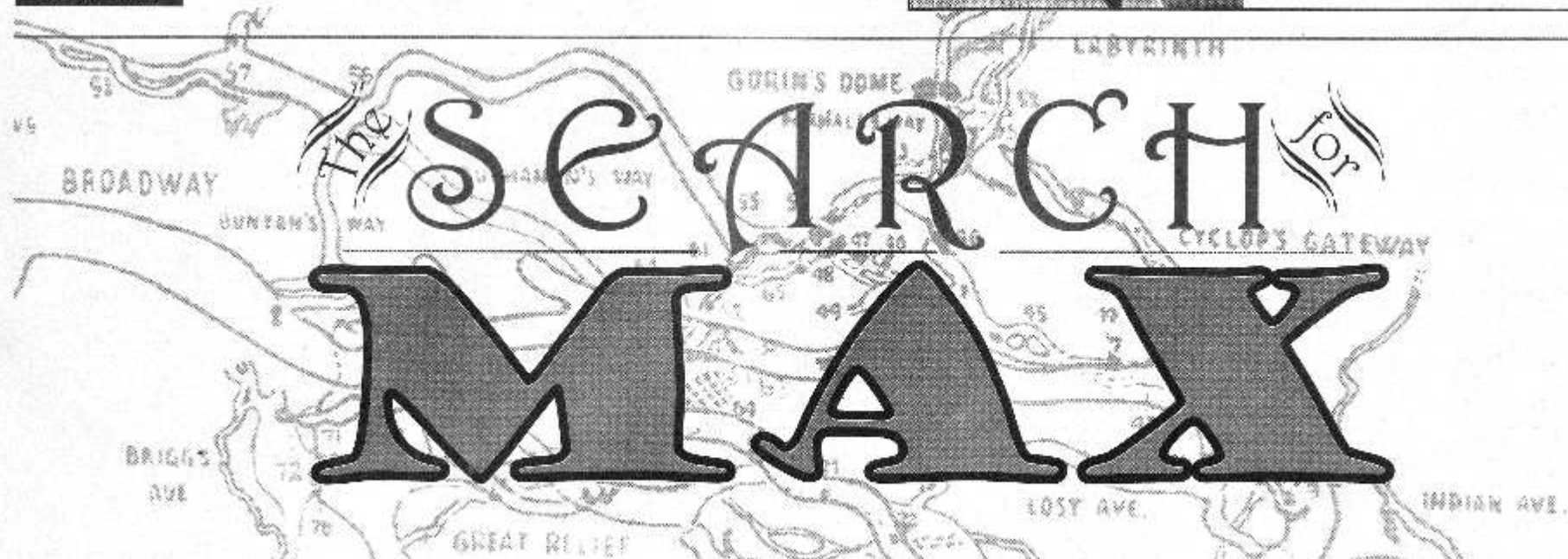
MAMMOTH CAVE GUIDE

Mammoth Cave National Park • Volume VII, No. 1 • 2001



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Cave Guide Ed Bishop, circa 1908. Bishop aided Max Kämper's mapping expeditions. See page 1 story.

The mysterious map was stored in the curatorial room at Mammoth Cave for decades, along with numerous other historic artifacts. There was no scale or north arrow, and the only clue to its origin lay in the map legend itself: "Map of the Mammoth Cave, Kentucky - Surveyed and Drawn by Max Kaemper, Berlin, Germany (Guide: Ed Bishop) 1908."

In 1962, park hydrologist Dr. James F. Quinlan was searching through park files when he uncovered the map. Quinlan also discovered a surface overlay map, which included a north arrow and property boundaries of the Mammoth Cave Estate. In 1969, the Cave Research Foundation (CRF) began a resurvey of Mammoth Cave, and photocopies were made of the "Kaemper Map" to guide exploration and survey parties.

In 1981, Diana Daunt carefully copied the original map for CRF's use and sale at the park. Reproductions are still sold at the park Visitor Center today.

The map was vital to CRF's understanding of historic names of cave features for its cartography program. Signatures found on the cave walls allowed further correlation with names on the map, including Max's own signature with its correct spelling - "Käemper." As surveys proceeded, it became evident that the exceptionally gifted Käemper had drafted a cave map far ahead of its time. Still, no one could discover who Käemper was. Park naturalist Len McKenzie encountered park visitors from Germany who knew of Max Käemper's family, but could provide no further information. For 20



The German cave-mapper and explorer, Max Käemper

years cave historians accepted that Käemper's life history would never be known, and his work would remain part of the mythology of the cave. They believed that the real facts had come to a dead end, just as early explorers believed the cave ended in the breakdown at Ultima Thule.

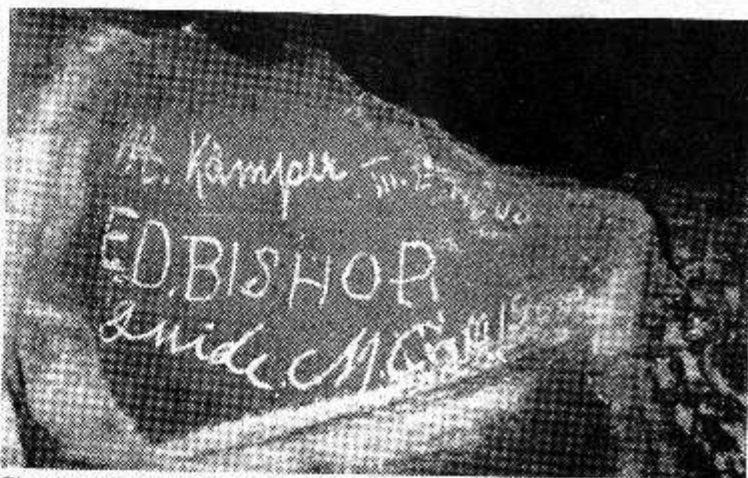
Then, during the summer of 1996, park ranger Chuck DeCroix began to research and document the history surrounding passages featured on Käemper's map. That same year, German cave researcher/journalist Bernd Kliebhan visited Mammoth Cave to study French speleologist E.A. Martel, considered to be the founder of modern caving. DeCroix and park ecologist Rick Olson took Kliebhan to Echo River, Martel Avontie, Hovey's Cathedral Domes, and other features along the Wild Cave route, discussing cave history, Martel, and the mysterious German explorer Max Käemper. Kliebhan was intrigued by the story of Max and assured DeCroix and Olson that he would research Käemper's family upon his return to Germany.

Dr. Stanley D. Sides (member and former president of the CRF), a leading expert on the history of Mammoth Cave, became involved in the project and started to research Käemper's year-long visit to New York before he arrived at Mammoth Cave. Sides slowly amassed information concerning Käemper's activities in America, but nothing about the man himself.

Then, like a rockpile tumbling away to reveal new caverns, came the big

The Search for Max Kämper

Continued from page 1



Signatures in the Cave bear testimony to the Kämper expeditions.

breakthrough.

Max Kämper, a young engineer from Berlin, Germany, visited the United States of America in 1907. While in the country, Kämper studied American engineering techniques and familiarized himself with the English language.

His travels brought him to Mammoth Cave on February 23, 1908. While touring the cave, Kämper became fascinated by the seemingly endless unexplored passages. Kämper obtained permission from Albert Covington Janin, owner/trustee of Mammoth Cave, to create a surveyed map of the cave in exchange for food, lodging, and caving. Ed Bishop (*photo, page 12*), 42-year-old grandnephew of slave guide Stephen Bishop,

continued to use small portions of his map for depicting tours. The maps were marked "Copy-right H.C. Ganter," and did not identify Kämper as their source. Rumors circulated that Max Kämper was killed in World War I, but no one could verify if the rumors were true. More mystery.

After months of research, Kliebhan at last located members of the Kämper family in Germany. A telephone call found Bernd talking directly to Hans Kämper, the 87-year-old son of Max. Hans, Kliebhan learned, had photographs of his father and other members of the Kämper family. Even more astounding was a handwritten journal Max had recorded during his visit to the United States – and Mammoth Cave.

Detailed descriptions dating Kämper's explorations and identifying who accompanied him in the cave provided a wealth of new information. There were even unpublished cave photographs taken by Max Kämper himself. Sadly, rumors of Kämper's death were true – Kliebhan learned that Max had been killed at the Battle of the Somme in northern France in 1916. The last photo of Max Kämper was taken in a war-ravaged bunker. His eyes reflect a tired and weary man who would shortly meet his fate.

The Kämpers were impressed with Kliebhan's enthusiasm and knowledge of their family history. They knew that Max had come to America and visited Mammoth Cave, but had no idea that he had actually mapped the cave and made several significant discoveries. Correspondence between DeCroix, Kliebhan, Sides, and Olson slowly started to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

The search for Max Kämper culminated on September 30, 2000, when 72-year-old Gerlinde Kämper (Max's daughter-in-law) and three of her children, Klaus, Ulrike, and Regine, visited Mammoth Cave for the first time. The Kämpers were welcomed by park staff, and it was as if old friends had

finally been reunited. Several special cave trips to Kämper Hall, Elisabeth's Dome, Violet City, and Gerta's Grotto were organized as the Kämpers followed in the footsteps of Max's discoveries. Hans Kämper himself would not make the journey; he died shortly after his contact with Kliebhan, but not before opening a window into his father's past.

Upon arriving back in Germany, Gerlinde Kämper sent the following e-mail:

Dear Chuck, Rick, and Stan, Now we are at home, but in our mind still in the cave with all the impressions. We will never forget these days and your enormous hospitality... Everybody has been so kind to us. I hope you can imagine what it means for us to have seen an important part of Max Kämper's life. I also wished my husband Hans could have been with us... I hope some of us will come back to Mammoth Cave in future again.

With all sincerity,

Gerlinde

Copies of the Kämper Map are available for purchase at the book sales area in the park Visitor Center. \$3.75



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Kämper and Bishop explored the cave with intense determination and enthusiasm. In addition to re-mapping established passages they made significant discoveries of their own including Gerta's Grotto (named after Kämper's cousin), Kämper's Hall, Elisabeth's Dome (named after Kämper's sister), Violet City, and Grand Avenue. After eight months of intense labor, Kämper's map was finally complete. A work of art, the map delineates 35 miles of cave passages, beautifully illustrated in five colors. Max Kämper delivered his completed map, including surface overlay, to Judge Janin in 1908 and returned to Germany.

Thereafter, knowledge of his identity was lost even though the Mammoth Cave Estate and Mammoth Cave National Park

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The Kämper descendants (left) explore the cave with park rangers.