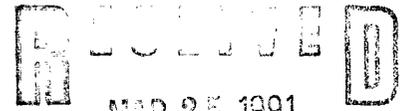


United States Department of the Interior National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Crystal Cave District

other names/site number includes structures T-73, T-74, and site E-13

2. Location

street & number Mammoth Cave National Park (MACA)

not for publication NA

city, town Mammoth Cave

vicinity NA

state Kentucky

code KY

county Edmonson

code 061

zip code 42259

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal (checked)

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic Resources of Mammoth Cave National Park

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: [Signature], Date: 3/20/91, State or Federal agency and bureau: National Park Service

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: David L. Morgan, Date: Jan. 8, 1991, State or Federal agency and bureau: State Historic Preservation Officer, Kentucky Heritage Council

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. (checked) See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain):

Signature of the Keeper: Patrick Anders, Date of Action: 5/8/91

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture

Commerce

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic:Camp

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

No style (buildings)

No style (cave entrance)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls wood:weatherboard

roof corrugated metal

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Historic Resources of Mammoth Cave National Park, MPS  
Edmonson, Hart, and Barren Counties, Kentucky

Section number 7 Page 1 Crystal Cave District

---

7. Description of present and historic physical appearance.

The Crystal Cave District is located on Crystal Cave Road, 1.25 miles northeast of its junction with Flint Ridge Road. The district includes three contributing sites, Crystal Cave Entrance, the path leading to the entrance from the ticket office, and the visitor gathering yard; two contributing buildings, the Collins House and Crystal Cave ticket office; two contributing structures, the sandstone stairway leading to the cave and sandstone walls surrounding the entrance; two noncontributing buildings, outhouses behind the Collins House; and two noncontributing structures, the cave entrance door and wooden railing left of the stone stairway.

Floyd Collins discovered the natural entrance to Crystal Cave in 1917 in a sinkhole on the farm of his father, Lee Collins. Floyd enlarged and improved the entrance with retaining walls, a stone stairway, and a door or gate so that the cave might be operated commercially.

From its discovery in 1917 until around 1927 the Collins family operated Crystal Cave from their home, located approximately 50 yards south of the cave entrance. Dr. H. B. Thomas, who purchased the Crystal Cave property in 1927, constructed a ticket office a few yards southeast of the Collins House soon after. Dr. Thomas also was responsible for the construction of the house just west of the ticket office in the 1940s. This more recent aluminum-sided building has been excluded from the district boundary. The property was purchased by the National Park Service for Mammoth Cave National Park in 1960. Although Crystal Cave area is not interpreted for park visitors, the Cave Research Foundation currently uses the buildings on the site for housing during their monthly caving expeditions.

The Collins house, constructed at some unknown date in the early twentieth century, is a one story frame structure with a rear ell. The main structure has two rooms and faces south. The one room ell is on the north side of the house. This building sits on a fieldstone foundation, has a corrugated metal gabled roof, two front doors and two front double-hung sash windows. The west wall has one double-hung sash window and the ell has one door (north side) and one double-sash window (east side). The front exterior wall has weatherboard siding. The end wall

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Historic Resources of Mammoth Cave National Park, MPS  
Edmonson, Hart, and Barren Counties, Kentucky

Section number 7 Page 2 Crystal Cave District

---

on the eastern side of the building is covered with diagonal sheathing. The western wall and the walls of the rear ell are covered with board and batten siding. Behind the house to the north of the structure sit two recently constructed outhouses.

Though no exhaustive records have been kept concerning maintenance work completed on this structure, the metal roof has been replaced in kind, stone entry steps have been replaced with concrete steps, and some of the wood siding has been replaced or supported in the last decade. The front facade is essentially intact and the majority of the building's original materials are still in place. The Collins house has been painted several times by the National Park Service with paint chosen to match the original. The recent board replacements are currently unpainted. Though the building is in poor condition, integrity of location, setting, design, the majority of materials, workmanship, feeling and association are present.

To the southeast of the Collins house is the Crystal Cave ticket office, constructed ca. 1927. The ticket office, which faces west, is a two room, wood frame, dog-trot-like building with an encircling wood plank porch and a corrugated metal hipped roof. The portion of the roof covering the porch is supported by log posts. The front of the building is set on a stone wall foundation, the rear sits on a stone pier foundation. The walls are covered with weatherboard siding. The room on the building's south side served as a ticket office and has a rectangular window opening onto the porch. The section of the building on the north side is divided into a shower and dressing room area, which opens onto the central passage, and two restrooms, which open onto the porch.

The Crystal Cave ticket office is in poor condition. The wood of the plank porch floor, roof beams, and exterior walls are deteriorating. Except for the roof and a few of the stone foundation piers, which have been replaced in the last decade, all of the materials are original. Despite the deterioration of the structure itself, the integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association are maintained.

From the ticket office, a dirt and stone step path runs in a northerly direction toward Crystal Cave, descending down the ridge top approximately 50 yards to the gathering yard in front of the entrance. From the gathering yard, approximately 32

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Historic Resources of Mammoth Cave National Park, MPS  
Edmonson, Hart, and Barren Counties, Kentucky

Section number 7 Page 3 Crystal Cave District

---

sandstone steps of varying sizes lead down to a 4.5 foot high, 3 foot wide steel entrance door, which faces northeast. To the right of the entrance is a sandstone retaining wall that supports the opening; to the left is a stacked sandstone wall which does not provide any support. A recently constructed wood hand rail runs along the left hand side of the stone stairway.

The path and steps leading to Crystal Cave are original, though parts are weather deteriorated. The setting and location of the gathering yard is intact. The opening to Crystal Cave is original, although the sandstone steps and walls are deteriorating due to weather and lack of maintenance. The wood hand rail was added in recent years and the original gate or door was replaced with the present steel door in the 1970s. Integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, the majority of materials, feeling, and association are maintained.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G    N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1917-1927

Significant Dates

1917

Cultural Affiliation    N/A

Significant Person

Floyd Collins

Architect/Builder

Floyd Collins (Crystal Cave Entrance)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Historic Resources of Mammoth Cave National Park, MPS  
Edmonson, Hart, and Barren Counties, Kentucky  
Crystal Cave District

Section number 8 Page 1

8. Statement of significance, criteria justification, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance note above.

The Crystal Cave District is historically significant in the area of Entertainment/Recreation and represents the property type 'Commercial Cave Entrances and Related Structures' (for property type information, see Section III of the Historic Resource Study, pages C-7 to C-9). Though Crystal Cave was operated commercially from 1917 to 1960, the period of significance (1917 to 1927) refers to the years from the discovery and improvement of the cave entrance in 1917 to the purchase of the property from the Collins family by Dr. H. B. Thomas of Horse Cave, Kentucky in 1927. The Crystal Cave District is the only intact commercial cave complex within the boundaries of Mammoth Cave National Park.

Mammoth Cave has been a well-known tourist attraction since the early nineteenth century. In the latter part of that century local residents searched for other caves that might draw tourists. Between 1895 and 1924 several major commercial caves, Colossal Cave, Great Onyx Cave, Crystal Cave, New Entrance Cave, and the Frozen Niagara portion of Mammoth Cave were opened to visitors. These caves competed with Mammoth Cave and each other for the area tourist business.

Crystal Cave was discovered, explored, and improved in 1917 by Floyd Collins, who owned half-interest in the cave with his father, Lee Collins, the owner of the land on which the cave was located. The Collins family operated the cave from 1917 to 1927.

Floyd Collins was known throughout the Mammoth Cave region as an avid cave explorer. In 1925, Collins brought national attention to the area when he became trapped in a narrow passage while exploring Sand Cave. He died of exposure before rescuers could reach him after sixteen days in the cave. The tragic death of Floyd Collins, highly publicized in print and one of the earliest nationally broadcast news stories, enticed even more curious tourists to the Kentucky cave region. Dr. Thomas, who purchased the property from the Collins family in 1927, placed Floyd's coffin and headstone in Crystal Cave and built a ticket office near the family home to accommodate the large number of visitors to Crystal Cave. Both the Collins family and Dr. Thomas

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Historic Resources of Mammoth Cave National Park, MPS  
Edmonson, Hart, and Barren Counties, Kentucky

Section number 8 Page 2 Crystal Cave District

---

were prominent enough in the Mammoth Cave area community to avoid condemnation of the property by the state government for the proposed national park. Dr. Thomas died in 1948. His family continued to operate the cave commercially until 1960, when it was purchased by the National Park Service for Mammoth Cave National Park.

In the spring of 1989, the National Park Service removed the coffin and headstone of Floyd Collins from Crystal Cave and relocated them in the cemetery of Mammoth Cave Baptist Church.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Historic Resources of Mammoth Cave National Park, MPS  
Edmonson, Hart, and Barren Counties, Kentucky  
Crystal Cave District

Section number 9 Page 1

---

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

Hicks, Jack. "'25 Tragedy is Recalled in Kentucky." The Kentucky Enquirer, August 7, 1981.

Vaughan, Nellie, comp. "Brief History of Crystal Cave,"  
Manuscript, Mammoth Cave National Park Library, Mammoth Cave,  
Kentucky, April 1950.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Historic Resources of Mammoth Cave National Park, MPS  
Edmonson, Hart, and Barren Counties, Kentucky  
Crystal Cave District

Section number 10 Page 1

---

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: approximately 8 acres

UTM References

A 16 4118400 583920                      B 16 4118480 583740

C 16 4118660 583880                      D 16 4118500 584000

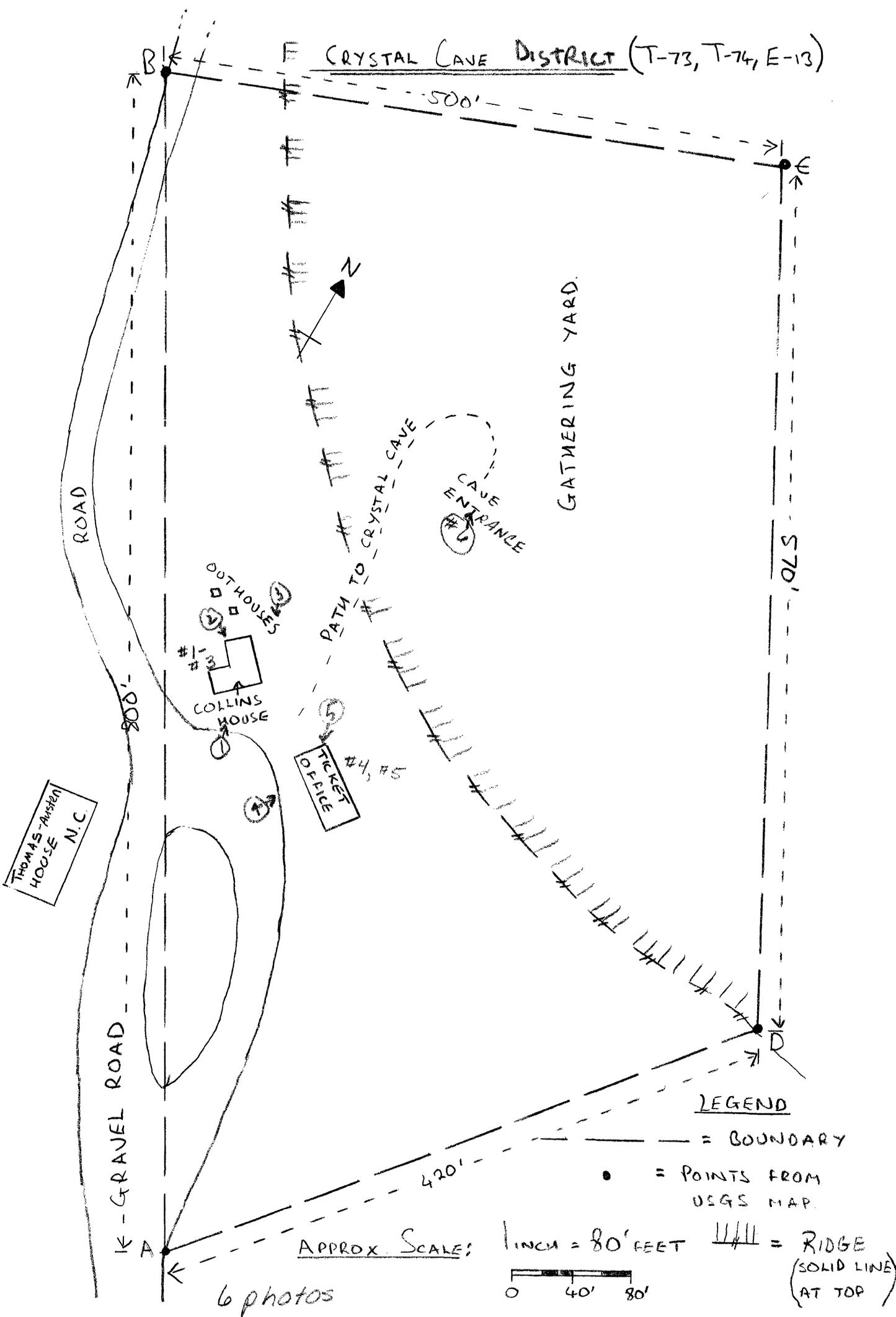
Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: A: 16 4118400 583920, B: 16 4118480 583740, C: 16 4118660 583880, D: 16 4118500 584000. Points A and B are located along Crystal Cave Road as it passes along the west side of the Collins house and Crystal Cave ticket office. Point C is located on the eastern edge of the cave's gathering yard. Point D completes the polygon to ensure that all resources are included within the boundary.

Boundary Justification

The unusual physical characteristics of this property make it difficult to use geographical features for the district boundary. The polygon formed by the above-mentioned UTM coordinates includes the Crystal Cave Ticket office, the Collins house, the path leading to Crystal Cave, the visitor gathering yard, and the entrance to Crystal Cave, all of which are historically associated with the commercial operation of Crystal Cave. The boundary excludes the more recently constructed residential structure to the west of the ticket office.

CRYSTAL CAVE DISTRICT (T-73, T-74, E-13)



THOMAS-AMSTER HOUSE N.C.

B

F

C

N

PATH TO CRYSTAL CAVE

CAVE ENTRANCE #U

GATHERING YARD

570'

800'

GRAVEL ROAD

A

D

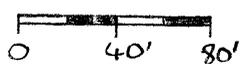
LEGEND

--- = BOUNDARY

• = POINTS FROM USGS MAP

||||| = RIDGE (SOLID LINE AT TOP)

APPROX SCALE: 1 INCH = 80' FEET



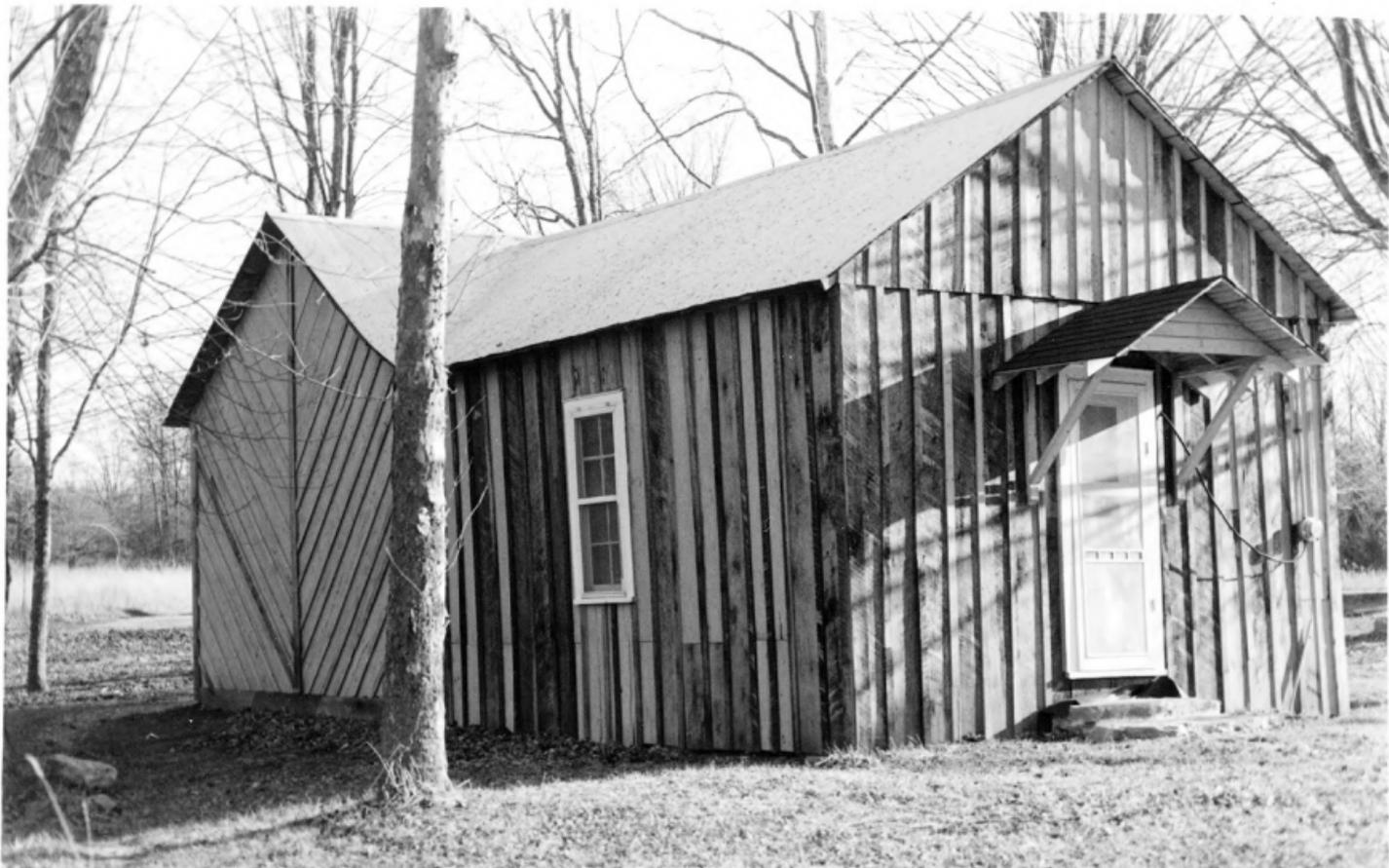
6 photos



1. Collins House, (T-74), Crystal Cave District  
Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky

1. Collins House, Crystal  
Cave District

2. Collins House,  
Crystal Cave District



3. Collins House (T-74), Crystal Cave District  
Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky

3.

Colin's House

157A / Ave District



4. Crystal Cave Ticket Office (LT-73), Crystal Cave  
Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky District

4. Crystal Cave Tucker office

Crystal Cave District



5. Crystal Cave Ticket Office (T-73), Crystal Cave District  
Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky

5. Crystal Cave Ticker Office

Crystal Cave District



6. Crystal Cave Entrance (E-13), Crystal Cave District, Mammoth Cave Nat'l Park, Kentucky