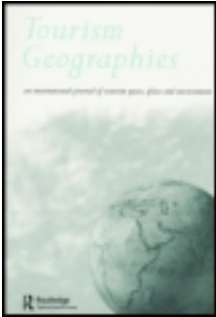


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Underground Tourists/Tourists Underground: African American Tourism to Mammoth Cave

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ABSTRACT *This paper uses structuration theory and the methods of historical geography to explore the conditions in which a Jim Crow-era hotel run by and for African Americans flourished at the edge of one of the nineteenth century's most popular tourist destinations, Mammoth Cave, Kentucky. It identifies structures, legal and customary, that hindered African American travel, but also, in this particular region, other structures linked to early twentieth-century capitalism that allowed room for agency on the part of the hotel's proprietors. It demonstrates the importance of understanding networks of social relations when undertaking micro-scale structuration analysis and contributes to our understanding of a little-studied aspect of Jim Crow-era tourism, the use of temporal and spatial strategies to create separate places within white tourist destinations for African American tourists.*

KEY WORDS: Tourism, African Americans, Jim Crow, structuration theory, hotel, resort, Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, United States National Park Service

During the early 1920s, Matt and Zemmie Bransford turned their two-story, 14-room house near Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, into a hotel for African American tourists. This entrepreneurial activity was remarkable for several reasons. Firstly, the Bransford Summer Resort fostered tourism by middle- and working-class African Americans at a time when Jim Crow-era segregation laws pervaded all aspects of travel, including transportation, lodging, and dining (Henry 2005). Secondly, rather than creating a tourism venue exclusively for African Americans, as most African American-owned resorts and hotels at the time did (Phelts 1997; Rymer 1998; Foster 1999; Stephenson 2006), the Bransfords enabled access by African Americans to Mammoth Cave, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the United States for over a century and destined to become, within a decade, one of the first national parks east of the Mississippi (Figure 1). That is not to say that the Bransfords integrated tourism at Mammoth Cave, for facilities there, including the hotel and restaurant, remained whites-only and tour groups were segregated. Rather, Matt Bransford was

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Figure 1. Mammoth Cave, Kentucky. *Source:* Map by author.

able to use his knowledge of the cave’s operations acquired during decades of work as a Mammoth Cave tour guide and a complex personal relationship with the managing trustee of the Mammoth Cave Estate, Albert Janin, to devise temporal and spatial strategies that carved out a separate space for African American tourists parallel to that for the cave’s larger stream of white tourists.

This paper presents a case study of the Bransford Hotel, focusing on the conditions that fostered its creation and subsequently led to its demise and on its interdependence with the Mammoth Cave Estate and other regional tourism businesses. While the situation at Mammoth Cave may not have been unique for the Jim Crow era, it was certainly unusual; the tourism literature lacks similar examples of destinations that welcomed African American tourists yet tried to keep their presence unknown to white patrons. African American tourists at Mammoth Cave were kept figuratively, as well as literally, underground. While some sites of leisure, such as municipal pools, are well known for providing access to African Americans on certain days of the week (Wiltse 2007), further studies of major tourist destinations during the Jim Crow era are needed to ascertain how common the ‘underground tourism’ that existed at Mammoth Cave was. This case study is by no means a denial of the widespread discriminatory tourism practices during the Jim Crow era, but it is a call for a nuanced examination of the range of experiences and situations that existed, including those where the business interests of white-owned enterprises aligned with those of African American entrepreneurs to promote African American travel, albeit within a highly discriminatory social system.

Despite the burgeoning literature on tourism within geography, insufficient attention has been given to the historical African American tourism experience, especially during the Jim Crow era. Exceptions are Hart’s (1960) study of Idlewild, Michigan, a segregated summer resort for African Americans that flourished from the 1920s through the 1940s, Butler *et al.*’s (2002) study of the barriers African American

travel agents have historically faced and continue to face in operating independent businesses, and two studies of segregated campgrounds within parks, one in a Florida state park (O'Brien 2007) and one of the National Park System (Young 2009). Clearly, this list of historical geographical work on African American tourism is woefully short and highly fragmentary. Historians have filled the gap to a degree, e.g., Denkler's (2007) study of African American tourists in Luray, Virginia, just outside the Shenandoah National Park, Foster's (1999) study of upper-class African American tourism, as well as a number of histories of individual hotels and resorts. Another body of literature, largely coming from the field of leisure and recreation studies, attempts to quantify and understand differences in tourism choices between African Americans and whites (e.g., Floyd 1998; Martin 2004; Grant 2005; Carter 2008), but the historical African American experience in these studies is generally treated as a variable that can help explain current choices. Among the most vibrant areas of current tourism research are critical analyses of the politics of memory surrounding the interpretation of African American history at a variety of tourism destinations (e.g., Rahier & Hawkins 1999; Alderman & Campbell 2008; Modlin 2008; Buzinde & Santos 2009). While such studies speak to perceptions and affinities held by different groups for the sites, which in turn impact tourism, the historical tourism experience is not addressed. Although the outline of the Jim Crow tourism experience for African Americans is well known (racial segregation, common indignities, fear of racism-fueled violence), African Americans did not share a monolithic experience. Questions about the variety of that tourism experience abound. How did urban tourism differ from rural tourism . . . in provision of services, interactions among the races, adherence to laws advocating or barring discrimination? Since states and cities could pass their own laws regarding public accommodations and transportation, how did African American tourists negotiate the variable legal landscape of tourism? What changes did the Great Migration of two million African Americans from the South to the North and Midwest between 1910 and 1930 bring to tourism practices? Because the study of tourism has come to be a respected part of academia, a socially inclusive tourism geography is needed. The historical geography of African American tourism has been for too long one of the larger silences in the field.

While this study cannot address all of these questions, it can begin to fill the void with an exploration of several ways in which African Americans acted to negotiate or circumvent structures that constrained their travel. The analysis is grounded in a structurationist perspective to illuminate relationships between key individuals and institutions. Teasing out the complex interplay of human agency with the opportunities provided and constraints imposed by social structures embodied in institutions such as the Mammoth Cave Estate, the Mammoth Cave National Park Association and the US National Park Service helps understand not only the 'what' of the Bransford Hotel but also the 'how' and the 'why.' The methodologies employed are those of historical geography. Primary source materials, including documents written by key individuals, are used where possible, with the recognition that the historical record is notoriously

fragmented, partial, and biased, e.g., that certain people or categories of people are much better represented in the historical record than others. Indeed, the historical record on the Bransford Hotel is scanty. No records from the hotel itself survive, nor are there contemporary records from the Bransford family that reflect upon the hotel. Primary sources used in this paper derive largely from three archives – the Janin Family Collection in the Huntington Library of San Marino, California; the Blair – Janin Family Papers in the Historical Society of Washington, D.C. (both of which hold portions of the collected papers of the owners of the Mammoth Cave Estate); and the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, which holds records from the National Park Service that date to the creation of Mammoth Cave National Park. These collections hold several documents written by Matt Branford as well as letters written to and about him by others. This archival material has been supplemented with census data, newspaper articles and information from published secondary sources. The goal is to shed light on a little-examined area of tourism studies, namely the circumstances that allowed a rural African American hotel to flourish alongside a white-dominated tourism institution, creating a separate space for African American tourists in the midst of a nominally whites-only tourism venue during the Jim Crow era.

Tourism Geography, Social Theory, and Structuration

Recent surveys of tourism geography note the value of social theory in illuminating social, cultural, and economic analysis while also calling for empirical engagement (e.g., Davis 2001; Bianchi 2009). The subdiscipline has taken a ‘critical turn’ over the past decade, using social theory to engage ‘with issues of power, inequality and development processes in tourism whilst acknowledging the significance of cultural diversities’ (Bianchi 2009: 484). While many of these studies deal with contemporary issues in a globalized context, the historical geography of tourism can benefit just as much from approaches that probe the politics of race, ethnicity, and labor relations in tourism. Davis’s (2001) survey of post-modern, structuralist and post-structuralist approaches in tourism research notes the importance of cultural context and power dynamics as well as economic structures on tourism environments and activities. Power, whether the power to act or the power to reproduce social structures, is embedded in everyday actions, and many of these studies employ micro-scale analysis of mundane activities to unpack the social construction of space (Davis 2001; Bianchi 2009).

Among the various post-structuralist approaches, one adopted by scholars in many disciplines is structuration theory (Phipps 2001). In its most basic form, structuration theory holds that structure and agency are dual processes that are mutually and continually reproducing. Structure, the economic, social, and power relations that exist in a particular historic and spatial context, both enable and constrain human action. Agency, individual human activity with both intentional and unintentional outcomes,

is a product of knowledgeable human actors who, although free to exercise their individual wills, make decisions in the context of value and belief systems and particular economic, social, and political circumstances (Smith 1983: 14). Structure arises from 'a sedimentation' of cultural and economic practices and of power relations (Pred 1984). It is reproduced by the daily actions of individual agents and is a product of routinized practices. Rules, which encompass normative elements of social interaction and elements that communicate meaning, and resources, which are authoritative or allocative in nature, are structural components that lend stability to social systems (Giddens 1984: xxxi; Mote & Whitestone 2011). Giddens uses this third construct, the social system, to refer to the routinized social practices of a particular group, the everyday lived experience of individuals as they interact with each other and with institutions.

Giddens (1976, 1979, 1983) developed structuration theory to bridge the oft-times antipodal paradigms of functionalism and structuralism, at one pole, and humanism, at the other, producing a body of theory and methodology intended to inform empirical research while correcting the most grievous omissions of the former approaches. It balances the determinism that characterizes functionalism and structuralism with the voluntarism of humanism through the notion of the duality of structure and agency, 'the essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices' (Giddens 1979: 5). Neither agency nor structure is accorded primacy in the explanation of social systems, but the two are involved in an elaborate interplay that is mutually constructive. While functionalism and structuralism have typically been used in macro-scale explications of society, and humanism, especially symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics, in micro-scale examination of local, interpersonal relationships, structuration tries to recognize the constitution of the global by the accretion of local minutiae and contextualize local activity in regional, national, and global settings by wedding a theory of action with a theory of institutions. The relationship between structure and agency is, to an extent, a matter of scale, temporally and spatially, for the closer specific structures are examined, the more apparent are their constituent human actions. Structuration denies a teleological or superorganic conceptualization of structure (Giddens 1979: 7; Pred 1984); therefore, structure is nothing more than the cumulative effect of innumerable decisions and actions by a multitude of individuals, who through accustomed usage and shared meanings, acquire a historical momentum and stability that promote their continuation. Structure encompasses commonplace knowledges and ideologies that inform peoples' everyday choices, cultural understandings 'so deeply internalized that they may not even be evident to the people who hold them' (Warf 2008: 24). In other instances, structural rules, such as those surrounding social practices of 'slugging' [informal ride sharing to take advantage of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in major urban centers], may be formalized to the point of being written down, but they have nonetheless evolved out of communal interactions in a particular context, in this case a given transportation infrastructure and policy regime, urban social practices of

distanciation, and commuting patterns (Mote & Whitestone 2011). At the extreme of formalization are structures embodied by a society's laws, which serve as structures of legitimation to sanction certain behaviors even when they violate other normative structures (e.g., laws permitting corporal punishment versus the commandment 'thou shalt not kill') (Schrodt *et al.* 2006).

Although Giddens (1983: 75) declared his intention of producing a body of theory and methodology to inform empirical research, it has been left to others to implement an empirical agenda. Many researchers have combined the broad interpretive framework of structuration theory with other approaches to elicit a detailed understanding of the structure, social practices, and agency operative at specific times and places. For instance, Pred's (1986) seminal work synthesizes structuration and Hagerstrand's time-geography to examine the daily life paths of Swedish peasant farmers before and after a radical consolidation and redistribution of farm land that transformed village structure in southwestern Sweden. In other work, Pred (1983, 1984) invokes sense-of-place approaches to develop his notion of place as a 'historically contingent process' of continual 'becoming.' Sociologist Smith (1983) looks to symbolic interactionist modes of inquiry when expanding structuration theory to include a notion of 'symbolically defined social contexts' in his examination of the pure-bred beef cattle industry. Warf (2008) deploys structuration theory among a group of approaches, including historical materialism, world systems theory, and actor-network theory, to probe the historical dimensions of time-space compression. Giddens would no doubt approve these theoretical syntheses, for he clarifies his perception of the role of structuration as follows:

[Structuration] is not a magical key that unlocks the mysteries of empirical research, nor a research programme. The research programme which I envisage, at any rate, in relation to the theory of structuration cannot be simply inferred from the concepts deployed therein. It is concerned with a broad spectrum of historical and political theory. (1983: 77)

The approach of this paper is to combine the insights of structuration theory with the methodological approaches of historical geography to explore a specific period and place of significance in the development of tourism within the United States.

Historical Geography of African American Tourism

By the time the Bransfords launched their hotel in the early 1920s, the United States had seen over three decades of institutionalized segregation in the tourism sector. Reconstruction had briefly seemed to promise equal treatment to all travelers through the federal Civil Rights Act of 1875, which prohibited racial discrimination in 'inns, public conveyances . . . theaters, and other places of public amusement' (Delaney 1998: 87). In 1883, however, the Supreme Court decided five cases, known collectively as the Civil Rights Cases, that had been carefully orchestrated to challenge

required integration of tourism and entertainment venues, including hotels, railroads, restaurants, theaters, and opera houses. The majority decision framed access to such places as a 'social right,' something the federal government did not have the authority to regulate, rather than as a 'civil right,' and left it to individual states to regulate social rights (Delaney 1998). The consequence of this failure of the federal government to ensure equal treatment was a flurry of legislation in Southern states that sought to segregate all aspects of life, from hotels to hospitals, from railroad waiting stations to public water fountains, and more (Bell 2004). By this time, most Kentucky hotel keepers were already routinely turning away black customers, and many restaurants refused to serve them or offered them only carry-out service (Lucas 1992a). Norms had developed within the white-dominated social system such that whites could expect to travel without encountering or interacting with African American travelers. Discrimination in lodging was by no means limited to the South, however. Wealthy black families that had been accustomed to staying at elite hotels in Saratoga Springs, New York, during the 1870s and 1880s, found themselves being turned away from these same places during the 1890s (Foster 1999). When the New York State legislature attempted in 1895 to counteract the effect of the Civil Rights Cases with the passage of the Malby Law, which assured that within New York, 'all persons . . . shall be entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, restaurants, hotels, eating houses, music halls, public conveyances on land and waters, and all other places of public accommodation and amusement,' the level of public outcry on the part of hotel and restaurant owners against having to serve African Americans made clear that the social norm of the North was little different from that of the South ('Equality by legislation?' 1895). Hoteliers usually claimed no inclination to discriminate for their own part, but cited their customers' prejudice as a reason for wanting to exclude African Americans ('Hotel men are worried' 1895). Thus, by the turn of the twentieth century, both formal and informal structures for the exclusion of African Americans from the majority of tourism venues were deeply embedded in American society.

African Americans did participate in tourism during the Jim Crow era, but that tourism took particular forms due to such constraints. While prosperous African Americans had financial resources that eased some of these restrictions, e.g., private automobiles that allowed them to avoid the indignities of public transportation, and afforded greater freedom to travel at home and abroad, the average black working-class family found their travel highly constrained, particularly outside cities (Foster 1999). The majority of hotels owned or managed by and for African Americans were located in large cities or mid-sized cities with large African American populations (Jakle & Sculle 2009). In New York City, hotels and nightclubs owned and patronized by the city's emerging black cultural elite, including Marshall's (Fronc 2006) and Hotel Theresa (Wilson 2004), were concentrated in Harlem and the Tenderloin district. Because of the dearth of rural lodging options, African American tourists generally limited themselves to day trips, stayed with relatives, or traveled from city

to city, avoiding intervening rural areas (Foster 1999; Jakle & Sculle 2009). When first visiting a strange town, African American tourists had to be adept at reading the landscape in order to navigate to the African American part of town, where they could then hopefully get a local to recommend a tourist home with rooms to rent (Denkler 2007). Lack of knowledge about the geography of lodging increased the difficulty of trip planning and travel for African Americans by adding an element of uncertainty – in any given town, they might or might not find a welcoming place to stay under the norms for tourism established by the dominant white social system.

Knowledge is a resource that can confer the power to shape actions of those within a social system; that is, in structuration terms, knowledge is an authoritative resource that can induce social change, i.e., lead to new or altered structures as customary routines are changed (Giddens 1984). Just such a shift can be traced to a small number of individuals acting on the periphery of the tourism sector who sought to make knowledge about hotels serving African Americans publically available. Editors of *The Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), tracked openings of hotels for African Americans among its news items, to assist in travel planning. For the years 1921 and 1922, the period when the Bransfords were launching their hotel, *The Crisis* listed the following new hotels: The Ovington Hotel and the Fitzgerald in Atlantic City, New Jersey; the Hotel Mary Elizabeth in Miami, Florida; and an un-named hotel in Galveston, Texas. The magazine also listed the Roadside Hotel of Philadelphia, the Waldorf Hotel of Los Angeles, the Chicago Hotel of New Orleans, Hotel Baltimore of Detroit, and the Sterling Hotel of Cincinnati as hotels that catered to African American travelers. Colleges serving African American students, including Wilberforce College (now Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio), West Virginia Institute (now West Virginia State University, Institute, West Virginia), and Storer College (Harper's Ferry, Virginia), provided lodging to travelers during the summer (NAACP 1912). Through accumulation and dissemination of a knowledge base about places to stay, the magazine's editors inaugurated a counter-hegemonic structure that facilitated many individual journeys. It sought to enable African American tourism through the promotion of a separate travel network, one apart from that used by white tourists. Victor H. Green's *Negro Motorist Green Book*, launched in 1936 as a dedicated travel guide for African Americans and published through 1964, expanded this project. The *Green Book* contained listings, organized by state and city, of hotels, restaurants, service stations, drug stores, barber shops, and other businesses that served African Americans and might be of use to travelers. It became immensely popular, with 15,000 copies of later editions printed, but was largely invisible to white America (McGee 2010). Many copies were distributed through Esso service stations, one of the few national gas station chains to offer franchises to African Americans (McGee 2010). Jointly, *The Crisis* and the *Green Book*, and perhaps other less-well-known publications, made tourism by African Americans easier by helping to routinize the travel experience; people could travel to a town and know that they would

find accommodations. Black-owned gas stations helped reproduce the structure of African American travel on several levels – both by refueling the means of travel, the automobile, and by dissemination of knowledge about where to travel and where to stay.

Knowledge of lodging options was an emerging structure in African American tourism during the Jim Crow era; increases in the number of lodging options also helped routinize the travel experience. The Bransford Summer Resort was among a group of rural retreats for African Americans that were individually developed during the early twentieth century. In 1912, *The Crisis*, noting a dearth of rural accommodations, invited readers to submit information on places to stay, observing that ‘when they have the money and time to take a vacation, our correspondents show us that the choice of a summer resort is limited . . . if you are colored, [you] will knock in vain at the farmhouse door for board and lodging. The beautiful, inexpensive, out-of-the-way places are out of your way, indeed’ (NAACP 1912: 186). The list of known rural vacation accommodations for African Americans published in that issue is short (Table 1) and includes primarily Atlantic beach resorts and accommodations near well-established inland resorts, such as the New York’s Catskill Mountains and Saratoga Springs, and North Carolina’s Blue Ridge Mountains. Not included in this list, as its development began in 1912, was Idlewild, Michigan, soon to become one of the largest and most prestigious of vacation spots for affluent African Americans (Hart 1960; Walker & Wilson 2002). Idlewild included several thousand acres of land, allowing the development of a vacation home community, and its amenities included camping, swimming, boating, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, roller skating, and

Table 1. Rural vacation spots for African Americans, 1912

Locale	Lodging
Atlantic City, NJ	Fitzgerald’s Hotel Mrs. Poole’s Cottage Ridley’s Cottage Other cottages
Sea Isle, NJ	James Gordon’s Hotel
Cape May, NJ	Hotel Dale
Arundel, MD	Unspecified
Somerset Beach, MD	Unspecified
Buckroe Beach, VA	Unspecified
Silcott Springs, VA	Unspecified
Asheville, NC	Boarding houses
Shawnee, PA	Boarding house
Catskills, NY	Unspecified
Saratoga, NY	Thompson Cottage
Benton Harbor, MI	West Michigan Resort

Source: NAACP (1912).

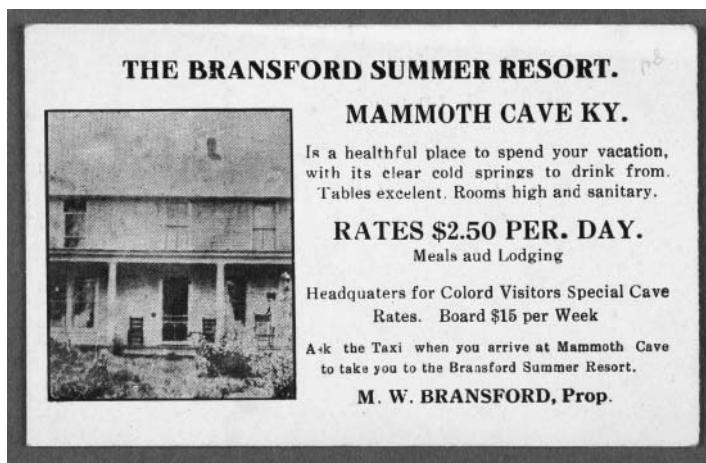


Figure 2. Promotional card, Bransford Summer Resort, c. 1921. *Source:* Janin Family Collection, Huntington Library. Used by permission.

nightclub performances by the era's leading African American entertainers. The resort became famous for its annual Chautauqua, which attracted the cultural and intellectual elite, as well as the wealthy.

The Bransford Summer Resort, launched in 1921, preceded a number of other notable African American resorts, including Barrett Beach, New Jersey (1925–1926), Lake Ivanhoe, Wisconsin (1926), Chowan Beach, North Carolina (1928), and American Beach, Florida (1935) (Phelts 1997; Rymer 1998; Foster 1999; Stephenson 2006). Bransford styled his business as a 'summer resort' (Figure 2), but it was not on the same scale as any of these, most of which included extensive acreage, opportunities for vacation home ownership, and a variety of recreational facilities. Barrett Beach, at 50 acres, was one of the smaller, but it offered 1700 feet of beach front with bath houses, a movie theater, a large dance pavilion, and a baseball field (Foster 1999). The Bransford property consisted of a family-home-turned hotel on 47 acres, some of which was farmed. Its resort-like properties derived from its rural setting and proximity to the Mammoth Cave Estate with its landscaped grounds (although the Bransfords' guests were limited in their freedom to enjoy them). The nearby Green River provided opportunities for swimming and boating, and Sunday guests could attend services at a pretty country church a short walk from the Bransford place. Tours of Mammoth Cave and perhaps other rival show caves were the main focus of visitors' activity. Home-style meals and socializing while sitting in the front porch's rocking chairs rounded out the leisure activities.

Another difference between the Bransford enterprise and the larger African American resorts was that it did not offer the same level of separation from white society.

Rural retreats exclusively for African Americans provided safe spaces for relaxation where they could ‘insulate themselves, and particularly their children, from unpleasant confrontations with whites’ (Foster 1999: 131). Rather than trying to provide a segregated resort for African Americans, Matt Bransford endeavored to enable access by African Americans to one of the more popular destinations in the country for white tourists – Mammoth Cave. Bransford’s guests experienced almost complete segregation from white visitors to Mammoth Cave, a condition imposed by Albert Janin, managing trustee of the Mammoth Cave Estate, but would likely have had contact with white members of the estate staff, including Janin himself, the cave manager, and the hotel manager. Moreover, the privileged white spaces to which they did not have access, e.g., the Mammoth Cave Hotel, the dining room, the hotel lobby where cave parties normally assembled, and rooms used to change into cave costumes, would have been in view and served as a reminder of second-class status. While resorts such as Idlewild and Chowan Beach created separate places for African American leisure, places apart from white tourists, Matt and Zemmie Bransford created a separate space for African American tourists on the periphery of a place patronized by white tourists. The Bransford Hotel was probably not unique in this regard, but its case history is worth exploring as it represents a largely overlooked segment of the African American tourist experience. It demonstrates that African Americans employed in the white tourism sector could, on occasion, facilitate African American access to these same attractions, subtly challenging the ‘whites-only’ norm of white American tourism. The Bransford case stands out because this agency took an entrepreneurial turn with the establishment of a rural hotel.

Tourism at Mammoth Cave

Mammoth Cave, located in the karst region of west-central Kentucky that is particularly rich in caves, sink holes, and other limestone dissolution features, was discovered by Anglo Americans as the region was settled in the 1790s (Algeo 2004). Native Americans had used it for thousands of years before that, extracting gypsum and flint and leaving evidence of having explored it to great depths. Anglo Americans initially used the cave to produce saltpeter, a key ingredient in gunpowder, as were many caves in the limestone belt running from Indiana through Tennessee. Mammoth Cave’s wide entry avenue provided ample work space for the men, mostly enslaved African Americans, who dug and processed the cave earth to extract its saltpeter. By the 1820s, demand for the cave’s saltpeter was declining, and a series of owners worked to promote the cave as a tourist attraction. Tourism was initially sparked by the public’s curiosity about Native American ‘mummies’ (actually bodies desiccated by dry cave conditions rather than preserved as Egyptian mummies are) found in nearby caves. Several of the era’s leading naturalists wrote about the ‘mummies,’ and their observations were subsequently disseminated in the popular press. With one

'mummy' on display in Mammoth Cave and another taken on tour through north-eastern cities, Mammoth Cave garnered the attention of elite tourists wealthy enough to afford the time and means of travel to a remote rural location. These were also the sort of tourists who spent the summer season at a fashionable watering hole, and a hotel was built at Mammoth Cave to accommodate them. Although rustic in form and appearance, it mimicked the features of grand hotels at eastern spas, with a ballroom, a billiards room, and a long veranda for promenading.

By the 1830s, descriptions of Mammoth Cave began appearing in the works of travel writers, and it was increasingly described, not in scientific terms, but in the language of the Romantic Movement, as a sublime natural wonder, inspiring awe, but fundamentally ineffable (Sears 1999). Mammoth Cave was recognized early on as being exceptionally large (it remains even today the longest known cave system in the world), and its sheer size added to its grandeur. By mid-nineteenth century, travel writers routinely placed it in the pantheon of world wonders, and it was considered second only to Niagara Falls in importance among America's scenic tourism destinations. The Louisville & Nashville (L&N) Railroad, completed in 1859, made Mammoth Cave more accessible to the traveling public in the decades following the Civil War. As the region recovered economically, tourism to the cave grew, especially among the emerging middle class. As the L&N Railroad acquired other railroads and expanded its rail network throughout the South, the company saw tourism destinations such as Mammoth Cave as a means of increasing ridership. Its passenger agents worked with Mammoth Cave management to promote group excursions to the cave, e.g., by fraternal organizations, teachers, state press organizations, other occupational groups, and church congregations. The railroad also increasingly promoted day trips to the cave from Louisville, which given its transportation connections by rail and river, had become a popular city for conferences and conventions by the turn of the twentieth century. By that time, the nature of tourism to Mammoth Cave had fundamentally changed. While its owners had once positioned it as a seasonal retreat in the tradition of Eastern resorts and mineral spas, it had become primarily a destination for day trippers or people who stayed at most one or two nights. The change would have significant implications for African American tourists, for with visitors spending less time at the cave, cave management needed more people to visit in order to maintain or increase the business's profitability. One way to increase visitation was to cultivate new streams of tourists, such as the African American middle and working classes. Thus, a shift in the structure of American tourism, from season-long stays to short trips, created demand and opportunity for African American tourists, enabling a wider choice of destinations, including Mammoth Cave.

African American Tourists at Mammoth Cave

It is impossible to know when African American tourists started coming to Mammoth Cave. Although the cave's hired managers kept detailed records on numbers of visitors

since the mid-nineteenth century, they made no notation of race. One factor that may have attracted African American visitors was the fact that many of the cave's guides during the nineteenth century were African Americans, either slaves brought to work at the burgeoning tourism enterprise before Emancipation or their descendants (Lyons 2006). During the nineteenth century, African Americans were exposed to the same kind of media that stimulated the desire of whites to travel to the cave, media exposure that helped enshrine the cave as a world wonder. African American newspapers, like other newspapers and journals throughout the country, featured travel narratives about Mammoth Cave that both publicized the cave and served as a model of sophisticated travel. For instance, during its relatively brief existence from 1837 through 1841, the New York City-based *Colored American* published two articles about Mammoth Cave among its fare of social uplift and advocacy for rights and freedom ('Mammoth Cave' 1838; 'Mammoth Cave of Kentucky' 1841). Because the authors of these articles are not identified and the first-person narratives contain no clues to their writers' race, these articles cannot serve as evidence of African American travel to Mammoth Cave. Both articles are, in fact, reprints from other papers (a common practice at the time), *The New York Evangelist* and *The Journal of Commerce*. Although they cannot help document African American tourism, these articles do serve as important early evidence of knowledge circulating within a free African American community about the cave and its suitability as a tourist destination. Likewise, in 1849, when *Natural Wonders of America*, George Brewer's moving panorama (a form of entertainment that preceded moving pictures) was on national tour, *The National Era*, an African American paper published in Washington, DC, featured a brief review of the panorama, particularly recommending the Mammoth Cave scenes ('The great wonder' 1849). The following year, when the panorama was in Boston, the Rochester, New York, *North Star* concurred with the glowing assessment and recommended that its readers visit the exhibition ('Brewer's panorama' 1850). The enormous popularity of Brewer's panorama and its decade-long tour of major American cities exposed Americans of all races to the literary and artistic conventions of Romantic-era tourism, turning the cave into a mass tourist destination during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Documentation of African American tourists began, incidentally, only after Albert Janin took up the position of resident trustee at Mammoth Cave in 1901 because of the voluminous correspondence that he maintained. Janin had married into the extended family that owned Mammoth Cave and his wife, Violet Blair Janin, upon the death of her mother in 1914, would become the largest shareholder of the Mammoth Cave Estate. Meanwhile, as a favored son-in-law, Janin, a lawyer by training, started representing his branch of the family in Mammoth Cave matters (Algeo 2008). In his almost daily letters to his wife, who maintained her residence in Washington, DC, Janin wrote of life at the cave, and these missives, as well as his business communications, provide insight into African American tourism at Mammoth Cave during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Janin had not been at the cave for more than several weeks when, in mid-September 1901, a party of Baptist ministers, '16 rather fine looking colored men from Louisiana and one from Texas,' who were returning home after attending a convention in Cincinnati, made a day trip to the cave (Janin 1901). The timing of this party, in the early days after Janin took up residence, suggests that African American tourism to the cave was already established. Janin documents, however, the kind of casual indignities to which African American travelers were subjected and his own intervention to ameliorate the situation. The ministers asked to be served coffee after their cave tour, Janin wrote his wife:

As the [Mammoth Cave] hotel does not entertain colored people [hotel manager Henry] Ganter answered that he was not fixed for it. Later he and I had a conversation about the matter and, on their coming out, had them served with hot coffee by two waiters with trays. They were overwhelmed with gratitude. Their leader made a speech in front of the office, said that they had visited Buffalo and Niagara Falls; that the Mammoth Cave was the grandest thing they had ever seen; that we ought to be proud of being the custodians of God's greatest natural wonder, and that nowhere in the travels had they met with such courteous treatment. (Janin 1901).

As the acting trustee of the Mammoth Cave Estate, which owned and leased the Mammoth Cave Hotel to Henry Ganter, Janin had influence with the hotel manager and used it to secure refreshment for the tourists, who would otherwise have been denied all service. In this instance, sympathetic agency partly overcame the established structure of discrimination. Janin did not have the power to change the whites-only policy of the hotel, because to attempt to do so would have challenged the entrenched social norm of racial segregation in tourist accommodations and possibly led to the hotel being shunned by white tourists, which would have been a financial disaster. It should be noted that while Kentucky passed state laws mandating racial segregation on railroads and streetcars, it had no laws concerning tourist accommodations. Furthermore, none of the Mammoth Cave Hotel leases that have survived mention any policy concerning who might or might not patronize the establishment. Thus, the structure of discrimination arose from the routinized practices of the hotel's managers, in refusing service to African Americans, and potential patrons in seeking or not seeking accommodation, which mirrored similar practices enacted on a daily basis throughout the South. Structuration theory holds that structures both constrain and enable, and while the constraints on African American visitors to Mammoth Cave are clear, the enabling aspect of this same structure of discrimination should be pointed out. When the Bransfords launched their hotel, it was not perceived as a competitor or threat to the Mammoth Cave Hotel, because it served a separate customer base. Whereas Janin treated rival hotels in the vicinity run by and for whites as threats and yearned for their failure, he materially aided Matt Bransford in starting the Bransford

Summer Resort. Thus, in ironic fashion, racial discrimination practices in accommodation enabled Matt Bransford, an employee of the Mammoth Cave Estate, to create an entrepreneurial niche for himself.

Albert Janin's biography is key to understanding his agency in the case of the black Baptist ministers, as well as his subsequent assistance to Matt Bransford in starting the Bransford Summer Resort. He grew up in New Orleans, the son of a French immigrant who, as a prominent lawyer, argued cases before the US Supreme Court. Albert was educated in Germany and subsequently took over his father's New Orleans law practice, where he had moderate success but was distracted by a string of failed business ventures and an unsuccessful run for Congress in Louisiana's first congressional district. A November 1882 statement of his political campaign platform reveals him to be a progressive on matters of race when he optimistically asserted that 'the South was now of one mind with the North as to maintaining the rights of the freedmen and extending to them the fullest blessings of free and public education' (Janin 1882: 1). Janin showed a marked preference for New Orleans' multicultural, multiracial milieu. After taking up residence at Mammoth Cave when he was 57 years old, he returned to the city whenever he could (much to his wife's annoyance), particularly to enjoy Mardi Gras celebrations. His trips to New Orleans were both his reward for and escape from often demanding duties at Mammoth Cave.

As the first decade on the twentieth century wore on, Janin became ambivalent about African American tourism to Mammoth Cave because he found himself increasingly constrained by social structures regarding race as the tourism sector became more competitive. He wanted African Americans to tour the cave because they represented an untapped market. He had devoted the past few years of his life to increasing tourist numbers because his in-laws' income (on which he was almost entirely dependent) rested in good measure on the number of tours taken. His white customers, however, expected the segregation endemic in Kentucky and other southern states at that time. Breaking local custom in this regard risked the loss of the larger stream of white tourists. His change in attitude was also linked to new, bitter business rivalries in both the hotel and show cave sectors. Apparently, his competitors hoped to siphon off some of Mammoth Cave's white tourist trade by branding it as an African American resort. In a letter to William Russell, a general passenger agent for the L&N Railroad, Janin signaled his willingness to continue receiving African American tourists but only if they could be kept separate from, and invisible to, white tourists:

I cannot undertake, and do not desire, to interfere in any way with your apporent [sic] purpose to 'work up', in conjunction with the M.C.R.R. Co. [the independently owned Mammoth Cave Railroad Company], colored excursion parties for the Mammoth Cave, but I shall not do anything to confirm and justify Elbert Hubbard's widely circulated statement that the Mammoth Cave has become a resort for colored picnic parties.

I will not receive colored parties scheduled to arrive here on trains provided for our white visitors and expecting to be taken into the Cave at the time fixed for whites – that is 9 A.M.; 1:30 P.M. and 7:00 P.M. – and to leave this place at the same time that white visitors do.

If I receive them at all, it will be in pursuance of a special agreement made for each separate party with a view to preventing any conflict or contact between such party and any party of white people whom we may have to handle on the same day. (Janin 1908a).

In a letter to his wife about the same situation, Janin was more forthright about the motives he suspected were behind the railroad agents' activity:

Mentz and Lacey have been trying to get up [African American] excursions – the object being, I think, to enable the Mentzes to say that their hotel is the one for white visitors as the M.C. Hotel entertains [African Americans]. I am also engaged in efforts to thwart two L&N agents in their aim to divert some patronage from here to the Mentz Hotel. (Janin 1908b)

One of the difficulties in interpreting Janin's position is that he tended to view any actions by business rivals as threats to Mammoth Cave, an attitude that verged on paranoia in his later years. Because he left a voluminous historical record and his business rivals did not, it is difficult to verify or refute his understanding of others' intentions. Edwin H. Mentz and his wife Mary ran the Mentz Hotel at Glasgow Junction, the transfer point for Mammoth Cave-bound passengers from the L&N line to the Mammoth Cave Railroad. Mentz was also involved with Richard H. Lacey in the independently owned Mammoth Cave Railroad Company, which was then the main means by which tourists reached Mammoth Cave. Whether or not Janin was accurate in his assessment of his rivals' motives, the policies he established at this time, of spatial and temporal separation of tourists by race, had the unintended consequence of creating a tourism niche that Matt Bransford would fill with his hotel and tour organization services.

The Bransford Summer Resort

Networks of social relations, with their accompanying asymmetries of power, both constrain and enable individual agency. Bransford and Janin had had a long-standing, if unequal, relationship, and this personal connection was what allowed Bransford not only to operate his business without triggering Janin's defensive suspicions but also to secure the latter's financial assistance. Matt started working at Mammoth Cave in 1897 at the age of 17, carrying lunches from where they were prepared in the hotel into the cave so visitors could consume them at the mid-point of their tour (Porter 1937). Eight years later, in July 1905, Matt started training to be a guide (Janin 1905). As acting trustee, Janin controlled the roster of Mammoth Cave employees, although

he likely listened to the advice of the cave and hotel managers. Matt's promotion to the position of guide was a sign of favor. Guiding was a desired position as guides earned tips in addition to their regular wages. Matt had an advantage in seeking the position because guiding at Mammoth Cave was a family tradition. His grandfather, Matterson Bransford, a mulatto slave, was one of the early guides whose witty and well-informed tours helped achieve an international reputation for Mammoth Cave (Lyons 2006). Matt's father, uncle, older brother, and other male relatives also worked as guides. Matt's talents as an interpreter of Mammoth Cave were recognized off the estate as well. When William Kerrick, a part-time travel agent, organized Mammoth Cave-themed entertainments for soldiers stationed at Louisville's Camp Zachery Taylor (a promotional endeavor approved by Janin because the evening lecture/slide shows were generally soon followed by large excursions of soldiers to the cave itself), Kerrick requested that Matt Bransford come to the camp to do the narration (Kerrick 1918). A further sign of Janin's favor was that in November 1920, Matt Bransford was one of two employees whom he took to the Hotelmen's Exposition in New York City, this despite the fact that Bransford worked as a cave guide and not in the Mammoth Cave Hotel (Janin 1920). Perhaps Bransford had already formulated a plan for a hotel and shared those plans with Janin, or perhaps the two men jointly planned the hotel for African Americans as an adjunct to the Mammoth Cave business. These details have not been preserved in the historical record. Regardless, the six-day exposition, attended by 'representatives of leading hostelries from all parts of the country,' occupying three floors of New York's Grand Central Palace and featuring over 300 booths with the latest 'devices for greater efficiency of hotel operation' ('National Hotel Men's Show' 1920), would have greatly expanded Bransford's knowledge of hotel keeping by exposing him to the latest in industry practices and equipment. Whether Janin played an active role in planning the new hotel or not, his payment of Bransford's travel expenses to the hotel conference provided an opportunity for the younger man to pursue his entrepreneurial vision. Thus, agency on the part of both men grew into a hotel for African Americans that became part of a larger structure of African American tourism during the Jim Crow era.

Matt's partner in the hotel business was his wife, the former Zemmie Lewis, whom he married in 1904, when they were both about 24 years old. The Bransfords were part of a moderately prosperous community on Flint Ridge just outside the Mammoth Cave Estate where many of the guides lived (Figure 3). The area was residentially integrated, and there was little social or economic difference between African American and white neighbors (Lyons 2006). Livelihoods came from combining seasonal income from guiding or working in the hotel with farming or cutting timber. Matt and Zemmie owned their house, free of mortgage, by age 30, no mean feat for a couple in any era, but particularly impressive at this time and place when KKK activity in other parts of western Kentucky was driving African American residents from their land, an act that would be called 'ethnic cleansing' today (Lucas 1992b). By the 1930s, Matt owned 74 acres of land, and Zemmie owned a 12-acre tract in her own name.

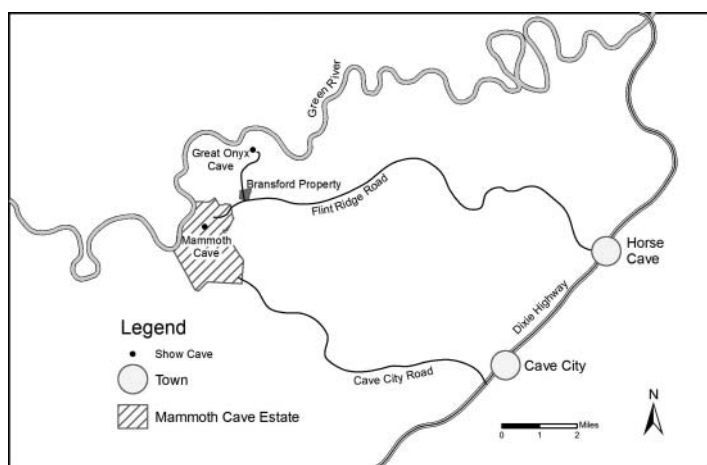


Figure 3. The Bransford Summer Resort on Flint Ridge, Kentucky. *Source:* Map by author.

While they inherited some of this land, land ownership by the prior generation speaks to the general prosperity of the community.

It is not known when Matt and Zemmie first opened their home to tourists. Perhaps before they took up hotel keeping in a formal way, they lodged the occasional traveler who lacked other options. Such tourist homes for African Americans were the norm in small towns (Jakle & Sculle 2009) and the *Negro Motorist Green Book* would later include them among its listings. However they got started lodging visitors, the summer of 1921 was a turning point for their business. Because of its transportation connections, Louisville was the site of many conferences, including African American religious, educational, and business conventions (Lucas 1992b). That summer, it hosted both the Kentucky Negro Educational Association, which drew 950 attendees (NAACP 1921), and the National Negro Medical Association, attended by over 500 doctors from 31 states ('500 Negro Doctors' 1921). William Kerrick, who had been organizing excursions to Mammoth Cave from Louisville since 1912, was eager to organize tours for the physicians and wrote to Janin several times on this subject (Kerrick 1921). Kerrick was pursuing a specific goal – he had ambitions to own Mammoth Cave, and to this end, he wanted to show Janin that he was an effective tour organizer in hopes of being anointed Janin's successor at the cave. Kerrick's attitude toward race is unknown, but it is likely that any tours he organized for the visiting doctors stemmed from single-minded pursuit of this dream rather than from a desire to challenge societal structures. Structuration theory holds that agency can have both intended and unintended consequences, however, and both factor into the reproduction of structure. In this case, an unintended consequence of Kerrick's desire

to organize as many tours to Mammoth Cave as possible was to facilitate travel by African American tourists and provide a stream of customers for the Bransford Hotel.

In anticipation of increased business, Bransford requested and received a loan from Janin, money he used to buy furniture (Bransford 1921c). He also plowed his income from guiding that year back into the hotel (Bransford 1921b). That Janin loaned Bransford money at a time when it was notoriously difficult for African Americans to get loans from white-controlled banks suggests that Janin bought into the idea of the Bransford Hotel as the best solution for the dilemma of appropriately handling African American tourists. It does not necessarily testify to a close spirit of cooperation between the two men. As many of his letters show, Janin could be prickly, and he liked being in charge more than he liked cooperating with others. Bransford, however, seems to have been adroit at managing their relationship. It appears that he initially asked for a loan and was rebuffed, for he apologized for a request (Bransford 1921a). In a subsequent letter, he appealed to Janin's vanity and self-image as a generous man (and back-handedly renewed the appeal for a loan) by declaring:

I told [L.P. Edwards, manager of the competing Onyx Cave and Janin's bitter business rival] that my boss would send me money without a word if I ask[ed] him. Of course there are plenty of people here [probably a reference to Flint Ridge] that would let me have all the money I want, but I told him that in order that he might not think that I had to be without money. I was and am yet ashamed[d] I ask[ed] you to send me the money. (Bransford 1921b)

The loan was soon forthcoming, perhaps in part to ensure that Bransford continued to bring his hotel guests to Mammoth Cave rather than to rival Onyx Cave, which was actually closer to the Bransford Hotel. Bransford, on his part, adhered to the separation of races stipulated by Janin, carving out separate spaces for the various activities that were part of a tour. He minimized the time his guests were on the Mammoth Cave grounds, carrying them over by wagon for tours timed to avoid groups of white tourists. Tourists customarily changed out of their good traveling clothes into 'cave costumes' before entering the dirty, damp cave. White tourists did this in the Mammoth Cave Hotel, but Matt secured the use of one of the tenant houses on the estate grounds for his guests to change and leave their luggage (Bransford 1922). Zemmie cooked for the guests, and when objections were raised to their being fed in the cave, as was customary with tours, Matt assured Janin they would take all meals at his house: 'Judge, I hope you will rest contented that my main motive is to keep the white and col. seperated [sic]. I am doing as near the way you told me as I can' (Bransford 1921c).

Once a routine was established for handling African American tourists at Mammoth Cave, the historical record goes quiet on this topic. This suggests that the practices became 'routinized,' a step in the establishment of new social structures, for there was

no need for further communication when everyone on the estate knew how parties of African American tourists were handled. That African American tourism continued is evidenced by a passing reference in a 1923 court petition to a taxi driver who took ‘a load of colored people’ from the [Mammoth Cave] estate grounds (Edmonson Circuit Court 1923) as well as by an acknowledgment of the potential for tourism revenue from the Bransford home when the property was appraised as part of the conversion to a national park (Bragg 1934).

A new set of social structures were imposed on the region with the federal authorization in 1926 of Mammoth Cave National Park. The park was to encompass not just the estate and cave owned by Janin’s in-laws but also 73,000 acres of surrounding land, including the Flint Ridge community where the Bransfords lived. This legislative act meant the end of the Bransford Hotel. While the Mammoth Cave Hotel was to continue operating, the several other hotels in the designated park area were to be closed. Closure was not immediate, because land acquisition was slow and stretched into the late 1930s. Many land owners, black and white, were reluctant to sell because doing so meant not only the loss of land that had been in their family for generations but also the dissolution of their communities. In 1920, when talk of the park to come was rife, Matt Bransford wrote a moving paean on behalf of the ‘farmers and land owners of Edmonson County,’ testifying to the pride they had in the farmsteads created by their ancestors, for ‘they may not be so fertile as some of the other lands, but they are ours according to law, and we are as proud of our farms as if they were worth millions’ (Bransford 1920). Bransford wrote presciently of a future when a man ‘dispossess[ed] of his home’ is left ‘only his household and kitchen furniture and a few other things about the house not worth mentioning. Now he must git [sic] and find some other place whether it suits him or not’ (Bransford 1920). It is not clear who was the intended audience of this plea by Bransford that he and his neighbors be allowed to remain on their lands. The handwritten note was addressed ‘To whom it may concern,’ and signed only by Bransford, yet he seems to represent a broader community of interest, at least informally. He was viewed as a community leader by land buyer R.S. Bragg, who urged the National Park Service to act quickly in December 1934 on an option to purchase the Bransford place: ‘Previously, all efforts to induce a sale have failed . . . It is hoped that early consideration may be given this option, because of the effect upon the other colored owners in the cave area’ (Bragg 1934). Bransford’s example in selling and moving, it was hoped, would induce other Flint Ridge land owners to sell. His action would have the perhaps unintended consequence of signaling to other area land owners that selling was the right thing to do. Structures of signification are built out of individual agency. Bragg certainly expected that Bransford’s action would precipitate a shift in social structures, heralding an acceptance of the park to come and an end to passive resistance.

The Kentucky National Park Commission, the state-level organization charged with purchasing land that would then be donated to the federal government for the national park, secured three appraisals for the Bransford land, which came in

at \$35, \$45, and \$75 per acre, respectively (Bragg 1934). The highest appraisal acknowledged the revenue-earning potential of the hotel business, which suggests that Matt and Zemmie were still operating the Bransford Summer Resort into the 1930s. The house and outbuildings were valued at \$1040. The purchase offer made to the Bransfords allowed the full value of the buildings, but only an average of \$26 per acre, well below even the lowest of the three appraisals. The Bransfords were offered a total of \$3000 for their house and 75 acres, an offer that they accepted, apparently without negotiation. Within a few months, Matt and Zemmie had moved out, thus ending the Bransford Summer Resort. Bransford retired from guiding at Mammoth Cave when he moved his family to Cave City, a town on the Dixie Highway, some 10 miles distant, that would become a gateway to the national park, but he offered to return if his guide services were ever needed (Porter 1937).

With the closing of the Bransford Hotel, travel to Mammoth Cave again became more difficult for African American tourists. Once again, they were largely restricted to day trips because of a dearth of accommodations. The National Park Service, which took over Mammoth Cave Hotel operations, initially retained the whites-only policy that had prevailed when it was privately owned. Nor was camping an option, for National Park Service policy until 1942 followed the old 'separate, but equal' canard; campgrounds in southern national parks were to be segregated in accord with regional custom, yet the only campground built for African Americans was at Shenandoah National Park (Young 2009). Park Service Director Arno Cammerer maintained that campgrounds would be built for African Americans following 'the demand of people for them' (Cammerer cited in Young 2009: 663). However, demonstrating demand was a chicken-and-egg problem, as demand could not be easily documented until facilities were available. The irony of this chapter in National Park history is that at the start of the twenty-first century, the institution finds itself asking why park visitation by African Americans is disproportionately low and trying a variety of means to increase visitation (Waye 2005).

Conclusions

Structuration theory probes the interconnectedness of structure and agency to identify not only ways in which actions and choices are constrained, on the one hand, by law, rule, custom, and social expectation, but also ways in which structures create opportunities for agents to act. The result over time is that when enough agents act in a certain way, new structures are formulated that while generally self-reinforcing, also open new possibilities for agency. Thus, structure and agency are mutually constitutive, but not repetitive, more like a spiral than a snake swallowing its tail. The constraining structures are easy to identify for African American tourists in the early twentieth century – the state laws that excluded them from hotels and restaurants and mandated segregated railroad cars and waiting rooms with distinctly second-class amenities, such as unpadding seats; the concession to regional 'custom' on the part

of National Park Service administrators in maintaining whites-only policies when no federal law required it; and the perpetual risk of unpleasant confrontations with whites in public spaces that led African Americans to self-police where they went and how they acted. Less easy to identify are structures that opened possibilities for agency, as most resulting agency is arguably small-scale and short-lived, and therefore, particularly difficult to identify in the historical context. The practice of the editors of the NAACP's magazine *The Crisis* and Victor H. Green in his *Negro Motorist Green Book* in identifying hotels accommodating African Americans facilitated individual travel. The Bransford Hotel, although not mentioned in either publication, was part of a web of mutually dependent businesses, including the Mammoth Cave Estate, the L&N Railroad, the Mammoth Cave Railroad, and Kerrick Tours, which cooperated during the first third of the twentieth century to increase African American tourism despite sometimes conflicting individual goals. As an underserved portion of the population in regards to tourism, African Americans represented a potential growth market that each of these businesses pursued. Thus, the profit motive of early twentieth-century capitalism partially trumped racist structures hindering travel at this particular place as individual railroad passenger agents and tour operators developed excursions for African Americans, not out of a sense of social justice but in pursuit of the bottom line.

This paper presented a case study of a Jim Crow-era hotel owned by and run for African Americans in the rural South, relating what is known of its proprietors and placing its history within a larger historical and institutional context. The Bransford Hotel made it significantly easier for African Americans to travel through central Kentucky and to visit the world-famous Mammoth Cave. As long as Mammoth Cave was privately owned, other tourism enterprises, including the Mammoth Cave Estate, the L&N Railroad, and a Louisville tourist agent, while not sharing identical ends, engendered enough cooperation for the Bransford Hotel to thrive. When the federal government took over Mammoth Cave and surrounding land to create a national park, it displaced residents and shuttered numerous small businesses, the Bransfords' included. Ironically, federal oversight set back the cause of equal access to tourism facilities at Mammoth Cave until the National Park Service's policy of segregation was overturned in the early 1940s.

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