

Jeffrey's Cliffs

Conservation & Recreation Area

By Jerry Long

Hancock County, KY Deed Book 17, page 249:

Jeffrey Cliff Deed

This Indenture, made this 13th day of July 1874, between Joshua D. Powers and Clara his wife of Hawesville Hancock County Kentucky of the first part and John A. Jeffrey of Cannelton, Petty County, Indiana of the second part. Witnesseth that the party of the first part in consideration of the conveyance of a certain lot or parcel of ground together with the appurtenances thereto belonging situate on the corner of Second Street and Washington St. in the town of Cannelton, Perry County, Indiana made by the party of the second part and his wife, have bargained and sold and by these presents do convey and confirm unto the said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns forever a certain tract or parcel of land lying in the County of Hancock and State of Kentucky and described as follows viz: being that place or parcel of land devised to John H. Sterett by his grandfather John Sterett now deceased by will of record in the Clerk's Office of the Hancock County Court in Will Book No.4 page 37 and is known as -the "Big Cliff" and includes all the land on the top of said cliff and underneath the same as may be between the boundary lines of D.D. Davison, George M. Younger, Edward Brashear, C.C. Younger, James Burnett, James Sherron, Thomas M. Newman, William H. Bowner and the heirs of James Holder dec'd and said Cliff the tract herein conveyed being bounded by the lands of the above named persons being all of said Big Cliff tract conveyed to said J.D. Powers by John H. Sterett except that part of said tract conveyed by J.D. Powers & wife to C.C. Younger on the 1st day of January 1874 by deed duly recorded in the Hancock County Court Clerk's Office Deed Book 17 page 92. The parties of the first part further convey to the parties of the second part by the title to a right of way thirty feet wide from the "Big Cliff" tract through the lands of John H. Sterett & Baird Sterett to the Public road, which leads from Hawesville to Cloverport via Fairview School House and also to the right of way reserved in the Deed to Younger as aforesaid. Deed from Steretts wife to said J.D. Powers recorded in Hancock Co. Court clk. Office Deed Book 17 page 59. To have and to hold the same with the appurtenances unto the party of the second part, his heirs and assigns forever. And the said parties of the first part do father covenant with the said party of the second part that they will warrant and forever defend the title to the foregoing described land and premises from the claim of all persons whosoever.

In testimony whereof the parties of the first part hath herewith subscribed their names the day and date herein written.

J .D. Powers, Clara Powers (Seal)
[Deed was recorded on 13 July 1874]

See also:

Hancock County, KY Deed Book 17, pp.59-60. On 26 November 1873 John H. Sterett and wife, Medora B. Sterett, and Baird Sterett & wife Elizabeth Sterett, of Hancock County, sold to Joshua D. Powers of Hancock County, tract of 100 acres, being parcel devised to John H. Sterett by his grandfather, John Sterett, known as the "Big Cliff" and includes all the ground on the top of said cliff and underneath the same; bounded by lands of Dr. D. Davison, George Younger, Edward Brashear, James Burnett, heirs of James Holder, James Sherron and Thomas M. Newman.

Hancock County, KY Deed Book 17, pp.92-93. On 1 January 1874 J. D. Powers, and wife, Clara Powers, of Hancock County sold to Clarendon C. Younger, of Hancock County, tract of 5 or 6 acres in Hancock County, off of the north west end of the "Big Cliff Tract", deeded to Powers by John H. Sterett & wife, bounded by G. M. Younger and David Davison.



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 21 February 1894, p.1:

A Wonderful Kentucky Cliff.
[Hancock Clarion.]

Jeffrey's Cliff, located four miles east of Hawesville, is a natural curiosity and a wonder. It consists of a huge cliff from 200 to 400 feet high all around and looks as if Providence had but set a huge boulder down on the face of the earth. There is a soil on top of it from ten to thirty feet deep, and before it was partially cleared off, a heavy growth of timber adorned it. There is probably more than a hundred acres of good land on top of it. Nature left no way for a man with a modern vehicle to go up it, but at an expense of hundreds of dollars, a wagon-way has been cut through the solid rock and the dirt graded up to meet it. In two other places footpaths have been provided for the lone traveler.

On this wonderful natural production the towns of Cloverport, Cannelton, Hawesville and probably others can be plainly seen, as well as a large scope of surrounding country, Cattle in the bottom look like mere midgets, and one's head swims with the dizziness of the height when buzzards, which make the cliff their roosting place, sail half way down the sides. "Salt Peter Cave" and other points of interest make up its peculiar wonders. There is an aperture in the cliff on one side, of but a foot or so wide, that sends out the year round a cold breeze. The warmest, sultriest day that can be imagined in August, this constant flow of cold air greets the sightseer. It sits in the middle of the upper bottom and the Ohio river curves more than half way round it at a distance of a mile and a half away. Truly, this is a home wonder.

[This article was syndicated and carried by numerous other newspapers throughout the United States.]



Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Saturday, 13 April 1901:

Skillman column – A telegram was received here on Monday stating that Mrs. E. H. Jeffrey, widow of the late Dr. John H. Jeffrey, had died on that day, on her farm five miles from Louisville, of pneumonia. She formerly lived at Hawesville, Cannelton and Skillman—leaving here a year ago, when she tried her fortunes in Arkansas. She soon returned, however. Mrs. Jeffrey

was about sixty-five years of age and a christian woman whom everyone loved. She was a great niece of Daniel Boone's, the Kentucky pioneer, and owned the famous cliff near here, which bears her name.

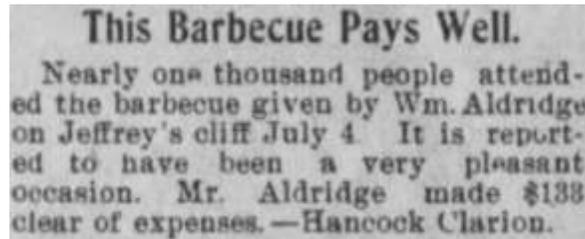


Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Saturday, 21 September 1901:

A copy of the will of John A. Jeffery, of Cannelton, Ind., was probated in the Jefferson county court on Thursday. It is dated December 4, 1889, He died several years ago and left his estate to his widow, Elizabeth H. Jeffrey. The property consists chiefly of the famous Jeffrey's Cliff, five miles above Hawesville. It was for a half a century the property of heirs of Capt. John Sterett, but was coveted and finally bought by Jeffrey, who had long been a New Albany druggist. He put many improvements on the property and removed there to live, but did not stay long. He, however, held to be property, which is a great natural curiosity. It contains about one section of land and has a perpendicular wall of stone, all about and below it, not less than one hundred feet high. At one point on the north east side Jeffrey blasted out the rock and made a wagon-way approach. – Owensboro Messenger.



Breckenridge News, Cloverport, KY, 13 July 1904, p.8:



[William Aldridge was the owner of Jeffrey's Cliff]



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 5 May 1935, pp.1B-2B:

Three "Lookouts" To Be Built On Highway 60 Near Hawesville

Hawesville, Ky., May 4 – County Judge G. W. Newman has worked out a road beautification program for Highway 60, east of Hawesville, and contracts will be let next Friday by the State Highway commission at Frankfort for the building of three observation points or "lookouts," as the Judge calls them. He expects work to begin by the first of June. These "lookouts" are each to be 225 feet long, 100 feet, wide with a 40 foot parking space for automobiles, with a wall of masonry on the river side four feet high and two and a half wide....

Wife Owns Jeffery Cliff

An extensive land owner is the judge, in addition to the home just off Highway 60 with its flower garden, its wide porch and easy chairs that invite to leisure and repose. Mrs. Newman too,

is the possessor of many acres of Hancock county land. Farther east toward Cloverport she owns the Jeffery Cliff, a bold, rocky headland that rises toward the river, jutting from the surrounding lower lands to stand far above the country round-about, one massive rock of 140 acres on top, an ancient Indian fort where Red men built their wigwams when danger neared. Summer picknickers often climb to the top of the Jeffery Cliff, named for an eccentric Englishman who came there about 1870 and lived atop the' rock for several years. Judge Newman recalls when coal mining was a big industry about Hawesville, and that big Ohio steamers would be tied along the foot of the very spots included in the beautification program, a dozen or fifteen he says, taking on coal from the first supply found for hundreds of miles. A bathing beach invites to water sport there now, the shelving slope of such gentle grade that danger is reduced to a minimum. And when the forestry experts have followed the builders of the observation platform alongside the highway and the steep hillside been converted into a summer vacation land, the tangle of fallen trees will have given way to an orderly arrangements of shade, and there within sight of the river, the railroad and the cluster of cities, with the Kentucky hills a background for the wide picture, a conveniently arranged assortment of beauty spots will lure many to pause, to stay longer and probably to establish homes.



Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Friday, 20 March 1936, p.1:

Historical Lore

Concerning Jeffrey's Cliff and it's Habitants,
Provides Material For Article in Evansville paper

Evansville Resident Interviews Local Men Who Supply
Information About the Cliff Dweller and His Family

The following article appeared in the March 8 issue of the Evansville Press:

It just shows you how a story gets around. William Wesley Peters, Evansville architect, started it, said Mr. Peters: "I've heard that an Englishman settled in Kentucky on a big Ohio River bluff about seven miles above Cannelton, Ind.

"He was an admirer of the famous frontiersman, Daniel Boone. But his Kentucky neighbors didn't like him and they conspired to cut off the road to his land. This resulted in a hated law case in which the court ruled that a man has the right to entrance to his own property."

Attorney W. C. Welborn who originally told the story to Mr. Peters, couldn't shed any more light on it. But he suggested seeing Judge Emra H. Ireland.

Hancock County, Kentucky is the native habitat of the Irelands, and the judge knew a bit more about the English cliff-dweller.

"His name," he said, "was Jeffreys. And Daniel Boone was his hero. In fact I heard that he came to Kentucky just to see the country made famous by Daniel Boone's explorations.

"And he married a girl who was a descendant of Daniel Boone.

"But there was another reason why he came to Kentucky. In England he had a friend who owned a pet bird – a redheaded woodpecker. Jeffrey wanted to see the country where the red headed woodpeckers lived.

"I imagine that after he arrived here he saw so many of them he didn't care about having one caged.

...

"Jeffreys lived on top of a cliff. The only way to get there was on a narrow wagon road that he blasted thru the sandstone. I've gone hunting along that road many a time.

"He planted an orchard on top of the cliff. It was one of the first real fruit orchards in this part of the country.

"But if you really want to know about the Jeffreys you'd better go to Hawesville," he concluded. "The cliff is about four miles west of town."

Edward P. Kelly, Hawesville attorney, and an old schoolmate of Mr. Ireland provided the next bit of information about the queer Englishman who lived on top of a cliff.

The cliff, itself, rears from 200 to 300 feet above the surrounding territory about a half mile off U.S. Highway 60, and about a mile and a half from the horseshoe bend in the Ohio River.

...

Its top is flat as a table and contains some 100 acres, now forested with second growth elm and locust. From its top one can see for miles – the Ohio River appears as a broad ribbon that winds between lush river bottom farms.

The base of the cliff is honeycombed with deep caves – some the haunts of red foxes.

"One cavern on my land where it touches the base of Big Cliff is called Morgan's Cave," Mr. Kelly said.

"Tradition has it that Morgan's Raiders made the cave their rendezvous during Civil War days.

"The opening is 100 feet high, and 250 feet wide. It extends back into the sandstone rock for 150 feet.

"It is shaped like a huge amphitheater with a gradual, sloping floor.

...

"On the northwest side are steps going to the top of the cliff that were chiseled into the solid rock by boys who went up to "visit" the Jeffreys.

"On the east side, Harold Hagman, farmer, now uses one of the giant caves for a stock barn. You can drive a four-horse team into this barn and easily turn around.

"Near the stone steps is Saltpeter Cave. Saltpeter for explosives was mined there during the Civil War.

"A cold water spring shoots from the bottom of the cliff and the old Iglar farm, now owned by Orville Swihart, has a regular water system from the spring to the house and farm buildings 980 yards away. Swihart doesn't need a pump, either to boost the pressure."

...

Attorney Kelly owns much of the property below the cliff, which incidentally provides him with a natural fence for the rear of his farm.

"In summer, not a day passes but what there's a crowd of picknickers at the cliff," he said.

"A Louisville man came down to see me about some oil well property, near Big Cliff, not long ago.

"We drove out there. I parked the car and by the time I got out the oil man was missing. I found him about 15 minutes later. He had spotted the cliff and was exploring caves and caverns just like any kid.

"The old place really does something to you."

Kelly says it is the only section of the county that still abounds in wild life – foxes, rattlesnakes, and copperheads, 'coons and 'possums.

...

He likes to tell how he killed an eight-button rattler with a small hatchet, after fooling it into striking at clods of dirt.

But how about Mr. Jeffreys and his right-of-way law suit?

Well, musty old records pushed back on a dusty top shelf in the Hancock County Courthouse, reveal that John A. Jeffrey bought the Big Cliff property from J. D. Powers on July 13, 1874.

The yellowed deed describes the property as formerly belonging to the Sterett family — first John Sterett and then his grandson, John H. Sterett.

Jeffrey, two years later, inaugurated and won a suit against J. D. Powers, John H Sterett, Barrett Sterett, C. C. Younger and G. M. Younger who were apparently seeking to shut off his right-of-way to the public highway.

...

James Holder, farmer, who lives beneath the shadow of the bluff, supplies the next flu and final bit of information concerning the cliff-dwelling Englishman and his family.

"They called him Dr. Jeffrey," he said. "He first lived in Cannelton, then on top of Lover's Leap Bluff in Hawesville and then out here on Big Cliff.

"Doc Jeffrey wasn't a big man but he had foot that was large enough to support a man twice his size.

"I remember how he used to ride around the country on a broken-down and sway-backed, white and brown spotted horse.

"I never could understand ow the horse managed to live so long.

...

"Doe Jeffrey once boasted to me that he had ridden across the Ohio River on his horse. That was when it was frozen of course. And Jeffrey said that he carried back a barrel of flour.

"But, pshaw, neither the horse nor Doe Jeffrey could have lifted a barrel of flour, much less carry it seven miles from Cannelton."

Mr. Holder, who delights in taking the romance out of a story, said that he couldn't understand why the Jeffreys picked a place like the cliff for a home.

"It can't be farmed," he said. "Just as soon as you cleared off the trees, wind and rain would sweep all the soil from it.

"Jeffrey was an odd character. He had to blast out a road to get to the top of Big Cliff.

...

"It never was much of a road, tho he did make it wide enough for a threshing machine to struggle up one time and cut a bit of wheat.

"The old Jeffrey house was a curiosity. it has been torn down tho, for many a year. George W. Newman, who now owns Big Cliff, contracted with some farmers around here to wreck it. Newman was going to build a garage with some of the lumber. I don't know what happened to the rest of it."

The cliff-house was typically English.

"First Jeffrey put up a story and it half building with two or three rooms," Holder said. "Then he added other wings to this main structure."

"I went to several parties. up there," and he waved his hand at the towering wall of stone over which more than 100 buzzards swooped and glided on noiseless, powerful wings.

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"Once, I even took my fiddle along to help a boy serenade one of Jeffrey's daughters," Holder went on.

Doctor Jeffrey had four daughters and one son. Holder remembers three of the daughters: Mrs. Edith Richey, Mrs. Alvin Shearn and Mrs. Lulu Newman.

"John, the son – I had a fight with him in town, one time." Holder said. "I won."

"Doctor Jeffrey used to complain that he was getting a bit deaf.

"He said that he thought it was due to heavy cannonading while he served in Britain's army.

"After Doctor Jeffrey's death the family stayed on for a while. They mortgaged up Big Cliff for provisions.

"Later they moved to Arkansas for a while."

• • •

This summer, if you visit Big Cliff after gaining the reluctant permission of farmers to cross their lands to reach it, you can still see the foundation of the old Jeffrey home.

You might even drink the ice cold water from the deep well there and see some of the flowers and shrubs that the Jeffreys planted.

Some day the place may be converted into a park. At least everyone in that vicinity agrees that it should be included in the Kentucky park system or that something should be done to record and preserve the history of Big Cliff.

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[The preceding article was published in the Evansville Press under the title of "The Story of Big Cliff, a Woodpecker, and a Famous Lawsuit" (8 March 1936, p.1B). This article and the two articles that appeared in the Hancock Clarion in 1901 I discovered in 1984 when Don Wimmer, editor of the Hancock Clarion, allowed me to go through the old editions of the Clarion, and copy articles that reflected on the history of the county. Mr. Wimmer published part of the 1936 article in the 31 October 2013 edition of the Hancock Clarion.]

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 20 June 1954, p.6D:

New Cliff Park Opens Near Hawesville, Ky.

A new park has been opened to the public near Jeffrey's Cliff, five miles east of Hawesville just off U. S. 60, it has been announced by P. W. (Dad) Finley. It is known as the Jeffrey's Cliff Park.

Finley has turned approximately 75 acres of his farm into the park which skirts the cliff projection and includes Morgan's Cave with its historic background. The area is wooded. Finley has built a road from the highway which winds its way to the cliffs and the cave.

Finley has also constructed a lake which was stocked with fish last year.

The park is open each Sunday and members of the Fireside Frolic Barn Dance group furnish free entertainment.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 23 January 1977, p.5B:

Does anyone have a spare \$28,000?

By Gary Kula, Messenger-Inquirer

After digging through my pockets, coming up with 20 cents and bumming the nickel to fill out the quarter needed to purchase a soft drink, my thoughts turned to this question: How do you raise \$28,000 to purchase 140 acres of land – land that has little or no value except for its aesthetic and historical ones?

Consider this advertisement that appeared in the Hancock County Clarion.

"FOR SALE JEFFERY CLIFFS

Approximately 140 acres of the most unique formation of nature in Kentucky. This historic land value has outstanding potential as a State Park or for private camping and trails, etc. Long a monument to natural unspoiled days gone by, where the Indian and nature lived in harmony, now being offered for sale at a once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity price of \$28,000.00. A fine stand of mixed hardwood timber, located five miles east of Hawesville . . ."

Real estate broker Charles King admitted to that fancy prose and said that he's had the property listed for about 30 days. "I'm pretty sure I've got it sold," said King, who represents owner George Newman of Virginia.

"I've had about five people who are interested, one fellow is from Anchorage, Alaska, but I have no idea what any of the interested parties plan to do with it."

King said this particular property, which is only a section of the rocky outcropping in Hancock County known collectively as Jeffery Cliffs, has been in the Newman family for as long as he can remember.

Newman tried to get the state to buy the land for a state park. King said, but they weren't interested.

The cliffs are rather unique biologically and historically, according to Owensboro Area Museum Director Joe Ford. "It's an uplifted area of cliffs, primarily limestone, with overhangs which harbor botanical life which is different from the surrounding areas," Ford said.

According to Ford, Indians inhabited the cliffs caves from the time of the Archaic Culture, about 2,000 B.C., up to the coming of the white man. The larger openings in the cliffs were used as permanent settlement sites while the smaller ones were temporary shelters, Ford said. Area residents have long used the cliffs for recreation and exploration but some recent developments have hampered those interested in gaining access to the cliffs.

Vandals virtually destroyed the interior of a house belonging to one of the property owners and the owner closed his property to the public. The man was more than justified in doing so and it's a shame that the actions of some result in sanctions against the majority.

But according to King, the property for sale still is not off limits to the public. "There are two rights of way leading to the property," King said. "The trouble is trying to find the exact locations of those rights of way.

"I have no idea what the people who have expressed interest in the land plan to do with it," King said. "But, I'm pretty sure they would allow public access. Actually the land has no true

development potential. The only commercial potential would possibly be as campsites. And even those would have to be primitive unless a lot of money was spent on development.

"This is very rugged land that would necessitate a lot of money to develop. Even basic utilities such as water would cost a lot of money to install. I think the person who buys it will hold on to it. It's the type of property that lends itself to promotion."

Why does this writer want \$28,000 to purchase the land. It'd be nice to own a little piece of that rock, so to speak. Profitably speaking, the cliffs probably aren't worth \$500 an acre but I'll bet the stars are a little brighter when you camp up there and the wind whistles a bizarre tune through the rocks.

I'd even let you use it. Maybe I would even install an old-fashioned, pump-type well if I could find some way paraphrasing Bob Dylan to keep the vandals from taking the handle.



Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 31 October 2013, p.7:



Legend has it that John Hunt Morgan and his "raiders" camped in Morgan's Cave during the Civil War. It is located 6 miles east of Hawesville in the Jeffrey's Cliffs sandstone formation. The cave is 240' wide, 150' deep and 180' high. Over the years amateur archeological hunters have found many artifacts in the cave.



This narrow wagon road (on left) was carved by John A. Jeffrey in the sandstone enabling him to drive his wagon to the top of the cliff.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 26 May 2017, p.1A:

Hancock County plans to open Jeffrey's Cliffs to public

By Renee Beasley Jones, Messenger-Inquirer

As an 11-year-old, Steve Canepari hiked the Jeffrey's Cliffs area just east of Hawesville.

Canepari remembers Boy Scout cookouts and camping trips around the cliffs -- huge finger-like sandstone outcroppings that jut up from the Skillman Bottoms near Domtar Paper Co.'s mill.

As a young man, he hiked Jeffrey's Cliffs with his future wife, Dosella. Later in life, he introduced their children and grandchildren to the cliffs.

Now, Canepari, 71, is president of the recently formed Hancock County Heritage Commission, which plans to turn Jeffrey's Cliffs into a free public park and protect the unique 140-acre tract for future generations.

"It will take several years before it is open to the public," Canepari said. "It's a work in progress."

On Thursday, he busied himself with paperwork needed for Jeffrey's Cliffs to be deeded to Hancock County.

The most recent owner was the late Jerry Harris, who died in 2012. Harris' daughters Linda Phillips and Carol Harris of Anchorage, Alaska, inherited the cliffs.

Harris was a successful businessman in Alaska, but he always loved Hancock County. He bought Jeffrey's Cliffs in 1977.

He later registered the land with the Kentucky Heritage Council, and it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. "The property has historical significance and has prehistoric rock art," Phillips said.

Harris never wanted to farm or develop the land for his personal use. Instead, he wanted to preserve the petroglyphs for the public.

"We are pleased we can honor his wishes and leave this land to the county he loved so much," Phillips said.

Judge Executive Jack McCaslin is thankful for Harris' long-term vision. "Now, (Jeffrey's Cliffs) will be preserved forever for people to enjoy. Without this wonderful donation, this piece of property could have been lost for us to enjoy."

In 1874, Dr. John Jeffrey bought the cliffs with hopes of building a home atop them. However, access gave him grief.

The sandstone cliffs form an island of sorts, surrounded at its base by other landowners' woods. "(Jeffrey) went 'round and 'round with his neighbors," Canepari said.

Jeffrey won his court battle and gained access to his stony perch. On one side, he blasted through solid rock to get wagons to the top, where he built a home and other buildings. Stone foundations and a cistern are all that remain.

Besides their history, the cliffs are a natural wonder, rising more than 100 feet high in places. Through the years, wind and rain carved out crevices and several would-be caves. One is large enough to house the Hancock County Judicial Center.

Rumor has it that Confederate General John Hunt Morgan and his troops holed up for a time in "Morgan's Cave" at the cliffs during the Civil War.

Recently, Canepari took officials from the Kentucky Nature Preserves Commission and Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife for a tour of Jeffrey's Cliffs. They were impressed with the county's proposal, which includes hiking and horseback trails.

As in 1874, access remains an issue. Canepari plans to meet with adjacent landowners to listen to their concerns. "We want to be a good neighbor," he said of the preserve.

Because the project is in its infancy, county officials haven't calculated development costs and annual maintenance expenses yet, McCaslin said, but grants and donations will be sought.

To gain insight, he and Canepari have visited similar Kentucky preserves, including Lower Howard's Creek Nature and Heritage Preserve in Clark County. Its first parcel was donated to the county in the late 1990s. Today, seven tracts make up the 425-acre preserve.

Lower Howard's Creek Manager Clare Sipple said it took about two years to open to the public. Grants provided funding for preservation work and property acquisitions.

With this type of project, support from local government and state agencies is crucial, Sipple said. "Of even greater importance is a vision for what the project will achieve for its community."

Lower Howard's Creek experienced one unanticipated problem -- its large number of visitors. One of its public trails is open year round and sees thousands of visitors annually.

Because of the preserve's layout and many points of entry, capturing accurate visitor data is difficult at best, Sipple said, so she estimates attendance by the number of brochures taken at the trail head.

Tourists spent more than \$75 million in Clark County in 2015, Sipple said. "We know how important (Lower Howard's Creek) is as part of that economic development equation"

McCaslin sees a bright future for Jeffrey's Cliffs. "My hope is when we get this project completed it will be the best tourism attraction in our area, and it will be known as the best hidden secret in Kentucky," he said.



The entrance to Morgan's Cave



Steve Canepari, president of the Hancock County Heritage Commission, stands at the base of Morgan's Cave at Jeffrey's Cliffs.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 20 September 2017, p.1A:

Jeffrey's Cliffs earns \$500,000 state grant

By Renee Beasley Jones, Messenger-Inquirer

Jeffrey's Cliffs -- a 140-acre tract of sandstone outcroppings near Domtar Paper Co.'s mill in Hancock County -- is set to receive nearly \$500,000 in state grant money.

The Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund recently awarded the grant to the Hancock County Heritage Commission to purchase an additional 150 acres that butts up to the cliffs' west side. Part of that land also borders Kentucky 1406, which would provide critical access to the cliffs.

If this land deal goes through, it would mean Jeffrey's Cliffs would no longer be landlocked and could be opened as a public park in the future. To view the cliffs now, hikers and nature enthusiasts must gain permission from private landowners whose property surrounds the cliffs or risk trespassing on private property.

The Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund provides funding for the preservation of areas with unique features and areas that provide habitat for rare or endangered species. It also preserves land for public use, outdoor recreation and education.

Zeb Weese sits on Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund board. In April, he toured Jeffrey's Cliffs.

He said grant applications that come before the board often are skewed toward conservation or recreation.

"This project had both," Weese said of the Jeffrey's Cliffs. "It's very well thought out."

Funding for the state agency comes through environmental fines, unmined mineral taxes and the sale of Kentucky's nature license plates.

The license plates give state residents a way to invest in important projects such as Jeffrey's Cliffs, Weese said.

In the past, the state fund provided grants to the Highview Hills Conservation Area in Ohio County; the Peabody Wildlife Management Area in Muhlenberg, Ohio and Hopkins counties; and the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park, to name a few in the five-county region.

Earlier this year, Linda Phillips and Carol Harris of Anchorage, Alaska, gifted Jeffrey's Cliffs to the Hancock County Heritage Commission. The women had inherited the land from their father, the late Jerry Harris, who died in 2012.

Jerry Harris bought the cliffs in 1977. He purchased it to preserve its natural beauty and petroglyphs.

The state grant will provide funding for three phases required to turn Jeffrey's Cliffs into a public park, said Steve Canepari, president of the Hancock County Heritage Commission.

They are land acquisition, biological and archeological surveys, and some park development projects, such as trails, gates and signs.

Buying the 150-acre tract is the next crucial step -- one of many to come.

No purchase price is known. First, the land must be appraised.

"We're probably a year away, at best, to closing on the property," Canepari said.

Judge-Executive Jack McCaslin said opening Jeffrey's Cliffs to the public would boost Hancock County's local economy.

"For years, we have always known that we had a gem in the Jeffrey's Cliffs property," McCaslin said. "Now, with the hard work of our local heritage commission and the generosity of the state heritage council, Hancock County will own one of the best places in Kentucky to visit, hike and sightsee."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 27 August 2018, p.1B:

Jeffrey's Cliffs project receives more state grant money

By Renee Beasley Jones, Messenger-Inquirer

Hancock County officials learned recently that the Jeffrey's Cliffs project near Hawesville earned a \$198,000 grant from the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund.

That marks the project's second successful grant application from the state fund in less than a year.

In September 2017, county officials learned the project would receive nearly \$500,000 to purchase 137 acres that connect Kentucky 1406 to the cliffs' west side.

The county plans to turn the cliffs into a free public park, but Jeffrey's Cliffs, a 140-acre tract of sandstone outcroppings near Domtar Paper Co.'s mill, is landlocked by privately owned farmland in the Skillman Bottoms.

Steve Canepari, president of the Hancock County Heritage Commission, hopes the 137-acre land deal needed to provide public access to the cliffs is finalized late next month.

"The unknown has always been acquiring the property (for access)," Canepari said. "(Jeffrey's Cliffs) is a project. It won't happen overnight."

The \$198,000 grant provides money for Hancock County to buy the cliffs from the Hancock County Heritage Commission. After that takes place, the commission will manage the park for the county, Canepari said.

The Jeffrey's Cliffs project started with Linda Phillips and Carol Harris of Anchorage, Alaska, who inherited the cliffs from their father, the late Jerry Harris. The sisters donated the cliffs to the local heritage commission last year.

Looking ahead, one of the next steps for Jeffrey's Cliffs will be biological and archeological studies of the cliffs, which could take up to two years. That must take place before infrastructure and trails are constructed.

Canepari offered no estimate of how long it may be before the cliffs open to the public.

After working 47 years in the construction industry, he is uniquely suited for the project. Besides managing large projects, he worked exclusively on government jobs, so he's used to "red tape" and the hurry-up-and-wait scenario.

"Patience is what you have to have," he said.

Also, Jeffrey's Cliffs officials applied this spring for a \$99,500 federal grant to help pay for a series of ladders and stairs needed to reach the top of the cliffs and create trails there. Canepari said the commission is waiting to learn that grant's outcome.

That grant is an 80/20 application, meaning the county must kick in 20 percent of the funds or an equal amount in in-kind contributions.

In the meantime, Domtar donated to Jeffrey's Cliffs seven sets of stairs from a recent renovation. Canepari said the stairs are in storage at a Hancock County road department facility. The county hopes to use those stairs at Jeffrey's Cliffs when the time comes.

Canepari has a deep affection for Jeffrey's Cliffs. As an 11-year-old, he hiked the area. He remembers well Boy Scout cookouts and camping trips around the cliffs.

And he explored the cliffs with his wife, children and grandchildren.

Canepari has spent a tremendous amount of time trying to make the county's dream for the cliffs a reality.

"This is a labor of love," he said.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 25 May 2019, p.3B:

Jeffrey's Cliffs is now open by appointment

By Jack Dobbs, Messenger-Inquirer

In 1840, Dr. John Jeffrey settled with his wife Elizabeth Boone in Hancock County, where he raised a family and constructed a house atop some sandstone cliffs. [note by Jerry Long – this year is wrong, John A. Jeffrey came to Hancock County about 1874].

Now, following several years of preparation work and the acquisition of the surrounding land, these cliffs, known as Jeffrey's Cliffs, are about to become a county park and have now opened for volunteer crews and small tour groups.

Steve Canepari, president of the Hancock County Heritage Commission, said that Hancock County gained ownership of formerly private land that adjoins the cliffs.

"We purchased the (surrounding) land from the Henning heirs," Canepari said. "They were happy to sell." The purchase allowed access to the Jeffrey's Cliffs property.

Canepari said the land, which totals to 137 acres, was purchased through the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund at a cost of about \$390,000.

Canepari said that included the purchase of the land as well as the cost for survey work.

"We have to constantly monitor the area to make sure there is no vandalism," Canepari said.

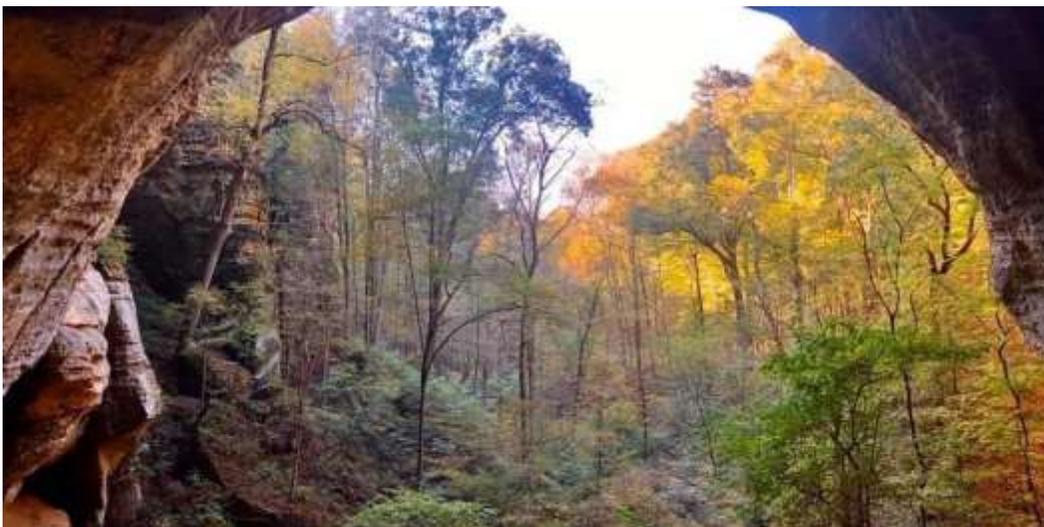
Hancock County originally acquired Jeffrey's Cliffs from Linda Phillips and Carol Harris of Anchorage, Alaska. The sisters had inherited the land from their father Jerry Harris after he died in 2012, Canepari said.

The Heritage Commission has set a goal for the opening of the park for visitors.

"We have a goal of next spring," Canepari said. "(It will be open initially) at least on weekends, keeping appointments during the week."

The park is currently open only through appointments. Canepari said that if anyone or a small group wants to visit the cliffs, they have to call and work out a time for that to happen.

"If you want to go up and see it, call me," Canepari said.





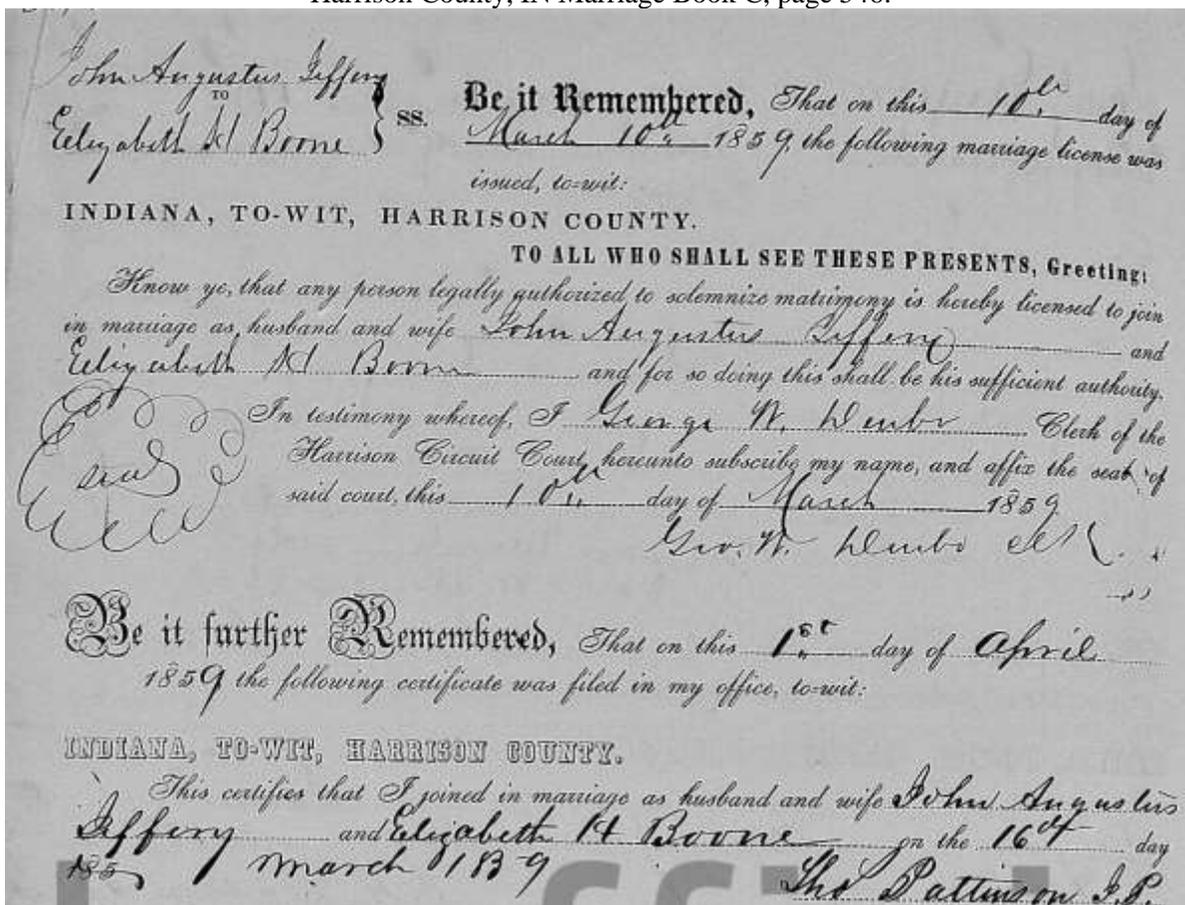
John Augustus Jeffery (1827-1889)

By Jerry Long

John Augustus Jeffery was born in England on 26 November 1827; he was baptized on 24 February 1828 at Carlisle in England. He was the son of Joseph Jeffery and Lueza Augusta.

John Jeffery, age 23, druggist, born England is recorded in the 1850 census of McCracken County, KY. He married Elizabeth Hayden Boone in Harrison County, Indiana on 16 March 1859.

Harrison County, IN Marriage Book C, page 546:



Elizabeth H. Boone was born on 4 February 1841 in Harrison County, IN. She was the daughter of Upton Boone and Elizabeth Houser. Elizabeth's great-grandfather, Samuel Boone (1711-1745), was a first cousin of the legendary Daniel Boone (1745-1820).

John A. & Elizabeth Jeffery are listed in the 1860 census of Harrison County, IN, 1870 census of Jefferson County, KY and in the 1880 census of Hancock County, KY. The 1870 census gave his occupation as wholesale druggist and the 1860 & 1880 censuses reported it as farmer. In the 1860's he conducted a drug store on Washington Street in Cannelton, IN.

**Cannelton Reporter, Cannelton, IN
21 March 1867, p2:**



In 1874 he sold his drug store in Cannelton, IN to Joshua Dever Powers and purchased from the same the Jeffrey's Cliff property in Hancock County, KY. During 1880-1883 he left Hancock County, KY and moved across the Ohio River to Cannelton, Perry County, IN. A daughter, Jessie, was born in Indiana in 1883.

John A. Jeffery died on 13 December 1889 in Cannelton, Indiana, where a death certificate was filed. On his monument in the Cliff Cemetery in Cannelton his surname was spelled as Jeffery – the spelling that appears on the majority of his family's records.



John A. Jeffery monument
Cliff Cemetery, Cannelton, Perry County, IN

John A. Jeffery wrote his will on 4 December 1889 . It was recorded on 16 December 1889 in Perry County, IN will book C, pages 390-391 and in Hancock County, KY will book 5, pages 2-5. He left all of his property to his wife, Elizabeth H. Jeffery. After his wife's death a copy of his will was also probated in Jefferson County, KY.

Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY
13 September 1901, p.10:

Will From Indiana.
A copy of the will of John A. Jeffery, of Cannelton, Ind., was probated in the Jefferson County Court yesterday. The widow gets the estate.

During 1899-1900 his widow, Elizabeth Jeffery, moved to Woodruff County, Arkansas, where she was listed in the 1900 census. This census reported that she was the mother of 12 children, 6 of whom were then deceased. Their children included – Annie, Louisa Elizabeth, Matilda A., John A., Edith Lavina, Eliza B., Martha, Mary, Carrie, Ruth and Jessie. Elizabeth Boone Jeffery died of pneumonia on 8 April 1901 on her farm five miles from Louisville, KY.

