

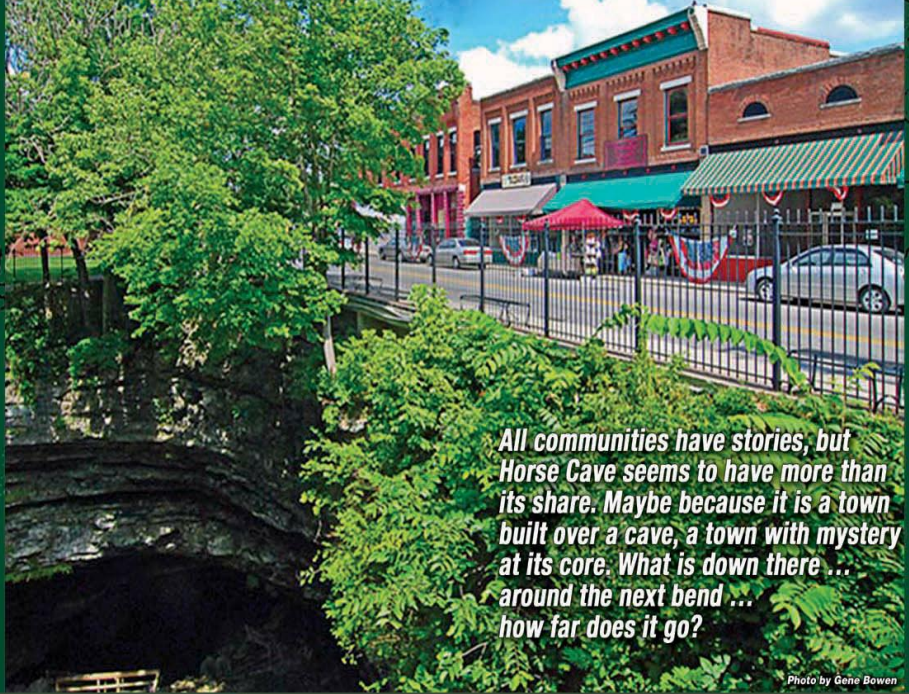
AWARD WINNING!



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Horse Cave TRAILS



All communities have stories, but Horse Cave seems to have more than its share. Maybe because it is a town built over a cave, a town with mystery at its core. What is down there ... around the next bend ... how far does it go?

Photo by Gene Bowen



Horse Cave KENTUCKY

Our Stories

Fittingly, the raison d'être for the settlement of the town is centrally located beneath Main Street. Horse Cave was apparently a landmark to Native Americans and to the longhunters of the late 1700's. The source of the name is lost in the mists of time.

Did some Native American use the cave as a hiding place for horses when his clan arrived to hunt in The Barrens? Did the horse of some pioneer stumble on the high cliff to the north of the cave and plunge down the sheer precipice? Or, did the gaping opening to the netherworld itself give the adjective "horse" its 19th century meaning as some longhunter instructed his comrades to meet him at "the horse cave."

Whatever the source, the cave gave a distinctive name to the settlement, one that has served its residents well at home and abroad. A tobacco broker in Europe, a college student in Texas, and others stand out among their friends because their hometown is Horse Cave, Kentucky.

Maybe because it is a town built over a cave, a town with mystery at its core. What is down there ... around the next bend ... How far does it go?

Practical considerations like access to water were certainly a draw for early settlers, but there is another quality, one that draws dreamers and storytellers. Just like the cave beneath the streets, layers of stories are under every building.

Our Trails

Where does the cave go under the town? The pathway of the cave beneath your feet is traced in the sidewalks with aggregate and in the streets with a faint brown stain.

Enjoy our award-winning Above Ground and Below Ground Cell Phone Trails that tell the stories of the cave, the buildings and most especially the people that lived and worked here. Visit the related website www.horsecavestories.com for more oral histories, stories and historic photos or simply scan the quick response codes on the interpretive signs that mark the trails to go directly to the website.

Expand your experience with our Historic Building Trail that focuses on ten of the more than 50 buildings in Horse Cave's National Register Historic District.

Our Awards

Our trails have received the Kentucky League of Cities Enterprise Cities Award, the Kentucky Historical Society's Education Award, and the Kentucky Department of Travel and Tourism's "There's Only One" designation.

Our Websites

Cell Tour - www.horsecavestories.com
Tourism - www.kygetaway.com
Hidden River Cave - www.hiddenrivercave.com
City of Horse Cave - www.horsecaveky.com



www.horsecavestories.com

www.horsecavestories.com

Horse Cave Cultural District • Interstate 65/ Exit 58 • PO Box 326 • Horse Cave, KY 42749 • 270.218-0386

Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

**Rich Heritage of Horse Cave
Stop #1**

Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

**The Bookstore
Stop #2**

Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

**Legacy of the Railroad
Stop #3**



ABOVE GROUND TRAIL

Horse Cave is not your typical small town. Designated as a Kentucky Cultural District, it is home to a world-class professional theatre, a national cave museum, and a beautiful intact historic downtown all within a few blocks. Even our sidewalks are unique and enhanced with cave critters! The walking cell phone trail explores how a town developed on top of a cave and introduces you to the remarkable citizen effort that created the Kentucky Repertory Theatre and provides a glimpse back to the days when the region was dominated by the Cave Wars.

HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail
270-854-3054

HORSE CAVE STORIES: As you walk along the trail, use your cell phone to call 270.854.3054 to hear residents' short narrative, or scan the QR code on the marker to take you directly to the Horse Cave Stories website where you can see historic photos and access longer oral histories about the stop. The phone narrative and website (www.horsecavestories.com) can also be accessed from anywhere in the world.

Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

**The Opera House
Stop #4**

Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

**Cornering the Cave Market
Stop #5**

Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

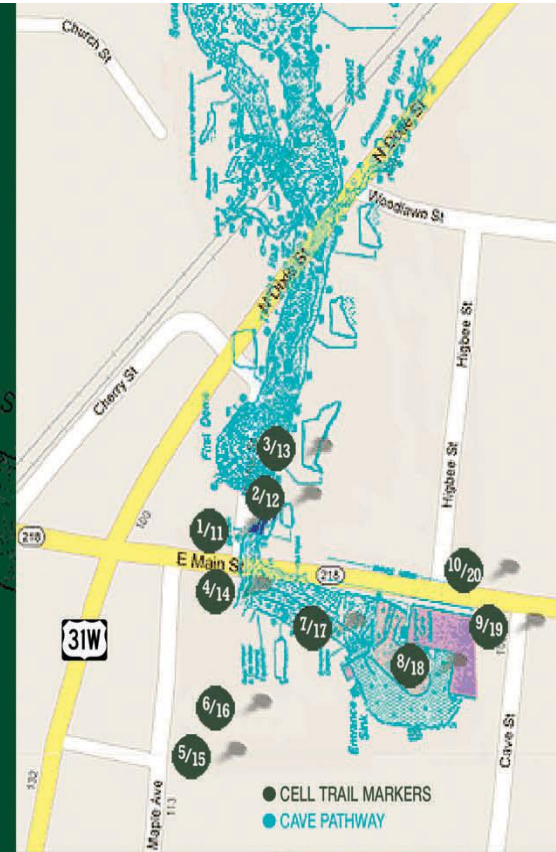
**Kentucky Repertory Theatre
Stop #6**

Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

**Dr. Thomas House
Stop #7**

Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

**Coolness of the Cave
Stop #8**



Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

**Horse Cave State Bank Building
Stop #10**

Above Ground Tour
HORSE CAVE STORIES
Cellphone Walking Trail

**American Cave Museum
Stop #9**

270.854.3054

www.horsecavestories.com

Telephone Exchange Building

1905

101 East Main Street



HISTORIC BUILDING TRAIL

H.B. THOMAS OPERA HOUSE, 1911

109 East Main Street

Dr. George A. Thomas, local dentist, built a large mercantile building, dentist's office and vaudeville theatre on this site when he came to town and bought the nearby cave and home. That building burned in 1910 with the adjacent Poynter building. His son, Dr. Harry B. Thomas, also a dentist, rebuilt the structure in 1911. Dr. Thomas' dental chair sat in the projecting brick bay, also a feature of his father's older building, so the doctors could see everything that went on in downtown Horse Cave as they worked on patients. The vaudeville stage is still visible on the second floor at the right. In its heyday it hosted Chataquas, high school graduations, traveling minstrel shows, and various musical treats. In 1977, the storefronts were closed and the structure was converted to Horse Cave Theatre, now Kentucky Repertory Theatre.

DR. THOMAS HOUSE, 1860, 1887, 1908

111 East Main Street

William Martin Wilson purchased this property in 1859. He was the son of Elizabeth Wilson, who had come to this territory in 1802 to take up a Revolutionary War land grant to her deceased husband, James. Dr. G.A. Thomas, purchased the house from the heirs of Wilson. G.A. had constructed the distinctive domers across the pressed tin shingle roof above the porch

and the corner tower with its decorative wood shingle siding. The interior front portion of the house is attributed to him. Dr. Harry B. Thomas inherited this house, along with the adjacent cave and the "opera house" building. He remodeled the house to its current presentation in 1908. This building is owned by the city of Horse Cave and used for community functions.

PATTERSON BUILDING, 1931

119-123 East Main Street

The Patterson building, now home to the American Cave and Karst Center, was constructed by local contractor Clarence Owens, owner of the Owens Hotel and strong rival of Harry B. Thomas. Thomas family stories recall the two men fought openly on the streets of Horse Cave. Thomas walked past Owens at the corner of Water and Main Streets. Thomas felt a knife go into his side. When he turned, Owens was the only one who ran. Harry Thomas ran Clarence Owens down in the middle of Water Street in front of the livery stable, where the post office now stands. Thomas gave Owens such a beating that he had to be hospitalized.

THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK & AUSTIN BUILDING, 1910

129-131 East Main Street

These two buildings house the American Cave and Karst Center. The First National Bank building was constructed in 1910 after a fire burned the wood frame New York Store on the same site. The bank closed in 1930 with the failure of the Bank of Kentucky. Upstairs the building was occupied by the first home of Horse Cave High School, apartments and early offices of Horse Cave Theatre. The Austin building served a mercantile purpose with apartments above and a pool hall in the basement. The pool room was accessed down the steps that divide the Austin building from the Western Auto building. It was forbidden territory for the young children and girls of any age of the town.

MIDWAY CAFÉ, Early 1930s

124 East Main Street

The Midway Café building was erected in the 1930's as a café in this two-story brick commercial building.

The window area to the left of the door that looks like a walk-up window is just that. It was a pick-up window for beer during the days when city merchants could sell liquor. Rooms were rented upstairs.

HORSE CAVE STATE BANK BUILDING, Early 1920s

118 East Main Street

Farmers Deposit Bank closed in 1926 and opened the next day as Horse Cave State Bank. The original façade was brick with a corner entry. The president and board of the new bank wished to differentiate their establishment from the previous occupant and moved the entry to the right corner of the building, covering the entire façade with cut stone engraved in the Art Deco motif, the latest architectural fashion of the day. Later, when the bank moved, the building became a fabric shop, then a dress shop. It now houses the offices of Kentucky Repertory Theatre with actor housing upstairs.

PIERCE BUILDING 1906, 1911

101 Water Street

The Pierce Building has been known during the past 50 years as Pierce's Market then Village Corner Dress Shop. This corner building was built by L.C. Willis in 1906 as part of the department store building next door. The building's original corner tower was removed in 1911 when the second floor corner was infilled with brick (see stone plaque). A silhouette of the corner bay remained above the wall for a number of years. The building now houses The Gypsy's Closet.

W.F. TOOPS AND COMPANY BUILDING, 1911 (L.S. Cherry Addition, 1947)

123 Water Street

W.F. Toops and Company is one of the largest brick buildings in town. Later Hulen and Toops, and eventually the Midway Wholesale Company, wholesale grocery companies that served the country for miles around, occupied the building. Previously a warehouse, it was later used as an auction house and in recent years, set design and shop for the Kentucky Repertory Theatre.

W.F. Toops and Company Building

1911 (L.S. Cherry Addition, 1947)

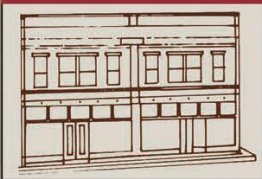
123 Water Street



Poynter Building

1911

103 East Main Street



TELEPHONE EXCHANGE BUILDING, 1905

101 East Main Street

This one-and-a-half story brick bungalow housed the first telephone exchange in Horse Cave. The drama continues; now it houses company members of Kentucky Repertory Theatre. Situated on a prominent corner of the downtown historic district, it has retained all of its character-defining features, including the hipped standing-seam roof and corner window.

POYNTER BUILDING, 1911

103 East Main Street

From 1911 until the late 1980's, shoppers were greeted with courtesy and a smile in a series of commercial establishments located in the Poynter building. It is two separate buildings tied together by a single cornice with a continuous stone band spanning the second floor below the windowsills and a steel beam connecting the storefronts. The separated store bays were left intact when the building was renovated in 1993 for Horse Cave Theatre's, now Kentucky Repertory Theatre's, backstage and rehearsal space.

H.B. Thomas Opera House

1911

109 East Main Street



Dr. Thomas House

1860, 1887, 1908

111 East Main Street



Patterson Building

1931

119-123 East Main Street



The First National Bank & Austin Building

1910

129-131 East Main Street



Midway Café

Early 1930s

124 East Main Street



Horse Cave State Bank Building

Early 1920s

118 East Main Street

