



Get your local daily news, special offers
& more delivered right to your inbox!
SIGN UP NOW >

http://www.glasgowdailytimes.com/news/guide-raising-funds-for-family-memorial-at-mammoth-cave/article_dd9a1796-0ab8-11e8-bd3f-a72d330f61a6.html

TOPICAL

FEATURED

Guide raising funds for family memorial at Mammoth Cave

BY GINA KINSLOW gkinslow@glasgowdailytimes.com 16 hrs ago

Jerry Bransford, a cave guide at Mammoth Cave National Park, portrayed his great-great-grandfather Mat Bransford, who was a slave and also a cave guide at Mammoth Cave, during South Central Kentucky Cultural Center's Harvest of History cemetery tour in 2014. Shown behind Bransford are his brothers, Michael, left, and Larry, both of Glasgow.

GDT FILE PHOTO



Jerry Bransford, a seasonal tour guide at Mammoth Cave National Park, is raising money to fund the creation and placement of a memorial at Mammoth Cave National Park in effort to commemorate his family's historical connection with Mammoth Cave.

The memorial will be placed at the Bransford Family Cemetery, located off Flint Ridge Road within the national park's boundaries.

“I want to place a really nice memorial there to pay tribute for the 101 years that we lived there, coming into slavery and staying there years and years after the Civil War. That's my mission,” Bransford said.

Bransford, also a Glendale resident, is the great-great-grandson of Mat Bransford, a slave cave guide who led groups on tours of Mammoth Cave long before it became a national park.

Mat Bransford came to southcentral Kentucky from Nashville in 1838 at the age of 17. At that time, slaves had the same sur names as their owners. In Mat Bransford's case, his owner was also his father.

“Thomas Bransford of Nashville fathered him and owned him. He was brought there with another slave named Nick Bransford,” said Jerry Bransford. “They weren't really brothers, but we know that Thomas Bransford was Mat's daddy.”

Thomas Bransford and Franklin Gorin of Glasgow were business partners. Gorin owned Mammoth Cave.

“Those boys were brought up there from Nashville. Nick and Mat, my great-greats, were leased to Franklin Gorin for \$100 a year each as two of the three original slave guides in Mammoth Cave,” Jerry Bransford said.

While he knows the names of several people buried at the cemetery, he does not know all of them. He explained many of the graves have no markers.

In addition to listing the names of those buried there, he wants to include Joy Medley Lyons' name.

Lyons, who died in 2015, was chief of programs at Mammoth Cave when she began research for a book she penned titled, “Making Their Mark: The Signature of Slavery at Mammoth Cave.”

It was through her research that she met Jerry Bransford about 30 years ago and is someone he credits for becoming a tour guide at Mammoth Cave.

“I'm in my 14th year now as a tour guide. Joy Lyons found me. She left us quite early, but I want to make sure that there is something permanently placed on there that thanks her and is a tribute,” he said. “She was my boss, but she loved the Bransford story and she made me know that.”

Jerry Bransford is looking to raise \$10,000 for the memorial and said that is a conservative figure.

“If I don't raise at least \$10,000, the whole thing goes down the drain. If I raise anything over \$10,000, it can be used for anything that is relative to the memorial,” he said.

Helping him with the fundraising process is Imagewest, a student run advertising and public relations agency at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green.

“I met Dr. Pam Johnson of Western Kentucky University by accident last year. She told me that there may be a way of me getting some help,” he said.

Johnson is a faculty member with WKU's School of Journalism and Broadcasting. She introduced Bransford to the students with Imagewest, who began meeting with him in November 2017.

The students created a website featuring information about Bransford's mission and providing history about the slave guides of Mammoth Cave and the entire Bransford family. They also developed a Facebook page and filmed a couple of documentaries in which Bransford talks about his family's legacy and the black guides at Mammoth Cave.

Through the website they created a link to a GoFundMe page where people can make a contribution toward the creation and placement of the memorial.

“We just launched the GoFundMe page about three weeks ago. The last time I checked it was up to \$125, which was pretty exciting. Of course he needs much more. We are just at the beginning of the project,” said Kara Williams Glenn, manager of Imagewest.

In addition, they issued press releases to area media representatives about Bransford's desire to see a memorial placed at the Bransford Family Cemetery and his fundraising effort.

For more information about the project or to make a donation, go to www.BransfordMemorial.com.

This Week's Circulars

JCPenney



Hover for **Circular**

Save a lot



Hover for **Circular**

PETSMART



Hover for **Circular**

Powered by 

Glasgow Daily Times Events

TUE 6 Book Sprouts Preschool/Early Ele...
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY


WED 7 Tator Tot Time ages 18-36 months
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY

WED 7 My Time
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY

THU 8 Color Me Calm
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY

 TUE 6 WED 7 THU 8 FRI 9 SAT 10 SUN 11

 See all events

 Add your event

Glasgow Daily Times Events


TUE 6 Book Sprouts Preschool/Early Ele...
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY


WED 7 Tator Tot Time ages 18-36 months
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY

WED 7 My Time
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY

THU 8 Color Me Calm
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY

 TUE 6 WED 7 THU 8 FRI 9 SAT 10 SUN 11

 See all events

 Add your event

Glasgow Daily Times Events

TUE 6 Book Sprouts Preschool/Early Ele...
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY


WED 7 Tator Tot Time ages 18-36 months
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY

WED 7 My Time
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY

THU 8 Color Me Calm
Mary Wood Weldon M... | Glasgow, KY

 TUE 6 WED 7 THU 8 FRI 9 SAT 10 SUN 11

 See all events

 Add your event

