

# Tales of Marvelous Missouri

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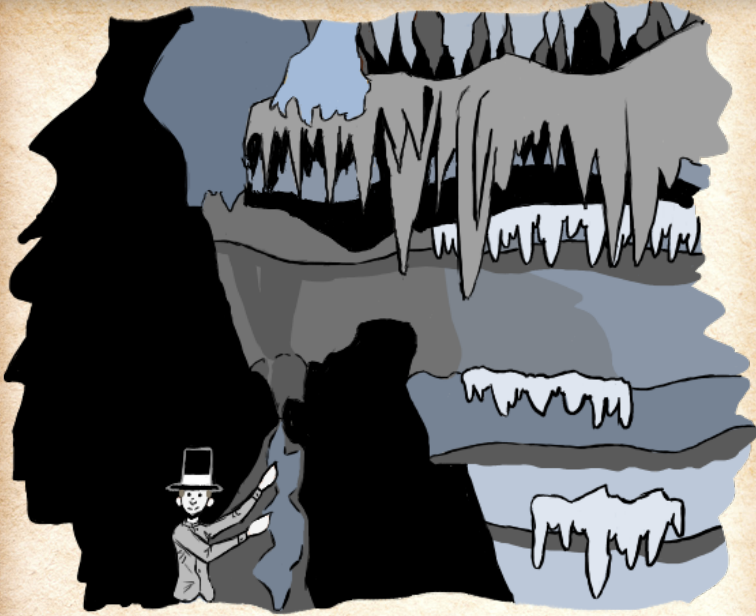
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## Chapter 3: Tourists for All the Marbles

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Molly laughed and imagined an entire cave filled with bat poop. She enjoyed sitting near the entrance of Marvel Cave and listening to Elsie explain its history.

“What did they do with all of that bat poop?” Molly asked.

“Well, they mined it,” Elsie answered.

Molly raised her eyebrows, wide-eyed.

“It’s a fertilizer,” Elsie explained. “But can you believe it, those men were *still* convinced that the cave might contain lead or marble, even after finding all of that bat poop?”

Elsie explained that way back in 1884, a man named T. Hodge Jones bought the land, including the cave, and formed the Marble Cave Mining and Manufacturing Company. “Those men went so far as to even build a town right here, on top of the cave!”

“Was it Silver Dollar City?” Molly asked.

Elsie laughed.

“No, no. They called it Marble City.”

“Still all about that marble, huh?” Molly said.

Elsie nodded.

“Right. And again, no marble. Turns out the rock was just limestone, which is common in Missouri.”

“So, what did they do with Marble City?”

“Well,” Elsie answered. “Around 1889 a miner and dairyman, all the way from Canada, decided to buy the cave.”

Molly tried to imagine what it would be like to *buy* a cave. “Did he want the bat poop?” She asked. “For, uh, fertilizer?” “No, no,” Elsie said. “By that point, the guano was almost all gone. Mr. Henry Lynch decided to open the cave to sightseers! And that was how this spot got its start as a tourist attraction.”

Elsie nodded toward the throng of excited patrons lined up outside of the cave.

“Obviously, that was a success,” Molly said.

“Well,” Elsie answered. “Not at first. Lynch went out of business pretty quickly. But after he raised a bit more money, he was able to open the cave to visitors again around the year 1900, and it’s been open ever since!”

“Wow,” Molly said. “That’s a long time!” She looked around at the T-shirt and flip-flop-clad tourists entering the cave and tried to imagine the long dresses and hats people might have worn on their visits more than one hundred years ago.

Elsie told Molly how when Henry Lynch died in 1927, the cave was owned by his daughters, Miriam and Genevieve, who changed its name from Marble Cave to Marvel Cave.

“That makes a lot more sense seeing as no one ever did find any marble,” Molly said. “Plus, it does look pretty *marvelous*!”

“Right!” Elsie answered. “The Lynch ladies operated the cave for fifty years until they eventually sold it to a vacuum cleaner salesman from Chicago named Hugo Herschend. That’s when Silver Dollar City was born.”

## Newspaper Connections:

**Look at the comics in your local newspaper.  
Create a comic with copy and art about  
visiting a cave.**

