

Tales of Marvelous Missouri

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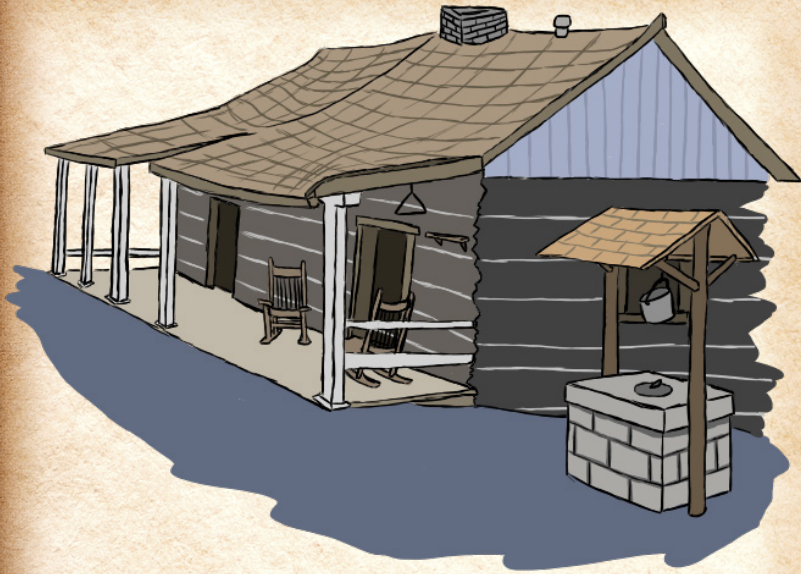
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Chapter 4: From Cave to Coasters?

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Molly studied the mouth of Marvel Cave. She was a little confused. Elsie had told her how the Herschend family had taken over the lease of the cave in 1950. But how did *that* lead to Silver Dollar City? Molly couldn't imagine how a cave led to roller coasters.

"When Hugo Herschend died, his wife Mary took over the cave's operations," Elsie explained. "And Mary was awesome at her job!"

Elsie told Molly how Mary had made some new improvements to the cave, including adding a railway which pulled visitors a full 218 feet to the surface, so that they wouldn't have to climb all the way out.

"The tourists loved it," Elsie said. "Mary loved it too. So, along with her sons, Jack and Peter, she decided to build something to bring even *more* visitors to the Ozarks."

"Ohh," Molly nodded. "She built roller coasters!"

"Ha, well, not quite yet. But she did decide to build Silver Dollar City."

"Without the roller coasters?" Molly asked.

"When the theme park first started," Elsie told her. "It was meant to be modeled after an Ozark village from the 1880s. Mary, Jack, and Peter built shops, a church and a log cabin meant to mimic what it was like to live in Missouri at that time. This was in 1960."

Elsie went on to tell Molly all about how the roller coasters, water rides, and steam train were added over the years as the park became a success."

Molly looked around her at the smiling crowds.

"Sure, looks like it was a success!" She added.

"It was," Elsie agreed. "In fact, in its first year, Silver Dollar City had 125,000 visitors! Four times more visitors than Marvel Cave!"

"I guess Mary, Jack, and Peter had a pretty good idea," Molly said.

She looked around the theme park at the rides and roller coasters.

"Where's all the pioneer stuff?" She asked Elsie.

"Would you like to see it?" Elsie asked, eyes twinkling.

Molly nodded.

"Ok," Elsie said. "Why don't you just go run and let your mom and dad know that you're headed over to the Homestead Ridge section of the park."

Molly did just that.

As soon as she was back, Elsie jumped up and began to move through the crowd with surprising speed for a woman of her age. Molly skipped and jogged to keep up.

The pair threaded their way through the visitors until the crowds let up a bit and they found themselves standing in a quiet, wooded clearing.

There, Molly saw a small house made entirely of logs with rough windows and a big barrel out in front. A fence, also made of logs, surrounded the house.

"Wow," Molly whispered. "A *real* log cabin!"

Newspaper Connections:

Look through the newspaper for stories about historic homes or log cabins in your area. What is the oldest residence you find mentioned?

