

Secrets of Rebel Cave: A Stoneworth Teen Adventure

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It is 1945 and WWII has just ended. Sixteen-year-old Dulcie Stoneworth and her twelve-year-old brother Jackie are travelling by train from their coal-mining hometown in Kentucky to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with their cousins in Tennessee. The group, including neighboring twins Erik and Anna Gunther, has planned an adventure-to explore Rebel Cave.

The cave has a colorful history: according to the local stories, it has been the hiding place of Civil War Confederate soldiers and early 1930s moonshiners. The youngsters set out to see if any relics have been left behind. Little did they expect the real adventure and treasures there.

Inside Rebel Cave, they find two boxes of Yankee Spenser seven-shooter rifles, the first guns that used “pre-packaged” bullets. Unfortunately for the group, a nasty neighbor claims that his land deed includes the cave, and therefore the guns belong to him. He orders the kids, including their “Nazi friends” Erik and Anna, to stay out, and slaps a restraining order against them.

The industrious Dulcie and her brother, who has a photographic memory, set to work researching the history of the lands and deeds at the county courthouse. Whether the adventuresome teens can prove that they own the cave and its guns depends on their tracing the course of the river that was used as a marking point, and appealing to a judge who may be benevolent.

With liberal sprinklings of facts about Tennessee history, the Civil War, the economics of the year 1945, spelunking, and cultural biases, this novel informs readers as well as entertaining them. The authors, a father-daughter writing team, have combined their efforts for a second time. Secrets of Rebel Cave continues the story that began with their first book, Turn Back Time, which told the tale of how Dulcie’s and Jackie’s parents met, fell in love, and married. Smith is an avid spelunker himself and writes with the authority of one who knows his caves. The combination of storyteller and cave explorer, enhanced by a straightforward, clean writing style, makes this book appealing to middle- and high-school-aged youth.

LINDA COOLEY (March / April 2002)

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