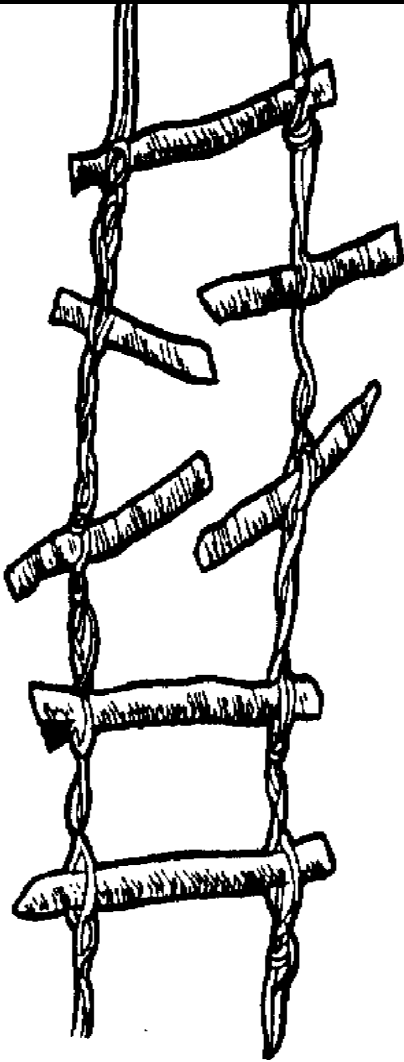


Carlsbad Caverns

National Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



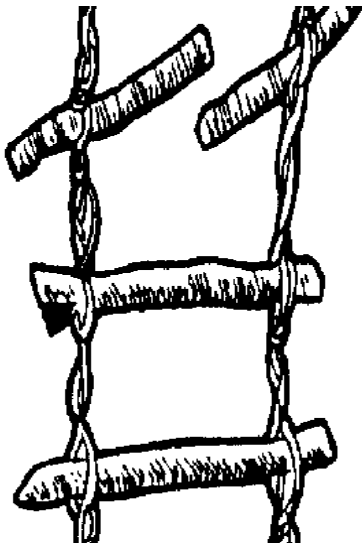
An Historical Perspective

More than a thousand years before the first ranchers entered the Guadalupe Mountains region of southeastern New Mexico, Indians were living in the area now known as Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Although the names of the Guadalupe Indian discoverers of the caverns were never recorded, their signatures can be seen in the numerous pictographs (paintings) and cooking rings located throughout the park.

These early people left no evidence that they ventured any farther into the caverns than the natural entrance. What lay beyond remained a mystery until the late 1800s.

If Spanish explorers found the cave entrance, no mention of the discovery was ever made in their journals.

Exploration

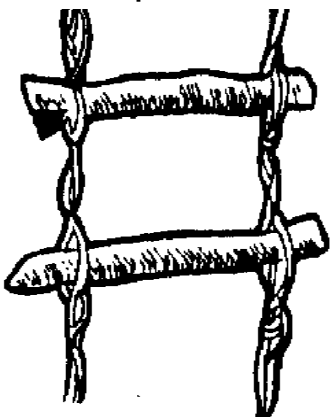


The earliest exploration for which records exist took place in 1883. At that time the father of twelve-year-old Rolth Sublett reportedly lowered him for a brief time into the "twilight zone" area at the cavern entrance.

Around 1901 a young cowboy named James "Jim" Larkin White was drawn to the cave by a billowing black cloud of emerging bats and made his discovery of Carlsbad Caverns. Exploration of what lay beyond the natural light of Bat Cave and the twilight zone continued for nearly twenty years. During this period, the mining of the bat manure, or guano,

began and ended. While working intermittently as a miner, Jim White began to explore the farther reaches of the cavern. Through his exploration and subsequent efforts to share his discoveries with others, interest in the cave grew. Eventually, in 1923, Carlsbad Cave National Monument was born.

Development



Today's visitors see many of the same parts of the cave as the earliest visitors, but in a totally different light. Since the National Park Service began managing the cave in 1923, electric lights have been added, changed, and at times even taken away, allowing visitors to view the cave in its natural state. Trail development and improvement has been ongoing for over sixty years.

Early visitors entered the cave in a large metal bucket that was lowered into the cave by a small gasoline-

powered hoist. This bucket was used primarily to remove the bagged guano from the cave, but also served as a crude elevator for the miners. Eventually the bucket was replaced by wooden stairs and a dirt trail, then by elevators and the blacktop paving of today.

Key dates in cavern history

1883	Earliest recorded visit to cave entrance
1901	James Larkin White entered cavern for the first time
1903	First mining claim filed on Bat Cave by Abijah "Bije" Long
09/1922	First officially organized trip into cavern (group of fourteen local businessmen)
10/25/1923	President Calvin Coolidge signed proclamation creating Carlsbad Cave National Monument
11/18/1923	Photos of cavern taken by Ray V. Davis were published in <i>New York Times</i>
01/1924	Article on Carlsbad Caverns published in <i>National Geographic Magazine</i>
03/1924	Beginning of six-month-long National Geographic expedition
04/1924	First boundary expansion protecting Carlsbad Caverns and additional nearby caves (Other boundary adjustments increasing the size of the original 720-acre national monument occurred in 1928, 1933, 1939, and 1963)
09/1925	Second article on new discoveries in Carlsbad Caverns published in <i>National Geographic Magazine</i>
1926	First electric lights installed in cavern
05/14/1930	Park designation changed to national park
1931	Installation of two eleven-passenger elevators
1951	Three-year cavern trail project begins
10/1953	First color photos of Carlsbad Cavern published in <i>National Geographic Magazine</i>
1955	Second elevator shaft completed; two twenty-five passenger elevators installed
1966	The cavern's known length increased by about one-third with the discovery of the Guadalupe Room
1978	Congress designated 33,125 acres of the park's 46,766 acres as wilderness
1986	Discovery of extensive new passages in Lechuguilla Cave

