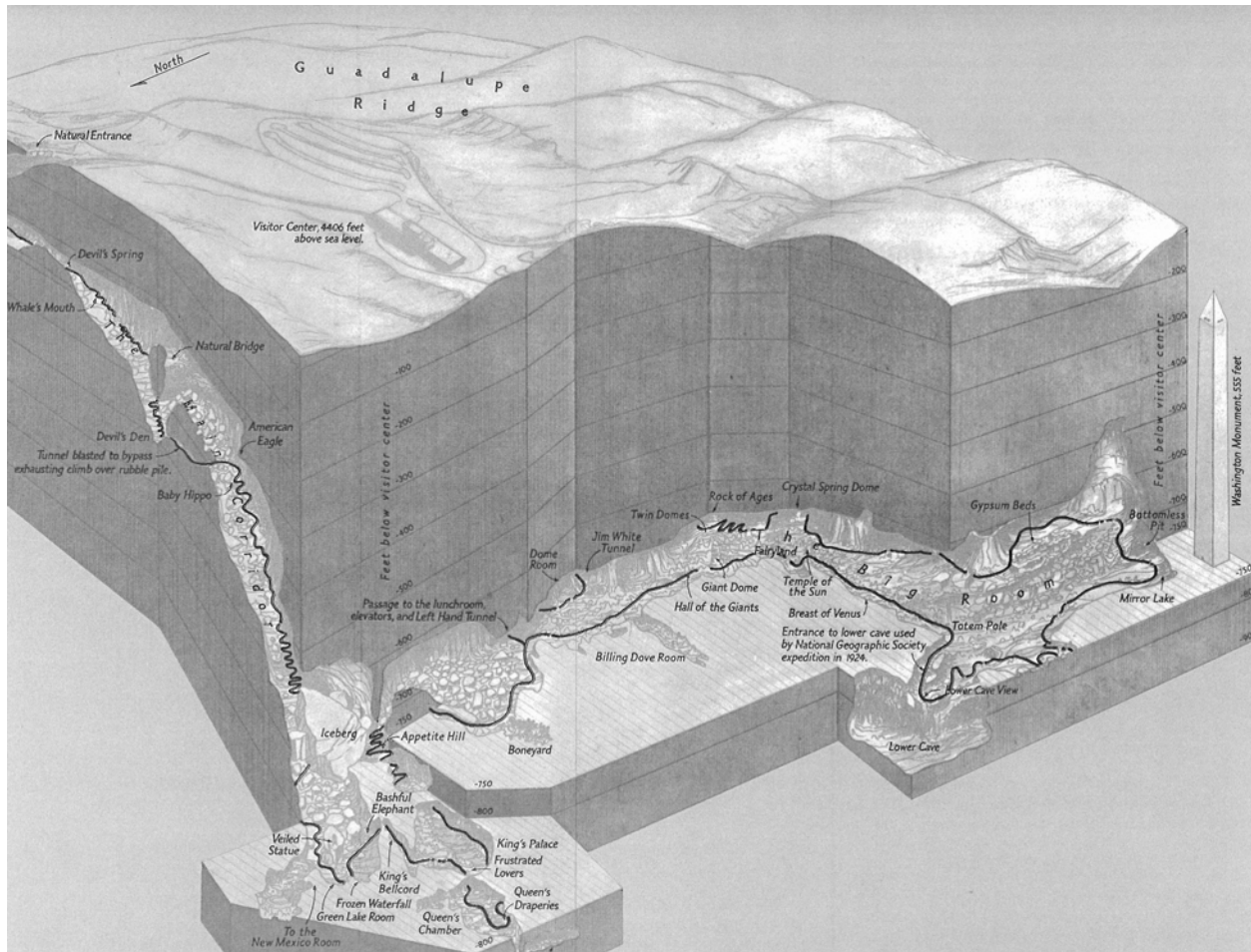




CAVE History Update

A Newsletter from CAVE Cultural Resources in the Resource Stewardship and Science Division

CHU #10 — August 31, 2004



Half a Century Later, a National Geological Society Cavern Map (1953) and a Picture (1952) Bring Cavern into More Focus

In the October 1953 issue of *The National Geographic Magazine*, the article "Carlsbad Caverns in Color" written by Mason Sutherland and illustrated by E. "Tex" Helm appeared. For the first time in cavern's history, a cartographer drew a map attempting to relate cavern features to Chihuahuan Desert surface features. As the author explained the map,

At a time when Carlsbad Caverns was little more than a local curiosity, the National Geographic Society prepared the first extensive map of the cave and published it in the September 1925 issue of the Magazine.

As informative as it was, that map did not relate strange underground passages to

familiar overhead features. Subsequent maps had the same omission; they did not delineate the ups and downs, nor did they show the visitor where he was going or where he had been. Confused tour parties passed the same point twice without realizing it.

On these pages, The Society offers another "first"—a block diagram, or

depth map, of the caverns. This device, a sort of giant cross section, presents a cutting away of the earth and an unroofing (sic) of the cave to show salient feature, top to bottom.

...It takes but a glance to see how the subterranean rooms dwarf surface features such as the ticket office. Three story elevator building, and 600-car parking lot. The 555-foot Washington Monument, sketched in for comparison, gives an idea of the caverns' depth.

If you look closely at the elevator building on the above map, you will see that it is labeled "visitor

center." That is because in 1957—four years after the NGS article appeared—a new visitor center was built, incorporating parts of the 1930s elevator building; so, the map had to be updated for use in later park brochures.

Today--half a century later—this map can still help to get a visitor his or her cave bearings.

Of all the beautiful and colorful cavern pictures shot by E. "Tex" Helm and published in this article, none has quite as interesting a behind-the-scenes story as the shooting of "The Big Shot." Taken in August of 1952, this picture of the cavern's Big Room with visitors in the foreground and the background required 16 hours to set up the equipment and to take it down afterwards.

Why? Because this one picture required setting up and firing 2,400 light bulbs at one time! The picture was reported to cover an estimated 555,000 square feet.

NGS Cartographer Walter Morrison and photographer E. "Tex" Helm both left succeeding generations a valuable legacy—two "tools" to bring the cavern into better focus.

Carlsbad Caverns National Park Recently Voted Best Historic Site in the Area

Recently the readers of *The Carlsbad Current Argus* voted the park as the best historic site in the area. On of the reporters, writing an article about that subject, asked park historian Bob Hoff to send her his opinion about the historical significance of the caverns and he responded by saying,

Since 1923 to the present, Carlsbad Caverns National Park has been historically significant worldwide because the park has protected and preserved world-class limestone caves, a significant portion of the biologically diverse Chihuahuan Desert's animals and plants, and a number of prehistoric and historic cultural resources. In addition, the park has provided state-of-the-art accessibility features--trails, lights, elevators etc.—for the convenience and safety of nearly 40,000,000 visitors from all over the world, while helping these visitors to understand and appreciate the world-unique

resources that make this park so special and important to preserve for future generations.

During the same time, the park has been historically significant locally. Carlsbad and local area residents, employed with the National Park Service, have worked in many jobs at the park. These jobs include building and maintaining facilities/services, guiding cave tour groups, and presenting other cave and surface programs. Other jobs have included providing school and other providing community programs, protecting and managing the park's resources, office administrative support functions, and providing general information, park orientation, visitor and ticket sales etc. Non-National Park Service employees--Carlsbad and local area residents—have also provided important visitor services in the park by working for the Cavern Supply Company (since 1927) and The Carlsbad

Caverns/Guadalupe Mountains Association and The Carlsbad Natural History Association (since 1956).

We can all be proud of the park and the

teamwork that has made it a part of New Mexico, US, and world history.

Some of the comments were incorporated into the August 28, 2004 edition of the paper.

From the Past

(August 1937, Superintendent's Monthly Report)

Candid Cameras: Second only to house trailers, I believe that candid cameras are developing into somewhat of a nuisance in this national park. The amateur photographers are of course encouraged to take all of the pictures they want to on the surface but it is certainly annoying when one is conducting several hundred tourists through the cavern to have someone pull a collapsible tripod out of their pocket and set it up in the middle of the trail and delay hundreds of people while the photographer makes a picture which probably could be purchased for five cents. Some

visitors insist on putting their children on top of formations for a photograph, and openly resent our request that they remain on the trails, which after all is the safest place in the cavern. They seem of the opinion that we are depriving the Carlsbad Cavern of some favorable publicity, but at the same time I believe that protection of our formations against defacement, and safe conduct of our visitors over the underground trails, is of much more importance to the future of the Carlsbad Cavern than the possible publicity which might be obtained from an amateur who, nine times out of ten, knows little if anything about operating the Kodak.