



CAVE History Update

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

CHU #9 — February 25, 2004

Special History Months

Black History Month 2004 is ending soon; the interesting NPS Afro-American Ethnic Heritage internet sites to be visited remain and are well worth your attention. Visit the summary NPS link at:

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/categrs/etnc1.htm>

Upcoming is *Women's History Month* 2004. This year's theme is "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility." See the *National Women's History Project* at: <http://www.nwhp.org/whm/themes/themes.html> for lots of ideas.

Discovery of the Cavern

Today we generally believe that the cavern known originally as *The Bat Cave* was known to locals in the late 1800s. In 1968, then park naturalist Neal Bullington put together the following list of claims and counter-claims for discovery.

It is interesting to note that in the 1980s, an 1898 "J. White" inscription was found near Taffy Hill.

"Who Discovered Carlsbad Caverns?"
Edited by Park Naturalist Neal R. Bullington
May 1968

Over the years considerable *legend* or myth has grown up concerning the discovery of Carlsbad Cavern, and who the discoverer really was. We are sure the Indians knew of the Cavern for an extremely long time before us, so when we talk of "discoverer," we refer to an early immigrant. He may have been a wandering cowboy or sheep herder. He may have been a rancher or farmer, or perhaps just a traveller passing through for parts unknown. It is almost certain that we do not know who the discoverer was, and equally certain that we will never know. Anyone who could have told us did not come forward in the early days and is now long since gone.

It is not the purpose of this report to advance one claim over another, and certainly not to discredit the claim of any. It is merely to present the facts as we know them today, so that a better knowledge of cavern history may be gained by those interested.

Many men have laid claim to the discovery. No doubt some of them knew their claim to be false but advanced it for the sake of honor or notoriety. Others undoubtedly set forth their claim in good faith, sincerely believing themselves to be the discoverer. If a man chanced upon the entrance or entered the Cavern, and left only a slight indication of his passage, others coming later—whether one day or ten years—probably had no knowledge that they had been preceded.

The following pages are excerpts from documentation which we have concerning some early visits and knowledge of the Cavern. On some pages, footnotes reflecting current knowledge have been added to the source material.

No report of this type would be complete without touching upon the presence in the Cavern of James Larkin White. For years many have credited Jim White with being the discoverer. To the best of our knowledge, Jim White made no active claim to discovery, although neither did he go out of his way to stop others from claiming it for him. This in no way should tarnish his reputation as explorer and promoter, for that is completely justified.

The legend of Jim White as discoverer evidently dates back to a barbeque at the Washington Ranch in the early 1920's. Dr. Willis T. Lee, hoping to promote the Carlsbad Cavern, had invited a great crowd of newspapermen and dignitaries to a free tour of the Cavern. Afterwards, they met at the ranch for the barbeque. When the meal was finished, speech-making was in order and various notables rose to eulogize Dr. Lee for his "Discoveries" and work in the Cavern. Some of the local residents apparently felt that Dr. Lee was tacitly accepting too much credit for things he hadn't actually discovered himself. We are indebted to Carl Livingston (Lee's assistant) for recording what followed:

Among the big crowd of old settlers present were two who also could speak, but they were not on the program, nor had they been in the Cavern that day. These were Bob Dow and the late Col. Etienne de Pillesier Bujac, father of Bruce Cabot, the movie actor. Both men were old residents of Carlsbad. Bujac was a silver-tongued orator of the old school. When he talked he brought in the honeysuckles, the bees and the mocking birds, and he could hold an audience spell-bound with the eloquence of his oratory. Bob Dow was no slouch as a speaker, himself, and the two hatched an idea. The speaking was about through, Colonel Bujac was called upon, and from then on took the place of the toastmaster. Bob Dow stepped forward and said: 'Mr. Toastmaster, I suggest that we hear a word from Jim White.'

This started a shout from the hungry mob that had not come in on the barbecue. 'We want to hear from Jim White.' Then a great silence fell over the crowd. At this Dr. Lee had a funny look.

'Who is this Jim White?' a general asked a governor. The governor whispered: 'A working person at the Cavern, so whispered Dr. Lee.'

Of course, Colonel Bujac responded, taking up his cue. 'Your excellencies, I take pleasure in introducing to you the friend of my youth and comrade of all time, an unassuming cowboy with who I have ridden over the sun-kissed plains—JIM WHITE, THE DISCOVERER AND FIRST EXPLORER OF THE CARLSBAD CAVERN!'

*... Those forty newspaper men and women ate it up. Jim just about stole the show from Dr. Lee. And while the Cavern was well known to many old residents of Eddy County years before Jim ever set foot in it, he has ever since been credited with first discovering it. (Livingston Carl B., "The Eighth Wonder," *New Mexico Magazine*, March 1934)*

Neal R. Bullington – The legend was spread for many years by both the Park Service and the Cavern Supply Company. In our records we have NPS literature through 1936 which cites Jim White as discoverer. Literature sold by the Cavern Supply Company as late as 1941 likewise refers to Jim as discoverer.

Source: Book – *The Big Cave*
Long, Abijah & Long., Joe N.
1966 – Seventh Edition

Abijah (“Bije”) Long claims to have been the discoverer, finding the small hole above the Bat Cave while out exploring with Sam Evans and a Mr. Brown. He also says he found the natural entrance the next morning by seeing the bats enter it.

His second trip to the cave was allegedly made with Andy Fairchild and Jacob Lynn, with the express purpose of exploring it. Long claims that all three went back into the Bat Cave, saw the guano there, and then returned to town so he could file a mining claim.

NB – It is interesting to compare Long’s version with those of Sublett and Hannsz.

Source: Letter written by Charles J. Hannsz of Haskell County, Texas
Certified by: Notary Public
Date: November 24, 1930

In justice to myself I state unconditionally that I am the original discoverer of what is known as the Carlsbad Caverns. By this term I do not claim that I discovered the hole in the surface of the ground first, for it had been known years prior to the time it was entered, but I do claim that I am the first man to penetrate what is known as the Carlsbad Caverns and to discover something of its wonders and grandeur underneath the earth.

About the month of July 1902, Abijah Long came to me where I was employed and asked me if I would go with him into the mountains. I agreed to go and did go with him. Andy Fairchild and Ross (sic) Sublett also went along with him... We were primarily on a hunting trip and had a camping outfit.

We went to the opening of the Carlsbad Cavern, which was a hole in the ground that a good many people had known about for years and we decided to explore it... I was let down on a rope... I did discover, however, indication of large deposits of bat manure or guano. This guano was of a soft nature and it would have been impossible for an animal or man either to have walked about in the cavern on this guano without making clear tracks. I now state that there was no indication of any tracks in the cavern at that time.

NB – Mr. Hannsz was the brother-in-law of Abijah Long (“Bije”), and worked for him as a supervisor in the early guano mining.

Source: Newspaper Article – *The Carlsbad Current*
“Beautiful Sights in Bat Cave West of Carlsbad 1,800 Feet Underground”
Date: September 15, 1922

This cave was first discovered by Bije Long, who gave a man by the name of Fairchild \$5.00 to go in it. He was lowered by rope, but became frightened before going far and was pulled out.

Then Jim White was let down and penetrated it to a considerable depth.

NB – This sounds as if the writer had heard confused stories even at this early date.

Sources Personal Interview

Person interviewed: John L. Hess of Higgins, Texas

Interviewed by: Ernst Christensen, Senior Guide

Date: May 15, 1944

At the Bat Flight Program, May 14, an oldster, John L. Hess, from Higgins, Texas, responded to the historical phase of the talk by reminiscing about his knowledge of the area. He claimed that some of his friends made an attempt to explore the caverns in 1902. He maintained that at that time the caverns had not been explored, but that the entrance to it was widely known...Mr. Hess lived on a ranch some fifteen miles northeast of the Cavern entrance, and had been all over this country, but know nothing about Jim White.

Source: Personal Interview

Person interviewed: Mrs. R.E. Miller of Hammond, Indiana

Interviewed by: Brad McGraw, Park Guide

Date: July 27, 1946

On July 25, 1946, Mr. & Mrs. R. E. Miller of Hammond Indiana went through the caverns. During that trip it was discovered that Mrs. Miller's aunt, Miss Chloe Williamson, Route #3, Valparaiso, Indiana, visited Carlsbad Caverns, and took a trip through them, when she was a girl of 16, in the year 1901... The trip to the cave was made from a nearby ranch, on burros.

Source: Personal Interview

Person interviewed: John Forehand

Interviewed by: Tom Meador, Speleohistorian

Date: July 28, 1967

Forehand claimed that he was in the Cavern in 1898. He says, "I was the first fellow to know bats were in it. All the old stockmen knew the cave but didn't know about the bats. I was working on top near Oak Springs with another man, cutting sotol for cattle food."

NB – John Forehand was one of the early guano miners working for "Bije" Long.

Source: Personal Interview

Person Interviewed: Jim White, Jr.

Date: June 1966

Jim White Sr. told his son that his first entry was in 1898 but it got stated as 1901, so he just let it go on. Jim, Jr. feels that probably his father went in "just a little ways" in 1898.

Source: Personal Interview

Person interviewed: Robert W. Tansill

Interviewed by: Bennett T. Gale, Park Naturalist

Date: December 3, 1946

Most important is his declaration that from the years 1898 through 1904 was the greatest guano mining activity in the Carlsbad Caverns. He recalled this particular period of activity definitely, for mining was in progress while he was away at school.

NB – At the time of the interview, Mr. Tansill was “possibly in his early sixties.” Although the dates he gives for guano mining may be correct, it was almost certainly in some other cave than this one. Also, in a taped interview recorded 17 years later (20 FEB 63) by David Karraker and Ken Baker, Mr. Tansill admitted that he had little knowledge of the Carlsbad Cavern. In fact, he maintained vehemently that the natural entrance had been blasted out by the Park Service.

Source: Newspaper Article – *Eddy Argus*

Date: June 18, 1892

The paper had an article on ‘Malaga’ which mentions a cave.

“... There is, also, a short distance from the station, a large limestone cave known as the ‘Bat’ Cave, from the almost innumerable number of bats that make it their home.”

Source: Newspaper Article – *Eddy Daily Current*

“An Underground Wonder,” Goding, Henry

Date: January 3, 1893

This article is a description of a large cave and tells the story of a hoax in which two men claim to have found a petrified man in that cave in November 1892.

NB – Although for years it was thought that this article referred to the Carlsbad Cavern, Speleohistorian Tom Meador had since definitely proved that it actually was McKittrick Cave. **This source is included here to show how easy it is to confuse Carlsbad Cavern with other nearby caves in historical references** (bold added 5/2001). It is quite possible that many old- who claim to have been in our Cavern were actually in another.

Source: Personal Interview

Person interviewed: C.J. Walters of Carlsbad

Interviewed by: T. Homer Black, Park Naturalist

Date: July 31, 1947

Mr. Walters stated that by 1891 the Caverns had become rather well known among inhabitants of this area. In that year, 1891, Lucius Anderson, sometimes more commonly known as Grandpa Anderson, killed a deer near the site of the ticket office (now demolished). While dressing it, the bats came from the cavern and he watched the spectacle. This, according to his, Walters’ knowledge, was the first time the cavern entrance was reported.

Source: Land Office Records

Memo for the Superintendent as a result of search of records of the Office of the Bureau of Land Management, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

By: Bennett T. Gale, Park Naturalist

Date: February 6, 1947

Caverns entrance and the bat shafts are located in section 31 of Township 24 South, Range 25 East.

The earliest plat of the township found was a map drawn by or Alfred H. Warren from a survey conducted July 10 to 16, 1884. This survey, for subdivision, sections, and purposes was made on request of a settler on the township, one Pantaleon Martin who paid \$449.00 to the General Land Office for the work... No mention is made on the map of the Caverns entrance or of the Bat Cave. It does seem probable, however,

that the entrance was noted at this time for the south boundary of Section 31 is a Range line. Any survey for subdivision purposes would have to be run along Township and Range lines regardless of how desultory the survey of the inner sections. This would place the surveyor within one-half mile of the Cavern entrance.

There were several early settlers in the Township and information concerning them follows:

1885 - William H. Hardy, 40 acres, Section 20, 1 ½ miles away.

1885 - Thomas J. Moseley, Section 4

1888 - Charles H. Dehuke, Section 4

1889 - H.W. Thaxton, Section 4

1900 - James C. Keith, Section 19, 2 miles away

1900 - Henry E. Robb, Section 20, 1 ½ to 2 miles away

Source: Newspaper Article – *The Carlsbad Current-Argus*

Person concerned: H.D. Torian of West Memphis, Arkansas

Date: April 21, 1963

In an interview Mr. Torian told the newspaper that he had seen the big entrance hole into the Cavern in the 1880's, "but had no idea that there was a wondrous cavern there." Mr. Torian claimed to be 103 at the time of the interview.

Source: Personal Interview

Person interviewed: P.E. Carrera of El Paso

Date: Circa 1950

Carrera claimed that his father, J.C. Carrera, saw the entrance more than 65 years ago (before 1885). A sheep man told him about it and took Carrera and a geologist to see the entrance. They had no rope so they did not enter.

Source: Personal Interview

Person interviewed: Ned Shattuck

Interviewed by: Dale Giese, Park Guide

Date: Circa 1960

Mr. Shattuck claimed that on the evening of 2 AUG 1885, he and his father saw bats coming out of the cave. They went over and looked into hole, but didn't enter. He is sure of the date because something of importance happened to him less than a week later.

Source: Affidavit

Sworn to by: Rolth Sublett

Witnessed by: D.S. Libbey, Superintendent

Date: 2 Oct 47

This is to certify that I, Rolth Sublett, of Artesia, New Mexico, Route No. 1, first visited what is now known as Carlsbad Caverns in 1883 when I was twelve years of age. I went down the natural entrance about sixty to sixty-five feet and then in the part where the bats stayed. The cave was known as the Bat Cave. My father, William Caldwell Sublett, was with me.

The next time I visited the cave was in 1900; it was in the fall. Bige Long and his father-in-law, whose name I do not recall, were with me. I showed them the Bat Cave, and they went back to the town of Eddy. After Long and his brothers-in-law left I went over close to Walnut Springs to see in Walnut Canyon an old Mexican who was about 83 years of age. He was not there and I came on in to the town of Eddy. That night I got in town and saw the old Mexican who was in Bige Long's saloon and drunk. He told me Bige Long had given him a quart of whiskey and \$5.00 for his rights to the cave.

NB – According to Speleohistorian Dr. William Halliday, Sublett would actually have been five years old in 1883.

Source: Newspaper Article – *Carlsbad Argus*

Person Concerned: W.H. Angell of Carlsbad

Date: January 4, 1924

The newspaper printed a letter from Mr. Angell in which he states: "I want to state that I ate my birthday with W.L. Netherlin and family in that cave (CACA) in December—forty years ago now—which was the year 1883, and we were not the original discoverers, either. We however, only explored the cave for a distance of about a quarter of a mile, as we did not have proper lights to make further exploration."

Source: Newspaper Article – *Carlsbad Newspaper*

Person Concerned: William Henry (Hank) Harrison

Date: Circa 1931

Harrison was one of the early settlers in this area, establishing a ranch at Rattlesnake Springs in June, 1880. He died in Carlsbad in July of 1931. According to the paper which carried his obituary, Harrison "recalled a visit to the vast arched entrance (CACA) in 1882, but did not attempt to enter the cave."

Source: Magazine Article – *New Mexico Magazine*

"Other Man's Bones," Livingston, Carl

Date: January 1934

"... certainly it (CACA) was well known in the 70's (added 1870s, 5/2001). My uncle built his ranch house close to the cavern's mouth in that year and it was spoken of as a well-known land mark then."

NB – Carl Livingston was Dr. Lee's assistant in the 1924 National Geographic expedition. He had lived most of his life in this area and knew it intimately.

Source: Personal Interview

Person interviewed: Mr. Hartshorne, 4390 Triggs St., Los Angeles, California

Interviewed by: Ernst Christensen, Acting Park Naturalist

Date: October 17, 1946

"According to Mr. Hartshorne guano was mined as early as 1880... He claims that the first load of guano was shipped out on the J.J. Hagerman Railroad in 1881."

NB – Almost certainly this does not refer to mining in the Carlsbad Cavern. In fact, it is interesting to note that the earliest mining claim specifying guano now known is an 1899 claim to what was apparently Goat Cave in Slaughter Canyon.

Source: Newspaper Article – *Carlsbad Argus*

Person Involved: Capt. Addison M. Williams of Santa Fe

Dates: October 21, 1929

According to the article, Mr. Williams, then aged 77, made a tour of the Cavern. He then claimed that in 1877 he was attached to Troop M of the 8th Cavalry, stationed at Fort Bascom. He said they were chasing Indians through this area, covering territory about the Canadian and Pecos Rivers. They found many caves, including one where the huge entrance makes him think it was CACA. He says a party entered, went a short distance, and “disturbed the bats.”

NB – There are of course, many other caves near here, such as Gunsight Cave, which have even larger entrances than CACA.

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...when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every tenement and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last."

Just past noon on January 15, 1929, a son was born to the Reverend and Mrs. Martin Luther King in an upstairs bedroom of 501 Auburn Avenue, in Atlanta, Georgia. The couple named their first son after Rev. King, but he was simply called "M.L." by the family. During the next 12 years, this fine two story Victorian home is where "M.L." would live with his parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and their boarders. The home is located in the residential section of "Sweet Auburn", the center of black Atlanta.

Two blocks west of the home is Ebenezer Baptist Church, the pastorate of Martin's grandfather and father. It was in these surroundings of home, church and neighborhood that "M.L." experienced his childhood. Here, "M.L." learned about family and Christian love, segregation in the days of "Jim Crow" laws, diligence and tolerance. It was to Ebenezer Baptist Church that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would return in 1960. As co-pastor with his father, "Daddy King", Dr. King, Jr. would preach about love, equality, and non-violence.

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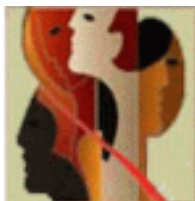
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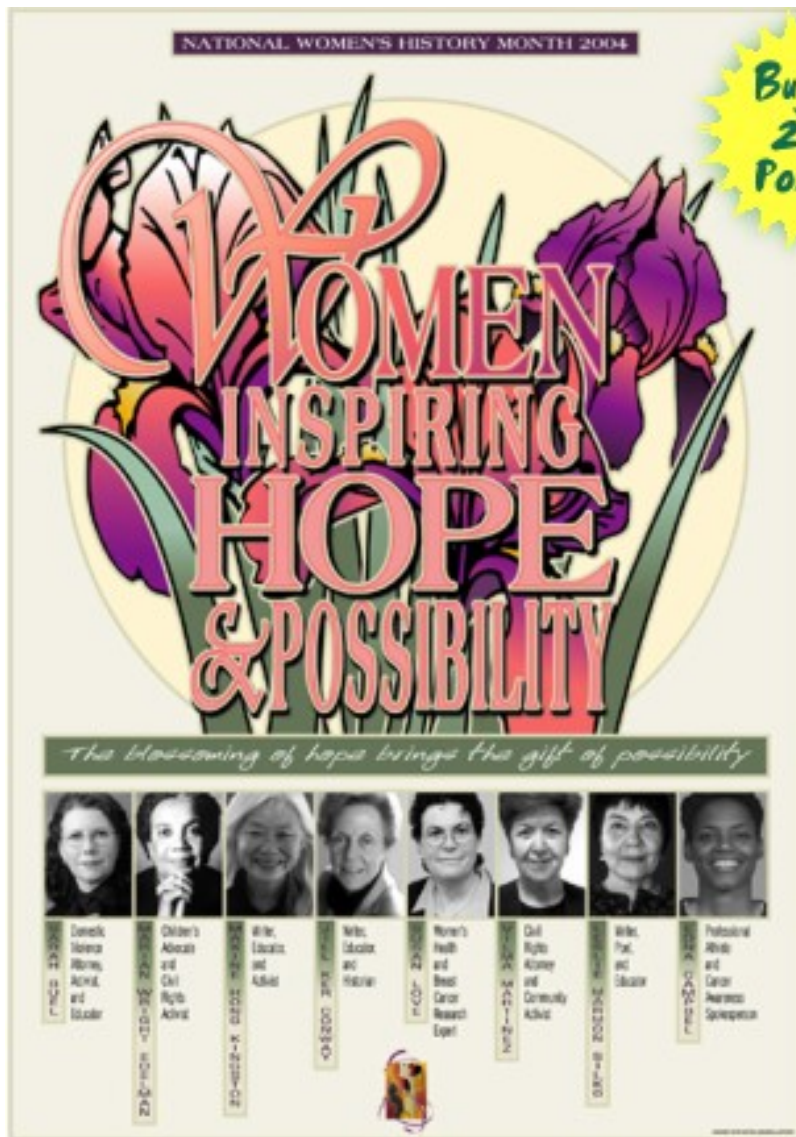
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