

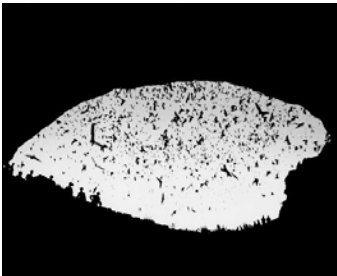


Caverns' Chronology



Introduction

Carlsbad Cavern is one of over 300 limestone caves in a fossil reef laid down by an inland sea 250 to 280 million years ago. Twelve to fourteen thousand years ago, American Indians lived in the Guadalupe Mountains; some of their cooking ring sites and pictographs have been found within the present day boundaries of the park. By the 1500s, Spanish explorers were passing through present-day west Texas and southeastern New Mexico. Spain claimed the southwest until 1821 when Mexico revolted against her and claimed independence. Mexico, fighting the westward expansionist United States in the late 1840s, lost the southwest to the US. In 1850, New Mexico Territory was created, and for the next 30 years the cultural conflict between American Indians and the US government continued. Eddy, New Mexico, the future Carlsbad, was established in 1888 and New Mexico became a state in 1912.



1400 – Mescalero Apaches come to the Guadalupe Mountains area.

1536 – Cabeza de Vaca is the first of the Spanish explorers to cross southeastern New Mexico.

1583 – Antonio de Espejo leaves Acoma and travels south along the Pecos River into Texas. He calls the river Rio Salado.

1724 – Pedro de Rivera inspects the province of New Spain. His engineer, Francisco Alvarez y Barriero is one of the first to map the Guadalupe Mountains.

1745 – Padre Juan Miguel Menchero maps the area of present-day Carlsbad. He notes herds of cattle along the Pecos River.

1849 – Captain Randolph B. Marcy explores the Guadalupe Mountains area. Numerous expeditions crossed this area that had recently acquired by the United States.

1855 – Captain John Pope of the Army Topographical Corps crosses the Guadalupe Mountains surveying routes for the railroad.

1858 – The route of the Butterfield Overland Mail runs through the Guadalupe Mountains. A stage station is established at Pine Springs.

1866 – Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving begin driving cattle north along the Pecos River on the route that becomes known as the Goodnight-Loving Trail.

1867 – Dick Reed establishes a trading post on the Pecos River at the later site of Seven Rivers.

1870 – Seven Rivers (originally called Dogtown because of the prairie dog colonies there) is settled by the Herskill Jones family of Virginia. Situated where seven arroyos lead into the Pecos River, it became an important trading post on the cattle trail

from Texas. Outlaw Billy the Kid frequently visited Seven Rivers.

1880 – Sixteen wagons full of settlers arrive at Seven Rivers in September.

Dan Lucas begins ranching along the Black River on the property that is now Washington Ranch.

1881 – Henry Harrison arrives from Indiana and homesteads at Rattlesnake Springs. Cavalry patrols use his farm as a point of supply during the 1880s.

1882 – July 11, explorer/guide James Larkin White born in Mason County, Texas.

1884 – John T. Plowman comes from Dallas County, Texas to ranch on the Black River. (Patterson)

Captain John Shattuck of Anderson County, Texas settles on a spring in Dark Canyon. (Patterson)

The settlement of Badgerville is started at the present site of Hope. Many of the residents lived in dugouts like badgers.

1892 – White family moves to Lone Tree, New Mexico.

1898 – 16-year-old, Texas-born cowhand Jim White probably enters the caverns for the first time. The first to find the entrance remains disputed.

1912 – January 6, New Mexico becomes a state, 62 years after becoming a territory.

1915-1918 – First photographs in cavern's Scenic Rooms and Big Room taken by Ray V. Davis. His photographs stimulate interest in the cavern. Davis' photos appear in the New York Times in 1923.

1923 – April 6 to May 8, Robert Holley, General Land Office, surveys and maps the cavern, guided by Jim White and photographed by Ray V. Davis. Recommends establishment as national monument.





On October 25, Carlsbad Cave National Monument was established.

1923 to 1927 – W.F. McIlvain serves as first custodian (superintendent), overseeing first trails, stairs and lights. He supervises Jim White, works with Willis T. Lee, coordinates with city officials, including the Chamber of Commerce, and makes \$12 a year.

1924 – March 20 to September 15, Dr. Willis T. Lee, sponsored by National Geographic Society and assisted by Jim White, extensively explores cavern. NPS Director Mather visits in April.

1925 – Staircase from natural entrance to Bat Cave installed, eliminating use of guano bucket to enter cave. Donated by Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce. See photo.

1926 – First trail by NPS—dirt path and wooden stairways through Main Corridor, Kings Palace, Queens Chamber, and three quarters of the Big Room. Installation of first electric lighting system via Main Corridor and Kings Palace.

1927 – Trail past Bottomless Pit opened. School for employees' children established in park. Cavern Supply Company is established as the park concessioner. Entry fee – \$2.00 per person.

June 23 – First wedding ceremony is held in Carlsbad Cavern, performed at Rock of Ages.

1928 – February, Charlie White (no relation to Jim) homesteads 120 acres at the entrance to Walnut Canyon, the future Whites City.

Amelia Earhart visits the caverns in September. See photo.

1930 – May 14, Congress designates Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

1931 – January- August, 750' elevator shaft is drilled and blasted from both ends—the surface and the cavern. In November, the elevator is installed, going into operation in January 1932. Two larger elevators and another shaft are added in the middle 1950s.

1934- 1935 – Six miles of water pipe is laid from Carlsbad Cavern to Rattlesnake Springs replacing Oak Springs as the park water supply.

1937 – February 9, Jim White begins selling his book (ghostwritten by Frank Ernest Nicholson) in the cave. His wife Fanny continues to sell it until her death in 1964.

In July, Tom Tucker discovers Slaughter Canyon

Cave (New Cave).

September 28, park receives the 1 millionth visitor. Through February 2005, the park has received over 39,000,000 visitors.

1938 – July 1, a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp is established at Rattlesnake Springs. The camp is in operation until April 1942.

1946 – Jim White dies in Carlsbad, on April 26, at the age of 63. For his exploration, guide services, and promotion of sharing the caverns with the public, he is unofficially “Mr. Carlsbad Caverns.”

1959 – In March, construction of the current visitor center is complete; old stone buildings near the cave entrance are removed and tour operations transferred to the visitor center. Adjacent parking areas, originally constructed in 1940 as overflow, are now used as primary parking, with the lower parking area designated as overflow and Bat Flight parking.

In June, the motion picture *Journey to the Center of the Earth* with Pat Boone and James Mason, is filmed in the Kings Palace and Boneyard.

1963 – The bat flight amphitheater at the natural entrance is constructed and placed into operation. First requested some 16 to 17 years earlier as seating area for bat flight viewers at the natural entrance watching the bats.

In December, the Rattlesnake Springs was added as a detached unit of the park.

1967 – In June, self- guided trips through the Big Room are begun. Rangers stationed at points throughout the Big Room interpret their section as visitors pass by. Tours are still guided through Main Corridor and Scenic Rooms.

1972 – On January 6, self- guided tours of entire Cavern are initiated.

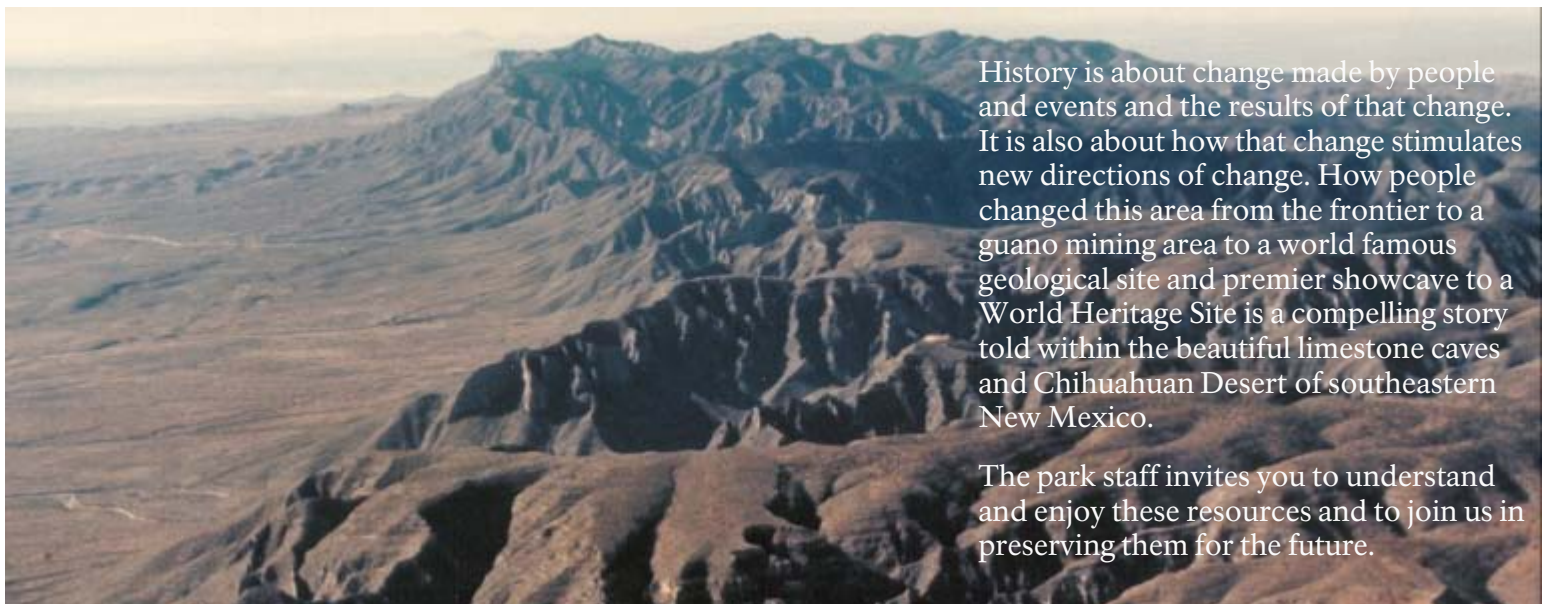
1975- 1977 – Cavern's lighting system replaced.

1986 – Lechuguilla Cave discovered to “go further” than expected. Over the coming years, it is taken to over 100 miles of explored passageway.

1995 – In December, Carlsbad Caverns National Park is declared a World Heritage Site.

1998 – Employee reunion held.

2005 – Lechuguilla Cave tops 110 miles of passageway.



History is about change made by people and events and the results of that change. It is also about how that change stimulates new directions of change. How people changed this area from the frontier to a guano mining area to a world famous geological site and premier showcave to a World Heritage Site is a compelling story told within the beautiful limestone caves and Chihuahuan Desert of southeastern New Mexico.

The park staff invites you to understand and enjoy these resources and to join us in preserving them for the future.