



## CAVE History Update

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

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### 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Creation of Carlsbad Cave National Monument

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On October 25, 1923, President Calvin Coolidge signed the following proclamation bringing the monument into existence—the passages in italics are the descriptions of the great limestone cave that justified its significance as a unit of the National Park System:

**BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
A PROCLAMATION  
[No. 1679-Oct. 25, 1923-43 Stat. 1929]**

WHEREAS, there is located in section thirty-one, township twenty-four south, range twenty-five east, and section thirty-six, township twenty-four south, range twenty-four east of the New Mexico Principal Meridian, in southeastern New Mexico, near the town of Carlsbad, a limestone cavern known as the Carlsbad Cave, *of extraordinary proportions and of unusual beauty and variety of natural decoration;* and

WHEREAS, *beyond the spacious chambers that have been explored, other vast chambers of unknown character and dimensions exist;* and

WHEREAS, *the several chambers contain stalactites, stalagmites, and other formations in such unusual number, size, beauty of form, and variety of figure as to make this a cavern equal, if not superior, in both scientific and popular interest to the better known caves;* and

WHEREAS, it appears that the public interest would be promoted by reserving this natural wonder as a National Monument, together with as much land as may be needed for the protection, not only of the known entrance, but such other entrances as may be found.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States of America, by authority of the power in me vested by section two of the act of Congress entitled, "An Act for the preservation of American antiquities," approved June eighth, nineteen hundred and six (34 Stat., 225) do proclaim that there is hereby reserved from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, subject to all valid existing claims, and set apart as a National Monument to be known as the Carlsbad Cave National Monument all that piece or parcel of land in the County of Eddy, State of New Mexico, shown upon the diagram hereto



**Figure 1.** President Calvin Coolidge. Credit: Library of Congress Photography Division.

annexed and made a part hereof, and more particularly described as follows: lots one and two, section thirty-one, township twenty-four south, range twenty-five east, and section thirty-six, township twenty-four south, range twenty-four east of the New Mexico Principal Meridian.

Warning is hereby expressly given to all unauthorized persons not to appropriate, injure, destroy or remove any feature of this Monument and not to locate or settle upon any of the lands thereof.

The Director of the National Park Service, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, shall have the supervision, management, and control of this Monument as provided in the act of Congress entitled, "An Act to establish a National Park Service and for other purposes," approved August twenty-fifth, nineteen hundred and sixteen (39 Stat., 535) and Acts additional thereto or amendatory thereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done in the City of Washington this 25th day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and twenty-three and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and forty-eighth.

CALVIN COOLIDGE

By the President:  
CHARLES E. HUGHES,  
Secretary of State



**Figure 2.** Jim White, ca. 1930s. Credit: National Park Service.

As we remember this 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the national monument, we must also remember the efforts of a few people who made it possible:

**Explorer/guide Jim White** first entered the cave in 1898, served as a guide for nearly three decades, made early cave trail improvements, and advocated its value and potential for future visitors.

**Photographer Ray V. Davis**, with his wonderful cavern pictures, brought the cavern to the attention of federal and state agencies, the national media, and tourist

operations in the southwest. Davis's pictures—the result of Jim White's invitation to Davis to take photographs—started the political momentum for the monument's creation. In November 1923, the month after the monument's creation, some of Davis's cavern pictures appeared in *The New York Times*.



**Figure 3.** 1924 Ray V. Davis photograph of the King's Palace, Carlsbad Cave National Monument. Credit: National Park Service.

**General Land Office Mineral Examiner Robert Holley** led a 5-week survey expedition in April and May 1923; in his resultant report, he strongly advocated monument status.

**US Geological Survey geologist Willis T. Lee** led two expeditions in 1923 and 1924, and published two *National Geographic Society* magazine articles about the findings. Like Holley, Lee strongly recommended monument status.

Less than seven years later, Carlsbad Cave National Monument, by an act of Congress, became Carlsbad Caverns National Park on May 14, 1930. To date, in those eighty years, Carlsbad Caverns has welcomed and served nearly 40,000,000 visitors.

We, the national park staff at the caverns, appreciate the past, present, and future cooperation of visitors who have helped, are helping, or will help to preserve these incredible cave, surface, and cultural resources at one of America's greatest national parks. If you haven't done so, come see for yourself.

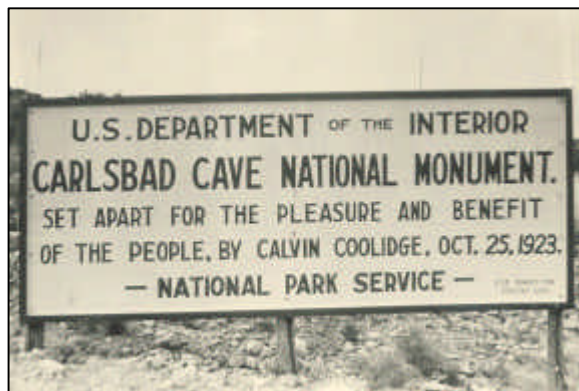


Figure 4. Credit:Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

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## The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps

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The Civilian Conservation Corps “was an organization formed as part of Roosevelt's New Deal as an attempt to counter the rampant unemployment and economic despair resulting from the Great Depression. Formed by an act of Congress and upon the request of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps was an organization unique in American History. The Civilian Conservation Corps were a group of men, mostly youths but also World War One Veterans or Skilled Laborers in their own companies, formed across the country and utilized for a wide range of skilled and unskilled labor in the



Figure 5. View of Civilian Conservation Camp “NP-1-N” at Rattlesnake Springs, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, ca. late 1930s.

American wilderness. Hundreds of Thousands, and eventually Millions, of these men were gathered under government auspices and paid to perform civil engineering projects in a hitherto unforeseen scale”. (James F. Justin Civilian Conservation Corps Museum at <http://members.aol.com/famjustin/CivilianConservationCorpshis.html>)

The Civilian Conservation Corps, created nationally 70 years ago, arrived at Carlsbad Caverns National Park 65 years ago in July 1938, setting up camp at Rattlesnake Springs. In February 1938, in his monthly report, Superintendent Tom Boles noted,

*Possible Civilian Conservation Corps Camp: For some time we have been endeavoring to get a Civilian Conservation Corps camp located in or near the Carlsbad Caverns National Park, and it now appears that when the camp located near Roswell, New Mexico completes its work at the Bottomless Lake State Park that it will be transferred here.*

The following month a small group of Civilian Conservation Corps and NPS officials met to select the site at Rattlesnake Springs for the new camp. In July 1938, Boles wrote that,

*During the month of July, and first month of occupancy of Camp NP-1-N, located at Rattlesnake Springs, Carlsbad Conservation Caverns National Park area, field work consisted entirely of surveying and preparing preliminary plans for final approval of jobs contemplated. Due to uncertainty, in regard to correct details applying on major jobs, it was considered best not to initiate the larger projects until more definite information was received. Low company strength (only 62 enrollees), inclement weather and the need for finishing of camp buildings, etc., also influenced the use of enrollees on the project.*

Over the next four years, the Civilian Conservation Corps "boys" at Carlsbad Caverns National Park performed an amazingly diverse number of projects. A partial list of projects completed demonstrates this. Consider some of the projects worked on in February 1940:

*Special Improvement Activities:* *Civilian Conservation Corps Camp NP-1-N "Rattlesnake Spring," Arthur V. Read, Project Superintendent, reports as follows for February:*

*Foot trail maintenance (59 man days labor); hauling cement and asphalt from Carlsbad, taking material into Cavern and distributing to job (101 man days); electric line maintenance (50 man days); building maintenance (13 man days); grading floors in Cavern (129 man days); alterations and addition to Pump House (89 man days); employee's residence, worked on plastering, painting, plumbing, etc.(230 man days); barriers, taking large rock from the talus slope in the Underground Lunchroom and placing them along walk boundaries (225 man days); sewage disposal system, excavating, laying soil pipe and building forms for manhole and septic tank (.28 man days); cavern cleanup, cleaning up as work in Cavern progressed (30 man days); park road maintenance, along Walnut Canyon road (42 man days); tree preservation, pruning, painting and transplanting trees in the Rattlesnake Spring area (128 man days); road obliteration (194 man days); bank sloping (180 man days); new parking area, excavating and building embankment (1016 man days)*

The February 1940 project achievements were but one of the 46 months that the Civilian Conservation Corps at Rattlesnake Springs labored here.

Other Civilian Conservation Corps construction "projects" still used today include the two triplexes and the maintenance office and shed. Originally, the triplexes were to be built with quarried limestone, but after a short period of quarrying the abundant, but difficult-to-quarry rock, Civilian Conservation Corps workers must have been relieved to see the construction plans shifted to adobe bricks construction. Adobes were made somewhere off the current "loop road," a 9 ½ mile drive through the Chihuahuan Desert for the enjoyment of today's visitors.

**Figure 6.** CCC workers repairing the flood-damaged park road in September 1941. Credit: Carlsbad Caverns National Park.





**Figure 7.** CCC workers installing large culverts along the park road after devastating flood of 1941. Credit: Carlsbad Caverns National Park

Throughout New Mexico from 1933 to 1942 the Civilian Conservation Corps responded to emergencies: fire-fighting, search and rescue, and flood control work. After the devastating September 1941 flood, they helped to rebuild the flood-damaged Walnut Canyon road. By the time that they left here in May 1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps had contributed much to the making and the maintaining of facilities at Carlsbad Caverns National Park and in the process left a visual legacy for them.

All in all, the Civilian Conservation Corps in New Mexico served over 32,000 men from New Mexico and 50,000 men in all. The Bureau of Reclamation, The U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Soil Service, among other agencies benefited from the efforts of other Civilian Conservation Corps camps in the area; in Carlsbad, Civilian Conservation Corps lined the irrigation canals, built support for the flume, constructed sidewalks, and constructed facilities at the Carlsbad municipal beach. The Civilian Conservation Corps also worked on some projects at the local dams, Avalon etc.

Given responsibility and skills training/experience, along with pay, most of which the Civilian Conservation Corps administrators sent back home to the enrollees' families every month, many Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees from New Mexico (and many from the 3,000,000 in the program from throughout the land) matured and went on to serve their nation in industry and the military during WWII.

In 2002 Jeff Bingaman, Senator from New Mexico, along with several other US senators, introduced a resolution proclaiming March 31, 2002, the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Civilian Conservation Corps, as National Conservation Corps Day.

During *New Mexico Historic Preservation Week* in 2002, Carlsbad Caverns National Park invited a Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni chapter from Albuquerque to help us formally dedicate our new Civilian Conservation Corps wayside exhibit. This exhibit is located on the north side of the trail leading to the natural entrance to Carlsbad Cavern.

Clearly, most Civilian Conservation Corps veterans I have met rightfully show pride in their accomplishments from six to seven decades ago. As the Civilian Conservation Corps veterans celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their agency this year, many Americans look back at the program and rate it as one of the best programs enacted in the Great Depression. Both America and her young men benefited from the Civilian Conservation Corps program.

So did Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Here in southeastern New Mexico, the Civilian Conservation Corps "boys" made significant and long-lasting changes and additions, on the park and on themselves. They built both facilities at the time and their own characters for the future.

Much of the national historical significance of the *Cavern Historic District* and *Rattlesnake Springs Historic District* at the park derives from the work done by the Civilian Conservation Corps (Civilian Conservation Corps) enrollees from the *Rattlesnake Springs* camp, NP-1-N from July 1938 until May 1942. Here and throughout New Mexico, the Civilian Conservation Corps put their strength, labor, and skills into making New Mexico a better place, then and still, seventy years later. At the caverns, we continue to salute the efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps "boys."



*Note:* For more information on the Civilian Conservation Corps in New Mexico, please see *Coming of Age in the Great Depression: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in New Mexico, 1933 – 1942* by Richard Melzer, (Yucca Tree Press, April 2000).

**Figure 8.** Rattlesnake Springs Camp (Carlsbad Caverns National Park) CCC workers resurfacing floor in the Underground Lunchroom in the late 1930s.

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## Documenting and Developing Carlsbad Caverns' History: How People Help

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Let me give you a couple of examples of how people sometimes help Carlsbad Caverns National Park's staff to document and develop our park's history.

Several months ago I wrote an article in the *Carlsbad Current Argus* about the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps at our park that included the picture above of CCC workers resurfacing the floor in the park's underground lunchroom. Two brothers read that article and thought that they recognized their father who worked here as a CCC foreman at the Rattlesnake Springs Civilian Conservation Corps camp. They asked me to send them a larger version of the picture so that they could possibly identify their dad. While it turned out not to be their dad, they sent our park some wonderful CCC pictures and a list of CCC names that included their father's name. Their kind donation of pictures included the following:



**Figure 9.** Retreat ceremony at the Rattlesnake Springs Camp, date unknown.



**Figure 10.** A group shot, date unknown. Can you spot the cooks and the supervisors? Some of these boys, now in their 70s and 80s, belong to Civilian Conservation Corps alumni groups today.

In our park museum collection, we have a table and chairs built by CCC workers (probably in northern New Mexico). Maybe the CCC reading room is where our park's CCC furniture came from?

Putting an article in the newspaper with some historical photographs "turned up" these photographs through the kindness of the two donor-brothers, photographs of great value to our collection. From time to time, I meet visitors or receive calls from other people who want to share their memories or photographs or other items from their personal historical connection to our park. Because of such people, we continually learn more about our park's history. Some people donate items; others let us scan or copy pictures.



**Figure 11.** One of the recreations of CCC enrollees was reading.

One visitor was so excited about her four visits here, over the course of a half century, that she wrote an illustrated history of what the park has meant to her, including her research on the park's geology and history. For the enjoyment of others, we have posted her

**Memories of Childhood** on our website at [www.nps.gov/cave/pdfdocs/nancy\\_hultgren\\_remembers.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/cave/pdfdocs/nancy_hultgren_remembers.pdf).

Thank goodness for people who want us to know about their historical and personal connections to this park. These people help us to document and "flesh out" our park's history. We can always count on such people to help bring the caverns' history more alive and to make it more personal and enjoyable.



**Figure 12.** "Details" such as these young men accomplished many projects at Carlsbad Caverns National Park, 1938 to 1942.

These are some of the ways people help us to document and develop our park's history. Do you have any personal/historical connections to the story of Carlsbad Caverns? If so, come on down and see us or give us a call.

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**Note It:**  
**Some Park Historical Notes From October**

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**1879** The Tenth Cavalry establishes a permanent camp at the old Pine Springs stage station in the Guadalupe Mountains. In October, Colonel Benjamin Grierson visits the camp and explores the Black River canyon.

**1894** The railroad is complete from Eddy (1899 becomes Carlsbad) to Roswell.

**1904** Heavy floods in October wash away dams, bridges and railroad tracks in Carlsbad.

**October 25, 1923** President Calvin Coolidge signs bill creating Carlsbad Cave National Monument.

**1930** October 13, Jim White is slugged and \$40 stolen from him at the Texas State Fair in Dallas.

**1932** *Teachers' Convention:* My September report included details of the meeting of the New Mexico Educational Association which is to be held in the "Big Room" of the Carlsbad Cavern. The Director will recall that at the east end of the "Big Room" there were large banks of waste material from the elevator shaft. The old return trail crossed this waste bank but we have thrown this trail over near the east wall, which by the way is a much better location, and have graded the waste banks into a sloping concave surface similar to a Greek amphitheatre facing a natural grotto which by a slight rearrangement of our lights serves admirably as a stage or rostrum. For seats we have arranged about twenty concentric arcs of 2 x 10 boards supported at short intervals by building-tiles which have stakes driven through them to prevent toppling. The seating capacity is 1,200.

**1933** *Personal Economy:* The arrangements made with a Carlsbad wholesale house for delivering groceries once a week to the employees living in the Park is proving quite satisfactory, and we have been able to obtain our

groceries, meats and vegetables at approximately 20% below the local retail price in Carlsbad; but the big saving is in the fact that the employees do not have to drive 28 miles to town and back in order to make these purchases. Under existing reduced salaries this saving is most welcome to us all. It has of course brought forth a protest from the several merchants here in Carlsbad who heretofore had enjoyed the Cavern business; however, the employees in the Park were ready to deal with local merchants if they would make deliveries even once a week and this they declined to do. I am unofficially informed that the local Chamber of Commerce has filed a protest with the Secretary of the Interior about this.

**1942** October 26: The first party to visit Carlsbad Caverns by plane lands "on the automobile parking terrace."

**1954** A 3.56-inch rainfall the night of the 6th caused wash-outs in seven places on the entrance road and closed it for 11½ hours

**1964** Mrs. Fannie Hill White dies on October 26. Concession Permit Number I-6np-30 issued in 1948 for twenty years or for Mrs. White's lifetime was automatically terminated with her death. In November, Jim White Jr. applied for a new concession permit for exclusive sale of Jim White's book.

**1966** A bill authorizing the establishment of Guadalupe Mountains National Park was approved by the President on October 15.

**1974** October was another wet month for CACA with 2.65 inches of rainfall through the 24th, which brought the yearly total to date to 21.91 inches. The rain increased the amount of moisture in the Caverns tremendously, especially near the Natural Entrance and in the Big Room. The continuous dripping of water made it quite noisy near Devil's Spring and there were several



new pools of water in the Big Room. The pools beneath Crystal Spring Dome and Longfellow's Bathtub increased greatly. New Cave was also active with many new pools of water.

**October 4, 1976** Park employee Tom "Boomer" Bemis explores a room with an opening so small that only he can get into it. Room named *Bemis Chamber*.

**1980** An 18-year old airman from Cannon Air Force Base in Clovis was killed in a fall at the Cavern entrance about 4:30 p.m. on October 11 after attempting an unauthorized entry into the cave after it had closed.

**1982** In October, Cave Specialist Ron Kerbo and Geologist Mike Queen use light cord, balsa wood, and helium balloons to float cord to area 200' above Baby Hippo area, snagging a stalagmite. Later, both climb rope into area later named Balloon Ballroom.

**1986** A film crew from NBC filmed the dome climb and a portion of the entry into the Spirit World made by Ron Kerbo, Jim Goodbar, Donald Davis and Mike Queen. The segment was telecast on Tom Brokaw's nightly news on October 29.

Several hundred feet of new highly decorated passageway was discovered in Lechuguilla Cave, making it the second deepest cave in the park and the eighth deepest cave known in the US.

**1987** October 14, 1987, Lechuguilla is 37,500 feet long and 1207 feet deep.

**1990** Two adult javelinas were observed by visitors and employees near the nature trail and park housing area, the first known sightings on top of the escarpment.

**1991** Elevator Mechanic James W. Hatfield, age 62, was fatally injured Wednesday, October 23, while working in the large elevator shaft shortening hoist cables. This was the first fatal job-related accident at the park in over 40 years.

**1995** Actor Gene Hackman visited the park with Dan Lenihan of the NPS Submerged Cultural Resources Unit.

**1997** A desert shrew was found dead at the natural entrance. Only two other *Notiosorex crawfordi* have been collected in the park, one in 1942 and the other in 1991. Desert shrews are notoriously difficult to capture and are likely more numerous in the park than capture data suggests.