

HULBERT, BEN H.

INTERVIEW

DRESSER-CRYSTAL CAVES. #7410 ²⁷²

DRESSER AND CRYSTAL CAVES

Ben H. Hulbert, Informant and Guide.

Ft. Gibson, Oklahoma.

Indian-Pioneer History - August 27, 1937.

Jas. S. Buchanan, Field Worker.

The Dresser Cave is located four miles north-east of Ft. Gibson in Flowers Canyon, which is the origination of Flowers Creek that flows into Grand River. Legal location, SW NE of section 20, T16N R20E, Cherokee County.

Legendary history has it that a band of wild Indians and a band of Spanish explorers fought a bloody battle at this point in Flowers Canyon in the early days previous to the coming of the white man, and during this battle the Spanish treasures of gold were hid in one of the caves of Flowers Canyon.

The Dresser Cave is a phenomena of nature which has much of legend and of fact to add to its interesting history. Information furnished by Ben H. Hulbert, a pioneer of the early days and an inhabitant of the immediate area, is that the cave derived its name from the fact that a recluse and prospector by the name of

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Dresser came to the place in 1913 and made his home in this cave for about four years, and eventually left the country as mysteriously as he came. While no tangible evidence remains to give evidence of his habitation of the cave, it is entirely plausible and possible that such was the case, for adjacent springs and abundant natural resources such as honey of the wild bees, grapes, berries, wild plums etc, would have been sufficient, together with the native wild animal life existing at that time to have comfortably fed and even clothed a person such as Dresser must have been.

Only a preliminary exploration of the cave was made, since to thoroughly examine it would have required better preparation in the way of equipment and clothing than was available, but a perusal of the main passages was made and proved very interesting. The entrance to the cave is on the south side of the canyon, and about forty feet above the creek bed in the ravine below. The mouth of the cave is approx-

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imately fifteen feet wide, and the ceiling at the entrance is high enough for the ordinary adult to stand erect. From the entrance the passageway extends to the left and becomes smaller as one progresses farther into the recesses. Numerous smaller caverns extend out from the main passage 70 or 80 feet in different directions. The inside of the cave is very damp and in many places water is dripping from the ceiling of the cave, and the gravelled floor of the cave gives evidence of the fact that it was formed by former underground waters washing out the softer strata, leaving the harder formations as they now exist.

Bats, maroon colored lizards about two inches in length and centipedes were the only live life in evidence.

Small stalactites were found and due to the comparative youth of the cave, were of minor nature being only one-fourth to three-fourths of an inch in length, and no stalagmites at all were found,

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probably due to the fact that drippings from the stalactites fell on the soft floor of the cave and were absorbed by the soft sandy gravelled bed before hardening and forming stalagnites.

The temperature inside the cave was some thirty degrees cooler than outside, and was a pleasant respite from the outside mid-summer heat, since the moisture from one's breath was visible and would form a fog. In the farthest part of the main passage we penetrated we experienced a fog that obstructed the rays of our flashlights and hindered visibility to a great extent.

A careful search was made for the reported existence of names of early day outlaws who sought haven in the cave, but none were found, which could have been due to time having erased these carvings, or to the fact that the reports were erroneous.

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CRYSTAL CAVE

Crystal cave is situated one half mile northwest of the Dresser cave and on the opposite side of Flowers canyon, about one hundred feet above the bed of the canyon. The entrance to the cave is in a cliff and hidden from view by large pieces of stone that have broken from the cliff above and fallen down in ages past and rest on the canyon side. The massive pieces of rock that conceal the entrance of the cave would impress one as giant sentinels standing guard at the gate of a crystal palace which holds within its silent walls a treasure of sacred secrets of the ancient past.

The cave is an interesting phenomena of nature, being an excellent example of the processes of under ground water and its effect on the sub-surface strata. The entrance to the cave is rather narrow, being only about eight or ten feet wide, while twenty to twenty-five feet in height. Unlike its neighbor, the Dresser cave, Crystal cave is more on the order of the better known and much larger Cave of the Winds

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and Carlsbad Cavern, known universally for their natural phenomena. The main passageway extends directly inward about fifty-five feet, and unlike Dresser cave the ceiling is high, being approximately thirty feet in height. A short distance from the entrance in the main passageway is a cavern some twenty feet in depth and about five feet in diameter with passages leading out from the bottom of it an indeterminate distance.

Most distinctive are the formations inside the main passageway, being not unlike the famed stalactites of the Carlsbad Cavern formations, and extending the height of the cave, but of course being only the remains of the processes of under ground water erosion and not due to the deposits of carbonaceous waters as the Carlsbad cavern stalactites and stalagnites were.

Legend and tradition have it that this cave was the recipient of the buried treasure of the Spainards, and while no one has been able to

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disprove the assertion, at the same time none of the surrounding inhabitants place too much credence in the story, but of course when traditional tales of this nature are handed down from ages past it is rather hard to disprove them, for it is entirely in the realm of possibilities that this actually did happen; ~~needer~~ it does add to the zest of an explorer of the cave and its many recesses to surmise just where the gold would most likely be hidden. . . IF there.

Many excavations in the vicinity give mute evidence of exhaustive efforts of treasure hunters as the result of the lure of the legend.