

"Nonnezhozhi," the Father of All Natural Bridges



The Nonnezhozhi Arch From The North East



The Bridge From Where It Was First Seen

THE discovery of an awe inspiring natural bridge, spanning a hitherto unknown canyon in southern Utah, on the 14th of last August by Prof. Byron Cummings and his State Archeological party, adds a chapter to scientific exploration that is more than interesting.

The new bridge was only reached after repeated and hazardous experiences under the glare of a torrid sun, over barren and undulating stretches of desert, through "Royal" gorges with perpendicular walls, over untraded and unnamed mesas rising 2,000 feet in the air, sliding and slipping over miles of soft sandstone rock, wending patiently through beds of yellow sand, dry and thirsty for water, half blind from the wicked reflection of heat waves, jaded from nights spent in thunderstorms and not blankets, and finally half starved from a scarcity of provisions.

And even then, had it not been for the opportune visit of a certain Pahute Indian with an epicurean twinkle in his small eyes we should have been hopelessly lost and the majestic bridge with its solemn and solitary settings might have waited for many years to come the unknown giant freak of the wilds.

INDIAN GUIDES QUIT.

We had gained a point possibly 25 miles from the coveted goal when our two Indian guides, one a Navajo, the other a Pahute, decided simultaneously that the bridge was a myth and that traveling under difficulties was not particularly healthful to Indian indolence. We had expected during the long afternoon that their unrelenting search for trail was a more serious matter than they were willing to admit and when night came they confidently whispered that their old "stomping ground" was far behind.

It was then (the night of the 13th of August) that Nashlaw Begay, who, by the way, is son of the most cunning sneak of Indian diplomacy yet living and has a goodly inheritance of the original paternal instinct himself, came up through the dark hugging our side with a perspicaciousness that was long ago patented by the red man after considerable hemming and hawing and a monotonous series of grunts was informed that the bridge lay a half day's ride ahead in a canyon that emptied into the Colorado, and that he (Nashlaw Begay) would lead us there and out again for three silver dollars a day.

That meant to us what rain means to seed sowers, and we swung into saddle the next morning all expectation. At noon, after shooting up and down through a labyrinth of confused canyons and narrowly escaping the loss of two pack horses from the pack train, Prof. Cummings, followed by the rest of the party, caught the first glimpse of the mythical bridge that the few Indians who have benched it call "Nonnezhozhi," meaning "The Bridge," a term which means to them if they could express it in English.

"SING OF BRIDGES."

At first sight it seemed insignificantly small—just so to speak—in a glaring mass of red sandstone cliffs that wall the canyon on either side in frenzied, jagged, wilds. As we wound down the canyon, however, the upper segments of the arch slowly became illuminated against the sky and the magnificent proportions of the whole bridge appeared on its in their entirety.

The comparatively slender shaft of the bridge, spanning a canyon 124 feet wide (224 feet inside measurement), and rising 200 feet in the air, did not official measurements, makes the most unique picture of its kind known to scientific research.

FOR INSTANT.

It would be possible, for instance, to place five or six ordinary 15-story skyscrapers under the arch and then have enough room for an aeroplane to sail through.

On the southeast side the arch joins an extension of the same formation and continues the wall of the canyon, but on the northwest side the arch

runs clear to the bottom of the canyon jutting from it as a Gothic flying buttress springs from the pavement, retaining even the characteristically Gothic curve. Add to this the attending barren walls around it, the stretches of sun-scorched, sun-parched canyon earth, torn and isolated scrub-pine, clumps of half-dead cedar, patches of cactus and yucca weed, and you are face to face with the unadorned and awe-inspiring handiwork of elementary nature.

PROBABLY FIRST WHITE VISIT.

The fact, also, that no sign of any previous visit by white men was visible nor probable, and that the bridge was in Utah, and considerably larger than the largest of those lying north of the San Juan adding an additional scene wonder to our list of wonders, was recompense enough for the difficulties we encountered in making the discovery.

AUGUSTA ECLIPSED.

It might be mentioned that on several occasions erroneous measurements have been given out to the public in regard to the other bridges of national reputation. When first discovered only very rough triangulated measurements were taken and the largest bridge,

called the Augusta, was said to be 220 feet wide and 265 feet high. Prof. Cummings and party later made an accurate survey and found the measurements to be 244 feet across and 227 feet high, considerably smaller than the new bridge in every way. Of course they possess charms of their own individual to themselves, being somewhat nearer civilization and in close proximity to one another.

The new bridge on the other hand lies in the most desolate and confused section of the continent about four miles north of the Arizona line, midway between the Colorado river and Navajo mountains. Navajo mountains, it will be remembered, is a tremendous dome-shaped peak, about 10 miles in diameter and rising practically 10,000 feet above sea level. Ranging from it are innumerable canyons some of them emptying into the San Juan and others into the Colorado, all of them displaying unimaginable fantasies from the creative elements that have fed here for centuries. Lying around the base of the mountain are 10,000,000 white and blue and red sandstone pinnacles rising one after another in concentric circles sometimes half hid in the solitary haze of the morning and evening but often scintillating in a glory of

merciless heat waves. These are the fountain springs of inspiration for the canyon which growing more and more treacherous as they wind and tumble toward the river finally cut their way through a thousand feet of variously colored strata and become more scorching on the bottom.

The bridge canyon is not at all an exception to the rule. Several of our party set out on foot the afternoon of the discovery with the hope of possibly finding some sign of prehistoric occupation and the whereabouts of the Colorado. After several hours at a running walk under walls that half closed to either far above us we finally heard the roar of the great river and emerged somewhat in the open to see the waters pitching and hopelessly muddied, rushing down their imprisoned course to be ingurgitated by the greedy cliffs below.

MARKS OF MAN.

On the junction side of the two canyons under a projecting canopy of cliffs we could see what at first sight we thought to be some Pueblo ruins but which proved on examination to be some piles of masonry built undoubtedly by hands which at some early period of pioneer history had drifted into the heart of the great unknown with

the alluring dream of finding gold, and which had passed on again leaving their hurried work to decay. We found these masonry structures with charcoal above the ruins and, curiously alongside a series of hieroglyphics distinctly of antiquity. Further examination brought to light several old walls and considerable rubbish which likewise belonged to the cliff dwellers whose remains are scattered so generally and promiscuously over the great southwest. As we were primarily interested in archeological research this fragmentary evidence of occupation, in so decidedly a forgotten section of the wilderness, along with the rough inscription of transient gold hunters, both suggesting the terrible struggle of existence under the ban of appalling elements, furnished us with ample contemplation on the long tramp back to camp. This was necessarily slow and hazardous. We were already fatigued and jaded from three months of continuous travel and this extra exertion of 12 miles through an unknown and precipitous canyon in the throes of absolute darkness was an experience much better to have "gone through" than to actually undergo.

AS SEEN AT NIGHT. The bridge, however, when we finally reached it, presented an unforgettable picture. Stretching across the blue vaulted star studded heavens like a giant arm of an evergreen tree, it seemed infinitely larger than we at first conceived it to be, and the pale flicker of a dying campfire flitting its lower surface with an uncertain red, added just enough of the human element to remind us of the immensity—the limitlessness and unapproachable immensity of the wilds.

IN DIRE STRAITS.

The next morning we set out for the return journey, hoping to explore several of the important canyons we had crossed and then switch off into Arizona with the view of finding some rumored cliff houses reported to be in excellent preservation. It was here the most serious proposition of all dawned on us. It had already taken us much longer to reach the bridge than we had anticipated, and our stock of provisions, which we had prepared at Olathe, some hundred miles away as we should return, were dangerously low. Bacon, flour and coffee comprised the list in the beginning, as we had contemplated a serious journey, and our pack horses were already worn out. Bacon and coffee were now gone. We had possibly in found of four to be divided among six men for a journey of five days through the blinding and blood-eating rays of an August sun, and it was necessary to cook this in a Dutch oven without even a drop of lard in the bottom. Eating a biscuit apiece with re-

served sentiments for our stomachs, we managed to travel along fairly well for a day and a half without serious weakening, but the beginning of the third morning every man was suspiciously gloomy and the pack horses, with their proverbial predilection for being stubborn, seemed to have developed the instinct twice over with additions. Our hope to find a human or some other indication of Indian life, where some sort of gold or silver would certainly be found, slowly died. The few hehans we passed were deserted.

MR. TILGESS RAIN.

During the long afternoon the sun dropped us in its undulating heat waves, and when evening came several black clouds suddenly shot into the sky and then, in a paroxysm of anger, fell on us in a flood. All night and the next day it rained. The next night it rained, our blankets were completely saturated and our bones were soaked. The next morning we awoke up at daylight and it was still raining. We had half a half dropped down the side of a mesa 2,000 feet, on arriving at the bottom our horses' feet were worn to the quick and bleeding. We were anything but good humored—and it was still raining.

HIGH-PREED GOAT.

At noon we came to Nashlaw's hogan in Pahute canyon and after passing some primitive greetings we gave him an excellent price for an antiquated and ossified goat that had lived on soap weed for possibly 15 or 20 years. This interesting "last refuge" we killed, skinned, baked, and ate within a period of 10 minutes and at this particular moment it is doubtful if any member of the party could look a goat in the face and conscientiously hold either his physiognomy or stomach in perfect equilibrium. We had enough of goat. A million of them might have surrounded us clamoring to be killed and not a drop of innocent blood would have been shed.

WELCOME RETREAT.

But Olathe itself is a 10 days' ride from nowhere dropped suddenly near the Utah-Arizona line and consisting of one lone improvised house, cool, comfortable and surprisingly artistic inside but utterly barren from without. It serves as trading post, council hall, postoffice and home for Mr. Wetherill and his family, and for us it still remains a highly prized and particularly inviting retreat.

Mr. and Mrs. Wetherill should be remembered as the prime promoters not only of archeological research over the greater sections of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, but also in regard to the natural scenic wonders of the enchanted southwest. It was due to their continuous and persistent questioning that we received the rumors of the bridge and it was Mr. Wetherill who kept up the spirits of the party under adverse conditions. It was Mr. Wetherill who chided Nashlaw in the side of a cliff near the bridge and climbed up and over until he reached the top of the arch. It was Mr. Wetherill who guided us during the long summer through all the confused rocks and corners of the little known but intoxicating great southwest.

ENJOY SAM REPRESENTED.

It might be of interest also to know that W. B. Douglass, United States examiner of surveys, who is at present commissioned to survey several of the more important cliff houses we discovered during the summer with the view of making them national monuments, was permitted along with his party to accompany our expedition as far as the bridge. He remained there, however, and drove making an official survey and from his attitude while there we take it that he will use his influence to have the bridge set aside as a national monument.

It will be remembered, of course, before the ordinary pleasure seeking adventurer's tourist will venture their highly priced selves into such a magnificent mass of confused and formidable elements. Unhappily, back rocks and the water are not set on the north end to the south. Backing greater sand, brown coffee, and bacon, with 14 hours daily of continuous effort for dinner, more or less admirably, till at last, and the hunchless stretch of nocturnal sleep, we wrapped day and night in solid solitude, grateful all the hours with a pen and scintillating life.

The accompanying photographs of the bridge are copyrighted by Mr. Stuart M. Young, the official photographer of the expedition, and are presented here for the first time.

DONALD BEAUREGARD.

How W. B. Douglass, U. S. Examiner of Surveys, "Discovered" the Big Bridge

SOME people delight in reaching out for those things to which they are not entitled. It is their idea of a square deal. They can secure the public pat in no other way. Of course there can only be a limited amount of honor attached to the discovery of a national curiosity and that small amount is scarcely worth quarreling over, nevertheless, when the honor can be placed on the worthy shoulders by a few words, it should be done, despite the enmity of the would-be hero.

Dean Byron Cummings, of the state university, has spent 16 years of his life in the service of Utah people. He has devoted the past four years toward the collection of archeological specimens and other data concerning the prehistoric inhabitants of this state. The results of his efforts have been accepted by the Utah public—it has given him much encouragement in a continuance of his work. Recent reports of W. B. Douglass, U. S. examiner of surveys, have been circulated by that worthy with the sole purpose of gathering, under his name, the discoveries that Dean Cummings has made and claiming, for himself, the credit due the university professor for work done in Utah, for Utah. It is to correct the false impression that the Douglas reports would convey and to give Prof. Cummings the credit that is so justly his, that this article is written. The author has been with Prof. Cummings on his last three expeditions, is familiar with his work, and also that of W. B. Douglass in southern Utah during the past summer. These words have not been penned with an idea of starting another Cook-Perry controversy, but merely of giving the public the plain truth, that it may judge for itself.

FAILED TO FIND BRIDGE.

In 1908 W. B. Douglass surveyed the three bridges in White canyon and repeated the recommendation of Dean Cummings, made in the summer of 1897, that the bridges, and the ancient ruins in their immediate vicinity, be set aside as a national monument. He outlined at Bluff City, employing George Perkins as head packer and Jim, son of a Pahute Indian called Mike, as guide. While the surveying was being done, Jim told the Douglas men of a larger bridge in the neighborhood of Navajo mountains. In fact, Douglass, who is very hard of hearing, was informed of this other arch by his men. He expressed his desire to visit the bridge and, for that purpose, engaged the services of Jim for the summer. The Douglas guide admitted during the summer months, he had never seen the Navajo mountain arch but believed that he could take his employer to it from information given him by Nashlaw, a Pahute Indian living on the edge of the Navajo reservation.

Late last fall, Douglass led his party into the Moonlight region for the purpose of visiting this great bridge and also some large cliff houses, the existence of which he had learned from John Wetherill of Olathe, Utah. He got no nearer the bridge than the Olathe trading post, and could not find the ruins even after Mr. Wetherill had furnished him with an abundance of information concerning their location.

DOUGLASS SMALLNESS. Upon reaching Bluff City this year, Douglass learned that Prof. Cummings was at the head of an expedition in the territory he wished to enter. He delayed his work six days in order that he might telegraph the information to Washington and then orders to have the Utah party expelled from the field. He even went so far as to claim that Prof. Cummings was excavating without a permit. It was his opinion that the results of the university people should be conceded to him in Bluff City. He threatened he would do it.

At the time of his visit to the Olathe trading post in the summer of 1908, Mrs. Wetherill had told Dean Cummings the Navajo story of the bridge near Navajo mountains. At that time she did not know its exact location but promised to give all the possible information concerning another Pahute house. During the afternoon Mr. Wetherill told Douglass that neither his guide nor the Navajo house warden with Prof. Cummings, knew where the bridge was to be found, but that he would pick up Nashlaw at his hogan in Pahute canyon. Mr. Wetherill told Douglass that this Indian, and his father, were the only ones he knew of who had actually been to the bridge. When the party reached the canyon in question, it was learned that the young Pahute had taken his guide out upon the mesa pasture. Mr. Wetherill pushed on, hoping to find the bridge from the information that his wife had secured in her talks with Nashlaw.

PARTIES UNITE.

He said that he proposed to visit the big bridge. Dean Cummings suggested that the two parties unite, a suggestion that was quickly accepted by Douglass. It was agreed to go on that afternoon and, while the Douglas horses rested, he and his men were fed at the Wetherill table. The start was made about 4 o'clock. During the 12 miles that were covered before sundown, the Utah party was forced to wait several times for the heavily-laden Douglas horses. During the afternoon Mr. Wetherill told Douglass that neither his guide nor the Navajo house warden with Prof. Cummings, knew where the bridge was to be found, but that he would pick up Nashlaw at his hogan in Pahute canyon. Mr. Wetherill told Douglass that this Indian, and his father, were the only ones he knew of who had actually been to the bridge. When the party reached the canyon in question, it was learned that the young Pahute had taken his guide out upon the mesa pasture. Mr. Wetherill pushed on, hoping to find the bridge from the information that his wife had secured in her talks with Nashlaw.

BRIDGE DISCOVERED.

The bridge was reached just before noon the next day. It lay in a network of box canyons through which it could have been impossible for one, not familiar with the country, to have gone. I, personally, was in the rear, with part of the pack train, when the bridge was first seen so that I do not know to whom the "honor" of first sight really belongs. I do know, however, that Douglass had done his best to keep in front of the guides during the entire morning, and that the owner of the horse he was riding had complained to another member of his party that "the old man would kill the little mare if he had to ride her much farther at that gait."

The next morning Douglass measured the bridge and said that he did not want the Utah people to have his measurements. Prof. Cummings and his party left the arch about 6 o'clock, leaving his Navajo, Dogeyebeg, with Douglass. This Indian knew the route to the canyon which contained the cliff dwellings the surveyor had failed to find the fall before, and also said trails led to that canyon from the mountains. Inasmuch as I was familiar with Rega canyon and knew the ruins Douglass was looking for I remained alone, at Dean Cummings's wish, to wait for the surveyor until he was successful in his work. The Navajo quit the morning after the Cummings party had left and caught up with them before they reached Pahute canyon. We remained at the bridge two more days. On the way out, the Douglas Indian said that he did not know the trails, therefore another Pahute was engaged to lead the party across the mesa to the head of Rega canyon. While attempting to gather information concerning the several points that the two Indians were constantly passing, in a cut across canyon, Jim told me that he knew all the trails in that part of the country, that he had been over them many times. When I asked him why he could not find the way from Pahute canyon to the head of the Rega, he merely laughed, and refused to answer.

WITH DOUGLASS SEVEN DAYS.

I was with Douglass seven days from the time the two expeditions joined at the bridge. At Professor Cummings's wish, I guided Douglass directly to Kitch's, the 14-room dwelling, in one of the smaller canyons. I also drew a map of the Rega, with its main branches, locating all the ruins that we had found, including the 40-room dwelling that white men had never seen previous to its discovery by Dean Cummings and his party. I further furnished Douglass with a map showing the best camping places, marking the springs and tanks in which water could be found, and those places where he could find grass for his horses.

Knowing that our party was waiting for me, I left Douglass at the West-Side ruins on the morning of Aug. 22, and with Douglass's head packer, Dan Perkins, rode the 50 miles to Olathe that day. We let our horses rest the next day and started for home on the morning of the 25th, arriving at Bluff City the afternoon of the 27th, and reaching Salt Lake direct.

This has been a hurried account of the doings of the Utah party during the time in which Douglass was in the field. His suggestion to Dean Cummings, that the Utah Historical society present him, Jim, with a gold medal for guiding them to the bridge, makes one laugh in regard to "the parts of gentlemen from Utah, who wished to get the benefit of his guide, Mike's boy," and their real connection with the examiner of surveys. Enough has been said when the truth has been told. W. B. Douglass would have returned to Bluff City a second time without seeing either this high rest of all natural bridges, or the "extensive prehistoric ruins," had it not been for the courtesy of Prof. Cummings.

NEIL M. JUD.



Photo by Stuart M. Young.

PARTY AT THE BIG BRIDGE.

Douglas Bureau and Neil Jud are the Two in the Rear Row at the Extreme Left. Prof. Cummings, Mr. Douglass and Mr. John Wetherill are the Three Central Figures.