

December 14, 1947

To: Dr. J. O. Brew
From: Herbert W. Dick
Subject: Statement of facts concerning the respective claims of Dick and Hurt for the excavation of Bat Cave.

My first interest in studying the Plains of San Augustin was initiated when I made a survey trip between Reserve, New Mexico and Socorro, New Mexico during the spring of 1940.

My interest was aroused a second time during the summer of 1946, when I crossed the Plains of San Augustin on a minor survey and did a short concentrated survey on Apache Creek near Aragon, New Mexico.

In the early fall of 1946, after arriving at Harvard, I asked Dr. Kirk Bryan if he knew of any archaeological work having been done in the Plains of San Augustin and if he knew anything about Bat Cave, which is a prominent landmark in the area and appears on all maps dating from early surveys. He stated that he had been through the area and that detailed geological work concerning the old lake basin of San Augustin had been carried on by William F. Powers, and published on by him in 1939. This publication included references to Bat Cave. In 1941 Powers published an article with a detailed description of the formation of Bat Cave and a photograph of the cave.

Dr. Bryan urged me to undertake a survey of the Plains of San Augustin the next summer (1947) if it were possible. This I planned to do after my excavation of a cave in the Manzano Mountains.

I consulted Dr. Brew on this matter and he thought it would be worth looking into if it did not conflict with another party in that area. He suggested that if another party were active in the area I should undertake another problem in a different region.

Shortly before I left for the West for the summer Dr. Brew informed me that Mr. Wesley R. Hurt, Jr. of the University of Chicago had showed him some interesting archaeological material from the Plains of San Augustin. At this point I considered abandoning further research in the Plains of San Augustin but reserved definite decision until finding out if active research was being carried on.

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In June I began an excavation of Reiche's Cave in the Manzano Mts., which was completed by the end of that month. I then returned to Albuquerque.

During my stay in Albuquerque, obtaining supplies and making repairs on the mobile equipment, I mentioned to a friend, Mr. Daniel M. McKnight, that I planned to survey the Plains of San Augustin. He told me that he had taken Hurt as a companion on a two-day trip to that area in December, 1946. On that trip he had located a blow-out site and visited Bat Cave, and both he and Hurt had picked up artifacts at both locations. Mr. McKnight further stated that he definitely had no interests in the area, except as an interested layman; that Hurt was interested in the one blow-out site that they had found and not in Bat Cave; and that so far as he (McKnight) was concerned, the area was open to anyone. He urged me to carry out my trip as planned.

McKnight, who was running a custard shop at that time, gave our party detailed instructions on how to reach Bat Cave. He also stated that he had picked up a large number of arrow back-shafts (on which designs were incised and painted) on the surface in the cave, as well as a sandal, some beads, etc. He stated that he had used most of the arrow back-shafts for kindling wood in the fireplace at his home. He presented me with the remaining material and a photographic negative of some stone artifacts from the open site. (It seems incongruous that the material from the cave was not given to Hurt, if his interest in the cave was as great as he has led me to believe in the attached letter.)

McKnight also said that in February, 1947 he had made a second trip to the Plains of San Augustin, on which he was accompanied by the following people: A. E. Dittert, W. F. McConnell, R. F. Arnold, L. M. Pierson, and R. Drake, all of the University of New Mexico. A blow-out site and Bat Cave were visited by this group.

Before entering the Plains of San Augustin I located these people, who were working on greatly divergent problems throughout the Southwest. I later travelled to their respective camps and questioned each as to whether he intended to work in the Plains of San Augustin or to excavate Bat Cave. Each stated that he was not interested and that he knew of no one else who was. All were glad to see me undertake the job as they thought it would prove to be an important one. All of them had artifacts from the area which they gladly gave me. McConnell and Dittert gave me their material in July. In August, Drake contributed photographs of the February trip. (Drake, a shell expert, also asked if he could study any shell material I might obtain. I agreed

to this and he is doing so at this writing.) Pierson sent me his material from the Plains of San Augustin last month (November 23, 1947).

I wish to point out that the trips conducted by McKnight were not scientific in nature, in that artifacts found by each individual were added to his own personal collection and the material was scattered about in such a manner as to make the intention of a scientific study by any one man improbable. It seems strange that Hurt made no attempt to contact these people nor to gather the material to complete the archaeological picture of the area.

Our party proceeded to the Plains of San Augustin on July 1, 1947. We went immediately to the "Y" Ranch, owned by the Hubbell Cattle Company, where I asked Mr. James L. Hubbell, president of that company, if any archaeologist had been in the area in the past year. He stated that he had seen several strange cars on his land but they had never stopped to see him. I asked his permission to run exploratory trenches in Bat Cave and explained my plans in detail. He readily granted this permission and we established a camp at the foot of the cave and began trenching. We spent two weeks carefully contouring, mapping, and trenching the cave, and surveying the area immediately around the cave. The trenching proved significant and the results were better than we had hoped for. The projectiles from the lowest levels were similar to those collected by the aforementioned people from a blow-out site west of the cave and across the old lake basin from it. Until that time none of the material collected in the cave itself had given any indication that it might have been occupied by Early Man.

We returned to Albuquerque and I gave McKnight a detailed description of our work and the results of it, which he wrote to Hurt on his own initiative. Hurt at this time (summer, 1947) was working in Alabama for the Alabama Museum of Natural History. I also contacted all of the people I have mentioned who had been to the Plains of San Augustin earlier and gave each of them an account of my finds, thanking them again for their material.

I attended the Chaco Conference and was asked to give a brief resume of my work during the summer, at which time I gave a very brief account of what I had done at Bat Cave.

On my return to Albuquerque I found the attached letter from Hurt. I took this letter immediately to W. W. Hill and asked his opinion on what I should do. After he reviewed the facts he suggested that I should not write to Hurt but should continue my work on the Plains of San Augustin. It was his opinion that I was not committing a breach of archaeological ethics.

I then took the matter up with the other people who had been to the Plains of San Augustin and they agreed with Hill that Hurt had no right to claim prior rights to Bat Cave or sites in the Plains of San Augustin. They considered that the first person to do active excavating and detailed survey had undeniable claim for future work.

I returned to the Plains of San Augustin for two more weeks to initiate a detailed survey of the basin. We obtained adequate maps from the School of Mines at Socorro, New Mexico on which to mark the sites. I went first to the "Y" Ranch to ask Mr. Hubbell if I might obtain permission to do a detailed excavation of Bat Cave in the summer of 1948. As he was not there at the time I gave Mrs. Hubbell a summary of Hurt's claims and left his letter with her to be passed on to Mr. Hubbell. I then mapped and made collections at twelve sites along the western shore of the old lake basin.

We returned to Albuquerque, having had to abandon our survey because of heavy rains. At that time McKnight stated that Hurt was putting pressure on him regarding the Plains of San Augustin and that he (McKnight) was at a loss as to what to do. McKnight also wanted a copy of my survey maps giving the locations of the sites, as he had decided to go back to school and needed the information in order to write up a research problem for which he had received a grade of "I" (incomplete) when he left school over a year before. However, he was later given another problem by Dr. Hill.

I then packed all of the material from the Plains of San Augustin, developed and printed all photographs taken, drew maps and sections from the field notes and shipped all of the material to Cambridge.

Shortly after arriving in Cambridge I received the attached letter from Mr. James L. Hubbell granting me permission to excavate Bat Cave during the summer of 1948.

In summary, I would like to emphasize the following points:

1. I did make extensive inquiries, in accordance with my agreement with Dr. Brew, concerning the presence of any other archaeologist in the Plains of San Augustin, and was assured that there was none.
2. McKnight did not inform me of any plan of Hurt's to write a dissertation on Bat Cave and nearby sites. On the contrary, he assured me that Hurt had absolutely no interest in the cave.

3. Mr. Hurt's intense interest in Bat Cave itself apparently arose after he had been informed of the work I had done there.

4. Mr. Hurt was not the initiator of his original trip to the Plains of San Augustin in December, nor did he make any attempt to collect the material which subsequent visitors to the cave collected there.

5. Mr. Hurt, in spite of his professed long-standing interest in Bat Cave, took a summer job in Alabama in 1947.

6. Mr. Hurt was apparently not enough interested in a project at Bat Cave to obtain permission of the owner of the land to excavate.