

COUNTRY MUSIC

BLUEGRASS MUSIC

Introduction

Bluegrass music developed directly out of old-time music in the 1930s. Bluegrass “is a form of American roots music, and a sub-genre of country music. Bluegrass was inspired by the music of Appalachia and has mixed roots in Scottish, Irish, and English traditional music, and also later influenced by the music of African-Americans through incorporation of jazz element.

“In Bluegrass, as in some forms of jazz, one or more instruments each takes its turn playing the melody and improvising around it, while the others perform accompaniment; this is especially typified in tunes called breakdowns. This is in contrast to old-time music, in which all instruments play the melody together or one instrument carries the lead throughout while the others provide accompaniment. Breakdowns are often characterized by rapid tempos and unusual instrumental dexterity and sometimes by complex chord changes.” (Anon. 2012)

Bluegrass music has always had a special place with cavers up and down the Appalachian Range. Many cavers coast to coast are accomplished bluegrass musicians.

The different versions of “Natural Bridge Blues” were listed separately. There are a few Bluegrass versions of “Miller’s Cave” but these were naturally listed in the “Miller’s Cave” sections. The bluegrass version of Larry Kingston’s “The Cave” was also listed in the Country Music section with the other versions of this song.

Ref: Anon. 2012, Bluegrass Music, [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bluegrass_music)

CY-BG1 United States 1990

APE CAVE VALUES *

or APE CAVE BLUES *

Country – Bluegrass – Instrumental

Comp: Vivian WILLIAMS

Perf: Vivian **WILLIAMS** (fiddle)

Harley **BRAY** (banjo)

Phil Williams (guitar)

Prod. Co: Voyager Recordings

Liner Notes: (?)

Time: 3:10

CD: WINTER MOON

Voyager 336 (Tk 11)

Notes: This Pacific Northwest folk and bluegrass trio is based in Seattle. The liner notes for this number tell us that the music was inspired by Ape Cave “an old lava tube formation near Mt. St. Helens, reported to be the home of Sasquatches.”

“Fiddler Vivian Williams has composed a number of striking tunes that combine singularly original melodies with the rhythmic and stylistic requirements of the form. She is a prize-winning fiddler with long experience playing for dances around her native Seattle, so her playing has the lift and drive needed for good barn-

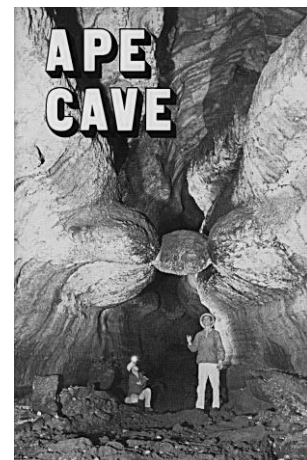


Photo by Charles Larsen



dancing. Williams is well complemented by the melodic banjo playing of Harley Bray, a veteran of the '60's era bluegrass pioneers the Bray Brothers and the Bluegrass Gentlemen." (Anon. n.d.)

The 30-second Web site audio clip lets us hear a lively, cheerful banjo picking out the theme. Some Websites label this piece as "Ape Cave Blues." The CD cover shown here is the 2007 CDBaby reissue CD.

Other selections on this CD were inspired by the Oregon Trail and different Washington state sites.

Ape Cave, located south of Mount Saint Helens, is a simple unitary or throughway type lava tube with a total length of 12,810 feet (4,270m in 1983), which ranks it as one of the longest lava tubes in continental United States. The cave got its name from a widely reported 1924 incident where two prospectors in a cabin on the east slope of the volcano farther up the

valley claimed that ape-like creatures threw rocks at them (later one local youth confessed to the attack). In memory of this incident the local Boy Scouts who first explored the cave in 1952 dubbed themselves the Mount St. Helens Apes. The cover photo of the 1983 pamphlet shows a lava ball, the "Meatball," wedged between wall ridges. (Halliday 1963 & 1983) The mythical Sasquatch, also called Big Foot, is a large hairy ape-like creature that some hunters in the Pacific Northwest claim to have spotted.

The full significance behind the title, "Ape Cave Values," might be explained by a ceremony once conducted by the original explorers, Harry Reese and his sons, in which conservation values were championed –

"For several years the newcomers were guided by the Reeses and treated to an impressive ceremony which climaxed the tour. All the lights were extinguished as Harry Reese recited a pledge to protect and preserve the wilderness below and above ground. In utter blackness, he then would strike a match. With the Scouts' eyes now widely adapted to darkness, the cave seemed to come alive with light – an impressive symbolic demonstration of the effect of one light in the darkness. Whereupon Reese solemnly would announce that all present now could claim themselves as Mount St. Helens Apes, and conduct their lives as true conservationists." (Halliday 1983)

Ref: Anderson, Rick n.d., Vivian Williams, Winter Moon, Review, [Allmusic](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Anon. n.d., The Trenton Times, Vivian Williams et al, Winter Moon CD, Reviews, [voyagerrecords](#)

Halliday, William 1963, *Caves of Washington*, Washington Department of Conservation, Olympia, WA, p. 71-77

Halliday, William 1983, *Ape Cave and the Mount St. Helens Apes*, ABC Printing & Publishing, Vancouver, WA, p. 5, 9-10, & 14

Vivian Williams et al, Winter Moon CD, (Labeled "Ape Cave Blues") [CDBaby](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Vivian Williams et al, Winter Moon CD, Reviews, [voyagerrecords](#)

CY-BG2 United States 2002

THE LOST CAVE

Bluegrass – Instrumental

Comp: Glen DUNCAN

Rts: (BMI)

Perf: LONGVIEW

Glen Duncan (fiddle)

Dudley Connell (guitar)

Joe Mullins (banjo)

Don Rigsby (mandolin)

Marshall Wilborn (bass)

Prod: Longview

Prod. Co: Rebel Records; Charlottesville, VA

Rec. Co: River Track Studio; Fort Gay, WV

Rec. Date: Oct. 9-12, 2001

Time: 4:35

CD: LESSONS IN STONE

Rebel 1780 (Tk 9)



Notes: The 30-second Allmusic audio clip provides a high lonesome fiddle tune with a distinct Celtic flavor. Some critical comments about this piece that have since been removed from two bluegrass Websites – "The mid-tempo instrumental 'The Lost Cave' gives everyone a chance to step to the front, each one

adding his own unique interpretation of this evocative and beautifully mysterious melody.” (Anon. 1, n.d.) Another listener remarked – “‘The Lost Cave’ is Glen Duncan’s minor key fiddle masterpiece with his wonderous (sic) fiddle playing augmented by strong leads from the other band members.” (Anon. 2, n.d.) There are several American caves with the name Lost Cave scattered around the States, but notably, in West Virginia there is a Lost Cave near Alderson in Greenbrier County. “Saltpeter was obtained from the cave in the War of 1812 and Mexican War. The cave receives its name due to the inability to locate it during the War Between the States.” (Davies 1958)

Ref: Anon. 1 n.d., Rebel Recording Artist: Longview, rebelrecords.com (Text removed)

Anon. 2 n.d., The Northern California Bluegrass Society, sebs.org (Text removed)

Davies, William E. 1958 (1965), *Caverns of West Virginia*, West Virginia Geological & Economic Survey, v. XIXA, Beckley, WV, p. 106

Longview, Lessons in Stone CD, [Allmusic](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Longview, Lessons in Stone CD, [CDUniverse](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

CY-BG3 United States 1982

THE NATURAL BRIDGE SUITE *

Bluegrass – Instrumental

Comp. & Arr: Bela FLECK

Rts: Happy Valley Music (BMI)

Perf: Béla FLECK (banjo)

Darol Anger (fiddle)

David Grisman (mandolin)

Mark O'Conner (guitar & viola)

Jerry Douglas (Dobro guitar)

Mark Schatz (bass)

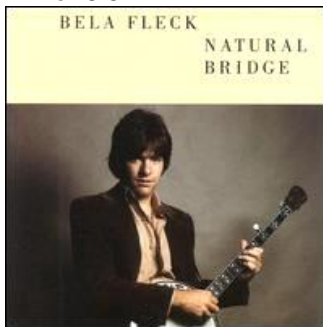
Prod: Bela Fleck

Prod. Co: Rounder Records; Somerville, MA

Rec. Co: 1750 Arch Studios

Liner Notes: David Grisman

Time: 6:54



1. **LP:** NATURAL BRIDGE

Rounder 0146

12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 5)

2. **CD:** DAYBREAK (1987)

Rounder CD 11518 (Tk 17)

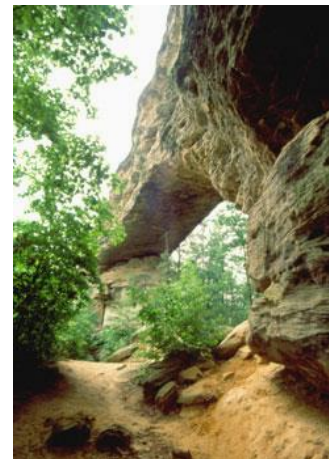
3. Reissue on **CD:** NATURAL BRIDGE (2000)

Rounder 11661-0146-2 (Tk 11)

Notes: This Newgrass suite is billed as "a beautiful 'acoustic nouveau' construction, which subtly displays classical rock, bluegrass, and jazz influences." (Grisman Liner notes)

Critic Cooney calls this “modern string-band music” and, regarding Béla Fleck, he says – “His astonishing technical facility on the banjo is equalled (sic) by his considerable talent and poise as a composer and an arranger.” (Cooney 1982) “The album’s piece de resistance, a nearly seven-minute-long “Natural Bridge Suite”, Fleck’s playing bears hardly a trace of the instrument’s rural origins and associations.” (Weisberger 2000)

Around 1980 Béla moved from Boston to Lexington, Kentucky where he formed the group Spectrum. (Anon.1 2012) Some 45 miles southeast of Lexington is Natural Bridge State Park and photos of Natural Bridge (one on right) seem to match the one pictured in the wide angle shot on the back cover of this LP (see above). (Judging by the slight overhang on the upper left in the LP photo, it could be nearby the entrance of a cave.) So it is probably safe to assume that this natural bridge or the nearby Sky Bridge was the inspiration for this bluegrass suite.



Bela Fleck also performed a jazz piece entitled, "The Cave." (See under Jazz Music – Avant-garde & Experimental)

Ref: Anon. 1 2012, Béla Fleck, Biography, Béla Fleck Official Website, [belafleck](http://belafleck.com)

Anon. 2 2012, Béla Fleck, Biography, [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bela_Fleck)

Atkins, John 1982, Reviews, *Old Time Music*, n. 38, Summer/ Autumn 1982, p. 29

Béla Fleck, Natural Bridge CD, [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Béla Fleck, Natural Bridge LP, [Discogs](http://www.discogs.com)

Béla Fleck, Natural Bridge Suite (6:58), [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE)

Cooney, Don 1982, *The Record Roundup*, n. 25, May-June 1982, p. 4

Natural Bridge History, Natural Bridge State Park, parks.ky.gov

Natural Bridge State Park, Historic Rose Hill Inn, [rosehillinn](http://www.rosehillinn.com)

Smith, Pete; Blackman, Karen; Davis, Sylvia; Bellerose, Jennifer; & Kent, Jimmy (Editors) 1992, *The Official Music Master Tracks Catalogue*, 4th Edition, Waterlow Information Services Ltd., London, p. 854

Weisberger, Jon 2000, Béla Fleck, Natural Bridge, *Not Fade Away*, n. 27, May-June 2000, [nodepression](http://www.nodepression.com)

CY-BG4 United States 1971

RIVER UNDERGROUND

Bluegrass – Ballad – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: Wendy SMITH & Ralph STANLEY (LY-CY15)

Rts: La-Car Music (BMI)

Perf: **RALPH STANLEY &
THE CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS**

Ralph Stanley (vocal & banjo)

Curly Ray Cline (fiddle)

Ricky Scaggs (fiddle & mandolin)

Roy Lee Centers & Keith Whitley (guitars)

Jack Cooke (bass)

Prod. Co: Jessup Records Inc.; Jackson, MI

Rec. Co: Jessup Recording Studio

Liner Notes: Fay McGinnes

Time: 3:23

1. **LP:** RALPH STANLEY AND THE CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS SING MICHIGAN BLUEGRASS

Jessup MB-108 (stereo)

12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 2)

2. Reissue **LP:** RALPH STANLEY AND THE CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS – BLUEGRASS (1983)

Plantation PLP 57

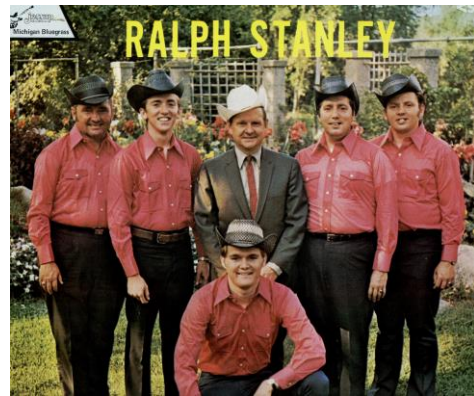
12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 1)

3. Reissue on Compilation **CD:** ECHOES OF THE STANLEY BROTHERS (2001)

Varese 066215 (Tk 8)

Notes: Ralph Stanley, one of the all-time greats of bluegrass music, hardly needs an introduction. This song may not be the best thing he's ever done but it's not all that bad either, and any caver who likes Bluegrass should make an effort to hear it. The reviewer in *Bluegrass Unlimited* gave the album 4 stars but the critic in *Old Time Music* had other ideas and called the whole LP "rather unmemorable." However, in *Record Roundup* there is yet another opinion: "This aggregation of Stanley's band was his best since brother Carter passed away (1966), and this recording is a fine representation of the Stanley sound at that time." (Romanoski 1983) When it was rereleased on CD another reviewer had this to say – "The plot-heavy "River Underground" carries the same determinism [as "Another Song, Another Drink"]. The narrator marries a woman, she runs around with other men, he murders her and leaves no evidence, and, because he misses her, decides to commit suicide. (One wonders what might have happened had the song been extended another minute.) The best thing about both songs is the deep feeling that accompanies the vocals; the haunting harmonies hark back to the old-time music of the Appalachians and the lyrics seem to have been carved in stone." (Lankford 2013)

This song brings back the theme of lovers, a cave, and a murder reminiscent of "Miller's Cave" and it might easily have been partly inspired by that song which has become a well-known country standard. However, here the story of a river submergence cave and its discoverer, who ended up drowning his unfaithful wife in the cave, is told in a more plausible narrative ballad form than the older, country-oriented song. The tune is



very familiar and the lyrics have all the elements of a sad lament traditionally associated with bluegrass ballads but the heart-rending punch and the tragic fatality of the great classics is just not there. The Stanley Brothers grew up in the Clinch Mountains of Virginia so it's possible that this song is based on an incident involving a cave in that region.

Ref: Lankford, Ronnie D. Jr. 2013, Review, Echoes of the Stanley Brothers CD, [Allmusic](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

O'Ryan, Jack, *Old Time Music*, n. 6, Autumn 1972, p. 29

Ralph Stanley, Biography, [answers](#)

Ralph Stanley & The Clinch Mountain Boys, River Underground (3:50), [YouTube](#) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE)

Ralph Stanley & The Clinch Mountain Boys, Bluegrass LP, [Discogs](#)

Ralph Stanley & The Clinch Mountain Boys Sing Michigan Bluegrass LP, [Discogs](#)

Ralph Stanley & The Clinch Mountain Boys Sing Michigan Bluegrass LP, [ibiblio.org](#)

Romanoski, Steve 1983, *The Record Roundup*, n. 32, Oct.-Nov. 1983, p. 8

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