

# ALBERT CHRISTENSEN & AHARRON ANDEEW:

*Eccentric Sculptors...& Kindred Spirits? The Mystery of a Second 'King World' Inscription*

Jim Stiles

*AUTHOR'S NOTE: This is a story about two remarkable artists who lived within miles of each other in southeast Utah the 1930s, who 'followed the beat of a different drummer,' and whose artistic obsessions brought them great heartache and misery. This tale is merely an addendum, an addition to the historical record. For a more complete record of Albert Christensen and Aharron Andeew, I refer you to these excellent accounts, the best anywhere by Buckley Jensen, from the San Juan Record, and by Robert Dudek, in the classic "Stinking Desert Gazette." JS*

**THE KING of the WORLD by Robert Dudek**

<http://www.riverguides.org/SDG/SDG1-4.pdf>

**GIANTS OF SAN JUAN by Buckley Jensen**

[http://sjrnews.com/view/full\\_story/18104677/article-San-Juan-County-s-famous-man-made-wonder-and-the-pioneers-who-built-it?](http://sjrnews.com/view/full_story/18104677/article-San-Juan-County-s-famous-man-made-wonder-and-the-pioneers-who-built-it?)

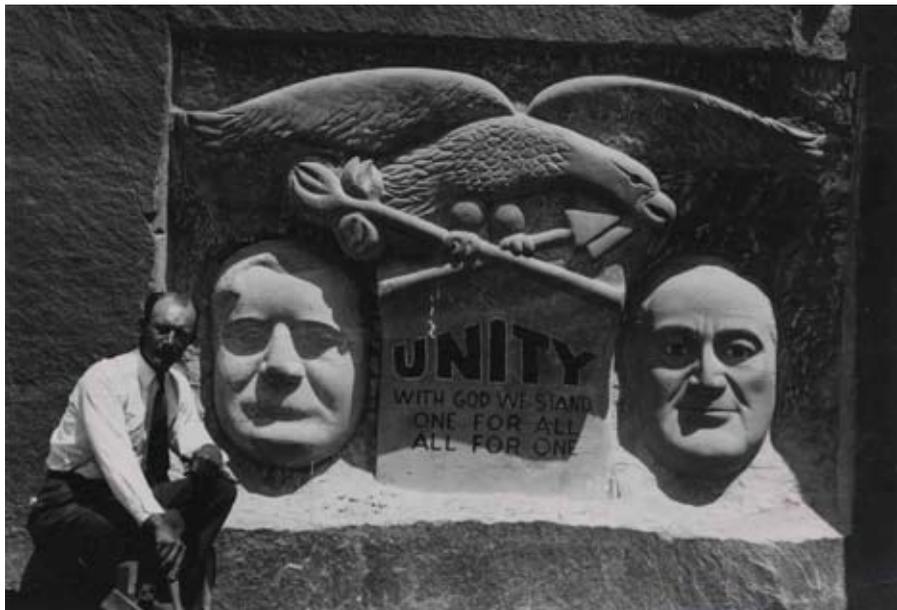


Albert Christensen was a native Utahan, whose love for art, and especially sculpture, not only defined his passion but broke his heart. In the 1930s, his family moved 40 miles north from Monticello, to the land near Cane Springs and it was here that the Christensens made their home.

During the depression, they tried to augment their meager earnings by bootlegging liquor; eventually they were caught, but somehow only Albert did hard time for his 'crimes.' Upon his return, Albert took an interest in art—in oil paints and in sculpture. After all, he was surrounded by some of the most extraordinary sandstone in the world. His father had shown him how the softer rock but could be blasted out and excavated. In fact, as a boy his father had created a summer room for his boys, using dynamite and chisels. Albert took his father's

rudimentary work and made something remarkable.

Beginning in the late 1930s and for the next 12 years, Christensen would create his remarkable 5000 square foot home—his 'Hole 'n' the Rock—from the surrounding Entrada sandstone. But his most impassioned work, and the project that was to cause such profound disappointment and heartbreak, was his 'Unity Monument,' his grandiose effort to honor President Franklin Roosevelt and his opponent, Republican Wendell Willkie. He planned a massive bas relief tribute in a sandstone amphitheatre near his rock home, but the federal government claimed he'd built his scale model on public land and completely obliterated his efforts. Albert was devastated. (The complete story appears elsewhere in this issue)



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But there was another sculptor in southeast Utah in the mid-1930s, though his time there was limited, his origins unknown, and his life after his brief stay in Moab, tragic. His real name is not known, but he called himself 'Aaron Andrew,' or 'Ahrron Andeew,' or simply, 'King America/King World.' He may have been of eastern European ancestry but no one can say with any certainty. What I know of 'King World' comes from listening to the Moab oldtimers when I first arrived in town, in the late 70s. Aaron was an eccentric artist who dressed oddly, created copper 'medals' that he wore on a chain over his tattered great coat, and who was often seen marching up and down Main Street on Sunday mornings, as if on patrol.

And he was a sculptor. Amid the broken ledges north of town, just a stone's throw from the old

ranch house (now Moab Springs Resort), Andeew found the perfect canvas for his hammer and chisel. On a large flat boulder, he created an extraordinary relief rendering of, many believe, himself. In full military regalia, he sits in profile astride his magnificent horse. The detail is amazing—upon his cossack hat, he intricately depicts a map of the northern hemisphere; even the buttons on his coat are shaped like small globes. And on the flat stone surface between the horse's head and Andeew's is this strange inscription:



**M.C.F. HHAESUS  
AMERICA**

**AHARRON  
ANDEEW  
KING AMERICA  
KING WORLD**

He chiseled the date:1935. It supposedly took Andeew just a few months to carve out the relief sculpture, and in 15 months he was gone, never to return. Though he never threatened or harmed a soul, some of Moab's most prominent families considered him a threat, merely for his unique behavior and he was urged to leave town. Within months, he found himself incarcerated at the state mental hospital in Provo.

The Parriott family, who had provided Andeew with a place for his camp, north of Moab, and who had genuinely liked the man, were the last familiar faces to see him alive. The Parriotts stopped at the hospital on their way to the state fair to visit their friend. Chained and in tears, Andeew spent a few moments with the family and was led away. He presumably died there, though there are no records to confirm it.

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Albert Christensen and Ahrron Andeew were both dedicated artists who were, in many ways, consumed by their work. The art defined them. Both men were regarded as eccentrics, though Albert was able to at least find a way to make a living from it. Christensen saw his greatest accomplishment, his Unity Monument sculpture, blasted from the cliff face and the dream of a grander-scale, 'Rushmore-esque Monument crushed by government bureaucracy.

Andeew was not allowed to stay in Moab long enough to receive even a hint of recognition for his work. He died alone, never dreaming that almost a century later, his sculpture would still be admired and discussed. And that the scant details of his own life would even be remembered and puzzled over.

But is it possible their lives are entwined? Could they have met? Did they possibly know each other? It's possible...

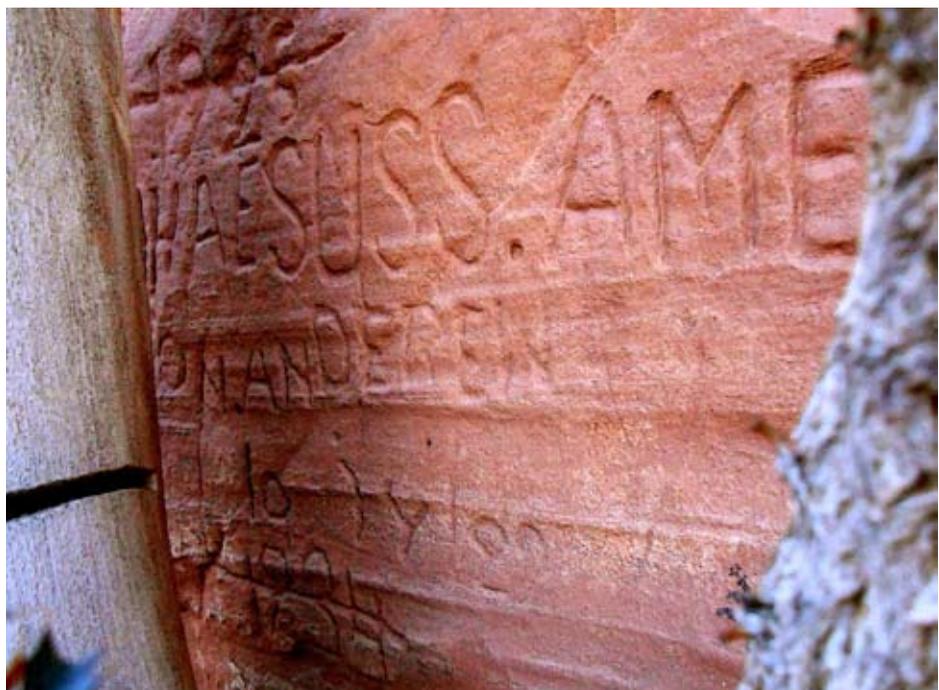
Last winter, I stopped at 'Hole 'n' the Rock' to photograph some of the historic inscriptions that can be found just west of the main entrance to Albert Christensen's old home. Several recognizable names can be found, including 'Loren Taylor,' the longtime publisher of the Moab Times-Independent and Sam Taylor's father. But as I walked the wall, looking for and recording the graffiti, I could barely see a partial inscription, obscured by a thicket of desert holly. Trying to read the words proved to be difficult but finally, I could see the deeply carved letters and realized I'd seen them before, in a very different location. It was another work by Ahrron Andeew.

The top date inexplicably appeared to read '1925.' The next two lines bore an uncanny similarity to the Moab work, but beneath his name was a series of symbols that stumped me. (Check the photo to interpret them for yourself). And finally, another date: 1934. Here, as best as I could decipher it, was Ahrron's message:

**1925  
M.C.F.HHAESUSS. AMERICA  
AHARRON. ANDEREW**

**10 iy 29  
1934**

The words were almost identical to his Moab carving. Here he added an 'r' to his name to create "Andrew," and again, he included his mysterious reference to "M.C.F.HHAESUSS," spelled slightly differently here. Many have speculated on its meaning and most of it stays beyond the reach of my understanding. But I did find an obscure reference to the word 'Haesus' in a 19th century (1828) book with the remarkably long title, "Illustrations of the History of Great Britain: An Historical View of the Manners and Customs, Dresses, Literature, Arts, Commerce, and Govern-



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ment of Great Britain; From the Time of the Saxons, Down to the Eighteenth Century. Volume 1." It was written by Richard Thomson. In a chapter about the Druids, Thomson wrote:

*"The Supreme Being was worshipped under the form of an oak, and called Haesus, or Mighty. In their representation of this Divinity, the Druids, with the consent of the whole order and neighbourhood, fixed upon the most beautiful tree they could discover, and having cut off its side branches, they joined two of them to the highest part of the trunk, so that they extended like the arms of a man. Near this transverse piece was inscribed the word Thau, for the name of God; whilst upon the right arm was written Haesus, on the left Belemus, and, on the centre of the trunk, Tharanis. Towards the decline of Druidism, however, when a belief in the unity of God was lost in Polytheism, Haesus is sometimes said to have been identified with Mars, who presided over wars and armies, though it is also believed that he was adored under another name, in the form of a naked sword. To him were presented all the spoils of battle."*

Is this the Haesus that Andeew was referring to? Considering the militaristic aspect of his art and his wardrobe, it could be the source of Ahrron's inspiration. It would also suggest just how widely read and informed he might have been.

Ahrron apparently didn't stay at Cane Springs long enough to attempt a sculpture similar to his 'King World' relief carving in Moab, but even his inscription required a lot of time and effort. What led Andeew south over Blue Hill? He must have camped in that shady grove of cottonwoods for a considerable time. To this day, it remains a shady rest stop for travelers. The Christensens were living there by now and their father may have already blasted out a room for his boys. But none of the excavation work that would form their future home had begun.

Still, did Aharron Andeew meet Albert Christensen? Did they discuss their artistic inclinations and did perhaps Andeew share his plans to create a "King America/King World' sculpture just a few miles north in Grand County? Did they discuss the permanence of stone and the sculptors'

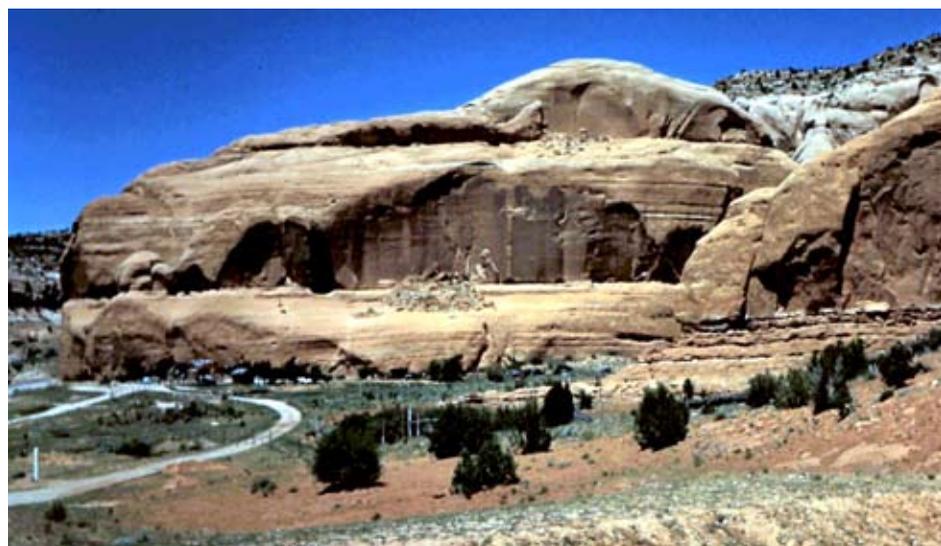
notion that their works would last for centuries? Was it Aharron Andeew himself who put the idea of sculpting into Albert's fertile and creative mind? Did Albert ever travel to Moab to see the 'King World' relief carving? Was he on the site while Aharron labored lovingly to finish his project?

All these questions...but no answers. But the romantic in me would like to think that they did indeed meet, that they found something of themselves in each other, and that their passion for finding expression in stone made them kindred spirits. Yes, many of their fellow residents probably thought both men were a bit odd, spending so much of their lives hammering and chiseling away at sandstone, but at least perhaps not to each other. And I'd like to believe that even now, they know—finally—that their efforts are admired and appreciated, many decades after they left us.

*POSTSCRIPT: This is a story without an ending. If there is anyone in Grand or San Juan Counties who has any memories of Albert or Aharron, and especially information that they have met and known each other, please contact me. (Jim Stiles, cczephyr@gmail.com)*

*LINK TO: "Illustrations of the History of Great Britain: An Historical View of the Manners and Customs, Dresses, Literature, Arts, Commerce, and Government of Great Britain; From the Time of the Saxons, Down to the Eighteenth Century. Volume 1*

*https://books.google.com/books?id=BHpVAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA12&lpg=PA12&dq=HAESUSS&source=bl&ots=Jizoeso2wg&sig=PLptf27rD5qkAfZl47bfue\_Uqgl&hl=en&sa=X&ei=JG\_vVM2BBovBgwTkm4TgBw&ved=0CCYQ6AEwADgU#v=onepage&q=HAESUSS&f=false*



Hole n" the Rock, in the late 1940s. photo by Herb Ringer



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