



FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON ANCIENT AMERICA

THELONA D. STEVENS, CHAIRMAN / 202 SOUTH PENDLETON AVE. / INDEPENDENCE, MO. 64050

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NEWSLETTER NO. 11

Dear Members and Friends,

In this, our first newsletter in 1972, the Foundation for Research on Ancient America sends you special greetings, wishing for you a blessed year of unlimited growth in all matters pertaining to righteousness, including that of expanded knowledge of the Lord God through the Book of Mormon.

We sincerely hope and trust that new incentives will open to you to delve deeply into all sources which verify and substantiate Book of Mormon claims in order that this marvelous record may be the more widely read, studied, presented to friends, and defended against attack by those who have not yet come to understand its beauty and value.

We are particularly anxious that our youth may become more fully acquainted with this great book. We urge that all who have an opportunity to do so may promote more widespread use of the Book of Mormon among children and young people, using means compatible with their grasp and understanding.

The annual meeting of the Foundation was held in the Education Building of the Stone Church again this year, January 23, at which time Seventy Clair E. Weldon was the speaker. Wayne Stanton, teacher in the Raytown school system, and a budding archaeologist, displayed and explained some artifacts of ancient America which he discovered in Missouri. He did not name the specific area but said it is within one hundred miles of the Center Place.

The Foundation chose for the ensuing year the same officers who have already been serving you: Thelona D. Stevens, chairman; Chris B. Hartshorn, vice-chairman; Katherine H. Wilson, secretary; and Frances R. Davidson, treasurer.

A special invitation is extended to all to attend the meeting of the Foundation which is to be held during the coming World Conference. Verneil Simmons is to be the speaker. Her subject will be "The Promised Records". The meeting will be held in the Music Room of the Auditorium immediately after the business session, April 11, 4:30-6:00 p.m. Do arrange your schedule to meet with us.

-- T.D.S.

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Frank Evan Frye submitted the following, giving credit to Verneil Simmons for the references to Thesiger's Arabian Sands, and the thoughts which prompted his study.

The story has to do with the "Land Bountiful" which the Nephites came upon just before crossing the ocean for the New World. As Lehi and his group left Jerusalem, they traveled "by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea" (I Nephi 1:30, 31). Being led by the liahona (I Nephi 5:11; Alma 17:71), they were directed in the "more fertile parts of the wilderness" (I Nephi 5:16, 18, 20, 42). Then, at a certain point in the wilderness, they were directed to "travel nearly eastward" from that time on. Thus, they walked directly into one of the greatest deserts in the world. In Nephi's own words, "We did sojourn for the space of . .

eight years in the wilderness." Then they came to a place which they called Bountiful, which abounded in fruit and honey, a place of "many waters," and they camped by the sea which they called Irreantum (I Nephi 5:60-67).

It would have been literary suicide for one writing a book in the early nineteenth century to have described such a place as this on the parched, southeastern coast of Arabia. Very little was known about this land at the time Joseph Smith brought forth the Book of Mormon. Then, in 1964 Wilfred Thesiger, traveler and explorer, published his book, Arabian Sands, in which he describes just such a land on the southeastern coast of Arabia:

"Two days later we rode our camels across the stony plain of Jarbib; we passed some cultivation and went on towards Jabal Qarra, which is about two thousand feet high, and is flanked on either side by much higher mountains which close in on the sea. Some peculiarity in the shape of these mountains draws the monsoon clouds, so that the rain concentrates upon the southern slopes of Jabal Qarra, which are in consequence covered with mist and rain throughout the summer and were now dark with jungles in full leaf after the monsoon. All the way along the south Arabian coast for 1,400 miles from Perim to Sur, only these twenty miles get a regular rainfall."

Arabian Sands, by Wilfred Thesiger,
Penguin Books, Ltd., England (1964), pg. 47.

On this same page, the author describes the jungle trees "wreathed with jasmine and giant convolvulus Massive tamarinds grow in the valleys, and on the downs great fig trees rise above the wind-rippled grass like oaks in an English park."

Another quotation, found on page 87, says: "When we returned from Hughshin the year before, and had come out from the void of the desert onto the crest of the Qarra range and looked again on green trees and grass and the loveliness of the mountains, I turned to one of them and said, 'Isn't that beautiful!'"

The description of this isolated paradise matches the land that the Nephites named "Bountiful." This seashore oasis exists even today as a testimony that God did indeed lead his people that they "might not perish" (I Nephi 5:63).

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The Los Angeles Times, December, 1971 printed a story which was sent to us by John Evan Hobart, from which we have gleaned these facts:

A group of archaeological "diggers" from Northwestern University under the direction of Prof. Stuart Struever have been working since 1968 "unearthing traces of eleven prehistoric cultures that settled along the Illinois River" near Kamps-ville, Calhoun County, Illinois, "between 5100 B.C., and A.D. 1200. The earliest of these settlements were as ancient as any discovered in Egypt." The article states, "The record of several ancient villages, spanning 11,000 years and ranging in population from 50 to more than 1,000 is uniquely preserved there. Layers of silt washing down from the river bluffs have covered and preserved the remnants of the ancient peoples. "

The excavation is now the largest and most complex archaeological expedition in the Western Hemisphere, according to Prof. Struever, with 85 "diggers" working there last summer. Their most dramatic find was "the fully intact skeleton of an 18-month-old infant who lived about 5000 B.C. The body was colored red before burial with a dye derived from iron ore imported from Missouri. Ceremonial painting of a corpse was a practice shared by most ancient inhabitants of the North American continent. It was also common among prehistoric peoples of the Danube Valley in Europe," according to Prof. Struever. "The skeleton was found 34 feet beneath the surface, in what was termed 'Horizon Eight'--the eighth of at least 11 layers of silt-covered earth containing evidence of man on the site."

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From Loren Reid, of Wayne, N.J., has come an interesting news item. It is contained on the inside cover of the April, 1971 issue of Singer Light, a monthly publication for employees of Singer-Kearfott Division of The Singer Company. This story is date lined Sunnyvale, Calif., and pictures Al Hummel, an employee of Advanced Products Operations, Link Division, holding a clay tablet imprinted with cuneiform characters said to be 2,000 years old, valued at \$12,000. The article states, "The Oriental Museum of Chicago dates the tablet back to 1800-1900 B.C., in the area of the ancient country of Cappadocia, or Syria as it is now called. Cappadocia was that part of the Roman Empire located to the east of the Mediterranean Sea and south of Turkey."

The tablet, found by Al Hummel's father "on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania in the early 1920s . . . was first thought to be of Aztec origin due to similarity to markings on known Aztec artifacts." The "rock," before its value was known, served the family "first as a teething object for children . . . and later as a paperweight or conversation piece."

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We are indebted to Joseph L. Hunter, of Tweed, Ontario, Canada, for citing Frank Edwards' Strange World (1964), Lyle Stuart, New York (\$4.95), in which the author raised the question, "Who was first in America?" and then declared that the Indians who inhabited North America at the time of Columbus "were relatively newcomers," since there are many "bits and pieces of evidence . . . which point to the existence of earlier cultures of considerable attainment and widespread distribution." He goes on to say, "One such tantalizing specimen is the strange symbol on the top of Medicine Mountain, in the windswept Big Horn range in Wyoming. There is a circle of stones, seventy feet in diameter, carefully laid out in perfect geometric form. The stones are arranged to form twenty-eight spokes radiating from the hub twelve feet in diameter, with a seven-foot open space in the center. Around the wheel symbol are six huge stones which seem to have served as chairs, possibly for the high priests of the people who built this unique monument." Then Mr. Edwards concludes: "The Indians had no use for the wheel and no idea of how it got there, although they know of its existence, of course. White men first became interested in the design in 1902, when S.C. Simms of the Field Museum in Chicago spent considerable time trying to unravel the mystery. He could only conclude that it was a religious symbol of some race that had existed there between 15,000 B.C. and 1000 B.C." -pg. 172.

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Mr. Hunter also drew attention to another item in Frank Edwards' Strange World, pg. 173:

"In my book, Stranger Than Science, I have reported on the giant human remains of great antiquity which were dug up at Rancho Lompock, California; at Crittenden, Arizona (in 1891 in a stone sepulcher); and at Walkerton, Indiana, where in 1925 a group of amateur "investigators" destroyed one of the most important finds of its kind. They dug into an 'Indian mound' and unearthed the skeletons of eight prehistoric giants, ranging from eight to almost nine feet tall, all wearing substantial copper armor. Sad to relate, the evidence was scattered and lost."

Then Mr. Edwards comments about the copper: "That these ancient Americans should have been clad in copper armor is, in itself, not surprising. The copper mines operated by these earliest Americans extend for hundreds of miles along Lake Superior. They are in many ways extensive and remarkable for the engineering used in their construction. But they were certainly not Indian mines; for when the white men came, the Indians knew nothing of the copper mines or of their purpose."

The American Antiquarian (Volume 25, p. 258) says, 'There is no indication of any permanent settlement near these mines. Not a vestige of a dwelling, nor a skeleton, nor a bone has ever been found.' Just the mines-- and their impenetrable mystery."

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The above account is of great interest to Book of Mormon students on two counts--the size of the "prehistoric giants" and their copper armor. The Jaredites, the Book of Mormon's most ancient people, were large. The Brother of Jared was "a large and a mighty man" (Ether 1:8). Ether 6:99 describes those who engaged in their final battle as "large and mighty men." Coriantumr, found by the Mulekites, was a "large and a mighty man" (Helaman 1:16). The breastplates which they wore were discovered later by the Nephites, who described them as "large; and they are of brass, and of copper" (Mosiah 5:65).

There are numerous references to the Nephites also as being large, such as: Nephi was "large of stature" (I.Nephi 1:47, 135); Nehor "was large, and was noted for his much strength" (Alma 1:3); Amalickiah was also "a large and a strong man" (Alma 21:31); Mormon, the last great Nephite general, even in his youth, was "large in stature" (Mormon 1:22).

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Mrs. R.M. Hursh, of Warrensburg, Missouri, sent us a folder published in Salina, Kansas, Indian Burial Pit, October, 1971. It describes what is claimed to be the "largest prehistoric Indian burial pit in the Middle West, "located on the Price brothers' farm, about four miles east of Salina, just off Highway US 40. Although the burial pit is not large, it was found to contain the remains of 146 Indians, buried in layers, in a flexed position (knees drawn and hands resting close to their faces). "Some of the skeletons are quite large, measuring well over six feet in height; others are of small children."

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Elder Will J. Murray, of Yucaipa, California sent us a copy of Arizona Highways, January, 1972, which features Indian buildings and history in the state of Arizona. Interested individuals may still be able to obtain a copy of this issue (60 cents), if not locally, by writing to the location of publication, 2039 West Lewis, Phoenix, Arizona 85009. Most of the pictures are in color.

Featured in this issue are Montezuma's Castle, Beaver Creek, Verde Valley, Arizona, and Betatakin Ruin, Navajo National Monument, Arizona (together with a number of other ruins). Having made trips to a number of these ruins, Brother Murray was able to give his own testimony regarding these places, which of course coincides with the printed material sent. He said, "Entrance to Montezuma's Castle and the Mesa Verde ruins are no longer allowed because of damage to the old buildings. Both can be easily seen close by." He told of a chance trip which took them to Flagstaff, Arizona, where they followed a dirt road "out the back way and down into Indian country," on a road marked, "Travel at your own risk." This led to Wupatki National Monument.

The red sandstone pueblos of Wupatki were built by groups of prehistoric farming dwellers. More than 800 homesites have been discovered in the monument, which include the pits of early earth lodges, as well as 3-storied house structures. Studies of ancient wooden beams in the ruins have dated the major occupation as occurring between the late 1,000s and the early 1,200s with an estimated population of between 250 and 300 persons. It is claimed that the rooms were air conditioned, by means of masonry ducts built from the outside, under or along the floors, through the walls and into each room.

In the valley below was a "ball court," of stone masonry, one of two found in the vicinity. Elder Murray said they found a solid rubber ball, about 4" in diameter in the ball court when it was excavated. The Ranger told them that only one other similar ball had ever been found and that one was in Mexico. Wupatki National Monument was established by presidential proclamation in 1924. It covers almost 56 square miles.

Betatakin ruins, also in northern Arizona, are some 17 miles off the highway, also on a dirt road. These ruins are not easily seen until one is almost on them. A spring of clear water comes from under the cliff, just as one enters the ruins. They are the best preserved ruins, being naturally protected from the weather.

Twelve miles from Betatakin is Keet Seel, which can be reached only by horseback or on foot, following an 11-mile primitive trail. Keet Seel is the largest cliff ruins in Arizona, and one of the last to be abandoned. It is pictured also in this issue of Arizona Highways.

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Credit also goes to Will J. Murray for another item, from the San Bernadino Sun Telegram, dated December 27, 1969, stating that a human skeleton dug out of the LaBrea Tar Pits in 1914 has been established as among the oldest found in the Western Hemisphere. This has been established through a new dating method in which the amino acid from the bones was analyzed by radiocarbon dating to determine the skeleton's age, according to Richard Reynolds, research assistant at the county Museum of Natural History, Los Angeles.

Scientists said that the bones were those of a woman 25-30 years old, about 5 feet tall. She was found in the same pit where archaeologists are digging for more remains--human and animal. Dr. Charles Rozaire, curator of museum claims that the amino acid dating was accurate within 80 years.

"This date adds one more piece of information," said Dr. Rozaire, "in that the bones were found in association with those of extinct animals--such as giant condor-like vultures."

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Mrs. L. E. Christy, of Lebanon, Missouri, has generously sent us from time to time copies of magazines related to our work. The latest one is the November-December, 1971 issue of Americas, in which we have found an interesting article, "Holly Legends," by Catharine Marsden, linking similar uses of holly in the Eastern Hemisphere and the Americas, p. 11-16.

"The Indians of both North and South America have many legends about holly. It has been a part of their religion, magic, richness, and superstition. The South American Indians believed that holly was a blessed plant and they kept pieces of holly around their homes to provide a place for good spirits to hide, and to frighten away wicked spirits. We find this belief also among the North American Indians . . . The earliest known use of holly was long before the Christian era in Europe. After the Roman festival known as the Saturnalia, which was held in December, holly branches were given as gifts of friendship. Although this use of holly was a pagan custom, the Early Christians adopted it. Perhaps it made them less conspicuous among their fellow men, who were more often hostile pagans."

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From Gilbert A. Haring, of Clinton, Iowa came a clipping from the Des Moines Register, dated April 18, 1971, showing the picture of an "ancient Humpty-Dumpty" photographed by Gordon W. Gahan of the National Geographic Society. This "mysterious Humpty-Dumpty effigy and five others" were unearthed at Monte Alto in southern Guatemala by a team from Harvard University's Peabody Museum, supported by the National Geographic Society. Announcement is made that the story of the Omecs and other pre-historic peoples is told in the Society's book, Discovering Man's Past in the Americas (\$4.25).

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The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, Tenn., April 17, 1969, yields this information:

Under Vancouver, B.C. date line, Phil Thornburg, a Victoria sculptor, says that the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, is mystified and bewildered by Vancouver's petroglyphs, or rock carvings. Thornburg, who "has become an authority on the carvings," said, "We don't know how old they are, what they signify, who carved them or where these people went afterwards. It's a complete mystery. Being carved in sandstone, it is virtually impossible to say what age they are." He believes the age of carvings found under more than a foot of topsoil to be "around 5,000 to 7,000 years old, which is really ancient for this country."

At one site, Thornburg found a petroglyph that had a hole worn completely through it by dripping water, while at another site he discovered a carving that had crumbled as a massive tree grew through it. He says that "anybody who tries to set an exact date on them is sticking his neck out," but he is positive that they are "definitely pre-Indian," and he went on to say, "When the white men first arrived here in 1860, the West Coast Indians had already incorporated the carvings in their legends. They showed them to the white explorers and explained they were left by an ancient civilization and were the hub of creation."

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The Foundation extends special thanks to Linda Baker for giving freely of her time and talent in typing the Newsletters.

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