



FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON ANCIENT AMERICA

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NEWSLETTER NO. 8

January 20, 1971

Dear Friends,

Greetings from those of the Foundation who serve you. We hope you will have twelve months of joy and blessings, and opportunities to serve in worth-while projects in 1971.

January 31 has been set as the date of the annual meeting of the Foundation. The special attraction of this meeting will be a talk by Brother Charles R. Hield on his recent trips and experiences, including discussion of Teotihuacan near Mexico City. Of course, the necessary business of reports and election of officers will take place at that time also. Do plan to attend if at all possible. The meeting will be held at 3:00 P.M. in Room #201 of the Stone Church Education Building. We hope to see you there.

If you were receiving our newsletters at one time but are not now getting them, it is because you changed your address and did not tell us. With each mailing, many letters are returned, marked "Unknown," or "Moved, left no address." We have no alternative but to drop each such individual from our mailing list. Sometimes the post office shows a new address on the returned letter. This is expensive to us. Our mailings are under a special rate, and return postage is guaranteed, so each returned letter costs us 10¢. If a new address is shown, we correct our files and send another letter at the current 6¢ rate. Thus, the cost of sending the newsletter in each such instance adds up to 17½¢. Hence, we are sending an earnest plea to all to notify us when your address changes if you wish to receive the newsletters.

Our thanks are extended to all who have contributed news items. These are the items which make the newsletter possible. When sending any item, please be sure it is fully documented. Some articles sent in cannot be used because the name of the source, the publisher's name, date of publication, and page number were not given. Incidentally, paraphrasing on our part is to avoid copyright infringement.

Don't forget January 31.

--T.D.S.

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Undoubtedly the biggest recent news item having bearing on Book of Mormon claims is one which was widely publicized last fall. Clippings and references poured in from various parts of the country, all bearing similar titles, expressing the possibility that "Jews Discovered America." The most complete accounts were in Newsweek, October 26, 1970 (sent by Ed. Guy, of Kansas City, and Mrs. Pansy Rinehart, of Grant City, Mo.) and Argosy, January 1971 (sent by Pearl Kinnaman, of St. Joseph). We shall summarize briefly, since there has been such widespread publicity of the event.

The Argosy account (p. 23) is headed by these words, "Stone inscription found in Tennessee proves that America was discovered 1,500 years before Columbus," and Dr. Cyrus Gordon, Chairman Department of Mediterranean Studies, Brandeis University, is

quoted as saying, "Who really were the first to settle America? . . . Exciting new information based on an eighty-five-year-old Tennessee grave dig indicates that it may well have been ancient Canaanites from the Eastern Mediterranean. Proof? The only authenticated pre-Columbian artifact ever found in North America. A hand-sized, inscribed stone tablet first found in 1885 by Smithsonian Institution archaeologists who misidentified it as a Cherokee tablet. The stone was found in an undisturbed tomb which had been ingrown by tree roots in such a way as to make any sort of error or fraud as to its identification a virtual impossibility."

When the inscription was photographed and published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1894, it was printed upside down and its significance went unnoticed, Dr. Gordon said. Dr. Joseph Mahan, of the Columbus, Georgia, Museum of Arts and Crafts, who had been searching for evidence of Mediterranean people in ancient America, happened to see a photograph of the stone, he sent a copy to Dr. Gordon, an expert on early Mediterranean languages, for translation. He immediately recognized its importance. He said, "Its message was immediately clear; its full impact on our understanding of our own history may not be felt for another hundred years." Then he explained the inscription. "This inscription, which contains a clear sequence of five letters meaning "for Judah," is not only the oldest text ever uncovered in North America, but, more importantly, it is the first time a Mediterranean inscription has been found anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, in its original site with all the original objects connected with it in place. Other clues like this have been found, but always separated from their original locations. This tends to make them suspect in the eyes of archaeological experts." (Argosy, p. 24.)

Dr. Gordon's training covered Classical, Indo-Iranian and Semitic languages and cultures. He has spent many years in the Near East, Mexico, and South America devoting his time mainly to field archaeology. In World War II, he was a cryptanalyst, breaking enemy codes. This experience led him into recovering the lost languages of the ancient Mediterranean. His book on links between the Old World and Ancient America is scheduled to appear in 1971.

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CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN IN ECUADOR, by Roy E. Weldon.

In 1949 when Elder Francis Anderson and I were preparing for a Book of Mormon trip to South America, C. Ed. Miller, lifelong student of the Book of Mormon, strongly urged us to go to Manta on the Coast of Ecuador. There is a high hill north of Manta where University of Pennsylvania archaeologists found a large stone table and twelve stone chairs. The Book of Mormon (Alma 1:1-23) tells of a criminal by the name of Nehor who was taken to the top of the hill Manti, for his trial and execution.

After two weeks in the high Andes of Peru and Bolivia, where we had climbed among the staircase forms, we arrived at Manta, Ecuador, directly under the Equator. I was exhausted from too much climbing among the terraces at 12,000 to 13,000 feet elevation in the high Andes.

When we arrived at the hill Manta, via truck along a rough road, it was very hot and humid. We obtained a guide at one of the near-by huts and started the steep climb. Shortly we were dripping perspiration. Again and again we were forced to stop for rest. Finally, we reached the summit and found that our guide was not sure where the ruins were. An Indian lad shortly appeared, who informed us that the ruins were about a mile away on the highest section of the ridge but due to the density of jungle, it would be necessary to descend to the base of the mountain on the other side to the home of a rancho, where the archaeologists had their headquarters. After a conference, it was agreed Elder Anderson would go back down the mountain with the first guide, while the Indian lad would lead me on with the full expectancy that I would be able to spend the night with the rancho and visit the ruins on the morrow.

At mid-afternoon we arrived at the home of the rancho, who informed us that three years had passed since the archaeologists had been there. The trail to the ruins was now overgrown and it would take a crew of men to cut a trail, he said. He further informed me he had no place for me to stay overnight. He showed me his bed above which was suspended a mosquito bar-tent, which he let down at night to protect him. He said I would have to return over the mountain before dusk because swarms of insects of the fever-ridden tropics came out at dusk.

These words made my heart sink within me. I was weak and exhausted, and doubted whether I could make it back over the mountain that afternoon. I did not know that outside the door my Lord was waiting for me.

It was perhaps a hundred feet from the rancho's bamboo home to where the trail abruptly started upward. As I walked across this short distance, I had one of the great experiences of my life. I felt my weakness and exhaustion leaving, and strength, energy, and vitality flowing into my body. As I wondered what was happening to me, a surge of God's Spirit went through me and I knew the Lord was going to see me out of this difficulty. I had exhausted myself on projects related to his cause. I have learned that when we exhaust our resources trying to serve his cause and need to draw on his resources, he will not let us down.

Full of energy and exhilaration, I followed the Indian youth to the top of the mountain without once asking him to stop and rest. When we reached the summit (where Alma, or Helaman, or Moroni may well once have stood) I had a glorious experience. The sun was setting over the Pacific Ocean, and as I stood there, thrilled by the beautiful sunset and the Presence of Divinity, I was given to know that I had had a taste of what men will enjoy in their resurrected state.

A former governor of that province has one of the chairs taken from this hill. He permitted me to take a picture of it, which I have. As far as I know, the table still remains atop Hill Manta.

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The Kansas City Star, August 19, 1970, bearing El Dorado, Kansas date line, reported the discovery of a human skeleton by University of Kansas archaeological crews in the upper Walnut River valley, in an area that will eventually be covered by the El Dorado reservoir. Roger Grosser, head of the university team, said the skeleton, believed to be that of a woman, "probably dates about 2,200 years before Christ." The skeleton was in a "flexed position of burial"--a sitting position with knees bent up to the chest. He said this finding may be evidence of an ancient burial ground lying below the field a few hundred feet from the river. The skeleton was taken to the University of Kansas Museum of Anthropology to be assembled and examined with the hope of gaining further information.

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Recently your chairman has come across two references by Geikie, the historian, of writing on brass in early Jewish history.

Geikie recounted some of the activities of Antipater when seeking high position in Palestinian government. During the civil war between Caesar and Pompey in 49 B.C., Antipater led in certain support of Caesar. Caesar, in recognition of this assistance, made Antipater a Roman citizen, with freedom from taxes on his property, and a procuratorship was granted to him, making him independent of Hyrcanus, the high priest. "All these concessions he took care to have forthwith confirmed at Rome, and graven on plates of brass." --Life and Words of Christ, by Cunningham Geikie, D.D. (1890), p. 23.

In this same book, Geikie, in discussing reasons for the hatred of Herod by the Jews, commented that although Herod "had done much to deserve gratitude in these later years, . . . yet the nation wrote his virtues in water, and his faults in brass" (p. 39).

Obviously this is symbolical language, and yet it does show that they were familiar with the art of writing in brass.

In view of the importance of the Plates of Brass which the Nephites brought as they fled from Jerusalem, these quotations seem significant.

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Research by John C. Moody, of Kingsville, Missouri, has yielded the two items which follow:

"Like all American Indians, the Maya very frequently bore a congenital pigmentar

spot, wrongly called the Mongolian spot. It had a greenish color and was located at the level of the sacral region. It rapidly disappeared with age."

--Maya Cities, by Paul Rivet, p. 33.

(Maya Cities was translated from the French by Miriam and Lionel Kochan; published in Great Britain by Elek Brooks, 1960; in the United States by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, N. Y.; in Canada by The Ryerson Press, Toronto; first published in 1954 as Cities Maya, copyright by Albert Guillot, 1954.)

The second item concerns a Shawnee Indian tradition, taken from The Indian Journals 1859-62, by Lewis Henry Morgan, published by University of Michigan, 1959, p. 144.

"SHAWNEE TRADITION OF HEAVEN

"Father De Smet told me the following, which he had from a Shawnee who was a Catholic. He said that the residence of the Great Spirit was upon a high mountain in the midst of a large and beautiful island. He dwelt upon the summit. From the top issued numerous streams which, descending on all sides to the plains, became beautiful rivers which abounded in fish. The plains between were covered with cattle of all kinds, and with game. The plains were full of flowers, and roots, and berries. Here the 'good and saved' Indians resided in the midst of abundance. This island was surrounded by water, and was reached in one place only, by a tree of supernatural length, on which the departed spirit was obliged to cross. Near the center was a grapevine bearing delicious grapes. As the spirit approached it, he became anxious to reach the fruit. If his life had been upright and good, his step was firm; he reached it in safety, and soon crossed to the island, on which his eternal happiness was secure. But if he had been wicked, when he approached the grapevine, his anxiety to reach it became equally great, but he was sure to lose his footing and fall into the rushing waters beneath, by which he was borne onward to a cold, barren, desolate country, where he was doomed to wander forever in a state of misery and famine."

Brother Moody comments, "This Shawnee Indian tradition is suggestive of Lehi's and Nephi's vision" (I Nephi 2:41-76; 3:40-68). He suggests these comparisons between:

The tradition:	The Book of Mormon account:
The high mountain	I Nephi 3:38
Numerous streams descending on all sides	I Nephi 3:68
The plains	I Nephi 2:48
The tree of supernatural length	I Nephi 2:69
The vine bearing delicious grapes	I Nephi 2:49, 50
Rushing waters beneath the tree of supernatural length	I Nephi 2:54
Wicked Indians who fell into the rushing waters with resulting miseries	I Nephi 2:80,81

THE PUZZLE OF POVERTY POINT

"The excavation of the most complex geometrical earthwork in North America proves it to be the oldest planned town in this part of the world, an Indian settlement that flourished 2,700 years ago," wrote James A. Ford in Natural History magazine (pub. by American Museum of Natural History, N.Y.), November 1955, p. 466.

Two large mounds at Poverty Point, Louisiana, have been recognized for more than half a century as the work of prehistoric people. They are as high as six- and seven-story buildings, the taller one being the second highest Indian mound in North America. (The Cahokia Mound near East St. Louis is the tallest.) The taller Poverty Point mound measures 700 to 800 feet at the base and rises 70 feet above the surrounding plain. It is in the shape of a bird. The geometrical pattern of the ancient site could not be comprehended from the ground, but came through air

reconnaissance. Copies of the air photographs taken for mapping purposes by the Mississippi River Commission of Army Engineers were made available to James Ford, who described the ridges as "arranged neatly in six concentric octagonal figures. The outside octagon is three-quarters of a mile in diameter. At the corners, gaps were left in the ridges to form aisles leading toward the center. A nicer arrangement in city planning for a community of this size could hardly be imagined. The ridges are from five to ten feet high and were built of earth taken from the swales that lie between them. The dwellings were evidently situated along the tops of the ridges." This was determined, Mr. Ford explained, by the concentration of black soil stained with charcoal from cooking fires, as well as most of the broken and worn-out utensils found on the ridges."

A little arithmetic by the author produces the estimation that the Poverty Point people "moved more than 530,000 cubic yards of earth, just to make themselves a well-ordered city in which to live. This is over 35 times the cubage of the famous Pyramid of Cheops at Gizeh in Egypt. And it does not include the two mounds, which involved moving another 33,000 cubic yards." The soil was carried in baskets, the evidence of which has been uncovered.

Archaeologists believe that Poverty Point was first settled about 800 B.C., which, if true, would identify these people in the minds of Book of Mormon students as of the Jaredite civilization. Archaeologists have definitely identified objects unearthed as belonging to an earlier people than the Mayas. Mr. Ford said, "The excavating we undertook this year at Poverty Point produced about 800 pounds of specimens, which give us our first direct insight into the life of a large community of aborigines who lived in southeastern United States a half a millennium before the beginning of the Christian era" (p. 467).

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The largest and most important Indian city in the United States was located at East St. Louis at the Cahokia Mounds. Around 1200-1300 A.D. it was the largest North American Indian temple mound, according to Richard B. Fowler, writing in the Kansas City Star, October 16, 1970. He declared, "Inside the United States no Indian city approached its size and influence. It had to be the great political and religious center for a large part of the Upper Mississippi valley. . . Cahokia was, and is, the open door to the Southeast, where other advanced people have left temple mounds on the lordly building sites of their cities."

In the 1920's, the development of a tract by bulldozers leveled a very big temple mound. Public protest resulted in action by the Illinois Legislature for Cahokia State Park--a small area then, now nearly a square mile.

Archaeologists have found ground-level ditches that held upright poles for house walls for the homes of common men who didn't rate the eminence of mounds. Archaeologists have followed the lines of two stockades dug to a distance of 400 feet, far enough to show the pattern. People of that great city were not secure from marauders or, perhaps, from attack.

Mr. Fowler wrote, "Nobody knows who these people were but their urban society and the importance of their city was implicit in everything we saw. They lived under established laws. The manpower needed to hand-carry the earth for Monks mound, alone, is almost inconceivable--18 acres at the base and 100 feet high. Such a city requires capable administration at home and political authority over a wide area to support it. The evidence of a great religious center is in the mounds built for temples.

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This brings to mind the account of Zion's Camp traveling from Kirtland, Ohio to the relief of the members of the church in Missouri. They camped one mile from Jacksonville (Illinois) and made preparations for the Sabbath. Joseph Smith wrote, "Sunday, June 1, 1834. We had preaching and many of the inhabitants of the town came to hear. . . During our travels we visited several of the mounds which had been thrown up by the ancient inhabitants of this country, Nephites, Lamanites,

etc., and this morning I went up on a high mound, near the river, accompanied by the brethren. From this mound we could overlook the tops of the trees and view the prairie on each side of the river as far as our vision could extend. . . . On the top of the mound were stones which presented the appearance of three altars having been erected one above the other, according to ancient order; and human bones were strewn over the surface of the ground. The brethren procured a shovel and hoe, and removing the earth to the depth of about one foot, discovered the skeleton of a man, almost entire, and between his ribs was a Lamanitish arrow, which evidently produced his death. . . . The contemplation of the scenery before us produced peculiar sensations in our bosoms; and the visions of the past being opened to my understanding by the spirit of the Almighty, I discovered that the person whose skeleton was before us, was a white Lamanite, a large thick set man, and a man of God. He was a warrior and a chieftain under the great prophet Omandagus, who was known from hill Cumorah, or Eastern sea, to the Rocky Mountains. His name was Zelph. The curse was taken from him, or at least, in part; one of his thigh bones was broken by a stone flung from a sling, while in battle years before his death. He was killed in battle, by the arrow found among his ribs, during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites."--Times and Seasons, Vol. 6, p 1076. (This is mentioned also in Church History, Vol. 1, p 461, though the full account is not given.)

It is interesting to note that this event took place quite close to Cahokia, since Jacksonville is not far from East St. Louis, Illinois.

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All it takes to have a copy of this newsletter sent to a friend is a request, giving his name and address, including zip code, please. Just send the request to Thelona D. Stevens, 202 S. Pendleton, Independence, Missouri, 64050.

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