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Old America - The Mound Builders

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Abstract: Series of articles dealing with archaeological, anthropological, geographical, societal, religious, and historical aspects of ancient America and their connections to the Book of Mormon, which is the key to understanding “old American” studies.

"You would have been rescued in the month of December, if the frost had held on," my father said; "but the snow softened, and we had no choice but to work as hard as we could at this undertaking. You must know, my dear Louis, that our neighbors have been wanting neither in charity nor zeal; but, within the memory of man, never was there such a heavy fall of snow. Four times did we open the road, and four times was it drifted up again."

"Was it blocked up from the first day?" I inquired.

My father then informed me of a very unfortunate circumstance. He nearly lost his life from the sliding of a mass of snow, as he was descending the mountain. They picked him up in a dying state at the edge of a ravine, and, a few paces farther on, they found my grandfather's stick, and my bottle.

My father was carried home senseless, where he continued for three days in a precarious condition. They lost all that time in searching for us amongst the snow at the bottom of the ravine. When my father came to himself, it was too late to make any attempt in our favor, which would already have been very dangerous, if not impossible, after the first day.

All our neighbors came out to meet me, testifying their friendly disposition; and I blushed to have ever doubted it. Everybody is curious to see Blanchette. She is overwhelmed with caresses on my account. She is treated to the best hay and the driest litter; she will be the most pampered and the happiest of goats.

God has saved my life. He has not permitted my grandfather to behold his family again. But the good friend whom I have lost, taught me never to murmur at the decrees of Providence.

Old America.

BY G. M. O.

THE MOUND BUILDERS.

An ancient people who have left remains of their civilization in the valleys of the Mississippi and its tributaries are called "Mound Builders," this name having been suggested by an important class of their works—mounds, most of them terraced and truncated pyramids, constructed with intelligence and great labor. These works are not found widely separated or isolated; but form an almost continuous chain down the Ohio and Mississippi from western Pennsylvania to Mexico and Central America. Ross County, Ohio, alone contains about one hundred enclosures and five hundred mounds. The number of mounds in the whole State of Ohio is estimated at over ten thousand and the number of enclosures at more than fifteen hundred, and yet they are more numerous in the regions of the lower Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico than anywhere else. Mounds and earth works are very numerous in Kentucky, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia, in fact from Maine to Florida, but they are most abundant in Western New York and Central Pennsylvania in reference to the Atlantic States. The mounds are as variable in dimensions as are the enclosures, and range from such as are but a few feet in height and a few yards in diameter to those which rise to the height of seventy feet and measure a thousand feet in circumference at their base. In form it may be observed that the larger part of the enclosures are regular in outline, the circle predominating, some are squares, some parallelo-

grams, ellipses or polygons. The mounds are usually simple cones, sometimes truncated and occasionally terraced with graded or winding ascents to their summits. Most are circular, some elliptical, others pear-shaped and others squares with aprons or terraces and graded ascents. A class found most frequent in Wisconsin and the North-west takes the form of animals and reptiles, and another variety of remains are elevated causeways or roads, graded descents and covered ways to rivers and streams, or from one terrace to another. The regular works are found mostly on level grounds. The irregular works are those which were evidently works of defense, and are usually made to conform to the nature of the ground on which they are erected; they run around the brows of hills, across narrow rocks or isthmuses, which are protected on the sides by deep ravines, streams or steep and inaccessible precipices, and vary in the height of their walls and the depth of their ditches. The square and the circle are often found in combination, frequently communicating by avenues of parallel embankments. Where excavations are made, skeletons, fragments of pottery and other relics are usually found.

Antiquarians have divided the works of the Mound Builders into three grand classes: works of defense, religious structures and sepulchral monuments. These relics are almost always found in districts and places where the soil is rich and fertile. Mr. Fliut, the geographer, says: "The most dense ancient populations existed in precisely the places where the most crowded populations will exist in ages to come. Sites selected by our own people for settlements are often found to be those which were the principal seats of the Mound Builders. Marietta, Newark, Portsmouth, Chillicothe, Circleville and Cincinnati, in Ohio; Frankfort, Kentucky, and St. Louis, Missouri, all stand on the sites of extensive ancient works which have in some instances determined the plan of the existing cities."

Although the works of the Mound Builders are all of one general type, they vary materially in the different sections of the country. Enclosures and tumuli, evidently religious, are found mostly in the Southern and Western States, while defensive works are abundant in Western New York, Central Pennsylvania and Ohio. The nearer we approach the Gulf of Mexico the regular mounds or truncated and terraced pyramids, coinciding in type with the "teocallis" of Mexico, become more numerous and larger, and in some cases adobes, or sun-dried bricks were used in their construction. Relics of art have been dug from some of the mounds, consisting of a variety of ornaments and implements made of silver, copper, obsidian, porphyry and green stone, finely wrought. There are single and double axes, adzes, chisels, drills or gravers, lance-heads, knives, bracelets, pendants, beads and other ornaments of copper; pottery of elegant design and finish, with ornaments of bone, mica, silver and shells; articles of stone of fine workmanship, some of them elaborately carved, while in a few cases written characters or glyphic writing has been found. At an archaeological congress held at Norwich, England, in 1868, one of the speakers related the fact that "Fragments of charred cloth made of spun fibres have been found in the mounds. A specimen of such cloth, taken from a mound in Butler County, Ohio, is in the Talisbury Museum." The Mound Builders used large quantities of copper. Remains of their mining works were first discovered in 1848 by Mr. Knapp near the shore of Lake Superior. A point or projection of land resembling in shape an immense horn, projects into the lake; it is about eighty miles long, and about forty-five miles broad where it joins the mainland. All through this district the remains of ancient mining works are found.

Usually the civilized life of the Mound Builders has been classed below the ancient people of Central America and Mexico, this inference being drawn from the lack of stone work and finely carved inscriptions and decorations surmounting their mounds, but we have every reason to believe that originally the pyramids of the Mississippi Valley were crowned with temples and altars, but constructed of perishable materials. Mr. Baldwin remarks that "It can be seen without long study of their works as we know them that the Mound Builders had a certain degree of civilization which raised them far above the condition of savages. To make such works possible under any circumstances, there must be settled life, with its accumulated and intelligently organized industry, fixed habits of useful work, directed by intelligence."

Prominent among the remains of those ancient people is the great mound at Grave Creek, West Virginia. It is 70 feet high, and 1000 feet in circumference at the base. A mound in Miamisburg, Ohio, is 68 feet high and 852 feet in circumference. The great truncated pyramid at Cahokia, Illinois, is 700 feet long, by 500 feet wide, and 90 feet high. Within a circuit of a few miles from this mound are the remains of over one hundred and fifty ancient tumuli; and within the vicinity on the Missouri side of the river are the remains of two ancient cities of vast proportions. At the mouth of the Missouri there stood a pyramid with three stages or landing places. Fifteen miles west of St. Louis, on the Maramec River, is a group of mounds. In one of them were found stone coffins containing human bones. The mound known as Mount Joliet in Illinois, is sixty feet high, four hundred and fifty yards long and seventy five yards wide. It is erected on a bed of limestone formation, and Mr. Schoolcraft says in its construction 18,250,000 solid feet of earth were required. At Piqua, Ohio, on the Miami river, is located a circular wall of stone enclosing about twenty acres. This wall is built of limestone taken from the bed of the river. The stones are laid in mortar. Lower down the river are extensive ruins upon the plain. The wall of a fortification here is twelve feet high, of earth, and encloses one hundred and sixty acres. Surrounding Chillicothe, Ohio, are extensive ancient ruins. From a map by Mr. Squires embracing a section of about twelve miles of the country surrounding this city over one hundred mounds and forty enclosures, many of large size, can be counted. At Seltzertown, Mississippi, there is a mound 600 feet long, 400 feet wide and 40 feet high. Its summit measures four acres, while its base covers six acres of ground. There was a ditch around it, and near it are smaller mounds. Dickeson says the north side of this mound is supported by a wall of sun-dried brick two feet thick, filled with grass, rushes and leaves.

(To be Continued.)

SURNAMES AND NAMES OF TOWNS.

A SURNAME is the name of one's family. John Smith is simply John of the Smith family. It is not agreed what the derivation of the word surname is. Dr. Johnson says it is the name which one has over and above the Christian name, thus giving his sanction to the idea that the word originated from the French *our nom* or *over-name*. Others say that the surname was formerly the Christian name instead of after it; thus Smith John, instead of John Smith. Still others say that it is really the *sire-name*, or the name of one's father, or sire. The first of these three theories is probably the correct one.

There is something to be said, however, for the last rather fanciful notion. Every nation uses the father's name in forming surnames. The Hebrews did so. "Ben," before a name, meant "son of." Benhadad was "the son of Hadad." The Germans add *sohn*, or son. Mendelsohn, the first of the name, was Mendel's son. The Swedish Nilsson is formed in the same way. This is also the English way. Johnson, Thompson, Williamson, Peterson, Jameson and hosts of others might be mentioned as examples. The Polish addition for son is *ski* or *sky*, as Petrowsky, the son of Peter.

The Scotch use Fitz and Mac before the name to express the idea of *son of*, and the Irish use Mac and O. The latter is, simply, Thomas O'Donnell is Thomas *of* O'Donnell; and this may be either *son of*, or of a certain place.

The names of the principal Highland clans in Scotland are given as follows:

- M'Intosh; the son of the First.
- M'Donald; the son of Brown Eyes.
- M'Dugall; the son of Black Eyes.
- M'Onnechy or Duncan; the son of Brown Head.
- M'Gregor; the son of a Greek Man.
- M'Leod; the son of the Wounder.
- M'Lean; the son of the Lion.
- M'Kenzie; the son of the Friendly One.
- M'Intyre; the son of the Carpenter.
- Campbell; Crooked Mouth.
- Cameron; Crooked Nose.
- Stewart; High Stay or Support.

Ap is the prefix used in Wales for *son*. Llewellyn ap-Howell is the name of Llewellyn the son of Howell. As Llewellyn wanders into England his name is shortened into Powell. John ap-Richard in the same way becomes John Pritchard.

But while Welshmen stay at home they keep their names unchanged, and sometimes they add to them. Thus Evan's son is named Richard ap-Evan; his son is John ap-Richard-ap-Evan, and so on.

An Englishman riding in the mountains of Wales one dark night, heard a cry of distress from some one who had fallen into a ravine by the roadside.

"Help, master, help!" cried the poor man.

"Help? Who are you?" called out the traveler.

"Jenkin ap Griffith ap-Robin ap-William ap-Rees ap-Evan," was the reply.

"Lazy fellows that you be!" said the Englishman, spurring up his horse, "to lie rolling in that hole, a half-a-dozen of you! Why in the name of common sense don't you help each other out?"

The original names of towns as well as the surnames of persons, have often a peculiar meaning.

Litchfield, for example, is really the *field of the dead*. *Litch* was the Saxon word for a dead body. A *lich* or *lych-gate* was the one in a church-yard through which the dead were carried to burial. Such gates may still be found in England. It is asserted in old traditions that in the time of Diocletian, a thousand Christians were put to death, and left unburied in a field, which is still pointed out near the city which grew up there, and received its name in consequence.

SLANDERS.—Look on slanderers as direct enemies to civil society; as persons without honor, honesty, or humanity. Whoever entertains you with the faults of others, designs to serve you in a similar manner.