

# THE DESERT WEEKLY

PIONEER PUBLICATION

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION.

ESTABLISHED

TRUTH AND LIBERTY

JUNE 1850.

NO 16.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1893.

VOL. XLVII.

## TRAVELING THROUGH SOUTHERN UTAH INTO ARIZONA.

### [EIGHTH LETTER.]

While it is in the province of an archaeologist to throw a great deal of light upon the history of an ancient people by making careful examinations of the remains they have left behind, it is a very difficult matter for him to form any idea of dates. Thus, when an attempt is made to tell the time when a people settled in a certain country, and how long they occupied it, and how many years have passed since they abandoned it, the results must be vague and uncertain. Probably there has not a single archaeologist made a study of the ruins of Central America and Mexico who has not in his own mind formed some idea as to the time that has elapsed since the Toltecs first entered those regions of country and the ages that have passed since they abandoned them; yet we find no two men who agree as to the length of those periods, while the differences between them extend over many centuries. It will thus be seen that while there are things that convey to us some idea of time, such as the ages of trees found growing upon ancient mounds, and the geological changes that have taken place since the abandonment of the old cities, we cannot form any satisfactory idea of time or dates except by reference to written history, and when that is lacking, the opinions or ideas of our best and most conservative students are very unsatisfactory.

Thus, when we try to form an idea of the time when the ancient people first reached the valleys of Arizona, and the length of time they remained in possession of the country, we find ourselves confronted with obstacles that we cannot surmount. It is clear to all who have studied the country that when the old people came here they did so in small numbers, that their growth and development in the country was slow and gradual. They do not seem to have owned the country occupied by any people, and the fact that afterwards they destroyed them must have come into the country at a later period. Everything indicates a long residence here; where the old canals were cut through the hard rock the latter has been worn smooth by the action of the water. On the Black Mesa, thirty-five miles below the

junction of the Salt and Gila rivers, there is an old canal that crosses a mesa of hard volcanic rock and falls a distance of about fifteen feet to a lower mesa. At the point where it leaves the upper mesa the water carried by the canal has cut into the hard rock several inches, smoothing and polishing it in a manner that has defied the effacing influences of time and the elements since the water has ceased to flow there. To have accomplished this, even with a large body of water flowing rapidly, must have required centuries. It has not been many years since this country was re-settled, probably twenty years at most; yet in that short time trees have been planted and sprung up of their own accord until now every canal everywhere is lined with them. In the olden days it is very probable that the same thing occurred. If so there must have been trees of immense size growing along some of the canals at the time when the people were destroyed and their cities abandoned. Yet the time between that abandonment and the arrival of the first white men was so great that all traces of a woody growth along the canals had disappeared. And it should be remembered that this country is so dry that timber would be preserved from decay for a long time.

The more I study the ruins and the history of the people, the more convinced I am that the cliff dwellers of Arizona and Utah were descendants of the old people who formerly inhabited the valleys, and who escaped the general destruction by fleeing to the mountains, and who for years eked out a miserable existence in the narrow valleys and deep gorges of the Colorado. Indeed, it is not improbable that the Mogul and Zuni Indians of the present day are degenerate descendants of the old race. There are many points of similarity between these people. Their pottery was designed and decorated much the same. They used stone implements identical in shape and finish. They cultivated the same kinds of grain and vegetables and domesticated the same kind of cattle.

The Zuni and Maricopa Indians of the present day preserve their history by means of what might be called historic families. There are families of this kind in every tribe. It is the duty of the head of the family to call his sons around him at stated times and rehearse to them the history of his people, as it has been rehearsed

to him and his forefathers for many generations. In this way I understand many things of importance connected with the history of the people has been preserved. Prof. Cushing remained with the Zunis for some years studying their history, and it is expected that when his book is published it will throw much light upon the past of that strange people.

I was told that the Maricopa Indians still preserve a tradition among them that at one time they lived in a country far to the south; that during their residence there the country was visited with a great drouth that dried up the rivers, destroyed their crops and threatened the people with utter destruction. During the drouth they sent forty of their men northward to look out another and better country to which they could emigrate. The party traveled northward a great distance and finally came upon a mountain south of the Salt river valley, and from which they could see the valley spread out before them like a map, covered everywhere with orchards and fields, among which the many canals wound in and out like threads of silver. Three of the party were selected to go down into the valley and reconnoiter, while the others remained on the mountain. Proceeding cautiously, they discovered the valley to be inhabited by a white people who wore beards, and by whom they were received and entertained kindly. After three days they returned to their companions on the mountains again and arranged that they should go back to their old home and collect all their people and return and take possession of the rich valley, while they would return to the valley and remain until the arrival of the army, arranging that a signal fire should be lit on a certain peak to give them warning. The program was carried out. The three returned to the valley and partook of the hospitality of the people while they spied out their strength and planned for their destruction. After many days the signal fire was seen on the mountain. The three hastened there, and found all their people prepared for war. During the night they led them into the valley, where they fell upon the unsuspecting inhabitants and destroyed them. For a while they fared well, but they were unaccustomed to irrigation and allowed the canals to go to decay, and gradually the country became parched and dry like the surrounding desert.