

RELICS OF THE "MOUND BUILDERS."

At the annual meeting of the Dav-
enport (Iowa) Academy of Natural
Sciences, the President read a very
interesting report of the progress of
the institution, in which extended
notice was given to the subject of
the Mound Builders of the Missis-
sippi Valley. The address shows
that they were a numerous and in-
dustrious people, altogether different
from the present race of American
Indians and occupying the country
in much earlier times than the lat-
ter; that they were of different tribes
but domestic in their habits; that
they lived in a very simple manner,
possessed few mechanical contriv-
ances, but were a laborious, pains-
taking people; that they had some
system of barter with neighboring
tribes, as shown by the occurrence in
the mounds of large sea shells,
which, the reader opined, at the
nearest, must have come from the
Gulf of Mexico; obsidian which must
have come from the Far West; mica,
not to be found in this region; ga-
lena, etc.

It appears too that they smoked
tobacco, not merely for pleasure, but
as a ceremonial observance, for the
pipes discovered are, in many in-
stances, very elaborately and beau-
tifully carved out of a great variety
of kinds of stone, generally of a
rather soft character, and were ap-
parently held in very high estima-
tion, perhaps almost sacred.

The report says:

"They are all in the Upper Missis-
sippi Valley, of the same general
type, having the flat, curved base,
which is perforated to serve as a
stem, and not at all adapted to retain
in the mouth for smoking continu-
ously; which fact, with the small-
ness of the bowl itself, would indi-
cate that it was to be used by pass-
ing from one to another of the per-
sons assembled."

This would indicate that the pre-
sent degenerate tribes obtained from
the more ancient race the custom of
smoking the calumet or pipe of
peace, which prevails even among the
lowest bands of Indians when hold-
ing councils or pow-wows on im-
portant matters.

The report says further on the sub-
ject of these pipes:

"They represent a great variety of
animal forms, some difficult to de-
termine, but among them are two,
well and distinctly representing the
elephant, though differing some-
what from each other in form and
position. These plainly and unmis-
takably show that the sculptors were
acquainted with the elephants (the
mammoth or mastodon) of which,
though long extinct, numerous re-
mains are found throughout this
country."

Readers of the Book of Mormon
will see in this, a corroboration of
the statement in that sacred book,
that there were elephants on this
land when the Jaredites colonized it,
which was at one time cited as proof
of the fallacy of the Book, as it was
not generally believed that elephants
were indigenous to America. We
quote from the report other para-
graphs which will be interesting as
corroborative of the Book of Mor-
mon:

"Strangest of all, and most con-
trary to the opinion of all archaeol-
ogists hitherto, it now appears that
the mound builders had a written
language. Whence derived, or
what its origin is matter of the mer-
est conjecture. What its affinities,
or whether any connection with
other written languages, ancient or
modern, no one has as yet been able
to determine.

The inscribed tablets in our mu-
seum, the only ones of much signifi-
cance or importance perhaps,
which have as yet been discovered
in the mounds, have attracted much
attention both in this country and
in Europe, and by all eminent and
well informed archaeologists, are con-
sidered of the highest importance.
They are certain to stimulate re-
search, which will doubtless lead to
further discoveries, until it may well
be hoped that the key to the lan-
guage may ultimately be discovered,
and something of a history of this
ancient people may be made out as
written by themselves.

Whether the language was under-
stood by all, or only by a more
learned few, or whether the tablets
were heirlooms and cherished relics,
cannot now be scarcely even
guessed.

A rather significant circumstance,
perhaps, is the fact that in the same

mound with the two tablets first
found were the bones of a young
child, partially preserved by the
contact of a large number—about
300—copper beads, indicating it to
be an important personage, and
that persons of high rank were
buried there.

Some doubts of course have been
expressed regarding the genuineness
of the tablets, though not to any
great extent by competent and can-
did archaeologists, and we feel no
uneasiness on that account.

The tablets have been sent to the
Smithsonian Institute for examina-
tion, and were retained there and
subjected to the most thorough scru-
tiny for two months, during which
time the National Academy of Sci-
ences held its meeting there, and the
heliotype plates of them were obtain-
ed under the directions of Prof. Baird
himself. They were also exhibited
throughout the sessions of the meet-
ings of the American Association for
the Advancement of Science at Bos-
ton last August.

Any author or other person who
cared to inform himself of the facts,
has and has always had ample op-
portunity to do so, and would at once
see that the circumstances of the
finding were such as utterly to pre-
clude all possibility of fraud or imposi-
tion.

The evidence that they are coeval
with the other relics, that is, that
they were inhumed with them and
before the mound was built, is ample
and conclusive, and will be so con-
sidered by any unbiased man.

No pre-historic relic ever found
has better evidence to establish its
genuineness than these, and not one
suspicious circumstance in connection
with them has been pointed out, nor
can there be.

We shall confidently hope for and
gladly welcome further discoveries
by whomsoever made, tending to
throw more light upon this still ob-
scure and intensely interesting prob-
lem, of our earliest predecessors on
this continent."

"Our collections of mound relics
now consists of the four inscribed
tablets, 32 mound builder's pipes, 25
copper axes, 300 copper beads, 14
copper awls, and a great number
and variety of other relics from the
mounds of this region, constituting
the most extensive, rare and unique
collection of its kind in this country,
and probably in the world. Besides
these, this department contains 225
vessels of ancient pottery, over 1,000
stone implements, and 10,000 of
flint, beside about an equal number
of broken ones and fragments worth
preserving."

This evidence is valuable, as it is
conclusive that the prehistoric in-
habitants of this country did, as de-
scribed in the Book of Mormon, make
records in a language which through
changes and admixtures was differ-
ent from others. The report says:

"During the last decade every
year has added something new and
strange to the silent testimonials of
the lives, the labors, and the vast
numbers of that mysterious people,
whose very memory has utterly
passed from the face of the earth.

From these relics a great deal has
been learned regarding the habits of
this people, and a wide spread and
intense interest awakened, and it is
not too much to say that our Aca-
demy has contributed a fair share
towards this result.

Though the knowledge consists
chiefly of a disjointed incoherent
mass of facts, scarcely sufficient
even now to warrant the enuncia-
tion of any very complete theory re-
garding them, yet sufficient data
have been accumulated to justify
some pretty strong inferences in
most of which, probably, nearly all
persons at all familiar with the sub-
ject will concur."

We are pleased to chronicle the
discoveries which, as the report de-
clares, have been so numerous dur-
ing the past ten years. For they
add to the immense mass of testi-
mony already accumulated, in sup-
port of the record which the Prophet
Joseph Smith translated by the
gift and power of God, and which is
the true key to the "intensely inter-
esting problem of our earliest prede-
cessors on this continent."

The "disjointed, incoherent mass
of facts" collected by antiquarians,
explorers and other persons, will
remain in that unsatisfactory con-
dition to the learned men of the age
until they are willing to accept the
revelation made by the Almighty,
which connects, harmonizes and
makes plain the otherwise hetero-
geneous mass of data which scien-
tific research has exhumed from the
buried past. And while the "wis-
dom of the wise" perishes or is hid,

the simple souls who exercise faith
in God rejoice in a knowledge of the
truth, and have a clear understand-
ing of that which puzzles the learn-
ed—proud in their own conceit—and
can take the developments of archæ-
ological experts, and fit them into
the place to which they belong in the
history of the ancient inhabitants of
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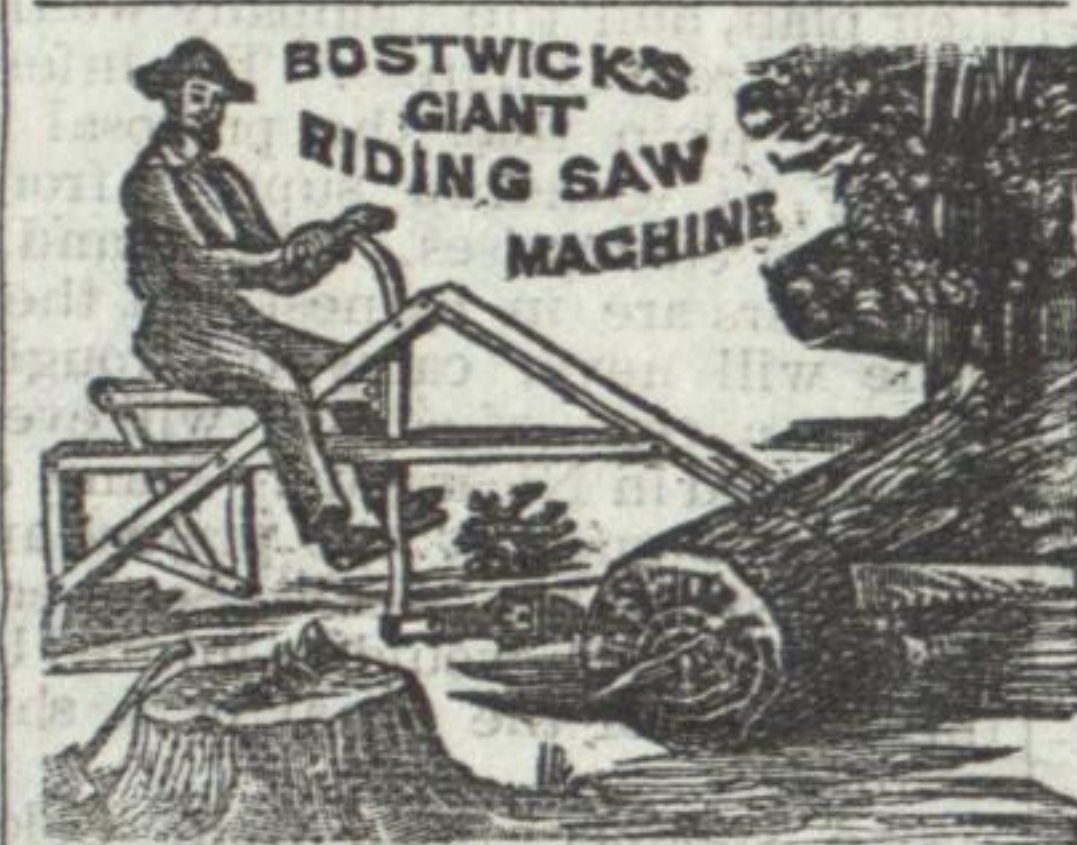
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