IN SIGN AND PICTURE

Examination of the Writings in Clear Creek Canyon.

PARAGOONAH RUINS EXPLORED.

A Utah Boy, in Love with American Antiquities, Starts on an Extended Tour.—Who Left These Signs?

Correspondence Deseret News.

Since my early boyhood I have read of the wonderful sights to be seen in Arizona, of the great canyon of the Colorado, the great petrified forests, the ancient Mexican cities with their quaint old churches, and last, but not least, of the numerous ruins of an ancient people that at one time inhabited its broad valleys. For years the mere mention of these topics has been sufficient to awaken my interest and arouse my undivided attention. No wonder then then that I should wish to visit so interesting a country. To stand upon some ancient ruin, to look down upon the work of an extinct people, and study the civilization of an almost forgotten race was the dream of my boyhood and the great desire of my more mature years.

After years of waiting my wishes took definite shape at last, and on June 19th I left Logan in company with H. E. Baker to make the trip. We were to travel overland by team, and were therefore equipped with all the paraphernalia necessary to a successful camp life. Our route took us through the most interesting parts of Utah. South of Provo the character of the country seems to undergo a change. With one or two exceptions the mountains are not so high and are not so abrupt and are mostly covered with scrub cedar and pinion or nut-bearing pine. When you leave Utah valley you leave behind the broad continuous stretches of green fields and thereafter only find them in spots, sort of oases in the desert of dry, barren hills and plains that surround them.

Our first lay through Nephi and the Juab valley, thence through a hilly country past Payette and Gunnison, and down the whole length of the beautiful lower valley with its pretty little towns, its well cultivated farms, its valuable stone quarries, its salt mines, and its vast tracts of sheep. To the latter is attributed the desolate appearance of the mountains for while the valley at this season is green and beautiful the mountains look barren and dry, rendered so by the numerous flocks that range upon them. From Juab City we passed up the Clear creek canyon and over the mountain to the old Cove Fort. The canyon is full of interest. A large stream of clear cold water leaps and dashes over the immense boulders on its way to the valley below. On either side are high cliffs of sandstone that in some places approach each other so closely that there is scarcely room for the creek and the wagon road. In these narrow defiles the Rio Grande Railway company engraded a road with a view to holding the right of way should they wish to build through there at some future day.

It was in this region that we first met with tangible evidences of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country. No very extensive ruins of remains have been found in the newer valleys, but there are several places where evidences are found of the existence of villages, and old irrigation ditches can be traced in different directions, while broken pottery and implements are found scattered about.

Old Sheegyphics are met with on the cliffs in the canyons hereabouts, and we were told to be on the lookout for them just after going up the canyon several miles and not finding any we inquired of a boy that we met where the sheegyphics were located. He looked on a puzzled expression. He evidently did not understand. We explained that they were marks on the rocks made by the ancient Indians. His face brightened up he understood all right now. "Oh, yes," said he, "down there by Sam Robinson's there's a train of cars and lots of things they cut on the rocks long ago."

After a while we found the Sheegyphics, lots of them. They are mostly on the face of the cliff, six or eight feet above the ground, and are cut into the rock with some crude instrument, probably a flint knife or stone axe. They are made to represent deer, mountain sheep, lizards, arrow and spear heads, sun dials, concentric circles, grotesque human beings, and a great variety of marks and signs whose meaning or object we were not able to guess out. Some were deep, some were but half cut, and others were simply outlines and usually terminated in a square or circle. These I took to represent roads through the various canyons to the valleys beyond, and were probably guides to the traveler. Almost every mile of Paragoonah every cliff for a distance of ten miles or more through the canyon was covered with ancient marks or hieroglyphics of some kind. There were also a great many ancient dwellings and if we were to judge the mental standard of the Indian from these picture-writing on the rocks we would say that the Indian now was far superior to the ancients.

To point of antiquity it is difficult to form an idea as to how old these writings are. I could say more made at all old times and others long gone by, but that they were all executed by the same people. At first we were inclined to attribute a great antiquity to them, for the reason that they were all cut in sandstone and appeared to be more or less of a whole piece, in fact such as we suppose the ancients of the modern Indians to have made. Neither do we attribute much importance to them, but were of the opinion that they were executed by young Indians in succession. This we mind the more probable from the fact that the rock is so soft that with an ordinary pocket knife it would not be a very difficult undertaking to imitate them.

Those seeking Clear Creek I have been found to change my mind as to the antiquity of the writings and now attribute to them a greater antiquity than I was at first willing to do for the following reasons: When first seen by the white people forty or fifty years ago the writings were about the same as now. That is, they bore the same air of antiquity and the outlines of some of them have not changed. I guess I noticed that portions of the rock, which were, no doubt, firm when the writings were placed upon them, have since crumbled away and fallen down. Then, I thought from the fact that they seemed to avoid the softer rocks was an indication that the ancients either had the technique or possessed the tools necessary to do the work; but I have since seen similar writings chipped in the surface of the hardest granite rocks, so hard in fact that an ordinary chisel would hardly make an impression upon them. So that, when it may have been an easy matter to have gouged out the extensive writings in Clear Creek canyon, it was correspondingly laborious and difficult to do the work on the granite blocks of the Rio Virgen; and while it is just possible that japanese may have executed some of the writings in Clear Creek canyon for amusement, it will hardly do to apply the same rule to the Sheegyphics on the Clara and Virgin; japanese are not constituted that way. Similar writings are met with in other parts of the country that are known to be from two to three thousand years old, and much older for aught we know. That the Sheegyphics have a symbolical meaning can hardly be doubted when it is known that writings almost identical with those are found in Peru, Yucatan, Colombia, Mexico and other parts of the country. So that, notwithstanding the fact that they were the work of a crude people, it can hardly be doubted that they had some meaning and that that meaning was not confined to the Indians of Utah alone, but was known and understood by their red brethren as far away as the confines of Bolivia.

Western Utah bears no evidence of having been very densely populated in ancient times. While there are evidences in many places of villages and a settled life, there is only one place that bears evidence of having been long settled by an agricultural people. This was about Paragoonah, in Iron county. The mounds or ruins are situated just outside the town, along the road that goes towards Beaver. They are irregularly distributed over an area of probably 160 acres, and consists of what appears to be mere heaps of earth thrown up promiscuously, varying in size from 25 to 35 feet in 45 by 100 feet, and in feet 8 feet from 6 to fifteen feet. While the mounds appear to be mere heaps of earth thrown together, in contrast with the tumuli mounds I have seen in the Mississippi valley, yet when they are uncovered, well preserved walls are found, so that it is a very easy matter to trace the plan of the ancient house. At different times since the settlement of the country by the Mormons, interested men have made excavations into the mounds with a view of learning something about their builders, but outside of some broken pottery and some charred bones and ashes, nothing of importance was ever discovered. Last winter Don Magalre came down and made some extensive excavations and unearthed nine or ten well-preserved skeletons and some few stone implements, axes, etc.

The large mound where Mr. Magalre made his excavations seems to have been the principal building of the town and was probably a temple as well as a place of general resort in case of attack. It faced the east and corresponded very nearly to the cardinal points. It was rectangular in form and had an open court in the center around which were duplicate rows of small rooms. It was in the court that Mr. Magalre found the skeletons. At first I supposed from the size and height of the mounds that the buildings must have been two or more stories high, but afterwards I was led to change my mind on this point. Mr. Magalre opened up several of the small rooms running the walls and in doing the rubbish to the floor. This floor level was about eight or ten feet above the level of the plain. We dug through the floor and under the walls and discovered that the ground had been raised to that height before the building had been constructed. Continuing onward, we penetrated layer after layer of ashes, and charcoal and ashes, until the level of the plain was reached. The layers of ashes ranged in thickness from half an inch to three inches, and in them were found ancient bones, broken pottery, and fragments of stone implements. The bones found in the lower mound were badly decayed and seemed to be much more than those found in the upper mound. Just above the plain we found several pieces of what appeared to be fragments of burned tiles. They certainly were as near to it as some bricks and had been made so by the agency of fire.

This led us to the opinion that the value had been twice inhabited, and that the later people had built their houses on the ruins of the former, and that long in turn had been abandoned or driven away. Everything about the place indicates gloriously that a state of war existed when they were destroyed. Here existed a settled community well advanced in the arts of civilized life. They built houses, cultivated fields of corn and squash, irrigated them with water brought from the mountain streams in canals that are still discernible. In the midst of the peaceful life they were pounced upon by their enemies; they were driven into their houses and murdered; fire was then set to the buildings, and the remains of the inhabitants, charred and burned, were covered by the falling walls. The skeleton found by Mr. Magalre had their tomahawks by its side, the tomahawk instrument of war, and they uncovered quiltons that would indicate that they had been slain on the spot where they were found. Very few if any whole pieces of pottery have been found in the ruins, and the scarcity of flint arrow heads is noticeable. It seems probable that the conquerors carried off or spoiled everything of the nature that they could make use of.

The walls of the buildings were all at one but think and were made of flat, sized rocks to be evenly laid in the same principal as we erect our concrete or cement houses. A layer from twelve to sixteen inches thick was placed upon the wall and left to dry and bake in the sun. When this was done another layer was added, and the drying process was repeated until the walls was raised to the required height. The floors were of a soft cement made of clay and gravel, and I believe was hardened by the agency of fire. All any rate they were very hard and must have lasted without replacing for a great many years. Some of the pottery found was ornamented with rude designs and finish, indicating that the makers were experts at the business. The decorations were mostly painted with black and resembled very much the decorations in vogue among the Maricopa Indians of Los present day.

It is difficult to form any idea as to the age of the ruins, when they were first erected, how long they were inhabited or how long since they were destroyed. In my opinion these people must have covered centuries, but how many I am not able to say. From the worn step stones that I saw, I would suppose that the buildings were occupied a long time. We shall have occasion to refer to this subject in a future letter.

JOEL RICHE.

Differences of Opinion About Asparagus.

It is worthwhile to see all agents regard to the superiority of various asparagus. There appears to be a fair consensus of opinion that there is but one variety, and that the marked varieties are only improved strains brought about by careful selection of seed and improved cultivation. Asparagus, unlike the varieties of most other vegetables does not distinguish the different sorts by color, form, or size of seed and other characteristic compounds, and when removed from the favorable conditions that have developed a superiority in the plant it deteriorates. Asparagus is a dioecious plant—that is to say, the male or staminate flowers and the female or pistillate flowers are on separate roots. The latter only bear seed, and these seeds will not be fertile unless the flower has impregnated by the pollen of the female.

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