

**FOOT-PRINTS OF  
VANISHED RACES IN THE  
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649586066

Foot-Prints of Vanished Races in the Mississippi Valley by A. J. Conant

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

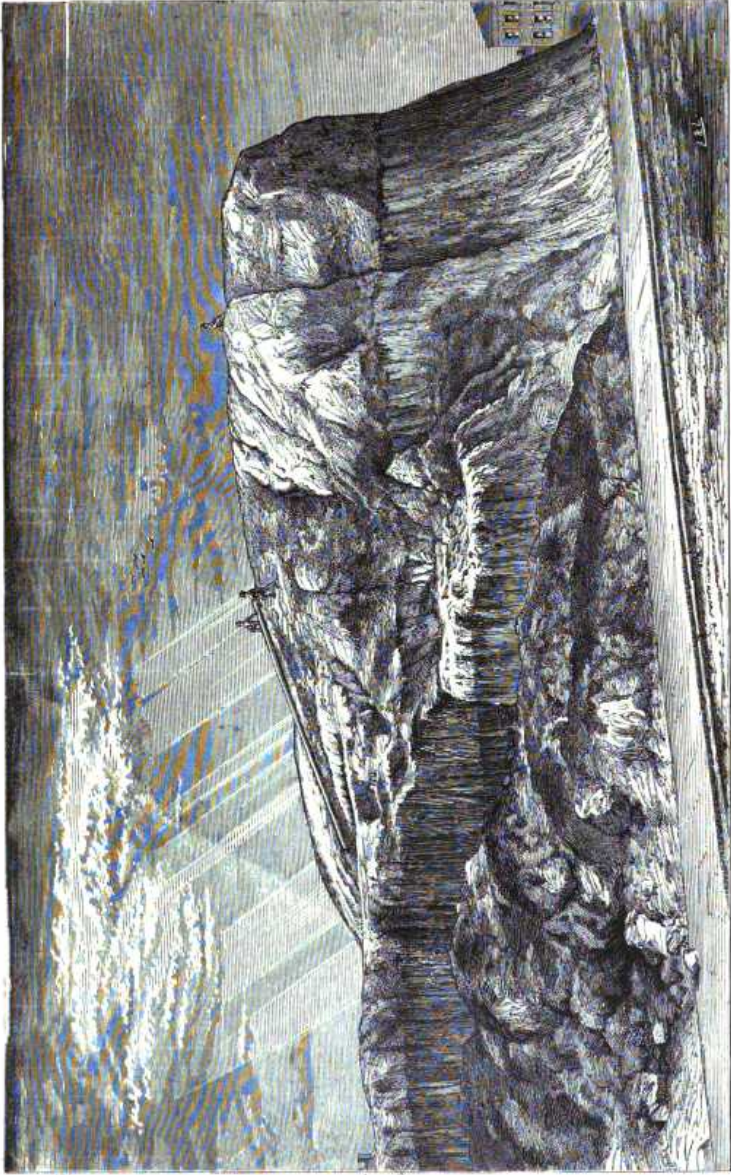
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**A. J. CONANT**

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THE BIG MOUND AT ST. LOUIS, 1869

*Prehistoric man.*

FOOT-PRINTS  
—OF—  
VANISHED RACES

—IN THE—  
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY;

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF SOME OF THE MONUMENTS AND RELICS OF  
PRE-HISTORIC RACES SCATTERED OVER ITS SURFACE, WITH  
SUGGESTIONS AS TO THEIR ORIGIN AND USES.

*Albert Jackson*

By A. J. CONANT, A. M.,

*Member of the St. Louis Academy of Science, and of the American Association  
for the Advancement of Science.*

ST. LOUIS:  
CHANCY R. BARNES.  
1879. *J+*

Checked  
May 1913

## PREFACE.

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The first organized effort for the study and preservation of the antiquities of this continent was the formation of THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, which was incorporated by Act of the Legislature of Massachusetts in October, 1812. A goodly number of distinguished scholars of that State were immediately enrolled as members, as well as many other learned men residing in other States, who were made corresponding members. In 1821 this Society published its first volume of "Transactions."

Although nearly all the accounts of the expeditions of the earlier explorers of the continent of North America contained notes of striking memorials, which were met with in their journeys, such as mounds, embankments, fortifications and the like, still, all such notices were too meagre and superficial to give them any special scientific value.

Through the labors of the American Antiquarian Society, the attention of the scientific world was first called to the countless, and often imposing memorials of pre-historic America, and their proper study began.

More than three-score years have now passed since the date of the organization referred to, during which time volume after volume has appeared upon the subject. Accounts of special surveys, by private individuals and State geologists, have multiplied every year. Scientific associations all over the land, as well as numerous Archæological Societies formed for this specific purpose, have given the subject unremitting and serious attention. The Smithsonian Institute has also expended large sums of money in

exploration and in publishing the accounts of the multiplied discoveries of observers employed by that noble institution. Nor has the interest in the subject been confined to America. Some of the wisest archæologists of Europe have written learnedly upon the works and migrations of the ancient inhabitants of both continents of America.

Notwithstanding all this labor and study, the great questions continually repeated, which were suggested when our antiquities were first noticed, still remain unanswered; namely: Who were the authors of these works? What was their origin, and what were the causes of their disappearance? Were they the red men found in possession of the continent at the time of its discovery? I am not aware that the opinion that the red men were the authors of the most extensive works, though maintained by some scholars of high repute, is held by any who have given them personal and thorough examination. The earlier travellers who stumbled upon them in the wilderness, or on the prairie, express their astonishment at their magnitude and the skill displayed in their erection. Captain Carver, in the account of his travels in the years 1766-'7-'8, describes what he was convinced was a military work, which he accidentally discovered upon the bank of Lake Pepin. This was long before it was known that America had any antiquities. Concerning it he says that "its form was somewhat circular, and its flanks reached the river. Though much defaced by time, every angle was distinguishable, and appeared as regular and fashioned with as much military skill as if planned by Vauban himself." Again: "I was able to draw certain conclusions of its great antiquity." "How a work of this kind could exist in a country that has hitherto (according to generally-received opinion) been the seat of war to untutored Indians alone, whose whole stock of military knowledge has only, till within two centuries, amounted to drawing the bow, and



whose only breastwork, even at present, is the thicket, I know not."

His testimony is selected from that of a multitude of early writers, because he could not have been prejudiced by the preconceived opinions or notions of others, and also because he was a man of military training, being a captain in the British army, whose conclusions would not be mere guess-work. The judgment of Brackenridge, Atwater, William Wirt and many other distinguished men, is in perfect agreement upon this point, namely: that they could not have been built by the Indians, as we know them, nor any people in like condition.

The first important question to be decided—if, indeed, it can be—is the origin of the North American Indians. Was their original home in Asia? and did they, as many believe, make their way to this continent across Behring's Straits, or the Aleutian Islands? In the solution of this question, the student of Archæology bespeaks the aid of the Philologist.

Archæology, Geology and Paleontology have been called three sister sciences. Philology must be added to the sisterhood, at least as far as American pre-historic times are concerned, as it may be that the lamp of this younger sister may light the footsteps of the elder to the final results of ethnological investigation. Should there be discovered some radical affinity between a few of the forty stock languages of the red men of North America and their physically-related brethren of North-western Asia, the question, it would seem, would be settled.

No one who has not previously examined the antiquities of the vanished races who once dwelt upon this continent, can have any adequate idea of their magnitude and extent; and he who has seen them as they lie thickly scattered throughout the fertile valleys of the Western States, is surprised at the evidence they

present of a prodigious population which once swarmed in this wide domain.

The Cahokia group of mounds in the American Bottom, six miles from St. Louis, may aid in illustrating the statement. There are in this group, beside smaller ones, at least a dozen in close propinquity; any one of which, if standing alone, would be a striking feature of the landscape. Just west of Monk's Mound, the largest of the group, is one which is perhaps fifteen to twenty feet in height. On the flat surface of the top stands a good-sized farm-house, with necessary out-buildings and conveniences, and plenty of room for a variety of fruit trees, and an ample vegetable garden. This is not the only one so occupied, and there are near this one several others much larger and more conspicuous; while all of them look diminutive, and may be compared to ant-hills beside that King of Mounds which stands near the northern center of the group. Directly north of this great work are satisfactory evidences of a large artificial lake, the dirt taken from which was presumably used in building the mounds. The form and size of the lake can best be made out just after the Cahokia creek, which flows through it, has been swollen by heavy rains.

Having his home in the center of the great valley where these works abound, and looking upon some of them almost every day of his life, the writer has been impelled to note the facts which came under his own observation, and to venture, concerning them, a few conclusions. The conclusions may be valueless; but if he who causes two blades of grass to grow where but one grew before, is a benefactor, truly, he who contributes a new fact to the sum of human knowledge, should be considered in the same light: for the after times alone can reveal the value of the contribution, and that which is least in all earthly kingdoms sometimes becomes the greatest. In the desire to do what he could to advance the study of a science so deeply interesting to himself,

the writer commits these chapters to the public, making no claim to originality beyond the accounts of his own explorations of the mounds and caves therein contained.\*

It should be noticed that this memoir has already appeared in the voluminous work, entitled, "The Commonwealth of Missouri," and as there has been, ever since the appearance of that work, much inquiry from various quarters, particularly outside of Missouri, for the Archæological portion, and by those who had no special interest in the local history of our State, and therefore did not care to incur the expense of purchasing so costly a work as the Commonwealth, it has seemed best, without further delay, to reprint the work from the original plates, as it first appeared in the history referred to. This statement will explain the frequent allusions which will be noticed, to that work.

A. J. C.

\* It may not be amiss to state, also, that an additional interest may attach to the subject-matter of this work, because it is the result of explorations in an entirely new field, concerning which nothing has before been published. The account of every new "find" in the Archæological field always elicits the attention of scientists all over the world. This is illustrated by the fact that a short paper upon the mounds in Southeast Missouri, read by the author of this book at a meeting of the St. Louis Academy of Science, and published in its transactions, has been translated and republished in France, Germany, Austria and Denmark.