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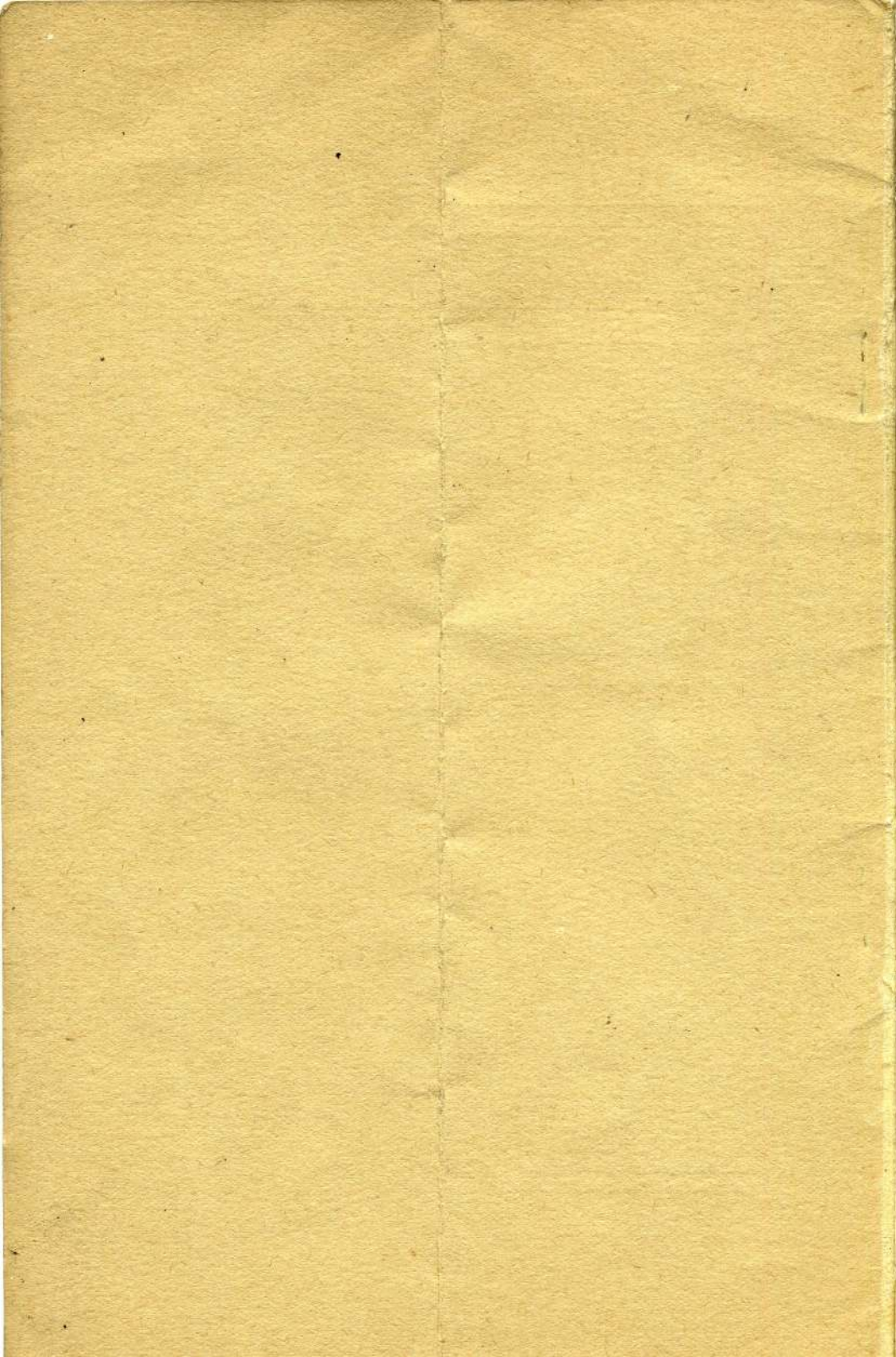
A PAPER READ BEFORE THE

*West Virginia Historical and  
Antiquarian Society....*

BY  
DR. J. P. HALE,  
PRESIDENT.

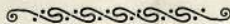
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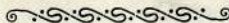
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## LOCAL ARCHÆOLOGY.

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### OPENING MOUND ON TWENTY-MILE CREEK.

*A*CTING under a resolution of the Executive Board of the West Virginia Historical and Antiquarian Society, requesting me to visit and open several of the ancient mounds in the valley and to examine, measure and report upon some curious, ancient stone walls on the high ridges in the upper Kanawha Valley, I went, first—in September last—to a mound on the waters of Gauley, accompanied by Col. B. W. Byrne, from this city, and Maj. W. H. Hill, of Gauley Bridge, on whose land the mound is situate, and who had kindly given the Society permission to open it. Maj. Hill had believed this mound to be entirely of stone and so represented it to me, which being very unusual, excited more interest and curiosity in its examination. Upon digging into it, however, it was found to be an earth mound covered with stone, to the depth of about four feet at the top, thinning out to no stone half way down the sides, the balance being so covered with leaves and debris that a careless observation did not reveal its composition, whether earth or stone. The whole mound was covered with a growth of sassafras trees and other



brush, briars, etc. It was a beautiful symmetrical cone about ten feet in height.

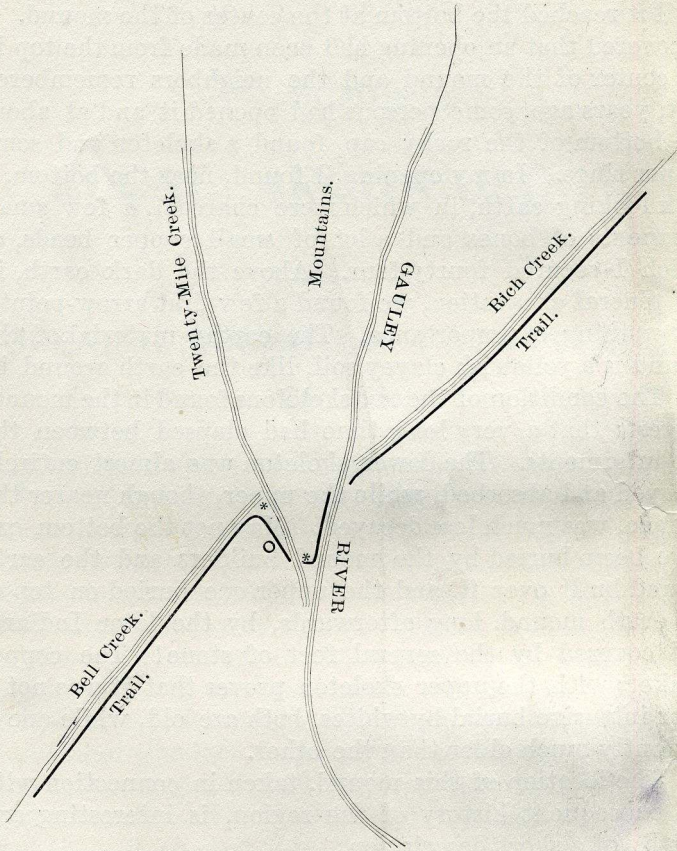
In opening the mound I drove a cut about three feet wide, commencing near the base and sinking gradually until it reached the bottom at the center of the mound. I discovered that an opening had been made from the top in the center of the mound and the neighbors remembered that, years ago, some persons had opened it and at about the bottom of the rocky cap, found a skeleton and some copper rings. In my opening, I found, near the bottom, a dark looking earth, in which were charcoal, a few small fragments of bones and a lot of small copper beads, of which I secured forty-four. Above the dark earth, in the general excavation, we found a few flint arrow-points, but nothing of importance. The earthy material of the mound is a yellowish clayey soil, like the earth around it.

The condition of the two skeletons found in the mound, suggests that a very long time had elapsed between the two interments. The lower skeleton was almost entirely decayed and absorbed, while the upper, though nearer the surface, was much less decayed. May not the bottom one have been buried by the mound builders and the earth mound built over it, and the upper one buried on top of the earth mound, long afterwards, by the later Indians, and covered by the several feet of stone! The copper trinkets with the upper skeleton proves that it was not a later intrusive burial by whites, both are old, while one is evidently much older than the other.

The location of this mound, taken in connection with the subsequent history of the region, is interesting and worthy of a short description.



The accompanying rough sketch will give an idea of the topography of the region :



\* \*—Mounds.

O—Circular earth enclosure.



It is well known that the wild races preceding the whites, located their trails with some degree of intuitive engineering skill, over the shortest routes and easiest grades, generally following streams and ridges, where practicable. The Ohio Indians in making their raids on the then western border white settlements of Jackson and Greenbrier rivers, are known to have traveled this Gauley river, Rich creek, Meadow creek route, having found it impracticable to follow New river through the canons from Gauley up.

When the whites first possessed the country, and as long as they confined their methods of locomotion to foot travel and even horse, they adopted the Indian trails as the best routes. Mathew Arbuckle, the first white man known to have come from the Greenbrier settlements to Kanawha, came over this route in 1764; the VanBibbers and Aldersons, the Kelleys, Morrises and Flinns, came over it in 1773; Gen. Lewis' army came over it in 1774. After Clendenin's settlement at Charleston, Mad Ann Bailey made her famous and perilous ride back and forth over this route, to bring ammunition from the fort at Lewisburg to Clendenin's fort, and many of the early settlers of this valley came over this route.

It is quite probable that at first the route was from the mouth of Rich creek down Gauley to the mouth, and thence down the Kanawha, but it soon got to be understood that across a big ridge opposite the mouth of Rich creek was a creek (Bell creek) in a line with Rich creek, but flowing in the opposite direction, and that by turning the point of this ridge at the mouth of Twenty Mile creek and going up Twenty Mile creek to the mouth of Bell creek, they had, with the exception of this detour, almost a straight line down Rich and up Bell creek to the heads of Campbell's creek, Kelley's creek and Hughes' creek, down either of which they could come to the Kanawha. The location of these mounds, for there is a second smaller mound in the upper angle of the junction of Gauley and Twenty Mile creek, while the larger one (the one opened) is in the

lower angle of Twenty Mile and Bell creek—suggests that they may have been intended to serve a double purpose, first, as places of burial, and second as landmarks at these sharp angles of their otherwise nearly straight trail. Not far from midway between the two mounds and the two angles mentioned, in a little bottom on the Twenty Mile, is a circular earthen enclosure, now nearly obliterated by long plowing and cultivation of the field.

In the face of a cliff facing Bell creek, near the opened mound, some human skeletons were found a number of years ago, and under a cliff facing Twenty Mile, not far below, some handsome earthenware pottery and a carved pipe were recently found. They came into the hands of Mrs. David Eagan, of this city, an enthusiastic archaeologist, who deposited them in the museum of our Society.

A part of a much rusted sword was found under the cliff near here many years ago. It is thought possible that it was lost or broken and left at a camping place by some officer of Gen. Lewis' army; this with an ancient ornamented pipe and some other relics, were presented by Maj. W. H. Hill to our museum. Mr. David Hill, who lives in the immediate vicinity of the mound, had picked up from time to time, a number of handsome flint implements, also presented them to the Society, together with the razor of his grandfather, the famous Tice VanBibber, the long time friend and companion of Daniel Boone, while he lived in this valley.

I will mention here that the black flint ledge, a prominent feature and well known land mark in this valley, and the material from which the Primitive races made their arrow-heads, knives, tools and other implements, is probably better developed here than at any other place in this valley; it is darker, closer grained, and of closer texture than I have ever seen it elsewhere. It was evidently very extensively worked hereabouts, as broken and unfinished implements and flint chips strew the ground abundantly.



## EXAMINATION OF ANCIENT STONE WORKS ON MOUNTAINS EAST OF PAINT CREEK.

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ON the 26th of October, last, I started up to Paint creek, about thirty miles above Charleston, on the south side of the Kanawha river, accompanied by John Cole, Jr., surveyor, to examine some prehistoric stone walls, about which there are many conflicting reports and much mystery.

These stone works are on the high ridge east of Paint creek, which trends nearly due south back from the river. The existence of these walls has been known nearly ever since the valley has been settled by whites, though comparatively few people ever see them. They are on a very high ridge, 1600 feet above river level, very steep and very rugged. The majority of those who have seen them have been bear hunters, bee hunters, seng diggers, and an occasional party of surveyors running some of the old lines of the large coal and timber tracts of the region. None of these classes are noted for closeness of observation or accuracy of report, outside of their special business. Those who saw anything, reported what they saw from one standpoint and guessed at what they didn't see. These various reports when they got into second and third hands and beyond, became exaggerated, conflicting and unreliable. To get at the exact facts, nothing was left but to go especially to see and examine the works.

We climbed up the end of the mountain just back of Mount Carbon, and followed the long, narrow, sharp ridge, southward for about one and one-half miles, where we came to the first wall of stone crossing the ridge at right angles. Instead of being a built up wall, as generally reported, we found it simply a ridge or winrow of stones, piled up irregularly and loosely, 12 to 15 feet wide at bottom and 3 to 4 feet high. We followed the wall down the



west side of the steep mountain for about 200 feet, where it ended at the top of one end of a rock cliff some 6 or 8 feet high. This served as a wall for about 50 feet along the side of the mountain; at the other end of the cliff the wall does not continue; but there is, instead, an abundance of loose stones, which some of the party thought was the material of the wall which had slipped and rolled down, or had been knocked down by timber getters rolling saw logs against the wall. I do not think either explanation correct. There are several similar aggregations of stones in gaps between actual walls. They appear to me more like an assembling of loose stones on the ground, preparatory to building the wall. Finding no wall or assembled stones for some distance after this, we went up a large ravine which spreads out into a beautiful cove near the top of the ridge. There are 25 or 30 acres of rich looking land in the cove, covered with a heavy growth of very large timber; there is also a growth of very peculiar and unusual grass, which the natives say that deer are especially fond of and come here to feed upon.

In this cove, some 25 or 30 feet from the top of the ridge, we found the two so-called round towers, or forts. One is simply an oval pile of stones, somewhat like a turtle back, about 20 feet in diameter at the base and 3 feet high in the middle. A large poplar tree,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet in diameter, has grown up within this pile of stones, pushing the stones aside. This tree is now dead and fallen. The other fort is 40 to 50 yards from this, and is a circular ridge of stones about 33 feet in diameter, the current report is that this has been a round tower 20 feet high. I think it is a mere ridge of stone built in circular form. If the stones were built into a wall I don't think it would make a wall over 3 or 4 feet high. In the edge of this ridge of stone is a live, standing poplar tree,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet in diameter. Following the ridge southward from here, we came to a second wall, crossing the ridge at right angles. This wall or ridge of stone was larger than the first; it is 25 to 30 feet wide at the base and 5 feet high, composed of heavy stones of



irregularly rectangular shape; one that I was sitting on measured  $3\frac{1}{2}$  by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet and 7 or 8 inches thick, and they ranged down from this to say 12 by 15 by 6 inches. Many of these stones must have required three or four men to handle them, and they were probably brought from considerable distances, and from lower levels with very great labor. The builders, no doubt, gathered all the loose stones on the surface, along the ridge, as the absence of stones on the surface now indicates; (one of our party remarked that there is not a stone left big enough to throw at a bird). But it seems impossible that there should have been that quantity of stone and of that character and size on the top of a—mostly—narrow ridge. I estimated that if the stone in the wall or ridge at this place were built into a masonry wall it would make a wall 25 feet high by 3 feet at bottom and 1 foot at top.

We took kodak pictures of this and many other interesting points along the walls; but, unfortunately, the woods were afire and the air so loaded with smoke that they would not develop.

The elevation of the ridge above river level, at this wall, is 1450 feet. The elevation at the first wall is 1350, and the highest point of the ridge between is 1600 feet, measured by pocket aneroid.

Looking down the eastern side of the mountain from this stone crossing, the wall ran in a northeastwardly direction until lost to sight by the brush and uneven ground.

We followed it on the west side of the mountain, running northwestwardly; but in about 132 yards it ceased, and for some distance there was no wall nor assembled stone, until, nearing a little ridge or spur, running up and down the mountain, we came to another section of wall that ran across that spur and into the ravine that leads up to the so-called round towers, where it again ceased.

I was unable to follow the surveying party for the next two days, but they reported to me that they followed the mountain ridge beyond the crossing of the last men-

tioned wall, and at about 1776 yards came to a third wall crossing the ridge at right angles, as the others. This wall extended down the side of the mountain, east and west, for about 74 yards, when they ceased. Following the main ridge, which bears to the right, or nearly westward, they found still another wall (No. 4), about 1045 yards from the last. This, like the last, goes down the mountain sides, right and left, only about 70 yards and ceases. Between these two last cross walls, on the west side of the ridge, about 100 feet from the top and 75 feet apart, are three large piles of stone, the use of which can not be guessed. At the point A, not far from the last wall, is a circle, about 6 feet in diameter, of flag stones, set in the ground and standing about 10 inches above ground. At point B is a cave in the rocks; the men crawled into it, going about 6 feet down and 20 feet horizontally. The chainmen say that some of their neighbors found a bear in it some winters ago, in a state of hibernation; they dragged him out and made meat of him.

At point C is a water hole which affords but little water, but never goes dry. It has the appearance of having been much stamped and has, no doubt, been visited by the wild animals from the indefinite past.

Beyond the last wall mentioned the surveyors explored the ridges up to Powellton, 6 miles from the river, without finding any more stone walls or works, except the little stone circle marked A on the map.

Returning, they found a known spring or water hole, between the first and second walls. It is on the west side of the ridge near the "round towers." It is on sloping ground and the dirt on the upper side seems to have been dug and scraped to and piled up around the lower side, forming a saucer-like basin, about 20 feet in diameter and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 feet deep. Nearly in the center is a well hole about 6 feet in diameter and 4 feet deep. It has never been known to be dry. No water was then running from it, but it was the dryest season ever known. The hole is full of mud, leaves and water, but the small supply of



water, this dry season, was absorbed by the surrounding earth, leaving no surplus to run over.

On the third day the surveying party finished up by an examination of the walls on the east side of the mountain, supposed to connect the cross ridge walls, one and two, and the cross walls, three and four. Following down the wall from cross wall No. 1 they found it to cease at about 66 yards. Going on in the supposed direction of the wall they came to several patches of what I have called assembled stone, loosely gathered in line, but not piled up in a ridge. Going on they passed three of these patches of assembled rocks and the 4 intervening blank spaces, they came to the end of the wall we had seen going down from cross wall No. 2, and followed it 132 yards to the top of the ridge, there, in like manner they followed the wall, the loose patches of stones and the intervening blank spaces between cross walls Nos. 3 and 4.

This finished up the examination of the works on the mountain. We heard, among the neighbors in the valley, many wonderful stories about what had been seen in connection with these walls on the mountain; most of them were too absurd to credit; but one, being positively stated by several sensible men, I was induced to look into it, as all the neighbors seemed to be firmly convinced of its truth. The rumor was that Mr. H., a seng digger for more than 30 years all over those mountains, had found a stone table, near these walls, and knew just where to go to it. After discussing with the chain carriers, experienced mountaineers, the ways and means of getting it down the mountain, and concluding that it could be gotten down on a sled with long lines, I rode ten miles to interview the seng digger, and learn its whereabouts. When I found him, I asked him if he knew of a stone table up among the stone walls? "No," said he; "is there one?" "Why," said I, "they say you are the man who found it and know where it is." "No," said he, "I never heard of it, and of course never saw it." Interviewing him further, he replied that he had been familiar with all the mountains

“round about here” for thirty years; there were no other stone works on the mountains we had explored, but there was a smaller stone enclosure on the opposite or west side of Armstrong creek at the head of Bear branch, about 8 miles from the river. He thinks it encloses an area of about 3 acres; says it could not have been enclosed for cultivation, as it is a steep, rough, conical point. He knows of no caves or rock houses near, in which people might have lived; has never seen any evidences of burial places or human remains; found no flint implements or other relics near the wall; says the wall is continuous around the mountain peak; thinks it is about 3 feet high, but pointing to a retaining wall by the creek, he said it was about such a wall as that. The retaining wall was about 2 feet high and 2 feet wide. I was too much worn out by my experiences on the other mountain to venture to climb this; but Mr. H. is an intelligent man, and is said to be a truthful and reliable man. Mr. B., at whose house I had been staying, promised that he would go up to and see it and report to me, but he has not done so.

I visited and examined, in the little valley of Armstrong creek, about a mile from its mouth, the foundation, (all that is now left) of an ancient circular building, possibly a fort, which was about 50 feet in diameter. Mr. B. says that the late Dr. Buster, who came to the valley in 1818, told him that when he came, the fort was 12 feet high; but he, Buster, being of a practical and utilitarian turn, tore it down and hauled away 400 wagon loads of it to build a stone fence, and the Armstrong Creek R. R. took the balance of it to build retaining walls to protect their road. Thus has been sacrificed to petty utilitarian uses, one of the most interesting prehistoric relics in our valley.

Now that the ancient stone works on top of the Paint creek mountain have been carefully examined, measured and mapped (I am using approximate measures in this paper; the surveyors' measures are exact), the varied and conflicting rumors about their size, character and extent must give way to known facts, and all the rumors, theories



and guesses as to their origin, purpose and uses, should, in my opinion, be totally dismissed; there is not one of them which an investigation of the walls, the grounds and the surroundings will not refute and dispel.

It is commonly reported and believed that there is one large enclosure, surrounded by a continuous wall; the fact is there are two partial enclosures—the vacant spaces between walls far outmeasuring the walls. These two partial enclosures are 1776 yards apart between their exterior walls on the top of the ridge. The long diameter of the first enclosure is 1045 yards, and of the second 1045 yards. If the walls were continuous around both the partial enclosures, there would be about 3 miles of wall.

The common belief is, that all these walls, or ridges of stone, were once a regularly built up wall, that some of it has been thrown down by disintegration and gravity, or by earthquakes, and by rolling saw logs, and that a large portion is still standing. I have been told by men that they had seen portions standing 6 or 8 feet high and one man assured me that he had seen a portion standing which he thought was 10 feet high. The fact is that there is not a foot of standing wall, and I feel equally positive that there never was a foot of built up wall in all the series. I am sure that the ridges or winrows of stone remain today just as the builders left them ages ago. The so-called "round towers," claimed to have been 20 feet high, and and probably used for observatory or lookout towers, were never round towers, were never 20 feet high, and were never used as lookout towers, as they are in a cove with the view shut off on three sides, and from the fourth side only the big mountain on the opposite side of Paint Creek could be seen.

The usual suggestions as to the uses of these walls are that they were fortifications against an enemy and that they may have been pens in which to coral large game, buffalo, elk, deer, etc.; but in fact the walls, even if continuous, would not keep an army out, nor keep game in. The walls are sloping, and men or animals could go over them



easily anywhere. It has been suggested that the enclosures had been intended for some sort of religious ceremonies; but knowing nothing of the people or their religion, the suggestion is not worth considering.

No evidences of burial and no human remains have been found within the enclosures; no pottery ware, no flint or stone implements or other trinkets usually found near the works of the mound builders or the Indians (the black flint ledge runs through and crops out within these enclosures). This, as well as the totally different character of the works, is a strong indication that these works were built by an entirely different race of people.

This examination, while it gives us the facts, hitherto unknown, of the extent, physical character and present condition of this gigantic work of an unknown people, unfortunately gives us no clue which might lead to the history of their origin and use. These, as heretofore, are shrouded in mystery dark and profound.





