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OF THE  
BUREAU OF ETHNOLOGY

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BY

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REPORT  
ON THE  
MOUND EXPLORATIONS  
OF THE  
BUREAU OF ETHNOLOGY.  
BY  
CYRUS THOMAS.

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## *Evidences of Contact w/ Modern European Civilization found in the Mounds*

THOMAS.]

INDIANS AND EUROPEANS.

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Mention has already been made of finds by Mr. Walker in some mounds near Tampa Bay, Florida, and therefore need not be repeated here.

While excavating that part of the Ohio canal running through Benton township, Cuyahoga county, it became necessary to remove part of a small mound. In this, says Mr. W. H. Price, under whose direction the work was done, were the remains of one or more skeletons, a gun-barrel, and perhaps some of the mountings of the stock.<sup>1</sup>

With one of the burials in the works of Union county, Mississippi, Mr. Fowke, the Bureau assistant, found a piece of silver stamped with the Spanish coat of arms, a figure of which has been given, also the irons of a saddle-tree. As this locality is in the territory occupied by the Chickasaws, a people visited by De Soto in his expedition, it is possible these articles are mementoes of the trials and hardships suffered here by that unfortunate expedition.

In the rubbish thrown out of one of the stone graves of the Hale mound, Alexander county, Illinois, heretofore described and figured, was found a small brass Catholic medal, which we know from the saints' names stamped on it can not be older than the year 1700.

In one of the Arkansas mounds excavated by one of the Bureau agents was an earthen bottle modeled after the old French decanters. In another was discovered a tooth which Prof. Baird pronounced that of a hog.

A circular mound of the group at Hazen Corners, Crawford county, Wisconsin, which consists of effigies and elongate mounds, was opened by one of the Bureau assistants. There were no indications of burial, but at the bottom, in the center, was a small pile of stone implements, among which was a regularly shaped, genuine gun-flint. In some of the mounds of this section the Bureau assistants found a copper kettle, silver bracelets with Roman letters stamped upon them, silver brooches and crosses; but these pertained to intrusive burials and hence are not introduced into this list of cases as bearing upon the point now referred to.

From mounds in Le Sueur county, Minnesota, about 4 miles north of St. Peter, Mr. Blackiston obtained the following articles: A silver wristlet with "Montreal" and "B. C." stamped upon it; tubular copper ear-pendants; a string of thirty white china beads, a large brown glass bead, four common pins, a needle, a small pearl ornament, and a quartz arrow point.<sup>2</sup> ✓

From the Ninth Annual Report of the Geological Survey of Minnesota, above referred to,<sup>3</sup> we learn that a "blue-glass bead" was obtained by Prof. Winchell in one of the mounds at Big Stone lake. ✓

The fragments of iron implements obtained from a mound in Caldwell county, North Carolina, showing undoubted evidence of contact

<sup>1</sup> *Anc. Mon.*, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> *P.* 162.

<sup>3</sup> *Geol. and Nat. Hist. Surv. Minn.*, vol. 1 (1872-'82), p. 647. *Ninth Ann. Geol. Rep. Minn.*, 1880, p. 164.

whites. Add to this the further statement that "an oxide remained of a similar shape and size," and the evidence is too strong to be set aside by a mere opinion. Moreover, his statement that "no iron was found" shows careful observation and a desire to state precisely what he saw. As hunting knives with deer-horn handles and silver ferules were common in the days of the first settlement of the country, there would be no hesitancy in accepting the statement where there is a willingness to admit that the mound was built after the advent of the whites.

It is a very bold assumption that a man of Atwater's attainments and experience as an antiquarian would take iron-colored clay for a plate of oxidized iron. He does not say that it was cast iron, but, that before being disturbed by the spade it "resembled a plate of cast iron." We therefore feel fully justified in giving this mound as one example where evidence of contact with European civilization was found.

The following examples are taken from Dr. P. R. Hoy's paper entitled "Who built the Mounds?"<sup>1</sup>

James Mathew, a brother of Rev. Father Mathew, of Racine, settled on Zumbro river in Olmstead county, Minnesota, in 1860. When he first plowed the land there was a mound 6 feet high and 20 feet in breadth, and so situated that it was in the way of properly cultivating the land, so he made an attempt to plow it down. He sank the plow to the beam repeatedly, but succeeded in reducing the height only about 2 feet. The next year he procured a scraper and went to work systematically to remove the entire mound. After scraping down the eminence to within about 2 feet of the base he came to some rotten wood. On carefully removing the top he discovered a kind of cage built of large stakes driven into the ground, as close together as possible, and covered with a split log, finished by plastering the outside thickly with clay, this forming a rude lodge which was about 3 feet long and a little less in breadth. In this pen he found one skeleton of an adult in a good state of preservation, and with the bones were found two iron hatchets, a dozen flint arrow heads, a copper ring 2 inches in diameter, a lot of shell beads, and a red stone pipe of rather large size and ingeniously ornamented with lead. Father Mathew visited his brother a few days after this find. On his return he brought the entire lot of implements home with him.

From Mr. West, an intelligent and reliable gentleman of Racine, Wisconsin, Dr. Hoy received an accurate description of a mound opened. From this it appears that the mound was small, being only about 10 feet in diameter and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet high. The much decayed skeleton was in a pit in the original soil under the mound, and near the center was a copper kettle. "This kettle was about 6 inches across, with straight sides; it had ears and no bale, and, in one place on its side where there had been a hole, there was a rivet inserted, made of copper."

He mentions other mounds situated near the junction of White and Fox rivers, in one of which had been buried on the original surface of the ground four persons, two adults and two children. "Each was covered," continues the account, "with a thick stratum of compact

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Montreal meeting (1882) of the Amer. Assoc. Adv. Sci., but published in pamphlet form.

clay, thus forming a rude kind of sarcophagus. On breaking open these clay cases we found human bones partly decayed, and three copper kettles, one of which had some nuts in it, perhaps pecans; another had what are supposed to be bones of a rabbit; also there were many silver earrings, breast pins, and one beautiful, double-armed, ringed, silver cross, with R. C. in Roman capitals engraved in the center of the upper arm of the cross, also a large quantity of blue glass beads." In the other was found one copper kettle of rather large size "and a small fur-covered, brass-nailed trunk, 10 by 12 inches and 8 inches in height. In this trunk were discovered a lot of cheap silver trinkets."

#### THE MUSKOKI TRIBES.

As I have in two small works, one entitled "The Cherokees in pre-Columbian Times,"<sup>1</sup> the other "The story of a mound, or the Shawnees in pre-Columbian Times,"<sup>2</sup> discussed the probability that the tribes named were mound-builders, there is no necessity for repeating the discussion here.

By reference to these works it will be seen that I arrived at the conclusion that both the Cherokees and Shawnees were mound-builders, the evidence leading to this conviction, some of which has been given in preceding chapters, being apparently so strong as to dispel all doubt on the subject.

I would, however, call attention to the very strong evidence that the Cherokees were mound-builders, presented in the preceding report of field work. By referring to the plat of the Little Tennessee valley, Pl. xxv, and Timberlake's Map, Pl. xxvi, showing the locality of the Cherokee "Overhill towns" and locations of the mound groups, it will be seen that each of the former is marked by one of the latter.

Mr. Gallatin, Dr. Brinton, and Mr. Gatschet (especially the latter in his excellent work on the "Migration legend of the Creeks") have demonstrated from the aboriginal names of persons, places, and things mentioned by the narrators of De Soto's expedition, that the tribes then inhabiting the southern states through which the wanderers passed, were the same as those subsequently found occupying this region. It follows, therefore, that the theory advanced by some writers,<sup>3</sup> that the Creeks or Muskoki (Muscogee or Muscogulgee) tribes migrated to this region from some point west of the Mississippi, subsequent to the date of De Soto's expedition, is erroneous, and may be dismissed from further consideration.

From the narratives of the Adelantado's march and a few faint glimpses we catch from other sources, we are justified in concluding

<sup>1</sup> First published in the *American Anthropologist*, then in book form by Judd & Detweiler, Washington, D. C., 1891.

<sup>2</sup> First published in *Science*, then in book form by N. D. Hodges, New York, 1890.

<sup>3</sup> Milfort "Memoire," etc. Pickett "History of Alabama," Vol. I, p. 74, et seq.