

# *Book of Mormon Geography*

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## PREFACE

In recent years there has been a tendency among certain students of the Book of Mormon to orientate Book of Mormon cultures far to the south. Many students of the subject are convinced that the three colonies that came to America had their existence in Central America and Mexico. They are thought to have lived within a radius of a few hundred miles of Zarahemla, never pushing northward many miles, certainly not thrusting out their branches as far north as the Great Lakes along our Canadian border.

These students think it unlikely that the Jaredites or Nephites were in North America, and that they surely did not push northward as far as New York state; that the large bodies of water referred to in the Book of Mormon were in Middle America, and that Ramah and Cumorah were in the vicinity of Zarahemla.

Most students who accept this theory do not consider the Hill Cumorah in western New York as the hill where the gold plates were originally deposited, nor the area immediately south of the Great Lakes as the site of the Jaredite and Nephite battlefields. This theory leads to the assumption that Moroni buried the gold plates in a hill in Middle America known as Cumorah. After Joseph Smith's family moved to Palmyra, New York, it is thought that the Angel Moroni took the plates from the Hill Cumorah in Central America and deposited them in the largest hill near the Smith homestead in western New York. This hill where they were finally concealed was named Cumorah in honor of the original hill far to the south where they were first deposited.

For many years the Book of Mormon carried footnotes explaining that "the land of many waters," "the large bodies of water," "Ripliancum," etc., had reference to the Great Lakes, while Ramah and Cumorah were the identical hill, near Palmyra, New York.

Because of the popularity of the new theory which places all Book of Mormon races far to the south, these explanatory notes have been eliminated from recent editions of the volume.

The following pages are a plea in defense of the old theory—the interpretation of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Orson Pratt, and a countless number of the Authorities of the Church. It is our humble opinion that there is no occasion to fling aside the old interpretation and accept the new, thus restricting the Book of Mormon races to the restricted confines of Central America.

We are indebted to Elder Mark E. Petersen, of the Quorum of the Twelve, for reading the manuscript and encouraging us to hasten its publication. He wrote these lines after reading it:

I greatly enjoyed my perusal of your manuscript, and was very much impressed with the array of information you have gathered together from archeological and other sources to prove your points. I recall that many of our people who have made studies in the region of the Hill Cumorah in western New York are convinced that the Nephites and Lamanites fought their last battles there because of the discovery of so many evidences of an ancient battle in that region.

I am glad for anything that strengthens the faith of our people, and I believe that this new book will do that, particularly with respect to their attitude toward the Book of Mormon. I hope many people will read it and enjoy it as I did.

In an effort to stimulate interest in the subject and defend the interpretation that has been accepted for so many years by such renowned scholars, we humbly submit these conclusions.

*E. Cecil McGavin*  
*Willard W. Bean*

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## FOREWORD

The *Geography of the Book of Mormon* by E. Cecil McGavin and Willard W. Bean is an incisive study of the geographical locations of the three colonies that came to America in ancient days; and their spreading into North America in what is now Southern Canada and the country east of the Mississippi River and south of the Great Lakes. The authors address themselves to the non-scientist, the ordinary reader and student of religion. The text needs to be studied rather than just read. Anyone interested in the subject will find the effort thoroughly worth while.

The thesis centers around a concept of the Prophet Joseph Smith who "was definitely convinced that the Nephites had spread over North America." While traveling with Zion's camp near the Illinois River, a skeleton was found which Joseph Smith identified as Zeph. He explained that Zeph was a converted Lamanite and became a great warrior of the Nephite armies "from the eastern sea to the Rocky Mountains." Nearby, as explained by the Prophet, the Nephite city of Manti had been built. Later when the remains of a stone tower were found along the Grand River in Missouri, he told his brethren that it was "an old Nephite tower."

The authors of this book maintain that the Nephites spread throughout North America and the country particularly east of the Mississippi River. Contiguous to the Great Lakes is where the thousands of people finally found the land of their desires. The present Hill Cumorah was the center and here the gold plates were buried to be brought forth in this day by the visitation of the Angel Moroni, who placed them in the hands of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Here the great battles were finally fought between the Nephites and

Lamanites, and archeologists of today verify this idea by their careful investigations.

Many quotations are given from such writers as E. G. Squire, *Antiquities of New York*, Christopher Morgan, *Documentary History of New York*, Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities*, and reference is made to Frontenac, the French explorer of the early part of the seventeenth century, who describes the many remains of fortifications that had been left in the country of the Great Lakes. This is an interesting point for many French Jesuit priests wrote extensively of their travels in the western wilderness, which meant lower eastern Canada and the Great Lakes district. One of the Jesuits describes a sacred mound where the Indians met for sacred worship of the Great Spirit. This, a student of the subject might consider, was the Hill Cumorah.

The book is well written, with copious notes and references to leading ethnologists. It gives the reader a personal feeling of acquaintance with the ancient inhabitants who form the story of the Book of Mormon—their conditions of life and most especially their attitudes and activities.

—Levi Edgar Young  
of the First Council of the Seventy.

# I

## THE BATTLEFIELD OF THE JAREDITES

Many students of the Book of Mormon have been convinced that the Jaredites and the Nephites fought their final battles in the same locality. Oliver Cowdery wrote extensively in defense of this theory, while Joseph Smith and other students of the subject never objected to his explanation.

In July, 1835, the *Messenger and Advocate* published a long article by Oliver Cowdery in which he declared that the Nephite Cumorah was the same as the Jaredite Ramah, and it was the same hill in which Joseph Smith found the gold plates.

Elder Orson Pratt did not hesitate to say that two great nations fought their final battles in western New York, and that Ramah-Cumorah was the same hill in which the gold plates were found.<sup>1</sup> Elder Parley P. Pratt was convinced that "this book was hid in the earth by Moroni, in a hill called by him Cumorah, which hill is now in the state of New York."<sup>2</sup>

Though the Jaredites may have landed in Mexico or Central America it is not unlikely that they pushed as far north as the Great Lakes in their quest for the best area in this choice land. They preferred the Ramah region for the same reason that the Nephites later chose it. There was no territory in North America comparable to it as a choice hunting ground for primitive man. Its countless streams, fountains, and lakes, in the heart of a fertile area, made it a paradise for primitive man. There was no other place on the continent worth spilling blood to preserve.

<sup>1</sup> *Millennial Star*, XXVIII, 417.

<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 59.

The earliest white men to penetrate the region described it as a paradise for the Indians, where only the most powerful nations of warriors could remain. The physical features of Ramah-Cumorah lured both animals and men. An abundance of grass is found in the fertile valleys and plains. A vast variety of timber abounded, including sugar and other maples, oak, hickory, black walnut, chestnut, ash of different kinds, elm, butternut, basswood, poplar, pines, thorn-trees of prodigious size, a variety of fruit trees, such as apple, peach, mulberry, black haws, grapes of different kinds, raspberries, blackberries, cranberries, etc.

Wild animals in abundance were to be found when the first white men penetrated this choice region, such as deer, moose, elk, beavers, otters, minks, martins, rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, bear, wildcats, panthers, all of which furnished pelts and meat.

Champlain and the early trail blazers were amazed at the great number of fowl and fish, turkeys, pheasants, partridges, pigeons, plovers, heathfowl and Indian hen, wild geese and ducks. In the many streams and lakes were salmon-trout, white and yellow perch, sheep-heads, pike, succors, large eel, and many others.

As early as 1615, Champlain visited the "land of many waters." Though he had been favorably impressed with much of the country he had seen in America, he considered this the heart of New France. From his flattering description of this favored land we glean these comments from his letters:

I never saw so many deer . . . We saw in divers quarters, immense herds of wild bulls and cows; their horns resembling, in some respects, the antlers of a stag. Our game does not leave us; it seems that venison and game follow us everywhere. Large droves plunge into the

lake as if to meet us. Some were killed for the sake of amusement, by blows of an ax.

At the side of the rapids we perceived a herd of wild cows which were passing at their ease in great state. Five or six hundred are seen sometimes in these regions in one drove.

Frontenac and other early explorers described this region as the best they had seen in the new world.<sup>3</sup>

One early explorer said that in the early spring months, when the lakes and streams abounded with waterfowl, "wild pigeons come in such mighty flocks, so thick that they darkened the sky like clouds, and upon trees, broke the branches by their very weight."

These same natural resources that attracted the most powerful warriors among the Indian tribes, lured the Jaredites and Nephites to this fruitful area. There is an abundance of evidence of an ancient aboriginal occupation in that favored land, the chief monuments being the remains of fortifications that attest the skill of the builders. These ancient relics together with the evidence of an extensive and ancient warfare in that region are tokens of a highly civilized nation that thrived and perished in that historic land.

This vast array of evidence tells the scientists who have studied it a story of bitter warfare—the saga of a great nation being exterminated in the land of many waters. The accounts related by the historians and archeologists sound very much like the stories told in the Book of Mormon about the battles that took place in that favored region.

Two centuries ago remains of fortified hills and well defended villages were to be found in more than

<sup>3</sup> E. B. O'Callaghan, *Documentary History of the State of New York*, IV, 4.



two hundred places in western New York, many of which were said to have been erected long before the Christian era.

The oldest fortifications do not appear close to the southern shore of Lake Ontario, because it is thought that the lake was much larger then than it is now. Turner has a long discussion of this subject, pointing out that Lake Ontario has receded from its elevated ground. On the south side of the ridge nearest the lake, he assures us, and on the hills in the vicinity, are to be found remains of fortifications, yet north of the ridge and beyond to the lake-shore, not a single fort is to be found, thus indicating that the fortified ridge marked the ancient shore of Lake Ontario, where, perhaps 2,000 years ago, a great battle was fought.

At that distant time, Turner argues, a great part of North America was inhabited by populous nations, highly civilized. "These numerous works could not have been supplied provisions without the aid of agriculture, nor could they have been constructed without the use of iron or copper."<sup>4</sup>

The book of Ether (15:26) declares that the Jaredite warriors were men of great stature. When Limhi's scouts found the remains of the Jaredites they were impressed with the "large breastplates" which they found among the ruins. So impressed were they with these large metal protectors, that they carried some of them home with them. These were made of brass and copper "and were perfectly sound." Surely, these were the first people to work the copper mines near Lake Superior.

It is significant how the scientists have verified

<sup>4</sup> O. Turner, *Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York*, pp. 23-26.



this fact, finding many giant skeletons among the oldest ruins. Turner mentions a skeleton being found at Aurora "which would indicate great height, exceeding by several inches, that of the tallest of our race."<sup>5</sup> This was found in "the theatre of a sanguinary battle, terminating in favor of the assailants."

Turner describes another fortress near the shore of an ancient lake, which has receded to a mere swamp. Within the enclosure, near the gateways are large piles of small stones, convenient to be thrown by hand or with slings. "Some skeletons, almost entire have been exhumed, many of giant size, not less than seven to eight feet in length."<sup>6</sup>

McIntosh has much to say about this ancient lake-shore, insisting that the remains of numerous forts are to be found south of it, while along the old lake bed there are no remains of a single fortress. "The border of the lake is the very place that would be selected for habitation and consequently for works of defense," he argues, "on account of the facilities it would afford for subsistence, for safety, for all domestic accommodations and military purposes." He is definitely convinced that "such prodigious works" must have been the result of labor, far beyond the patience and perseverance of our Indians."<sup>7</sup>

Harvey Rice describes an ancient burial ground that was uncovered in 1800. Concerning the giant skeletons uncovered in this mound, we read:

Human bones of gigantic proportions were discovered in such a state of preservation as to be accurately described and measured. The cavities of the skulls were large enough

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> John McIntosh, *The Origin of the North American Indians*, p. 285.

in their dimensions to receive the entire head of a man of modern times, and could be put on one's head with as much ease as a hat or cap. The jaw-bones were sufficiently large to admit of being placed so as to match or fit the outside of a modern man's face. The other bones, so far as discovered, appeared to be of equal proportions with the skulls and jaw-bones, several of which have been preserved as relics in the cabinets of antiquarians, where they may still be seen.

He concludes that a race of gigantic men once existed on this continent in the remote ages following the mastodon and the sourian. "Both plant and animal life assumed in many instances huge proportions, and in all probability, included in successive ages huge men." He assures us that these early people had acquired the art of manufacturing "edge-tools of copper and of tempering them that they would cut about as well as our modern steel implements."<sup>8</sup>

Squire mentions a legend preserved by the Iroquois that in a certain burial mound is the skeleton of a powerful giant.<sup>9</sup>

The first two chapters in the *History of Cayuga County* are filled with accounts of the people who built the forts whose remains are found in that area. "Different races have been born and swept away successively," he is convinced, "around the same spot where dwelt a race considerably advanced in civilization."

Cayuga County yielded a rich harvest of giant skeletons among the ancient ruins, of which we read that "entire skeletons have been found of people of giant proportions, the skulls and jawbones of which could cover the head and face of the most fleshy person of

<sup>8</sup> Harvey Rice, *Pioneers of the Western Reserve*, p. 303.

<sup>9</sup> E. G. Squire, *Antiquities of the State of New York*, p. 86.

our day." We are told of a tradition which asserts that a destructive war was waged "in this very section of the country, "and with such fury and determination on each side that practically all of the warriors were slaughtered."

Erie County has yielded a vast store of ancient monuments, including many giant skeletons, spear-points, war hatchets, and other weapons that seem too large for an average sized man to wield. Bones of "giant size" have been uncovered.<sup>10</sup> Similar discoveries have been made in Ontario County, "skeletons of an early age, including many of unusual size have been found."<sup>11</sup>

Turner saw many of the giant skeletons that have been found in the land of many waters. He mentions "thigh bones which would indicate great height exceeding by several inches the tallest of our race," and that many of the skeletons found at LeRoy, Batavia, and other forts in that area "averaged one-third larger than the present race."

In 1922 "on the Rose farm, one half mile from Mormon Hill" a number of large skeletons, stone implements, copper ornaments, a copper axe of unusual type, and other articles were found. At this historic spot were found "many of unusual physique, tall, long-limbed, finely formed skulls, teeth finely shaped."<sup>12</sup>

Brown's *Western Gazeteer* has much to say about the ancient burials in western New York, including skeletons whose possessors were persons of gigantic stature." Brine lists "large skulls" among the skeletons be examined.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> C. H. Johnson, *History of Erie County*, p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> C. F. Millikin, *Ontario County, New York*, p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> Fred Haughton, *Seneca Nation*, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> Lindsay Brine, *American Indians,—Their Ancient Earthworks*, p. 97.

In 1925 a farmer near Palmyra was digging a cellar and found several large skeletons. He notified the Rochester Museum, and some scientists were sent to the scene. They took one of the "six foot" skeletons back with them. They estimated the ages of these giant skeletons to be "at least 3,000 years old." The "Rochester Herald" published a long article at the time, from which we quote:

In this pit were found an axe of peculiar shape, wide bit and other implements that bore signs of ancient warfare. There are dozens of similar ruins near Rochester. It requires a strong effort of the imagination to reach back into the dim ages of the past and see these hills covered with wig-wams, with camps and fortifications. Upon these steep heights invading armies may have pressed a desperate assault, while all along the brow of the hills behind the rude fortifications of the great forest, stood the defenders of camp and home. On the hills doubtless burned council fires, and around them was heard the rough eloquence of the Indian orator inspiring his men to deeds of valor.

Turner describes a fortified hill within three miles of the Hill Cumorah which was "barricaded on an eminence, made for a large and powerful enemy. It must have been a very valuable place for defensive warfare." The entrenchment ten feet deep and twelve feet wide was plainly visible to the first settlers in that region.

The skeletons that were found within the enclosure of this fortress and in the immediate vicinity "indicate a race of men one-third larger than the present race." A few miles away hundreds of skeletons of both sexes and all ages were found within an enclosure. "This had been the theatre of a sanguinary battle, terminating in favor of the assailants." One of these large bones, "a thigh bone of unusual length was taken home by a Lockport physician."

On almost every page of Turner's writings he mentions numerous skulls that had been broken by war clubs or stones, and "skeletons of all ages promiscuously thrown together into the same pit or left where they fell, "primitive palisades," "entrenchments, breastworks, watch towers."

Almost all the historians and scientists who discuss this subject use the same terms. It is surprising how many of them mention the giants who died on the ancient battlefields in the land of the many waters, most of them insisting that the giant skeletons are to be found in the oldest ruins.

It is amazing how many of these renowned scientists announce their opinions that are in accord with the accounts related in the Book of Mormon. John Fiske assures us that a very primitive people lived in North America. "Along with these ancient Americans," he insists, "lived some terrestrial mammals that still survive, such as the elk, reindeer, prairie wolf, bison, musk-ox, and beaver, and many that have since been extinct, such as the mastodon, mylodon, megatherium, mangolonyx, Siberian elephant, mammoths, etc."

Josiah Priest was convinced that "not only Asiatic people very soon after the flood, but also all along the ages, the different races of men colonized different parts of this country . . . America was peopled before the flood. It was the country of Noah and the place where the ark was erected."

In Josiah Priest's book, *Wonders of the World*, which was printed in 1825, he expressed the belief that America's first post-deluvian colonists arrived here 340 years after the flood. He expressed the opinion that about 1,000 B. C., a nation of giants waged a bloody

war south of the West Lakes, among the hills along the southern shore of Lake Ontario and in the rich forest land which concealed so many small lakes and fountains. About 600 B. C., a great "giant arose on the Susquehanna River, who waged war with the surrounding nations . . . Cultivated regions, populated cities, and towns were reduced to a wilderness."

Yes, there are half a hundred archeologists and reputable historians who have told us the story of Ramah-Cumorah-land. It would be a hard assignment to convince them that the Jaredites and the Nephites never pushed beyond the narrow horizon of Central America and Mexico.

## II

### THE LAND OF MANY WATERS

The historian Ether is not very specific or definite in his description of the land in which his people fought their final battles. He assures us, however, that a short time before they began to assemble their forces in Ramahland, that the whole face of the land northward was covered with inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

At that time they were a prosperous people, "exceeding rich in buildings, and in gold, and silver, and in raising grain, and in flocks and herds."<sup>2</sup> They were skilled in the art of working metals and were well prepared with metal tools to erect elaborate fortifications with which they prepared to defend themselves as the drums of war were heard in Ramahland.

They worked "all manner of ore, and they did make gold and silver, and brass, and all manner of tools to till the earth, both to plow and to sow, to reap and to hoe, and also to thresh."<sup>3</sup>

Ether informs us that "so great and lasting had been the war, and so long had been the scene of bloodshed and carnage, that the whole face of the land was covered with the bodies of the dead."<sup>4</sup>

These evidences of a hard-fought battle in the land of many waters, remained for many witnesses to see years later. Many historians and archeologists tell us a story that sounds very much like the accounts we read in the Book of Mormon—the story of ancient warfare in the land of many waters, where a few hundred drumlin hills were strongly fortified by a highly civilized

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<sup>1</sup> Ether 10:21.

<sup>2</sup> Ether 10:12.

<sup>3</sup> Ether 10:23-27.

<sup>4</sup> Ether 14:21.



people who made their final stand on those historic hills.

The bitter war had not been raging long until "there had been slain two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and children."<sup>5</sup>

As the Jaredite general, Coriantumr retreated before his opponents, "he came to the waters of Ripliancum, which by interpretation, is large or to exceed all; wherefore when they came to these waters they pitched their tents."<sup>6</sup>

Traditions abound among the Jaredites about the many lands in which their fathers had traveled, but during their many journeys they had never seen a lake as large as Ripliancum nor as many bodies of water as were to be found in Ramahland. Surely the lakes in Central America and Mexico were mere lagoons in comparison with the giant bodies of water in that northern land where they had assembled for their last stand against the enemy.

There is an abundance of evidence that Lake Ontario was once much larger than it is now; that the fortified ridge, still dotted with the remains of fortifications, mark the ancient shore of the old lake. There is ample evidence that near the shore of the ancient lake numerous forts were erected and mighty armies waged a destructive warfare.

This does not refer to the ancient and prehistoric Lake Algonquin, but to the giant Lake Ontario long before a new outlet or deeper channel shrunk it to its present level. The gigantic proportions of the old lake Ontario were maintained long after primitive man in

<sup>5</sup> Ether 15:2.

<sup>6</sup> Ether 15:8.



America had risen to a high degree of civilization and possessed sharp-edged tools with which to erect the many defenses that crowned all the hills in that region.<sup>7</sup>

Many historians have called attention to the high ridge that once formed the southern boundary of the ancient lake, which was lined with ruins of ancient fortifications. These authorities agree that while this lake had reached its extreme dimensions, its shores bathing the land far beyond its present limits, an ancient people engaged in a bitter and destructive warfare. At that time the name Ripliancum would certainly describe the huge body of water which served as the northern defense which would protect their rear as they prepared to defend themselves against a powerful enemy.

In the land of their first inheritance and in all the land through which they had traveled for centuries, the Jaredite people had never seen so many bodies of water or a single lake with such gigantic proportions as the one they named Ripliancum, which exceeded all the lakes they had seen in its enormous proportions.<sup>8</sup>

As Coriantumr drove his foes southward from Ripliancum, he pitched his tents by the hill Ramah, "and it was that same hill where my father Mormon did hide up the records unto the lord," wrote Moroni centuries later, when the Nephites had assembled in the same region and for the same reasons—to defend themselves against their enemies. There was no other region in North or South America so admirably adapted for a long defensive warfare as the land of many waters.

Thus established in Ramahland, they declared a truce for the space of four years that they might assem-

<sup>7</sup> A. P. Coleman, *The Last Million Years*, pp. 162-167

<sup>8</sup> Ether 15: 10-11.

ble all their people in that choice region and fortify the drumlins and be ready to defeat the foe as they penetrated this favored region with their armies.<sup>9</sup>

It is significant that an opposing army should have regard for the wishes of the enemy and grant them a few years in which to assemble their warriors in a distant land and perfect their preparations for war. This is characteristic of all Book of Mormon warriors. It is also a characteristic feature of the American Indians when the Europeans first came to this country. The Indians have always had a high regard for the wishes of the enemy and on many occasions have laid down their weapons of war and waited for the enemy to retreat to better quarters or make greater defenses.

When the Nephites were ready to gird themselves for the final struggle with the Lamanites, Mormon wrote an epistle to the king of the Lamanites, informing him that they wanted to retreat to the land of Cumorah and there prepare for battle. He told the general of the opposing forces just where he intended going and sued for four years time in which to make every preparation. The Lamanite king had regard for Mormon's petition and held his warriors in check while the enemy withdrew from their land and pushed northward in search of a better region in which to erect their defenses.<sup>10</sup>

The drums of war were not heard in Cumorahland until four years had passed and the Nephites had perfected their precautions for war in that favored land which abounded with all the natural advantages which retreating people would be glad to occupy. It is a strange coincidence that the Nephites spent four years

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<sup>9</sup> Ether 15:14.

<sup>10</sup> Mormon 6:2-3.

in assembling their forces and fortifying the drumlin hills in Cumorahland. Exactly that same space of time was consumed by the Jaredite warriors as they retreated northward and erected their strong defenses in Ramahland.

Whenever Book of Mormon writers describe Ramah-Cumorahland it is always described in a similar tone—a land far to the north; a land richly endowed with all the natural bounties; a land of many waters, fountains, and streams.

When Limhi's forty-three scouts and mountaineers were sent northward to find the city of Zarahemla they became lost in the wilderness and journeyed northward until they came to the place where the Jaredites had made their last valiant stand. The description these pioneers gave of the country is typical of the Book of Mormon description of Ramah-Cumorahland.

It was a "land of many waters, covered with the bones of men, and of beasts, etc., and was also covered with ruins of buildings of every kind; having discovered a land which had been peopled with a people who were as numerous as the hosts of Israel."<sup>11</sup> Among the ruins they found swords, the hilts of which had perished and the blades were cankered with rust. Breastplates of brass and copper were found among the ruins.

When Limhi's scouts visited the land where the Jaredites were exterminated, the ruins of buildings were found in great numbers. These buildings, however, did not long remain as monuments to their builders because they were doubtless built of logs. Many varieties of hardwood trees abounded in the land of many waters. They would surely erect their buildings from the trees of the forest, rather than from stone and cement.

<sup>11</sup> Mosiah 8:8.

This land of desolation, far from Zarahemla, had been peopled with a people as numerous as the hosts of Israel, yet none of the Nephites had ever heard of the region. Though the Nephites had been a migrating people, ever pushing northward from city to city and from land to land, they had never before found the ruins of the Jaredites, nor had they seen the land of many waters. Millions of them had seen the river Sidon, Lake Nicaragua, and all the streams and fountains that were to be found in Middle America, yet the giant lakes where the Jaredites were exterminated had never been found by the Nephites because it was such an extreme distance north of the Nephite cities.

Every historian who ever spoke of the Great Lakes was well acquainted with the bodies of waters within a wide radius of Zarahemla, but those local lakes were mere lagoons and pools in comparison with the numerous streams, fountains, lakes, and rivers in Cumorahland.

This land which had witnessed the destruction of the Jaredite hosts; where a few million skeletons were left as monuments of the vast destruction which had visited the land; where the ruins of buildings of every kind and skeletons of animals marked the spot of desolation, seems a little too immense and far away to fit into the restricted and crowded geography of Central America.

Limhi's scouts could travel a great distance during the many days they were lost in the wilderness. These were seasoned veterans, who had grown up on the frontier. They were selected for this perilous journey because they were strong men accustomed to the rigors of the wilderness. They could travel many miles in a day and continue for a long period of time to march

mile after mile, day after day. Inspired by the thought of locating Zarahemla and getting their people out of bondage to the Lamanites, would give them the courage to push ever northward in quest of the city of their dreams. Directed by Providence to find the gold plates that contained the record of the Jaredites, they could spend many days pushing northward without falling from exhaustion and giving up the chase.

Some critics raise the objection that Limhi's scouts could not possibly journey to the region of the Great Lakes during the "limited" time they were lost in the wilderness. The account states that they were lost in the wilderness "for the space of many days." It is significant that Nephi used those very same words in estimating the time it required for his family to cross the ocean in their humble ship. The Jaredite chroniclers who watched the calendar with a keener eye, inform us that it required 344 days for their barges to cross the ocean. The strength of this objection is diminished when we consider how loosely this expression was used by Nephite historians.

If their rough barge could cross the ocean in the space of many days, it certainly would not be an impossible task for the strong men from Limhi's colony to journey up the Mississippi valley to the Great Lakes and return within the space of many days. It might require six months longer than it did to cross the ocean, and still be well within the limit set by that indefinite expression.

It must be remembered that the Nephites and Mulekites were in America long before the armies of Coriantumr and Shiz began to fortify the drumlin hills in the land of many waters. When the war was over and the bodies of the dead were strewn over the land, the

victorious general wandered southward until he discovered the city of Zarahemla, where he lived for nine months before passing away.

It is not unlikely that Limhi's scouts would find the remains of log buildings in their day which had been built by the last of the Jaredites as they were ready for their final wars. These buildings would be erected in haste and surely from logs which were so abundant in the land of many waters. Years later when Mormon assembled his host in that same land it is not surprising that the log structures had fallen into decay. The intervening centuries would decompose the wooden structures, leaving only skeletal remains and the stone or metal weapons they used in war.

Throughout the Book of Mormon the "land northward" seems to be synonymous with the "land of many waters." The historians who were well acquainted with Lake Nicaragua, the sea to the west and the sea to the east, and all the streams, fountains, and lagoons in Central America, always referred to the land of many waters as being far to the north.

In the days of Alma, when the Nephite general Moroni had made the Nephite army a power to be reckoned with, a certain leader named Morianton inspired a number of his colleagues to join him in a flight to the north country which "was covered with large bodies of water."<sup>12</sup>

Wherever we find mention made of the land far to the north it is always said to be in the land of many waters.

As Morianton led his warriors northward they were overtaken on the borders of the land of Desolation,

<sup>12</sup> Alma 50: 29.



which was near "the narrow pass which led by the sea into the land northward; yea, by the sea on the west, and on the east."<sup>13</sup> The borders of the land Desolation were certainly at an isthmus which led into a barren, desolate region. After passing through the land of Desolation one would surely be impressed by the many streams, lakes, rivers, and fountains in the land of many waters, far beyond Desolation.

Helaman tells of an exodus from Zarahemla to the land northward about fifty years before the birth of Christ. "And they did travel to an exceeding great distance, insomuch that they came to large bodies of water, and many rivers."<sup>14</sup> So many people had inhabited this northern land that the forests had been denuded of their rich spoil to provide houses for the people. This is the reason that the buildings of the Jaredites did not long remain as monuments to the skill of their builders.

Helaman's account is typical of every reference in the Book of Mormon to Cumorahland. It was "an exceeding great distance" from the land of Zarahemla. The numerous rivers and large bodies of water were an impressive feature which dwarfed the streams and pools in Middle America. Every historian, though well acquainted with the bodies of water in Central America, always associated the land far to the north with the "large bodies of water and many rivers."

"An exceeding great distance" from Zarahemla would surely take one far beyond the restricted limits of Middle America. To people who were accustomed to travel from city to city and from land to land, such

<sup>13</sup> Alma 50:34.

<sup>14</sup> Helaman 3:3.

distances were small in comparison with the vast distance it was to the land of many waters.

It was our good pleasure to fly in a hedge-hopping plane from the Connecticut River to Lake Erie, flying northward and skirting the shore of Lake Ontario. It is utterly amazing how many rivers and streams flow into the St. Lawrence and the two large lakes. From Lake Champlain through the country of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Cayugas, and Senecas are numerous small lakes and pools in addition to the long slender Finger Lakes. There is evidence over that entire trail that ancient lakes once bathed the shores where smooth pebbles mark the bed of the old lakes and lagoons.

No place on the American continent can so faithfully be called the land of many waters as the western half of New York state, and no other place in the hemisphere bears such evidence of having been an ancient battlefield.

Before Mormon marshalled the Nephite armies in Cumorahland he had visited the land of Zarahemla. He had seen the river Sidon and the major lakes and streams in that vicinity.<sup>15</sup>

The land of Zarahemla with its vast population almost as numerous as "the sands of the sea," was still fresh in the memory of Mormon when he pushed northward to Cumorahland and described it as the land of many waters, rivers and fountains.<sup>16</sup>

Another striking statement in Ether's record is his assertion that the Jaredite warriors were "large and mighty men."<sup>17</sup> Limhi's scouts found near the hill Ramah "breastplates which are large."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Mormon 1:6.

<sup>16</sup> Mormon 6:4.

<sup>17</sup> Ether 15: 26.

<sup>18</sup> Mosiah 8:10.



It is significant that among the ruins in western New York the archeologists have emphasized the enormous size of the skeletons that have been found amid the ruins of that ancient battlefield. Yes, there were giants in Ramahland and hundreds of their enormous skeletons have been left among the ruins as monuments of an ancient race that was exterminated in that historic land.

No place on the American continent is there such an abundance of lakes, streams, fountains, and pools as are to be found in western New York. This choice region was the hunter's paradise. The hundreds of drumlin hills, formed by the same glaciers that scooped out the beds for the countless lakes and lagoons, were suitable for defense and were within easy access to water, fuel, and food supplies.

Before the white man's axes laid low the forests of hardwood in Cumorahland and his plows turned the rich sod above the Indians' ancient burial grounds, this choice region was desired by man, beast, and fowl. No place on this hemisphere could primitive man have found such a fruitful hunting ground. No place could their warriors have found such a favorable location to erect their fortifications on the low drumlin hills and prepare for a war of extermination. Though Mormon knew that his people were going to be mopped up by the Lamanites he was determined to make the enemy earn every drop of blood they should spill.

The same motive inspired the last of the Jaredite warriors when they sought the best region on the continent to wage their final wars. Yes, Cumorahland was the heart of an ancient battlefield. Since the first pathfinders and settlers penetrated western New York they have been telling us that in ancient times some highly

civilized nations engaged in a destructive warfare in that rich, historic country. Their defenses were said to have been erected with a skill far surpassing that of the Indian, who is thought to have exterminated them and taken possession of their country, but did not achieve the civilization the vanquished race had achieved.

Though the modern trend in the Book of Mormon geography inclines toward Central America and is anxious to confine most of the pre-Columbian activity to Middle America, surely the time will never come when our guides and missionaries on Hill Cumorah will be instructed to make such an explanation as the following to the many tourists who visit that historic shrine:

This hill is named in honor of a hill somewhere in Central America or Mexico. It's unfortunate that we do not know just where that other hill was located, since it was the most famous landmark in ancient America. Near it the Jaredites and Nephites fought their last battles. In that famous hill, or near it, the records of both those ancient nations were deposited.

That mysterious hill, wherever it was located, was known as Ramah to the Jaredites, and Cumorah to the Nephites. After the Nephite warriors were destroyed in battle, their historian buried the gold plates in that hill. Fourteen hundred years later that same person who had deposited them in the Hill Cumorah, then a resurrected person, went to that unmarked hill far to the south and recovered the golden record, bringing them up here and burying them in this very hill just a short time before Joseph Smith was to receive them.

Since the records had been deposited in the Hill Cumorah somewhere in Middle America, this Hill was given the same name, since it was the largest hill nearest Joseph Smith's home. It was unfortunate, indeed, that we do not know the location of that distant Cumorah. If we did

we would know the land where these two great nations were swept off the face of the earth. Meantime, we shall be content to consider this hill as a humble replica of that historic and sacred hill far to the south.



### III RAMAH-CUMORAH LAND

The gathering of the Jaredites and later the Nephites at the popular rendezvous in Ramah-Cumorah-land, occasioned an extensive migration and assemblage in a short course of time. This has been considered by many writers as incredible, but the mobility of primitive man in America has been underestimated.

Aztec traders wandered far afield over Central America and Mexico, acting as both merchants and spies.<sup>1</sup> War parties traveled faster and covered more territory than merchants did. In 1680, a war party of Iroquois braves attacked small tribes west of the Mississippi, about one thousand miles beyond the Iroquois homeland in western New York. Other Iroquois warriors attacked tribes of natives in South Carolina and near Lake Superior.

Indians from afar have wandered up to Minnesota pipestone quarries, and Eskimos have traveled four hundred miles to get flint at the Fort Good Hope quarries. New Mexican turquoise reached Mexico City and Mayan cities, and Colombian emerald was so common in Peru that for two centuries after the conquest it was known as Peruvian emerald.

The Nez Percés traveled hundreds of miles in quest of necessities. In 1831 these Indians sent four of their braves from the mouth of the Columbia to St. Louis, Missouri, in search of "the white man's book from heaven."

The Chippewas went as far as Virginia to barter Lake Superior copper for the products of the Atlantic coast. The pre-Columbian Caribs on the tiny Island

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<sup>1</sup> W. H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, p. 86.

of Montserrat in the West Indies, possessed ornaments of jade and amethyst from South America, more than two thousand miles away.

Jadeite has been found in a mound in Michigan. Spinden and Mason think that the Mayas had emerald from Colombia. American soapstone, pectolite, and nephrite were traded with the natives from Siberia. Shetrone is convinced that Indians in Hopewell sent expeditions to the Yellowstone Park for obsidian, since grizzly bear teeth and obsidian are found together in the Hopewell culture mounds.<sup>2</sup>

The climatic conditions were very different in North America in the fourth century A. D., and at the time the Jaredite factions fought for supremacy, to what we know today. Dr. Allison joints out that from 1226 B. C., to about 520 A. D., the region roughly north of 35 degrees North Latitude (this parallel divides Tennessee from Alabama and the Carolinas) was first cool and rainy and later cool and windy. There was not "much forest growth upon these alluvial plains" of the Mississippi Basin. Thus the northern part of the United States would afford a logical place of retreat. The pursuing marauders, accustomed to the semi-tropics of Mexico and Central America would find the region inhospitable and unattractive. It afforded rapid escape after the fugitives had once left the forested south behind them.

Both the Jaredites and Nephites fled within the period when this was true. In their final extremity it was perfectly natural for both of these nations to retreat northward. It would have been utterly impossible

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<sup>2</sup> G. H. Gall, *The Mining of Gems and Ornamental Stones by American Indians*, Bureau of Am. Ethnol. Bull. 128, pp. 30-47.

for them to have found such a suitable place for a long warfare as Ramah-Cumorahland.

The estimate of two million fatal casualties in eight years of warfare is not incredible. During the Thirty Year's War in Europe, ending in 1648, large portions of Bohemia, Austria and Germany were completely ravaged. Four million people in Bohemia were reduced to a mere eight hundred thousand. The population in the three countries fell from about twenty millions to six millions. Of four hundred thousand in Wurtemberg, only forty-eight thousand remained.<sup>3</sup>

The conclusion is forced upon us that the bitter wars at Ramah-Cumorah were extensive and involved armed forces of great strength. Try as hard as one may and these battles simply do not fit into Middle American dimensions.

Since four years were required by the Jaredites to assemble their warriors at Ramah and exactly the same length of time for Mormon to collect and organize his forces at Cumorah, it would imply a great population covering a vast territory. "All the face of the land" is a common expression in Jaredite and Nephite chronicles. This seems to imply a vast extent of territory rather than a few hundred square miles in Middle America. This was said to be a choice land, choice above all other lands. Surely this repeated expression had reference to the whole continent, not merely to a restricted zone in Central America or Mexico.

As Mormon engineered the migration of his people northward, they passed "land after land" and captured city after city before they reached Cumorahland. Otherwise, as the Lamanites dealt the final blows to their op-

<sup>3</sup> L. Hausser, *The Period of Reformation*, p. 18.

ponents, we read that they hunted them down "from city to city and from place to place, even until they are no more."<sup>4</sup>

Such repeated declarations simply cannot be forced into the limited dimensions of Central America or Mexico.

The expression "the waters of Ripliancum," could not possibly refer to the ocean, for it is always specified; nor was it a large river, for rivers are also named as such. This was an extensive lake near the hill Ramah. Both retreating armies fled to it because it was as far away as they could hope to get from the cities of their enemies, in a country as unattractive to the latter as could be found. Ripliancum was so large that the enemy could not pass it, and it protected their rear. That would scarcely be true of Lake Nicaragua, though it is large. It is separated from the Pacific by high mountains. Mormon's forces would have been much safer in those mountains than along the seashore of Lake Nicaragua.

During the final wars of the Nephites a small remnant escaped to the "South countries." If this means the region immediately south of Lake Nicaragua, there was nothing to gain by such a retreat, unless the country was sparsely settled, open, and suitable to rapid flight—a country in which these refugees could live by hunting and fishing without infringing upon the rights of others or traveling through their hunting grounds; a country in which it would be difficult to track this fleeing remnant, and where the northern barrier was an impassable water barrier.

If Cumorah were in Central America, it would

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<sup>4</sup> Mormon 8:7.



have been suicidal for a marked enemy to flee southward from the field of battle. The Lamanite hordes infested the land, while these "pale face" warriors were the only Nephites in that locality. The fact that it took sixteen years for the numerous Lamanites to run them down and exterminate them seems all out of proportion to the restricted dimensions of Central America. If we consider them wandering over the great plains south of the Great Lakes, eating uncooked food so no smoke signals from their campfires would reveal their hiding place, traveling by night and hiding by day as they sought to prolong their lives, we understand why it took so long for the powerful foe to ferret them out and mop them up. They undoubtedly had a vast territory to roam over and their small groups were likely separated.

In the land of Zarahemla, infested with hordes of Lamanites, a handful of the marked foe could scarcely conceal themselves for the space of sixteen years. Their hunting grounds must have comprised a vast territory where they were finally captured as bands of Lamanites pushed southward toward their old homeland, after the Nephites in Cumorahland were exterminated; or they may have been killed as they were discovered by Lamanites who lived in the great open spaces near where the refugees retreated.

None of these strategic possibilities apply to an escape southward from Lake Nicaragua. Such a retreat would have taken them into the heart of the enemy country—their strongholds where warriors had erected fortifications for generations. It is unlikely that all Lamanites, men, women, and children, followed Mormon's armies to Cumorahland.

Unless one delights in mysteries there seems to

be nothing to gain by restricting these two great nations to Middle America.

"Since the gold plates were buried by Moroni in the Hill Cumorah and found by Joseph Smith in the Hill Cumorah," argues Evan Shute, from whom much of this material is gleaned, "it is more credible to believe they were the same hills rather than two of identical name thousands of miles apart. Why should God perform a great miracle merely to baffle readers of the Book of Mormon?"

Some students of the subject think it impossible for the retreating armies of the Nephites to migrate so far in such a short space of time. History of more recent vintage offers us some suggestive parallels.

Alexander led an army of 35,000 Macedonians, during eight years, not only six hundred miles south into Egypt, but also over twenty-five hundred miles east to Punjab. His generals took them back about thirty-five hundred miles to their homeland.

Hannibal took an army of 100,000 men over thirteen hundred miles from southern Spain, over the Little St. Bernard Pass, to the gates of Rome in about fifteen years. Napoleon led 600,000 men over five hundred miles from Kovno into Moscow. Within the year the remnant returned.

Herodotus declares that Phoenician sailors circumnavigated Africa during the reign of Pharoah Necho. The Vikings from the far north, centuries ago, pushed southward to the Mediterranean, over to Palestine and up to what is now Constantinople. In ships seventy-five feet long and sixteen feet wide, drawing less than four feet of water, and propelled by oars or driven forth by the wind, they drifted to Iceland, and to

Greenland, and to Vineland. It is thought that early Scandinavian explorations were made in South America.<sup>5</sup>

The extensive forays of Tamerlane, the historic march of the Mormon Battalion, and many other military migrations make the retreat of the Jaredites and Nephites seem less miraculous.

Moroni makes it clear that the Jaredites were exterminated "upon the face of this north country," where he then wrote. He tells of the migration of Omer, who "departed out of the land with his family and traveled many days and came over and passed by the hill Shim, and came over by the place where the Nephites were destroyed, and from thence eastward, and came to a place which was called Ablom, by the seashore."<sup>6</sup>

Does this not tell us that the historic hill Shim is near Cumorah? That not far eastward of Cumorah was the sea, and that both were far from the ancient homeland of the Jaredites?

Among the useful animals that the Jaredites possessed were the elephants, cureloms, and cumoms. If these last two were mammoths and mastodons,<sup>7</sup> as some students assume, it is significant that all three of these gigantic species have left skeletal remains in considerable numbers in the United States. By means of such large animals the Jaredites could have made a long journey with little difficulty, marching the same distance as the Nephites did, in exactly the same length of time, from Zarahemla to Cumorah.

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<sup>5</sup> *Millennial Star*, I, 101.

<sup>6</sup> Ether 9:3.

<sup>7</sup> Ether 9:19.

Many years before Mormon retreated to Cumorah-land to make his last stand against the Lamanites, he dwelt in a land far north of Zarahemla. When he was a mere child his father took him on a trip to the historic city of Zarahemla. He commences his book by relating this great journey that had made a lasting impression on his young mind. "I was carried by my father," he wrote, "into the land southward, even to the land of Zarahemla."

Again this seems reluctant to be crowded into the narrow confines of Central America or Mexico. Mormon's youth had been spent in a land far from Zarahemla, among a pioneering people who dwelt in small communities. For these reasons he was very much impressed by the fact that the land southward was "covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea."

Years later, as the Nephites retreated northward, it is surprising how many cities they fortified and were expelled from on their northward trek toward Cumorah. After years of retreat they came to the city of Jashon, which "was near the land where Ammaron had deposited the records." At the beginning of Mormon's record, he tells us that these records were deposited in the hill Shim, while Moroni's abridgment of the Jaredite record assures us that Shim was near "the place where the Nephites were destroyed."

The early chapters in Mormon's chronicles emphasize how they pushed northward, passing land after land and city after city. The Lamanites gave the Nephites the land northward, while they retained the land southward. It is significant that the meridian from which they measured north and south, was "the narrow passage which led into the land southward."

As they abandoned their cities and joined the long lines of refugees always pushing northward, they seem to have attempted to evacuate the entire Nephite population, gathering them from "city" and "land" as they reluctantly retreated before the powerful foe.

The "Nephites did again flee from before them," we read, "taking all the inhabitants with them, both in towns and villages." The ones who could not fall in with the marching caravans were destroyed by the Lamanites.

On every page in the early chapters of Mormon we learn that they marched "forth before the Lamanites," or "did take flight again," or "did flee before them."

After a series of protracted retreats, ever northward, Mormon was in the vicinity of the hill Shim, where he recovered the records Ammaron had buried there, and this hill was near the place where the Nephites were destroyed. Mormon's forces were traveling in reverse practically all the time from the 326th year until the 380th year. Land after land they traversed; year after year they fled with the enemy in hot pursuit. They were defeated and expelled from Zarahemla, Angola, Jashon, Shem, Teancum, Boaz, and other cities and lands.

In some cases years elapsed between the time of the exodus from one city until they were expelled from the next one, much of that time having been spent in hasty flight in an effort to get far beyond the reach of the enemy. As soon as the Lamanites could muster reinforcements, they were on the march again, following the fresh trails of the Nephites—ever northward. The mad pursuit did not end until the Lamanites over-

powered the foe in the land of many waters, far to the north.

At the time Mormon wrote his epistle to the king of the Lamanites, requesting permission to assemble the Nephites in the land of Cumorah, he was then not far from Cumorah, it seems. He had already recovered the records that had been deposited in the hill Shim, and for years had been withdrawing his forces and journeying northward. By the time he was suing the Lamanites for a few years of peace in which to prepare for war, it was certainly not intended that the entire time would be consumed in marching from Zarahemla to Cumorah. To the contrary, they had passed through many lands after leaving Zarahemla and the waters of Sidon. They were doubtless on the threshold of Cumorah when he repaired to Shim and procured the hidden records.

The four years they enjoyed peace were not spent in marching that entire distance, but in assembling scattered remnants of Nephites as the main body fortified many of the drumlin hills in the land of many waters. The well-planned defenses that crowned the low hills in that region could easily be erected in that length of time by a numerous people who had been trained for war since their fathers set foot on the promised land.

Moreover, Mormon knew that it was to be "the last struggle" of his people. This would inspire them to hasten their preparations and make their defenses strong. The perennial enemy must earn every drop of blood they should spill as the Nephites were wiped off the face of the earth.

Since the days of Alma the Nephites had been fortifying their hills and building palisades around their



cities. The skilled engineers in Mormon's day would know every detail of erecting defenses, and with the vast Nephite population assembled in Cumorahland, realizing that this was to be their last stand, could fortify the many hills in that region and be well prepared to meet the powerful thrust of the Lamanites as their drums of war were heard in Cumorahland.

The Jaredite historian mentions the "poisonous serpents also upon the face of the land, and did poison many people. . . And their flocks began to flee before the poisonous serpents, towards the land southward, which was called by the Nephites Zarahemla."<sup>8</sup> These serpents "hedged up the way that the people could not pass." This was in a region where there was a "great dearth upon the land" and "no rain."

Does this not sound like our Texas and Chihuahua rattlesnakes which thrive in an arid habitat? This was an unsuitable region for their flocks and many of their animals perished. Surely the serpents could not hedge up the way unless they were at an isthmus. Again the picture seems reluctant to fit into the limited dimensions of Middle America.

In due time "the Lord did send rain upon the face of the earth . . . and there began to be fruit in the north countries, and in all the countries round about."<sup>9</sup> This sounds like a vast tract of land where prosperity followed the rains. It seems reluctant to fit into the semi-tropical belt of modern Mexico. By the same token the land southward was a forest land, "preserved for a wilderness, to get game."<sup>10</sup> This is a grave contrast to the description of the land northward, which was

<sup>8</sup> Ether 9:31.

<sup>9</sup> Ether 9:35.

<sup>10</sup> Ether 10:21.

evidently beyond the semi-tropical climate of Middle America.

This arid country, infested with serpents, was certainly not in the vicinity of the land of many waters, but seems to be just beyond an isthmus through which they had to pass before reaching the land of Ripliancum.

It was in Cumorahland that Moroni abridged the history of the Jaredites. He wrote these words which have given rise to much discussion, "after the waters had receded off the face of this land, it became a choice land above all other lands."<sup>11</sup>

There are students of the subject who interpret it to mean the Pleistocene lakes called Algonquin, Iroquois, and Agassiz, which were enormous bodies of water. Lake Algonquin covered a far greater area than all the Great Lakes combined. Lakes Superior, Huron, and Michigan merely mark its greatest depth. It covered about 100,000 square miles. Moroni wrote on a spot which the gigantic lake once covered.

Lake Agassiz covered much of southern Canada, Minnesota, and North Dakota, while Lake Iroquois covered the area now occupied by Lake Ontario, extending far to the east and south. Other great lakes of that ancient era were Bonneville, Chicago, and Warren, which have left mere lagoons to mark their lower outlines.<sup>12</sup>

Ether relates that so many were killed in the swift and speedy war, that the "scent thereof went forth upon the face of the land, even upon all the face of the land." The intense heat of the tropics would

<sup>11</sup> Ether 13:2.

<sup>12</sup> A. P. Coleman, *The Last Million Years*, pp. 162-167.



have reduced this stench to a few days, while the scavenger birds which thrive in Middle America would have reduced this to a minimum.

When Ether completed his record he hid the plates "in a manner that the people of Limhi did find them."<sup>13</sup> This implies that the records were buried far from Zarahemla; far from the metropolitan areas of Central America, but in a wilderness where Limhi's scouts "were lost for the space of many days."<sup>14</sup> Though these pathfinders knew the rivers and lakes of Middle America, and the streams they had crossed or followed as they pushed northward in search of Zarahemla, they spoke of Ramahland as "a land of many waters." To every Book of Mormon historian, these terms are synonymous with the land northward, especially Ramah-Cumorahland.

For ages the trails of the Mulekites, Nephites, and Lamanites had been deeply cut in the land of Zarahemla. Warriors, couriers, hunters, and traders had left their tracks in that populous and crowded land. If the scouts of Limhi had seen the large bodies of water near Zarahemla, they could easily have followed the trails that led to that metropolis or to other inhabited regions nearby. But for a wise purpose, they by-passed Zarahemla and continued their journey northward until they arrived at the land of many waters. These trained, out-of-doors men, inured to the rigors of the chase and well equipped for a long journey, were "lost for the space of many days, yet they were diligent." Their wanderings surely were not restricted to Central America.

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<sup>13</sup> Ether 15:33.

<sup>14</sup> Mosiah 8:8.

When the people of Zeniff finally left the land of Nephi and united with their kinsmen in Zarahemla they made the entire journey in twenty-two days.<sup>15</sup> Yet this group was encumbered with women and children and burdened with all their chattels and possessions. They drove with them their herds and flocks, stopping along the way to graze them. Though they fled in haste, without providing for their journey as the forty-three scouts had done; they were safely in Zarahemla after a journey of twenty-two days.

The experienced pathfinders were able to travel much faster than the colony, which made the journey in about three weeks' time. The fact that they were lost in the wilderness many days before they found the land of many waters seems all out of proportion with the miniature dimensions of Central America.

When Mormon was ready to take the Nephites out of Lamanite territory, he retreated to the "north countries," a term describing a vast territory, not merely implying removal to the northern slopes of a mountain range near Zarahemla or ascending the ridge beyond the river Sidon. It would be difficult to find a better line of retreat for a lightly-armed, self-supporting army, anxious to make the most possible speed with the surest safety, than the eastern banks of the Mississippi and Ohio. The river bottoms were fertile and in grass. The adjacent hills, out of bow-shot, were lightly forested.

Mormon, like all the Book of Mormon historians, emphasized the "many waters, rivers, and fountains," in Cumorahland. The outstanding group of "waters, rivers, fountains, and lakes" in the American continent are the Great Lakes, their tributaries, and satellite lakes.

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<sup>15</sup> Mosiah 23:3 and Mosiah 24:25.

About fifty years before the birth of Christ there was another mass migration from "the land of Zarahemla to the land northward." This was a time when the Nephites were "exceedingly strong in the land." In one year 5,400 men with their wives and children made the journey to the north country. As the tide of emigration swept northward, "an exceeding curious man" named Hagoth conceived the idea of constructing ships in order to minimize the hardships and dangers of a journey to that prized land far to the north.

The book of Alma closes with the account of this ship builder who "built him an exceeding large ship, on the borders of the land Bountiful, by the land Desolation, and launched it forth into the west sea, by the narrow neck which led into the land northward." If one is not unwilling to accept the facts as they are stated, it seems that the historian is trying to tell us that the ship was launched near the Isthmus of Panama and sailed up the Pacific Coast. The next year he built other ships, filled them with people and provisions and set out for the land northward. The following year they were still going northward in ships, though Hagoth did not return to the land of Zarahemla.

Since ship-building facilities were so limited at that time, they surely would not take time to construct a convoy of ships in order to transport colonists a few miles up the coast. It would require so much time to construct the seagoing craft that no journey less than a long one up the Pacific Coast or across the Gulf of Mexico and far up the Mississippi River, would recompense them for the labor and time spent on such a project.

The fact that some of the ships were lost during the second year of this new method of colonization is

proof that they were making a long journey, not merely a short trip in which the ships hugged the coastline.

Like all descriptions of the land northward, this again hesitates to fit into the cramped and crowded confines of Middle America where a ship was certainly not needed to take them to the far flung horizon of that limited and restricted expanse. These two vast continents were the stage on which the Jaredites, Nephites and Lamanites played their many parts. In the hundreds of years that they were in this land they became "exceeding strong and numerous." When we contemplate how the American nation spread from sea to sea in a few centuries, we need not try to restrict these vast empires to the northern tip of South America and the heart of Central America. Before their final wars in the land of the many waters these people had pushed back the horizons and had penetrated the distant region far beyond the narrow and crowded limits of the land of Zarahemla.

In this account as in all other in the Book of Mormon the land northward is associated with the large bodies of water. The third chapter of Helaman insists that these colonists who went in great numbers traveled "an exceeding great distance, insomuch that they came to large bodies of water, and many rivers, Yea, and even they did spread forth into all parts of the land. . . . they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth."

Cumorahland provided the best place in America for a defensive warfare. Interspersed among the few hundred drumlin hills, of which Cumorah is typical, were enough bodies of water to hinder the progress of

the invading armies. The Great Lakes to the north protected the Nephites' rear, while the Finger Lakes would narrow the front on which the enemy could approach and would hinder the mobilization of his forces, while at the same time facilitating both the defense and feeding of the defending army.

When Mormon describes the slaughter of his warriors, who were stationed on the Hill Cumorah, at which time all were killed except twenty-four, he says "the Lamanites had returned unto their camp from the top of the Hill Cumorah."<sup>16</sup> It seems utterly impossible to visualize the final battles in Cumorahland without assuming that every important hill in that neighborhood was fortified as the Nephites are said to have fortified other battlefields.

It was common practice in the early days of the Church for the leaders to speak and write in defense of the proposition that western New York was the scene of the final wars of the Jaredites and Nephites. It was thus interpreted by the members of the Church for many years. Joseph Smith never once objected to that explanation. He allowed the brethren to preach the doctrine and write in defense of it for the Church publications.

This same interpretation was accepted by the non-Mormon editors of newspapers and authors of books. Hundreds of newspaper articles and numerous books spoke of Cumorahland as the place where Moroni buried the gold plates after his people were destroyed, yet not once did any of the leaders of the Church protest such a theory.

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<sup>16</sup> Mormon 6:11.

Joseph Smith was definitely convinced that the Nephites had spread over North America. While traveling with Zion's Camp near the Illinois River, they found a skeleton which Joseph Smith identified as Zelph. He explained that Zelph was a converted Lamanite and became a great warrior for the Nephites, under the direction of Onondagus, who was in charge of the Nephite armies "from the Eastern sea to the Rocky Mountains."<sup>17</sup> Nearby, it was explained by Joseph Smith that the Nephite city Manti had been built. Later, when the remains of a stone tower were found along the Grand River in Missouri, Joseph Smith told the brethren that it was "an old Nephite tower."<sup>18</sup> Years later President Brigham Young declared that the Nephites had planned to build temples at the spot where temples were later erected in St. George and Manti, Utah.

During the pioneer period in Utah, the Church authorities often referred to the natural hideouts in southern Utah as the strongholds of the Gadianton robbers.

It was common knowledge in the early days of the Church that the Nephites and Jaredites spread over North America and were exterminated in the land of many waters in western New York. If it were true then, it is true today. We should not be in a hurry to discard that popular opinion because modern students think the poor warriors would get tired during a four years' march from Zarahemla to the Great Lakes.

For many years the footnotes in the Book of Mormon designated Ripliancum as Lake Ontario, the land

<sup>17</sup> M. F. Cowley, Wilford Woodruff, p. 41. Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, IX, 209.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, p. 210.

of many waters as the Great Lakes and satellite lakes in western New York. These footnotes make the accounts easier to understand and emphasize the true geographical locations. Let us not be too hasty to fling aside the old popular theory that has borne the stamp of approval of so many reputable witnesses.





## IV NEPHITE FORTIFICATIONS

Ether, Mormon, and Moroni had very little to say about the elaborate fortifications their warriors made in Ramah-Cumorahland, but it is certain that they would employ every mechanical invention and means of defense that had been developed by their people. When Alma narrated the historical events of his time, he had an eye for something besides dates and statistics. His book is filled with human interest stories. His characters are very human, very much alive. He paused to describe the extensive defenses his people made for war.

Since the very same defenses were made in Cumorahland, as many witnesses testified two centuries ago, we shall consider Alma's complete description and compare it with the archeologists' account of the many fortified hills in western New York.

Almost a century before the birth of Christ, the Nephites were erecting "forts, or places of resort; throwing up banks of earth round about, to enclose his armies, and also building walls of stone to encircle them about."<sup>1</sup> In the weakest defenses they placed the greatest number of warriors.

In many cities they "cast up dirt round about, to shield them from the arrows and the stones of the Lamanites."<sup>2</sup> Some of the "ridges of earth" were so high that the enemy were powerless to "cast their stones and arrows at them, that they might take effect, save it was by their place of entrance." They were armed with shields and breastplates, headplates, armshields, and shields of every kind.

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<sup>1</sup> Alma 48:8.

<sup>2</sup> Alma 49:2.

They dug moats or "ditches" around their forts and erected ramparts from which they could hurl stones and other missiles upon the approaching foe. The enemy often attempted to dig away the embattlements by filling the moat with earth, but instead the "ditches were filled up in a measure with their dead and wounded bodies."<sup>3</sup>

"Upon the top of these ridges of earth he caused that there should be timbers; yea, works of timbers built up to the height of a man, round about the cities."<sup>4</sup> Above these timbers was a frame of sharpened pickets "strong and high." Overlooking the tall pickets they "were prepared to cast stones from the top thereof" upon any foe who approached their strongholds.

When Moroni and Teancum captured a host of Lamanite prisoners, they forced them to dig a ditch around the city Bountiful. They were compelled to build a "breastwork of timbers upon the inner bank of the ditch, and cast up dirt out of the ditch against the breastwork of timbers."<sup>5</sup>

Alma's account of the Nephites who prepared strong cords and ladders so they could be let down into the city by night, thus leaving their fortification in order to surprise the Lamanites, who were camped nearby without their armies, gives one a good picture of how large and strong the fortifications were.

Many, indeed, were the Nephite cities that were fortified in this manner. Many years later the Nephites were fortifying other cities, "and the strength thereof should be exceeding great."

<sup>3</sup> Alma 49:22.

<sup>4</sup> Alma 50:2.

<sup>5</sup> Alma 53:3.

When Mormon began to fortify his cities, he certainly made use of all the knowledge his people had acquired during the years of preparation for war.<sup>6</sup> Surely he employed all the engineering skill his people had developed when he "did fortify against them with all our force, that they might not get possession of our lands."<sup>7</sup> So extensive were their first fortifications that their remains were easily detected when the first white men penetrated the region about three hundred years ago.

Many volumes have been written about the battles that have been fought in western New York, as is apparent from the many remains that have been found in that region. As the scientists have examined these ancient earthworks and fortified hills in western New York, they have visualized such a system of defenses as Alma describes.

In the light of this evidence it would be useless to argue with these reputable historians that a war of extermination had not been fought in Cumorahland and that a great nation had been exterminated, whose civilization was much higher than that of the Indians.

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<sup>6</sup> Mormon 2:4, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Mormon 3:6.



## CUMORAHLAND AND THE SPADE

Many renowned antiquarians have described Cumorahland as the site of an ancient battlefield. Their descriptions of the ancient fortifications sound very much like Alma's detailed account of how his people prepared for war. The voluminous material on this subject is so pertinent that we must quote at length as these famous scientists tell us where the final battles of the Jaredites and Nephites took place.

*What Nation Perished in Cumorahland?*

Almost within a stone's throw of Lake Ontario the remains of a formidable fort were found on an eminence. This was long before the plows of the white men had disturbed the numerous fortifications. In Frontenac's report to the king of France, he paused to describe this fortified hill, where the trenches ten feet wide, were still plainly visible. The French pathfinder was amazed at the engineering skill that had planned this fort. The iron implements that were found convinced him that a superior race had erected these defenses. His report concluded with these lines:

By whom were these forts wrought? Not by the natives, surely. If the natives ever had the art of working iron, it is not probable that they would lose an art so useful. Further, no native Indian tribe could build such regular and well planned works for self defense. Again, this fort at Sandy Creek which is cut out of rock could not have been the work of native tribes. It is far too stupendous for untaught savages to effect; and it is very doubtful if it could have been done without the use of powder.<sup>1</sup>

In the same volume Professor Morgan writes:

Judging from the position of these forts, generally in close proximity to water, and other circumstances not less conclusive, imply a defensive origin. The unequivocal traces

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Morgan, *Documentary History of New York*, IV, 4.

of long occupancy found within many of them, would further imply that they were fortified towns and villages permanently occupied. In respect to date, nothing positive can be affirmed. Many of them are now covered with heavy forests. I have seen trees from two to four feet in diameter standing upon the embankments and in the trenches, which would indicate that the date of their origin would be some centuries ago.<sup>2</sup>

Josiah Priest wrote extensively on this subject. His *American Antiquities* is filled with such statements as this:

We are far from believing the Indian of the present time to be the aborigines of America; but quite to the contrary are usurpers who have by force of bloody warfare exterminated the original inhabitants, taking possession of their country, property, and in some few instances, retaining arts, learned of those very nations.<sup>3</sup>

Another reputable authority wrote of the early inhabitants of the Genesee country.

Human bones have been discovered beneath accumulated debris; and in nearly every part of the trench skeletons of adults of both sexes, of children and infants, have been found. They seem to have been thrown together promiscuously. They have also been found in narrow depressions resembling artificial trenches. . .

This county possessed a very heavy aboriginal population; probably greater than any equal extent north of Mexico. Fragments of pottery, pipes, flint arrowheads, stone hatchets, etc., are in great abundance. In many places both within and exterior to the ruins, were found pits for hiding corn and other articles in cache. . . .

An examination of this mound was made by excavation. Great numbers of bones were found; and beneath them, at a greater depth, others were found which have

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 18.

<sup>3</sup> Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities*, p. 87.

been burned. No conjecture could be formed as to the number of bodies deposited here. The skeletons were lying without order, and so much decayed as to crumble to dust at the touch. At one point in the mound a large number, perhaps a thousand arrow-heads were discovered, collected in a heap. They were made in the usual form, and of yellow or black flint.

The bone pits, which occur in Western New York, are of various sizes, but usually contain a large number of skeletons; in some cases the bones appear to have been deposited with some degree of regularity. One of these pits, discovered and opened up in Niagara County, was estimated to have contained several thousand individuals. Another place I visited were found mounds containing human skeletons of individuals of all ages and both sexes. Not less than four hundred were found in one place.

We have the conclusive evidence that these mounds served as tombs, and abound in human bones. It has often been said that some of the mounds are full of bones that have been perforated, as though the living subjects were killed in battle; and that the skeletons were heaped together in promiscuous confusion, as if buried after a conflict, without order or arrangement. In some cases arrow points are still sticking in the bones.\*

In like vein, Squire describes many of the drumlin hills that were well fortified. In his *Aboriginal Monuments of New York*, he speaks of "human bones of adults of both sexes, of children and infants thrown together promiscuously . . . Many skulls were fractured as if by a blow from a hatchet or club. This was the scene of one of those indiscriminate massacres so common in the history of savage warfare."

He mentions the burial grounds beside the fortified hills, all of them bearing these characteristics: Human bones of all ages and both sexes were promiscuously heaped together. Intermingled with them were

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\* E. G. Squire, *Antiquities of New York*, p. 89.

numerous flint arrowheads." A deposit of bones is described in one ancient mound, containing "several thousand of individuals." Another fortified hill had a trench in which more than four hundred skeletons had been thrown. All these authorities marvel at the skill which erected the numerous defenses, attributing them to a race superior to the Indian.

### *What Mysterious People Fought in Cumorahland?*

Volumes have been written on this intriguing subject. From our limited research we have culled a few hundred typed pages of quotations similar to the ones included in this chapter. Since all authorities agree in the main about the ancient monuments left as tokens of a vanished race, we shall limit the witnesses to a few. They would all like to know what civilized people inhabited that land and why they disappeared. One historian offers this suggestion:

Again, the fort near Sandy Creek, which is cut in the rock, must have been a work too stupendous for untaught savages to effect; and it is doubtful whether it could have been done without the use of powder. And there is a difficulty attending this fort—on condition, or suppose it to have been done by any European nation, they would not have undertaken a work so arduous, when so little benefit could have been derived from it, in proportion to the work. Who then wrought those works? They were done by the hand of man there is no doubt; but by whom, and when, and for what purpose must remain at present inexplicable enigma. What has become of these people? And why have we not histories of such a nation as must have inhabited this part of the world? Were these the works of the ante-diluvians—or is this the land of Nazareth, to which Esdras says the ten tribes traveled, and were a hundred and twenty days on their journey? Or is it the Vineland of the emigrant Swedes, who returned to their native country but once? Or were they the works of Spaniards in searching for gold? Or was this



land inhabited by the emigrant Mexican, after the Spanish conquest? That these works were not done by French or English is beyond doubt, from various reasons too numerous to mention. I am informed that in the Military tract several pieces of stamped coin are found, which can not be read by the ignorant peasants, and which I am fearful will be lost. Probably if a knowledge of those ancient people is ever obtained, it will be derived from inscriptions on stones or metals, which may have withstood the rust of time.<sup>5</sup>

Governor DeWitt Clinton wrote extensively on this subject. From his prolific writings we glean these lines:

Previous to the occupancy of this region by the progenitors of the present race of Indians, it was inhabited by a race of men much more populous and more advanced in civilization. Who they were, whence they came, and whither they went, have been themes of speculation by learned antiquarians, who have failed to arrive at any satisfactory conclusions. There are vast and ancient ruins at Pompey, Onondaga, Manlius, Camillus, Scipio, several between Seneca and Cayuga Lakes, three near Canandaigua, many along Ridge Road between Rochester and Buffalo, in fact scattered everywhere, all of which surpass the skill and engineering ability of the Indians. The antiquity is unquestioned, trees, even the last of many growths, all indicate that the fortifications are many hundreds of years old.

A great part of America, long before the coming of Columbus, was inhabited by populous nations who had made great advances in civilization. These numerous works could never have been supplied with provisions without agriculture. Nor could they have been constructed without the use of iron or copper, and without perseverance, labor and design which demonstrate considerable progress in the arts of civilized life. . . .

On the south side of the great ridge (the ridge road)

<sup>5</sup> E. B. O' Callaghan, *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, III, 1143.

in its vicinity, and in all directions through the country, the remains of numerous forts are to be seen; but on the north side, that is the side toward the lake, not a single one has been discovered, although the whole ground has been carefully explored. Considering the distance to be, say seventy miles in length and eight in breadth and that the border of the lakes is the very place that would be selected for a habitation, and consequently for works of defense, on account of the facilities it would afford for subsistence, for safety, and all domestic accommodations, and military purposes, and that on the south shore of Lake Erie these ancient fortresses exist in great numbers. There can be no doubt that these works were erected when this ridge was the southern boundary of Lake Ontario, and consequently, that their origin must be sought in a very remote age.

These forts were, generally speaking, erected on the most commanding ground. The walls or breastworks were earthen. The ditches were on the exterior of works. On some of the parapets, oak trees were to be seen, which, from the number of concentric circles must have been standing 150, 260, and 300 years; and there were evident indications, not only that they had sprung up since the creation of those works, but that they were at least a second growth. The trenches were in some cases deep and wide, and in others shallow and narrow; and the breastworks varied in altitude from three to eight feet. They sometimes had one, and sometimes had two entrances, as was to be inferred from there being no ditch at those places. When the works were protected by a deep ravine or a large stream of water no ditch was to be seen. The areas of these large forts varied from two to six acres; and the form was generally an irregular elipsis; and in some of them fragments of earthenware and pulverized substances, supposed to have been originally human bones, were to be found.

These fortifications, thus diffused over the interior of our country, have been generally considered as surpassing the skill, patience, and industry of the Indian race, and

various hypotheses have been advanced to prove them of European origin.<sup>6</sup>

Just one year before *The Book of Mormon* came from the press, the *Wayne Sentinel* published these lines about the nation that had vanished from the land of many waters:

In relation to the civilized people who once inhabited this country, relics of whom have been found in most of the western states, as well as our own, and whose fate remains involved in mystery and obscurity, probably nothing definite will be known. There appears to be a gap in the history of the world, so far as relates to them, which can never be filled up. True we may conjecture what and who they were; . . . we may picture them in our minds as a flourishing and mighty nation, possessing all the advantages and blessings of civil and religious liberty; powerful in wealth and natural resources; combining moral and political excellence; and seated upon the pinnacle of national prosperity and glory—and we may suppose that some dreadful plague, some natural calamity swept them from the face of the earth; or perhaps like Sodom and Gomorrah of old, their natural sins became so heinous, that the Almighty in his wrath utterly annihilated them;—but after all our own conjectures cannot lead us to any satisfactory results. . . .

Who they were; from whence they sprung; and what was their destiny remains locked up in the womb of the past, one of these events which defy human ken or human examination; which loom up on the far-off ocean of by-gone years, with enough of the reality about it to convince us that they are no fiction, but yet clothed with an indistinctness which defies investigation. The origin, the history, the destiny of that people, together with the cause of their extinction, is (to use the beautiful language of an elegant modern writer) 'consigned to the receptacle of things forever lost upon the earth.'

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<sup>6</sup> O. Turner, *Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York*, p. 20.

The *New York Star*, July 11, 1840, edited by a Hebrew named Noah, offers this solution of the mystery:

The people of this country must be prepared for extraordinary developments in researches throughout Central America, Mexico and Peru. We must, as a nation, relinquish our believing propensities, our uniform practice of doubting everything which we cannot exactly comprehend, and believing everything to be a hoax or a humbug, and prepare ourselves by a proper study and discipline of mind to know and to believe that this New World, so-called—the discovery of a few centuries—was settled by the descendants of Peleg, and that the statues described by Catherwood and Stephens, together with the altars, obelisks, the temples at Palenque, the hieroglyphics, the aqueducts, viaducts and military highways, are from the same people who built Tyre, Babylon, the tower of Babel, the pyramids and Carthage—the Phoenicians; who, driven down the Mediterranean by Joshua, after they had circumnavigated Africa visited Britain and the West Islands, found themselves 4,000 years ago in the Gulf of Mexico, and there made their settlements—spread over the Peninsula to the Pacific ocean and to Cape Horn. Let our people be prepared for something yet more startling—the downfall of the powerful people who had built those cities. Let them be prepared to believe that 1,500 years after the Phoenicians had settled in America, the nine and a half tribes of Israel, after the capture of Samaria, took their departure for an unknown country, and after taking in their train the Tartars and Chinese disposed to follow, crossed to the land of the Pacific Coast.

Let our people know that the red men spread over this continent are the descendants of what was called the lost tribes, who bear, at this day, the proofs in their religion, language and ceremonies, of their early origin. So far all is conjecture; but these discoveries will in time ripen into fixed and positive evidence.

Turner has written about the mysterious people who once lived in that choice land:

We are surrounded by evidence that a race preceded the present Indians, farther advanced in civilization and the arts, and far more numerous. Here and there upon the brow of hills, at the head of ravines, are their fortifications, their location selected with skill and adapted to refuge, subsistence and defense. Uprooted trees of the forest that are the growth of many centuries, expose their moulding remains, the uncovered mounds with masses of their skeletons promiscuously heaped one on top of the other, as if they were gathered and hurriedly entombed dead of well contested battlefields. In our villages, upon our hillsides, the plow and the spade discover their rude implements adapted to war, the chase and domestic use. All these unintelligible witnesses, bringing but unsatisfactory knowledge of races that have preceded us.

Although not confined to this region, there is perhaps no portion of the United States where ancient relics are more numerous. Commencing near Oswego River, they extend westwardly over all the western counties of the state. We clear away our forests and speak familiarly of subduing the "Virgin soil," and yet the plow upturns the skulls of those whose history is lost. Then as now the western portion of New York state had attractions and inducements to make it a favorite residence, or this ancient people, assailed from the north and east, made this their refuge in a war of extermination, fortified the commanding eminences, met the shock of a final issue, were subject to its adverse results. The forest invited the chase, the rivers and lakes, local commerce and fishing, and the fertile soil for agriculture. The evidence that this was one, at least, of their final battlefields, predominate. They are the fortifications, entrenchments and warlike instruments of an extinct race. That here was war of extermination, we may well conclude, from masses of human skeletons we find indiscriminately thrown together, indicating a common and simultaneous sepulture from which age, infancy, sex and no condition, was exempt.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. E. G. Squire describes a copper hatchet found near a burial where "Bones of the human form were

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

promiscuously mingled. A large number of the skulls were dislocated from the underjaws." In describing the fort in which it was found he says "this was a most stupendous work and could not have been erected without iron tools."

The Reverend Samuel Kirkland, who spent some years as a missionary among the Indians in the Genesee country, wrote extensively about the ruins he found in that region. He describes the moats five or six feet deep around the forts. He describes the remains of six gates in the walls. He concluded his description with this paragraph:

From many concurring accounts which I have been able to get from Indian historians of several tribes, there are well defined traditions that long before the white man came, there was a great war in these parts, that lasted many moons. An old, gray-haired Indian told me that he and his progenitors before him, had tramped over these hills and among these ruins, and that many ages of trees had grown up since the great battle took place. He said that his people at that time knew nothing about firearms, but that they fought with bows and arrows, javelins, with sharp points made of bone, deer horn or flint; of stone, slings and catapults to throw stones. He said also that his forefathers wore jackets or body coverings made of willow or split wood. They also wore caps or coverings for their heads, of double thickness to withstand the blows of clubs and death-malls. Some affirm that their old men had told them that thousands were slain that the ground in and around the forts was covered with dead bodies. Those within the forts were thrown into hurriedly dug pits and covered with stone and earth to keep them from stinking, as they were beseiged for a long time. Those killed on the outside of the forts were left to bleach upon the ground or be devoured by beasts.

Schoolcraft was convinced that all these ancient fortifications "were intended as an emergency for a siege."



The *Centennial History of Rochester* has many chapters telling of the fortified hills in western New York. The first chapter describes the "clearings or openings" in the flats of the Genesee country, explaining that they had been cleared and cultivated centuries ago by a people far superior to the Indian. When the first pathfinders penetrated the land of many waters they found many such clearings, some of which enclosed as much as 10,000 acres. Not even a wild bush encumbered the ground where the sharp tools of an agricultural people had cleared the land.

"Through this country," we read, "there are not only signs of extensive cultivations having been made at some early period, but there are found the remains of old forts. Ditches and gates are still visible. They appear to have been chosen for defense. The forts are too numerous to have been built for mere stations, and great collections of human bones have been found in them, which shows they were used for war purposes."

Professor E. G. Squire's *Aboriginal Monuments*, is filled with descriptions of the fortifications found in the various counties in western New York. He describes a fortified hill as far away as Chenango County where hundred of skeletons and arrowheads were found. He assures us there are:

More than 1,000 sites in Ontario, Livingston, Genesee and Monroe Counties. Nearly 500 sites chartered in Monroe County alone. In Genesee County are over 100 fortified hilltops and strongholds, and similar number of burial sites, and nearly 50 true mounds. It thus appears that long before the coming of the white man, this region was settled by active and vigorous peoples. There villages were along rivers, creeks, and lakes. Their camps upon the hills, their fortifications in strategic places difficult to assault. There is not an area of like size in the United

States east of the Ohio and north of the Mason and Dixon Line where evidences of aboriginal occupation are so abundant.

In 1802 the Reverend John Taylor made a missionary tour through the land of many waters. He described the many fortifications that were then very noticeable. He was convinced that "there stupendous works could not have been erected without iron tools."<sup>8</sup>

### *Ancient Aboriginal Monuments*

The historian Bradford describes many of the old forts he visited at the dawn of the nineteenth century. He mentions a town with a fort at each end. These forts were two miles apart. One containing about four acres of land, while the other one was twice that large. A deep ditch surrounded the walls and a "covered way to the water" was still visible.

He describes a vast number of fortified hills near Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, explaining that "more have been found between the ancient beaches of Lake Erie and Ontario and their present shores, though many of them run parallel with the former line of the lakes—a circumstance favoring their high antiquity."<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Bradford is convinced that these numerous fortifications were built by a people "elevated far above the savage state. Many of them indicate great elegance of taste, and a high degree of dexterous workmanship and mechanical skill." He regards them as monuments of an "ancient and enlightened people." He makes minute descriptions of nearly one hundred fortified hills in western New York, all of which resemble Alma's account of the fortifications the Nephites made in his

<sup>8</sup> E. B. O'Callaghan, *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, III, 1142.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander W. Bradford, *American Antiquities*, p. 36.



day. Near Newark is a fortified hill which he says includes twenty-two acres, with an elevated observatory on one side, constructed partly of earth and partly of stone, beneath which was a secret passageway to a nearby stream. This circular fort was connected by two parallel walls of earth with another fort twice as large. The walls of the latter were ten feet high when this scientist first visited the area.

The eight gateways in the wall were well defended by mounds of earth on the inside. Two parallel walls of earth lead to another similar fort and to several springs of water, where the people occupying the defenses could go without being seen by the enemy.<sup>10</sup>

He describes a large fort immediately south of this one whose embankment was thirty feet high. Parallel walls of earth led to a nearby stream. Elevated mounds of earth appeared at intervals along the walls, where strong defenses must have been erected.

Dr. Bradford's conclusion is worthy of consideration:

The best military judges have observed the skill with which the sites of many of the fortifications have been selected, and the artful combination of natural advantages with artificial means of defense exhibited in their construction. The care taken in their erection must have been necessary for protection against a powerful external enemy, or from internal wars. The latter probably was partially the case as, extrinsic of other reasons, it is hardly likely that at so early a period, and in a state of semicivilized society, this great people were united under one sovereign, or were free from internal commotions and revolutions.

Upon the whole, we may with justice say of these nations, far from a review of their relics and monuments thus far.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

1. That they were all of the same origin, branches of the same race, and possessed of similar customs and institutions.

2. That they were populous, and occupied a great extent of territory.

3. That they had arrived at a considerable degree of civilization, were associated in large communities, and lived in extensive cities.

4. That they possessed the use of many of the metals, such as lead, copper, gold, and silver, and probably the art of working in them.

5. That they sculptured in stone, and sometimes used that material in the construction of their edifices.

6. That they had the knowledge of the art of receding steps; of the art of pottery,—producing utensils and urns forged with taste, and constructed upon the principles of chemical compositions and of the art of brick-making.

7. That they worked the salt springs, and manufactured that substance.

8. That they were an agricultural people living under the influence and protection of regular forms of government.

9. That they possessed a decided system of religion, and a mythology connected with astronomy, which, with its sister science geometry, was in the hands of the priesthood.

10. That they were skilled in the art of fortification.

11. That the epoch of their original settlement, in the United States, is of great antiquity; and,

Lastly, that the only indications of their origin, to be gathered from the locality of their ruined monuments, point towards Mexico.”

Carver, who was one of the first pathfinders to study the many fortifications in western New York,

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-70.

writes of them, "Though defaced by time, every angle was distinguished, and appeared as regular, and fashioned with as much military skill, as if planned by Vauban himself."

The historian Turner has written so extensively and his opinions are so interesting that we must quote at length from his prolific writings:

Our own race was the successor of others. Here in our own region, when the waters of the Niagara were first disturbed by a craft of European architecture—when the adventurous Frenchman would first pitch a tent upon its banks, there were 'lords of the Forests and the Lakes' to be consulted.—Where stood that humble primitive 'palisade,' its site grudgingly and suspiciously granted, in process of time arose strong walls—ramparts, from behind which the armies of successive nations have been arranged to repel assailants. The dense forests has for more than a century enshrouded them, unbroken by the woodman's axe, have now disappeared, or but skirt a peaceful and beautiful cultivated landscape. Civilization, improvement and industry, have made an Empire of the region that for a long period was tributary to this nucleus of early events. cities have been founded—The arts, sciences taught;—Learning has its temples and its votaries; History its enlightened and earnest enquirers. And yet, with the pre-occupant lingering until even now in our midst, we have but the unsatisfactory knowledge of him and his race, which is gathered from dim and obscure tradition. That which is suited to the pages of fiction and romance, but can be incorporated in the pages of history, only with "suspicion" and trust." The learned and the curious have from time to time inquired of their old men; they have sat down in their wigwams and listened to their recitals; the pages of history have been searched and compared with their imperfect revelations, to discover some faint coincidence or analogy; and yet we know nothing of the origin, and have but unsatisfactory traditions of the people we found here, and have almost dispossessed.

If their own history is obscure; if their relations of

themselves, after they have gone back but little more than a century beyond the period of the first European emigration, degenerates to fable and obscure tradition, they are but poor revelators of a still greater mystery. We are surrounded by evidences that a race preceded them, farther advanced in civilization and the arts, and far more numerous. Here and there upon the brows of our hills, at the head of our ravines, are their fortifications; their locations selected with skill, adapted to refuge, subsistence and defense. The uprooted trees of our forest, that are the growth of centuries, expose their mouldering remains; the uncovered mounds masses of their skeletons promiscuously heaped one upon the other, as if they were the gathered and hurriedly entombed of well contested battle fields. In our valleys, upon our hillsides, the plough and the spade discover their rude implements, adapted to war, the chase, and domestic use. All these are dumb eloquent chronicles of by-gone ages. We ask the red man to tell us from whence they came and whither they went? And he either amuses us with a wild and extravagant traditionary legend, or acknowledges himself as ignorant as his interrogators. He and his progenitors have gazed upon these ancient relics for centuries, as we do now,—wondered and consulted their wise men, and yet he is unable to aid our inquiries. We invoke the aid of revelation, turn over the pages of history, trace the origin and dispersion of the races of mankind from the earliest period of the world's existence, and yet we gather only enough to form the basis of vague surmise and conjecture. The crumbling walls—the “Ruins” overgrown by the gigantic forests of Central America, are not involved in impenetrable obscurity, than are the more humble, but equally interesting mounds and relics that abound in our region.

We are prone to speak of ourselves as the inhabitants of a *new* world; and yet we are confronted with such evidences of antiquity! We clear away the forests and speak familiarly of subduing a ‘*virgin soil*’;—and yet the plough upturns the skulls of those whose history is lost! We say that Columbus discovered a *new* world. Why not that he helped to make two *old* ones acquainted with each other?

I believe we may confidently pronounce that all the hypotheses which attribute those works to Europeans are incorrect and fanciful—first, on account of the present number of the works; second, on account of their antiquity; having from every appearance, been erected a long time before the discovery of America; and, finally, their form and manner are totally variant from European fortifications, either in ancient or modern time.

It is equally clear that they were not the work of the Indians. Until the Senecas, who are renowned for their national vanity, had seen the attention of the Americans attracted to these erections, and had invented the fabulous account of which I have spoken, the Indians of the present day did not pretend to know anything about their origin. They were beyond the reach of all their traditions, and were lost in the abyss of unexplored antiquity.

The erection of such prodigious works must have been the result of labor far beyond the patience and perseverance of our Indians; and the form and materials are entirely different from those which they are known to make. These earthen walls, it is supposed, will retain their original form much longer than those constructed with brick or stone. They undoubtedly have been greatly diminished by the washing away of the earth, the filling up of the interior, and the accumulation of fresh soil; yet their firmness and solidity indicates them to be the work of some remote age. Add to this, that the Indians have never practiced the mode of fortifying by entrenchments. Their villages or castles were protected by palisades, which afford a sufficient defense against Indian weapons.<sup>12</sup>

Professor Turner did not hesitate to consider all the fortified hills in western New York as having been erected by "a race which peopled this country before the Indians, who raised so many monuments greatly exceeding the power of the Indians, and who lived at a remote era."<sup>13</sup> Turner observed that most of "these breastworks of earth on grounds where there are ap-

<sup>12</sup> Turner, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

pearance of creeks having flowed into the lake, or where there was a bay."

Turner allows his imaginations to follow the builders of these fortifications "through Ohio into the great valley of the Mississippi, thence to the Gulf of Mexico, through Texas into New Mexico and South America."

The historian Squire has written extensively on this subject, practically agreeing with Turner in his major conclusions. In 1851 he published a book on the subject, after years of research. He estimated that about 259 drumlin hills in western New York had been strongly fortified by an ancient people. "In nearly all cases these forts are placed in close proximity to some unfailing supply of water, near copious springs or running streams. Gateways, opening toward these, are always to be observed, and in some cases guarded passageways are also visible."

A characteristic feature of the fortified towns is the cache or "well" in which their food supply was stored. These holes are about eight feet deep and capable of holding a large quantity of food. They were very numerous and were always located in the driest portion of the enclosure.

He then describes many of these fortified sites, all of which had a high embankment of earth with an exterior ditch. His opinion of the fate that overtook these early inhabitants is "that the ancient village was destroyed by enemies, and that these are the bones of its occupants, who fell in defense of their kindred, and were burned in the fires which consumed their lodges." He saw bushels of stone axes, flint arrowheads, and other remnants of savage art."



### *Bones of Fallen Warriors*

He emphasizes the fact that in every fortified village the skeletons of the defenders are buried promiscuously—"adults of both sexes, children, and infants. Many skulls were fractured, is if by a blow."

Concerning every village he helped explore, he writes this comment, "human bones are promiscuously heaped together." "This county," he concludes, "possessed a very heavy original population; probably greater than any equal extent of territory north of the Floridas."

Squire concludes that:

If the tide of migration flowed from the south, it received its final check upon this line. On the other hypothesis, southward, constantly developing itself in its progress, until it attained its height in Mexico, we may suppose from this direction came the hostile savage hordes, before whose incessant attacks the less warlike mound-builders gradually receded, or beneath whose exterminating cruelty they entirely disappeared—leaving these monuments alone to attest their existence, and the extraordinary skill with which they defended their altars and their homes. Upon either assumption it is clear that the contest was a protracted one, and that the race of the mounds were for long periods constantly exposed to attack. This conclusion finds its support in the fact that, in the vicinity of those localities, where from the amount of remains, it appears the ancient population was most dense, furnishing ready places of resort in times of danger. We may suppose that a state of things existed somewhat analogous to that which attended the advance of our pioneer population, when every settlement had its little fort, to which the settlers flocked in case of alarm or attack.<sup>14</sup>

Every scientist who has studied the fortifications in Cumorahland has said much about the burial of the

<sup>14</sup> E. G. Squire, *Antiquities of the State of New York*, p. 303.



dead, which indicated that they were killed in battle. From another source we find this typical comment:

Children of different ages and the full grown seemed to have been piled together promiscuously. One of the skulls was found pierced by an arrow, which was still sticking in it, driven about half way through before its force was spent. The arrow point was about six inches long. The subjects of this mound were doubtless killed in battle and hastily buried. Some of the mounds are full of bones that are perforated, as though the living subjects were slain in battle, and that the skeletons were heaped together in promiscuous confusion, as if buried after a conflict.<sup>15</sup>

Almost every historian or scientist emphasizes that the "bones were of both sexes, and of all ages. Many of the skulls bore marks of violence, leading to the belief that they were broken before burial."<sup>16</sup>

The renowned scientist, Josiah Priest, wrote extensively on this subject after a careful research. He estimated the number of fortified hills in western New York at two hundred fifty. He and Dr. Cutler, and the historian Atwater spent months studying tree rings and the time required for a forest to grow above the ruins of a vanquished race. It was their opinion that this "country was deserted about five hundred years after the commencement of the Christian era."

Josiah Priest assures us that the forts, mounds and tumuli found in the land of many waters were made by a race "anterior to that of the present race of Indians." This statement from Priest is significant:

We are very far from believing the Indians of the present time to be the aborigines of America; but quite contrary, are the usurpers, have by force of bloody warfare.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel H. Brown, *Gazetteer of the West*, p. 58.

<sup>16</sup> E. G. Squire, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

exterminated the original inhabitants, taking possession of their country, property, and in some few instances, retaining arts, learned of those various nations. . . .

The celebrated antiquarian, Samuel L. Mitchell, late of New York, with other gentlemen, eminent for their knowledge of natural history, are even of the opinion that America was the country where Adam was created. In a letter of Governor DeWitt Clinton, in which this philosopher argued the common origin of the people of America, and those of Asia, he says: 'I avoid the opportunity which this grand conclusion affords me, of stating, that America was the cradle of the human race; of tracing its colonies westward over the Pacific ocean, and beyond the sea of Kamschatter, until they reached Europe and Africa. I had no inclination to oppose the current opinions relative to the place of man's creation and dispersion. I thought it was scarcely worth the while to inform a European that in coming to America he had left the new world behind him for the purpose of visiting the old.'<sup>17</sup>

Priest describes many of the forts that were to be discerned years ago, their ancient forms faintly visible to the trained eye of the scientist. He gives the usual information and his conclusions agree with those expressed in these pages. He mentions eight tall mounds within the enclosure of one large fort, each located near a gateway. These, he assumes were to be crowned with warriors or with spectators to watch the warriors as they left the fort or returned after a skirmish. These vast and numerous forts in western New York cause his imagination "to be irresistibly directed to a contemplation of ancient Babylon, the first city of magnitude to be erected immediately after the flood.

### *Ancient Landmarks*

Another historian calling himself an "Americanist" wrote a book which he called *The Ruins Revisited*. On

<sup>17</sup> Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities*, p. 331.

page 206 of this volume we read of a large fort in western New York capable of enclosing 60,000 soldiers and their families. He sees among the ruins of these fortified hills "lookouts that served as signal towers when apprehensive of danger from their enemies."

"The region adjacent to Lake Erie," writes Foster, "contains ancient earthworks with the ditch invariably on the outside of the parapets . . . On the frontier of the empire of the Mound-builders empire it became necessary to fortify against sudden incursions of the enemy."<sup>18</sup>

The Reverend John Taylor who penetrated the Genesee country as early as 1802, described many of the fortifications that were visible in that early time before the farmer's plow disturbed the faint remains that appeared on the slopes of the low hills. He was strongly impressed with one well defended position including about two acres, "made in the solid rock." It was plain to him that a highly civilized nation had prepared these defenses before they were exterminated by the enemy. "This stupendous work," he writes, "could not have been effected without the use of iron tools."<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Squire's books are filled with minute descriptions of the extensive preparations that had been made for war by a highly civilized race that once inhabited western New York. It is clear to him that long before the Europeans came to America "this region was settled by an active and vigorous people. Their villages were among the rivers, creeks, and lakes. Their camps upon the hills, their fortifications in strategic places difficult

<sup>18</sup> J. W. Foster, *Pre-historic Races of the United States of America*, p. 144.

<sup>19</sup> E. B. O'Callaghan, *op. cit.*, III, 1142.

of assault. There is not an arc of like size in the United States where evidence of aboriginal occupation is so abundant."

The historian John McIntosh has made some interesting observations concerning these ancient landmarks and numerous fortifications in the land of many waters. These comments are especially significant:

The mighty stream of people that streamed into America from Asia must have remained free from external pressure for ages. Availing themselves of this period of tranquility, they would devote themselves to the arts of peace, make rapid progress in civilization, and acquire immense population. In course of time discord and war would break out among them, and compel the establishment of places of security. At last they became alarmed at the irruption of a vast horde of barbarians who rushed like an overwhelming flood upon them. The great law of self-preservation to stand on their defense, to resist the ruthless invaders, and to construct numerous extensive works for protection. For a time the scale of victory was suspended in doubt, and they firmly withstood the torrent; but like the Romans in the decline of their empire, they were finally worn down and destroyed by inroads and attacks. And the fortifications of which we have been treating are the only sermonizing monuments of these ancient and exterminated nations. . . .

These forts were, generally speaking, erected on the most commanding ground. The walls or breastworks were earthen. The ditches were on the exterior of the works. On some of the parapets, oak trees were to be seen, which, from the number of concentric circles, must have been standing one hundred and fifty, two hundred and sixty, and three hundred years; and there were evident indications, not only that they had sprung up since the erection of those works, but that they were at least a second growth. The trenches were in some cases deep and wide, and in others shallow and narrow; and the breastworks varied in altitude from three to eight feet. They sometimes had one and sometimes two entrances, as was to be inferred from

there being no ditch at those places. When the works were protected by a deep ravine, or a stream of water, no ditch was to be seen. The areas of these forts varied from two to six acres; and the form was generally an irregular ellipsis; and in some of them fragments of earthenware and pulverized substances, supposed to have been originally human bones were to be found.

These fortifications, thus diffused over the interior of our country, have been generally considered as surpassing the skill, patience and industry of the Indian race; and various hypotheses have been advanced to prove them of European origin. . .

It is generally clear that they are not the work of the Indians. Until the Senecas, who are renowned for their national vanity, had seen the attention of the Americans attracted to these erections and invented the fabulous account of which I have spoken, the Indians of the present day did not pretend to know anything about their origin. They were beyond the reach of all their traditions, and were lost in the abyss of unexplored antiquity.<sup>20</sup>

Of the thousands of relics of ancient warfare found in western New York there are twenty-six different artifacts. Thousands of specimens have been taken to the various museums and private collections. In one collection comprising 20,000, the flint and copper arrow-points were the most numerous, comprising 5,200, while the hammer-stones were next with 1,100.

The historian Dellenbaugh describes two forts near Newark, New York, with a fortified runway connecting them, which he thus explains:

The plan suggests two communal villages, closely allied and united by a sort of runway, which while preventing hostile enemies from separating the two villages in time of attack, always afforded a safe passage for the women and children from one town to the other. The

<sup>20</sup> John McIntosh, *The Origin of the North American Indians*, pp. 285-287.

builders were evidently beset by enemies at the time when the works were occupied, but this does not necessarily imply that when the works were abandoned the occupants were driven out or annihilated, for their enemies may have been people of their own stock with whom they eventually became reconciled, or the enemies may have passed on to other fields, or the occupants of the works may have grown more powerful and at length have assumed the offensive.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the general histories already mentioned, histories have been written about each county in western New York. In each of these a long chapter is devoted to the aboriginal monuments found in that particular county. In these many books the accounts are quite identical and the conclusions very similar. Several hundred pages have been printed telling the world that western New York was the scene of ancient warfare, the like of which has not been witnessed elsewhere on the American continent.

"This cannot be the work of the ancestors of the Indians found here," concludes Downs after extensive study of the subject, "for here dwelt a large and prosperous people." He, too, emphasizes the skeletons of all ages buried promiscuously as if they had fallen in battle.<sup>22</sup>

In the *History of Erie County*, by T. C. White, "forty prehistoric mounds and earthworks" are described, including a flint factory where millions of points had been fashioned for arrows and spears.

Beers speaks of many "monuments which point to a people more skilled in arts and farther advanced in civilization than the Indian found in occupancy when the first Europeans landed." Beers is convinced that

<sup>21</sup> Fredrick S. Dellenhaugh, *The North American Indians of Yesterday*.  
p. 348.

<sup>22</sup> I. P. Downs, *History of Chautauqua County*, p. 9.



these superior people who preceded the Indians in this choice land, "came from Egypt, through Asia to America."<sup>23</sup>

Peck relates a tradition told by the Iroquois that "the people who preceded them in this land were devoured by a great serpent that dwelt near Canandaigua Lake."<sup>24</sup>

Durant speaks of western New York as the home "of one of the nations of the most remarkable confederacy of savage people of whom we have any history . . . . Battle and sieges have made its grand old woods echo with the thunder of war." He mentions and briefly describes 260 fortified hills in that area. He expresses the opinion that "the progenitors of the red race found occupying this country are supposed to have come from Asia." He assures us that the "Indians are supposed to have degenerated from the civilization of their ancestors."<sup>25</sup>

Clayton adds an interesting note after describing one of the large forts. He writes:

Most of the grounds mentioned had undoubtedly been scenes of hard-fought battles, of which the Indians had preserved unpleasant traditions, for such was their abhorrence of scenes enacted here that never, except in a few rare instances could they be induced to visit the spot near the old fort and burying ground. They turned from it with a sort of shudder, exclaiming, 'Ote-que-sa-he-eh!'—This is the field of blood.<sup>26</sup>

Dr. Conover concurs in the opinion that "the evidences of prehistoric occupation, the like of which is unknown, were left by a race of people different from

<sup>23</sup> F. W. Beere, *History of Herkimer County*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> W. F. Peck, *History of Rochester and Monroe Counties*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Samuel W. Durant, *Oneida County*, pp. 7, 15.

<sup>26</sup> W. W. Clayton, *History of Onondaga County*, p. 32.



the Indians." He speaks of traces of ancient forts on many of the hills in western New York, surrounded "by a ditch and a wall . . . They indicate defenses raised by a great race that preceded the Indian occupation."

Doty mentions "a score of earthworks found in Livingston County, all of which were placed in close proximity to some unfailing supply of water . . . Gateways opening toward these are always to be observed, and in some cases guarded passages are still visible." This comment is interesting:

Many of these works, traced by the pioneers, were covered with heavy forests, and, in several instances, trees from one to three feet in thickness were observed by Squire growing upon the embankments and in the trenches. This would carry back the date of their construction several hundred years.

While the enclosures usually varied from one to four acres in area, ruins of much greater extent have been found. The larger ones were designed for permanent occupancy, the smaller for temporary protection—the citadels in which the builders sought safety for their old men, women and children in case of alarm or attack, or when the braves were absent on the warpath. The embankments were seldom more than four feet in height. The spot selected was generally convenient to fishing places and hunting fertile bottoms. Indeed, all indications render it probable that the occupants were fixed and agricultural in their habits.<sup>27</sup>

Doty visited many of the fortified hills before the forests were removed by the settlers. At that time "the old stockade, the post holes about four feet apart, and the ditch surrounding the embankment" were plainly visible on many of the drumlins.

The historian Smith sees in the aboriginal monu-

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<sup>27</sup> L. R. Doty, *History of Livingston County*, p. 61.

ments left in New York state a skill greatly surpassing that of the Indians. He writes:

Who can imagine the Iroquois or Algonquins working the copper mines with such intelligence and skill, and such a combination of systematic and persistent industry! They had no traditions of such a condition of life, no trace of it. It is absurd to suppose a relationship, or a connection of any kind, between the original barbarism of the Indians and the civilization of the Mound-builders. The two peoples were entirely distinct and separate from each other. If they really belonged to the same race, which is extremely doubtful, we must go back through unnumbered ages to find their common origin and the date of their separation.<sup>28</sup>

MacLean speaks of their observatories, alarm posts, signal stations, watch towers, and outlooks, all of which were visible to the trained observer before the axe and the plow disturbed the ancient monuments.

Scharf is convinced that "America was peopled from various sources and at widely separated periods. These must have been very remote to afford time for the production of the conditions found existing here."<sup>29</sup>

MacLean had much to say about the superior race that fortified the hills and erected the mounds in New York and southward along the Ohio. He declares that the wild Indian tribes did not erect these works, but they were built by a race superior to the Indians. "There is not one scintilla of evidence," he concludes, "that the Indians built these mounds." He relates that the Indian Chief, Tobacco, told General George Rogers Clark of a tradition that had been handed down for generations, that a battle at Sandy Island had decided the fate of the ancient inhabitants.

<sup>28</sup> I. H. Smith, *History of Dutchess County*, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Westchester County New York*, p. 10.

This legend asserted that the "country had been inhabited by a white people who were familiar with arts of which the Indian knew nothing, and that after a series of battles with the Indians, they were exterminated." He also declared that the old burial places were the graves of an unknown people; that the old forts had not been built by the Indians, but "belonged to a long ago people, who were of a white complexion, and skilled in the arts."<sup>30</sup>

Respecting the battles along the northern Ohio, MacLean makes some interesting observations, such as this:

It requires no profound observation in order to understand what became of this people north of the Ohio. Every indication shows that they were expelled from this territory by force. When they were harassed by the inroads of the war-like bands of a foreign race, they erected their strong fortifications for retreats during the predatory raids. On the hills they erected the mounds for posts of observation, and when a war party came down upon them, the fires were kindled, and the people thereby warned sought their shelters of refuge.

Judging by the primitive methods employed, these wars must have continued for ages. If the settlements along the two Miamis and Scioto were overrun at the same time before they had become weakened, it would have required such an army as only a civilized or semi-civilized nation could send into the field. It is plausible to assume that a predatory warfare was carried on at first, and on account of this the many fortifications were gradually built. . . .

Those mounds were covered with a multitude of brave and self-sacrificing men, who shed their blood in defense of their home and religion. The grim visage of war, with its relentless fury, burst upon them, carrying death and destruction in its course. At least this peaceable and quiet people were expelled from the Ohio, and never returned.

<sup>30</sup> J. P. MacLean, *The Mound-Builders*, p. 144.

"A powerful people, superior to the Indians," writes another authority on the mound-builders, "once occupied the valley of the Ohio and the Appalachian range. A people with a confederate government, a chief ruler, a great central capital, a highly developed religion, with homes and husbandry, and advanced textile—all swept away by an invasion of copper-hued Huns . . . prior to the landing of Columbus."<sup>31</sup>

President William Henry Harrison expressed the opinion that a superior race that had left the fortifications and burial mounds would not have relinquished that choice land to an enemy without a bitter struggle by a more numerous or more gallant people. "No doubt the contest was long and bloody," he concludes, "and that the country, so long their residence, was not abandoned to their rivals until their numbers were too much reduced to continue the contest."

Shetrone speaks of the fortifications in the western half of New York state as "strategic positions of the hills and highlands overlooking the valleys . . . often equipped with palisades set into their low earthen walls."<sup>32</sup> He is convinced that this choice region was:

Possessed by a people in the full enjoyment of peace and liberty, and all that peace and liberty can give; whose matrons, like those of Sparta, have never seen the smoke of an enemy's fire, once presented a scene of war, and war in its most horrible form, where blood is the object, and the deficiencies of the field make up by the slaughter of innocence and imbecility. That it was here that a feeble band was collected, "a remnant of mighty battles fought in vain," to make a last effort for the country of their birth, the ashes of their ancestors and the altars of their gods. That the crisis was met with fortitude, and sustained

<sup>31</sup> H. C. Shetrone, *The Mound Builders*, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

with valor, need not be doubted. . . . But their efforts were vain, and flight or death were the alternatives.<sup>83</sup>

### *Indian Defenses*

For many years after the Nephites were exterminated, the powerful tribes that succeeded them in the land of many waters, continued to fortify their villages in a manner similar to that employed by the Nephites. Francis Parkman thus describes an Iroquois fort:

A situation was chosen favorable to defense,—the bank of a lake, the crown of a difficult hill, or a high point of land in the fork of confluent rivers. A ditch, several feet deep, was dug around the village, and the earth thrown up on the inside. Trees were then felled by an alternate process of burning and hacking the burnt part with stone hatchets, and by similar means were cut into lengths to form palisades. These were planted in the embankment, in one, two, three, or four concentric rows,—those of each row inclining towards those of the other rows until they intersected. The whole was lined within, to the height of a man, with heavy sheets of bark; and at the top, where the palisades crossed, was a gallery of timber for the defenders, together with wooden gutters, by which streams of water could be poured down on fires kindled by the enemy. Magazines of stones, and rude ladders for mounting the rampart, completed the provision for defense. The forts of the Iroquois were stronger and more elaborate than those of the Hurons; and to this day large districts in New York are marked with frequent remains of their ditches and embankments.<sup>84</sup>

As early as 1615 Champlain penetrated the Genesee country, where he found several Indian villages well protected. The Iroquois warriors had retained the art of erecting palisades and protecting their communities much as the Nephites had done during their long wars with the Lamanites. A typical fortified village was

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>84</sup> Francis Parkman, *Jesuits in North America*, p. 29.

described at length by the French trail blazer—a wall of four rows of large interlaced palisades thirty feet high. These were always erected near an unfailing supply of water. Galleries were constructed inside the palisades, protected by a “ball-proof parapet of wood, garnished with double pieces of wood.”<sup>35</sup>

Champlain's illustrations and descriptions certainly remind one of the fortified cities of the Nephites, yet the remains of the fortifications on the many hills in western New York indicate that a people far superior to the Indians erected those stupendous works.

#### *Small Arms Plants*

Many ammunition plants have been found in western New York where ancient warriors fashioned their implements of war. The most famous one is called Flint Mine Hill, which is located in Greene County. In this hill was found a vein of flint one mile long and 900 feet wide. For centuries the ancient inhabitants had fashioned their flint points in that historic quarry. It was so well concealed by natural protection that it was not discovered until 1924.

Enormous dumps of quarry refuse, twenty feet deep in places, marked the spot where they had worked the flint mine for generations. The area contained “hundreds of train loads” of quarry refuse. All kinds of flint weapons were found in the vicinity. The first scientist to examine the old munition factory found a vast supply of arrow points which were distributed among many private and public collections. In addition to the small points they found 3,000 hammer-stones after a few hours' searching.

This hill was abundantly supplied with fresh

<sup>35</sup> Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, p. 19.



water, having copious springs on three sides. It has been examined by many scientists who have estimated that from 50 to 100 artisans worked there at a time over a period of more than 1,000 years. Some authorities estimate that the ruins found there represent an intermittent labor covering 5,000 years.<sup>36</sup>

Thousands of arrowheads, fine blades, hammer-stones, axes, large blades, and a variety of well-fashioned tools were found strewn over the area. Among the tons of specimens that were found on that historic hill were red slate, jasper felsite, argilite, white quartz, rhyolite, and a high grade of compact light flint flecked with darker blotches. None of the materials listed above were native to the area, but had been brought in for many miles.

The presence of this foreign stone told the scientists that Indians from separated localities had brought their own local materials to this rendezvous to be worked into the finished product by the trained artisans who had long labored in that flint mine. "We pictured visions," writes Dr. Parker, "of a vast aboriginal industry. The hill was peopled with the master craftsmen of the Stone Age. We could close our eyes and see the woodland swarming with men; we could hear their shouts and the din of the quarry operations."

The museums in New York state are filled with the instruments of warfare that had been fashioned by the red men and so freely used in that historic area. The opinion is expressed in all those relic halls that western New York was the site of an ancient battlefield. There is more evidence of a well planned defensive warfare in that locality than there is in any other

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<sup>36</sup> Arthur C. Parker *The Great Algonquin Flint Mines*, pp. 111, 124.



region on the American continent. It is the opinion of most scholars that the defenses on the drumlin hills were prepared by a people more civilized than the Indians and were exterminated by the inferior race who were still in possession of the country when Columbus discovered this land.

The Indians have a tradition that their fathers trained certain skilled men to devote their full time to the art of making weapons and other tools. These trained men were fed and clothed by the other members of the tribe who were given in turn the equipment that had been made by the masters of the art.<sup>87</sup>

The many historians and scientists whose opinions are presented in these pages would never look to Mexico or Central America for the battlefields on which the Jaredites and Nephites were exterminated. There is no valid reason why students of the Book of Mormon should look to the distant south for the battlefields of those vanquished nations. Since 1615 the pathfinders and trailblazers have been telling us where these nations were exterminated. Their accounts, together with those related in the Book of Mormon, need not be flung aside in an effort to orient the Book of Mormon peoples in Middle America and confine their centuries of wanderings and migrations to the narrow limits and restricted dimensions of Central America.

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<sup>87</sup> H. E. Abbott, *Primitive Industry*, pp. 204, 288, 415, 417.  
Squire, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

In conclusion we repeat that the evidence is overwhelming in defense of the proposition that highly civilized nations fought their wars of extermination in western New York. Since the first white men penetrated the area their keen observers have been telling the world that the region immediately south of the Great Lakes was America's largest battlefield in ancient times. More than two hundred and fifty of the drumlin hills in that area are known to have been strongly fortified by skilled warriors who possessed a high degree of civilization.

The accounts written by many of these reputable historians and archeologists are so clear and specific that it seems as if the authors were familiar with the Book of Mormon record of the wars of extermination that were waged in Ramah-Cumorahland. For more than two centuries these renowned scholars have designated this area as America's greatest battlefield in ancient times. Their conclusions agree so faithfully with the Book of Mormon record that we need not look elsewhere for the solution of the mystery. If those two enlightened nations were exterminated in Middle America, the numerous aboriginal monuments that abound in western New York have no relation at all to Book of Mormon peoples. Since it is agreed that the Indians could not have wrought such mighty works of defense we are left to seek elsewhere for the civilized people who were destroyed by the Indians.

The tons of stone and flint implements of warfare, the countless ancient burials, the fortified hills, and the wealth of additional evidence that is found in such profusion in western New York must be regarded as having no bearing whatever on Jaredite and Nephite history. If we attempt to confine these mighty nations

to Middle America we are left without the slightest clue to solve the enigma. We are thus powerless to throw the faintest glimmer of light on this perplexing problem.

If we insist on placing Ramah-Cumorah in Middle America we are left without the slightest information for the great scholars who have been asking for many years, "Who were these civilized nations that perished in western New York? From whence did they spring and what was their destiny?" If we try to confine these vast nations to Middle America we thereby stand in silent awe before those who ask such questions.

In 1812 Governor DeWitt Clinton gave a lecture before the Historical Society of New York. After explaining in detail the aboriginal monuments that abound as evidence of a great nation that perished in that land, he concluded his lecture with these words: "Why have we no history of such a nation as must have inhabited this part of the world? Probably if a knowledge of these ancient people is ever obtained, it will be derived from inscription on stone or metals, which have withstood the rust of time."

Yes, the imperishable inscriptions of metal plates have told us the history of that mysterious people who fought their final battles in the land of many waters.

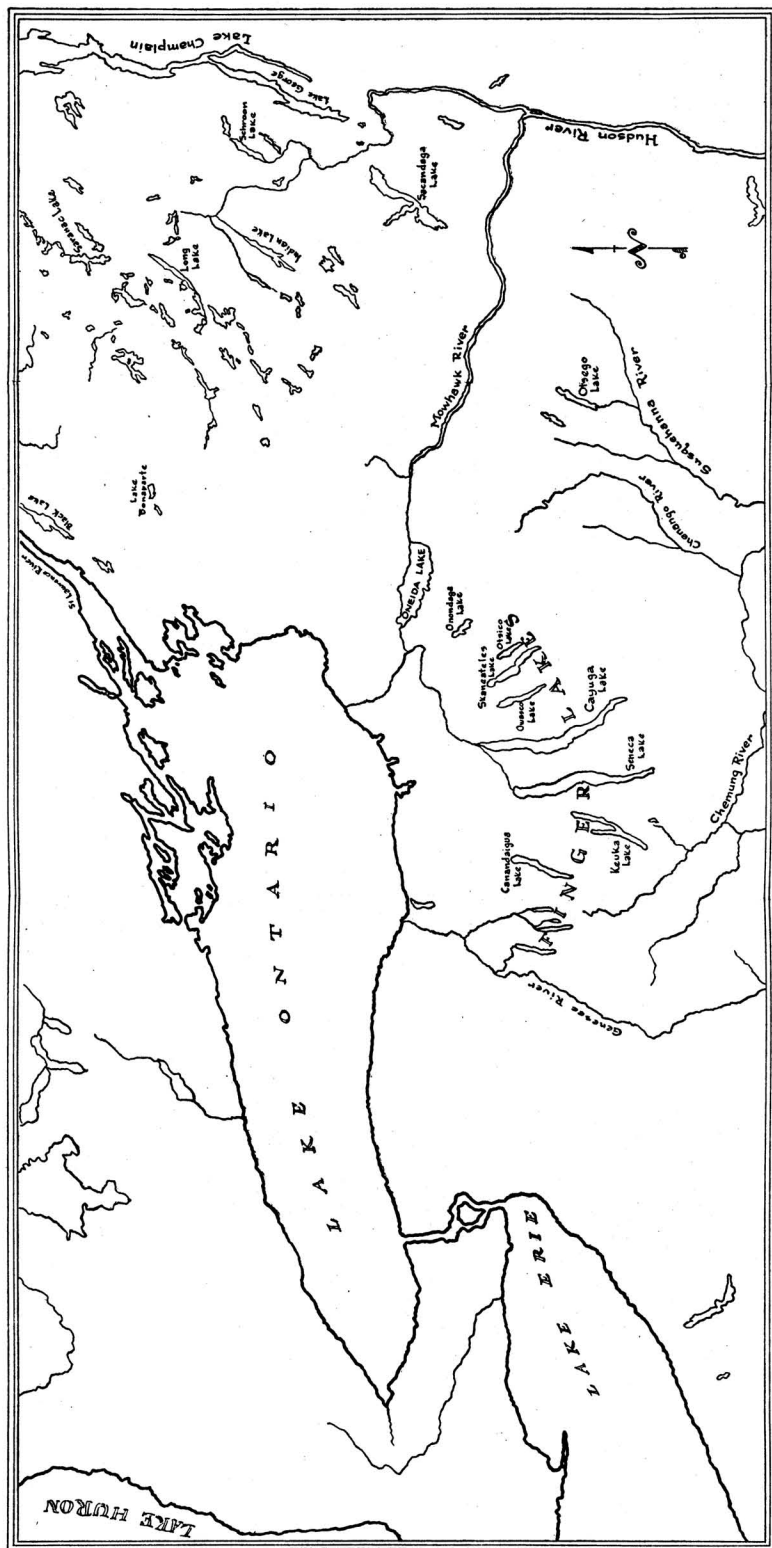
Furthermore, the Book of Mormon emphasizes the fact that the land of many waters was "an exceeding great distance" from the land of Zarahemla; that there were more streams, rivers, lakes, and fountains in that area that were to be found in any lands where these early people had dwelt.

Middle America is not a land of many waters. Its ancient hills are not marked with tokens of fortifications; its skeletal remains do not tell of a bitter war

of extermination, comparable at all to the evidence in western New York. If we are to find that historic land where the drums of war called forth the warriors until the land was covered with the bodies of the dead, we must go northward "an exceeding great distance," as the Jaredites and Nephites did many centuries ago.

These aboriginal monuments, the tell-tale tokens of ancient warfare by highly civilized nations, are not to be flung aside as one "fights against the pricks" to confine these ancient people to the narrow and restricted domain of Middle America. Inscriptions on metal have told us the story which is otherwise a great mystery. These mysteries vanish as ancient historians speak from the dust.





The Land of Many Waters

