
T I M E L I N E

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All around the state, historic and modern buildings reflect dramatic religious diversity.



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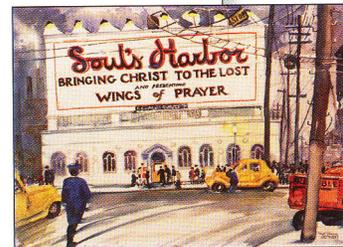
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By the time of the Civil War, the Newark Earthworks had become a popular resort and tourist stop.
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*Marvels, Ohio, on thy soil abound,
Fragments it puzzles Science to explain,
Of Mammoth, mastodon, and Indian mound,
Temple, tomb, fortress? — still discussed in vain!*

Richard Henry Wilde, "Hesperia"

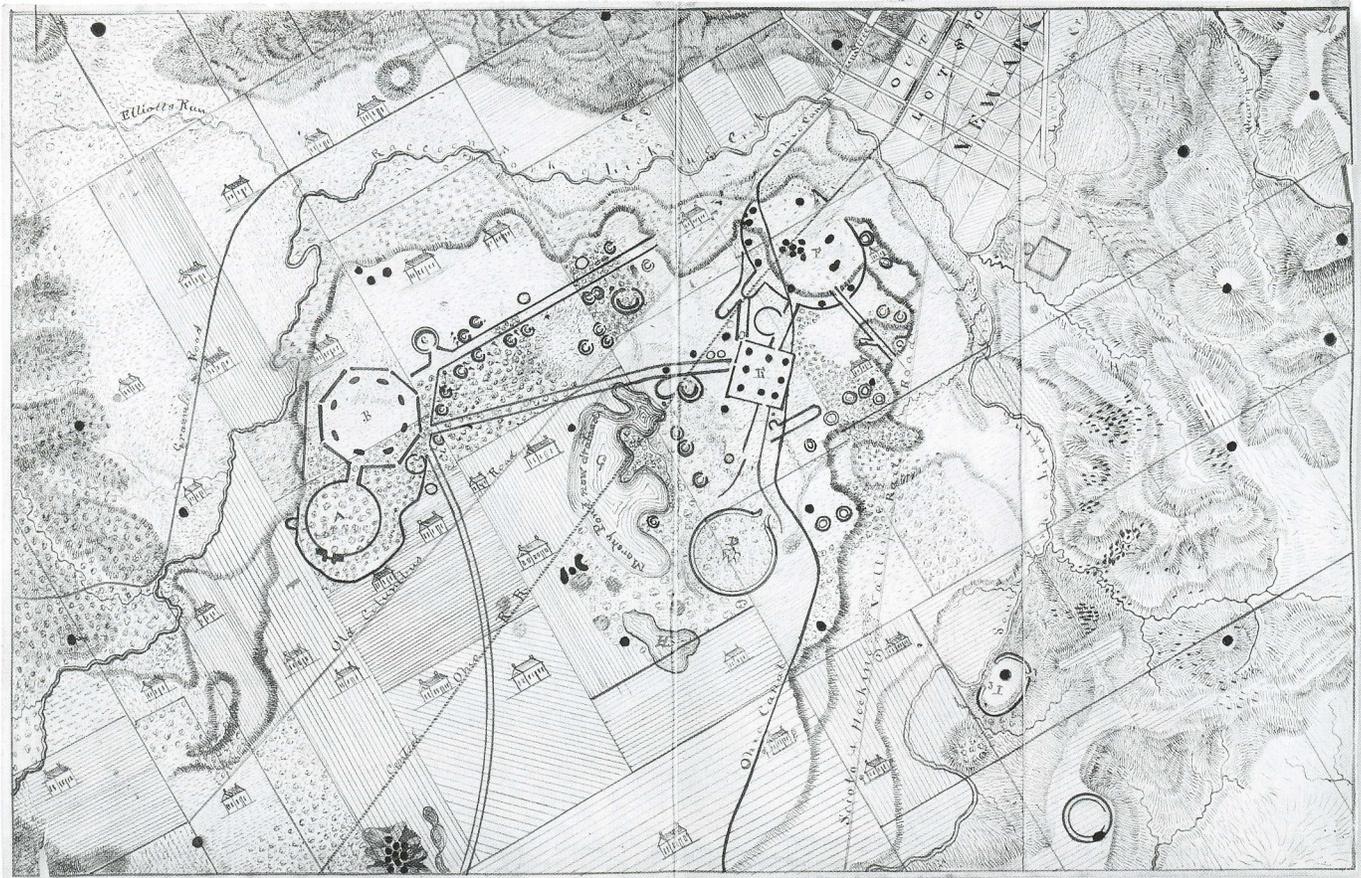
The "Keystone" that David Wyrick unearthed at Newark is approximately six inches long and one and five-eighths inches thick. *Harper's Weekly* reported that it appeared to be composed of a "compact quartz" like that used for honing edged tools. Its discovery in June 1860 helped fuel a simmering debate that involved science, religion, and politics. *Johnson-Humrickhouse Museum, Coshocton, Ohio*. David R. Barker, Photographer



THE NEWARK HOLY STONES

by Bradley T. Lepper and Jeff Gill

THE ROMANTIC POETS AND AUTHORS of the nineteenth century often contemplated Ohio's marvelous mounds in their attempts to conjure an epic and ancient New World from the meager shreds and patches of knowledge about prehistoric times. William Cullen Bryant, in "The Prairies," gave poetic expression to the widely believed myth of a utopian race of moundbuilders who, overwhelmed by "the roaming hunter tribes, warlike and fierce,...vanished from the earth."



Experienced surveyor David Wyrick and Cincinnati physician Joseph S. Unzicker collaborated to produce a map of the Newark Earthworks. Even today, it is valued for its detail and accuracy. *Western Reserve Historical Society*

David Wyrick of Newark, Ohio, shared the versifiers' dreams, and, in the summer of 1860, he thought they at last had come true. Wyrick was an antiquarian living in an antiquarian's paradise; the ancient earthworks at Newark are among the world's more spectacular monuments. It was as if Heinrich Schliemann had made his home beside the Dardanelles and then discovered Homer's Troy beneath his feet. Wyrick had devoted years to documenting and studying the Newark Earthworks, mysterious remnants of a seemingly lost civilization. His 1860 map of them is one of the more accurate and complete ever published.*

Wyrick's researches had led him, like other scholars of his era, to conclude that the elaborate and precise earthworks bespoke a level of sophistication lacking among the Indian tribes living in Ohio during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Wyrick came to believe that the builders of the great

mounds and enclosures were the storied Lost Tribes of Israel. This notion was not unique to Wyrick. It appeared in a number of works of literature and science, and, with a unique twist, figured in the *Book of Mormon*.

Wyrick was not content to speculate. He conducted excavations into Newark's mounds searching for the hard evidence to establish the identity of the Moundbuilders. And, on the 29th of June, 1860, he unearthed an artifact that seemed to provide the long-missing key to the mystery of the mounds.

While digging a shallow hole inside a small, circular enclosure just east of Newark's gigantic octagonal earthwork, Wyrick discovered a carved and polished wedge of yellowish-brown sandstone engraved with Hebrew letters. Bursting with excitement, Wyrick took his precious find to share with Israel Dille, his friend and fellow antiquarian. Dille, a former mayor of Newark and a local authority on the mounds, was entertaining an out-of-town visitor, Charles Whittlesey. Whittlesey, one of Ohio's noteworthy early archaeologists, had contributed a map of the Newark Earthworks to Ephraim Squier and Edwin Davis's *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*.*

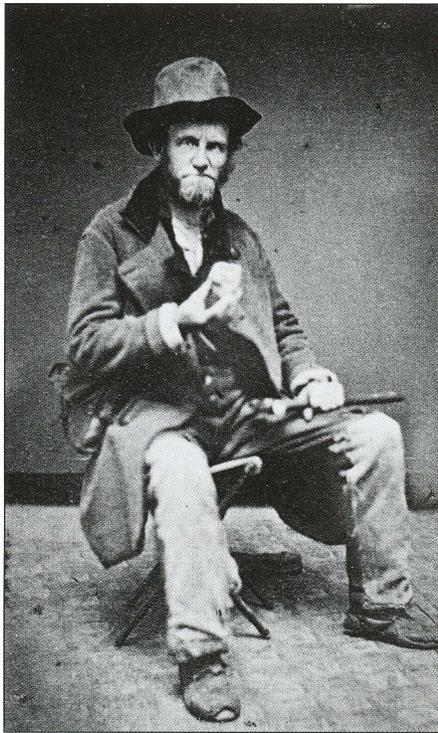
* See TIMELINE, January 1998

* See TIMELINE, December 1985

He was visiting Dille on business unrelated to the mounds. To some observers, it seems a remarkable coincidence that Whittlesey was in Newark on the day of Wyrick's great discovery.

The excited scholars recognized the inscription as Hebrew, and Wyrick hailed the discovery as conclusive proof of his "Jewish theory," but none of them could translate the inscriptions. So, they sought the help of perhaps the only man in town who could read Hebrew. The Reverend John Winspeare McCarty was the rector of the local Episcopal church. Schooled at nearby Kenyon College, McCarty had been a brilliant student. He deftly translated the inscriptions on Wyrick's artifact. The four inscriptions were written in the modern Hebrew alphabet and consisted of the following phrases: "the Laws of Jehovah," "the Word of the Lord," "the Holy of Holies," and "the King of the Earth."

While McCarty translated the words engraved upon the stone, others pondered the broader significance of the discovery. William Cunningham, another Newark antiquarian and a local authority on the symbolism of Masonry, identified the artifact as a



West Point trained and a practicing geologist in several Midwestern states, Charles Whittlesey was also a widely respected archaeologist. In 1850 he contributed a lengthy article on Ohio earthworks to a Smithsonian Institution publication.

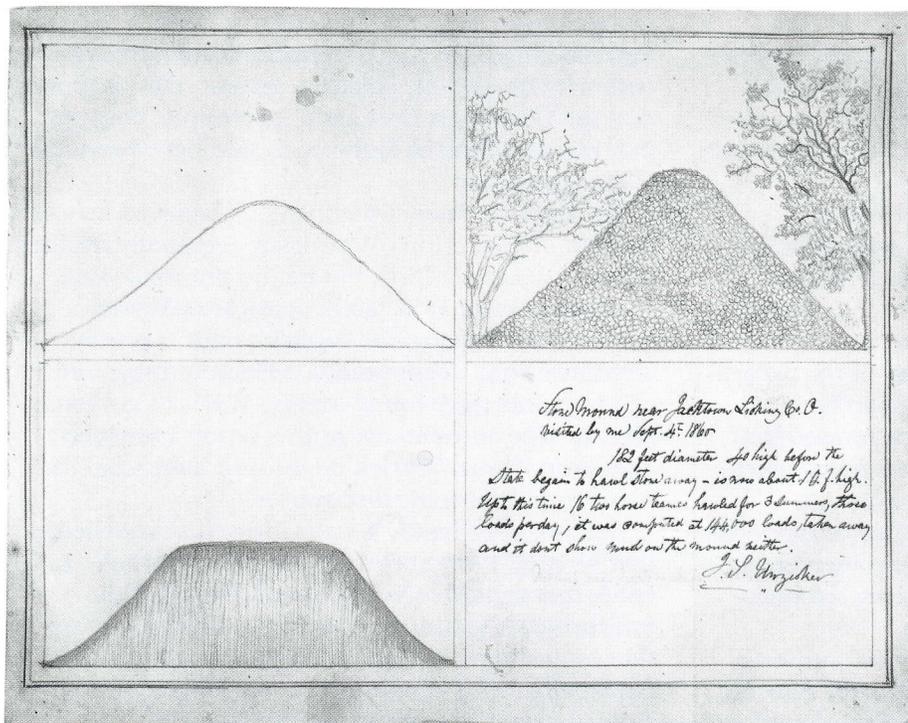
Western Reserve Historical Society

Masonic keystone. He believed it was evidence that ancient Masons built the Newark Earthworks.

Whittlesey was not persuaded that the "Keystone" proved either Masons or Hebrews had built the mounds. First of all, the Keystone was not buried deeply in the ground. Moreover, the letters on the stone were from the modern Hebrew alphabet. Although Cunningham was perfectly willing to have Masons plying their craft in pre-Columbian Ohio, Whittlesey was not. Whittlesey didn't

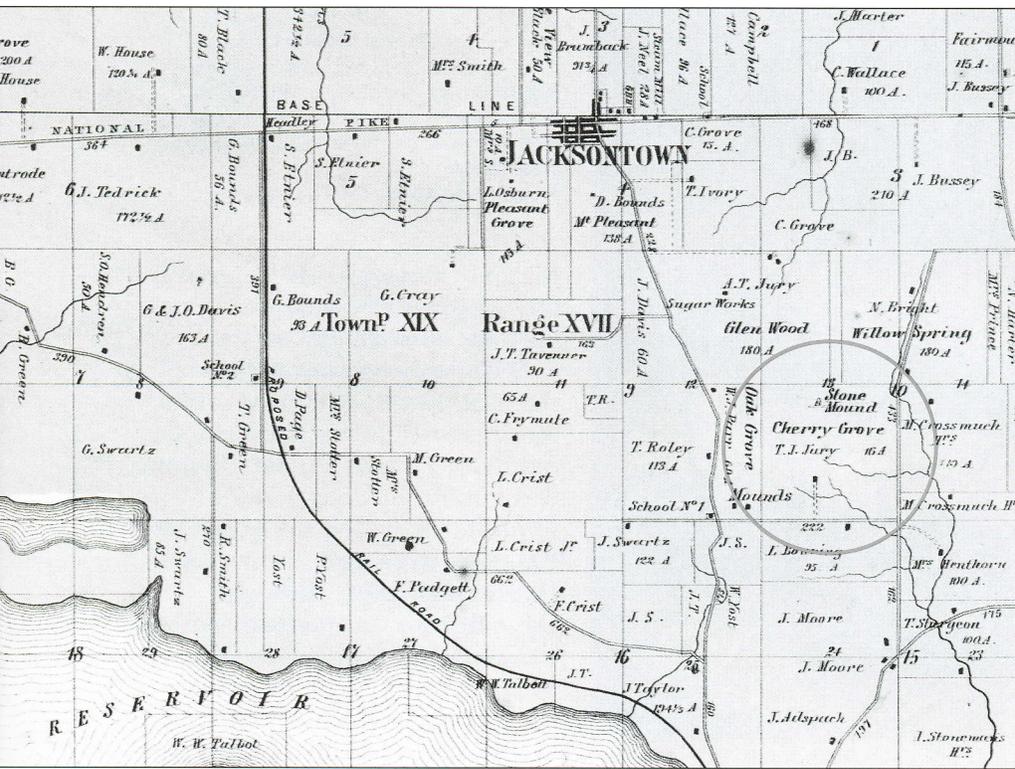
accuse anyone of faking the Keystone, but he concluded that it was a relatively recent historic artifact. Wyrick must have been disappointed, but he continued his archaeological explorations, and, remarkably, just five months after his discovery of the Keystone, he succeeded in finding yet another "Holy Stone" that unequivocally answered all of Whittlesey's quibbles.

The Jacksontown Stone Mound, located a few miles southeast of Newark, was an immense stone mound originally more than forty feet high. Most of the mound had been destroyed when the stone was hauled away to reinforce the dike of the Licking Summit Reservoir of the Ohio and Erie Canal — now known as Buckeye Lake. Beneath this enormous mound of stone were several small burial mounds. Antiquarians and treasure-seekers had dug into at least one of these mounds, revealing a carved, wooden trough, or coffin, within which lay human remains and ten copper bracelets. Wyrick and others



Early in September 1860, Wyrick's collaborator J. S. Unzicker recorded the Jacksontown Stone Mound.

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Also known as the Jury Stone Mound after the landowner, the Jackson town mound lay not far from the canal reservoir now called Buckeye Lake. Some 144,000 wagon loads of stone had been hauled from the mound for construction.
Ohio Historical Society

Ethnological Society had studied the evidence for more than a year. Isaac Smucker, a local Newark antiquarian who himself believed the Lost Tribes of Israel were the Mound-builders, denounced the Holy Stones as frauds after initially embracing them as proof of the Lost Tribes theory.

As it turns out, the Decalogue Stone is a fraud. It bears the evidence of imposture upon its engraved faces. For example, in the section of the inscription corresponding to Exodus 20:17, the verb "to covet" is rendered

re-excavated this mound and, on the first of November 1860, found a small stone box containing the "Decalogue Stone."

The Decalogue Stone is a small, tombstone-shaped artifact hewn from a dense, black limestone. The multiple faces of this intricately carved stone are covered with letters, which, though strange and antique-looking, are incontestably Hebrew. The Reverend McCarty translated the arcane inscription as the Ten Commandments of the Hebrew Torah. Moreover, the inscription wound around a bas-relief rendering of a man identified in the Hebrew caption as Moses.

Here was stunning confirmation of Wyrick's Jewish theory that even Whittlesey would have to accept. In fact, it was just what the doctor had ordered. The alphabet of the Decalogue Stone was definitely not modern Hebrew. The letters looked suitably archaic. And, if the testimony of the excavators could be relied upon, the artifact had been found at the bottom of a small earthen mound that had been buried under more than forty feet of earth and stone. Finally, it was unlike any Masonic artifact known. There was no possibility of innocent confusion; either ancient Hebrews were involved in the making of this prehistoric mound, or the Decalogue Stone was an outright humbug.

Ephraim Squier, perhaps the foremost authority on Ohio's mounds, concluded that the Holy Stones were fakes after he and a committee of the American

incorrectly. The Hebrew letter kaph appears in the place of a dalet. In modern Hebrew a kaph, when it comes at the end of a word, can look like a dalet. However, in the alphabet of the Decalogue Stone, there is no such similarity. The only plausible explanation for this blunder is that someone erred in the transcription of this text from modern Hebrew into this fabricated, ancient-looking alphabet. Frank Moore Cross, Harvard University professor of Near Eastern languages and civilizations and a recognized authority on ancient Hebrew, agrees. His opinion is that the Decalogue Stone is a "grotesque" forgery that no one fluent in Hebrew should have been able to take seriously.

No one who knew David Wyrick believed he was capable of deception. Whittlesey eventually decided Wyrick was the culprit, but he did not make this accusation until 1872, eight years after Wyrick's death. The evidence for Wyrick's guilt is purely circumstantial. Supposedly, a Hebrew Bible and carving tools were found among Wyrick's personal effects. The authenticity of this report is suspect, and, even if true, Wyrick might well have used the items to interpret his discoveries.

On the other hand, Wyrick himself acknowledged that he might have been the victim of a prank. In 1863, in a candid letter to Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian Institution, Wyrick confided his fear that "some one has been trying to hoax me — Especially as my opinions [on the subject of the Lost Tribes] have been strong and firmly held."

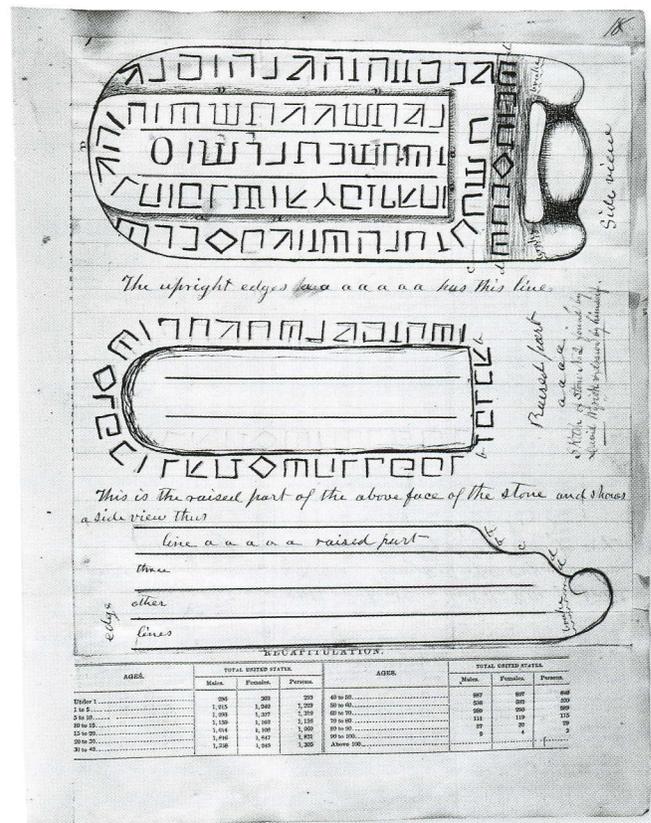


The "Decalogue Stone" rested within an 8 x 4 x 3 1/2-inch stone casket. Johnson-Humrickhouse Museum, Coshocton, Ohio

Even if Wyrick was involved in the fraud, he couldn't have done it alone. He did not have the requisite knowledge of Hebrew to devise the inscriptions of the Decalogue Stone. Indeed, very few people living in Newark at the time did have that knowledge. One was the Episcopal minister who had provided the excellent translations of the inscriptions on both stones.

The Reverend John W. McCarty was a remarkable man. He graduated from Kenyon College in 1857 as valedictorian with no demerits. Two years later he graduated from the Theological Seminary at Kenyon, having served as the college librarian for the 1858-59 academic year. Trinity Church in Newark was his first full-time assignment as a minister, and he had been on the job barely ten months when Wyrick discovered the Keystone. Could such a man have been a party to a deliberate forgery?

Wyrick carefully reproduced the reputed Hebrew inscriptions of the Decalogue Stone.
Western Reserve Historical Society





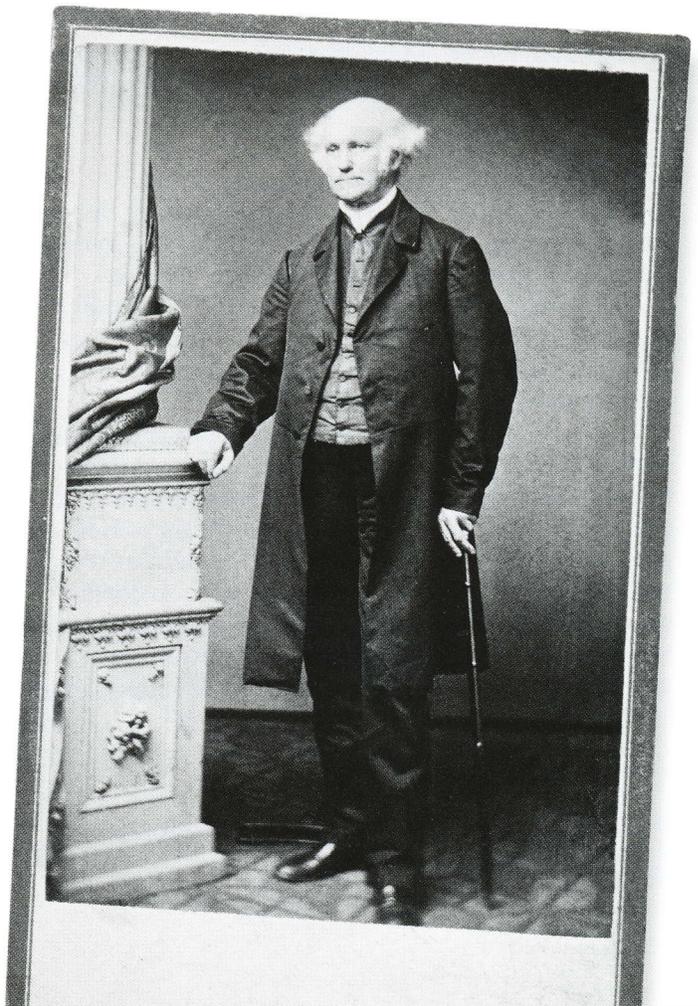
The Reverend John W. McCarty became the rector of Christ Church, a large and affluent Cincinnati parish, in April 1863. According to the parish history, his pastorate was among the congregation's happiest, and it was to the vestry's great regret that deteriorating health forced McCarty's resignation in May 1867. The promising young cleric died that same month.
Christ Church Cathedral, Cincinnati, Ohio

Although clearly brilliant, McCarty was more complicated than a superficial reading of his academic record might suggest. Francis Wharton, professor of history and English literature at Kenyon College, remembered McCarty as "by nature marked by much waywardness, irritability, and impetuosity." During his first year in seminary, he was called before the faculty "to answer for an exhibition of violent temper & improper language."

McCarty was also ambitious. It is unlikely that he would have been content to remain the rector of a church in relatively rustic Newark. It is telling that McCarty sent his letters presenting his drippingly erudite translations of the Hebrew inscriptions on the Holy Stones not to the local Newark newspaper, but instead to the *Cincinnati Commercial*. The Queen City was not just Ohio's cultural epicenter in 1860; it was also home to McCarty's bishop, the Reverend Charles McIlvaine. McCarty knew well that Bishop McIlvaine would find these discoveries of particular interest.

McIlvaine, bishop of the Diocese of Ohio of the Episcopal Church from 1831 until his death in 1873, had written the preface to John Delafield's 1839 book, *Antiquities of America*. This book was written to affirm the Mosaic account of human origins and to place American antiquities within a biblical framework. In his preface, McIlvaine expressed confidence that artifacts one day would be found in America's tumuli that would give evidence of biblical connections. For McIlvaine, more was at stake than an abstract theoretical argument. If the Bible was correct, and all people were descended from Adam and Eve, then all men and women were brothers and sisters, and human slavery was an abomination.

If, on the other hand, only Caucasians were descendants of Adam, and if the other "races" were separate creations with distinct lineages, then slavery was justifiable. This is just what one branch of nineteenth-century anthropology — the so-called American school of physical anthropology — was arguing. Josiah Nott, a southern physician, was one of the more vocal proponents of the doctrine called polygenesis, the theory that the "races of man" were unrelated and separate species. Nott argued that the biblically based notion of monogenesis, or the theory that all human "races" descended from Adam and



Eve, was untenable. An important part of Nott's argument was based on the archaeological researches of Squier and Davis. They had demonstrated, he declared, that America was densely populated for "more than a thousand years before the birth of Moses, or Abraham, or even of Adam." So, the biblical chronology and biblical history were hopelessly wrong.

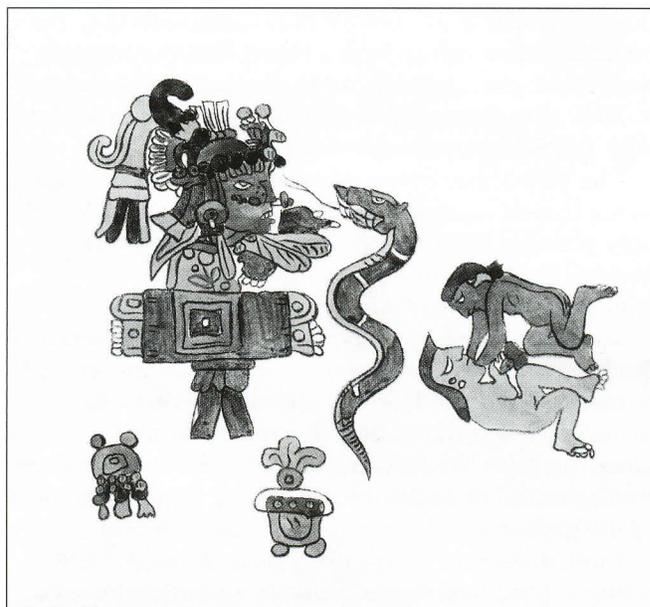
Nott attacked the Bible with a torrent of vitriol. He questioned the logic of those who would accept the traditions of the Jews, when these were "the people amongst whom Christ was born, who heard his teachings, who witnessed his miracles, who crucified him, and who reject his divinity and his religion to the present day!" He asserted that Hebrews at the time of Solomon were so ignorant of architecture that their great king was "obliged to send to Phenicia for his architects, workmen, and much of his materials." Moreover, Solomon's magnificent temple really was "not half as large as the smallest sized cathedral of England." Nott dismissed the tradition that Moses authored the Pentateuch since there was no Hebrew alphabet at such an early period. Finally, Nott pointed out that the authors of both the Old and New Testaments were as ignorant of the world beyond the limits of the Roman world "as we are of the geography of the moon."

The real point of Nott's work was to show that African Negroes were a separate creation — a distinct species. They were, according to Nott, brutish, vicious, and incapable of civilized attainments. Therefore, "Negro slavery" was "consistent with the laws of God, and with humanity." Abolition was the dangerous dream of "ignorant religious fanatics and brawling politicians."

These kinds of arguments helped to convince McIlvaine that slavery was more than a political issue. It was a signal evil that threatened God's kingdom on earth. Publicly, McIlvaine remained neutral on the incendiary issues of slavery and abolition, and he strove mightily to keep his church

Charles Pettit McIlvaine was an important figure among nineteenth-century Episcopalians. A graduate of Princeton, he had served several prominent parishes in the East and held professorships at the United States Military Academy and the City University of New York. After his election as bishop of the Ohio diocese, he filled the presidency of Kenyon College. During extensive travels he established important contacts with Anglican leaders in England. His fellow Episcopalians viewed him as a staunch "Low" churchman, stressing the importance of evangelical preaching over formal ceremony and ritual.

Kenyon College Libraries, Greenslade Special Collections



Through the reproduction of a variety of Mesoamerican art, John Delafield's 1839 *Antiquities of America* attempted to establish a connection between Hebrews and native North Americans. The central figures of this pre-Columbian Mexican rendition were interpreted as Eve and the serpent; the grappling pair were believed to represent Cain and Abel. *Ohio Historical Society*

and the country united. Even after civil war broke out, he counseled Ohio's Episcopal clergy to "preach no war sermons." But, behind the scenes, McIlvaine worked fervently to end slavery. As a special emissary to Great Britain, he wrote to President Lincoln in March 1862 to encourage the steps Lincoln was taking "towards Emancipation." He told the president that "nothing could do so much" to win the support of the people of England.

McIlvaine was deeply concerned with the question of "the unity of man," which is how the biblically based doctrine of monogenesis was often described. Delafield's *Antiquities of America*, to which McIlvaine had contributed, was a sustained argument for the unity of the human race. This question was the central issue for nineteenth-century students of ethnology as well as for theologians. A writer for the *Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register* in 1857 put it this way: "The entire scheme of redemption — which is the sum and substance of Christianity — is founded upon the postulate of the Unity of the human race, fallen in the first Adam, and restored in the Second — the Man Christ Jesus."

Josiah Nott's racist arguments were false and pernicious in their seemingly scientific justification of slavery, but how could they be refuted — scientifically? One of Nott's key arguments for rejecting biblically based views of race was that the antiquity of Ohio's mounds proved the Bible's history was

fiction. In the years before radiocarbon dating, how could scholars refute Nott's claim that the mounds were older than Adam? As McIlvaine had suggested in 1839, the discovery of objects linking the mounds with the Bible would provide such proof.

The Decalogue Stone, if genuine, would demonstrate that at least some of Ohio's mounds were not only younger than Adam, they were younger than Moses. Furthermore, if ancient Hebrews were in Ohio, their civilization, far from being the rude culture described by Nott, was truly cosmopolitan. Such an arcane inscription buried under an ancient mound proved the Hebrew alphabet possessed a respectable antiquity; and the association of Israelites with the Newark Earthworks and the giant stone mound of Jacksonstown linked them with some of the greatest architecture in the New World.

Indeed, each of Nott's criticisms of the Bible is refuted if the Decalogue Stone is an authentic relic

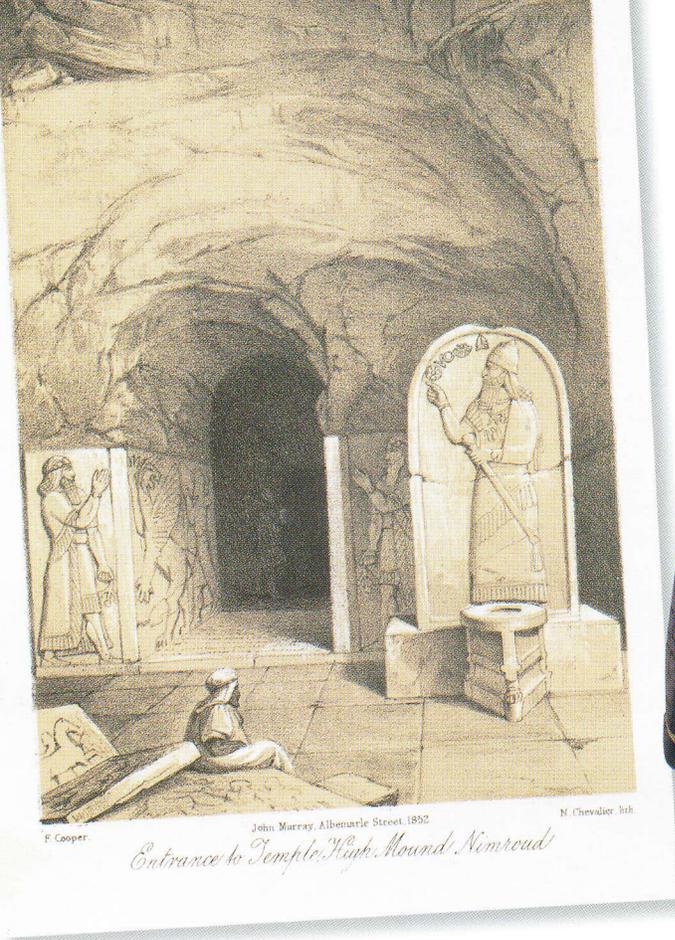
of antiquity. The implications of the Decalogue Stone undermine the scientific justification of slavery proffered by Nott and corroborate the biblical doctrine of monogenesis.

The Holy Stones suited, in a general way, the agendas of a number of nineteenth-century groups. Indeed, it is this motley congregation of suspects and motives that has so thoroughly obscured the tracks of the actual perpetrators for so long. Orson Pratt declared in 1870 that the Holy Stones were "direct evidence of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon." Cunningham, the Masonic enthusiast, saw the Holy Stones as proof that ancient Masons built the geometrically marvelous Newark Earth-

In *Indigenous Races of the Earth*, Josiah Nott and his coauthor, George Glidden, a former United States consul to Egypt, invoked a host of nineteenth-century "sciences" to prove the existence of distinct racial types. *Ohio Historical Society*

ETHNOGRAPHIC TABLEAU.
SPECIMENS OF VARIOUS RACES OF MANKIND.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION. (ARTICLE)	CRANIOSCOPIC EXAMPLES. (IF AFTER MEYER)	SPECIMENS OF VARIOUS RACES OF MANKIND						MARKING, GROUPED PHYSIOLOGICALLY. (ARTICLE)	LINGUISTIC DISTINCTIONS. (ARTICLE)
I. ASIATIC	A.	1. Chinese	2. Japanese	3. Hindoo	4. Malay	5. African	6. European	1. AFRICAN	1. AFRICAN
II. EUROPEAN	B.	7. Egyptian	8. Persian	9. Arab	10. Italian	11. Spanish	12. German	2. EUROPEAN	2. EUROPEAN
III. AFRICAN	C.	13. Ethiopian	14. Senegal	15. Congo	16. Zulu	17. Hottentot	18. Bushman	3. ASIATIC	3. ASIATIC
IV. AUSTRALIAN	D.	19. Australian	20. New Guinea	21. New Zealand	22. New Hebrides	23. New Caledonia	24. New Holland	4. AUSTRALIAN	4. AUSTRALIAN
V. AMERICAN	E.	25. American	26. Mexican	27. Peruvian	28. Brazilian	29. Argentine	30. Chilean	5. AMERICAN	5. AMERICAN
VI. POLYNESIAN	F.	31. Hawaiian	32. Tahitian	33. Samoan	34. Tongan	35. Maori	36. New Zealand	6. POLYNESIAN	6. POLYNESIAN
VI. MALAYAN	G.	37. Malay	38. Javanese	39. Sumatran	40. Bornean	41. Moluccan	42. Indonesian	7. MALAYAN	7. MALAYAN
VII. AUSTRALIAN	H.	43. Australian	44. New Guinea	45. New Zealand	46. New Hebrides	47. New Caledonia	48. New Holland	8. AUSTRALIAN	8. AUSTRALIAN



Johnson-Hummickhouse Museum, Coshocton, Ohio

The forger of the Decalogue Stone may have cribbed from an Assyrian sculpture discovered and documented by British archaeologist Sir Austen Layard. In 1853 Layard had published an illustration of this piece along with a detailed description. It showed a "Nimroud king in high relief, carved on a solid block of limestone, cut into an arched frame." The entire slab, Layard noted, was "covered, behind and before...with an inscription." The Nimroud king looks remarkably like the Decalogue Stone's "Moses," and Layard's description matches details of the Holy Stone. *Ohio Historical Society*

education for slavery. It gave transplanted Europeans a birthright to America by usurping the heritage of Native Americans. And, finally, it seemed to validate a literalistic interpretation of the Bible.

works and the stone pyramid of Jacksontown. But the Holy Stones were tailor-made to answer the polygenist arguments of Josiah Nott. Matthew C. Read, an early archaeologist from Hudson, Ohio, pointed out this signal characteristic of such frauds: they "will always in some way represent the ideas of the time of the forgery." From this perspective, the Holy Stones take on an extraordinary importance. They cast some light into the murky depths at the confluence of science, politics, and religion at this pivotal moment in the nineteenth century.

Had the Holy Stones appeared a decade earlier, they might have achieved their ends as successfully as the Piltdown Man hoax misdirected our understanding of human evolution. Five days after Wyrick discovered the Decalogue Stone, Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States. Five months later the country was at war. One outcome of that war would be the end of slavery in America. The debate between the monogenists and polygenists died a quieter death after the dissemination of Charles Darwin's revolutionary work, *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859. If the Holy Stones were fabricated to undermine polygenesis and contribute to the abolition of slavery, they were too late.

In 1860 the science of archaeology was in its infancy. America's past was largely a blank slate upon which the unscrupulous or zealous could write whatever suited their fancy. And what was inscribed upon that slate could influence the fates of nations. The Newark Holy Stones represent an attempt to encompass the prehistory of the New World within the biblical history of the Old. The logical implications of this for nineteenth-century scholars were manifold. It undermined an alleged scientific justifi-

The Holy Stones were aptly named. They may well have been crafted for a holy purpose — the freeing of America's slaves; but as that end was achieved, ultimately, through other means, they faded into obscurity. They are worthy of our attention today, not as authentic relics of prehistory, nor as mere curiosities. They are, instead, tangible links to a time when Ohio's ancient earthworks held center stage in the public imagination. **TL**

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Additional Reading

Ohio's Religious Landscape

A Guide to Cleveland's Sacred Landmarks by Foster Armstrong, Richard Klein, and Cara Armstrong, Kent State University Press, 1992.

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The Newark Holy Stones

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Fantastic Archaeology: The Wild Side of North American Prehistory by Stephen Williams, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

A Web page presenting information on the Newark Holy Stones, hosted by Huston McCulloch, can be accessed at <<http://www.econ.ohio-state.edu/jhm/arch/decalog.html>>.

Brighten the Corner Where You Are

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