

***HENRY
C. MERCER***



***THE LENAPE
STONE; OR,
THE INDIAN AND
THE MAMMOTH***

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PREFACE.

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In claiming an impartial examination of so extraordinary a carving as the "Lenape Stone" at the hands of archæologists, the writer has had several difficulties to contend with.

First, The fact that the carving is quite unique, it being the first aboriginal *carving* of the mammoth thus far claimed to have been discovered in North America.

Second, That no "scientific observer" was present at the discovery.

Third, That since its discovery the Stone has been several times cleaned, and that thereby many geological tests of its authenticity have been rendered impossible.

Fourth, That within the last few years, and particularly in Philadelphia, serious frauds have been perpetrated upon lovers of Indian relics.

These considerations may well have been sufficient to prejudice the mind of a stranger against the alleged wonderful Indian relic, yet they should in no case suffice to prevent, on the part of the archæologists, a thorough and impartial examination of all the evidence pertaining to its discovery.

In presenting this and other evidence, the writer has wished only to be impartial, and to be led by the facts as they have presented themselves, and for the examination of which his opportunities have been peculiarly favorable.

In his knowledge of the neighborhood and its people (his home), an acquaintance with all the persons concerned, and

very frequent visits to the Hansell Farm, nothing has yet occurred to shake his faith in the unimpeachable evidence of an honest discovery. Yet should any fresh light be brought to bear upon the subject, however at variance with this opinion, it will be welcomed.

The appearance in America of a carving of the hairy mammoth, presumably the work of our aborigines, if not a surprise to students of archæology, would certainly be no less interesting than the French discoveries of some twenty years ago; while the ready connection of the work with the Indian of comparatively recent times, the appearance of human figures in the carving, and of many symbols which seem related to highly important branches of archæological study, would awaken a more general and enthusiastic interest in the Stone, than has been felt for any other prehistoric representation of the great elephant.

A disbelief in its authenticity would leave us with an interest, not inconsiderable, in the unknown person who, after months of careful study and preparation, could have conceived and executed so remarkable a fraud.

ERRATA.

[Page 81, line 2](#), for Delaware *read* Susquehannok.

[Page 81, line 4](#), for Delaware *read* Susquehannok.

THE LENAPE STONE.

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In the spring of 1872, eight years after the discovery of the famous mammoth carving in the cave of La Madeleine, Perigord, France, Barnard Hansell, a young farmer, while ploughing on his father's farm, four miles and a half east of Doylestown, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, saw, to use his own words, a "queer stone" lying on the surface of the ground, and close to the edge of the new furrow. The plough had just missed turning it under. He stopped and picked it up; it was the larger piece of the fractured "gorget stone," in fig. 1, [\(frontispiece\)](#). By wetting his thumb and rubbing it he could see strange lines and a carving representing an animal like an elephant, but without troubling his boyish head much about it, he carried it several days in his pocket, and finally locked it up in his chest, where, along with his other relics, arrow-heads, spear-points, axes, and broken banner stones, thrown in from time to time as he found them on the farm, it remained until the spring of 1881, when he sold it to Mr. Henry Paxon, son of a well-known resident of the neighborhood, then a youth of nineteen, and with a fancy for collecting Indian antiquities, in whose possession it still remains.[\[A\]](#) At the moment of the purchase no particular attention had been paid to the carvings, and the new owner was not certain that he had noticed the mammoth while at Hansell's house, or until a few hours later, when he had brought home his trophies and shown them to his father, who distinctly remembers calling his son's attention to the rude outline of an elephant upon the stone.

But without doubt the singular part of the story is the unexpected finding of the smaller piece of the fractured

stone a few months later. After many ineffectual searches for it in the intervening years, it was picked up by Hansell while corn-husking with his brother in the same field and at the same spot where nine years before the first piece had been found. This luckily discovered fragment Hansell presented to Mr. Paxon. Several persons of the neighborhood had seen the stone at Mr. Paxon's house both before and after the discovery of the second piece, but it was not until both parts had been some months in his possession that any unusual interest was attached to it even by him.

Some time in July, 1882, Captain J. S. Bailey, of the Bucks County Historical Society, to whom the writer in preparing the present article must acknowledge his great indebtedness, and who first called serious attention to the archæological value of the stone, made it the subject of a paper read before the Society, but since that time, although displayed at a county exhibition and twice shown at meetings of the Society above mentioned, this remarkable relic has remained unheard of.

This is the simple story of most great archæological discoveries; no "man of science" was at hand to analyze the condition of the surrounding soil, or satisfy himself that a fraud had not been committed, and a hundred questions now arise as to the finder of the stone, and its present owner, its long unrecognized importance, the whereabouts of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, etc., etc. The "modern scientist" will by no means be satisfied with such evidence as would be held sufficient in a court of law, and every fraud that has been perpetrated upon the lover of Indian relics

adds to the necessity of carefully examining each detail of the discovery—nothing must be believed except upon the strongest evidence.

For a full discussion of this evidence the reader is referred to the [appendix](#).

Several circumstances seem to concur in adding to the novelty of the discovery. In the first place the carving has been made upon one of the so-called "gorget stones," than which no class of Indian relics have been more puzzling to archæologists. Our museums are well-supplied with these mysterious perforated tablets of slate, generally resembling in size and shape the stone represented in [fig. 1](#), and which are found in all parts of the United States. Ornaments, talismans, breastplates, or buttons, as we may choose to call them, they seem to have been the peculiar property of the North American Indian, without a counterpart, as far as the writer can learn, in the stone implements of other uncivilized races. They seem often to have been buried with the dead warrior and when discovered in Indian graves are generally close to the breast of the skeleton.[\[B\]](#) Gorgets are frequently scratched and scribbled upon, and ornamental zig-zags and cross-lines, like the faint scratches plainly to be seen on the Lenape stone crossing the carvings in all directions, are not uncommon on these stones, pipes, banner stones, and other Indian implements; but picture-writings proper, such as are commonly found painted upon buffalo robes, scratched upon birch bark, or carved upon the face of cliffs or large boulders, are exceedingly rare on small stones, and the tablet in question is the only known instance, the writer believes, of a pictured gorget. The

carving, when compared with the larger and more conventional Muzzinabiks or rock-writings and birch-bark records of the Indians, seems to lack much of the symbolic obscurity common to these productions of the prophets and medicine men. It doubtless belongs to the less hieratic class of writings, known among the Algonkins as "Kekeewin," which dealt with things generally understood by the tribe.

It is unquestionably a picture of a combat between savages and the hairy mammoth—an encounter such as our imagination has not yet connected with the ancient forests of America, and drawn as well as an Indian who had seen the great monster could have drawn it. Most of the figures seem represented according to the common conventional method of the modern Indians, yet there is certainly a seeming picturesque relation between them of which we can find no example in the few ancient Indian pictographs which have been preserved to us. We can almost fancy a foreground, a distance, and a faint chiaro-oscuro.

The combat we might imagine takes place on the confines of a forest, and if we may judge from an upward inclination of the foreground on the right, at the base of a hillside. The monster, angry, and with erect tail, approaches the forest, in which, through the pine trunks, are seen the wigwams of an Indian village. In the sky overhead, and as if presiding over the event, are ranged the powers of heaven: forked lightning flashes through the tree-tops, and from between a planet and the crescent moon, beyond which we seem to see a constellation (represented by a series of crossed lines) and two stars, the sun's face looks down upon the scene. Four human forms confront the monster, the first

holds in his right hand a bow from which the arrow just discharged is sticking in the side of the enraged beast, and in his left, if it is not planted in the ground, a long lance; a second warrior with head-dress of feathers stands farther to the right; and still farther, and near what may perhaps be called a rock, a third sits upon the ground apparently smoking a pipe. A fourth figure is easily distinguishable trampled under the fore feet of the mammoth.

The strong effect upon the fancy of the rude carving, as we gaze upon it, would be hard indeed to resist. Its stern naïveté and characteristic lack of æsthetic purpose bring upon the mind a haunting sense of the reality of the event it represents, and our sympathies seem genuinely awakened for the four human beings who have dared to confront the monster with their rude weapons of stone, yet whose destiny, like that of their huge antagonist, is overshadowed by the near presence of a supernatural power, seen in the great phenomena of nature which the artist has connected with the scene. Well might the appearance of the hairy mammoth have excited in the superstitious mind of the Indian hunter fancies more wild than those contained in the carving. Hardly more thrilling could have been the coming of the white men in ships, or the sound of their cannon, than the sight of one of these ungainly monsters in the shadows of a primeval forest, or the crash of his irresistible advance through the underbrush.

* * * "dat euntibus ingens Silva locum et
magno cedunt virgulta fragore."