

A VALUABLE MANUSCRIPT WHICH MAY BE FOUND

In 1852 there was a manuscript journal with an alleged account of a journey by four shipwrecked sailors from the Oregon coast to the Red River, and the following is published in the hopes that it may result in the discovery of this interesting document, and since the manuscript raised the question of prehistoric earthworks in the Oregon country, some readers of the *Quarterly* may be able to add some additional information on that subject. Should the lost journal be discovered it may indicate a route which passed the formations in the Shasta Valley to which reference is made.¹

J. NEILSON BARRY,
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*Indian Mounds in Oregon*²

"Mr. Editor. Sir. Mr. Henry R. Schoolcraft, the well known writer on Indian languages, manners and antiquities, who is now engaged under authority of the department of the Interior in preparing a great national work on those subjects, has lately written to me making inquiries as to the existence of any mounds or earthworks in Oregon, and more especially some that have been reported to exist on a river supposed to be the Deschutes or Fall River. He says 'I mentioned to you, I think, an old Oregon manuscript journal now in my possession. Mr. Lasalle, who was the author of it, was wrecked in 1809 in the ship *Sea Otter*, on the Pacific coast about a hundred miles south of the mouth of the Columbia at False Cape. From this he crossed the continent to the head of Red River, Louisiana, with three men. He describes certain large earthworks on a river named "Onalaskala," east fork, and the tribe who occupied the country he calls, "Onalas," which word I suppose, denotes the Mullallas, [Molalla] of the Willamette. Will you inquire into this matter? I am putting this discussion on a broad basis here under the patronage of congress, and I think it might be expedient in so partially explored a region as Oregon, to call attention to it by a few lines in an Oregon newspaper.'

"As the fact is one of considerable interest, I beg you to insert this, and would ask the same favor of other papers in

¹ See "The Stone Age in Oregon," by Rev. M. Eells, in the *Smithsonian Report*, 1886, Part I, page 283.

² From the *Oregonian*, Portland, Oregon, December 25, 1852, page 2.

territory, in hopes that our mountaineers may be able to throw some light upon it. Any communications may be forwarded either direct to Mr. Schoolcraft at Washington or through George Gibbs, Astoria."

*No Antiquities in Oregon*³

"G. Gibbs, Esq.

"My dear Sir:As to Lavall's mounds, I have inserted a notice in the Oregonian, calling attention to them, and will take all pains to give you a correct statement. . . .Very truly yours always, George Gibbs.

"P.S.I forgot to mention, that Peter Skeine Ogden, Esq., late chief factor of Hudson's Bay Company, at Vancouver, is now in New York. He explored the sources of the Deschutes some years ago, and can tell, if any one can, about the mounds [Footnote, page 663] In a manuscript journal of adventures by V. Lavelle, a native of Philadelphia, put into my hands in Philadelphia, by James Duane, Esq. he describes a journey performed in 1809, with three men, from the Pacific, across the Rocky Mountains, till they reached the sources of Red River on Louisiana. On crossing the Willamette valley and the Deschutes river, he describes, near the latter, extensive ruins of earthworks. No testimony to the existence of such works, can be found in modern Oregon. H.R.S.

"Astoria, O.T. April 1st, 1853.

"My dear Sir:—I have, as yet been unable to learn anything of Lavall's reported mounds on the Des Chutes, but as Gov. Ogden has now returned, I will write to him this week about them. . . .Always very truly yours, George Gibbs.

"Astoria, May 8th, 1853.

"My Dear Sir:—When at Vancouver, a few days since, I saw Governor Ogden, who had just received my letter, and we had a conversation respecting its subject-matter. At his request I write you the substance of it. Ogden is inclined to discredit Lavall's story, having never heard any reference to it among the Indians of the Willamette valley, who, had there been white men at the period referred to, would probably have retained a tradition. There is, however, no impossibility of a party having crossed the coast-range, on to the head of the Willamette, and thence

³ From *Archives of Aboriginal Knowledge*, by Henry R. Schoolcraft, Volume V., pages 662-665.

over the Cascade Mountains to the Des Chutes. I have myself crossed from the valley to the sea, about 80 or 100 miles from here. Odly enough, too, I saw a piece of a vessel long ago wrecked in the little bay on which we camped; but I don't think it was your Frenchman's, but at all events, Ogden concurs with others in denying absolutely the existence of any artificial earthworks on the Des Chutes. He has traversed the river through its whole length, as well as that entire section of the country, and has never seen any mound attributable to Indians. He says, moreover, that he does not believe any to exist west of the Rocky Mountains—of course, however, not referring to Southern California. As regards the Des Chutes, you will see, by Fremont's journal, that he ascended it and passed thence to the Klamath lake, and he evidently nowhere observed them. Dr. McLoughlin, also, the former chief factor at Fort Vancouver, a man of great intelligence and information, knows none such south of the Kee-e-tch-ra country, on the Colorado.

“As to myself, I have inquired extensively, but cannot hear of the existence of anything properly to be called an earthwork. . . . I noticed in the hilly country on the Columbia river, between the mouth of the Des Chutes and the Dalles, a great number of . . . small elevations, frecked, as it were, over the hills, and at a distance resembling corn hills. They covered an extensive tract, but I could only attribute them to the destruction of the forest at a very remote period; the trees having probably been killed by the fires which overrun the mountains, and gradually crumbled away leaving an elevation at the base. I had, however, no time to dig into them.

“I think that you may safely assume, as a general fact, the non-existence of artificial earthworks of a character similar to those of the Mississippi basin, to the west of the Rocky Mountains, unless it be toward the Mexican frontier. The mounds of the Shasta valley, and the two or three in the neighborhood of Scott's valley, were, as I wrote to you some time since, evidently natural, though some are sufficiently regular in form to excite curiosity—some being conical, others ovate. . . . Very truly, yours always, George Gibbs.

“Fort Vancouver, November 25th, 1853.

“My dear Sir. I have just reached this place, on my return from Captain McClellan's branch of Governor Steven's survey, embracing the district included between the Cascade range and

the Columbia river, or rather the Spokane, and, on my return, find your letter of August 3rd. I have succeeded at last, in discovering indications of earthworks, which are perhaps attributable to a previous race, in the valley of the Yakima, a branch of the Columbia, rising in the Cascade range. The Indians assure me that the work in question is that of "Elip Tilicum" ("first people," or perhaps "before people"), the pre-Adamites of the Oregon tribes, of whom I shall give a more particular account in my Report. This consists of two concentric circular embankments, formed by throwing up the earth from ditches, and enclosing the cellars of houses, as in the figure on the other side. It is not, however, more than fifty yards in diameter, and the enclosed space occupied by the circular holes, about twenty feet across and some three deep. It *may* be ancient, as the soil and climate would favor its preservation Mr. McKinlay, and other old Oregonians of the Hudson's Bay Company, however, all agree with Mr. Ogden, in declaring that they know of no others, anywhere, of an ancient date; and even these may turn out to be forgotten works of the present or some contemporaneous tribe. . . . I have been employed, during the summer, as Ethnologist to the Survey of this Territory. . . .

"Yours always, truly,

"GEORGE GIBBS."

In volume I, of the "Railroad Reports" (33rd Congress, 2nd Session, Ex.Doc. 78) pages 408-9, Gibbs reports: "A very interesting subject of inquiry has been pursued by Mr. Schoolcraft, in his endeavor to follow the earth-works of the Ohio and Mississippi valley into the region west of the Rocky Mountains. A careful inquiry among the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the most intelligent free trappers of Oregon, had satisfied me that none existed in the country. During an examination of the lower Yakima, however, the old Indian guide who accompanied me pointed out, on the left bank, a work which may possibly be considered as belonging to the same system, although being, so far as is known, a solitary one, it is somewhat questionable. The work consists of two concentric circles of earth about three feet high, with a ditch between them. Within are about twenty cellars situated without apparent design, except economy of room. They are about thirty feet across and three feet deep, and the whole circle eighty yards in diameter. . . . Our guide, however, who was a great authority on such matters, declared

that it was made very long ago, by men of whom his people knew nothing. He added that there was no other like it. It is well posted for defence in Indian warfare, being on the edge of a terrace about fifteen feet high, a short distance from the river, and flanked on either side by a gully."