

John Emmert, Demon Rum, and Bat Creek:

Excavations in the Smithsonian Archives

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A report prepared for

David Brose, Cleveland MNH

Jefferson Chapman, McClung Museum, U. Tenn, Knoxville

Charles Faulkner, U. Tenn. Knoxville Anthropology Dept.

James Glenn, Smithsonian Nat'l Anthropological Archives

Duane King, Cherokee Nat'l Historical Society, Tahlequah

Marshall McKusick, U. Iowa Anthropology Dept.

Richard Polhemus, U. Tenn. Knoxville Anthropology Dept.

Bruce Smith, NMMH

The intriguing Bat Creek inscription was found in early February 1889 by John Emmert in a mound along the Little Tennessee River. Conversations with the above individuals indicate that there is a belief among at least Brose, Chapman, Faulkner, King and Polhemus that the inscription is a forgery. This view has never been published, and contradicts the recently published statement of Marshall McKusick, himself an authority on 19th century forgeries, that, despite a superficial similarity to Hebrew, the stone is a genuine Cherokee inscription (Biblical Archaeologist, Summer 1979).

The view that it is a forgery stems from evidence in letters Faulkner had collected from the Smithsonian archives. The Bat Creek inscription came up informally at a 1980 conference at the Smithsonian attended by Brose, Faulkner and Smith, at which time Faulkner gave the others his interpretation of the evidence he had seen.

In phone conversations in 1981 and again in 1987, Faulkner indicated Emmert had been fired for drunkenness in 1887, and was very eager to get his

job back. He believed Emmert probably forged the inscription on the stone in order to ingratiate himself with his boss Cyrus Thomas. Faulkner also indicated that Thomas had received complaints from boarding house keepers about Emmert's personal habits, in particular his tendency to lie in bed with his muddy boots on.

Like all juicy stories (no pun intended), this one gets better as it is retold, and versions of it that I have heard from the above individuals and others they have spoken to include:

1. Emmert was habitually drunk and unreliable, and was probably drunk or hung over, and perhaps even hallucinating, when he found the stone.

2. Emmert was repeatedly carried home dead drunk and left in bed with his clothes and muddy boots on.

3. Emmert was Thomas' cousin and was kept on, despite his lack of productivity, only because of his family ties. He forged the inscription on the stone because he had few real specimens to turn in.

4. Emmert was known to have turned in other forgeries, so the Bat Creek stone may well also be a forgery.

5. The stone was forged not by Emmert, but by agent John Rogan. According to this version, Rogan had been fired just 3 weeks before the stone was found, and planted it either to confound Thomas or to frame his rival Emmert. He did this by offering to assist Emmert, who gladly and unsuspectingly accepted the help, and then slipped the stone into the excavation.

6. Very suspicious circumstances surround the finding of the stone.

7. Mound exploration procedures were so sloppy at the time that there is no telling where the stone came from. Even if the printed story is correct, the stone was struck by a steel prod which may have altered its appearance.

All of the above are supposedly documented in the Smithsonian archives' records of the mound survey, apparently as found by Faulkner. In order to check this out I spent the day in the archives on June 30, 1987 searching through these records. With Bruce Smith's help, I had already found Emmert's letters to Thomas on an earlier visit late in 1981, but had not had time then to locate Emmert's drinking record.

#### The Published Record

First I will review the published record of Emmert's employment and reliability. The record in the Annual Reports is this: during FY 82-83 (Vol. 4), Emmert was hired as temporary assistant and credited with finding the North Carolina source of certain bogus pipes. Thomas triumphantly depicted a few of these, that Emmert had had made to order and turned in, in the 12th annual report, where Emmert is again given credit (pp. 346-9). During FY 83-84 (Vol. 5), Emmert is a temporary assistant. During FY 84-85 (Vol. 6), Emmert was hired on Jan 1, 1885, and soon promoted to regular assistant on the death of agent Norris (of whose death the Bureau was notified Jan 15). During FY 85-86 (Vol. 7) Emmert employed full time as a regular assistant. During FY 86-87 (Vol. 8) Emmert was employed "until the conclusion of field work in February 1887." In FY 87-88 (Vol. 9), some isolated field work was done by a few agents, but no mention of Emmert. During FY

88-89 (Vol. 10), "Mr. Emmert devoted the few months in which he was employed to the successful exploration of mounds in eastern Tennessee. Some important discoveries were made [!] and additional interesting facts were ascertained in regard to the mounds of that section." During FY 89-90 (Vol. 11), isolated field work continues, but no mention of Emmert. In FY 90-91, (Vol. 13) "mound field work ceased." In an article in Volume 13, Emmert is given credit for turning in some old fabrics (perhaps on his own rather than as an agent).

Agents were not usually given personal credit for their finds. The fact that Emmert was given mention twice for the bogus pipes is therefore high praise.

The first publication of the Bat Creek stone is in a little-known work by Thomas entitled The Cherokees in Pre-Columbian Times, published in 1890. The pertinent excerpts are attached. Note on p. 37 that because of the extraordinary nature of the inscription, Thomas took the unusual precaution of sending another agent (who turns out to be James Middleton) "to the field where Mr. Emmert was at work, to learn the whole history of the find. . . . The examination by the person sent confirmed the statement by Mr. Emmert in every particular." On pp. 35-36, he lists some sort of fraud as one of three possibilities to explain a Cherokee inscription in such an old mound, but Middleton's report completely satisfied him that this was out.

Thomas published the discovery of the stone again in 1894 on pp. 392-4 of the 12th annual report, pretty much as Emmert had reported it to him. Thomas adds that "The engraved characters on it are beyond question letters of the Cherokee alphabet said to have been invented by George Guess (or Sequoyah), a half-breed Cherokee, about 1821." He mentions the stone again

on p. 714 of the 12th annual report, where he notes that given that "the evidence seems positive that the mound was at least a hundred years old, and that it was known that it had not been disturbed in sixty years," the presence of an unquestionably Cherokee inscription "presents a puzzle difficult to solve." Thomas devoted 12 pages of the same report (632-43) to the debunking of various other inscribed tablets allegedly found in mounds, including McKusick's favorite group, the Davenport tablets. Thomas was perhaps second only to Charles Whittlesey (d. 1886) as an outspoken critic of mound inscriptions.

In his Archaeological History of Ohio (1902), Gerard Fowke mentions the Bat Creek stone on pp. 458-9, but gives no indication that its authenticity is in any way suspect. As a Bureau agent himself, he would surely have been privy to any scuttlebutt about suspicions of forgery. He states, "But it is as easy to believe that Se-quo-yah, in constructing his alphabet, used marks resembling some that another person had formed, as to think he would invent a series of signs or characters utterly unlike any others ever thought of." He therefore sees no puzzle, and does not accept this find as supporting Thomas' contention that the Midwestern mounds are quite recent in origin. Later on, Fowke devotes three pages of his book (580-82) to a survey of literature on forged inscriptions, and therefore may also be regarded as an authority on forgeries.

There is thus no published indication by contemporaries in the know that the stone might have been a forgery, or that Emmert was in any way unreliable. In fact, the stone was presented to the public in the first place by one of the foremost contemporary experts on forged inscriptions.

In Bruce Smith's Introduction to the 1985 reprint of Thomas's report, he dwells on the activities of Emmert and the other agents. He does not mention that there was anything amiss with Emmert or any of his finds. Since he has curatorial responsibility for the Bat Creek stone, we may infer that the Smithsonian continues to stand behind Emmert's credibility and the Bat Creek stone as a legitimate mound artifact.

### The Unpublished Letters

On my new visit to the Smithsonian, in addition to MS 2400, box 6 (letters to Thomas from agents in Tennessee); I searched boxes 7 (misc and general), 9 (letters received by Thomas from miscellaneous individuals), and 10 (Bibliography, newsclippings, and Thomas' personal miscellanea, the latter primarily of an entomological nature). I also searched through BAE letters received, under Thomas, for 1879-88 and 1889-1906 (this contains letters received by Powell), and consulted BAE letters sent, boxes 5 and 6 (1885 - 1893). In addition, I searched through an important uncatalogued box called to my attention by Jim Glenn. This box, which is part of MS 2400, I will call box 9B. It contains mostly Thomas' replies to the letters in box 9.

There are numerous holes in this correspondence. There are almost no letters from Thomas to the agents, except for about 2 years' worth of letters to Fowke in Box 9. These include envelopes, and are apparently Fowke's originals which he happened to have turned in for this period, rather than Thomas' copies. There are abundant letters from Thomas to Powell for 1879-88, and for 1900-1904, but abruptly there are none for 1889-1899 (with one

1897 exception). Box 9B contains many letters from Thomas for this period, but only a few of these are to Powell. "Letters sent" are mostly acknowledgements by the chief clerk, and replies by Powell to inquiries for employment etc. by outsiders. It contains nothing of interest for the few periods I scanned though there are occasional directions to the agents. There must have been many letters from Powell to Thomas that are not here. Glenn indicated there may have been a second uncatalogued box, but the clerk could not find it and I did not have time to follow up on it.

The texts of the pertinent letters I was able to find follow (they do not xerox well for the most part). They are in chronological order regardless of author.

[MS 2400, box 9]

Fort Madison, S.C.

March 10, 1886

Dr. Cyrus Thomas,

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 2nd Inst. Just to hand.

I am sorry to learn you are dissatisfied [sic] with my reports on Tennessee. If Emmert made better finds than myself, it was out of mounds that I had permits for, and had written you that I was going to work. There are still some mounds in Tennessee & I will choose that as my field. Will go there as soon as I can finish a mound that I am on here - which will be sometime next week. I don't yet know exactly the locality I will go to, so for the present you had better send my mail to Cartersville, Georgia.

If my luck don't [sic] change up there, of course I will not expect you to retain me in service.

Yours truly,

John P. Rogan



[MS 2400, box 9]

Pikesville, Tenn.

March 20, 1886

Dear Cousin Cyrus:

Your letter of March 10th to hand in due time.

I regret exceedingly that I have been so much trouble to you. And while I am anxious to make a success of my work and retain my position if possible, yet I do not wish you to do one thing for me that bears hard on yourself. After this trial if I do not make any show, the only thing left for me to do will be for me to quit. If you have funds sufficient I would like for you to keep me going to the end of the fiscal year, if you have not the means to do this, please let me know awhile before I have to quit, so I can get my report in shape. It will take me two or perhaps three weeks to do this.

Now again thanking you for your kindness, and with love to all the family, I remain,

Ever yours,

John P. Rogan

[This is not the only apologetic "Dear Cousin Cyrus" letter from Rogan to Thomas.]

[MS 2400, box 9]

Bristol, Tenn.,

Nov. 29, 1886.

In consideration of the fact that I have no promis [sic] of employment with the Bureau of Ethnology longer than the 1st of Feb'y, 1887, and that I now wish to enter into the mercantile business for myself, I herein tender my resignation to said Bureau of Ethnology, to take effect Nov. 30th, 1886.

Very respectfully,

John P. Rogan

[This accompanied a note to Thomas indicating that it is an exact copy of the letter he sent to Powell.]

[BAE Letters received, Thomas, Cyrus, 1/20/87]

Youngsville Pa. Jan. 20, 1887.

Maj. J. W. Powell

Dear Sir

I find from the statement of funds furnished me by Mr. McChesney, that, with all my efforts to be economical, I am going to run short about five hundred dollars. You stated to me, when I last talked with you, that you could probably help me out in this respect. I would be glad if you would now let me know what you can do for me, as it is necessary, unless I get aid, to notify my assistants in time.

Without help I will have to let Emmert, who is in the field, making some measurements and observations I need to perfect information in regard to groups in Tennessee, go at the middle, or last of next month; Middleton, who is here working up data for maps, and will return in a few days to Washington, will have to stop in April, and Smith, who is working up the stone implements, the last of May. Neither of these parties, though they are working day and night can finish their work in that time. Mrs. Thomas and I are pushing my report as rapidly as we can, working from nine A.M. till four P.M., every day except Sundays. We are all making good progress and doing the very best we can, but it will be impossible to complete the report before the last of June, to do it right, and it may possibly take a month longer. Can you help me? Please let me know at your earliest convenience that I may know what steps to take.

Very respectfully,

Cyrus Thomas

[BAE Letters Received, Thomas, Cyrus, 3/8/87]

Youngsville Pa. Mar. 8, 1887.

Maj. J. W. Powell,

Director Bureau Ethn.

Dear Sir

I presume it is my duty to inform you that I had to let Emmert go at the end of February, because there were only funds sufficient to carry on the other necessary work during the fiscal year. Moreover his conduct has been such that I deemed it necessary for the good of the service to let him go. The enclosed letter, received since my action will show that I was justified.

Very respectfully

Cyrus Thomas

[Boldface emphasis added.]

In writing this up, I notice that the signature on Thomas's 1/20/87 letter is not in the same handwriting as the letter - probably he dictated it to his secretary or wife and then signed it. The letter of 3/8/87 is in the same handwriting as that of 1/20/87, and so is the signature. In other words, Thomas did not sign this letter himself, even though it is the original received by Powell. However, I would not go so far as to conclude that this letter, itself a major part of the evidence allegedly showing that the Bat Creek stone is fake, is itself a forgery!

I could not find the "enclosed letter," which evidently contains the key charges against Emmert. It was perhaps refilled under its author, but there was no indication of whom it was from, which would make searching for it futile. Apparently Faulkner has seen this, in which case a copy of it should be with the material he deposited in the McClung Museum. If either he or Chapman could find this for me, I would be very grateful. The date on it would either be February 1887 or March 1887, prior to the 8th.]

[The Emmert letters that follow are all from MS 2400, box 6, "Tennessee". I preserve Emmert's spelling, capitalization, and emphasis.]

Bristol Tenn. Dec. 19th 1888

Dr. Cyrus Thomas

Dear Sir

I have just received and read your Burial Mounds. And I certainly agree with you that the Cherokees were Mound Builders. In fact there is not a doubt in my mind about it. It is a certain fact that they claim long Island on the Holston yet and can tell exactly the location of most of the Burial places and mounds in East Tenn.

I have been with some of the Cherokees of the Western N.C. Reservation this past Summer. have talked with the old and most intelligent of them in regard to their History Modes of Burial &c. they told me of both mounds and caves, now in Lee County Va in which their people were buried. these mounds are on Powells & Clinch Rivers and are in particular on Black Water Creek.

They also showed me mounds on the "Lufty" River and the TuckeySeegee in Jackson County N.C. in which they name the chief ones that are Buried in them. the Valentines of Richmond explored a few of these mounds in 1883. the Cherokees assisted him in the work. They also showed me the stone grave of Junaluska their chief who aided Jackson in the Florida war.

There is one very old Squaw who told me that the big Citico Mound was full of their people. she also spoke of the mounds on the upper hiawassa [?] in Cherokee & Clay Counties N.C.

I have no doubt but the mounds in Lee & Scott County VA. together with some in East Tenn and those in Graham Jackson Cherokee & Clay in N.C. would satisfy any one who has made the matter a study that the Cherokees built them.

I have kept up a constant study of the mounds and who built them and should I ever have the opportunity of exploring them again I can certainly give greater satisfaction than I ever did before.

Will your works [?] show up any of my Tenn River work! Any thing that I can ever do for you in any way will gladly be done.

Yours very truly,

John W. Emmert

Bristol Tenn Jany 5th 1889

Dr. Cyrus Thomas

Dear Sir

Yours to hand this morning and in reply will say that there is so many mounds and caves that I have permission to work at any time, that I hardly know just what ones to mention. there is quite a number of nice mounds on the creeks emptying into the Tenn River that no one have ever molested there is two or three nice ones on Bat Creek (Monroe County) not far from its moth and there is many others on the diferent creeks in all that direction. I have thought that it would pay us to explore them first, keeping off the rivers for a while as it is a well known fact that the Cherokees had their little villages on these creeks when first met by the founders of old Fort Loudon. there is also some three or four more mounds on the head waters of Sweetwater Creek five miles from Athens these I saw this fall & got permission to open they are nice ones & never been touched.

I would suggest that you let me make one trip this month on the Holston beginning about 18 miles above Bristol in Va. where there is several stone graves and two or more large caves, said to contain Human skeletons. I have seen the stone graves myself. beginning there I would come on down the Holston to where I opened the Shipley mound and then cross over to the natanga [?] above Elizabethton & visit some burial grounds finishing up at the end of the month. then turn me loose down in McMin-Monroe-Blount & Loudon Counties and you will see Some good work done.

There is two large rock houses just across the N.C. line from Indian grave Gap in the unaka mountains near the line dividing Mitchell County N.C.

from Unical [?] County Tenn. I worked this Cave or Rock house a few hours with a wooden Spade & found two skeletons some pottery arrow heads and the head bones of what Prof Baird said was a species of bar now extinct these bones was plated with copper. I have told you of Caves along all the rivers that is said to contain "Indian" skeletons. It would probably be well to work them as we go along, especialy one or two in Polk County that I have heard of.

My reason for asking for work on the Holston this moth is that I may have some ready funds to begin active work when I go farther from home. I am very anxious to begin work just as soon as you will let me. would be glad to get a little outfit of stationary to begin with.

Promising you faithful work and hoping we will accomplish much I am

Very truly

John W. Emmert

[Emmert's emphasis and spelling etc.]



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Very truly

John W. Emmert

[Emmert's emphasis and spelling etc.]

Bristol Tenn Jany 15th 1889

Dr Cyrus Thomas

Dear Sir

I wrote you immediately on receipt of your letter stating the location of several mounds that I thought would yield something of interest. When I go regular into the work I would like very much to work the three or four mounds on the headwaters of Sweetwater Creek five or 6 miles from Athens. they are off to themselves and have never been mentioned in any reports that I know of. then those not far from Morganton on Bat and Notchie [?] Creeks. also some fine ones on Conasauga Creek about the line of McMin and Polk Counties. I believe every one of these are the works of the Cherokees.

My prime object in writing to day is to ask you to let me do some work this month either on the Holston east of here or around Kingsport on the Watanga [Watauga?] River. It would greatly assist me in making my start 1st Feb and I believe would be of interest to our Department.

Have you ever considered the idea of working the few mounds in Lee county Va on Powells River. they are said to be fine ones.

Hoping to hear from you soon I am

Very truly

John W. Emmert

Bristol Tenn Jany 16th 89

Dr. Cyrus Thomas

Dear Sir

Mr Hugh Fipps of Hawkins County is here to day. he wants me to go down on the River below Kingsport and open two stone graves on a hill just above the Junction of Holston & North Fork.

I sent Prof. Baird a coin of gold two pipes & some arrow heads from a stone grave taken from the same locality in 1886. Pro Baird returned the coin saying there was no money to pay for it. but saying to hold it for future work.

wont you let me put in a part of this month wherever you may think best.

Truly yours

J.W. Emmert

[There is a letter of Feb 1 which I have misplaced, but which just says he has begun work.]

Morganton Loudon County Tenn

Feb 15th 1889

Dr. Cyrus Thomas

Dear Sir

I am truly glad to inform you that I have struck two very interesting mounds. I have taken nine Skeletons from one and Seventeen from the other. In the one with nine in it I found a large pair of Copper Bracelets and a polished stone with letters or characters cut on it unlike any thing I have ever Seen before. they were found at the very bottom of the mound Some parties wanted to send a copy of the Stone to Knoxville for Translation but I objected until I heard from you.

In the mound with 17 skeletons I found an adult with head to east and on the lower leg bones is still what I take to be Buck skin and a metal button. also two small metal Buckles with Some kind of Substance still in them. with other skeletons I found wampum &c. I will preserve [?] everything just as found. Pleas let me know if I must ship to Maj Powell as usual. but I will not have an opportunity to ship for some time yet as I want to finish up the Section as I go. I Return vouchers the 70 will just about square me this month. but it is all right. will be glad to get check just as Soon as posable.

Pleas Send Check to Morganton.

Very truly

John W. Emmert

Morganton Loudon County Tenn

Feb 23d 1889

Dr. Cyrus Thomas

Dear Sir

I wrote you several days ago telling you of my Success in the Tipton Mounds in which I found the Bracelets Buckles Buckskin, the engraved Stone &c. Since that I have [worked various mounds]. . . . I have worked lively and have about run out of funds, but will work right on until I get done here. the weather has been very bad and the waters high. I will be ready to leave here by the 5th to 10th of March, according to the weather, and I would suggest that if Mr. Middleton comes March 1st that he come by R.R. to Lenoirs where I can join him. there is still plenty of work to do there.

There is considerable excitement here about the stone with letters on it that come out of the Tipton mound. There is quite a number of stone graves on the high bluffs all the way from here down to Lenoirs. Please tell me whether I shall explore them.

Very truly

John W. Emmert

Morganton Loudon County Tenn

Feb 25th 1889

Dr. Cyrus Thomas

Dear Sir

Yours received to day. I am very sorry to hear of your illness. It is impossible to get a Photograph of the Stone here. I send you a copy of it as near as I can draw it. I will take good care of every thing I get as you direct. I discovered another Mound near hear that I did not know of. So I have four yet to open near this place. I think it a good idea to look into every thing near here, that we might find something else like the Stone, or that might have some connection with it.

There is quite a number of Stone graves on the bluffs overlooking the River all the way from here to Lenoirs. I will have to go a little slow from now until I get my check, but will keep on at work. I am taking full notes as I go along and will try to make as clear report as possible. [I could not find these notes.- JHM]

The parties owning Mounds here are very kind to me and would like to get a copy of our Reports. Could you have two or three sent me here to give them!

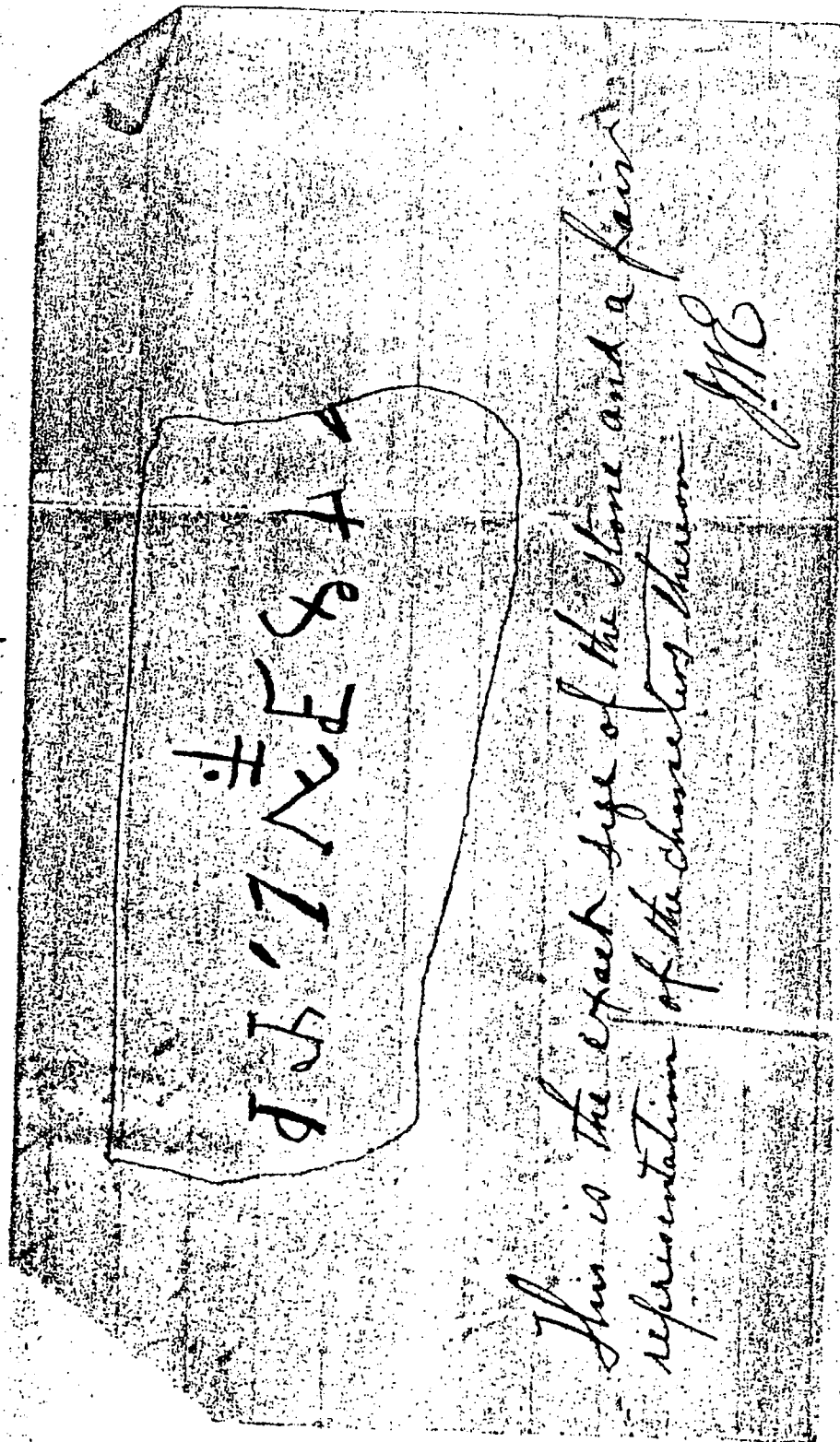
I will keep you posted &c.

Very truly

John W. Emmert

I will not write to McChesney as you have directed my check sent here. Will you please inform me what the inscription on the Stone is.

[Note that on Emmert's sketch of the stone, as in Thomas's 1890 book and the 1894 report, the two vertical strokes now present are absent. These are clearly doodles added at the Smithsonian sometime between 1889 and 1970.]



Lenoirs Loudon County Tenn.

March 7th 1889

Dr. Cyrus Thomas

Dear Sir

On the 1st Feb I commenced work Near Morganton, Loudon County Tenn.

\* \* \*

[There follows a 12 page formal report on Emmert's excavations for February, pretty much as they appear in the 12th Annual Report.]  
[Page 2:]

Two miles below or northwest of Morganton on the west side of the Little Tennessee River, Bat Creek empties into the River. above and below the creek is some beautiful Bottom land. running back from the river at some places 1/2 mile and terminating in high steep hills. along the borders of the River and creek there is still growing massive clusters of cane, showing that these bottoms was once covered with a dense cane brake.

Just in the angle of the creek and River is a large mound (see no. 1 on map) and on the other side of the creek on the up land or Second Bottom is two other mounds marked 2 and 3 on map. these two stand almost 100 feet apart from center to center. the first bottom runs back from the River to a rise or bank almost perpendicular about 20 to 30 feet high then the level land runing back to the high hills is called Second bottom on this Second bottom is the two mounds 2 and 3. Mound no 1 being on the low 1st bottoms.

Mound No. 1 on the farm M.M. Tipton....

\* \* \*



[The short paragraph in the middle of p. 392 concerning the skeleton with the metal ornaments in mound #2 is not Emmert's, except for the sentence "Whether this was an intrusive burial I am unable to say." The inference that it was intrusive is Thomas's, but must be correct given the different character of the burial below, quite apart from the metal objects. Emmert apparently saw no clear evidence of intrusion in the earth, but carefully left it to Thomas to draw inferences.

His description of mound #3 with the inscription follows on p. 6 of his letter:]

Mound No. 3 Tipton Group stands about 100 feet from no. 2 and was 28 feet in diameter and about 5 feet high. I found some large sassafras trees standing on the mound and Mr. Tipton told me that he had chopped other trees off of it forty years ago and that the mound had been a cluster of trees and grape vines as far back as the oldest settler could recollect. there was an old rotten stump yet in the center of this mound the roots of which ran down in the mound almost or quite to where the skeletons were found. that any one could have ever worked this mound without leaving some evidence of it I think it impossible. [Sic, my boldface - JHM]

I worked this mound by cutting a pit 8 feet square right down from the top to the bottom, taking out old rotten roots all the way. I found the entire mound to be of hard red clay all the way from top to bottom without any change of color whatever. Not any seams in the earth which would have been if the ground had ever been disturbed. [Emmert's underscoring]

I cut my pit down square and straight to the very bottom of the mound where I found 9 skeletons lying on the natural surface surrounded by dark colored earth. skeleton no. 1 was lying at full length with head to the south. lying close by the side of no. 1 was another skeleton no 2 with head to the north and feet almost touching the head of no. 1.

On the Same level with nos 1 and two were found 7 other skeletons all lying Side by Side with their heads to the north and all of them very much decomposed as were nos 1 and 2. these 7 skeletons were lying almost touching each other, the skulls being in line with each other. a little Singular that all were lying with heads north but no 1 whose head was to the South. I found no relics of any kind with any of skeletons except no. 1. Immediately under the skull and Jaw bones of Skeleton no. 1 I found two Copper Bracelets, an engraved stone, a small drilled fossil stone, a copper bead, a bone instrument, and some small pieces of polished wood. the ground about the skeletons was wet and muddy. the pieces of wood was soft and colored green with copper rust off the Bracelets. I could squeeze the green water out of them by pressing between my fingers. the copper Bracelet appeared to have been rolled up in Something that crumbled off of them on taking them out. they were appearantly as large as my finger before the outside crumbled off. the engraved stone was lying just under the back part of the skull. I punched it on the rough side with my steel rod in probing before I came to the skeletons. the other side of the stone is exactly as it was taken from the skeleton at the bottom of the mound about five feet deep.

\* \* \*

[There follows the original sketch from which Fig. 272 in the 12th Annual Report was faithfully redrawn, and then reports on other mounds. The last sentence of the section on p. 393 of the report, quoted above to the effect that the stone in Mound #3 is clearly Cherokee, is Thomas's. He concludes:]

I have packed the Specimens carefully and put the engraved stone in a box Separate as you directed and have made two Catalogues one to you and one to Maj. Powell. there is quite a lot of work around here to do. Six to ten

miles up the Holston from here is a number of mounds and no one has ever worked up that section.

I will do [what] I Can and will keep you posted as to my work. will make this my address for the present.

Very truly

John W. Emmert

Parks Ferry Knox County Tenn

March 12th 1889

Dr. Cyrus Thomas

Dear Sir

I shipped specimens and sent you report and catalogue on 7th Inst from Lenoirs I then came on up here and am working Some nice mounds . . . .

I have been looking for Mr. Middleton but he has not arrived yet. I will push the work as fast as I posably can and will keep you posted from time to time.

Very truly

John W. Emmert

Ps. will you pleas send me some more paper pencils and blank books and a box of them little tags to number my specimens.

[MS 2400, box 9B]

Frederick Md.,

Mar. 4th, 1892

Mr. W. H. Henshaw,

Dear Sir,

There is no doubt that Mr. Emmert has done and can do good work at exploring mounds, though he is an uneducated man. He worked for me two or three years, but was dropped on account of drunkenness, though he claims now to have reformed. He is the same man, as the records show, who wrote to President Cleveland accusing all the members of the Bureau of Geological Survey of being republicans while he, (Emmert) was a good democrat, having fought on the side of the rebellion.

You had better ask Mr. Christie to give you his opinion of the man, as he is very well acquainted with him. You will probably have trouble with him before you get through, whether you employ him or not. Nevertheless I must say that he can do good and faithful work, and is not afraid of work.

Yours truly,

Cyrus Thomas

[This letter, which is just Thomas's file copy, is in a third handwriting, but the signature is a shaky version of that on the 1/20/87 letter.]

### Conclusions

Clearly Emmert was involved in at least one disgraceful drunken episode, the evidence for which is in the missing letter accompanying Thomas's letter of 3/8/87. It is equally clear, however, from Thomas's letter of 1/20/87 and the statement in the 8th annual report, that Emmert was let go not for drunkenness, but because money for field explorations ran out at the end of 2/87. Thomas actually states in his letter of 3/8/87 that he did not receive the incriminating letter until after he had told Emmert he would be canned effective 2/28/87.

This money ran out in large part because Thomas had used much of it to support his worthless cousin John Rogan. It no doubt eased Thomas's conscience to learn that his action turned out to be justified by Emmert's subsequent behavior. By 1892 the reason for the action in his own mind had actually become Emmert's drinking spree, not his own nepotism.

Emmert probably realized why the money had run out, and it would be interesting to see from the missing letter whether the drinking episode occurred after he was let go or before. One can almost imagine him reeling down the streets of Bristol, or wherever, cursing the Bureau, Thomas, and all his relations.

In any event, his drinking did not seem to affect his productivity or reliability. Thomas was the first to admit (3/4/92) that he does good work at exploring mounds, that he does good and faithful work, and that he is not afraid of work. Rogan's letter of 3/10/86 shows that Thomas regarded Emmert much more highly than his own "dear cousin" Rogan. The drinking episode did

not prevent Thomas from rehiring Emmert in 1889 when new funds became available to finish up loose ends. Many modern-day archaeologists drink alcoholic beverages, and may occasionally even have gotten drunk, but this does not lead their colleagues to dismiss their finds as fraudulent whenever convenient.

Note that Emmert had been working for Thomas from 1882 through 1887, and again in 1889, not for just "two or three years" as Thomas recalled in his 1892 letter.

If, as Thomas stated in his letter of 1/20/87, Emmert was "working day and night", it would not be surprising if he occasionally collapsed exhausted in bed without first removing his boots. Archaeologists are supposed to get their boots muddy, though admittedly it is hard to imagine Thomas allowing his boots to become soiled!

It is clear from Emmert's letters of 12/19/88, 1/5/89, 1/15/89, and 1/16/89 that he is very eager to go back to work on the mounds. My sense of these letters, however, is that he is genuinely enthusiastic about this work, and not that he just needs a job, though he is out of cash and is concerned about how he can meet expenses away from home for a month without at least a partial paycheck in hand. Thomas apparently advanced him \$70 to squeak through the month. Note that he cannot even afford pencils and paper out of his own pocket. Bruce Smith, in his introduction to the 1985 reprint of Thomas's report, does indicate that Thomas was no joy to work for. If Emmert just wanted any job, he could easily have found a more genial employer.

Emmert might have had a motive to forge a Cherokee inscription to satisfy Thomas, as is apparent from these letters and from Thomas's 1890

book, where he presents the Bat Creek Inscription as the capstone of his theory that the Cherokees built all the midwestern mounds in the last few centuries before the historical period. We learn that Emmert actually visited the N.C. Cherokee Reservation in the summer of 1888 and spoke with several Cherokees there. He could easily have asked one of them to write out a plausible personal name or brief homily, inscribed it on a stone, and claimed to have found it in a mound. There is no evidence here that he did do this; it is just a possibility.

James D. Middleton was evidently the agent Thomas sent to the scene to check out Emmert's discovery, given his arrival in Tennessee in March. I could not find his report on this (other than a letter just stating he has arrived and found Emmert). There is an undated fragment of a report by him on explorations in Tennessee, which breaks off on p. 6, in the Tennessee file, but this may be from an earlier period. There is also a copy, in his handwriting, of the portions of Emmert's letter of 3/7/89, pertaining to the Bat Creek group, that he probably took with him from Washington to Tennessee for reference. In any event, the 1890 book indicates he confirmed Emmert's account to Thomas's satisfaction.

#### Gordon's Reading

Besides Cherokee, the inscription on the stone has also been identified as Old Hebrew script of circa the first century A.D., by Cyrus Gordon. According to Gordon the five-character string is the dative of an obscure form of the Hebrew word for Judea, so that it reads "for Judea", though a sixth letter appears to have originally been on a broken portion of the



stone, and hypothetically reconstructing this as a mem would turn this into the plural, "for the Jews." The other two letters before (i.e. to the right of, when it is held so that the "E" is backwards) the comma-shaped word divider cause him difficulties, but he gives a tentative reading (first proposed by his student Robert Stieglitz) of "A comet for the Jews", which would make some sense as a personal title in terms of prophesies that were receiving attention at the time. The lone letter below the text he interprets as a numeral, perhaps giving the year of some new era. Working from a 1970 photograph and the stone itself, he did not realize that the two vertical strokes were just doodles added while it was in the Smithsonian's custody. He could find no explanation for these as Hebrew, and simply declared them "enigmatical" in a footnote. The definitive version of his paper appears in a Gordon family festschrift entitled The Book of the Descendants of Dr. Benjamin Lee and Dorothy Gordon, Ventnor, 1972.

If the inscription is indeed Old Hebrew, there are two problems with Emmert's having forged it: First, Emmert had absolutely no motive to forge a Hebrew inscription to please Thomas. A Hebrew inscription is the very last thing Thomas would have wanted to see come out of a mound. If Thomas had spotted it as Hebrew, Emmert would have been out the door in a minute, with the stone flying after him, and without any reimbursement for his expenses or paycheck for February.

And second, it is doubtful that Emmert could have forged an Old Hebrew inscription. It is clear from his letters that he never even mastered English spelling or grammar. In just a few letters his misspellings include "diferent," "village," "begining," "potery," "especialy," "coppo," "pleas," "diging," "sasafra," "setler," "choped," "appearantly," "runing," "shiped,"

"mad" for made, "posable" for possible, "cite" for site, "moth" for both month and mouth, "bar" for bear, "mettle" for metal, and "dept" for depth. He cannot correctly conjugate the English verbs to be (he repeatedly uses "is" for are and "was" for were ) or to come ("come" for came). He uses the pronoun "them" in place of the adjective "those." His letters show him to be "intelligent" enough, but, as Thomas succinctly put it, "he is not an educated man." (3/4/92)

How are we to believe that this man, drunk or sober, took the trouble to learn the conventional Square Hebrew alphabet, selected an archaic root from a Hebrew lexicon, correctly formed its dative or dative plural, and then transliterated this into the arcane Old Hebrew script (which is so esoteric that even Thomas, one of our experts on forged inscriptions, did not recognize it), correctly combining letter forms (which appear in reasonably accurate form in the dictionary letter chart Thomas cites on p. 642 of his report as the crib sheet used by his contemporary forgers, but jumbled together with other types from different centuries and contexts) from a single period?

Again, even assuming it is Hebrew, there is no particular reason to think Emmert did forge it; it is just a possibility worth considering.

No one actually believed that the inscription was a forgery before Gordon's reading of it circa 1970. Gordon's reading is in fact the only real reason for questioning it. But if Gordon is just a crackpot, as is universally believed among American anthropologists, then there is no reason to accept his reading, and thus no reason to think the inscription is a forgery.

On the other hand, Gordon's reliance on Bat Creek is part of the basis for his reputation as a crackpot. Glyn Daniel, the editor of Antiquity, reviewed Gordon's Before Columbus in a lead editorial in the March 1972 issue. (This book contains a slightly watered-down version of Gordon's paper on Bat Creek as an appendix.) He describes Gordon's diffusionist hypothesis as "poisoned chocolate," and laments that so eminent a scholar could have fallen so low. When it gets down to specifics, he says,

What evidence there is needs careful weighing: every alleged find from Paraiba to Bat Creek studied with care and both sides of each argument fairly presented. This is what Gordon does not do.

I wrote to Daniel on Nov. 23, 1981, asking where I could find the other side of the Bat Creek story. He promptly and courteously replied, suggesting I contact Marshall McKusick, who "has taken a very special interest in the work of Cyrus Gordon and Barry Fell and can put you in touch with the most recent information on this subject." McKusick, in turn, referred me to his Biblical Archaeologist piece identifying it as an authentic Cherokee inscription (but in which he does not specifically identify the characters or explain its reading).

However, if, as Brose, Chapman, Faulkner, King and Polhemus all assure me, the Bat Creek inscription is a forgery, then it could as easily be a Hebrew forgery as a Cherokee forgery or a gibberish forgery, and Gordon's reading of it may be perfectly correct! Gordon simply accepts it as an authentic mound artifact on the Smithsonian's say-so. If the Smithsonian is secretly passing off a known forgery as authentic, it is not Gordon's fault if he took it seriously. Fifty percent of the case against Gordon's credibility therefore swings on the authenticity of this one inscription!

At the same time, it should be remembered that it is 50% circular reasoning to use Gordon's lack of credibility to dismiss his reading of the Bat Creek Inscription, since this reading is itself half the case against him. (I say 50% because the other half swings on the Paraiba debate in Orientalia, of which I have given a worm's-eye view in an unpublished note titled "A Puzzle Difficult to Solve." Since this has nothing to do with to John Emmert, I will not repeat it here. Suffice it to say that Dr. Eugene J. Fisher of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations describes it in Biblical Archaeologist (Spring 1980) as a "difficult question" involving "a controversy between two of the foremost philologists of ancient languages of modern times.")

(Since 1975 or so, Gordon has been concentrating his efforts on the ancient library of Ebla, which is the subject of a new exhibition that is just being installed on the ground floor of the NMNH. It would be interesting to see if any of his work appears there.)

#### Embellishments

I now examine the embellishments of the Faulkner story, as listed above.

1. There is no reason to think Emmert was habitually drunk, or unreliable as a consequence. Without the missing letter, in fact, there is no evidence that he got drunk more than once, and that may well have been when he was no longer employed by the Bureau! If anyone suffered from a chronically debilitating hangover, it was more likely to have been Rogan than

Emmert. In any event, Emmert clearly did not merely hallucinate the inscription, since the stone undeniably exists. If Gordon is right, then it was Thomas who was hallucinating when he pronounced it Cherokee, not Emmert.

2. Again, this is irrelevant to the authenticity of the stone, if true.

3. Rogan, not Emmert, was Thomas's cousin and was short on real specimens to turn in!

4. Emmert did turn in forgeries, but that was his assignment!

5. Rogan was not fired, but quit ignominiously, not 3 weeks before the stone was found, but rather 29 months before. This was not exactly a fresh wound. He was indeed jealous of Emmert's superior ability, but he seems too ineffectual to have pulled off this ingenious revenge. And if it was for revenge, why did he not make sure that Thomas found out it looks like Old Hebrew, if indeed it does? On the other hand, if it does not look like any ancient script, or if it is simply the Cherokee that Thomas was after, what would have been the point? There is no evidence in Emmert's letters or anywhere else that Rogan was present. This story appears to be a pure fantasy.

6. No suspicious circumstances surround the finding of the stone. If Emmert had merely found a decorated shell gorget instead of the stone, it would be completely accepted. The only odd things are the inscription itself and the fact that the bracelets turned out to be brass, but these are just artifacts to be "carefully weighed" and "studied with care," as Glyn Daniel put it, not to be brushed aside without a word. (Chapman's survey of Telllico Archaeology, to take a case in point, makes no mention of the Bat Creek inscription, not even as a curious forgery.)

7. The Bureau's practices were not up to modern standards, but it is clear enough in what context Emmert found the stone. As Emmert put it (3/7/89), "that any one could have ever worked this mound without leaving some evidence of it I think it imposable." At this point Emmert had had seven years' experience exploring and surveying literally hundreds of mounds, many of them disturbed. The 1894 printed story does not say which side was struck by the prod, but Emmert's report clearly indicates that it was the back side and that the inscription was not altered in any way. (The inscription has been somewhat altered sometime between 1889 and 1970, but that is another matter.) Note that the printed version makes it sound like the stone was some distance beneath the skull, but Emmert's report makes it clear that in fact it was immediately under the jawbones with the bracelets and wood fragments (identified by Bruce Smith as Middle Woodland earspools). He kept written notes as he went, but I do not know what happened to them. A copy of the Bureau's printed guidelines for mound exproation, incidentally, is in Box 9 or 9B in a file marked Baird.

#### Location of the Mound

There has been some confusion in my mind since my first trip to the archives over just where "Tipton mound no. 3" is, since the maps of the "Tipton Mound Group" clipped to Middleton's report in the file do not match the description in Emmert's report or in the published version. The problem, it is now clear to me, is that there are two Tipton mound groups, each containing three mounds. In each group, nos. 2 and 3 are approximately 100 feet from one another and are on the second bottom. In each group, no.

1 is further away from the other two, is nearer the river, and is at a lower elevation. The first group, next to the Morganton ferry road at mile 14 on the river and indicated by no. 13 on Plate 25 in the published report, was explored by Emmert in 1886. The second group, at the mouth of Bat Creek at mile 12 and indicated by no. 14 on Plate 25, was explored by Emmert in 1889. The maps based on "Emmert's Plat No. 10" are of the first group and have been mistakenly clipped to the 1889 report. Part of the problem is that the Bureau's policy was to name mound groups for the owners of the land, so that these are both "the Tipton group". Furthermore, I was going by what I took to be the original of Plate 25 in the files but which in fact was only a first draft of it that showed only the Morganton ferry group as "the" Tipton group.

Emmert did turn in a map of the Bat Creek group with his 3/7/89 report, but I could not find this and it is probably lost. It is very likely from his verbal description, however, that mounds #2 and 3 are the unnatural wiggle in the 840 foot contour that occurs on the north slope of High Top, just east of the lone structure that appears on the 1952 Loudon quadrangle. (A similar wiggle appears in the 820 foot contour right behind the Morganton ferry group, and probably represents the barrow pit the soil for the mounds was taken from.) The "second bottom" around High Top is at roughly 820 feet, to judge from the map.

### The White Paper

On my 1981 trip to the Smithsonian I found the attached unsigned and undated one-page report entitled "The Bat Creek Stone" in the file of clippings and recent correspondence accompanying the stone in the Conservation Laboratory. There is no direct indication that it emanated from the Smithsonian, but there is indirect evidence to this effect in that it refers to the Conservation Laboratory with a first person plural possessive pronoun. I therefore conclude that it represents some sort of unofficial white paper and will examine its contents, sentence by sentence.

It begins, "The Bat Creek Stone was excavated in 1885..." Wrong! It was excavated in 1889!

"The Smithsonian Mound Exploration Program was directed by Professor Cyrus Thomas." They got this one right at least!

"The specimen was acquired by the Museum in 1889..." Right, but misleading in conjunction with the first sentence, since it suggests a lacuna of 4 years before it was acquired by the Museum. In fact, it belonged to the Museum from the moment it was excavated, though of course it took a few weeks for it to be shipped and to physically arrive in Washington.

"Dr. Thomas identified the inscription with an early 19th century Cherokee alphabet." Thomas did not indicate that he had in mind anything other than the standard printed Cherokee alphabet. Marshall McKusick has told me that the fit to Cherokee is best using a little-known handwritten version that appears in Foster's biography of Sequoyah, but Thomas made no mention of this. The author(s) were perhaps confusing Thomas with McKusick.



"Subsequent research by Smithsonian Anthropologists has neither confirmed or denied the original description." Why not?

"The specimen and associated material continue to be analyzed..." Baloney. They have been studiously ignored ever since the "copper" bracelets turned out to be brass. Gordon's 1970 request for carbon dating of the wood fragments has been tabled ad aeternum.

"...and two definite opinions now exist regarding the inscriptions. One, that they are not Cherokee and the other that they are not genuine Semitic writing..." There are two definite published opinions regarding the inscription, but these are one, that it is Cherokee (Thomas, McKusick) and the other, that it is genuine Semitic writing (Gordon). Is it so hard for the Smithsonian's "continuing analysis" to tell Cherokee from Hebrew?

"...some characters appear as if someone were copying a few Hebraic letters from the alphabet." Surely it would be remarkable if some Middle Woodland Indians copied a few letters from a Hebrew alphabet, even if they did not understand their meaning! What is the carbon date of the ear spools?

"Recent tests by our Conservation Laboratory on the brass bracelets found in the same grave definitely established that they are 18-19th century trade goods and do not have the chemical composition of brass of the Roman or early Semitic periods." It would be more precise to have stated, "Recent tests by our Conservation Laboratory on the bracelets found in the same grave and originally classified by Thomas as copper definitely established they are instead heavily leaded yellow brass containing at least 25.2% zinc." The lab report (CAL # 1069, 12/23/70) did not mention anything about 18th or 19th century trade goods, Roman period ornamental brass, or brass of

the early Semitic period. It did establish they they do not have the chemical composition of Roman brass coins, but coins are likely to have a different composition than common ornaments, since they must be first struck and then bear up under circulation. Today, leaded yellow brass of similar composition is a garden variety alloy for ornaments, and it was probably so used in Roman times. The allusion to the "early Semitic period" is mysterious, since this must refer to the Akkadian takeover of Mesopotamia from Sumer in the mid-third century B.C. No one has suggested that the inscription is Akkadian cuneiform.

Richard Polhemus has called to my attention that the twisted heart brooch found with the intrusive burial in Bat Creek mound #2 is a very common item of trade silver from the fur trade of the 18th century. (Arthur Woodward in his Denominators of the Fur Trade shows an array of these, doubled and/or with crowns, and Jefferson Chapman shows virtually the identical item from an historical Cherokee village in his Telllico Archaeology. The twist and/or the crown is supposed to make it indicate the fifth wound of Christ.) But the intrusive burial in Mound #2 has no particular relation to the original and principal (indeed, only, given that the 9 skeletons are carefully arranged relative to one another) burial in Mound #3. The report may be muddling the two mounds.

In sum, this white paper is thoroughly misleading and should be completely disregarded. Whoever wrote it did well not to sign it.

Summary

The Bat Creek inscription was found by an experienced and trusted agent of the Bureau of American Ethnology in an undisturbed burial of considerable age. Although one important letter is now missing, there is nothing in the archives to indicate that it is a forgery or somehow spurious, any more than any other artifact recovered in archaeological context by a reputable scientific institution.

The only real reason it is regarded as a forgery appears to be Cyrus Gordon's reading of it as Old Hebrew. If Gordon is indeed a crackpot, as is universally believed by American anthropologists, then there is no reason for them to accept his reading, and hence no reason to consider it a forgery. Alternatively, if it is somehow a forgery, (or if McKusick's reading of it as Cherokee, upon which Glyn Daniel completely relies, is erroneous!), then half the case against this eminent scholar's reputation is misplaced.

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*P. of Cyrus Thomas*

*N.Y. N.O.C. Hodges, Phila. 1890*

is no reason to doubt; and that the bells indicate contact with Europeans must be conceded.

In another mound a little farther up the river, one of a group marking the site of one of the "Over-hill towns," were discovered two carved stone pipes of a comparatively modern Cherokee type.

During the fall of 1888, a farmer of East Tennessee, while examining a cave with a view of storing potatoes in it during the winter, unearthed a well-preserved human skeleton, which was wrapped in a large piece of cane matting. This, which measures about six by four feet, is quite pliant, and, with the exception of a rent in the corner, perfectly sound. It has a broad, submarginal stripe of red running around it. Enclosed with the skeleton was a piece of cloth made of flax, about fourteen by twenty inches, almost uninjured, pliant, but apparently unfinished. The stitch in which it is woven is precisely the same as that imprinted on pottery shown in Fig. 96 in Mr. Holmes's paper on "Mound-Builders' Textile Fabrics" ("Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology"). Although the earth in the cave contains salts which would aid in preserving any thing buried in it, these articles cannot be assigned to any very ancient date, especially as there were with them the remains of a dog from which the skin had not all rotted away. These were in all probability placed here by the Cherokees of modern times, and form a link between the historic and prehistoric times not easily broken.

Another important find was made in this locality by one of the Bureau agents in 1889. This is a small stone on which some characters have been rudely etched, and is shown in Fig. 7, on the next page. An examination by those familiar with the subject will probably soon satisfy them that some of the characters, if not all, are letters of the Cherokee alphabet. As the presence of the stone in the mound cannot be attributed to an intrusive burial, it is evi-

dent that the mound must have been built since 1820, that Mr. Guess was not the author of the Cherokee alphabet, or that the stone is a fraud. The mound in which this was found is described as follows:—

"The Tipton group is situated on the north side of the Little Tennessee, about two miles from Morganton. No. 3 of this group, which stands about one hundred feet from No. 2, is of small size, measuring twenty-eight feet in diameter and about five feet in height. Some large trees," says Mr. Emmert, the Bureau agent, "were standing on the mound, and Mr. Tipton informed me that he had cut other trees off of it forty years ago, and that it had been a cluster of trees

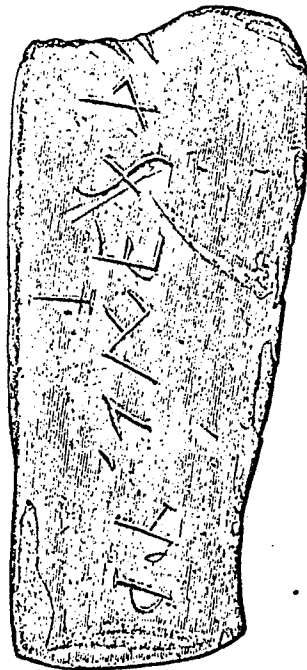


FIG. 7.

and grape-vines as far back as the oldest settler could recollect. There was an old stump yet in the centre, the roots of which ran down in the mound almost or quite to where the skeletons were found. . . . Having worked to the bottom, I found here nine skeletons lying at full length on the natural surface, with faces up, and surrounded by dark-colored earth. No. 1 (as shown in the diagram which accompanies his report) was lying with head to the south; while No. 2, close by the side of it, had the head to the north, and feet almost touching the head of the other. On the

same level, but apart from the preceding, were seven other skeletons lying closely side by side, heads all to the north, and all in a line. No relics of any kind were found with any of the skeletons except No. 1. Immediately under the skull and jaw-bones were two copper bracelets, an engraved stone (Fig. 7), a small drilled stone, a single copper bead, a bone instrument, and some small pieces of polished wood. The earth about the skeletons was wet, and the pieces of wood were soft and colored green by contact with the copper bracelets. These bracelets had been rolled up in something which crumbled off when they were taken out, but whether buckskin or bark I was unable to decide. The engraved stone was lying partially under the skull. I punched it with my steel prod on the rough side in probing, before I reached the skeletons."

As soon as the collections made by Mr. Emmert during this exploration were received at the office in Washington, a member of the Bureau was sent to the field where Mr. Emmert was at work, to learn the whole history of the find. This course was taken by the Bureau merely as a means of being fortified with all possible evidence as to the facts of the find being as stated. The examination by the person sent confirmed the statement by Mr. Emmert in every particular. This, therefore, necessitates one of two conclusions,—that the mound was thrown up since 1820, or that some one was at work on the Cherokee alphabet before Mr. Guess's time. But this is a question which has no bearing on the present discussion.

### CHAPTER III.

WHAT has been presented is probably sufficient to convince any unbiased mind that the Cherokees were mound-builders, nevertheless there is other evidence of a more general character which serves to show that the builders of the East Tennessee and North Carolina mounds were contemporaneous with the authors of the works of other sections.

Proof that in general the mound-builders were Indians would, as a matter of course, have a strong bearing on the case under discussion, but this would require too much space to be introduced here. The following extracts from Major J. W. Powell's article on "Prehistoric Man in America," in the *Forum* of January, 1890, will give what is now becoming the settled conclusion of most of the leading archaeologists of the present day:—

"The research of the past ten or fifteen years has put this subject in a proper light. First, the annals of the Columbian epoch have been carefully studied, and it is found that some of the mounds have been constructed in historical time, while early explorers and settlers found many actually used by tribes of North American Indians: so we know many of them were builders of mounds. Again, hundreds

File copy

THE BAT CREEK STONE

The Bat Creek Stone was excavated in 1885 from the Bat Creek burial mound in Loudon County, Tennessee. The Smithsonian Mound Exploration Program was directed by Professor Cyrus Thomas. The specimen was acquired by the Museum in 1889 and was described in the Bureau of American Ethnology Report, published in 1894. In that report, Dr. Thomas identified the inscription with an early 19th century Cherokee alphabet.

12th.  
H. 390-

Subsequent research by Smithsonian Anthropologists has neither confirmed or denied the original description. The specimen and associated material continue to be analyzed and two definite opinions now exist regarding the inscriptions. One, that they are not Cherokee and the other that they are not genuine Semitic writing, although some characters appear as if someone were copying a few Hebraic letters from the alphabet.

Recent tests by our Conservation Laboratory on the brass bracelets found in the same grave definitely established that they are 18-19th century trade goods and <sup>DO</sup> not have the chemical composition of brass of the Roman or early Semitic periods.