

**THE MASTERPIECES OF THE
OHIO MOUND BUILDERS:
THE HILLTOP FORTIFICATIONS
INCLUDING FORT ANCIENT**

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The Masterpieces of the Ohio Mound Builders: The Hilltop Fortifications Including Fort Ancient
by E. O. Randall

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THE MASTERPIECES
OF THE
OHIO MOUND BUILDERS
UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA
THE HILLTOP FORTIFICATIONS

INCLUDING
FORT ANCIENT

BY E. O. RANDALL
Secretary Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society

COLUMBUS, OHIO
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1916

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS little volume makes no pretense of being a scientific or technical treatise on the Ohio Mound Builders or their works. Its aim is to briefly describe the chief relics of the Ohio Mound Builders as they now appear, and as they appeared when found in their original condition, or when first studied by archaeological students. Some twelve years ago the author became the Secretary of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society. The duties of his office were confined to the executive affairs of the Society and the work of the Society along its historical lines. The archaeological department has been in the care of specialists in that subject. Professor G. Frederick Wright, Warren K. Moorehead, Gerard Fowke, Professor W. C. Mills and others connected with the Society have given their attention to the prehistoric researches and have produced many valuable publications as the result of their investigations. The author of the pages herewith issued naturally came in contact with the work of these scholars and acquired an irresistible interest in the subject—a subject fraught with fascination because of its uniqueness and mystery. The author has visited all the earthen works herein described—some of them many times—so that the descriptions are those of first hand, “views taken on the spot.” This volume is confined to the Hilltop Fortifications. The author hopes at no distant day to supplement these studies with descriptions of the chief Lowland Enclosures, Mounds and Village sites. The so-called great religious relic of these lost people, known as Serpent Mound, has been minutely treated by the author in a volume recently published by the Society.

E. O. RANDALL.

February, 1908.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA CAHOKIA MOUND.

During a sojourn in that fairyland of modern marvels, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, held at St. Louis, in the summer of 1904, it was the privilege of the writer in company with a party includ-



Cahokia Mound as Originally Appearing.

ing several students of American Archæology, to make an inspection of the world-famed Cahokia Mound. We crossed the sweeping Mississippi to the Illinois side, over the colossal bridge, one of the engineering achievements of modern invention and skill, which, had it existed in the ancient days of oriental glory, would have been regarded, if not the first, then

Easily the eighth wonder of the world. A half hour's ride on a swift speeding trolley car bore us inland some six miles, landing us almost at the base of the great mound—called respectively "Cahokia Mound," from the Indian tribe which formerly inhabited the locality, and the "Monks' Mound," from the fact that in the year 1810 a colony of Trappists settled thereabouts and occupied a monastic building, which they erected on the summit of the mound. After only a few years' sojourn, the solitude seeking religionists returned to France. But little evidence remains of their occupancy.

The Mound Builders never failed to exercise sagacious judgment in their choice of sites for habitation or the erection of their chief structures. No better place could have been found for the Cahokia and its surrounding mounds than in the upper Mississippi valley near the juncture of the Missouri from the West and the Illinois from the Northeast, a strategical point on the main waterways of the vast Northwest. For many miles below the mouth of the Missouri, the east side of the Mississippi broadens into a plain some eight or ten miles in width, interrupted by a line of bluffs which form its eastern boundary. This stretch of level surface composed of rich, fertile, alluvial deposit is known as the "American Bottom." Several creeks cross it from its eastern limit to the Mississippi and many little lakes formerly dotted the thick growths of timber and prolific underbrush that in the early days must have clothed it. This was a

prime hunting territory for fish, fowl and game, well adapted to the primitive life of a prehistoric people. Near the center of this bottom and just south of its chief stream, the Cahokia stands to-day, as it has stood for untold centuries, the most massive and imposing monument of the Mound Builders in this country and probably in the world. Surrounding this mound, within a radius of two or three miles, in a more or less perfect state of preservation, in varying shapes and sizes, from ten to sixty feet in height, are some fifty lesser mounds. At still greater distances from the center structure, in groups or isolated examples, are many more. Great numbers have been obliterated. Doubtless in the days of the "Golden Era" of the Mound Builder, hundreds of mounds dotted the American Bottom. Scores of these strange earth-heaps originally occupied the site of St. Louis and were demolished to make way for the lengthening streets and spreading squares of that metropolis. On these banks of the mighty river must have been a vast population whose labors were almost incredible in their results as evidenced by the relics still extant.

Cahokia Mound is a truncated rectangular pyramid, rising to a height of one hundred feet above the original surface upon which it was built. The dimensions of its base are: from north to south, 1,080 feet; from east to west, 710 feet. The area of the base is therefore something over sixteen acres. This is a greater area than the base of the Pyramid of Cheops — the greatest of the Egyptian tombs. The