

Act One

Analysis Part 1 – Historical Context

Chapter 2

1. For the purposes of studying the *Book of Mormon*, we're going to take a step back in time to the settling of America. We need to understand how important religious liberty was to some very important individuals at the time, as well as theories and historical studies embraced by such individuals.
2. Let's begin with examining the expansion of Protestant Christians coming over the Atlantic Ocean seeking asylum; religious and otherwise. Most of the early settlers of America, during the 17th century, were European citizens that were escaping the rule of governments, which were deeply tied with Roman Catholicism, or the Church of England.
3. A number of these American Protestant settlers loathed the intermingling of religion and state, and its subsequent authoritarian rule. It's arguable that one of the main driving factors behind the Declaration of Independence was heavily associated with religious freedom, just as much as taxation without representation, occupation, and other steadily compiling factors that drove the founding fathers to compose the Declaration of Independence. A lot of these pressures were the same that motivated these people to immigrate to the "New World" in the first place.
4. This late 18th century, early 19th century time period in world history is very different from what we see and experience today. By the end of the 19th century, we're talking about large swaths of Africa, all of India and Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, some South American colonies, and the European nations that are part of the U.K. today, all were under rule of the British Monarchy. The resources of this massive empire made it possible for people to get the ships and funding necessary to brave the Atlantic Ocean, and come settle the New World. (Miller, 1966)
5. The British Navy during these times was not to be trifled with. In fact, they had the absolute cutting edge, most powerful navy in existence, bar none. They were one of the wealthiest empires spanning thousands of miles, controlling most of their territory with naval superiority. Not one single nation or empire could contend with the British Navy, which gave them a monopoly of the waters and put them at the forefront of the ever expanding global trade industry. (Hicks, 2008)
6. This massive superiority allowed the British Empire the necessary resources to expand their empire to the Americas. Some of the earliest European settlers made their way to Massachusetts in 1620, and began settling the territory, by accident, I might add.
7. Things didn't go so well for these settlers. Many people died from starvation, dysentery, small pox, and other unpleasant diseases. Thanks to the Native Americans, the Europeans were able to survive, slowly settle, and propagate into Colonial America.
8. During European settlement of the American continents, many of the Native American

communes died off from diseases brought over by earlier exploratory groups. This is a topic of discussion that doesn't seem to gather enough attention.

9. The Natives didn't have the robust immune system that the Europeans had been cultivating for tens of thousands of years, and the Natives simply weren't prepared. Nobody could foresee the onslaught of micro organic warfare the Europeans would wage upon the Natives, largely doing so unwittingly.
10. Here, we begin to run into some issues with early American history. Some estimations say that hundreds of thousands of Natives died, but that's obviously a gross underestimation. Some estimations put that number into the low millions category. Some of the highest estimations say that somewhere between 25, and 30 million Native Americans died from old world diseases before the settlers could even make their way out across the plains to the west coast. Whatever the actual number, it doesn't necessarily affect the purposes of our study.
11. That may sound heartless to say, because each and every one of those Native Americans died a very uncomfortable, disease ridden death. That's a lot of dead people from very horrible circumstances, all massacred at the hands of an invisible enemy, disease. The Natives had absolutely no chance against Small Pox, and Influenza, the European settlers didn't even use their guns for the vast majority of the genocide that was committed upon the Native Americans.
12. The reason the exact number of Natives dead from these diseases doesn't matter is due to the focus of our research relating to the *Book of Mormon*. These deaths are important, and worth pointing out, but all that matters in our scope of research, is the aftermath of these millions of dead people. Joseph Stalin is quoted with saying something along the lines of, "One death is a tragedy, a million deaths, is a statistic". In the case of the Native Americans, that's all they were. Millions of people dead that didn't die through traditional warfare—just a statistic to us now. This was truly the largest absentee genocide in all of human history.
13. Let's try to visualize this for a minute. The average large sports stadium can house anywhere from 25,000 – 50,000 people. If you watch any major sporting event, a person can scarcely wrap their mind around how many people are really in the stands. When the cameras pan around to show the crowd, it just looks like a sea of faces with different colored clothes spotted throughout masses. 50,000 people in one place is nearly incomprehensible to any one mind.
14. Hopefully you have a picture of this stadium in your mind, because now, try to expand your imagination to include a stadium ten times the size of the one currently thinking pictured. That's 500,000 people. No single person can comprehend how many people that really looks like. It's an almost theoretical number when it comes to visualizing each individual person of that 500,000 people.
15. It pains me to ask you to do this, and this is where historical empathy engages in our study, but now try to imagine that stadium of 500,000 people, all dying horrible and painful deaths from sickness. It's completely incomprehensible to see that many faces, and imagine them all suffering from disease. The highest estimate I could find concluded that 95% of all the Native Americans died. Only a very small percentage of those deaths were committed by European warfare, almost all of them were due to the almighty invisible killer, disease. This is truly a horrible time of human history, marking the largest loss of human life from disease in all known history.
16. Considering the practical logistics of the problems these millions of bodies created, let's conduct a thought experiment. Human beings are one of the very few species that dispose of our dead, and it's a practice that has many evolutionary benefits; a person can easily catch a disease from a dead body, but not if that dead body is covered in dirt, or buried in a hole in the ground. Our ancestors that buried their dead, tended to survive better than the ancestors that didn't, so today, it's common practice to bury our dead.
17. If 95% of any given Native American tribe dies, it's incumbent upon the remaining 5% to

either bury the dead and move on with life, trying to survive; or they could simply vacate the area, and leave the mountains of dead bodies for someone else to deal with. Throughout the entirety of the American continents, both of these situations happened to the luck, as well as dismay, of the European settlers. But, more importantly for our studies, the ruins of micro organic warfare became a source of confusion for the new settlers. It was lucky for the new settlers because they didn't have to conquer these civilizations by force, but dismayed them from the sheer confusion of how the continent and the remaining civilizations came to be in such a state of disarray.

18. As people began expanding westward, settling all along the way, they happened upon Native American civilizations, some inhabited, others were ghost towns. When the early settlers would find these native civilizations that had been completely abandoned, some of which were littered with bodies that might be two weeks old, or 2 centuries old, they would understandably have some questions amidst the confusion. Who were these people? Why did they leave? Who killed them? Why weren't these people killed in battle, and what did kill them? Why didn't the conquering army of Indians bury the bodies in this ghost town, but did in the last ghost town we found?
 - a. "Indeed the form and materials of these works seem to indicate the existence of a race of men in a stage of improvement superior to those natives of whom we or our fathers have had any knowledge; who had different ideas of convenience and utility; who were more patient of labour, and better acquainted with the art of defence. ... At what remote period these works were erected and by whom; what became of their builders; whether they were driven away or destroyed by a more fierce and savage people, the Goths and Vandals of America [Indians]; or whether they voluntarily migrated to a distant region; and where that region is, are questions which at present can not be satisfactorily answered."(Belknap, 1792)
19. People were very fascinated with where these civilizations possibly came from, and didn't think it was remotely possible that the savage Native Americans, with whom they were in constant conflict, could be responsible for constructing such architecture. Whether it was racism at its foundation, or incredulity based on previous observations, many early settler scholars and historians simply could not believe that they, the Native Americans, were responsible for such amazing works of architecture and civilization; they were baffled.
20. While some of these civilizations were abandoned, or every person in the tribe had died; there were plenty more where the majority of the tribe died off, but the remaining alive decided to stay where they were, and bury the bodies in mass graves. Mass graves were the only practical solution to getting rid of these millions of dead people; that or burning them all, but burying was much less disgusting, and may have been more practical on a massive scale in the long run.
21. This all may seem a bit morbid, but it's not specific to the Native Americans. We've uncovered a lot of mass graves in our time during recorded history. Some of the more recent date back just a few years to Rwanda. Others date back to Jewish mass graves during the holocaust, and countless before that. Most of these graves are underground, and require digging to find. However, some of these mass graves are just thousands of human bodies, piled on top of each other, with a bunch of dirt thrown on top of them, making large mounds or hills filled with bodies; bodies, and really cool stuff for archaeologists to find among all the dead bodies.
22. Herein lies another problem. These mass graves incited curiosity and a need for research, thus leading to many European settlers digging through dirt piles, uncovering skeletons decorated in various Native American clothing and burial rites. Just like any curious person would in this situation, they were applying post-hoc reasoning to the existence of these civilizations, abandoned or otherwise, and the nearby mounds that were essentially mass graves. They were finding weapons, trinkets, religious paraphernalia, leather pouches with prized possessions in them, and all manner of curious workmanships.

23. As amazing as all the mass graves and treasures buried within were, they weren't the most amazing things that blew the Europeans collective mind. The most exciting thing about the Native Americans were the ruins, and the huge mounds that can still be seen and explored today. Throughout both American continents there were, and still are, massive ruins of pyramids, temples, and buildings of gathering, worship, trade, and inhabitation. While most Native tribes were hunter-gatherer type nomadic tribes, there were some larger cities that were much more modern, wherein empires were established, agriculture was produced on a massive scale, and people exchanged commodities with a fairly modern bartering system along major trade routes. Look at the Aztec, or Mayan empires, they weren't so different from other historic empires, we simply have a lot less hard evidence about them, as opposed to the evidence we have for other groups of people like, say, the Roman or British empires. Only the Mayans had a structured system of writing and documenting, as well as calendars, massive scale agriculture, and mathematics, while most other knowledge of ancient Native American tribes, such as the Shoshone or Navajo, only exists through estimations based on limited archaeological evidence.
24. During the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, archaeologists, and paleoanthropologists were discovering abandoned ruins, and mass graves all over both American continents, and they were coming up with a number of theories explaining how all of this stunning architecture could have originated, and why some of it was abandoned. Most people that were studying the ruins and artifacts at the time, had the writings of historians, and Spanish conquistadors to reference, but they had the same historical blind spot that we deal with today.
25. This blind spot, of course, is a lack of written evidence. When it comes to chronicling the ancient American civilizations that aren't the Mayan empire, it becomes very challenging very quickly. Native American civilizations didn't have any system of writing that was standardized, which is unlike the vast majority of the old world at any given historical time. There are hieroglyphs in caves and on major rock formations, but those are mostly pictographic, and tell a story in a way that can't be deciphered into typical lingual fashion. If there were some kind of American Native language to record past events, it's long dead, and anybody that spoke or wrote it probably died off centuries before the European settlers could get to them, and record their history in old world languages on paper.
26. If we look at it objectively, with the exception of the Mayan civilization, we have about 500 years of recorded history dealing with various Native American tribes on record; those we have record of, constitute a very small portion of the actual tribes that existed. Our best estimations put the Natives Americans arriving to the continent around 13,000 years ago on a land/ice bridge through the Bering Strait. (Lovgren Stefan, 2003) That means, we have historical European recordings of the existence and dealings of Native American tribes for about 2.5% of their actual time on the American Continents, and those recordings only chronicle the most influential, or largest of the tribes that existed during that 500-year span. This constitutes a huge blind spot in the known historical record.
27. If we extrapolate out this blind spot by geography, in all our modern studies and archaeology, we are aware of the existence of a very small percentage of the Native Americans; of those, we know an even lesser amount concerning their day-to-day lives, religious practices, or style of warfare, chronicled through first-hand experience that was recorded by post enlightenment scholars, historians, and anthropologists. This historical blind spot is something that we simply cannot overcome until time travel is ripped out of science fiction, and turned into science fact. Unfortunately, for now, all we can do, when studying the Native Americans, is work with the evidence we have and consider the ramifications of that evidence through historical empathy. Let's go back to the early settlement of Europeans in America and try to empathize with them a little bit.
28. Consider the state in which the Native American tribes were during the time European settlers encountered them. All we've discussed this far is the massive amount of death that occurred throughout both American continents due to old world diseases propagating, and the ruins the Natives left behind. Most of these Natives were too busy burying their dead, or trying to find somewhere to live without piles of dead bodies surrounding them. They didn't really have the time or infrastructure to recover from such a travesty. It can be argued that

they *never* recovered from European expansion, and the little plots of land that we call "Indian Reservations" are nothing more than a consolation, attempting to ignore the prior 400 years of genocide.

29. Let's invoke our favorite tool for learning about history, historical empathy. It would be hard for the current American society to recover right now, if it lost only 10% of its population. Think about that for just a minute, let's create a thought exercise. Let's say some hypothetical disease that only 90% of the population is resilient to, rages throughout the entire population of every major US city. Imagine if, in one year's time, 10% or 32 million people died in the United States from a horrible new disease that leaves a person covered in blisters and constantly vomiting until they died. The whole country would simply fall apart. People would utterly lose their minds.
30. In recent history a small number of African countries dealt with a major outbreak of the Ebola virus. Ebola is a horrible virus that is scarcely being brought under control in those regions now, even though Doctors Without Borders, and other similar agencies, have been working tirelessly to reduce the rate of infections and quarantine infected individuals. Ebola has all but disappeared from the news cycle in America at the time this is being written, because Americans consider the problem dealt with.
31. However, if we remember back to the headlines during the Ebola scare, American media took the ball and ran with it. Every major news outlet was covering the Ebola crisis without apology, or consideration of the facts. It was hard to walk into any public place without hearing somebody talk about how scared they were of Ebola. Irrational questions like, "What if it spreads overseas?" or, "What if it's actually airborne, and all the scientists don't know it yet?" were being asked constantly. The reason I say these were irrational questions is because they were asked from the perspective of ignorance. If we actually look at the data, we can understand that Ebola outbreak because the people in Africa that were getting infected, were only the people that were caring for their loved ones that already had Ebola. People were only contracting it because they weren't using any protective measures. The **TWO** Americans that died from Ebola during the major outbreak, only contracted it because safety measures were ignored or there was a malfunction in their safety equipment. (Fantz, 2014) That's **TWO** whole people, or a whopping .00000063% of the United States population, but the headlines exploded with fear of the newest threat to American lives. Exponentially more people die per year from getting hit by rogue bowling balls. (Lambert, 2006)
32. Remembering how sensationalized the headlines were during the Ebola scare, think about how much the American world would collapse in this hypothetical we've constructed. Let's say this hypothetical supervirus killed off 10% of the United States population. I would argue that people would run around like their hair was on fire! The economy would utterly implode; the already lackluster public health care system in America would be ripped to shambles; the world, and way of life as we know it, would be forever changed. Keep in mind, this is merely a hypothetical wherein 10% of American lives are lost.
33. Hopefully this engages a little historical empathy if we think back to what really happened with the Native Americans; there's simply no possible way to comprehend what happened to Native American society. We're talking about possibly 95% of all Native Americans dying in a matter of decades. Let that sink in for a moment.
34. Consider how messed up Europe was during the black plague. Bodies were everywhere being burned in piles. Infrastructure and governmental bodies were in pathetic disarray. People were producing less goods, and the exports they were producing were refused by many countries due to fear of catching the black death, thus tearing apart the European economy. (Hirshleifer Jack, 1966)
35. To put some perspective on population death, Europe lost roughly 60% of its population, which is a huge number of people, but it lacks true comparison to the possible 95% population loss the Native Americans experienced.
36. If you were to take a snapshot of Europe after the Black Plague, would that be a proper

picture of what Europe was before the plague, or would everything be in a perpetual state of strife, and unrest? Would you be able to properly judge Europe, based on what you saw in 1355? Piles of burned bodies would be everywhere, infrastructure would be in pieces, education wouldn't be a priority for anybody, the place would be an utter mess. Europe as it sat in 1355 would be nothing but a sickly shadow of its former self. What Europe looked like in 1355 was a disturbing obscuration, in comparison to the Europe of 1320 before the plague hit.

37. If the only evidence for European society that we had was a single snapshot of 1355, wouldn't we come up with a number of theories to explain why it was the way it was? This taps into something embedded in human nature. Maybe curiosity is the best word for it, or maybe personal vocabulary limits the ability to call it something more nuanced; when humans don't know something, or can't look back in time somehow, they tend to guess based on the evidence they can collect. It's the foundation for the scientific method in general; and the word curiosity, with a broad scope of course, and it seems to get at the roots of this tendency in human nature.
38. Trying to analyze European society, based on a snapshot of 1355, was exactly what the settlers were doing with Native American Society, only to a much greater extent. That's how we can historically empathize with what must have been going through the settlers minds during the exploration and study of ancient Native American societies. Our other example of the current-day American society experiencing some hypothetical super-bug helps us to empathize with what it must have been like for the Native Americans that were being ravaged by the power of old-world diseases.
39. Once we engage historical empathy with these two thought exercises, we can start to bring the settlers' experience into perspective with historical empathy. We have to do this with thought experiments because we have so little real information about the Natives. Some Native tribes only exist in the historical record because we heard about them through word of mouth. Historians may have heard about them spoken by Natives that were trading with the old world settlers, or those tribes were among the many that settlers were killing off to take over their land. The Mayans were basically the only civilization that had any standardized writing system and language that can be interpreted today, and the Mayan Empire fell in the early to mid-17th Century. We can't see through this historical blind spot in the record, or navigate this gaping hole in written history, and it's something that historians and scientists have to wrestle with constantly.
40. Early American scientists and researchers were studying these amazing Native civilizations that were either abandoned, or only had a small contingency of Natives still living there. In some of the worst cases, these civilizations had mounds of corpses either laying around, or piled up somewhere with a thin layer of dirt covering them.
41. As researchers were finding these seemingly odd civilizations, they were coming up with a number of theories about how the Natives came to live in such wonders of architecture, who built the cities and mounds, and what killed off all of the people; or worse yet, why some of the civilizations were altogether abandoned. Many researchers believed that the Native Americans had conquered some enlightened race of people that built the civilizations, and killed all of them, or drove them to a smaller part of the continent, or some island.
42. This is the point where human curiosity takes a major diversion from the scientific method. Many people studying the Native Americans sincerely believed that white people came over and ruled the Natives, and directed them to build the civilizations the European researchers were finding. A number of them sincerely believed that the Natives were far too savage and barbarous to actually be capable of such amazing work to build this astounding architecture without the help of an enlightened group of white people to direct them. It's some kind of white skinned exceptionalism that drove these biased conclusions of the evidence, and we see it through the quote of Belknap from earlier.
 - a. "At what remote period these works were erected and by whom; what became of their builders; whether they were driven away or destroyed by

a more fierce and savage people, the Goths and Vandals of America [Indians]; or whether they voluntarily migrated to a distant region; and where that region is, are questions which at present can not be satisfactorily answered.”(Belknap, 1792)

43. Belknap was not alone by any stretch of imagination. This quote placed him in the majority of historians and scientists at the time. The study of American Indians was an ever-growing field which was commonly discussed among readers that were consuming information from people such as Belknap.
44. Here is a brief list of books, written before the *Book of Mormon* in 1829, that espouse and propagate theories of white settlers, or emigrated ancient Israelites, building the American civilizations that were taken over by the savage Native Americans at a later time. The list includes the name of the author, title, date of publication, as well as a very brief synopsis of the contents; it was compiled by UTLM.org during their studies of the *Book of Mormon* origins.
 - a. Adair, James, *The History of the American Indians*, London, 1775.
 - i. Adair’s evidence for the Indian-Israelite theory consists of twenty-three parallels between Indian and Jewish customs. For example, he claims the Indians spoke a corrupt form of Hebrew, honored the Jewish Sabbath, performed circumcision, and offered animal sacrifice.
 - b. Boudinot, Elias, *A Star in the West; or a Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel*, Trenton, 1816.
 - i. He relies heavily on evidences compiled by James Adair. He also mentions the Indians’ lost book of God.
 - c. Cusick, David, *Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nations*, Lewistown, NY, 1827.
 - i. Records Indian fables, which he believes, support the mound builder myth. One fable, for example, speaks of the descendants of two brothers continually at war with the other until one group is finally destroyed in North America.
 - d. Israel, Manasseh ben, *The Hope of Israel*, London, 1652 and 1792.
 - i. Includes story of a remnant of the ten tribes of Israel being discovered in Peru.
 - e. Priest, Josiah, *The Wonders of Nature and Providence, Displayed*, Albany, 1825 and 1826.
 - i. A compilation of many previously published works, includes an extract from Francisco Clavigero's *History of Mexico* recounting the ancient Mexican traditions of idolatry and human sacrifice and a portion from Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* detailing evidence that Indians were of Hebrew origin.
 - f. Smith, Ethan, *View of the Hebrews; or the Tribes of Israel in America*, Poultney, VT, 1823 and 1825.
 - i. Ethan Smith's is by far the most important and interesting work dealing with the origin of the American Indians and the mound builders. Suggests that the first settlers of the New World were the lost ten tribes of Israel. Includes extracts from von Humboldt's description of Mexican antiquities, Atwater's description of the mounds, and evidence from Adair and Boudinot to connect Indians with the lost ten tribes. He also mentions the Indian legend of the lost book of God, which would one day be returned.

- g. Thorowgood, Thomas, *Jews in America, or , Probabilities That the Americans are of that Race*, London, 1652.
 - i. He mentions the notion that the gospel was anciently preached in America. Emphasized the millennialistic nature of his Indian-Israelite identification and the importance of the Indians' conversion to Christianity.
- h. Yates, John and Joseph Moulton, *History of the State of New York*, 1824.
 - i. They describe mounds and fortifications in their state and neighboring states, as well as the ruins of an ancient city near Palenque. According to them, these mounds, part of a great chain running down through Mexico and into South America, were built by a separate race of white-skinned people who were destroyed by the Indians. They mention the discovery of hieroglyphic writing and mammoth bones, and include reports that Indians in certain locales possessed the signs and tokens of Freemasonry.

(Tanner, UTLM.org)

- 45. As we can see, there were many people publishing various books, pamphlets, and religious material, as well as publicly lecturing, on proposed theories of Native American origins. It was a conundrum that nobody was in a proper place to refute or confirm. They simply didn't have the level of evidence in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries that we have today, which enlightens us to the true origins of the Native Americans, Asian descent from ~13,000 years ago.
- 46. A compounding factor to these proposed theories was the beliefs system that most of these researchers held. The people that settled the American continent were almost exclusively followers of Judeo-Christian religious sects, most being protestant, escaping the Catholic regime that dominated Europe, which was referenced at the beginning of this chapter. As a byproduct of this belief system, something that is pervasive in Judaism, and Christianity, is the belief that somewhere in the world lies the "lost tribes of Israel". This is an idea that's not at all exclusive to Mormonism. ("Where are the Ten Lost Tribes?," 2000)
- 47. Throughout antiquity, many Christian religions spread to a new area, and claimed that the people in that new area were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. Currently, Mormonism is doing this with their proselyting campaigns in Asia, Africa, and South America. The *Book of Mormon*, along with other Christian writings, tries to shoehorn the world into the pages of the Bible, which tends to introduce problems. One major problem is the fact that all humans aren't descendants of Noah after the flood. The followers of religions that attempt to make the world fit their world view are consistently trying to apply their existing knowledge, onto new facts, and the application doesn't always work. Not everybody in the world is of Hebrew descent, much to the dismay of believers in the Old Testament. The fact that we didn't all descend from Noah after the flood creates a problem for any religion trying to assert that any given population are the lost ten tribes of Israel.

The Mound-builder Myth

- 48. Given the perplexities brought on by the complex civilizations and mounds all over both American continents, a myth began to arise, termed "The Mound-builder Myth". Evidence was cropping up all over America that seemed to lend credibility to the myth that the people who built these amazing civilizations and mounds were an enlightened race, far superior to the Native Americans that remained. However, we find an issue with the interpretation of the available evidence, and the preponderance of poor interpretations being asserted as fact. As soon as legitimate scholars and archaeologists were claiming the mounds to be built by some enlightened race of white people, that were eventually killed off by the dark-skinned Natives, newspaper reporters and laypeople wrote articles and books that took the

Mound-builder Myth and ran with it. By the time Joseph Smith was a young man who would have been reading these newspapers and books, there was no shortage of material available that claimed enlightened white-raced origins for the Native Americans.

49. As discussed in the previous chapter, Joseph Smith was living in the Palmyra/Manchester area of New York from 1816 until 1827. He was a smart individual, and no doubt would have been reading any material he could get his hands on at the time, including local newspapers and religious pamphlets. In his own hometown, Palmyra, there were plenty of articles in multiple newspapers that discussed the Mound-builder Myth. This first article was printed in the Palmyra Register in 1818, a newspaper that Joseph Smith would've had ready access to.
 - a. "We can safely infer from them nothing more, than that this immense tract of country, which has every mark of having been for centuries past a desolate wilderness, has been thickly inhabited at some former period by a warlike people, who had made much greater advances in the arts of civilized life, than any of the aboriginal inhabitants of North America[Indians], who have been known since its discovery by Europeans." ("Indian Antiquities," 1818)
50. This next excerpt is from the Geneva Gazette, but was reprinted in the Palmyra Herald, another newspaper that Joseph Smith would've had access to.
 - a. "The Indians are reported the aborigines of North America; but I doubt the truth of this proposition. The fortifications and remains of antiquity in Ohio and elsewhere, clearly prove them to be the work of some other people than the Indians. Many of these fortifications were not forts, but religious temples, or places of public worship. Many of them much resemble the druidical temples still existing in England.
The first settlers of North America were probably the Asiatics, the descendants of Shem. Europe was settled by the children of Japheth. The Asiatics, at an early period, might easily have crossed the Pacific Ocean, and made settlements in N. America. The South American Indians probably were the first inhabitants of North America. The descendants of Japheth might afterwards cross the Atlantic, and subjugate the Asiatics, or drive them to S. America..."("Antiquity," 1823)
51. It's clear to us today that the civilizations and mounds on the American continents were constructed by the Native Americans living in pre-Columbian America. They were advanced enough in architecture and building to construct the massive temples and monuments that we find, as well as build the huge mounds that are found everywhere from the cliff dwelling Anasazis and the mound-building Mississippians, all the way to the various pyramids and cities of the Mayan empire of South America. Native Americans were responsible for constructing massive civilizations wherein tens of thousands of people, in some cases, lived, traded goods, and farmed maize together in harmony. In fact, the Native Americans were responsible for human beings' first attempt at domesticating any crop, maize. When maize started out, it was a nearly non-edible, hard grass; however, through crop selection and genetic engineering, the Native Americans were able to domesticate this grass and use it for a steady energy source, providing the fuel for them to settle in one location and build these massive civilizations. In many ways, the Native Americans were more advanced than their European counterparts, which is a sentiment only recently brought to light through proper historical and archaeological studies.
52. These Mound-builder Myths were a steady force that colored many people's understanding of pre-Columbian America for many centuries. Those previous quotes were just two small examples of newspaper articles from relevant newspapers in the same time and place Joseph Smith was living in, but those articles in no way properly captured the common misconceptions of the Mound-builders during Joseph Smith's lifetime.
53. Luckily, for the sake of intellectual honesty and furthering understanding of the history surrounding these civilizations, by the dawning of the 20th century, most of these myths had

been dispelled and replaced by more accurate studies of the Native Americans. John Wesley Powell, who was the director of the Smithsonian's Bureau of Ethnology wrote in the introduction to the Administrative Report of the Bureau of Ethnology published in 1891, where he briefly described the Mound-builder myths that had been propagated for centuries by that time.

- a. "It is difficult to exaggerate the prevalence of this romantic fallacy, or the force with which the hypothetical "lost races" had taken possession of the imaginations of men. For more than a century the ghosts of a vanished nation have ambuscaded in the vast solitudes of the continent, and the forest-covered mounds have been usually regarded as the mysterious sepulchers of its kings and nobles. It was an alluring conjecture that a powerful people, superior to the Indians, once occupied the valley of the Ohio and the Appalachian ranges, their empire stretching from Hudson bay to the Gulf, with its flanks on the western prairies and the eastern ocean; a people with a confederated government, a chief ruler, a great central capital, a highly developed religion, with homes and husbandry and advanced textile, fictile, and ductile arts, with a language, perhaps with letters, all swept away before an invasion of the copper-hued Huns from some unknown region of the earth, prior to the landing of Columbus."(Powell, 1894, XLI-XLII)

54. He continues on to make a 10-point list that deconstructs the Mound-builder myth, but number 8 is the most concise and complete to include here:

- a. "The explorations of the Bureau exhibit the fact that the mounds of the eastern portion of the United States can not be distinguished from those of the western portion as belonging to a higher grade of culture, while there is abundant evidence that the western mounds have in part been erected and used by the Indians in historic times. The present Director has himself seen two burial mounds in process of construction—one in Utah, on the banks of the Santa Clara, near the town of St. George, constructed by a tribe of Shoshonean family; the other built by the Wintun Indians in the valley of Pitt river, near the fish-hatching station on that stream. The evidence in favor of the Indian origin of the western structures has been so great and the facts have been so well known that writers have rarely attributed them to prehistoric peoples." (Ibid., 1894, XLVII)

55. As we can see, the myth that the Mound-builders were some enlightened race, who were exterminated by the Native Americans, was wholly abandoned by most legitimate scholars, by the turn of the 20th century. There were still a number of books in circulation that claimed the theory, some of which made it into the list of Mound-builder myth books earlier in this chapter, but very few people were still embracing and propagating the Mound-builder Myth by the time that John W. Powell released this annual report in 1894; except for believers in the *Book of Mormon*.

56. One may be asking, why is any of this relevant? We'll examine this in detail during Act 3 "Content/Claims" portion of the book, but it is worth noting that the ENTIRE premise of the *Book of Mormon* relies on the Mound-builder myth as put forward in many 17th, 18th, and 19th century books that Joseph Smith may have had access to. The scholarly consensus in Joseph's day aligned with the myths presented in the books featured in the earlier list. Not only were these books available to Joseph, but some of them, like *History of the State of New York*, by John Yates and Joseph Moulton, were used as text books in New York schools.

57. Not only was no scholar or historian able to refute the claims made in these books, but studies of the Native Americans simply hadn't advance far enough to refute said claims. The evidence we have now wasn't even available to people, in order to refute such fantastic theories. The majority of archaeologists, historians, and scholars were propagating the Mound-builder myths because that was the scientific consensus at the time, and the

- Book of Mormon* was written while many people believed in such Mound-builder myths.
58. One may argue that the *Book of Mormon* only describes one small subset of Native Americans, not all of the Natives as a whole. While that may be true, the *Book of Mormon* is fairly limited in the peoples it describes. The *Book of Mormon* claims that in 600 B.C.E., the family of Lehi travels, from Jerusalem, across the ocean and lands in the promised land, the American Continents. Soon after arrival, Lehi dies; the majority of the book follows the two denominations of Lehi's descendants: the righteous, light-skinned Nephites, and the wicked, dark-skinned Lamanites.
 59. The Nephites are known to be the more blessed, and God-fearing of the tribes, and they were responsible for building the majority of the civilizations all across the American continents; while the wicked Lamanites were the savage, tent-dwelling, hunter-gatherer Native Americans that the 19th century people knew and feared. According to Mormon 6:14-15, the wicked and uncivilized Lamanites nearly exterminated the entire race of the Nephites.
 - a. "14 And Lamah had fallen with his ten thousand; and Gilgal had fallen with his ten thousand; and Limhah had fallen with his ten thousand; and Jeneum had fallen with his ten thousand; and Cumenihah, and Moronihah, and Antionum, and Shiblom, and Shem, and Josh, had fallen with their ten thousand each.
 - b. 15 And it came to pass that there were ten more who did fall by the sword, with their ten thousand each; yea, even all my people, save it were those twenty and four who were with me, and also a few who had escaped into the south countries, and a few who had deserted over unto the Lamanites, had fallen; and their flesh, and bones, and blood lay upon the face of the earth, being left by the hands of those who slew them to molder upon the land, and to crumble and to return to their mother earth."
 60. There's much more content in the *Book of Mormon* that reveals it to be a book furthering the antiquated Mound-builder myth. We simply cannot ignore the prevailing theories that sought to explain the Native American civilizations during Joseph Smith's time. We'll examine the Mound-builder myth portions of the *Book of Mormon* during Act 3 in a much deeper examination, but this was merely an introduction to the archaeology and scholarship that Joseph would have been exposed to during his lifetime. This information needs to be taken into account when considering the *Book of Mormon* as a whole. Any person claiming the *Book of Mormon* to be of ancient origins needs to explain how a 19th century myth was the basis for the entire *Book of Mormon*; a myth that has been long since debunked and relegated to the science and study of a previous age.

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