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TO PRESERVE ANCIENT MINES

An application has been made to the secretary of the interior by I. S. Bartlett of Cheyenne, Wyoming, says the Mining Record, to have the remarkable prehistoric mines thirty miles north of Hartville, Wyoming, reserved by the government.

In reply Mr. Richard received a communication from W. A. Richards, commissioner of the general land office, in which the commissioner, after referring the matter to Professor W. H. Holmes, chief of the bureau of ethnology, Smithsonian institute, says:

"In view of the interest taken in the matter by the United States bureau of ethnology and by yourself, this office, if furnished with a description giving the section or sections, townships and range upon which said aboriginal mines are located, is disposed to give the matter favorable consideration and to recommend the reservation of the legal sub-divisions upon which the mines are located."

These ancient quarries are located in the northern part of Laramie county, and have begun to attract the attention of prominent archaeologists and

ethnologists of the country. An illustration has already been issued by the Field Columbian museum describing the ruins and excavations, and giving the report of Dr. George A. Dorsey, the curator of the museum, who made a personal examination of the ground on an expedition planned by Mr. Bartlett.

Mystery Surrounds Ruins.

Although there is a great mystery surrounding these ancient remains, it is now thought they represent historically the most ancient races of the country. None of the living Indian tribes have any knowledge, either by legend or tradition, of the origin of these village sites and mines, and it is impossible that any of the modern savage races could have done the mining work in the shafts, open cuts, tunnels and pits, which were made in a solid formation.

Mr. Bartlett, who has recently returned from a new visit to the quarries, gives an interesting description of them. He says the mines are located in the breaks of the sources of Muddy creek, thirty miles north of

Hartville, in a desolate region of foothills, mesas and treeless plains, unfrequented by livestock, as the creek bed is dry and the water supply uncertain. Without a guide it would be impossible to find the locality. For several miles before reaching the site of the expedition passed over a sand desert resembling the Bad Lands of Dakota, but more picturesque and strange. Rising from this desert are rock eminences in grotesque forms, and others in the shape of castles, monuments and fortifications. Two of the rock formations rising sheer and naked from the level of the desert, are almost copies of the pyramids of Egypt.

Beyond this desert area, located upon a series of hills and tablelands and along the ravines of the Muddy, are the old aboriginal quarries and village sites. On reaching there the visitor beholds a scene of great loneliness and desolation. No living object is visible. Not a sound breaks the oppressive silence. In that environment one seems at once to have been transported from modern life into a world of remote antiquity.

The excavations consist of many pits partially filled with debris, but still showing depth of from 20 to 50 feet; of tunnels and open cuts in the cap rock of the mesas and on the slopes of the hills. The pits are from 30 to 50 feet in diameter. The shafts, inclines and other openings are of varied form and extent, all scattered over an area of half a mile in extent in different directions. Enormous dump piles of broken rocks, lying as if it had been mined and brought to the surface, are seen around these openings.

Prehistoric Tools.

Back from the crests and slopes where these mines are situated are found the level areas which formed the village or shop sites, where the inhabitants lived and worked the rock, fashioning it into implements of all kinds, such as hammers, axes, grinders, hide scrapers, lances, arrowheads, knives and crude agricultural tools.

Hundreds, probably thousands, of these interesting prehistoric relics have been carried away by curious visitors and scientific explorers. One party remaining on the ground but a single day collected and carried away three barrels of these curious examples of ancient workmanship in stone. The finished work in most instances is crude, although some beautiful specimens have been found, made from brilliantly colored agate, jasper, obsidian and chalcedony.

While there are hundreds of tepe circles on the mesa, indicating extensive settlements of villagers within one mile of the mine openings, Mr. Bartlett is of the opinion that these are of a much later period than the origin of the mining operations. These tepe circles are exactly the same as those made by the present Indian tribes. It seems that when the ancient people that carried on these mining operations and engaged in agricultural pursuits were conquered and passed away the present Indian tribes utilized the results of the old quarries into a modern Indian armory for the manufacture of ammunition for their hunting and war parties. All remains of the ancient village have been undoubtedly swept away and obliterated by these late comers. So we must judge from surface indications. New discoveries may be made by scientific explorers of the ruins.

The village sites are covered with chippings, rejects and flakes of arrowheads, lanceheads, and scrapers, but have few if any of the rude and heavy implements seen at the mines, such as the large hammers, grain pounders, axes, grinders, etc.

Evidently the homes of the old stoneworkers cannot now be traced on the surface of these hills or in the adjacent ravines.

Mined Without Iron.

The rock mined was principally in quartzite in the upper stratum of the formation. These quartzite beds contain nodules of jasper and chalcedony of varied and beautiful colors. These are mostly worked into arrow and lance heads, while the quartzite, from its conchoidal fracture and easier working, was made into large implements for domestic use.

The mystery of all this extensive mining work in the hardest kind of solid rock still remains an unsolved problem. How was it done? By what race? In what period of human history? Nowhere in all these remains can be found the slightest trace of

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iron, copper or metal tools, or of anything of the nature of appliances for modern rock mining. We must at least go back to the Aztec or Toltec races, to the days of Montezuma, whose people are said to have come north at one time, to account for this ancient rock work in the Hartville range.

The history of the rediscovery of these mines is a matter of some interest. They were first noticed by some men in 1882, when some cowboys on a roundup saw the openings and reported the discovery at Hartville. They supposed they were old Mexican or Spanish mines, and their report induced several miners and prospectors of the Hartville camp to make a trip there, with the expectation of finding gold or silver mines. They did sufficient work to ascertain the mineral value of the rock. Their assays returned nothing and the miners gave up their task. At that time Mr. Bartlett first visited the locality and formed the theory that these were arrowhead mines, worked by recent Indian tribes. He says that further investigation has compelled him to abandon that theory and assign the work to ancient races.

Professor Dorsey says this is a rich field for archaeological exploration and adds, in relation to it, that many problems remain unsolved which require further investigation, to which investigation he expects to devote himself soon.

As this distinguished ethnologist has given many years to the study of these questions and to the personal exploration of the remains of ancient races in old Mexico, South America and all parts of the United States, the Wyoming discovery assumes a large importance in the study of American historical archaeology or the unwritten story of the ancient races of this country.—Boise Capital News.

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