



**American antiquities and discoveries in the West:  
being an exhibition of the evidence that an ancient  
population of partially civilized nations differing ...  
from those of the present Indians ...**

*Josiah Priest*

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# **American antiquities and discoveries in the West: being an exhibition of the evidence that an ancient population of partially civilized nations differing ... from those of the present Indians ...**

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Josiah Priest (1788–1851) was a popular American nonfiction writer of the early 19th century. His books and pamphlets, which presented both standard and speculative history and archaeology sold in the thousands.

American antiquities, and discoveries in the West is a 400-page publication centered around Priest's own study of the Bible and antiquarian journals, supplemented by information from his travels. After visiting earthworks in Ohio and New York, Priest concluded that these mounds could be traced back to a lost race that had inhabited America even before the Native Americans. This idea still has supporters in society today. Priest speculated that the original dwellers could be the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. The reasoning Priest gives for his conclusion that there was an even earlier settler than the Native Americans relies upon his own Biblical interpretation of the flood story. According to Josiah, after the great flood disappeared, Noah and his ark landed on America. While surveying the land, Noah also discovered mounds that had been constructed before the waters rose up. Upon seeing this, Noah questioned where these agricultural phenomenons came from. "Surveying the various themes of mound builder origins, he could not decide whether the mounds were the work of Polynesians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Israelites, Scandinavians, Welsh, Scotts, or Chinese, although he felt certain the Indians had not built them."

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