



Why many Americans still don't believe that ancient Native Americans built the mounds

The Mound Builder Myth

Fake History and the Hunt for a "Lost White Race"

By Jason Colavito

Say you found that a few dozen people, operating at the highest levels of society, conspired to create a false ancient history of the American continent to promote a religious, white-supremacist agenda in the service of supposedly patriotic ideals. Would you call it fake news? In nineteenth-century America, this was in fact a powerful truth that shaped Manifest Destiny. *The Mound Builder Myth* is the first book to chronicle the attempt to recast the Native American burial mounds as the work of a lost white race of "true" native Americans.

Thomas Jefferson's pioneering archaeology concluded that the earthen mounds were the work of Native Americans. In the 1894 report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Cyrus Thomas concurred, drawing on two decades of research. But in the century in between, the lie took hold, with Presidents Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, and Abraham Lincoln adding their approval and the Mormon Church among those benefiting. Jason Colavito traces this monumental deception from the farthest reaches of the frontier to the halls of Congress, mapping a century-long conspiracy to fabricate and promote a false ancient history—and enumerating its devastating consequences for contemporary Native people.

Built upon primary sources and first-person accounts, the story that *The Mound Builder Myth* tells is a forgotten chapter of American history—but one that reads like the *Da Vinci Code* as it plays out at the upper reaches of government, religion, and science. And as far-fetched as it now might seem that a lost white race once ruled prehistoric America, the damage done by this "ancient" myth has clear echoes in today's arguments over white nationalism, multiculturalism, "alternative facts," and the role of science and the control of knowledge in public life.

Author and editor **Jason Colavito** researches and writes on the connections between science, pseudoscience, religion, and speculative fiction. He is the author of *Jason and the Argonauts through the Ages* and *The Cult of Alien Gods: H.P. Lovecraft and Extraterrestrial Pop Culture*. In his blog at JasonColavito.com, he continues his exploration of the way human beings create and employ the supernatural to alter and understand our reality and our world.

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