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## 1922 Discovery of Mysterious "Prehistoric Carved Stone" Near Park Boundary

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

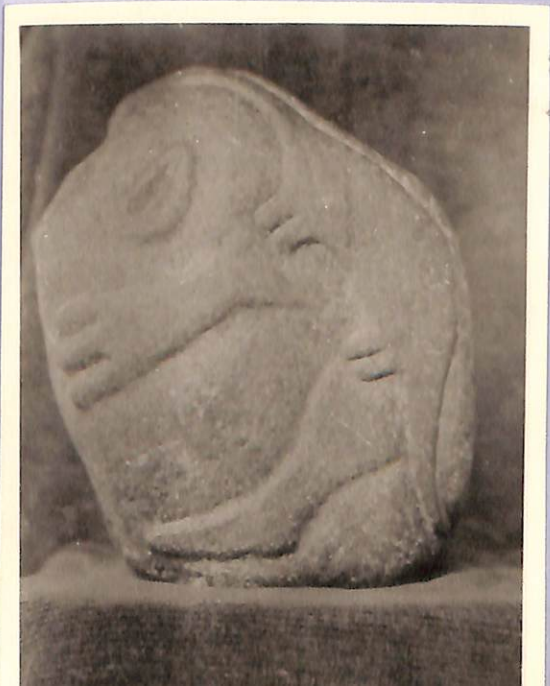
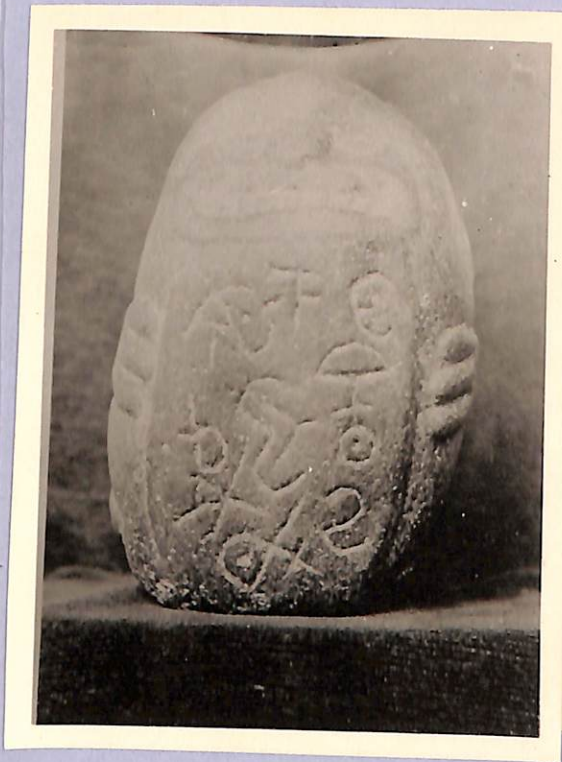
Rocky Mountain..... NATIONAL PARK

FILE NO.

740

"PREHISTORIC STONE"

"Discovered" in Grand County,  
Colorado, near Southwest Corner  
of Rocky Mountain National  
Park, in June, 1922.





# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

ESTES PARK, COLO.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

### PREHISTORIC STONE.

Mr. William L. Chalmers states that about the middle of June, 1922, while digging on his ranch in Grand County, Colorado, he unearthed a carved stone, of unknown origin.

I went to see Mr. Chalmers on August 31st, was shown the stone, and went with him to the place where he says it was found.

#### Size and Shape.

The stone has the appearance of a prehistoric relic, and no satisfactory explanation has as yet been offered regarding its origin. The weight of the stone is 66 pounds. It is  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches in height, 11 inches from front to back, and 9 inches wide. The stone stands on a flat base, apparently natural, and is quite symmetrical with respect to a vertical plane, except that the stone tips slightly to one side. Apparently the boulder is of natural shape, and the human figure carved upon it has been adapted to fit the symmetry of the stone.

#### Carving.

On the upper part of the stone is a grotesque face, near the center are two arms, each with three-fingered hands. Near the bottom are two legs and feet. The ears are not shaped like human ears, but are pointed, like those of a bear or some other animal. On the right shoulder are three animal figures, one of a mammoth or mastodon, with trunk and long tusks. Another resembles a dinosaur, with long neck and small head. The third figure is an animal's head. It is less distinct than the others, but is supposed to represent a sabre-toothed tiger. On the left shoulder is another animal resembling the dinosaur, with a somewhat shorter neck and heavier head. Below the face, and between the two hands is a flat, shield-like area, on which are carved some eight or nine hieroglyphics. They are of a diagrammatic type, and resemble alphabetical shapes rather than natural objects.

The carving consists mainly of grooves, outlining the various figures. The hieroglyphics are indented, as are some other features. The grooves have the appearance of being ground or scraped with some abrasive instrument, such as a hard stone. There are no chisel marks nor

any indications of recent work. The carving, however, seems perfectly preserved, and not damaged in any way.

#### Location.

Chalmers' ranch is nine or ten miles, by road, south of Grand Lake. It is half-a-mile east of the Grand Lake-Granby road, and on the branch road leading to Monarch Lake. The find was made not far from the north line of Section 11, T. 2 N., R. 76 W., and about three miles from the southwestern corner of Rocky Mountain National Park.

#### The Man.

Chalmers is a man of about fifty years of age. I believe he homesteaded the ranch, and has lived there about five years. He calls the place "Sunset Lodge." He does some ranching and has tent cottages in which he accomodates a few tourists or fishermen. His address is Granby, Colo. Chalmers has a collection of miscellaneous curios, such as Indian trophies, game heads, horns, etc. It is perhaps a coincidence that a collector should be the one to make this find. He had offered his ranch for sale before the discovery was made. The sale of his ranch, or the sale value of the stone, are the only apparent motives for a fraudulent "find."

#### Discovery.

Across the road from his house, and about three hundred yards distant, is a small reservoir. During the spring, the dam of this reservoir washed out, and in June, Chalmers was repairing it with gravel taken from a bank at the edge of the reservoir. His tools were pick, shovel and wheelbarrow. The excavation that he was making was about two feet deep, but during the previous construction of the dam, three or four feet of gravel had been taken from this point, so that the stone was found five or six feet below the original surface of the ground. It was lying on, and slightly imbedded in a layer of clay, and covered with river gravel. At the time of my visit the reservoir was full, and the spot where the stone was found, as well as the layer of clay, was submerged under a few inches of water, at the edge of the reservoir. Most of the gravel in the bank was considerably smaller than the stone, and varied in size from perhaps six inches in diameter, down to sand.

Chalmers reported the find, in June, to his son in Granby. The son came to see it, and later brought a newspaper man. On August 6th, the Denver Post ran an account of the discovery. Later the Pathe people took motion pictures of the stone. It has been exhibited in a store in Grand Lake, and Chalmers has recently had many visitors and mail inquiries, and has a good sale for photographs of the stone. He says he has refused an offer of \$5,000 for

the stone. Chalmers has done little or no digging since the discovery, and is awaiting further excavation by some museum or archaeological society. It would, of course, be interesting to uncover the layer of clay, for a few feet in every direction, to make sure that there are no relics near-by, and that the river deposit has never been disturbed. So far as I could see, the bank was a natural gravel-bed, without any indications that promise future discoveries.

### Stone.

The carved stone has the hardness of granite, and is an igneous rock somewhere in the scale of crystallization between a basalt and a granite. It is dark blue or gray in color, and Chalmers called it "blue granite." Most of the country rock is granite or schist, but volcanic formations are present, and stones somewhat similar to the carved boulder are found near-by.

### Suppositions.

The easiest solution of the question is to say that the find is a fake. Dr. J. D. Figgins of the Colorado State Museum has seen photographs of the stone, and does not believe that it is genuine, because of the prehistoric animals pictured on it. It seems evident, however, that Chalmers could not have made the stone. He has not had much education, and could not, I believe, produce an interesting "relic" of a new type. A softer stone would naturally have been selected. He might have procured the stone elsewhere, and then planted it, or merely reported the discovery. It is not probable that it was placed there in recent times by anyone else, without his knowledge. I saw no indications of fraud, and if the discovery is a genuine one, it is certainly remarkable. It has the appearance of being old work, but there are many unexplained features about it. The mastodon and the tiger were contemporaneous with the earliest human life, but the large lizard-like animals, of which two are pictured on the stone, were extinct before the dawn of human life, and knowledge regarding them is a comparatively recent geological discovery. It is interesting to note that animals of this type did live in this locality, in past time, and fossils of them are found in the foot-hills to the east, as well as near the western edge of the state.

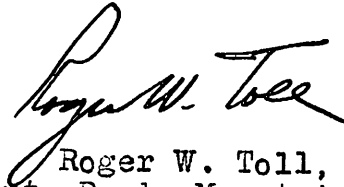
The stone is more suggestive of <sup>a</sup>Mexican antiquity than it is of either Indian or Cliff-Dweller manufacture. Indians frequented this region sixty or more years ago, and used it as a summer hunting-ground rather than as a permanent home. The elevation there is about 8,200 feet, and the valley is snow-covered most of the winter. The Indians of the plains did not have horses before the arrival of the white man, and it does not seem probable that they would carve, or carry about with them, a stone weighing more than sixty pounds. The Cliff-Dwellers are not known to have lived in this part of Colorado, and this does not resemble their work.

Topography.

The North Fork and the South Fork, headwaters of the Colorado River (formerly the Grand), meet about two miles above the location where the stone was found. Both valleys are of glacial formation, and moraines are abundant. Stillwater Creek, a tributary of the Colorado, is half a mile distant. While the valley is of glacial origin, the material on the valley floor has evidently been deposited by later stream action. The clay bed on which the stone was found was presumably deposited by a stream, and the gravel above it is river-worn and more uniform in size than if it had been deposited by a glacier. The carved boulder is larger than the other gravel at this point. There is no evident or satisfactory explanation of how it came there. Even the suggestion of glacial transportation does not help any. The valley <sup>to the south</sup> was filled by a glacier during the last ice age, but its source was on the Continental Divide, from ten to twenty-five miles distant. The stone surely did not come from there, and it does not seem probable that it came from further north.

A Previous Find.

Local residents connect the discovery of this stone with a stone vase, found some thirty-five years ago by Henry Lehman, and after his death, bought by Chalmers, who now owns it. It was found in the river-bed, half a mile distant. This vase is about 14 inches high, eight inches wide at the top, and four inches wide at the base. It is made of soapstone or talc, skilfully carved out, with quite thin walls. It is an unusual specimen, but there seems to be no reason to associate the two discoveries.



Roger W. Toll,  
Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park.

RWT/Bt

September 4, 1922.





Left Side, Front and Right Side Views



Front View



Top View, showing Face and "Tiger"



Left Side View



Right Side View

*prehistoric Stone*

September 12, 1922.

The Director,  
National Park Service,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Enclosed are some notes and photographs, regarding a carved stone, which was dug up near the south-west corner of the Park, and of which a brief report was made in the monthly report for August.

I am sending copies of these notes, and photographs, to Dr. Clark Wistler, of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, Dr. J. Walter Fewkes, of the Smithsonian Institution, and Dr. Livingston Farrand, President of Cornell University (a noted anthropologist, and authority on Indian matters)

Very truly yours,

Roger W. Toll,  
Superintendent.

RWT/S

*Prehistoric Stone*

CORNELL UNIVERSITY  
ITHACA, NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 28, 1922



Mr. Roger W. Toll  
Superintendent, National Park Service  
Estes Park, Colo.

Dear Sir:

Yours of the 12th inst., addressed to President Farrand, with photographs and description of a carved stone that was dug up near the boundaries of the National Park, has duly come to this office. President Farrand is just now out of the city for a short time but the matter will be brought to his attention as soon as practicable upon his return.

Very truly yours,

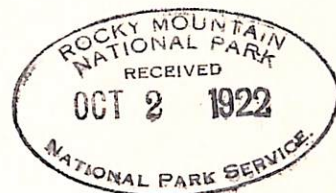
*A. B. Carman*  
A. B. Carman

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

77TH STREET AND CENTRAL PARK WEST

NEW YORK September 28, 1922.

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY  
CLARK WISSLER, PH.D, CURATOR  
PLINY E. GODDARD, PH.D.,  
CURATOR OF ETHNOLOGY



Dear Mr. Toll:

Yours of September 11th received, enclosing photographs of the curious stone found in your State. The one feature of the specimen to which you yourself call attention and which certainly stamps it as a fraud is the representation of prehistoric animals. The mammoth or elephant would not be impossible, but it is certain that human beings were not here when the Brontosaurus was roaming the country. Furthermore, the drawing of this reptile is a close copy of standard modern reconstructions. Naturally, these reconstructions are in part guesses so that even if primitive man had seen the creature, it is not likely that he would draw it in just this way.

I note also the difficulty in explaining how this specimen came into the hands of its owner, especially since he seems quite incompetent to have made it himself. This, however, is the usual setting in which such frauds are found, of which there are several classical examples in our literature.

Under the circumstances, therefore, I think it quite unnecessary for the owner to hold his property available for special excavation. It is not likely that anything more will be found in the site, but if so, it is not likely to throw any light upon the origin of this specimen. Assuming that you may wish the photographs and memorandum returned, I am enclosing them herewith.

Thanking you for calling this curious object to our attention, I am

Very truly yours,

*Clark Wissler*

Mr. Roger W. Toll,  
Estes Park, Colorado.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

ITHACA, NEW YORK

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*Presidential Stone*

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT



October 2, 1922

Mr. Roger W. Toll, Superintendent  
The Rocky Mountain National Park  
Estes Park, Colorado

Dear Toll:

Thank you for your letter of September 12th. It is good to hear from you and the mere fact of your writing from Estes Park makes me very homesick for Colorado.

Naturally I am much interested in the photographs and the account of the carved stone which you sent on, but I am perfectly helpless in the way of any opinion as to its genuineness or date. I am, however, taking the liberty of sending the correspondence down to the Museum of Natural History in New York, where I am asking the department of anthropology to see if they can give an opinion on it.

I wish I could get out to your part of the country and see you on the ground. It goes without saying, too, that if you are ever in this neighborhood I hope you will look us up at Ithaca.

With kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Livingston Farrand".

Livingston Farrand

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  
BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

October 23 1922.

Dear Mr. Toll:

I have neglected to reply to your letter of September 12 which was received shortly after my return from the Mesa Verde this summer. I fear it would be impossible for me to send you anything of great value relating to the stone, the pictures and description of which have been so carefully prepared. I have brought all this to the attention of one or two men among others a gentlemen who has studied inscriptions of stones from the middle west and he is quite sure that it is something of very great importance. His name has escaped me but he told me he would write to you about it and possibly you have heard from him. As for myself I cannot give any information. Last summer I had with me a very bright student from Berkeley who has taken up the study of the pictographs of the southwest and I am sending the material to him asking him to write to you direct.

I have the most pleasant recollections of our trip to the Mesa Verde in November two years ago.

Very truly yours,

*J. Walter Hewkes*  
Chief.

Mr. Roger W. Toll,  
Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park,  
Estes Park, Colorado