

Early Wisconsin Exploration and Settlement

By James Sutherland

Whence originated the aborigines of this country, is now, and perhaps always will remain, a mystery to both the antiquarian and the historian. Some have endeavored to trace their origin to the Greeks, others to the Romans, others to the Egyptians, while yet others have tried to identify them with the lost tribes of Israel. It is contended, in the latter case, that having roamed eastward, through Asia to Behring Straits, these wandering Israelites crossed over to the northwestern portion of our continent, gradually spreading over the greater portions of both North and South America. More recently, plausible arguments have been presented, to prove that the aborigines of the country came from Japan, and also from China. From whatever source this antecedent race had its origin, it is fairly to be conjectured, that the natives inhabiting the middle portion of our continent, if not the whole of it, when Columbus and other early navigators arrived on its coasts, were their lineal descendants.

That this earlier race possessed a higher degree of intelligence and a better knowledge of the arts, than their descendants, is readily seen from the remains they have left behind them. These consist of earthworks, the traces of palisades, various-shaped mounds, some of which appear to have been designed for the purpose of defense, others for look-outs, game-drives, places of sepulture, while others, perhaps, were designed as places or objects of worship. In the wonderful remains at Aztalan, large quantities of rude brick were found, and in others, articles of pottery evidently used for culinary purposes. Their fortifications were constructed in various forms. Some of them were circular, others rectangular, others octagonal; but all of them seem to have been laid out in geometrical order, unless where the grounds