

Grinnell during his youth as a critical component of his conservation philosophy. This put Grinnell at odds with the consumptive ethos of the Gilded Age, which, among other things, led to the slaughter of buffalo by the millions. For Grinnell, self-denial and restraint remained at the heart of the sportsman's ethic.

Punke's sources include government reports, Grinnell's private papers, and numerous editorials and articles from *Forest & Stream* and other magazines. The secondary sources, however, are dated. This is not a major detraction, but *Last Stand* might have benefited from recent works, such as those by Karl Jacoby and Louis Warren just to name two, that offer insights into the mind of the poacher and the significant friction between the goals of the elite eastern sportsmen and the needs of the local economy. This minor weakness, however, does not overshadow the fact that Michael Punke has written an engaging and, at times, exciting story for both a popular and academic audience.

A Colossal Hoax: The Giant from Cardiff that Fooled America, by Scott Tribble. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. xiv, 311 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$42.95 cloth.

Reviewer Chris Rasmussen is associate professor of history at Fairleigh Dickinson University. He is the author of " 'Fairs Here Have Become a Sort of Holiday': Agriculture and Amusements at Iowa's County Fairs, 1838-1925" in the *Annals of Iowa* (1999).

In October 1869, while digging a well on Stub Newell's farm near Cardiff, New York, workers uncovered a ten-foot, three-ton human figure carved from gypsum. Dubbed the Cardiff Giant, the figure soon became a nationwide sensation, as Americans debated whether the giant was a petrified human or humanoid fossil, an ancient sculpture, or perhaps an outright fraud.

Over the next five months the giant was revealed as a hoax perpetrated by George Hull, a two-bit con man, serial arsonist, and incorrigible huckster. A get-rich-quick schemer, Hull aimed to reap a windfall by exhibiting or selling the giant. Yet, as Scott Tribble's deeply researched, perceptive history makes clear, Tribble was also motivated by a deep-seated contempt for revealed religion and a desire to discredit the biblical account of creation. Hull shamelessly defrauded the public but considered revealed religion an even grosser fraud.

Hull was clever, but not quite clever enough to cover his tracks, keep his co-conspirators quiet, and pull off his audacious hoax. Tribble's detailed account of Hull's machinations reads like a whodunit, recounting every twist and turn in Hull's scheme. In 1868 Hull had

traveled to a quarry near Fort Dodge, Iowa, to select a suitable block of gypsum. Hull's irascible temperament annoyed local residents, who could hardly fail to recall the strange visitor when the Cardiff Giant became a public sensation the following year. After hauling the enormous block of stone by wagon to Montana (now Boone), Hull shipped it by rail to Chicago, where he enlisted two sculptors to carve the giant and distress its surface in an effort to make the sculpture appear ancient. Hull then shipped the giant to upstate New York, had it buried on Newell's farm, then waited nearly a year to have it "discovered."

The giant became a sensation virtually overnight, attracting throngs of visitors to tiny Cardiff. Hull and his partners immediately sold most of their interest in the giant to a group of investors from nearby Syracuse who laid plans to exhibit the Cardiff Giant across the United States and perhaps even in Europe and Asia. The giant's exhibitors borrowed their promotional techniques from America's most renowned showman, P. T. Barnum, deliberately stoking public controversy over the giant. As their advertisements asked, "What is it?"

Many Americans in 1869 were disposed to believe that "it" was a fossilized, petrified man or possibly a prehistoric forerunner of humanity. Others insisted that the figure was a sculpture — but if so, who sculpted it, and when? Indians? Vikings? Rather than view the giant as a blow against the biblical account of creation, however, Americans interpreted it through the lens of national pride. The giant attested to ancient human settlement in North America, indicating that America's history and culture was as old as Europe's.

Scientists traveled to Cardiff to examine the giant, but their professional judgment carried little weight with the public. As Tribble points out, American science was still rudimentary in 1869, and Americans' disdain for the opinion of experts was already legendary. Archaeology was a particularly new and undeveloped discipline, and American archaeologists were woefully ignorant about pre-Columbian America and lacked modern techniques for analyzing and dating artifacts. While most scientists rejected the possibility that the giant was a petrified human specimen, many did insist that it was of ancient origin. When the giant was revealed to be a fake, scientists' authority was diminished even further; as Tribble succinctly puts it, "scientists had been the clear losers of the affair" (193).

Hull also became a loser, as his fraud unraveled in a matter of weeks. He left behind too many clues about the giant's true origin, and some of his compatriots, who helped quarry, transport, sculpt, and bury the giant, could not keep mum about their role in the fraud. Fort Dodge newspaper publisher and historian Benjamin F. Gue

played a key role in uncovering Hull's deception by compiling evidence about his visit to Iowa. When sculptors Frederick Mohrmann and Henry Salle published their confession in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in February 1870, Hull's fraud was completely unmasked and his already dubious reputation was irreparably tarnished.

A Colossal Hoax recounts in detail the creation of the Cardiff Giant and the ensuing debate that it provoked. The book situates the debate amid the broad political, economic, religious, scientific, and cultural contexts of nineteenth-century America. In Tribble's readable and thoughtful account, George Hull's spectacular, short-lived fraud reveals a great deal about American culture in an era in which frauds of all sorts abounded, and in which Americans dared to question the truthfulness of both revealed religion and modern science.

Harker's Courthouses: Visions of an Iowa Icon, photographs by Michael P. Harker, introduction by Loren N. Horton. Cedar Rapids: WDG Publishing, 2009. x, 83 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$28.95 paper.

Reviewer Cameron Campbell is associate professor of architecture at Iowa State University. He did the photography for *A Century of Iowa Architecture, 1900–1999* (2004).

Iowa's courthouses epitomize the romantic notion of small, proud towns from a bygone era. They are also a topic of much interest for those who travel the state and discover these rare jewels dotting the Iowa landscape. Michael P. Harker has captured these remarkable treasures in *Harker's Courthouses*. The black-and-white images photographed by Harker accentuate the rich detail of courthouses from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. The book presents whole-building photographs as well as detail vignettes to tell the visual story of these buildings.

Natives of Iowa as well as visitors will appreciate the artful documentation that Harker's photographs provide. He organizes his journey across the state alphabetically by county, showing only those county courthouses that exemplify well-crafted courthouses from this period. The book is neither a critical text nor a historical account save for the brief introduction by Loren N. Horton. The introduction serves to ignite readers' interest in this building type and provides the context in which these buildings were designed. Ultimately, though, this is a picture book that allows readers to share in the awe for splendid Iowa courthouse architecture from 1840 to 1940 — the heyday of well-crafted courthouses.