

The Davenport Conspiracy Revisited, by Marshall McKusick. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988. xii, 193 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix, index. \$22.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY GEORGE H. DANIELS, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

The case of archeological fraud that came to be known as the "Davenport Conspiracy" was a landmark in the transition that occurred in the late nineteenth century from amateur to professional archeology in North America. A flood of artifacts "discovered" in burial mounds near Davenport, Iowa, by amateur archeologists beginning in the late 1870s easily persuaded enthusiasts to believe that a link between the old world and the new had been forged. The mound builders, the Iowa archeologists argued, were not related to the "redskins" who later inhabited the region, but were descendants of Europeans who had brought to the region a civilization, including a culture, a written language, and knowledge of ancient European animals, long before Columbus touched the New World.

During the next decade, emerging professionals from the Smithsonian Institution, contending that most of the artifacts were fraudulent, engaged in a bitter controversy with the Davenport group, but the outcome of the argument could not really be termed satisfactory. The participants died, moved away, or simply grew bored, and the controversy subsided. It was nearly a century later, in 1970, that McKusick, then Iowa's State Archaeologist, presumably laid the myth to rest in a book-length report issued by the State Archaeologist's office. The work included clear evidence of fraud, accompanied by a systematic effort at cover-up on a scale large enough to justify the "conspiracy" label, and it placed responsibility on a surprisingly large number of the members of the Davenport Academy of Science, one of the more successful of the amateur organizations that dominated archeology in its preprofessional phase. The evidence presented by McKusick appeared ironclad, and it should have removed any temptation to use the mounds to suggest the reality of pre-Columbian visits.

Why, then, has McKusick chosen to "revisit" the conspiracy? The work, as the title suggests, is much more than a "new edition." It includes new material, drastic rewriting, organizational changes, and it is published in a different format for a different audience. The new edition is motivated by the resurgence of interest since 1970 in an archeology more related to science fiction than to serious scholarly research, and in particular, despite McKusick's demonstration, in stories that place Egyptians, Libyans, Phoenicians, and others in the Midwest. McKusick was particularly incensed by three books by Barry

Fell, a marine biologist, which actually tried to resurrect the Davenport frauds as evidence for thousands of years of European activity in the Midwest.

The Davenport Conspiracy Revisited is extremely well done, and it can be read with profit by anyone interested in the social history of science or, indeed, in a fascinating piece of Iowa's history. It is especially good at illuminating the radically differing viewpoints of the amateur and the professional communities during that exciting formative period in American archeology. While there is no doubt where the author's loyalties lie, he still deals sensitively with the amateur's position and conveys a real understanding of the issues involved. The pity is that those who now read Barry Fell and other members of the "fantastic archeology" school will probably not read this book, and if they do, will surely regard it as simply one more effort of the "establishment" to distort evidence in order to keep the amateur researchers out—exactly as the Smithsonian experts were thought to have been doing over a hundred years ago.

Historic Illinois from the Air, by David Buisseret. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. 232 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, index. \$34.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT L. REID, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA

The front cover of the dust jacket of *Historic Illinois from the Air* presents a stunning color photograph of the Chicago skyline. On the back, Cairo is depicted with the Mississippi River on one side and the Ohio River on the other. The promotional blurb proclaims, "Illinois as you've never seen it." The sheer beauty of these pictures coupled with this bold claim prompted a negative initial response on my part: Is the University of Chicago Press publishing coffee table books? Perhaps it is—but in this case the book's cover is consistent with the quality of its contents.

Open *Historic Illinois from the Air* to any page and you encounter striking visual images. These include outstanding aerial photographs and an array of other illustrations—maps, sketches, bird's-eye views, drawings, and LANDSAT images taken from satellites. Sources include the Newberry Library, where the author serves as director of the Herman Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography, the University of Illinois, the Chicago Historical Society, and the Illinois Department of Transportation. Combining his love of flying with his skill as a photographer, David Buisseret took a number of low-level, oblique color photographs to complete the visual portion of his text.

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