A PLAIN-ENGLISH FACT CHECK

HIDDEN IN THE SMITHSONIAN?

Giant Skeletons and the Real Story in Storage



GIANTS | MOUNDS | GRAND CANYON | BAT CREEK | REMAINS

What the Records Show About the Cover-Up Claims

ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

TRINFINITY Enterprises

HIDDEN IN THE SMITHSONIAN?

Giant Skeletons, a Grand Canyon City and the Real Story of the Human Remains in Storage

What the 1894 mound report, the archives and the newspapers actually say, with a map of every "giant" I could trace

Andrew Dominguez

Fact Check Series

Trinfinity Enterprises

Hidden in the Smithsonian? Giant Skeletons, a Grand Canyon City and the Real Story of the Human Remains in Storage

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The information in this book stops at November 18, 2026. Every web source was opened and read on that date. Where I could not open a source myself, the footnote says so, and anything I could not confirm is marked [Not verified].

This book is not affiliated with, sponsored by or reviewed by the Smithsonian Institution or any museum, tribe, newspaper or fact-checking group named in it. It discusses human remains and the way some of them were taken. It contains no photographs of human remains.

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Contents

Summary 5

Introduction: How I Checked These Claims 6

The question and the scope 6

What counts as evidence 6

The verdicts 7

How this book is laid out 7

Part One: What the Record Shows 8

Chapter 1: The Smithsonian Goes Digging 8

Chapter 2: What the 1894 Report Says About Tall Skeletons 9

Chapter 3: The Collection Nobody Was Looking At 12

Chapter 4: The People in the Record 16

Part Two: Rumors and Disputed Claims 19

Claim 1: The Smithsonian hid or destroyed the giant skeletons it found 19

Claim 2: A Supreme Court ruling forced the Smithsonian to admit it destroyed giant skeletons 20

Claim 3: The Smithsonian found an Egyptian city in the Grand Canyon in 1909 and covered it up 21

Claim 4: A race of red-haired giants lived in Lovelock Cave, Nevada 22

Claim 5: The Bat Creek stone proves ancient Hebrews reached Tennessee, and the Smithsonian buried the evidence 23

Claim 6: The mounds were built by a lost race, not by American Indians 25

Claim 7: The Smithsonian hid a large collection of human remains 26

Claim 8: Smithsonian officials resisted returning remains 27

Shorter checks 27

Part Three: The Evidence Map 30

How the map was made 30

Table 1: Every report on the map 30

What the map shows 33

How to settle the open question 34

Conclusion: What We Know, What We Think, What We Do Not Know..... 35
Established by the record..... 35
My reasoning, not proven..... 36
Still unresolved..... 36
The limits of this check..... 36
What would prove a cover-up..... 36
The bottom line..... 36
Appendix A: Chronology..... 37
Appendix B: Claim-to-Source Table and Visual Credits..... 41
Claim-to-source table..... 41
Visual credits and rights..... 43
Appendix C: Full Source List..... 44
Tier 1: Primary and official sources..... 44
Tier 2: Archives and finding aids..... 44
Tier 3: Scholarly sources..... 45
Tier 4: Fact-checks and journalism..... 45
Tier 5: Books and claims being checked..... 47

Summary

If you spend any time online, you have seen the claim. The Smithsonian Institution, the story goes, dug up the bones of a lost race of giants, hauled them to Washington and hid them, or ground them up, so nobody would question the history books. Some versions add an Egyptian city inside the Grand Canyon, a Hebrew inscription in a Tennessee burial mound and a court order that finally forced the museum to confess.

I set out to answer one question: **Did the Smithsonian hide archaeological discoveries, and if it hid anything, what was it?**

Here is the short answer.

- **The giant-skeleton reports are real reports.** The Smithsonian's own 1894 survey of the eastern burial mounds printed six skeletons measured at about 7 feet or more. The largest was 7 1/2 feet long and 19 inches across the shoulders, in a West Virginia mound. Nobody had to leak these. The Smithsonian published them.[1]
- **The cover-up is not.** The same report concluded that the mounds were built by the ancestors of American Indians, not a vanished race. The field notes behind it are still in the Smithsonian's archives, and anyone can request them.[Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), "Outline of This Paper" and p. 21. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.][J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. xli-xlvii. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.][2] I found no record of an order to hide or destroy skeletons, and no researcher I could find has produced one.
- **Three of the most famous stories are false.** The "Supreme Court ruling" came from a satire website in 2014.[3] The Grand Canyon city came from a 1909 newspaper story that a nearby paper called "a splendid piece of imagination" eleven days later.[4] The Bat Creek stone's inscription was copied from an 1870 Masonic book.[5]
- **What the Smithsonian really kept out of sight was not giants. It was people.** The National Museum of Natural History still holds the remains of more than 30,000 people, and the

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[1] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 113, 117, 302-303, 361-362, 418-419, 425-427. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[2] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[3] Kim LaCapria, Snopes, "Did the Smithsonian Destroy Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons?", December 17, 2014, updated May 19, 2023. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/smithsonian-giant-skeletons/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[4] Jason Colavito (transcriber), "The 1909 Grand Canyon Hoax (transcriptions of the Arizona Gazette, March 12 and April 5, 1909, and the Coconino Sun, April 16, 1909)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.jasoncolavito.com/the-1909-grand-canyon-hoax.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[5] Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone Revisited: A Fraud Exposed", American Antiquity 69, no. 4 (October 2004): 761-769, p. 765. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-antiquity/article/bat-creek-stone-revisited-a-fraud-exposed/1847329C6E052F466ADF76E296C636FF. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Smithsonian itself says many were "acquired without informed consent."[6] In 2023 the Washington Post showed that the museum kept 255 human brains gathered for a "racial brain collection," mostly without consent, and one young woman's brain sat in storage for 90 years before her family learned of it.[7]

So the honest verdict is a split one. The Smithsonian did not hide a race of giants. It did hold, for generations and with little public notice, the bodies of real people who never agreed to be there. That second story is better documented, it matters to living families, and it is still being worked out.

Introduction: How I Checked These Claims

The question and the scope

This book covers the Smithsonian Institution from its founding in 1846 to November 18, 2026, but only where it touches the cover-up claims: the Bureau of Ethnology's mound survey of the 1880s, the human remains collections, and the stories that grew up around both.[8] It covers the continental United States, because that is where the giant stories are set. It does not try to review every object in the Smithsonian's collections, and it does not cover unrelated claims such as aliens or lost technology except to note them.

What counts as evidence

I sorted sources into five tiers, the same way every book in this series does.

1. **Primary and official records.** The 1894 report itself, Smithsonian policies and web pages, and the Smithsonian Archives timeline. An institution's own records prove what it said and published. They do not, by themselves, prove that what it said was complete or right.
2. **Archives and finding aids.** The National Anthropological Archives' descriptions of the original field notes and research papers.
3. **Scholarly work.** Peer-reviewed articles and historical society journals.
4. **Journalism and fact-checks.** The Washington Post, ProPublica, Smithsonian Magazine and the major fact-checkers. I used these for the documents and interviews they report, and I say when I could only read a reprint.
5. **The claims being checked.** Books and websites that promote the cover-up story. I quote them so you can see exactly what they claim. They are not treated as evidence for the claim itself.

When several articles repeat one story, I traced them back to the first one. Ten websites copying one 1909 newspaper article are still one source.

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[6] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[7] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[8] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

The verdicts

Each claim in Part Two gets one of the four verdicts used across this series.

- **True:** the record supports it.
- **Partly true:** part of it is supported and part is not, or it is true but missing context that changes its meaning.
- **False:** the record contradicts it, or it was made up.
- **Inconclusive:** the record cannot settle it either way yet.

When something is my own reasoning rather than a fact from a source, I say so. When I could not confirm something, I mark it **[Not verified]** right where it appears.

How this book is laid out

Part One tells the documented history: what the Smithsonian's mound survey found and printed, and how the human remains collection was built and is now being returned. Part Two takes the rumors one at a time, kept separate so a reader never mistakes a claim for a finding. Part Three is the evidence map: every "giant" skeleton I could trace to a written source, where it was, how big it was said to be, who said so and what happened to it. The appendices hold a timeline, a one-page claim table, the picture credits and the full source list.

A word on respect. The skeletons in these stories were people, most of them the ancestors of living American Indian nations. I describe what the reports say because the claims cannot be checked any other way, but this book contains no photographs of human remains. The Smithsonian's own current policy limits the use of such images to cases with consent, and I followed the same rule.[9]

[9] Smithsonian Institution, "SD 600 Chapter 16.3: Human Remains Not Subject to the NMAI Act (as posted by the National Museum of Natural History)", undated web posting, read November 18, 2026. https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/irdp/resources/sd-600-chapter-16-3. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Part One: What the Record Shows

Chapter 1: The Smithsonian Goes Digging

A museum and a bureau

The Smithsonian Institution was founded in 1846, and from the start it collected. Its own history page says it acquired human remains "for scientific research, most during the 19th and early 20th centuries," from excavations, government agencies, museums, universities, hospitals and private donors.[10]

The part of the Smithsonian at the center of the giant stories came later. On March 3, 1879, Congress set up the Bureau of Ethnology, placed it under the Smithsonian and named Major John Wesley Powell, the explorer of the Colorado River, as its director.[11] The bureau's job was to study American Indian peoples: their languages, customs and history.

That date matters for the rumor. One popular book claims the cover-up "transformed into an outright cover-up in 1879 when Major John Wesley Powell was appointed Smithsonian director."[12] Powell was the director of the bureau, not of the Smithsonian. The head of the Smithsonian is its Secretary, and from 1878 to 1887 that was the naturalist Spencer Fullerton Baird.[13] It is a small error, but the whole cover-up story leans on it.

The question everyone was asking

Across the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, settlers found thousands of earthen mounds, some of them huge. Many Americans of the 1800s did not believe the ancestors of the Indian nations they were pushing west could have built them. Powell, writing in the bureau's 1894 annual report, called this the "romantic fallacy" of "lost races" and traced it to a 1797 book by Dr. Benjamin S. Barton, which he called the first publication of the lost-race theory.[14]

So the bureau went to find out. It hired a division of field agents, put an entomologist turned archaeologist named Cyrus Thomas in charge, and sent the agents to open mounds from the Dakotas to Florida. The records of that work, field notes, drawings and letters from 1881 to 1889, fill 11 boxes in the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives as Manuscript 2400.[15]

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[10] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[11] Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Bureau of Ethnology Established at Smithsonian by Congress (Smithsonian timeline entry for March 3, 1879)", posted March 30, 2017. https://siarchives.si.edu/bureau-ethnology-established-smithsonian-congress. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[12] Richard J. Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2014. Claims quoted from the publisher description on the Simon and Schuster page for the audio edition. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/The-Ancient-Giants-Who-Ruled-America/Richard-J-Dewhurst/9781620559475. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[13] Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Spencer Fullerton Baird, 1823-1887", read November 18, 2026. https://siarchives.si.edu/history/spencer-fullerton-baird. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[14] J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. xli-xlii. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[15] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.

What they concluded

Thomas published the results in 1894 as a 700-page report. He framed the central question plainly: "Were the mounds built by the Indians?"[16] His answer, summed up in the report's opening outline and in Powell's introduction, was yes. The mound builders "comprised a number of tribes" with about the same way of life as the Indian tribes Europeans met when they arrived.[J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. xlv-xlvi. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), "Outline of This Paper". Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

That is the first fact a cover-up theory has to deal with. The Smithsonian did not hide evidence of a lost race. Its own scientists spent most of a decade and a large public appropriation building the case against one, and then printed every page of it, giant skeletons included.

The fine print that matters

The archive record for Manuscript 2400 includes a warning that is worth repeating word for word. The 1894 report "is based on these materials, but the printed report frequently contains important differences from the original notes, as well as being less detailed."[17]

In other words, the Smithsonian itself tells researchers not to treat the printed report as the last word. If anyone wants to check whether a printed measurement matches what a field agent wrote in the mound, the notes are there to check. I did not examine the boxes in person. That is the single most useful piece of research still waiting to be done on this subject, and Part Three says exactly which pages to start with.

Chapter 2: What the 1894 Report Says About Tall Skeletons

How I searched

I read the full text of the 1894 report at the Internet Archive and searched it for every mention of a skeleton's size: lengths in feet, and words such as "large," "very large," "giant" and "stature." Then I read each hit in context to find the mound, the county and the page. The report describes thousands of burials. Of all of them, these are the only ones it singles out for size.

Six measured at about 7 feet or more

1. **Dunleith, Illinois (Jo Daviess County), mound 5.** The agents called it "one of the largest skeletons discovered by the Bureau agents, the length as proved by actual measurement being between 7 and 8 feet." It "crumbled to pieces immediately after removal." Copper ornaments, copper beads, bear teeth and a chert spear point lay with it.[18]

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[16] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 21. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[17] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.

2. **Pike County, Illinois, a mound on the Hume farm.** Among dozens of burials, "excepting one, which was rather more than 7 feet long, these skeletons appeared to be of medium size."[19]
3. **Etowah, Georgia (Bartow County), mound C.** In a stone-lined grave 8 feet long, "the frame was heavy and about 7 feet long." The man's head rested on an embossed copper plate. The report says all the items from this mound "were forwarded at once to the Bureau of Ethnology, and are now in the National Museum."[20]
4. **Long Island, Roane County, Tennessee, mound 12.** This is the most carefully described one. The bones were soft but "sufficiently distinct to allow of a careful measurement before attempting to remove them. The length from the base of the skull to the bones of the toes was found to be 7 feet 3 inches." Thomas added that the man "when living was fully 7 1/2 feet high."[21]
5. **Spring Hill, Kanawha County, West Virginia, mound 11.** In a bark-lined vault 8 feet long lay "a skeleton fully 7 feet long," with 52 shell disks over the hips.[22]
6. **The Great Smith mound (Mound 21), Kanawha County, West Virginia.** At 19 feet down, in a log tomb whose roof had caved in, the agents found "a skeleton, measuring 7 1/2 feet in length and 19 inches across the shoulders." Six heavy copper bracelets circled each wrist. Thomas himself called it "this giant frame." The bracelets and a copper gorget are pictured in the report.[23]

A seventh, from Ross County, Ohio, measured "6 feet and 1 inch" to the ankle bones, which is tall but not remarkable.[24]

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[18] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 113. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[19] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 117. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[20] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 302-305. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[21] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 361-362. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[22] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 418-419. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[23] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 425-427. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[24] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 486. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Four more called "large" with no number

The report also uses words without numbers: "a large skeleton" in Kanawha County mound 19; "two very large skeletons" sitting face to face in Mound 31 on the Kanawha County poor farm; skeletons "many of them very large" in the Couch farm mounds of Mason County, West Virginia; and upper burials "of larger stature" in the Nelson Triangle mound of Caldwell County, North Carolina.[25]

Four more that the agents only heard about

Finally, the report repeats things other people told the agents: a stone grave in Coshocton County, Ohio, "containing a skeleton 7 feet long," opened before the agents arrived; graves near Dublin, Ohio, that local people "said had formed graves inclosing skeletons of very large size"; "a very large skeleton" found by earlier diggers in a West Virginia mound; and a landowner near Monongahela City, Pennsylvania, who had dug up "skeletons, some of them of large size."[26] These are hearsay, and the report presents them that way.

How much weight these measurements can bear

The six measured skeletons are real entries in an official report, made by the Smithsonian's own agents. That is worth saying plainly, because some debunkers wave the whole subject away. But there are good reasons to be careful about reading a 7-foot length in a grave as a 7-foot person. The points below are my reasoning from what the report itself describes, not findings from a separate study.

- **They were measured lying in the ground.** The Long Island measurement was taken before the bones were lifted because the bones were too soft to move whole. The Dunleith skeleton fell apart when lifted. A body that has lain in the earth for centuries settles and spreads as the soft tissue disappears, so its length in the grave is not the same thing as its height standing.
- **Some tombs had collapsed.** The Great Smith mound skeleton lay under the fallen roof of a log tomb, in "a commingled mass of rotten timber, decayed bark, and loose, dark earth."[27] That is a hard place to take a clean measurement.
- **Nobody re-measured them.** The report gives no bone-by-bone measurements for any of the six, such as a thigh-bone length, which is how stature is estimated today. The one place it does give a thigh bone, for "a large, strongly-built man" in Union County, Mississippi, it gives no height at all.[28]

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[25] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 336, 424, 432, 436. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[26] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 437, 450, 458, 494. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[27] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 426. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[28] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 273. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

- **Six out of thousands.** Even taken at face value, these are a handful of unusually tall individuals among thousands of burials of "medium size" and "ordinary size." A few very tall men in a large population is not a separate race.

None of this proves the measurements were wrong. A man a little over 7 feet tall is rare but possible. It does mean the report cannot prove they were right, and that the question can only be settled by the original notes and by any bones that survive.

What happened to the bones?

Here is where honest people part ways with both sides of the argument. For most of the tall skeletons, the 1894 report simply does not say whether the bones were kept. One crumbled on the spot. For Etowah, the report says the "articles" were sent to the National Museum, but it does not say whether the skeleton went too. For the Great Smith mound, the copper bracelets were collected and pictured; the bones are not mentioned.[29]

The archives point to where the answer may be. Manuscript 2400 holds the original notes, and the Smithsonian lists a related "Mound Exploration Division Catalog" as Manuscript 7118.[30] If any of these skeletons reached Washington, that catalog and the museum's accession records are where they would show up. I did not search those records, and under the Smithsonian's current policy, images and data about specific human remains are restricted except with consent or for law enforcement.[31] So whether any of these six individuals is in the collection today is **[Not verified]**. It is a real, answerable question. It is not evidence of a conspiracy.

Chapter 3: The Collection Nobody Was Looking At

The giant story imagines a Smithsonian that hid bones to protect a theory. The documented story is different and in some ways harder to read. The Smithsonian did hold human bones out of public view for a century, but the people they belonged to were ordinary men, women and children, and the theory they were used to support was racism.

How big the collection is

The numbers depend on what is being counted, and different sources count different things, so I give each one with its own wording.

- The Smithsonian says it has "more than 30,000 human remains in its collections," roughly half of them Native American, and that most are cared for by the National Museum of Natural History at its storage center in Suitland, Maryland.[32]

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[29] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 113, 304-305, 426-427. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[30] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[31] Smithsonian Institution, "SD 600 Chapter 16.3: Human Remains Not Subject to the NMAI Act (as posted by the National Museum of Natural History)", undated web posting, read November 18, 2026. https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/irdp/resources/sd-600-chapter-16-3. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[32] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

- The Washington Post reported in 2023 that the museum held "at least 30,700 human remains," the majority of which "appear to have been taken without consent."[33] A Philippine news report quoting the same investigation described the same figure as "human bones and other body parts."[34] Those two wordings are not the same, so I do not treat 30,700 as a count of individual people.
- ProPublica reported in January 2023 that the Smithsonian "holds in storage the remains of roughly 10,000 people, more than any other U.S. museum," in an article about Native American remains.[35]

What all of these agree on is the part that matters: tens of thousands of human remains, gathered mostly in the 1800s and early 1900s, many without anyone's permission.

How the collection was built

The Smithsonian's collecting reached far beyond scientific digs. ProPublica found that in the 1870s the Smithsonian "struck a deal" with General William Tecumseh Sherman to pay each of his soldiers up to $500 for Indian clothing, weapons and tools sent back to Washington. Joseph Henry, the Smithsonian's first Secretary, wrote to Sherman on May 22, 1873, that the Institution wanted "everything bearing upon the life and character of the Indians."[36] That letter, as quoted, asks for objects, not bodies. It shows how closely museum collecting followed the Army west.

The human remains came from many routes: excavations like the mound survey, transfers from government agencies, and donations from hospitals and individuals.[37]

Ales Hrdlicka and the brains

The person most responsible for the human remains collection was Ales Hrdlicka, a physical anthropologist who worked at the Smithsonian's National Museum from 1903 to 1943.[38] The Washington Post's 2023 investigation found that the museum held 255 human brains, "the vast majority" collected in the early 1900s "at the behest of Hrdlicka, a prominent anthropologist who believed in the superiority of White people."[39] The Post reported that bodies and organs were taken "from graveyards, battlefields, morgues, and hospitals in more than 80 countries."[40] An NPR interview

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[33] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[34] Rappler, "Smithsonian's 'Racial Brain Collection' Includes 1 Igorot, 23 Other Filipinos", August 2023. https://www.rappler.com/philippines/smithsonian-racial-brain-collection-include-igorot-other-filipinos-washington-post-report/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[35] ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[36] ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[37] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[38] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "Ales Hrdlicka Papers (collection record NAA.1974-31)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-1974-31. Accessed November 18, 2026.

with the Post's reporter summed up the finding: most of the brains "were taken from Indigenous and Black people without consent."[41]

The Smithsonian's own archive still carries an older description of Hrdlicka's papers saying some materials "contradict, or at least complicate, many long-held criticisms" that he was racist.[42] I note it because a fair account should. The Smithsonian's current leadership has not taken that view. Its 2024-era policy says this research "supported what has come to be known as 'scientific racism' and sought to support racial determinism and the ideology of white supremacy."[43]

Mary Sara

One case shows what all of this meant for a single family.

In January 1933, an Alaska woman named Mary Sara, who was Sami, an Indigenous people whose homeland includes northern Scandinavia, came to Seattle with her mother, who needed cataract surgery. Mary caught tuberculosis and was sent to a sanitarium, where she turned 18. She died in May 1933 while her mother was on a ship home. The same day, her mother's surgeon, Dr. Charles Firestone, offered her brain to Hrdlicka. Hrdlicka said he was interested only if she was "full-blood," and Firestone mailed the brain to the museum.[44]

It stayed in storage for 90 years. Her relatives learned about it only when Washington Post reporters told them in February 2023. The Post found no record that she or her family ever consented. On August 29, 2023, her cousins buried the brain at her grave in Evergreen Washelli cemetery in Seattle. The museum declined the family's request to help pay for the burial and a headstone; a tribal council in Alaska paid for the funeral and the cemetery donated the headstone.[45]

According to the Post, Mary Sara's was only the fifth brain from the collection ever returned. The four before it went to Native American families or communities, because federal law requires the Smithsonian to tell Native nations what it holds. The last one before hers was returned in 2007.[46]

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[39] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[40] Rappler, "Smithsonian's 'Racial Brain Collection' Includes 1 Igorot, 23 Other Filipinos", August 2023. https://www.rappler.com/philippines/smithsonian-racial-brain-collection-include-igorot-other-filipinos-washington-post-report/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[41] NPR and WBUR, Here and Now, "Smithsonian's 'Racial Brain' Collection Has a Dark History of Eugenics", August 16, 2023. https://www.wypr.org/2023-08-16/smithsonians-racial-brain-collection-has-a-dark-history-of-eugenics. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[42] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "Ales Hrdlicka Papers (collection record NAA.1974-31)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-1974-31. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[43] Smithsonian Institution, "SD 600 Chapter 16.3: Human Remains Not Subject to the NMAI Act (as posted by the National Museum of Natural History)", undated web posting, read November 18, 2026. https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/irdp/resources/sd-600-chapter-16-3. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[44] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[45] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

The law, and the gap in it

The Smithsonian has been returning Native American remains since 1984. The National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989, amended in 1996, requires it to return Native American remains and certain objects to tribes on request. The Smithsonian says that since 1989 it has offered to return the remains of about 7,000 Native American people, and about 5,000 have gone home.[47]

Two gaps stand out in the record.

- **Disclosure.** Most museums fall under a different law, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, which requires detailed public reporting. The Smithsonian does not fall under NAGPRA. ProPublica reported that the Smithsonian "does not publicly share information about what it has yet to repatriate with the same detail" and instead shares inventory lists with tribes directly.[48]
- **Everyone else.** The federal law covers Native American remains only. The Post estimated that about 15,000 sets of remains "from more than 80 countries" fell outside any notification rule.[49]

Did anyone drag their feet?

In December 2023, the Post reported that former Smithsonian employees described "internal resistance" to returning remains in the 1990s, while other staff from that period said the process takes time because the right descendants must be found. The Post also cited a 2011 government report that said finishing could take "several more decades."[50] I could read these points only as summarized by Smithsonian Magazine, not in the Post's original article, which refused my connection. This is credible testimony from people who were there. It is also disputed by others who were there, and it describes delay, not destruction.

The reckoning

Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III, who has led the Smithsonian since 2019, apologized publicly in April 2023 and named a task force.[51] After the Post's series ran in August 2023, he wrote in the Post that Hrdlicka's work "was abhorrent and dehumanizing work, and it was carried out under the Smithsonian's name,"

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[46] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[47] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[48] ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[49] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[50] Ellen Wexler, Smithsonian Magazine, "The Smithsonian's Human Remains Task Force Calls for New Repatriation Policies", February 22, 2024. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/smithsonian-human-remains-task-force-calls-for-new-repatriation-policies-180983829/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[51] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

and: "I condemn these past actions and apologize for the pain caused by Hrdlicka and others at the institution who acted unethically in the name of science."[52]

The task force delivered its report to the Secretary in January 2024, and the Smithsonian released it on February 21, 2024.[53] It recommended that the Smithsonian not collect, display or study human remains without the informed consent of the person or their descendants, and that it reach out to descendants and tribes instead of waiting for them to ask.[54]

Those recommendations now appear in the Smithsonian's collections rules as Chapter 16.3 of Smithsonian Directive 600. The chapter says that keeping these remains "prolongs harm and is fundamentally inconsistent with the Smithsonian's ethical standards." It requires each museum to inventory its human remains, to offer them back to descendants or communities, to get the approval of a senior official before denying any request, to report progress every year, and to keep a public website of returns.[55] The page I read does not show the date the chapter took effect. A British museum journal reported on March 12, 2024, that the task force's recommendations were "now being developed into an official policy," so the chapter was adopted after that date.[56] The exact adoption date is **[Not verified]**.

The human remains chapter builds on an earlier step. On April 29, 2022, the Smithsonian adopted a Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Policy that lets its museums return collections "based on ethical considerations," and folded it into the same Directive 600.[57] The Smithsonian says that 2022 policy did not address human remains, which is why a separate chapter was needed.[58]

A written policy is a promise, not a result. The measure of it will be how many people actually go home and how fast.

Chapter 4: The People in the Record

These are the people whose documented actions shaped what the Smithsonian found, kept, published or returned. I left out anyone whose only link to the subject is fame.

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[52] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[53] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[54] Ellen Wexler, Smithsonian Magazine, "The Smithsonian's Human Remains Task Force Calls for New Repatriation Policies", February 22, 2024. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/smithsonian-human-remains-task-force-calls-for-new-repatriation-policies-180983829/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[55] Smithsonian Institution, "SD 600 Chapter 16.3: Human Remains Not Subject to the NMAI Act (as posted by the National Museum of Natural History)", undated web posting, read November 18, 2026. https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/irdp/resources/sd-600-chapter-16-3. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[56] Geraldine Kendall Adams, Museums Journal (Museums Association), "Smithsonian Moves Towards Informed Consent Principle for Human Remains", March 12, 2024. https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2024/03/smithsonian-moves-towards-informed-consent-principle-for-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[57] Lonnie G. Bunch III, Smithsonian Institution, "From the Secretary: Adopting an Ethical Returns Policy for Smithsonian Collections", The Torch, May 3, 2022. https://torch.si.edu/2022/05/from-the-secretary-adopting-an-ethical-returns-policy-for-smithsonian-collections. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[58] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Person	When active	Role	What they did that can be documented
Joseph Henry	Secretary in 1873	First Secretary of the Smithsonian	Asked General Sherman in 1873 for help collecting Indian clothing, weapons and tools; the Smithsonian arranged payments to soldiers[59]
John Wesley Powell	Director from 1879	First director, Bureau of Ethnology	Ran the bureau that paid for the mound survey; called the lost-race idea a "romantic fallacy"[Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Bureau of Ethnology Established at Smithsonian by Congress (Smithsonian timeline entry for March 3, 1879)", posted March 30, 2017. https://siarchives.si.edu/bureau-ethnology-established-smithsonian-congress. Accessed November 18, 2026.][J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. xli. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.]
Cyrus Thomas (1825-1910)	1881-1894	Head of the bureau's mound survey	Directed the field agents and wrote the 1894 report, including every tall-skeleton entry in this book[National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894). Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.]
John W. Emmert	1880s	Field assistant, mound survey	Reported finding the Bat Creek stone; later researchers named him "the most likely suspect" in its forgery[60]
Ales Hrdlicka (1869-1943)	1903-1943 at the Smithsonian	Curator of physical anthropology	Built the human remains and brain collections, including Mary Sara's brain[National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "Ales Hrdlicka Papers (collection record NAA.1974-31)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-1974-31. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns

[59] ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[60] Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone Revisited: A Fraud Exposed", American Antiquity 69, no. 4 (October 2004): 761-769, p. 765. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-antiquity/article/bat-creek-stone-revisited-a-fraud-exposed/1847329C6E052F466ADF76E296C636FF. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Person	When active	Role	What they did that can be documented
			Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.]
Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas	1987-2005 research	Archaeologists	Traced the Bat Creek inscription to an 1870 Masonic book; gave their papers to the Smithsonian archives in 2014[Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone Revisited: A Fraud Exposed", American Antiquity 69, no. 4 (October 2004): 761-769. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-antiquity/article/bat-creek-stone-revisited-a-fraud-exposed/1847329C6E052F466ADF76E296C636FF. Accessed November 18, 2026.] [National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2014-03 Robert C. Mainfort, Jr. and Mary L. Kwas Papers on the Bat Creek Stone, 1987-2005 (finding aid)", read November 18, 2026. https://sirismm.si.edu/EADpdfs/NAA.MS2014-03.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.]
Dorothy P. Dansie	1975 article	Nevada historian	Showed that the Lovelock "giants" case rested on stories, with no bones ever produced[61]
Lonnie G. Bunch III	Secretary since 2019	Smithsonian Secretary	Apologized in 2023, formed the Human Remains Task Force[Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Ellen Wexler, Smithsonian Magazine, "The Smithsonian's Human Remains Task Force Calls for New Repatriation Policies", February 22, 2024. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/smithsonian-human-remains-task-force-calls-for-new-repatriation-policies-180983829/. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

Mary Sara belongs in this book as a person who was wronged, not as an actor in it. Her cousin Martha Sara Jack and her distant cousin Rachel Twitchell-Justiss carried her remains to the grave in 2023.[62]

[61] Dorothy P. Dansie, "John T. Reid's Case for the Redheaded Giants", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (1975). Year from the file name on the publisher-hosted copy; volume and issue not shown. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/Reid_Dansie_1975.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[62] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Part Two: Rumors and Disputed Claims

This part is kept apart from the history on purpose. Everything in Part One rests on a record I could open. Everything in this part is a claim someone has made, followed by what I could find about where it started, who spread it and whether the evidence holds it up.

Each claim follows the same layout:

- **The claim:** what is said, in the promoters' own words where possible.
- **Where it started:** the earliest version I could trace.
- **Who spread it:** the people, books or websites that carried it, named only when their role is documented.
- **What the evidence shows:** the records that support or contradict it.
- **Verdict:** True, Partly true, False or Inconclusive.

Claim 1: The Smithsonian hid or destroyed the giant skeletons it found

The claim. The best-known book on the subject says the evidence of ancient giants has suffered a "150-year suppression by the Smithsonian Institution," that the museum hid "thousands of giant skeletons," and that the proof sits "hidden in the restricted-access evidence rooms at the Smithsonian."[63]

Where it started. The giant stories themselves are older than the Smithsonian's mound survey. Local newspapers of the 1800s printed many reports of big bones turned up by farmers and road crews. The specific idea that the Smithsonian took them and hid them is much newer. The earliest full version I could trace in print is Richard J. Dewhurst's 2014 book, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America*.[64] The idea circulated on websites and in television programs before that, but I could not date those versions reliably, so I do not name an earlier starting point.

Who spread it. Dewhurst's book, its audio edition, and a 2014 satire article (Claim 2) that many readers took as news.[Richard J. Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2014. Claims quoted from the publisher description on the Simon and Schuster page for the audio edition. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/The-Ancient-Giants-Who-Ruled-America/Richard-J-Dewhurst/9781620559475. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Kim LaCapria, Snopes, "Did the Smithsonian Destroy Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons?", December 17, 2014, updated May 19, 2023. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/smithsonian-giant-skeletons/. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

What the evidence shows.

- The Smithsonian did the opposite of hiding the reports. Its 1894 report printed every tall-skeleton entry its agents made, with the page, county and mound, in a public government document (Chapter 2).[65]

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[63] Richard J. Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2014. Claims quoted from the publisher description on the Simon and Schuster page for the audio edition. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/The-Ancient-Giants-Who-Ruled-America/Richard-J-Dewhurst/9781620559475. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[64] Richard J. Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2014. Claims quoted from the publisher description on the Simon and Schuster page for the audio edition. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/The-Ancient-Giants-Who-Ruled-America/Richard-J-Dewhurst/9781620559475. Accessed November 18, 2026.

- The original field notes are not locked away. They are cataloged in the National Anthropological Archives as Manuscript 2400, and the archive's own description warns that the printed report "frequently contains important differences from the original notes."[66] An institution hiding something does not usually publish a guide to the evidence against its own report.
- The cover-up story says it began "in 1879 when Major John Wesley Powell was appointed Smithsonian director."[67] Powell was appointed director of the new Bureau of Ethnology, not of the Smithsonian.[68] The Smithsonian's Secretary at the time was Spencer Fullerton Baird, who served from 1878 to 1887.[69]
- The six measured skeletons were all found in or after the 1880s by the bureau's own men. For most of them, the report does not say whether the bones were kept (Chapter 2). That is a gap in the record. A gap is not proof of destruction.
- I found no order, letter or policy telling anyone to hide or destroy skeletons. I did not search every box of Manuscript 2400 or the museum's accession files, so I cannot say no such paper exists. I can say that no promoter I read has produced one.

Verdict: False. The Smithsonian published the giant reports and archived the notes behind them. Whether any of the measured skeletons survive in storage is an open and checkable question, not evidence of a cover-up.

Claim 2: A Supreme Court ruling forced the Smithsonian to admit it destroyed giant skeletons

The claim. "A US Supreme Court ruling has forced the Smithsonian Institution to release classified papers dating from the early 1900s" proving that it destroyed thousands of giant human skeletons.[70]

Where it started. A website called World News Daily Report, on December 3, 2014, under the headline "Smithsonian Admits to Destruction of Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons in Early 1900's."[71]

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[65] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894). Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[66] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[67] Richard J. Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2014. Claims quoted from the publisher description on the Simon and Schuster page for the audio edition. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/The-Ancient-Giants-Who-Ruled-America/Richard-J-Dewhurst/9781620559475. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[68] Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Bureau of Ethnology Established at Smithsonian by Congress (Smithsonian timeline entry for March 3, 1879)", posted March 30, 2017. https://siarchives.si.edu/bureau-ethnology-established-smithsonian-congress. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[69] Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Spencer Fullerton Baird, 1823-1887", read November 18, 2026. https://siarchives.si.edu/history/spencer-fullerton-baird. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[70] Ciara O'Rourke, PolitiFact, "Smithsonian Didn't Admit to Destroying Giant Human Skeletons", November 3, 2022. https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/nov/03/viral-image/smithsonian-didnt-admit-to-destroying-giant-human/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[71] Kim LaCapria, Snopes, "Did the Smithsonian Destroy Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons?", December 17, 2014, updated May 19, 2023. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/smithsonian-giant-skeletons/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Who spread it. The article named a group it called the "AIAA" and a spokesman called "James Churward," and said the Smithsonian had sued the group for defamation. Social media users have reposted it for years; PolitiFact was still checking new copies in 2022.[Kim LaCapria, Snopes, "Did the Smithsonian Destroy Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons?", December 17, 2014, updated May 19, 2023. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/smithsonian-giant-skeletons/. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Ciara O'Rourke, PolitiFact, "Smithsonian Didn't Admit to Destroying Giant Human Skeletons", November 3, 2022. https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/nov/03/viral-image/smithsonian-didnt-admit-to-destroying-giant-human/. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

What the evidence shows.

- The website's own disclaimer says: "All news articles contained within worldnewsdailyreport.com are fiction."[72]
- Snopes found no such Supreme Court case and found that the pictures used with the story came from unrelated sources, including a doctored "giant" photograph dating to 2002 and a photo of a man with gigantism who died in 1904.[73]
- A Smithsonian spokesperson told Reuters in 2022 that the claim was false, as reported by PolitiFact.[74]

Verdict: False. It is satire that escaped its website.

Claim 3: The Smithsonian found an Egyptian city in the Grand Canyon in 1909 and covered it up

The claim. Explorers found a huge cave in the Grand Canyon filled with Egyptian-style relics, mummies and statues, with the Smithsonian paying for the work, and the museum has denied it ever since.

Where it started. Two articles in the *Arizona Gazette* of Phoenix. The first, on March 12, 1909, reported that a "G. E. Kincaid" of Lewiston, Idaho, had reached Yuma by boat after a trip down the Green and Colorado rivers. The second, on the front page April 5, 1909, under the headline "Explorations in Grand Canyon," said Kincaid had found a cave and that "archeologists of the Smithsonian Institute, which is financing the expeditions," were exploring it under a "Prof. S. A. Jordan." The article guessed that the builders came from the Orient, "possibly from Egypt, tracing back to Ramses."[Jason Colavito (transcriber), "The 1909 Grand Canyon Hoax (transcriptions of the Arizona Gazette, March 12 and April 5, 1909, and the Coconino Sun, April 16, 1909)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.jasoncolavito.com/the-1909-grand-canyon-hoax.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Pima County Public Library, "Grand Canyon and Egyptian Artifacts (The Librarian Files)", undated, read November 18, 2026. Cites Don Lago, "'Looks Like a Mulhatton Story': The Origins of the Grand Canyon Egyptian Cave Myth," The Ol' Pioneer 20, no. 2 (Summer 2009). https://www.library.pima.gov/content/grand-canyon-and-egyptian-artifacts/. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

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[72] Kim LaCapria, Snopes, "Did the Smithsonian Destroy Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons?", December 17, 2014, updated May 19, 2023. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/smithsonian-giant-skeletons/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[73] Kim LaCapria, Snopes, "Did the Smithsonian Destroy Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons?", December 17, 2014, updated May 19, 2023. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/smithsonian-giant-skeletons/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[74] Ciara O'Rourke, PolitiFact, "Smithsonian Didn't Admit to Destroying Giant Human Skeletons", November 3, 2022. https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/nov/03/viral-image/smithsonian-didnt-admit-to-destroying-giant-human/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Who spread it. The story sat forgotten for decades. Researcher Jason Colavito, who transcribed the original articles, credits author David Hatcher Childress with reviving it as an Egyptian story in the modern era.[75] I could not confirm the date of the revival in a source I opened, so I give no year for it.

What the evidence shows.

- Eleven days after the Gazette story, on April 16, 1909, the *Coconino Sun* of Flagstaff, the town closest to the canyon, ran a short item headed "Looks Like a Mulhatton Story," calling the report "a splendid piece of imagination sent out by some Mulhattonized individual."[76] Joe Mulhattan was a well-known newspaper hoaxer of the period.[77]
- The Pima County Public Library in Tucson, drawing on historian Don Lago's 2009 study of the hoax, states flatly: "This story is not true but continues to be repeated."[78]
- No Smithsonian record of an expedition, a "Professor Jordan" or a Grand Canyon cave has been produced by anyone promoting the story. I searched the sources above and found none.

Verdict: False. It was a newspaper hoax, called a hoax in Arizona within two weeks.

Claim 4: A race of red-haired giants lived in Lovelock Cave, Nevada

This one is close to home for a Nevada reader. Lovelock Cave is in Pershing County, roughly 80 miles northeast of Dayton in a straight line, by my own measure on a map.

The claim. Miners digging bat guano out of Lovelock Cave in the early 1900s found the mummies of red-haired giants, and the evidence was lost or hidden.

Where it started. The cave was dug for guano and then excavated by archaeologists, who published *Lovelock Cave* through the University of California in 1929.[79] The giant version was promoted for decades by a local man, John T. Reid, and examined in detail by Nevada historian Dorothy P. Dansie in 1975.[80]

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[75] Jason Colavito (transcriber), "The 1909 Grand Canyon Hoax (transcriptions of the Arizona Gazette, March 12 and April 5, 1909, and the Coconino Sun, April 16, 1909)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.jasoncolavito.com/the-1909-grand-canyon-hoax.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[76] Jason Colavito (transcriber), "The 1909 Grand Canyon Hoax (transcriptions of the Arizona Gazette, March 12 and April 5, 1909, and the Coconino Sun, April 16, 1909)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.jasoncolavito.com/the-1909-grand-canyon-hoax.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[77] Jason Colavito (transcriber), "The 1909 Grand Canyon Hoax (transcriptions of the Arizona Gazette, March 12 and April 5, 1909, and the Coconino Sun, April 16, 1909)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.jasoncolavito.com/the-1909-grand-canyon-hoax.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[78] Pima County Public Library, "Grand Canyon and Egyptian Artifacts (The Librarian Files)", undated, read November 18, 2026. Cites Don Lago, "'Looks Like a Mulhatton Story': The Origins of the Grand Canyon Egyptian Cave Myth," The Ol' Pioneer 20, no. 2 (Summer 2009). https://www.library.pima.gov/content/grand-canyon-and-egyptian-artifacts/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[79] Amy Dansie, "Early Holocene Burials in Nevada: Overview of Localities, Research and Legal Issues", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (Spring 1997): 4-14. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/EarlyHoloceneBurials_Dansie_1997.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[80] Dorothy P. Dansie, "John T. Reid's Case for the Redheaded Giants", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (1975). Year from the file name on the publisher-hosted copy; volume and issue not shown. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/Reid_Dansie_1975.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Who spread it. John T. Reid, according to Dansie's study, plus later websites and books that repeat his claims.[81]

What the evidence shows.

- The 1929 excavation report, as Dansie quotes it, includes a statement by a man named Hart about a mummified man "six feet six inches tall" whose hair was "distinctly red." The same statement says there were "either four or five" red-haired mummies.[82] Six and a half feet is tall, but it is not a giant. Reddish hair is also a known effect of age and burial on dark hair, though that is general knowledge and not a point Dansie's article makes, so I offer it only as a possibility.
- A man named Tot Green, interviewed in 1968, said: "No more than seven skeletons were ever taken out of there!"[83]
- Claims of 9- and 10-foot skeletons from other places in the area came from people who said they had seen them, with nothing kept.[84] Dansie's conclusion was that "if there were any truth to any of these stories, there would be some physical evidence," and that the evidence "was gone as surely as if it had never existed."[85]
- The draft I was given says the cave held 31 burials of adult men between 5 feet 5 inches and 5 feet 11 inches. I did not find that in the sources I read, so it is **[Not verified]** and I do not rely on it.

Verdict: False as to giants. The mummies were real. The tallest one described in the record was about 6 feet 6 inches.

Claim 5: The Bat Creek stone proves ancient Hebrews reached Tennessee, and the Smithsonian buried the evidence

The claim. A small inscribed stone found in a Tennessee burial mound carries an ancient Hebrew inscription, proving visitors from the Old World reached America long before Columbus, and the Smithsonian misread it on purpose.

Where it started. The stone came from Bat Creek mound 3 in Loudon County, Tennessee, dug by the bureau's field assistant John W. Emmert. Cyrus Thomas published a drawing of it in 1894 and said the

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[81] Dorothy P. Dansie, "John T. Reid's Case for the Redheaded Giants", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (1975). Year from the file name on the publisher-hosted copy; volume and issue not shown. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/Reid_Dansie_1975.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[82] Dorothy P. Dansie, "John T. Reid's Case for the Redheaded Giants", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (1975), pp. 161-162. Year from the file name on the publisher-hosted copy; volume and issue not shown. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/Reid_Dansie_1975.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[83] Dorothy P. Dansie, "John T. Reid's Case for the Redheaded Giants", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (1975), p. 163. Year from the file name on the publisher-hosted copy; volume and issue not shown. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/Reid_Dansie_1975.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[84] Dorothy P. Dansie, "John T. Reid's Case for the Redheaded Giants", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (1975), pp. 158, 166. Year from the file name on the publisher-hosted copy; volume and issue not shown. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/Reid_Dansie_1975.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[85] Dorothy P. Dansie, "John T. Reid's Case for the Redheaded Giants", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (1975), pp. 161, 163. Year from the file name on the publisher-hosted copy; volume and issue not shown. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/Reid_Dansie_1975.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

marks were "beyond question letters of the Cherokee alphabet."[86] In 1970, Cyrus Gordon, a scholar of ancient Near Eastern languages, turned the stone around from the way it was printed and read the marks as Paleo-Hebrew, "for Judea" or "for the Judeans," dating them to about A.D. 100. He was quoted in the *Nashville Tennessean* on October 19, 1970, and published his reading in *Argosy* magazine in January 1971.[Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone: Judeans in Tennessee?", Tennessee Anthropologist 16, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1-19, pp. 2, 5. Copy posted by the Tennessee Division of Archaeology. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/environment/archaeology/documents/staff-pubs/arch_mainfort-kwas-1991.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.][J. Huston McCulloch, "The Bat Creek Stone (author web page summarizing McCulloch, 'The Bat Creek Inscription: Cherokee or Hebrew?' Tennessee Anthropologist, 1988)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://econ.ohio-state.edu/jhm/arch/batcrk.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

Who spread it. Cyrus Gordon, from 1970, and economist J. Huston McCulloch, who argued in 1988 that "the inscription matches Hebrew much better than Cherokee." McCulloch also reported a radiocarbon date on wood fragments from the burial of about A.D. 32 to 769.[J. Huston McCulloch, "The Bat Creek Stone (author web page summarizing McCulloch, 'The Bat Creek Inscription: Cherokee or Hebrew?' Tennessee Anthropologist, 1988)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://econ.ohio-state.edu/jhm/arch/batcrk.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone: Judeans in Tennessee?", Tennessee Anthropologist 16, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1-19, p. 9. Copy posted by the Tennessee Division of Archaeology. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/environment/archaeology/documents/staff-pubs/arch_mainfort-kwas-1991.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

What the evidence shows.

- Note first that the Smithsonian is the one that published the stone, in 1894, with a picture.[87] The "suppression" claim is backward.
- In 2004, archaeologists Robert Mainfort Jr. and Mary Kwas showed that the inscription matches an illustration in an 1870 Masonic reference book, Macoy's *General History*, *Cyclopedia*, *and Dictionary of Freemasonry*, page 169. Their summary: "The inscription is fraudulent, having been copied from a Masonic treatise."[88]
- They found that brass bracelets in the same burial "appear to be of European origin, dating to the eighteenth or early nineteenth century," and that an earlier radiocarbon date came from wood fragments, not from the bracelets or the stone.[89]
- They named Emmert, who found the stone, as "the most likely suspect."[90]

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[86] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 391-394. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[87] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 393. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[88] Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone Revisited: A Fraud Exposed", American Antiquity 69, no. 4 (October 2004): 761-769, pp. 761, 765. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-antiquity/article/bat-creek-stone-revisited-a-fraud-exposed/1847329C6E052F466ADF76E296C636FF. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[89] Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone Revisited: A Fraud Exposed", American Antiquity 69, no. 4 (October 2004): 761-769, pp. 763, 766. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-antiquity/article/bat-creek-stone-revisited-a-fraud-exposed/1847329C6E052F466ADF76E296C636FF. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[90] Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone Revisited: A Fraud Exposed", American Antiquity 69, no. 4 (October 2004): 761-769, p. 765. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-antiquity/article/bat-creek-stone-revisited-a-fraud-exposed/1847329C6E052F466ADF76E296C636FF. Accessed November 18, 2026.

- Their earlier 1991 study had already found that three of the signs are "not in the Canaanite system" and that the text does not make sense as Paleo-Hebrew. They also pointed out that a date on wood from the grave cannot date an inscription.[91] McCulloch has disputed both papers on his own website.[92]
- The stone is still in the Smithsonian's collection. The archive's finding aid lists it as accession A134902-0, with a cast, in the Department of Anthropology at the National Museum of Natural History.[93] I found no record that it was moved or loaned. Anyone who believes it is genuine can ask to study it.

Verdict: False. The inscription was copied from an 1870 book, most likely by the man who reported finding it.

Claim 6: The mounds were built by a lost race, not by American Indians

The claim. The great earthworks of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys were built by a vanished, more advanced people, often described as giants or as settlers from the Old World.

Where it started. In print, with Benjamin Smith Barton's 1797 book, according to Powell.[94] It was widely believed through the 1800s.

Who spread it. Popular writers of the 1800s, and today the same books and websites that carry the giant stories.

What the evidence shows. This is the question the Smithsonian's mound survey was set up to answer, and its answer was that the mounds were built by the ancestors of American Indian peoples.[Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 21. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.][J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. xlv-xlvi. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.] That conclusion has held for more than a century. The lost-race idea had a political use in its own day: it told settlers that the land had belonged to someone other than the nations being removed from it. That point is my own reading of the history; Powell's report, which calls the lost-race theory a "romantic fallacy," does not make it.[95]

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[91] Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone: Judeans in Tennessee?", Tennessee Anthropologist 16, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1-19, pp. 6, 9. Copy posted by the Tennessee Division of Archaeology. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/environment/archaeology/documents/staff-pubs/arch_mainfort-kwas-1991.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[92] J. Huston McCulloch, "The Bat Creek Stone (author web page summarizing McCulloch, 'The Bat Creek Inscription: Cherokee or Hebrew?' Tennessee Anthropologist, 1988)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://econ.ohio-state.edu/jhm/arch/batcrk.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[93] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2014-03 Robert C. Mainfort, Jr. and Mary L. Kwas Papers on the Bat Creek Stone, 1987-2005 (finding aid)", read November 18, 2026. https://sirismm.si.edu/EADpdfs/NAA.MS2014-03.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[94] J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. xli-xlii. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[95] J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. xli. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Verdict: False.

Claim 7: The Smithsonian hid a large collection of human remains

The claim. The Smithsonian quietly kept the bodies of tens of thousands of people in storage, out of public view.

Where it started. This one does not come from the giant books. It comes from Native nations, who pressed for the return of their ancestors for decades, and from investigative reporting in 2023.[ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

Who spread it. ProPublica's Repatriation Project (January 2023) and the Washington Post's investigation (August 2023).[ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Washington Post, "The Smithsonian's 'racial brain collection' (interactive investigation, "The Collection" series)", August 14, 2023. The Post site refused my connection; figures were read in the Post reprint above and in Rappler, below. https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/interactive/2023/smithsonian-brains-collection-racial-history-repatriation/. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

What the evidence shows.

- The collection is real and large: "more than 30,000 human remains," by the Smithsonian's own count, many "acquired without informed consent."[96]
- It was not secret in the strict sense. The Smithsonian has been required to tell Native nations what it holds since 1989, and it has returned about 5,000 Native American people since then.[97] Scientists knew of the collection and used it.
- But the public did not know much. ProPublica found that the Smithsonian does not publish its unreturned holdings with the detail other museums must.[98] The Post found 255 brains kept for a "racial brain collection," and Mary Sara's family did not learn of hers for 90 years.[99] For remains from outside the United States, no law required anyone to be told.[100]

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[96] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[97] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[98] ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[99] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[100] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-

Verdict: Partly true. The remains were known to the institution and, for Native American remains, disclosed to tribes. They were not disclosed to the public in any detail, and families of people from other groups had no way to find out.

Claim 8: Smithsonian officials resisted returning remains

The claim. People inside the Smithsonian slowed or blocked repatriation.

Where it started. Former employees quoted by the Washington Post in December 2023.[101]

What the evidence shows. The Post reported that former employees described "internal resistance" in the 1990s, while other staff said the work is slow because descendants have to be identified.[102] A 2011 government report, as cited in the same coverage, said finishing could take "several more decades."[103] The Smithsonian declined to pay for Mary Sara's reburial when her family asked.[104] On the other side, the Smithsonian has returned thousands of remains, its Secretary apologized in 2023, and it has since adopted a policy that requires its museums to offer returns rather than wait to be asked.[Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Smithsonian Institution, "SD 600 Chapter 16.3: Human Remains Not Subject to the NMAI Act (as posted by the National Museum of Natural History)", undated web posting, read November 18, 2026. https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/irdp/resources/sd-600-chapter-16-3. Accessed November 18, 2026.]

Verdict: Partly true. There is credible, named-source reporting of resistance in the past. It is disputed by other insiders, and current policy points the other way.

Shorter checks

Delavan, Wisconsin, 1912. The story says 18 giant skeletons were found at Lake Delavan and hidden. The original was a three-paragraph *New York Times* item of May 4, 1912, passing on a secondhand report of 18 skulls "much larger" than normal. Wisconsin's interim state archaeologist told Wisconsin Watch in 2023 that there is no evidence for it, and that the surviving letters, including those of Charles E. Brown of the Wisconsin Historical Museum, make no mention of unusually large bones. It was not a Smithsonian dig. **Verdict: False.**[105]

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racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[101] Ellen Wexler, Smithsonian Magazine, "The Smithsonian's Human Remains Task Force Calls for New Repatriation Policies", February 22, 2024. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/smithsonian-human-remains-task-force-calls-for-new-repatriation-policies-180983829/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[102] Ellen Wexler, Smithsonian Magazine, "The Smithsonian's Human Remains Task Force Calls for New Repatriation Policies", February 22, 2024. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/smithsonian-human-remains-task-force-calls-for-new-repatriation-policies-180983829/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[103] Ellen Wexler, Smithsonian Magazine, "The Smithsonian's Human Remains Task Force Calls for New Repatriation Policies", February 22, 2024. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/smithsonian-human-remains-task-force-calls-for-new-repatriation-policies-180983829/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[104] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

The Cardiff Giant, 1869. A "petrified" 10-foot man dug up on a New York farm in October 1869 was a carved block of gypsum, made for a man named George Hull, who later confessed. It is on display today at the Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown, New York. It had nothing to do with the Smithsonian, but it shows how early the giant trade began. **Verdict: a confessed hoax.**[106]

Catalina Island. The 2014 cover-up book's description claims "over 4,000 giant skeletons, including kings more than 9 feet tall" on California's Catalina Island.[107] I found no excavation record with a measurement to support that number, though I did not search California archaeological records in depth. **Verdict: Inconclusive, with no evidence produced.**

The Solutrean idea (Ice Age Europeans in America). Some archaeologists have proposed that people from Ice Age Europe crossed the Atlantic along the sea ice and helped settle North America. This is a real scientific debate, not a cover-up. A 2014 article by seven scholars in the journal *Antiquity* laid out the main objections.[108] The idea's best-known proponent, Dennis Stanford, was himself a Smithsonian scientist. In 2002 the University of Colorado introduced him as "chair of the anthropology department at the Smithsonian Institution" and described his "controversial suggestion" that Europe's Solutrean culture may have been among the first settlers of the Americas.[109] A museum that suppressed the idea would not have let the head of its own anthropology department promote it. **Verdict: Inconclusive as science; False as a suppression claim.**

The secret warehouse. The claim that the Smithsonian keeps forbidden artifacts in a hidden warehouse mixes a real thing with an invented one. The real thing: most of the National Museum of Natural History's collections, including human remains, are kept at the Museum Support Center in Suitland, Maryland, a storage and research building that the Smithsonian names on its own website.[110] Nothing I found suggests it holds anything other than catalogued collections. **Verdict: False as stated.**

People before Clovis. The draft I was given suggests that evidence of people in the Americas before the Clovis culture, long treated as the earliest, has been kept quiet. The opposite has happened in public. In 2021, scientists reported human footprints at White Sands National Park in New Mexico dated to about 21,000 to 23,000 years ago. When other scientists questioned the dates, a follow-up study, published in

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[105] Tom Kertscher, Wisconsin Watch, "Is There Proof That Skeletons of Giants Were Found in Wisconsin in 1912?", June 2023. https://wisconsinwatch.org/2023/06/is-there-proof-that-skeletons-of-giants-were-found-in-wisconsin-in-1912/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[106] Matthew Wills, JSTOR Daily, "The Cardiff Giant: The Biggest Hoax of the 19th Century", November 5, 2015. https://daily.jstor.org/cardiff-giant-biggest-hoax-19th-century/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[107] Richard J. Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2014. Claims quoted from the publisher description on the Simon and Schuster page for the audio edition. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/The-Ancient-Giants-Who-Ruled-America/Richard-J-Dewhurst/9781620559475. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[108] Michael J. O'Brien, Matthew T. Boulanger, Mark Collard, Briggs Buchanan, Lia Tarle, Lawrence G. Straus and Metin I. Eren, "On Thin Ice: Problems with Stanford and Bradley's Proposed Solutrean Colonisation of North America", Antiquity 88, no. 340 (June 2014): 606-613, doi:10.1017/S0003598X0010122X. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/antiquity/article/abs/on-thin-ice-problems-with-stanford-and-bradleys-proposed-solutrean-colonisation-of-north-america/4089DC3C381D850559466957F7CBC697. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[109] University of Colorado Boulder, CU Boulder Today, "Smithsonian Archaeologist to Speak on Much-Debated First Americans Jan. 31", January 25, 2002. https://www.colorado.edu/today/2002/01/25/smithsonian-archaeologist-speak-much-debated-first-americans-jan-31. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[110] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Science on October 5, 2023, tested them two more ways (radiocarbon dating of conifer pollen and a method called optically stimulated luminescence) and confirmed them. The U.S. Geological Survey, a federal agency, announced the result.[111] **Verdict on suppression: False.** Older dates are being published by federal scientists, not hidden.

Ancient copper around Lake Superior. Claims that the Lake Superior copper mines were worked by a lost foreign people ignore the published dating. A 2021 study led by geologist David Pompeani reviewed 53 radiocarbon dates from copper artifacts and ancient mines and found that the oldest reliable date from a copper artifact is about 8,500 years old, with many between 8,000 and 5,000 years ago, as reported by *Archaeology* magazine.[112] That makes the copper working ancient and local, the work of the region's own Archaic-period peoples, not evidence of outsiders. I did not read the study itself, only the magazine report. **Verdict on a lost-race or cover-up claim: False.**

[111] U.S. Geological Survey, "Study Confirms Age of Oldest Fossil Human Footprints in North America (news release)", October 5, 2023. https://www.usgs.gov/news/national-news-release/study-confirms-age-oldest-fossil-human-footprints-north-america. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[112] Marley Brown, Archaeology, "The Copper Standard", July/August 2021. https://archaeology.org/issues/july-august-2021/digs-discoveries/digs-michigan-old-copper-culture/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Part Three: The Evidence Map

How the map was made

The map below plots every "giant" skeleton report I could trace to a written source while checking the claims in this book. It is not a map of every giant story ever printed in an American newspaper; there are hundreds of those, and most name no exact place. It is a map of the ones that matter to the Smithsonian question: every tall or large skeleton in the Smithsonian's own 1894 mound report, plus the famous later claims and hoaxes that get attached to the Smithsonian.

Each point is placed at the center of the county or the site's general area, by my own placement, for display only. The symbols sort the reports by how strong the evidence is, from a measurement printed by the Smithsonian's own agents down to a story that was invented outright. The base map is drawn from Natural Earth state boundaries, which are in the public domain.

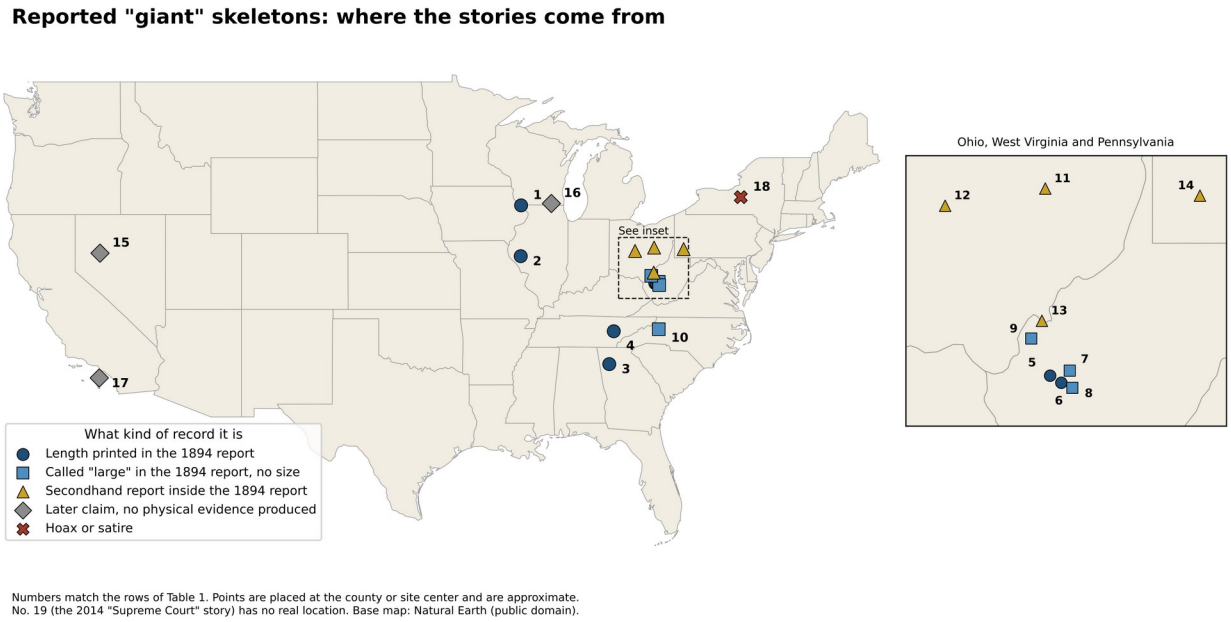


Figure 1. Evidence map of the alleged giant-skeleton discoveries tied to the Smithsonian question. Numbers match Table 1. Drawn for this book from the sources in Table 1 on a public-domain Natural Earth base map.

Table 1: Every report on the map

The "Assessment" column is my rating of the strength of each report, using the five classes in the map's legend. Page numbers are from the 1894 report unless another source is named. Full notes for the

sources in the table: the 1894 report;[113] Dansie on Lovelock;[114] Wisconsin Watch on Delavan;[115] the publisher's description of the 2014 cover-up book;[116] JSTOR Daily on the Cardiff Giant;[117] and Snopes and PolitiFact on the satire story.[118]

No	Site and place	Size claimed	Source	What happened to it	Assessment
1	Dunleith mound 5, Jo Daviess County, Illinois	Between 7 and 8 feet long (in the ground)	Thomas 1894, p. 113	Crumbled when lifted; copper items kept	Measured in the ground; never re-measured
2	Hume farm mound, Pike County, Illinois	One skeleton "rather more than 7 feet long"	Thomas 1894, p. 117	Not stated	Measured in the ground; never re-measured
3	Etowah mound C, grave a, Bartow County, Georgia	"Frame was heavy and about 7 feet long"	Thomas 1894, pp. 302-303	Grave goods sent to the National Museum; bones not stated	Measured in the ground; never re-measured
4	Long Island mound 12, Roane County, Tennessee	7 ft 3 in, skull base to toes; "fully 7 1/2 feet" in life (estimate)	Thomas 1894, pp. 361-362	Not stated; bones "very soft"	Measured in the ground; never re-measured
5	Spring Hill mound 11, Kanawha County, West	"Fully 7 feet long"	Thomas 1894, pp. 418-419	Not stated	Measured in the ground; never re-

[113] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894). Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[114] Dorothy P. Dansie, "John T. Reid's Case for the Redheaded Giants", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (1975). Year from the file name on the publisher-hosted copy; volume and issue not shown. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/Reid_Dansie_1975.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[115] Tom Kertscher, Wisconsin Watch, "Is There Proof That Skeletons of Giants Were Found in Wisconsin in 1912?", June 2023. https://wisconsinwatch.org/2023/06/is-there-proof-that-skeletons-of-giants-were-found-in-wisconsin-in-1912/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[116] Richard J. Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2014. Claims quoted from the publisher description on the Simon and Schuster page for the audio edition. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/The-Ancient-Giants-Who-Ruled-America/Richard-J-Dewhurst/9781620559475. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[117] Matthew Wills, JSTOR Daily, "The Cardiff Giant: The Biggest Hoax of the 19th Century", November 5, 2015. https://daily.jstor.org/cardiff-giant-biggest-hoax-19th-century/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[118] Kim LaCapria, Snopes, "Did the Smithsonian Destroy Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons?", December 17, 2014, updated May 19, 2023. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/smithsonian-giant-skeletons/. Accessed November 18, 2026. Ciara O'Rourke, PolitiFact, "Smithsonian Didn't Admit to Destroying Giant Human Skeletons", November 3, 2022. https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/nov/03/viral-image/smithsonian-didnt-admit-to-destroying-giant-human/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

No	Site and place	Size claimed	Source	What happened to it	Assessment
	Virginia				measured
6	Great Smith mound (Mound 21), Kanawha County, West Virginia	7 1/2 ft long, 19 in across the shoulders	Thomas 1894, pp. 425-427	Copper bracelets and gorget pictured; bones not stated	Measured in the ground; never re-measured
7	Kanawha mound 19, Kanawha County, West Virginia	"A large skeleton" (no size)	Thomas 1894, p. 424	Decaying fragments	Called large; no measurement
8	Poor farm Mound 31, Kanawha County, West Virginia	"Two very large skeletons" (no size)	Thomas 1894, p. 432	Not stated	Called large; no measurement
9	Couch farm mounds, Mason County, West Virginia	"Many of them very large" (no size)	Thomas 1894, p. 436	Not stated	Called large; no measurement
10	Nelson Triangle, Caldwell County, North Carolina	Upper skeletons "of larger stature" (no size)	Thomas 1894, p. 336	Not stated	Called large; no measurement
11	Metham stone mound, Coshocton County, Ohio	"A skeleton 7 feet long" (earlier opening)	Thomas 1894, p. 458	Not stated	Hearsay; agents did not see the bones
12	Mound near Dublin, Franklin County, Ohio	"Skeletons of very large size" (said by others)	Thomas 1894, p. 450	Graves already opened	Hearsay; agents did not see the bones
13	McCulloch mound area, Mason County, West Virginia	"A very large skeleton" found by earlier diggers	Thomas 1894, p. 437	Taken by earlier diggers	Hearsay; agents did not see the bones
14	Crall property, Washington County, Pennsylvania	"Some of them of large size" (owner's finds)	Thomas 1894, p. 494	Not stated	Hearsay; agents did not see the bones
15	Lovelock Cave, Pershing County, Nevada	Red-haired giants; one mummy "six feet six inches"; later claims 7 to 10 ft	Dansie 1975 (NHSQ)	Physical evidence for giants never produced	No bones or measurements produced
16	Delavan Lake,	18 skulls "much	New York	State records	No bones or

No	Site and place	Size claimed	Source	What happened to it	Assessment
	Walworth County, Wisconsin	larger" (secondhand, 1912)	Times, May 4, 1912; Wisconsin Watch 2023	mention no large bones	measurements produced
17	Catalina Island, Los Angeles County, California	4,000 skeletons, "kings more than 9 feet tall"	Dewhurst 2014 publisher text	No verified measurement found	No bones or measurements produced
18	Cardiff Giant, Onondaga County, New York	"Petrified" 10-foot man	JSTOR Daily 2015	Carved gypsum; maker confessed 1869	Hoax or satire
19	"Supreme Court" story, No real site (internet, 2014)	"Thousands" of skeletons, said to be 6 to 12 feet, destroyed	Snopes 2014; PolitiFact 2022	Satire site; no court case exists	Hoax or satire

What the map shows

Three things stand out.

The best evidence is the Smithsonian's own. All six measured reports, and every report with a page number, come from the 1894 report. The strongest evidence for tall ancient people in America is in the very document the cover-up story says was hidden.

The best evidence clusters where the survey dug. Nine of the fourteen 1894 entries are in West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania, and four of those are in a single county, Kanawha County, West Virginia, including the Great Smith mound. The report gives Kanawha County many pages of detail, which suggests the agents worked it hard; that is my inference from the report's length, not a count of digs. It tells us where the agents looked hardest. It does not, by itself, tell us that tall people lived there more than elsewhere.

The sizes grow as the evidence gets weaker. Figure 2 puts the numbers side by side. The skeletons measured at the dig run from about 6 feet to about 8 feet in the ground. The claims with no bones behind them start at 9 feet and go up to 12.

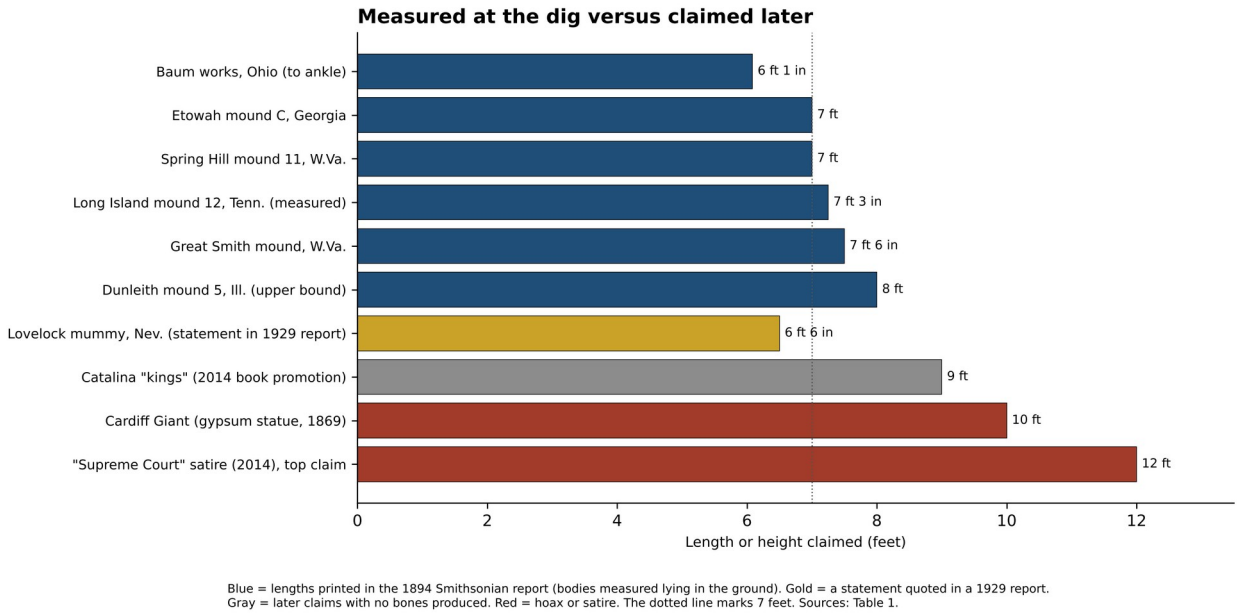


Figure 2. Measured at the dig versus claimed later. Lengths from the 1894 report are lengths of bodies lying in the ground, not standing heights. Drawn for this book from the sources in Table 1.

How to settle the open question

The one real question left by this map is simple to state: do any of the six measured skeletons survive, and if so, how tall were those people? A researcher could settle it this way.

1. Read the original field notes in Manuscript 2400 for the six mounds, starting with Kanawha County mound 21 (the Great Smith mound), Long Island mound 12 in Roane County, Tennessee, and Dunleith mound 5. The archive warns that the printed report differs from the notes.[119]
2. Check the Mound Exploration Division Catalog, Manuscript 7118, and the museum's accession records for any skeleton from those mounds.[120]
3. If any bones survive, any study must follow the Smithsonian's current human remains policy, which requires consultation and consent and limits images.[121] The descendants of the people in these mounds have the first say.

If those records show bones that were measured, kept and then quietly thrown out, that would be a real finding worth reporting. If they show bones that were never collected, or that turned out to be ordinary in size, the question is closed. Either way, the answer is in a public archive, not a secret one.

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[119] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[120] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[121] Smithsonian Institution, "SD 600 Chapter 16.3: Human Remains Not Subject to the NMAI Act (as posted by the National Museum of Natural History)", undated web posting, read November 18, 2026. https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/irdp/resources/sd-600-chapter-16-3. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Conclusion: What We Know, What We Think, What We Do Not Know

Established by the record

- The Smithsonian's Bureau of Ethnology surveyed the eastern burial mounds in the 1880s and published the results in 1894, including six skeletons measured at about 7 feet or more in the ground.[122]
- The same report concluded that the mounds were built by the ancestors of American Indians, not a lost race.[Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 21. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.][J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. xli-xlvi. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.]
- The original field notes survive in the Smithsonian's archives, and the archive itself warns that they differ from the printed report.[123]
- The "Supreme Court" story is satire, the Grand Canyon city is a 1909 newspaper hoax, and the Bat Creek inscription was copied from an 1870 Masonic book.[Kim LaCapria, Snopes, "Did the Smithsonian Destroy Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons?", December 17, 2014, updated May 19, 2023. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/smithsonian-giant-skeletons/. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Jason Colavito (transcriber), "The 1909 Grand Canyon Hoax (transcriptions of the Arizona Gazette, March 12 and April 5, 1909, and the Coconino Sun, April 16, 1909)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.jasoncolavito.com/the-1909-grand-canyon-hoax.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.][124]
- The Smithsonian holds more than 30,000 human remains, many taken without consent, including a brain collection built for racist research. It has apologized and adopted a policy to offer them back.[Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.][125]

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[122] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894). Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[123] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[124] Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone Revisited: A Fraud Exposed", American Antiquity 69, no. 4 (October 2004): 761-769, p. 765. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-antiquity/article/bat-creek-stone-revisited-a-fraud-exposed/1847329C6E052F466ADF76E296C636FF. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[125] Smithsonian Institution, "SD 600 Chapter 16.3: Human Remains Not Subject to the NMAI Act (as posted by the National Museum of Natural History)", undated web posting, read November 18, 2026. https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/irdp/resources/sd-600-chapter-16-3. Accessed November 18, 2026.

My reasoning, not proven

- In-ground lengths of decayed burials probably overstate living height in at least some of the six cases. That is my reading of how the report says the measurements were taken, not the finding of a study.
- The giant cover-up story survives partly because the real record has a gap: the report rarely says what happened to the bones. People fill gaps with stories.
- The real hidden-collection story got less attention than the giant story for a long time, although it is better documented. I cannot measure that, so it stays an opinion.

Still unresolved

- Whether any of the six measured skeletons is in the Smithsonian today. **[Not verified]**
- Whether the field notes in Manuscript 2400 give the same measurements as the printed report. **[Not verified]**
- The date Smithsonian Directive 600, Chapter 16.3, took effect. **[Not verified]**
- How many Smithsonian remains have been returned under the new policy. I found no count on the pages I read.

The limits of this check

I did not visit the National Anthropological Archives or the Museum Support Center. I read the Washington Post's reporting only through reprints and summaries, because the Post's own site refused my connection. I did not search 1800s newspapers for every giant story, so the evidence map covers the Smithsonian-related reports, not every report ever printed. A reader who finds a record I missed should weigh it against the sources here, and I would want to know about it.

What would prove a cover-up

A real cover-up would leave paper. An order from a Smithsonian official to destroy or hide a skeleton; a catalog entry for a giant skeleton that later disappears without a record of return, transfer or loss; a field note giving a measurement that the printed report changed. Any one of those would change the verdict in Claim 1. None has been produced so far, and the place to look is public.

The bottom line

The Smithsonian did not hide a race of giants. It printed the giant reports itself, then concluded the mound builders were American Indians. What it did hold back from public view for a century were the remains of real people, and that story is still being settled with the families and nations they came from.

Appendix A: Chronology

Date	Event
1797	Benjamin Smith Barton publishes what Powell later calls the first statement of the lost-race theory of the mounds.[126]
1846	Smithsonian Institution founded.[127]
October 1869	The "Cardiff Giant," a carved gypsum figure, is dug up on a New York farm; its maker later confesses.[128]
May 22, 1873	Secretary Joseph Henry writes to General Sherman seeking Indian clothing, weapons and tools.[129]
March 3, 1879	Congress creates the Bureau of Ethnology under the Smithsonian, with John Wesley Powell as director.[130]
1881-1889	The bureau's Division of Mound Exploration surveys the eastern mounds (dates of the surviving records).[131]
1894	Cyrus Thomas's mound report is published, including the tall-skeleton entries and the Bat Creek stone.[132]
1903-1943	Ales Hrdlicka works at the Smithsonian's National Museum and builds its human remains collection.[133]
March 12 and April 5, 1909	The *Arizona Gazette* prints the Kincaid Grand Canyon story.[134]
April 16, 1909	The *Coconino Sun* calls it "a splendid piece of imagination."[135]

[126] J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. xli-xlii. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[127] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[128] Matthew Wills, JSTOR Daily, "The Cardiff Giant: The Biggest Hoax of the 19th Century", November 5, 2015. https://daily.jstor.org/cardiff-giant-biggest-hoax-19th-century/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[129] ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[130] Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Bureau of Ethnology Established at Smithsonian by Congress (Smithsonian timeline entry for March 3, 1879)", posted March 30, 2017. https://siarchives.si.edu/bureau-ethnology-established-smithsonian-congress. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[131] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[132] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894). Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[133] National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "Ales Hrdlicka Papers (collection record NAA.1974-31)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-1974-31. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[134] Jason Colavito (transcriber), "The 1909 Grand Canyon Hoax (transcriptions of the Arizona Gazette, March 12 and April 5, 1909, and the Coconino Sun, April 16, 1909)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.jasoncolavito.com/the-1909-grand-canyon-hoax.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Date	Event
May 4, 1912	*New York Times* item on large skulls at Lake Delavan, Wisconsin.[136]
1929	*Lovelock Cave* excavation report published by the University of California.[137]
May 1933	Mary Sara dies in Seattle; her brain is mailed to Hrdlicka.[138]
October 19, 1970	Cyrus Gordon's Hebrew reading of the Bat Creek stone is reported in the *Nashville Tennessean*; *Argosy* follows in January 1971.[139]
1975	Dorothy Dansie's study of the Lovelock giant claims.[140]
1984	The Smithsonian begins returning Native American remains.[141]
1989 and 1996	National Museum of the American Indian Act passed and amended.[142]
1988	J. Huston McCulloch publishes a radiocarbon date of about A.D. 32 to 769 for wood from the Bat Creek burial.[143]
Spring 1991	Mainfort and Kwas find the Bat Creek signs do not read as Paleo-Hebrew.[144]
October 2004	Mainfort and Kwas show the Bat Creek inscription was copied from an 1870 Masonic book.[145]

[135] Jason Colavito (transcriber), "The 1909 Grand Canyon Hoax (transcriptions of the Arizona Gazette, March 12 and April 5, 1909, and the Coconino Sun, April 16, 1909)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.jasoncolavito.com/the-1909-grand-canyon-hoax.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[136] Tom Kertscher, Wisconsin Watch, "Is There Proof That Skeletons of Giants Were Found in Wisconsin in 1912?", June 2023. https://wisconsinwatch.org/2023/06/is-there-proof-that-skeletons-of-giants-were-found-in-wisconsin-in-1912/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[137] Amy Dansie, "Early Holocene Burials in Nevada: Overview of Localities, Research and Legal Issues", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (Spring 1997): 4-14. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/EarlyHoloceneBurials_Dansie_1997.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[138] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[139] Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone: Judeans in Tennessee?", Tennessee Anthropologist 16, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1-19, p. 2. Copy posted by the Tennessee Division of Archaeology. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/environment/archaeology/documents/staff-pubs/arch_mainfort-kwas-1991.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[140] Dorothy P. Dansie, "John T. Reid's Case for the Redheaded Giants", Nevada Historical Society Quarterly (1975). Year from the file name on the publisher-hosted copy; volume and issue not shown. https://www.onlinenevada.org/sites/default/files/Reid_Dansie_1975.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[141] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[142] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[143] J. Huston McCulloch, "The Bat Creek Stone (author web page summarizing McCulloch, 'The Bat Creek Inscription: Cherokee or Hebrew?' Tennessee Anthropologist, 1988)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://econ.ohio-state.edu/jhm/arch/batcrk.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[144] Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone: Judeans in Tennessee?", Tennessee Anthropologist 16, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1-19. Copy posted by the Tennessee Division of Archaeology. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/environment/archaeology/documents/staff-pubs/arch_mainfort-kwas-1991.pdf. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Date	Event
2007	The fourth brain returned from the collection goes to a Tlingit family in Sitka, Alaska.[146]
2014	Dewhurst's cover-up book is published.[147]
June 2014	*Antiquity* publishes a seven-author critique of the Solutrean proposal.[148]
December 3, 2014	World News Daily Report posts the "Supreme Court" satire.[149]
2015	National Museum of Natural History adopts an international repatriation policy.[150]
July/August 2021	*Archaeology* reports a study dating the oldest reliable copper artifact around Lake Superior to about 8,500 years ago.[151]
April 29, 2022	Smithsonian adopts its Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Policy.[152]
January 2023	ProPublica reports on museums' failure to return Native American remains.[153]
April 2023	Secretary Bunch apologizes and forms the Human Remains Task Force.[Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.][Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026.

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[146] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[147] Richard J. Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2014. Claims quoted from the publisher description on the Simon and Schuster page for the audio edition. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/The-Ancient-Giants-Who-Ruled-America/Richard-J-Dewhurst/9781620559475. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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[149] Kim LaCapria, Snopes, "Did the Smithsonian Destroy Thousands of Giant Human Skeletons?", December 17, 2014, updated May 19, 2023. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/smithsonian-giant-skeletons/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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[151] Marley Brown, Archaeology, "The Copper Standard", July/August 2021. https://archaeology.org/issues/july-august-2021/digs-discoveries/digs-michigan-old-copper-culture/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[152] Lonnie G. Bunch III, Smithsonian Institution, "From the Secretary: Adopting an Ethical Returns Policy for Smithsonian Collections", The Torch, May 3, 2022. https://torch.si.edu/2022/05/from-the-secretary-adopting-an-ethical-returns-policy-for-smithsonian-collections. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[153] ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Date	Event
	https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.]
August 14, 2023	Washington Post publishes its brain collection investigation.[154]
August 29, 2023	Mary Sara's brain is buried at her grave in Seattle.[155]
October 5, 2023	A study in *Science*, announced by the USGS, confirms White Sands human footprints at about 21,000 to 23,000 years old.[156]
December 2023	Post reports former employees' accounts of resistance to repatriation.[157]
January 2024	Task force report delivered to the Secretary.[158]
February 21, 2024	Task force report made public.[159]
Date not verified	Smithsonian Directive 600, Chapter 16.3, on human remains takes effect.[160]

[154] Washington Post, "The Smithsonian's 'racial brain collection' (interactive investigation, "The Collection" series)", August 14, 2023. The Post site refused my connection; figures were read in the Post reprint above and in Rappler, below. https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/interactive/2023/smithsonian-brains-collection-racial-history-repatriation/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[155] Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[156] U.S. Geological Survey, "Study Confirms Age of Oldest Fossil Human Footprints in North America (news release)", October 5, 2023. https://www.usgs.gov/news/national-news-release/study-confirms-age-oldest-fossil-human-footprints-north-america. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[157] Ellen Wexler, Smithsonian Magazine, "The Smithsonian's Human Remains Task Force Calls for New Repatriation Policies", February 22, 2024. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/smithsonian-human-remains-task-force-calls-for-new-repatriation-policies-180983829/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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Appendix B: Claim-to-Source Table and Visual Credits

Claim-to-source table

No	Claim	Verdict	Main sources
1	The Smithsonian hid or destroyed giant skeletons	False	1894 report; MS 2400 record; Bureau of Ethnology timeline[161]
2	A Supreme Court ruling forced the Smithsonian to confess	False	Snopes; PolitiFact[162]
3	Egyptian city in the Grand Canyon, 1909	False	1909 newspaper texts; Pima County Public Library[163]
4	Red-haired giants in Lovelock Cave	False as to giants	Dansie 1975; Dansie 1997[164]
5	Bat Creek stone is ancient Hebrew	False	Mainfort and Kwas 1991 and 2004; 1894 report; MS 2014-03[165]

[161] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894). Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, "MS 2400 Division of Mound Exploration Records, 1881-1889 (collection record)", read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/object/archives/sova-naa-ms2400. Accessed November 18, 2026. Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Bureau of Ethnology Established at Smithsonian by Congress (Smithsonian timeline entry for March 3, 1879)", posted March 30, 2017. https://siarchives.si.edu/bureau-ethnology-established-smithsonian-congress. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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[163] Jason Colavito (transcriber), "The 1909 Grand Canyon Hoax (transcriptions of the Arizona Gazette, March 12 and April 5, 1909, and the Coconino Sun, April 16, 1909)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.jasoncolavito.com/the-1909-grand-canyon-hoax.html. Accessed November 18, 2026. Pima County Public Library, "Grand Canyon and Egyptian Artifacts (The Librarian Files)", undated, read November 18, 2026. Cites Don Lago, "'Looks Like a Mulhatton Story': The Origins of the Grand Canyon Egyptian Cave Myth," The Ol' Pioneer 20, no. 2 (Summer 2009). https://www.library.pima.gov/content/grand-canyon-and-egyptian-artifacts/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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No	Claim	Verdict	Main sources
6	Mounds built by a lost race	False	1894 report; Powell[166]
7	The Smithsonian hid a large human remains collection	Partly true	Smithsonian; Washington Post; ProPublica[167]
8	Officials resisted repatriation	Partly true	Smithsonian Magazine summary of the Post; Smithsonian policy[168]
9	Delavan giants, 1912	False	Wisconsin Watch[169]
10	Cardiff Giant	Confessed hoax	JSTOR Daily[170]
11	4,000 Catalina giants	Inconclusive, no evidence produced	Publisher description[171]
12	Solutrean settlers suppressed	Inconclusive as science; False as suppression	O'Brien and others 2014; CU Boulder 2002[172]

[166] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 21. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026. J. W. Powell, "Report of the Director", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. xli-xlvi. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[167] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026. Nicole Dungca and Claire Healy, Washington Post, "Smithsonian Returns Woman's Brain to Family 90 Years After It Was Taken", September 8, 2023. Read in the Stars and Stripes reprint. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-09-08/smithsonian-returns-brain-racial-collection-11306576.html. Accessed November 18, 2026. ProPublica (The Repatriation Project), "America's Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains", January 2023. Read in the Anchorage Daily News reprint of January 13, 2023. https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2023/01/13/the-biggest-museums-in-the-us-fail-to-return-native-american-human-remains/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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[170] Matthew Wills, JSTOR Daily, "The Cardiff Giant: The Biggest Hoax of the 19th Century", November 5, 2015. https://daily.jstor.org/cardiff-giant-biggest-hoax-19th-century/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[171] Richard J. Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America: The Missing Skeletons and the Great Smithsonian Cover-Up*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2014. Claims quoted from the publisher description on the Simon and Schuster page for the audio edition. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/The-Ancient-Giants-Who-Ruled-America/Richard-J-Dewhurst/9781620559475. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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No	Claim	Verdict	Main sources
13	Secret warehouse	False as stated	Smithsonian[173]
14	Evidence of people before Clovis is suppressed	False	U.S. Geological Survey[174]
15	Lake Superior copper shows a lost foreign people	False	*Archaeology* magazine[175]

Visual credits and rights

Item	What it is	Source of data	Rights
Cover	Drawn for this book	Original artwork	Copyright 2026 Andrew Dominguez
Figure 1, evidence map	Drawn for this book	Points from Table 1; state outlines from Natural Earth, 1:50m admin-1 states and provinces (naturalearthdata.com)	Map copyright 2026 Andrew Dominguez; Natural Earth data is in the public domain
Figure 2, size chart	Drawn for this book	Numbers from Table 1	Copyright 2026 Andrew Dominguez

Historical images not used. The 1894 report includes drawings of the Great Smith mound copper bracelets and gorget and of the Bat Creek stone.[176] As a United States government publication of 1894, it is in the public domain, and readers can see the drawings in the Internet Archive copy cited in the source list. I did not reproduce them because I could not download a clean page image while preparing this edition. By choice, this book shows no photographs or drawings of human remains, following the Smithsonian's own current policy on images of the dead.[177]

[173] Smithsonian Institution, "Reckoning with Human Remains in the Smithsonian Collection (web page with Frequently Asked Questions)", undated, read November 18, 2026. https://www.si.edu/collections/human-remains. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[174] U.S. Geological Survey, "Study Confirms Age of Oldest Fossil Human Footprints in North America (news release)", October 5, 2023. https://www.usgs.gov/news/national-news-release/study-confirms-age-oldest-fossil-human-footprints-north-america. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[175] Marley Brown, Archaeology, "The Copper Standard", July/August 2021. https://archaeology.org/issues/july-august-2021/digs-discoveries/digs-michigan-old-copper-culture/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[176] Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 393, 427. Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[177] Smithsonian Institution, "SD 600 Chapter 16.3: Human Remains Not Subject to the NMAI Act (as posted by the National Museum of Natural History)", undated web posting, read November 18, 2026. https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/irdp/resources/sd-600-chapter-16-3. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Appendix C: Full Source List

Every source cited in this book is listed here once, grouped by the five tiers explained in the Introduction. Sources were read on November 18, 2026. Promoter materials in Tier 5 are listed because they are the claims being checked, not because they are trusted.

Tier 1: Primary and official sources

- Cyrus Thomas, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology", in Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1890-91 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894). Full text read at the Internet Archive, item bureauofethnology00thomrich. https://archive.org/details/bureauofethnology00thomrich.

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Tier 2: Archives and finding aids

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- Geraldine Kendall Adams, Museums Journal (Museums Association), "Smithsonian Moves Towards Informed Consent Principle for Human Remains", March 12, 2024. https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2024/03/smithsonian-moves-towards-informed-consent-principle-for-human-remains/.

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