

INTERVIEW: GLORIA FARLEY

# Discovering America's 'Old Country' Roots



Courtesy of Warren Dexter

Gloria Farley: "Hard evidence [of Old Country influence] is not scarce in America, it is just not known by many and is not accepted by most in academia."

## Biographical Sketch

Gloria Farley was born October 21, 1916, in the hilltop home of her parents in Heavener, Oklahoma. Her father, Dr. Matthew A. Stewart, was of Scottish descent. He had come to Heavener, then in Indian Territory, in 1902, as a pioneer physician. Her mother, Eunice Virginia Upchurch Stewart, of English descent, was a postal clerk before her marriage in 1911.

Gloria quit college after only one year to marry J. Ray Farley, of Miami, Oklahoma. They lived in Missouri for two years and in Ohio for eleven years before returning to Heavener to raise their two small sons, Scott and Mark. They built a brick home next door to her mother's home, on the same hill where Gloria was born.

Gloria encountered pre-Columbian artifacts as a young girl, and spent 54

years as an adult pursuing the history of pre-Columbian transoceanic contact with America. After her husband became an invalid, Gloria had to balance support for the family with her historical interests. She has recorded over 300 pieces of evidence that Old World people were in early America. Most of this evidence consisted of translatable inscriptions in 20 ancient scripts, plus related petroglyphs.

Much of the evidence was published in 1994 in her book *In Plain Sight: Old World Records in Ancient America* (Columbus, Ga.: ISAC Press). Gloria has also published 95 articles and delivered more than 80 lectures in the United States. At age 86, she was still writing and lecturing.

—Alan Gillespie

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This interview by Alan Gillespie was published in the Epigraphic Society Occasional Papers, ESOP, Vol. 24 (2006), and is reprinted here with permission. Gloria Farley died on March 18, 2006, and an obituary by Julian Fell appeared in the Spring/Summer 2006 issue of 21st Century.

**Question: Mrs. Farley, you are nearing completion of a second book. What is its title? When will it be published, and what topics will it address?**

It will be Volume II of *In Plain Sight*, and I hope it will be finished soon. Every time I think I have it finished, along comes something new and wonderful which must be included. It will contain more of everything that is in Volume I, plus two new subjects that I think are important: "The Early Chinese in America," and "Indian Relationships."

**Question: What events kindled your interest in epigraphy, and when did they occur?**

I unconsciously became an epigrapher as a skinny girl at age 12, when I was shown what I would eventually name The Heavener Runestone. At that time, the locals called it "The Indian Rock." This was in 1928. The site was in the wilderness, in a deep ravine on Poteau Mountain. It was only about 2 miles from Heavener, but there were no trails or paths leading to it. When, at age 14, I saw a runic chart and realized that the Heavener symbols were runes, I tucked this fact back in my mind and thought about it often. In 1948, I read about the Kensington Runestone, and I then sent a copy of the Heavener runes to the Smithsonian.

**Question: How do you work in the field? What is your methodology? What do you look for?**

When I was still able physically to work in the field, I followed any hint from anyone on where to look. I climbed cliffs and crawled in caves all over America, from New England to California. I cor-

rectly recorded all I found with photographs, tracings, and, if possible, with latex molds and plaster casts. I searched for any inscriptions that were not in English, as well as related petroglyphs.

**Question: How did you become involved in the Epigraphic Society, and when was this?**

I had been working with Dr. George Carter of Texas for years, and I sent him a puzzling inscription in 1975. Dr. Carter forwarded it to Barry Fell at Harvard University. Dr. Fell received it with enthusiasm, so I sent him many more recordings, to his delight.

He invited me to Harvard to attend, in September 1975, a joint meeting of the Epigraphic Society, New England Antiquities Research Society (NEARA), and the Early Sites Research Society (ESRS). They arranged to give me 10 minutes to speak. From that time I had many new colleagues, and worked hand-in-hand with Barry until his death in 1994.

**Question: You made your first appearance in the pages of ESOP in 1976. Barry Fell eventually named you as Director of Exploration for the Epigraphic Society. When did he do this, and for what did he thus distinguish you?**

I think it was in 1977. By 1978, the Field Exploration Committee consisted of me and John Williams. [ESOP Editor's note: in 1977, John Williams held this post alone]. This listing continued until 1992, when I was listed alone. Barry said that I was in this position because of the large number of sites and petroglyphs that I had found.

**Question: The Epigraphic Society logo is adapted from a petroglyph you discovered. Can you tell us about that discovery, and do you think the depiction on the seal is accurate?**

The seal of The Epigraphic Society is a somewhat abstract copy of a ship petroglyph near the bottom of Spider Rock in southeastern Colorado. Dale Murphy, then a young geologist with my exploration party, saw it first. We made a latex mold



*Farley on a cliffside by the Cimarron River in western Oklahoma, near the discovery of an image of Cernunnos, a Celtic god.*

as proof against later criticisms and adverse opinions. My drawing of the 22-inch ship, which was published on page 23 of my book, is slightly different than the seal because, in the interest of clarity, I drew all the ropes as more narrow than the ship lines. The plaster cast shows that all the lines are actually of the same width.

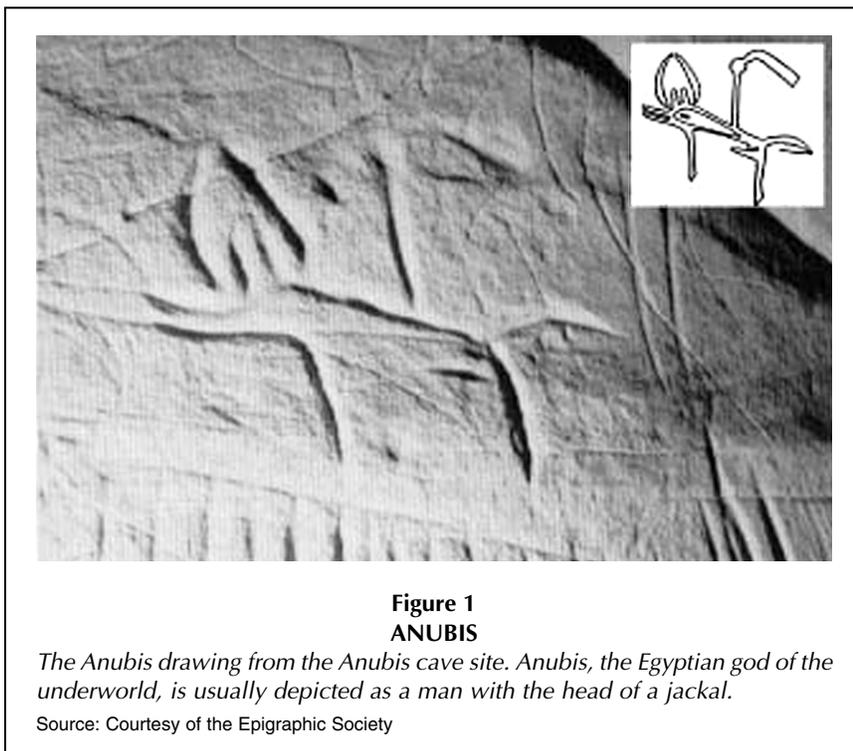
**Question: This is the second time you have mentioned latex molds of petroglyphs. You say that these offer proof of**

**what was on the rock, but others have sharply criticized the practice as destructive to the rock. How have you answered these critics?**

Of course we never attempt to take a latex mold of any stone that is friable. When Dr. Clyde Keeler and I were accused of damaging the Anubis panel [Figure 1] by making a latex mold, we also made other molds in the cave, but received no criticism for that. Many visitors were taken to Anubis Caves, without the owner's permission and not by me. The damage caused by these visitors is unknown, and uncriticized. However, the importance of the Anubis Caves would never have been ascertained if Clyde and I had not made the latex molds and several casts.

**Question: The photograph [this page] shows you in one of your field explorations. Can you tell us the story behind the photo?**

The photograph shows me walking in



**Figure 1  
ANUBIS**

*The Anubis drawing from the Anubis cave site. Anubis, the Egyptian god of the underworld, is usually depicted as a man with the head of a jackal.*

Source: Courtesy of the Epigraphic Society

triumph, even with a cane, on a cliffside by the Cimarron River in western Oklahoma, in 1979. We had just discovered the image of Cernunnos, the Celtic god who wore antlers and was always associated with a horned snake. I had recognized him, and copied an inscription below him. The inscription, which consisted of dots, turned out to be in Bricren Ogam, which Barry Fell could translate.

**Question: As with many larger-than-life figures, Barry Fell provoked many different and strong reactions from different people. In particular, his scholarly message was anathema to some academics. You knew Barry Fell for many years. Do you have any insights into why some scholars reacted so violently to what he had to say, to the point of *ad hominem* attacks?**

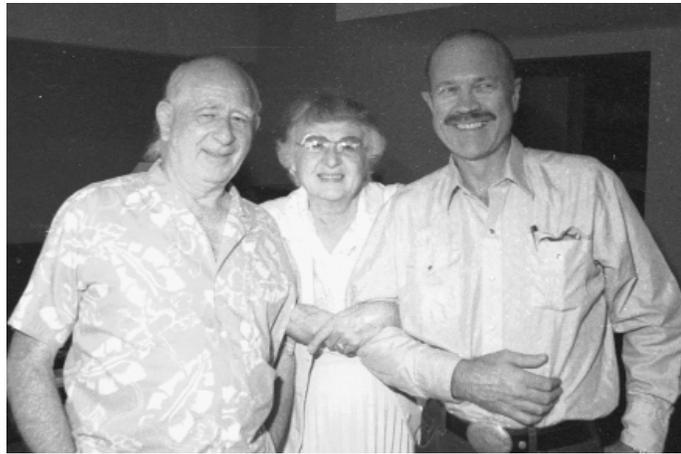
I do not understand the motives of the violent attackers, unless it was fear that Fell's new understanding would undermine their own published work.

To illustrate what Barry had to endure, I will relate what happened at a symposium in Atlanta, Georgia. This was at a meeting of the Southern Historical Association, on Nov. 12, 1976, and I had presented a program there. I listened to a panel of four professors about "New Scientific Dating Techniques," and afterwards approached the Egyptian specialist, Edward F. Wente of the University of Chicago, and handed him a plain 8x10 photograph of the Pontotoc Stone (page 83). He took one look and said, "All I can tell that is Egyptian is the design of the Sun disc and rays of the Sun," and told me to show it to the other three professors.

Their reaction was immediate and intense. They asked, "Is this stone from ancient Lebanon?" "No, Oklahoma," I replied. Their interest turned to derision. I said, "but it translates!" "By whom?" they asked. "Dr. Barry Fell of Harvard University." The tallest of the three said, "His book is hogwash!"

I answered, "How could you possibly know? His book is not yet published." The man said, "I admit to bias and prejudice."

I walked away without ascertaining if



Courtesy of Warren Dexter

Farley with Dr. Barry Fell (left), founder of the Epigraphic Society, and Dr. Norman Totten, Epigraphic Society president.

he was a Near East specialist. Fell never would let me publish this account, saying that if I did not know who said it, it was "hearsay." But I think the story should be told, for it is typical of what Barry Fell had to endure.

**Question: You told us that your introduction to epigraphic matters was essentially accidental, through the inscribed Heavener Runestone located near your hometown. What was it about the runestone that fascinated you most?**

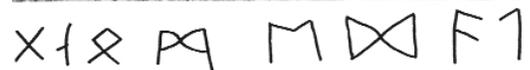
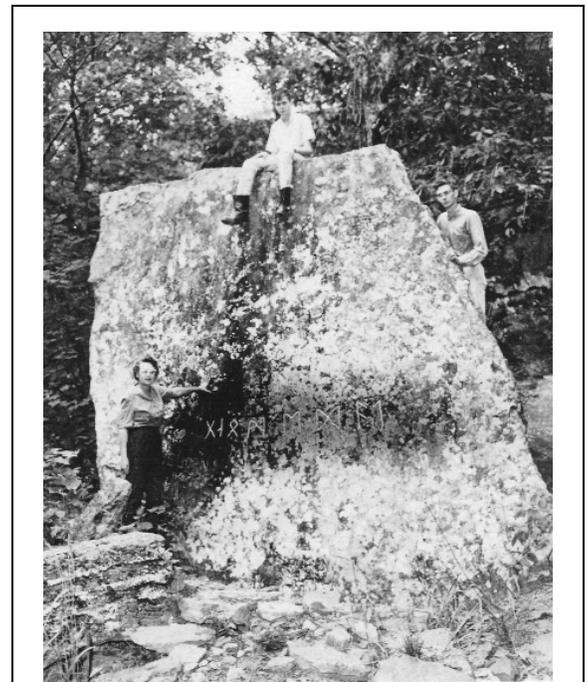
What fascinated me most at age 12 was the fact that the Heavener Runestone [Figure 2] stood vertically like a huge stone billboard; 12 feet high, 10 feet wide, but only 16 inches thick. Across its western face were plainly pecked, in a straight line, the eight large symbols, like an advertisement.

What could it say? As there was a stone shelf on the back, Mr. Carl F. Kemmerer, father of my chum, lifted me up to the top, where he said I clung to him in a death grip. I believed at the

time that it had been made by Indians.

**Question: The Kensington Runestone is perhaps better known than the one from Heavener, in part because of its long history of charges of fraud. Yet linguistic evidence compiled and analyzed by Richard Nielsen appears convincing that it could not have been manufactured in 19th Century America. Do you find the archeological information surrounding the Kensington runestone useful in your studies, one way or the other?**

The fame of the Kensington Runestone made Americans aware of the meaning of the word "runestone," which made the research on the five



**Figure 2**  
**THE HEAVENER RUNESTONE**

The Heavener Runestone in Oklahoma, which got Farley interested in epigraphy when she first saw it in 1928.

Source: Gloria Farley, *In Plain Sight*.

Oklahoma runestones easier for the public to understand.

The Kensington Runestone has been disputed since its discovery in 1898, clutched in the roots of a large tree. It has at last been fully authenticated, largely through the knowledge and efforts of Dr. Richard Nielsen of Houston. Dr. Nielsen also translated the Heavener, Poteau, and Shawnee runestones in 1986, and he has been my close friend ever since. He was assisted by Scott Wolter of Minnesota, and they both lectured at the Heavener Runestone State Park on June 19, 2003. They will take the Kensington Runestone to Sweden where it will be exhibited for three months. Of course, I have followed the entire history of the Kensington closely, and rejoice that it is now fully authenticated and accepted.

**Question: If the Norse were in Minnesota and in Oklahoma, they must have visited the New World repeatedly. Why were they here, and how far do you think they explored the New World?**

The Norse were explorers in widely separated places: Greece, and the Volga River in Russia, as well as the Atlantic seaboard, and there is no reason that they could not have ascended the Mississippi and explored all its tributaries. Possible runestones have been reported in other states, not yet proven.

To my five Oklahoma runestones, I would like to add another stone I recorded in western Arkansas on March 21, 1971. It is only 7 inches tall with four runes on the top edge, and I have always believed that it is a tombstone. Nearby is a circle of stones which seems significant.

I took the then-current Oklahoma State Archaeologist to the site but he only marvelled that I could relocate such a small stone on Wildcat Mountain, near Hackett, Arkansas. At my request, he drilled near the stone, but not, in my opinion, where a body might lie. Although I have reported this find to people who should be concerned, nobody is interested. I think the four runes must be a name.

However, when Dr. Richard Nielsen and Scott Wolter were in my home on June 19 and 20, 2003, they seemed very impressed by what I had to offer. They believed that I may have located a Norse grave, and intend to pursue this information.

Dr. Nielsen was excited when I showed



Courtesy of Warren Dexter

*Farley with the Pontotoc Stone, found in Oklahoma.*

him the photograph of a petroglyph of an eight-legged horse that had been found in central western Colorado near Montrose. I had suspected it might be the eight-legged horse Sleipner ridden through the sky by the supreme Norse God Odin, according to Norse mythology.

Richard not only confirmed this but also said it was astonishing and important, and evidence that the Norse got to Colorado. I had found three images of Sleipner in literature from Gotland.

**Question: When did you come to believe that the New World had been visited by other pre-Columbian travellers?**

In the years that I pursued runestones, I kept finding inscriptions that were not runic, which I correctly recorded and filed. It was in July 1973, when Earl Syversen of California and I were hoping to find a runic inscription at Picture Canyon in southern Colorado, that we were astonished to find a third of a mile of both, writing and pictures in stone, but none of it runic.

I then realized for sure that there had been other Old World travellers here. I also knew the exact site of the grave of a pagan Celt, and once had permission of the Oklahoma owner to excavate. The

7-foot inscription above it indicated it was a grave and even gave his name.

But the Oklahoma Archaeological Survey expected me to raise \$132,000 for a 70-day excavation.

**Question: Archaeologists have criticized epigraphic evidence of Old World contact, arguing that somewhere there should also be Old World artifacts, and lots of them. For example, evidence of Norse presence in Newfoundland was widely ridiculed until the 11th Century Norse structures were excavated. Is the perception that there is no archaeological evidence elsewhere justified?**

Of course artifacts exist! I published 18 in my first book, in the chapter "Made in America." Critical archaeologists and anthropologists just do not know this, or have no desire to know, which is a pity.

I know the owners, have photographs, and many plaster casts. One section of my forthcoming book will be called "Portraits in Stone," faces and heads of Old-World people. In addition, to three already published, I am adding probably ten more and will see three more next week. I own an amazing 14-inch stone head which is Celtic, found in Oklahoma. All who see it say "Wow!"

I intend to give it to the Oklahoma State Historical Society, which wants to inherit my vast collection of research items, including 4,000 slides, about 2,000 photographs, a room full of tracings, and a library of about 800 books.

**Question: Many, perhaps most, mainstream historians and archaeologists have a hard time giving much credence to evidence of Old World, pre-Columbian visitors to the New World. Why is this?**

Because they have already published otherwise and think it would be fatal to their careers to renege on their former beliefs. What Ph.D. is going to say, "I was wrong, and that self-educated female is right?"

**Question: The Epigraphic Society was established to provide a forum for the**



Courtesy of Warren Dexter

*Farley in the field. She was an intrepid explorer and careful documenter.*

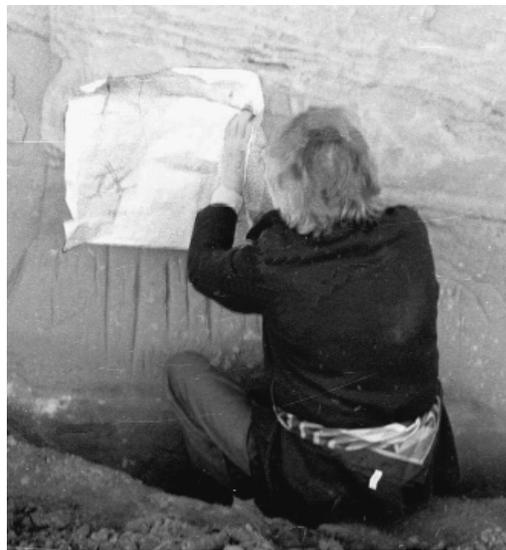
**presentation and discussion of just such evidence. Do you think it has some kind of duty to persuade mainstream scientists and historians, above and beyond its charter? If so, how should it go about achieving this goal?**

The Board is aware of its duty to the public, and that Fell's intention was far beyond the publishing of *ESOP*. So I should not be asked to advise the Board what to do, when, and why. If I could venture just one word, I would say "publish!"

**Question: One of your integrating concepts has been that Old World exploration of the American interior took place along waterways. What is it that led you to this idea, and how have you used it to organize your explorations?**

Almost all evidence of the presence of Old World people which I have recorded is found along waterways, because the shining unpolluted rivers which were deeper then, were the only means of transportation in ancient America. This method of following rivers and their tributaries was a guarantee that the travellers would never become lost in a vast new continent, they could always backtrack.

I always record the nearest waterway to any site. Most of them trace tributaries to the Arkansas or Mississippi rivers, or to the Atlantic or Pacific coasts. Sometimes, evidence is found at the very end of a waterway, which is a small branch or a spring, tributary to a creek,



Courtesy of Warren Dexter

tributary to a river. They leave something at this end before they return to their raft or ship. Southeastern Colorado, and the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles, are replete with evidence, because the sources for the Arkansas River in Colorado, the Cimmaron, North and South Canadian in extreme northwest New Mexico, the Red River in the Texas Panhandle, and the Rio Grande in central New Mexico, all together occupy just a small portion of the map.

**Question: You have found many petroglyphs depicting a figure that you identify as "Tanit," a Carthaginian deity known as Astarte to the Phoenicians [Figure 3]. Indeed, you have found this theme depicted so often that you are quoted as stating that Tanit has "found you." What did you mean by this, and**

**why do you think this has happened?**

As the ancient people in America left petroglyphs of their gods, this was very helpful in identifying their cultures. When I found the first petroglyph of Tanit in Colorado, I did not know her. After Dr. Fell identified her as the Carthaginian Tanit, I began a study of the varieties of her image in literature. So when I saw her on the ceiling of a stone chamber in Vermont, I jerked on Dr. Fell's jacket and pointed up.

He said, "Only you could find the second Tanit." I eventually found, all the way from New England to California, 10 of the 16 I published from America. The other 6 were contributed by friends who heard of

my work. I also published 36 comparisons from the Old World, including many from Africa. Volume II of *In Plain Sight* will include four more, from Ohio, Louisiana, Colorado, and Wyoming.

Through the years, it seemed uncanny how I kept seeing so many images of her in widespread places, plus pages in so many books.

**Question: You and your colleagues had uncovered evidence you say comes from a veritable hodgepodge of Old World visitors from various times and cultures. Summarizing your lifetime of experience, what do you think**

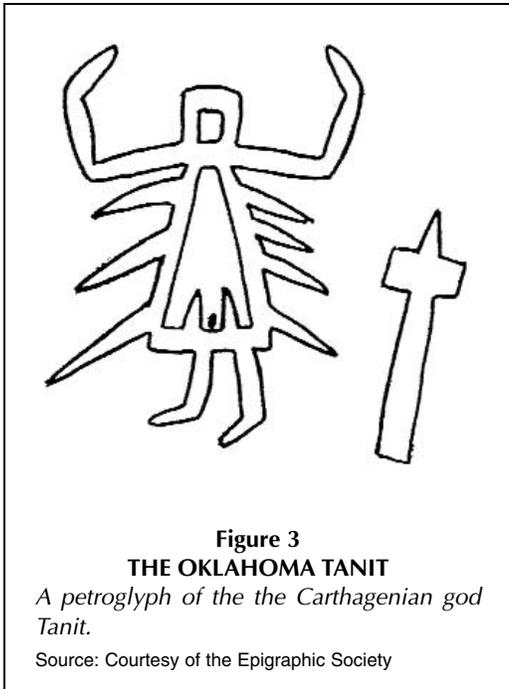
**explains this variety? What is your quick version of the history of pre-Columbian contact?**

Contrary to most historical records, seaworthy ships filled with Old World people swarmed both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, even before Christ. One of these voyages, by the Chinese in 2225 B.C., is proven because they returned to China and left records of America, some of which still exist.

Why did they travel? Some for economic reasons like trade, some for curiosity to find out what was beyond the rising and setting Suns. Why do we want to travel? The same human reasons.

**Question: What is the oldest evidence you are aware of?**

This is a tricky question. Do you mean evidence I have found, or evidence that



**Figure 3**  
**THE OKLAHOMA TANIT**

*A petroglyph of the the Carthaginian god Tanit.*

Source: Courtesy of the Epigraphic Society

contact seems so scarce?

Hard evidence is not scarce in America, it is just not known by many and is not accepted by most in academia.

I am privileged to have been a part of this. I attended, by invitation, the Yuchi "Green Corn Festival" for 12 hours. A long account of this will be in my next book. In the seventh month (July) they live for a week in booths, exactly as described in the Book of Leviticus in the Bible. Some of my personal friends were Yuchis.

I knew Ethel Stewart, and am familiar with her account of the escape to America from Genghis Khan of the Dene and Na-Denes of Asia, and her description of the Dene "Demi-House God with Pointed Snout."

In 1982, I had climbed a steep mountain in Colorado and recorded a panel of script and the image of a mouse with pointed snout wearing a crown. After a lot of research, this will be in my next book, and perhaps in the *Midwestern Epigraphic Journal*.

**Question: Some have accused elements in the Epigraphic Society of racism towards Native Americans, precisely because they seem to see an Old World explanation for all aspects of Native American society. Do you think this charge has any basis? You must know many Native Americans yourself, especially because of your chosen avocation. How do they view this issue?**

It is certainly not true that the Epigraphic Society is guilty of racism toward the Native Americans.

To expand my answer about Indians and racism: my Volume II of *In Plain Sight* will contain several important and long sections about evidence of the intelligence of the Native Americans, and their relationship with then Old World people.

I have even recorded an artifact, an Egyptian sphinx found

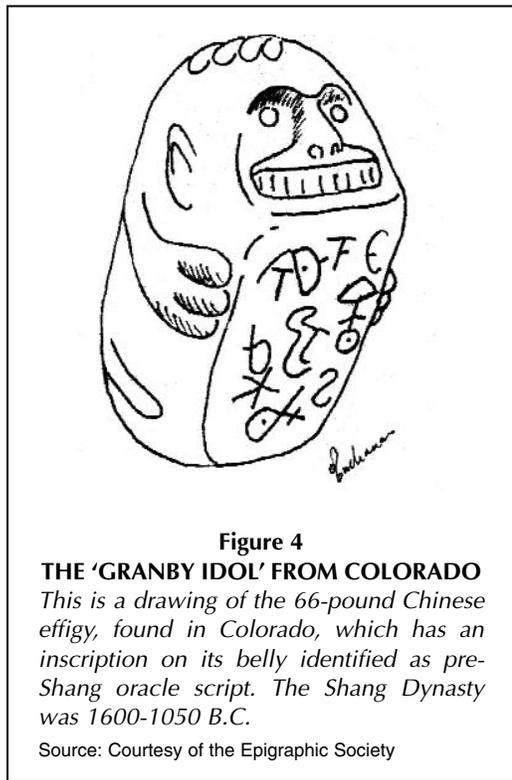
buried in an Indian site. I am told that my article about this will be published in Volume 24 of *ESOP*.

Barry Fell visited the Micmacs, tried to work closely with the Cherokees, and listed three Indian names in his Department of Amerindian Studies in *ESOP*, Vol. 5 (1978). I live in Oklahoma, which means "Home of the Red Man." My grandson is part Choctaw.

We are so integrated that we do not give a thought as to which of our friends may be Indian, their tribe, or what fraction of Indian blood they are.

**Question: Let's bring this discussion back to you. Your career has been long and inspirational to many. What advice do you have for those who follow you? What preparation did you have for your career? For example, have you learned any of the ancient languages of the people whose traces you have sought?**

My advice for diffusionists? Learn to see what you are looking at. Do not waste your time reading fiction. I had no preparation for my career. My 100 college hours did not even include ancient history, and I was lecturing before I took a speech course. No courses were presented anywhere in epigraphy.



**Figure 4**

**THE 'GRANBY IDOL' FROM COLORADO**

*This is a drawing of the 66-pound Chinese effigy, found in Colorado, which has an inscription on its belly identified as pre-Shang oracle script. The Shang Dynasty was 1600-1050 B.C.*

Source: Courtesy of the Epigraphic Society

I have read about? That includes some statements that are very difficult to accept. Every time we pick up a newspaper or magazine now, or watch television, there is new evidence. We diffusionists are finally winning.

The oldest evidence in my own research, the Granby Idol, was accidentally excavated in Colorado in 1920 [Figure 4]. I own three original photographs of it made before 1923. This 66-pound Chinese effigy cannot now be located. It was supposedly donated to a museum in St. Louis.

A plain inscription on its belly has been identified as pre-Shang oracle script. The Shang Dynasty was 1600-1050 B.C.

**Question: If an outsider were to read all the literature on Old World pre-Columbian contact, he or she would quickly form the opinion that much in the New World has an Old World origin. For example, the Yuchi may have come from the Indus River, Ethel Stewart would have the Athabaskan peoples arrive as refugees from Genghis Khan, the Mesoamerican pyramids must have a common origin with Egypt, and so forth.**

What is your "take" on this situation? Why is it that Old World influence is seen in so many aspects of New World life, yet hard evidence of Old World