

Chinkultic: City of Nephi

How often have you read the Book of Mormon and tried to imagine the cities and landscape where this spiritual record took place? Through the years artists have attempted to stir the imagination with their rendering of how these temples and cities must have appeared. Now, you can finally place an actual ruin site with a prominent Book of Mormon city. After years of research and innumerable hardships Neil Steede has identified the modern day ruin of Chinkultic as the City of Nephi.

The declaration of Chinkultic as the City of Nephi is made after exhaustive research of the city's location, stela, ruins, pottery styles, history, and topogra-

phy. From the geographical hints given in the Book of Mormon, it is safe to say that the City of Nephi is located between the Land of Lehi-Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful. Additionally, the City of Nephi must have an avenue of transportation to the City of Desolation. There will be a publication to follow that will be extensive in defining the research, but this article will quickly mention a few of the unique details that illustrate why Chinkultic is the City of Nephi.

From the archaeological research conducted at Chinkultic it has been determined that it experienced a ninety-year period of growth where many

significant buildings were erected, including the main temple. This fits well with the record of Zeniff, who leaves Zarahemla to inhabit the City of Nephi, is then succeeded by King Noah, and finally by King Limhi. The cultural growth and construction periods at Chinkultic parallel the same set of events recorded in the Book of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon.

Continued on Page 2



The temple ruins of Chinkultic.

Why The Brass Plates in Our Day? By Tim Brown

The story of the brass plates is a wonder to me. I remember listening in vacation church school to the story of Lehi, the brass plates, and the liahona. I would dream as the teacher related the adventures of Nephi and his brothers. Through the years those seeds that were planted in my heart have grown and my childhood dreams have given way to study and adventures of my own. I have read many articles written about Mormon's library and the different records kept by the Nephites, but I have never read one on the importance of the brass plates for our day—a day that looms somewhere in our future.

At the beginning of the Book of Mormon we are introduced to an important record that is kept secure by a man named Laban. God warns Lehi to flee Jerusalem with his family. They travel three days, pitch their tents, then Lehi is instructed by the Lord to send his sons back to Jerusalem to retrieve "the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of their forefathers which were engraven on the plates of brass." After much tribulation and some divine intervention the sons returned with the records. We are told that Lehi searched those records from the beginning. They contained the five books

of Moses, a record of the Jews from the beginning even down to the commencement of the reign of King Zedekiah, and also the prophecies of the prophets including Jeremiah, who was a contemporary with Lehi. They also contained

Continued on Page 3

Inside this Issue:

Chinkultic: The City of Nephi <i>Cont.</i>	2
Why The Brass Plates in Our Day? <i>Cont.</i>	3
Membership Now Available	4
Adventures in Scripture	5 & 6
Marker Found on Cerro Rabon	7
2007 Spring Expedition Planned	7
Prepare for the Rain	7
An Organizational First	8

Chinkultic: City of Nephi *continued*

What is interesting about the ruins at Chinkultic are the very unique stela erected in the ruin city. There are nine stela placed in Chinkultic of which six can be identified as specific Book of Mormon stories all pertaining to events that take place in the City of Nephi. One stela clearly illustrates a man in flames holding his hand toward a king figure. This parallels the story of King Noah sentencing Abinadi to die by fire, and Abinadi proclaiming that King Noah would suffer the same fate. Another partial stela illustrates the same king whose head and headdress are engulfed in flames signifying to the Book of Mormon believer that Abinadi's prophecy was fulfilled and King Noah suffered death by fire.

The third stela illustrates a group of soldiers who bring a bundle of swords and a stone box to the King. This is the story of the soldiers who were sent to find Zarahemla and instead returned with the record of the Jaredites that they found in the Land of Desolation.

The fourth stela illustrates a woman eloquently pleading to a man of authority for the life of a man who is bound and on his knees. The stela fits the story of the twenty-four Lamanite women who pled for the lives of their husbands who were the twenty-four priests of King Noah.

The fifth stela shows a man tiptoeing or otherwise leaving the city by stealth while a guard sleeps. This is the story of how King Limhi was able to help his people to escape during the night through a pass that led them away from the Lamanite occupiers and to find freedom in Zarahemla.

The final stone is probably one of the most famous Maya stones in archaeology. It is the Esperanza Ball Court Marker currently on display at the Museum of Archaeology in Mexico City. This round marker illustrates a man kneeling in the center of the stone and the glyphs around the marker say that he became the King of nothing. When King Limhi led his people out of the city of



One of the stela at Chinkultic. Most are covered to protect them from the elements.

Nephi and took them to be inhabitants of the land of Zarahemla he in essence became the King of nothing. He gave up his kingship that his people might live in freedom.

What is remarkable about this particular ruin city are the odds of finding six of the nine stela that illustrate events that are identifiable as specific stories found in

the Book of Mormon, and that these stories directly relate to events that took place in the City of Nephi.

However, one fact that is probably the most important topographical feature making Chinkultic fit as the City of Nephi is the presence of a very narrow land bridge located directly behind the main temple and hidden from the rest of the city. The main temple at Chinkultic is built upon a huge mound of earth that is surrounded by two lakes, a cenote, and a river. From any point in the city it appears that the temple is surrounded by water and positioned against a sheer cliff. It is not until you walk behind the temple at the top of the hill that you find a narrow path about fifteen feet wide which connects to a small pass in the rock cliff behind the city. There is no other known ruin in all of Mesoamerica that has a hidden pass where an entire city population could escape during the night. Only Chinkultic has this unique feature.

This discovery is one of the most exciting in recent years. To place the name of a prominent Book of Mormon city with a present-day Maya ruin is exciting and allows the Book of Mormon reader to fit this piece of the geographic puzzle with confidence. There will soon be a publication specifically on Chinkultic as the City of Nephi that will include as much information as can be assembled. Look for more information about this publication on our web site at:

www.hillcumorahexpeditionteam.com.



The Chinkultic temple against the cliffs as seen from the plaza below.

Why The Brass Plates in Our Day? continued

the genealogy of Lehi's family which happened to be of the tribe of Joseph (I Nephi 1:155-168).

These records were most likely written in Egyptian as it was a condensed form of writing and more information could be contained in a smaller space. Some have asked the question, "If the records were taken to the America's then how are the Jews still in possession of the record?" Good question. If you were in charge of the treasury of the temple and were responsible for the safe keeping of the records of your people, how would you keep them secure and yet share their message? Scrolls were kept in the temple from which the priests would read and teach the people. Think of the brass plates as a hard copy. When they needed a copy the scribes would sit down with the worn out scrolls and recopy them. If there was a question they could always bring out the brass plates to make sure they matched what was originally written. The scrolls were all the Jews had left when the brass plates were taken by Nephi. Over the years some changes occurred because there was no original with which to compare them. I believe this scenario accounts for some of the differences in Isaiah as recorded in the Bible when compared to Isaiah in the Book of Mormon.

Several statements are made concerning the reason they needed to acquire the brass plates. I Nephi 1:82, 83 *"And it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers; And also that we may preserve unto them the words which have been spoken."* (I Nephi 1:115-119 & I Nephi 2: 173,174)

It was important for them to have these records to pass the teachings to future generations. But was that all? Was it only to teach their children and successive generations the law or was there more? Is there a greater purpose that is yet to be fulfilled? I believe there is. Lehi prophesied concerning the brass plates and states they should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, *who were of his seed*, that the plates of brass should never perish (I Nephi 1:169,170). When Alma II was handing over the records to his son Heleman he repeats what had

been prophesied previously concerning the brass plates and adds his own commentary (Alma 17:31-36, 41, 42). Both Lehi and Alma imply the brass plates are to be preserved for a wise purpose, but they don't know what that purpose is. God chose not to share His purpose with them. I believe He left it up to us to search out the answer.

In III Nephi, Jesus quotes Isaiah several times (III Nephi 7:45 and 9:73) empha-

"...that he shall make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, that they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and Redeemer, the mighty one of Israel." What can make this come about? There is an answer; Mormon's library.

sizing in the last days the Lord will make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God. Apparently the whole world will see miracles and know it is from God. There will be no mistaking what is happening. In II Nephi, Nephi is teaching about the coming Messiah and what will transpire in the last days. In II Nephi 11:30-32 *"Wherefore he shall bring forth his words unto them, which words shall judge them at the last day; For they shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them; And unto the convincing them that they need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come."* Something will happen that will convince them, speak to them, touch them to the depths of their soul and they will understand beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is the Christ. It will be something spectacular.

What I like most about Nephi is the way he takes scripture that is difficult to comprehend and makes it easy to understand. He is one of my heroes because even I can understand what he is saying. I Nephi 7:17-25 are the most important verses for revealing what is going to happen. Nephi brings all of these elements together so we can have an unmistakable picture.

"And after our seed is scattered, the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; Wherefore, it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles, and being carried in their arms, and upon their shoulders. And it shall also be of worth unto the Gentiles: And not only unto the Gentiles, but unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying, In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. And I would, my brethren, that ye should know that all the kindreds of the earth can not be blessed unless he shall make bare his arm in the eyes of the nations. Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, in bringing about his covenants and his gospel, unto those who are of the house of Israel. Wherefore, he will bring them again out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance; And they shall be brought out of obscurity, and out of darkness; And they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the mighty one of Israel."

Here Nephi mentions *"a marvelous work, the making known the covenants to the house of Israel, that in Abraham's seed shall all the earth be blessed, that he shall make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, that they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and Redeemer, the mighty one of Israel."* What can make this come about? There is an answer; Mormon's library. Mormon says he took from hill Shem all the sacred engravings concerning this people. We know they passed down the brass plates, the Liahona, the sword of Laban, the 24 gold plates of Ether, as well as the records they kept throughout their history (Mosiah 1:23,24 and Alma 17:31-56). What will happen when the library is discovered? The brass plates are there. Because we can now read Egyptian hieroglyphics the brass plates will be able to be read almost immediately. There will be no doubt as to their origin. But what are they doing in the New World? How did they get here and who brought them? We assume that Nephi and the early leaders continued to

Continued on Page 4

Why the Plates of Brass in Our Day? Continued

record their history in the original Egyptian form. Therefore we will be able to read Nephi's records. Moroni states that he wrote in reformed Egyptian but that was centuries after Nephi landed in Central America. When the plates are discovered it will become clear who brought them and why. The brass plates and the genealogy that is contained therein will speak directly to the Jews and the children of Israel. The world will be compelled to accept them as genuine and the records as authentic.



Replicas of the plates of brass and other records.

Now comes the good part. I believe Moroni left some type of translation key much like the Rosetta stone. The epigraphers will be able to follow the transition from Egyptian to reformed Egyptian and they will be able to read the rest of the records. The message written on the records will shock the world. They will testify of Jesus' visit to the New World. They will testify of the miracles at his birth. They will testify of the destruction at his death and of his teaching and of his ministry. Everything we already know, the Jews and the rest of the world can no longer deny. It will turn the religious world upside down. Other records will be brought forth from different lands to confirm that Jesus also visited them (II Nephi 12:72). But the brass plates are the key.

They are the binding tie between Jerusalem and the New World. In Alma 17:33 *"And it has been prophesied by our fathers, that they should be kept and handed down from one generation to another, and be kept and preserved by the hand of the lord, until they should go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue and people, that they shall know of the mysteries contained thereon."* That, my brothers and sisters, is yet to be. It will be the fulfillment of the covenant the Lord made to Jacob—to bring his children back into a covenant relationship with him.

As a people, we have all but forgotten the promises that there are more records to

come forth. When the records do come forth they will validate the Book of Mormon and point directly to the Restoration movement. Joseph Smith will be accepted as a prophet. Are we prepared to teach the world about Jesus? Are you? Mormon writes in III Nephi 12:3-5 *"And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things, then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation. Behold I was about to write them all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbid it, saying, I will try the faith of my people; therefore I, Mormon, do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord"*.

There is a statement in scripture (Luke 12:57) *"...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom the Lord has committed much, of him will men ask the more."* We have been given much. The Lord is waiting on us so he can *"make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations."* How long must the world wait to be reconciled to him? The Lord is counting on us to respond. God Bless.

Membership Now Available

On August 14, 2006 the Hill Cumorah Expedition Team officially became a Missouri Not-for-Profit Corporation. This action required the development and adoption of a scope of purpose and the election of a Board of Directors. This information is available on our web site.

At the end of 2006, the Board of Directors developed a budget that proposed to provide over \$10,000 for archaeological investigation and dissemination of such as it relates to the Book of Mormon. In order to raise the \$14,000 required for the annual budget the corporation has voted to adopt and established an annual membership fee of \$100 per member, \$50 for students and seniors.

The annual membership fee will help fund the distribution of this newsletter on a quarterly basis; the printing of information that has been developed such as the publication that will soon be released on Chinkultic as the City of Nephi; and sponsor trips to Mesoamerica to photograph, gather information and investigate new leads for archaeology that supports the historical aspects of the Book of Mormon.

If you are interested and feel so led to support our efforts through a membership then you can send the membership fee in check or money order made out to **Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc.** And, send it to:

Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc.
c/o David B. Brown
311 N Lee Street
Buckner, MO 64016





If you prefer to purchase your membership with a credit card, then you can access our website and send your funds through PayPal. Donations are always welcome.

The success of our effort is greatly enhanced when there is sufficient funding. All of this can only happen with God's blessing, but we feel that we must prepare ourselves to be ready when God says, "It's time!"

www.hillcumorahexpeditionteam.com

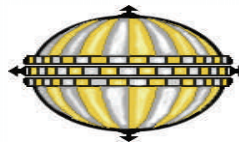
Adventures In Scriptures

Lehi's Journey

Lehi lived in Jerusalem  with his wife, Sariah and their four sons, Laman, Lemual, Sam and Nephi. He was faithful, diligent and obedient to God. God sent Lehi and his family on a great journey  to a promised land. One morning, in the wilderness, Lehi awoke. Outside his tent he  found a beautiful brass ball. This ball was of curious workmanship and called a Liahona.  They were to follow the direction of its spindles. The people of Lehi received this miracle compass by the power of God. As Lehi and his people continued their journey in the wilderness, they thanked God for this wonderful gift.

Find the underlined words from the above story in the word search puzzle below.

P	O	W	E	R	O	F	G	O	D	N	Z
A	R	F	B	M	X	Y	D	B	U	A	O
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I	N	D	M	U	H	J	C	D	N	O	L
L	T	E	A	I	W	A	O	I	K	G	I
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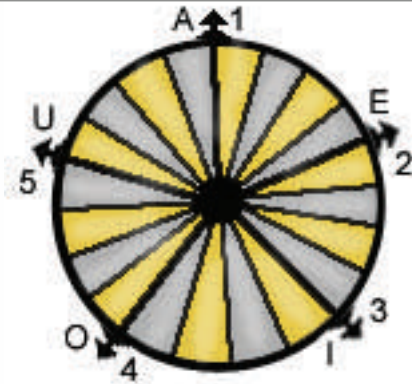
Scripture references:
Book of Mormon
1 Nephi 5:1-17

Adventures In Scriptures

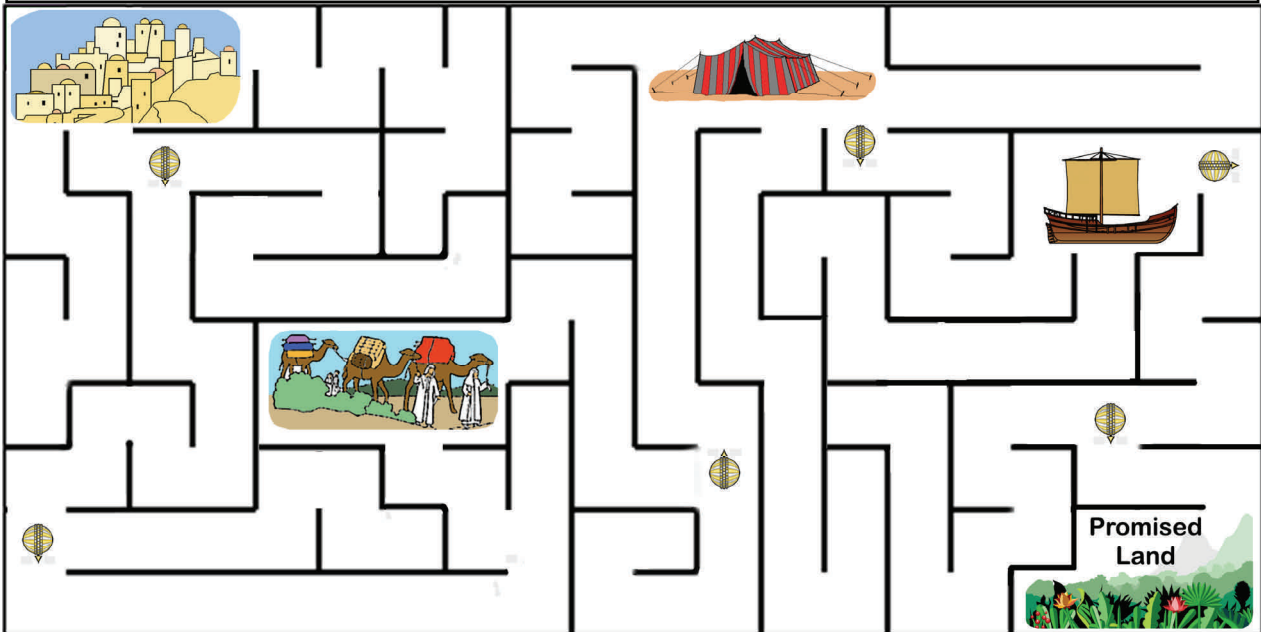
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Use the Liahona on the right to help you replace the numbers with the correct letters so you can understand

Scripture references:
 Book of Mormon
 Alma 17:79



Start at the city of Jerusalem and follow the direction the Liahona points to take the right paths to the Promised Land. You will travel by camel and camp in tents and even take a boat to get there.



Marker Found on Cerro Rabon

Approximately twenty-five years ago Neil Steede met with a guide by the name of Ignacio and they walked through jungle up the southwest slope of Cerro Rabon to a place where the *jicara* swirled in the whirlpools of the stream. This small stream was located next to a mound that held a marker. Neil was interested in the marker, thinking that perhaps it was a grave stone or some other artifact left from a battle that may have taken place there. The only marking that could be deciphered were grooves chiseled in the form of a date at about 1639 AD. Neil was not convinced that this marker was erected by Spaniards, but concluded that the marker already existed before the Spanish arrived and they utilized it as a land marker.

Neil was convinced that the type of stone construction was more in keeping with the Maya/Mixtec practice of constructing

stela in places of great importance. Upon closer inspection Neil was able to find evidence that the stone had markings from a period before the Spanish, but nothing was decipherable. This ended Neil's investigation of the marker until the spring of 2005 when again he was able to find his friend Ignacio and make the way back to the marker. Some photographs were taken in 2005, but there was not sufficient time to investigate.

In 2006 the team scheduled one day to spend at the marker to investigate the area around, or to see if anything further could

be deciphered on the stone.

While nothing significant was found on the stone itself, investigation of the area by several of the members revealed that the stela/marker is on top of a mound supported by a wall constructed of harvested limestone shale and the two-level design is a technique used by Maya/Mixtec. The team worked to clear away the growth on the wall, but true archaeological work will have to be done by contracted professionals. The team will return for continued reconnaissance in 2007.



Stone wall located below the stela marker on Cerro Rabon.

Hill Cumorah Expedition Team Planning an April Trip

Members of the Hill Cumorah Expedition Team have set the date for the 2007 Spring Expedition. They will be leaving for Mexico on April 14th and returning on April 28th.

The group has sent an expedition team to Mexico in the spring of each year for the last five years and this will be the sixth such trip. The purpose of

The purpose of the trip is to reconnaissance the area around the Cerro Rabon Valley ...

the trip is to reconnaissance the area around the Cerro Rabon Valley for information concerning the presence of artifacts that help support the belief that this particular valley is indeed the Hill Cumorah area described by Mormon as the final battle place between the Nephites and the Lamanites.

The purpose of the team is not to dig or disturb the artifacts, but rather to investigate the caves and jungle areas to see if there is a need to sponsor an archaeologist to do further work on probable sites where artifacts are found. Laws concerning historical artifacts are very strict and one of the operating guidelines of our efforts is to honor the culture, laws, and heritage of the people who inhabit the area.

“Prepare for the Rain” by David Brown

Members of our team often hear comments from well-meaning individuals who ask why we spend so much of our time, money, and energy traveling to Mexico and researching the subject matter of the historical aspects of the Book of Mormon. The statement is then made by these individuals that “God will do this in His own way and in His own time.” How do I respond to this?

An investigation of the purpose for the Book of Mormon teaches that there is more yet to come—the work that Joseph Smith began with Mormon's abridgement was just the beginning. God has some-

thing else in mind for the records our ancient brothers and sisters kept. The problem is that we are not privileged to all that God has in mind nor to know the timing of those events.

I am reminded of our friend Noah who was instructed to build an ark and prepare for a day that God said would surely come. If he had not listened to God's voice whispering to his soul our history would be much different.

I recently watched a movie entitled “Facing the Giants.” In this movie a wise man gave the illustration of two farmers who were experiencing a drought, but

God was promising a bountiful harvest. One farmer saw no reason to plant since there was no rain, but the other believed God's promise and he planted and prepared to receive God's promise of rain.

Our team is trying to be the farmer who is prepared. By learning all we can about the history of the Book of Mormon people we feel we are placing ourselves in a position to be blessed. When the eyes of the world are opened they will want to know all they can about these ancient people of God in the Americas. We want to prepare to teach. We want to receive the blessing of God's “reign”!

**We're on the web at
www.hillcumorahexpeditionteam.com**

The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc is a Missouri not-for-profit corporation dedicated to the study, research and dissemination of information as it pertains to the Book of Mormon. Our primary focus is to research and assemble archaeological and other related information to help establish the historical feasibility of the Book of Mormon.

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An Organizational First

The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc. began in the summer of 2001 when a group from the Buckner Community of Christ Congregation Adult Sunday School ventured to Mexico to visit ruins that pertain to the Book of Mormon. Neil Steede accompanied the group and acted as guide and interpreter. During this trip several of the men decided to trek up the side of Cerro Rabon to find the place where Neil had camped one evening in 1972 and had an encounter with the divine that solidified the course of his life.

The men were ill prepared for the heat of the jungle area at the base of the mountain cliff and suffered from dehydration and open blisters. The original campsite was found and several of the men felt the presence of God's Spirit telling them of the importance of this location.

So began the first trip that has been repeated annually since. Each year has brought an exciting adventure

where God has answered prayer and provided information that brings the group to new understandings. In 2004, Kevin Brown felt inspired to look beneath where the men were praying and he found a stone with ancient writing on it. That writing has been partially translated,

but further research is pending. There seems little doubt in the group that this stone is significant as it was found in the very place where Neil Steede had camped some thirty-two years previous.

How this stone will fit into the overall saga of the team's efforts to find the records of the Nephites has yet to be understood. Thus far, this is one of the many ways that God has taught us to prepare by studying the various types of script that may be found on these records.

This newsletter is an organizational first. It is our effort to share the knowledge that we have found with those who desire a more comprehensive understanding of the people who wrote this ancient record. They lived in anticipation of bringing us this record in the hope to save us from ourselves and to bring us to Jesus Christ. We sincerely hope that the efforts of our ancient brothers and sisters are not in vain.



This photo illustrates the Ogam script on the stone that was found in 2004. The preliminary translation reads, "Inside the covered place (?)"