

highest levels of maize consumption, houses with wall trenches, Mississippian pottery, and Mississippian peoples. In contrast, he provides evidence that the Madisonville site—perhaps the most well-known late Fort Ancient site—is biologically unique when compared to the others, suggesting that people at Madisonville may not have been closely related to those at other Fort Ancient sites.

Cook introduces ethnographic analogies in Chapter 6 to account for the development of the typical Fort Ancient circular village layout. He sees this template as a structural concept that could accommodate and incorporate multiple cultural groups, such as those present in early hybrid villages in the Central Ohio Valley. He discusses village plans among the Omaha (Siouan) and Winnebago (Siouan, but more closely aligned with Algonquian groups) at length and compares them in depth to the village layout at SunWatch, the most intensively excavated Fort Ancient site in the study area. Although there is evidence in favor of each of the examples, Cook sides with the Omaha Dhegiha Siouan influences at SunWatch (middle Fort Ancient) and with Winnebago Central Algonquian influences at the Madisonville site (late Fort Ancient).

Chapter 7 considers the “end” of Fort Ancient culture as an archaeological manifestation. Cook argues that some members of the Fort Ancient culture may have departed the study area at around AD 1400, when a cooler and drier climate may have led to decreased maize consumption. He further argues—based on strontium isotope data from Illinois, the Ohio Valley, and the Middle Cumberland Valley—that if there was migration into the study area after about AD 1400, it did not involve Mississippian groups from the west and south for which he had data.

Cook’s comprehensive and insightful consideration of diverse datasets has provided researchers and others involved in NAGPRA issues with some valuable guidance about site connections, cultural affiliations, and potentially descendant communities of the Fort Ancient culture. Clearly, these interpretations require Native involvement and consultation, which hopefully will occur in the future.

*Spooky Archaeology: Myth and the Science of the Past.* JEB J. CARD. 2018. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque. x + 413 pp. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8263-5965-0. \$39.95 (ebook, 2018), ISBN 978-0-8263-5966-7. \$39.95 (paperback, 2019), ISBN 978-0-8263-5914-8.

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In my youth, I devoured popular accounts of archaeological discoveries by German authors such as Philipp Vandenberg and German Hafner. Continuing a genre of best-selling archaeological nonfiction pioneered by C. W. Ceram and Rudolf Pörtner, these authors excelled in describing episodes of the history of archaeology, with particular emphasis on the ancient Mediterranean and the application of scientific analyses during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jeb Card’s volume reminded me of that genre. Despite the title, the book contains a series of somewhat unconnected accounts of the history of archaeology and archaeological interpretation since the nineteenth century. What is new compared with the titles I recalled are two aspects in particular. First, the geographical perspective is much broader, and a significant emphasis lies on the Americas. In addition to familiar references to the European megaliths, the Great Sphinx of Giza, Schliemann, hieroglyphic inscriptions, and prehistoric Wiltshire, we also learn about changing perceptions of sites and artifacts of the Maya, the Aztecs, Tiwanaku, and the lost continent of Mu, among many other examples. Second, the issues discussed are also significantly broader, in parts adapted to the interests of twenty-first-century audiences. Nazi archaeology, Bigfoot, Atlantis, and the New Age at Glastonbury are natural reference points, as are UFOs and extraterrestrials, the occult, and current postcolonial sensibilities. Much space is devoted to discussions of the past role of archaeologists as spies and their affinity to fictional detectives. An entire chapter discusses the significance of H. P. Lovecraft’s short story “The Call of Cthulhu.” None of this has much to do with ghosts or spookiness, although it touches on a variety of myths and intriguing details about the history of archaeologists that have possibly been marginalized in the most common textbooks of archaeology.

Claims of the volume to novel academic insight have to be modest. Most of the content may have been better placed in a nonfiction trade paperback carrying the same conspicuous title but without the more than 100 pages of notes and references. Having said that, the first chapter offers a more ambitious academic agenda in outlining “The Foundations of Spooky Archaeology.” These foundations turn out to be somewhat shallow. Card contrasts archaeology as “a field of science and scholarship” with the way “most people” have approached the archaeological record in terms of fairies, mythic ancestors, aliens, and lost races, as reflected in pop culture and folk archaeology (pp. 1–2). Citing that almost half of Americans believe that ancient advanced civilizations such as Atlantis existed (with another third being undecided), Card promises to

excavate archaeology, the occult practices of archaeologists, and “the inherently spooky nature of the material past” (p. 2). What follows, however, is little but a compilation of various details of the intellectual history of archaeology. Card’s initial claim that the archaeological record and its practice are inherently mysterious and supernatural is never fully developed, beyond the insight that the roots of many popular myths and tropes of archaeology derive from archaeology itself and that we ignore them at our peril. How myth—and spookiness—relate to the current practices of archaeologists is not investigated. The final chapter, fleshing out the subtitle of the book, contrasts mainstream scientific archaeology with “alternative archaeology,” which Card argues revives some very dubious Victorian ideas about the past and other cultures.

Among the foundations of spooky archaeology is also the contrast between chronological time that focuses on chosen episodes of the past and mythic time that provides a profound past for the present. Although that should open up a discussion about what kind of mythic time suits our age and the role of archaeology in bringing it about, Card does not go beyond a postcolonial critique of the way the pasts of indigenous, colonized populations have been subsumed under atemporal mythical concepts. The social power that lies in profound myths for the present is ignored, as are potent mythical concepts of the past that commonly occur outside the scientific paradigm, predating and competing with professional archaeology, even outside of the Victorian empire.

*Spooky Archaeology* excels in presenting many intriguing aspects and lesser-known details of the history of archaeology and archaeological interpretation. Yet the book sits oddly between different genres: it neither provides a fully developed academic analysis nor a sufficiently lighthearted exploration suitable for airport bookshops.

*Spectacular Flops: Game-Changing Technologies That Failed.* MICHAEL BRIAN SCHIFFER. 2019. Eliot Werner Publications, Clinton Corners, New York. xii + 308 pp. \$32.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-9898249-9-6.

Reviewed by Payson Sheets, University of Colorado

This fascinating volume documents 12 spectacular technological flops from the late eighteenth century to today. They include early experimentation with steam power (both vacuum and pressure), electricity, interoceanic canals, nuclear power for bombers and

earth sculpting, the Concorde supersonic airplane, hot and cold nuclear fusion, and a turbojet-powered automobile. Schiffer hoped to detect patterns and commonalities, but the diversity proved challenging. He was able to discern five common components in the cases: invention, development, manufacture, adoption, and use. To those five, we add failure, and failure can occur at any time in that series.

Many of the failures that Schiffer presents, along with so many other flops, have been given single-cause explanations, such as failures that occurred because of unforeseen economic conditions. Schiffer employs his anthropological sophistication to situate each technology in its historic, cultural, economic, social, political, and occasionally religious and ideological contexts, in order to more fully understand each project. That breadth often included significant successes that preceded the failures. For example, Ferdinand de Lesseps’s success in building the Suez Canal was salutary for international commerce in the 1860s, and it has continued to today. Conditions in Panama, however, were so different—tropical diseases, the need for locks, demanding topography, and other problems—that his efforts in building the Panama Canal proved disastrous. Similarly, Nicola Tesla’s experimentation with alternating electrical current was more successful than the direct-current motors that Edison determinedly advocated. Tesla’s striking early successes led to his building a large experimental laboratory in Colorado. He demonstrated that direct current (DC) could be transmitted for only short distances and could power only relatively small motors. His greatest success was in pioneering systems and motors reliant on alternating current (AC), which have become standard. Tesla, however, greatly overextended himself in claiming that he could develop a worldwide system to distribute energy—including electricity—from a single transmitting tower, which proved impossible and became his career-ending flop.

Schiffer employs a behavioral and cultural-contextual approach to understand each case of technological innovation that ultimately led to failure. For example, the world’s first automobile (“automobile,” meaning a self-propelled vehicle) was invented in France in 1769. Steam-powered pumps were being developed in the late eighteenth century, in the course of the Industrial Revolution, and many were quite successful. The French military desired a better means of hauling heavy artillery over open ground than using animal power. A Frenchman named Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot took up the challenge and designed a steam-powered vehicle that had the power to pull the artillery. It was ingeniously designed, but the first version was accidentally driven into a wall