

# Seeing the wood, not the forests

A Review of  
***Petrified Wood in the USA: Where to collect it, where to see it—a state-by-state field guide***  
 by Arthur L. Manning  
 Self-published, Lancaster, PA, 2003

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The blurb on the back cover of this small, easy-to-read book accurately portrays its contents:

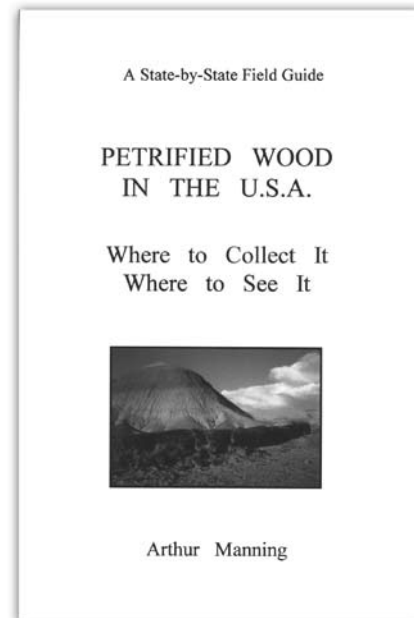
‘No matter where you may travel in the great American West, you’re probably not too far from a short excursion off the beaten path, away from the crowded tourist attractions, to where you and your family can view and/or legally collect your very own unique piece of evidence of life which might have been deposited by Noah’s Flood. Also, you may want to include one or more of the ten most spectacular petrified forests in your vacation plans. There’s even several places where you may find these fossils in the eastern part of our nation. Never before have so many American petrified wood sites been included in one convenient field guide. Also included are many interesting comments about these places, from a biblical perspective.’

Every US state is listed in this book, with comments about all known petrified wood sites and detailed directions on how to get to them. It is obvious from the descriptions supplied that Arthur Manning has indeed travelled over 45,000 km (28,000 miles) on expeditions to investigate more than 200 petrified wood sites. This book has been the culmination of many years of patient effort in pursuit of a passion.

There is no doubt that the beauty in the colours and patterns unique to each piece of petrified wood are quickly captivating, so it is easy to get ‘hooked’, just as the author did. Then the questions immediately arise as to how the petrified wood formed and when. The author attempts to answer these questions simply and succinctly at the beginning of the book. His comments are adequate. He correctly asserts that the evidence points to the catastrophic burial of lots of trees in many rapidly deposited sediment layers and even lava flows, consistent with events during the Genesis Flood. And this could have happened only recently (a few thousand years ago), because there is nothing in, or associated with, the petrified wood that stipulates it is millions of years old.

However, the author’s comment that the exact process of the transformation of buried wood into petrified wood ‘is still somewhat a mystery’ is no longer true. More recent experiments under natural conditions in Japan<sup>1</sup> have gone further than the observations of wood immersed in hot springs in Yellowstone National Park becoming partly petrified in just a few months.<sup>2,3</sup> Pieces of wood immersed in hot volcanic waters for up to seven years demonstrated how the hot water carries the silica it contains into the wood and progressively fills and replaces the woody tissues.<sup>4</sup> The Japanese scientists even referred favourably to previous creationist research<sup>5</sup> and concluded their experiments vindicated it! So petrification of wood only requires a few years, consistent with its rapid transformation after catastrophic burial during the Genesis Flood, while the sediment layers were still wet with the mineral-laden (volcanic) floodwaters from the ‘fountains of the great deep.’

This book is, as the title indicates, unashamedly American, so why would it appeal to a wider audience? As I read



it, I was impressed with how much petrified wood there actually is, in so many sediment and volcanic layers, in so many places just within the confines of the USA. And there originally must have been many forests of huge trees, judging by the giant fossilized logs up to 4–5 m (12–16 ft) in diameter and 40–50 m (130–160 ft) long. The author, by carefully describing these parameters at site after site, powerfully documents that only the global Flood could have catastrophically swept away whole forests of enormous trees, by snapping them off from their roots, dumping them elsewhere and then burying them in rapidly deposited sediments. Furthermore, at many sites, the petrified logs and stumps are mixtures of trees that today grow in widely different ecological zones and geographical locations, again testimony to the global extent of the Flood’s devastation. Reading this book thus gives one an overwhelming impression of the abundant evidence for the scale of the Genesis Flood.

There are a few black and white photographs dotted through the book, plus eight colour photographs in a centre-spread. These, along with the colour photographs on the front and back covers, try to capture some of the best examples of petrified logs and stumps in what the author has rated as

the US ten most spectacular petrified forests (so-called). Of course, due to their small size these photographs don't do these spectacular examples justice, so my advice is to also purchase the companion CD and see these photographs, and 92 others, enlarged on your computer screen. Accompanying each colour photograph is a description of what you are viewing. Throughout the CD, as in the book, the author takes every opportunity to elucidate the abundant clear evidence for the burial of these former trees by the Genesis Flood.

This book and CD don't purport to be technical, and the information presented is written for all to easily understand. I particularly appreciated his description of each of his top ten US petrified forests—enough detail to satisfy most, but also to whet the appetite of those who want more (providing references for follow up). What amazing fossil deposits some of these petrified forests are. I vividly remember some years ago visiting Arizona's Petrified Forest, seeing the massive, long logs and the rainbow colours of their petrified wood. What an awesome testimony they are to the Genesis Flood. The multiple horizons of upright stumps in volcanic ash layers in Yellowstone National Park are normally interpreted as successively buried *in situ* forests. However, the author succinctly outlines the definitive evidence that these were stumps that were transported and progressively buried under catastrophic conditions. The analogy is made with what happened in Spirit Lake after the Mt St Helens 1980 eruption, where volcanic ash buried upright stumps.<sup>6</sup>

What a way to grab the attention of children and get them fascinated with God's world. I vividly remember as a child picking up my first rock samples, with their shiny crystals. And see where that has led me! Outdoor adventures for family vacations are not only healthy, but are a great way for parents and children to bond in the joint excitement of discovering the wonders in the ground that our Creator has left to remind us of His awesome power when

He sent the Flood judgment. Without the distractions of modern technology, quality time is spent together having wholesome fun. And discussions about God's Word flow naturally. These are times children will treasure for a lifetime. Believe me, I know!

So grab a copy of this book and the companion CD of photographs. Read it and view the photographs to get informed and motivated. If you live in the USA, plan your next family vacation to include visits to one or more of the sites described in this book. It certainly won't cost you much, only time and effort, but the dividends in your children will be well worth every minute. And just maybe, one of them may begin their pilgrimage as a creation scientist! If you live outside the USA, after getting motivated, make a few inquiries to find out where there are petrified wood sites in your part of the world so you can plan your next family vacation accordingly. Try searching the internet for the websites of your state's or country's geological survey and/or natural history museum. Or make the necessary phone calls. The appendix to this book indicates petrified wood sites dot the globe, so you should eventually track down the information you require. Many geological societies and other professional groups have produced attractive, easy-to-follow field guides that should point you in the right direction to suitable outcrops. Go for it!

However, a word of warning is in order. The author is to be commended for his repeated clear statements that samples of petrified wood (and indeed other fossil or rock samples) must never be collected from National Parks or other national and state protected lands, and permission must first be obtained to collect from private land. This applies in all countries. Always check first what is and is not allowed on any land before venturing onto it. Ask appropriately, because sometimes permission is granted. But conditions always apply. And don't be greedy, says the author, quite correctly. So many magnificent and valuable fossil

deposits and rock outcrops have been vandalized and/or destroyed by greedy collectors. Where you can't collect samples, collect photographs instead. Furthermore, do it all safely, says the author, followed by plenty of repeated instructions for how to stay safe. After all, many petrified wood sites are in remote areas with harsh environments and unpredictable weather. So always go well prepared.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that, in the words of Dr Henry Morris:

'This unique travel guide will be of invaluable help to everyone interested in seeing the nation's petrified wood sites or in collecting samples for their own homes. The occasional comments on how these amazing deposits were produced will also be of special interest to anyone interested in the question of the historical accuracy of the Bible.'

## References

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