

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment One: "Footsteps in the American Soil"

FADE IN.

EXT. GREAT PLAINS — DAWN

VISUAL: An aerial drone shot glides low over an endless golden prairie, mist clinging to the grass in the pale predawn light. The camera drifts past a single weathered fence post — the only human mark for miles — before the sun breaks the horizon, throwing shadows across the land that stretch far longer than they should.

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(low, measured, reverent)* "In the old days, when the earth was soft and the mountains still remembered their making, there walked beings whose shadows fell across entire valleys."

So begins one of the oldest stories this continent has to tell.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *From the oral traditions of the continent*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The People knew them by many names. The Ancient Ones. The First Walkers. The Stone Giants. They are said to have left their mark in the very bones of the land — and though they have long since passed from sight, the old stories say their presence lingers still, in the places where the wind moves strangely through the pines.

EXT. CARDIFF, NEW YORK — FARM FIELD — OCTOBER 1869 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: Thick fog rolls through a stand of trees at the edge of a freshly turned field. Three men in period dress stand at the border of the mud, their breath visible in the cold air. Boots sink into ground that seems, in the slow-motion reenactment, to pull at them with unnatural insistence. This is a stylized recreation — grain added, color desaturated, the frame trembling faintly as if shot on aged film stock.

NARRATOR (V.O.): October, 1869. Outside the town of Cardiff, New York, a farmer named William Newell sends for help. His men, digging a well, have struck something that has stopped their shovels cold.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A sepia-toned engraving, period-accurate, depicts men gathered around a large recumbent stone figure lying in an open pit, hats in hand, expressions unreadable.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): At first, it looks like stone. A trick of geology, perhaps — a formation shaped by chance into something resembling a man. But as the mud is cleared away, the resemblance becomes harder to dismiss. Veins traced across the forearms. Individual toes, clearly defined. A face turned slightly to one side, wearing what might be read as pain, or simply the weariness of ages.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Length: over 10 feet*

INTERVIEW – DR. ELEANOR MARSH, FOLKLORE HISTORIAN

VISUAL: Interior office, warm lamp light, walls lined with maps and reference volumes. Dr. Marsh speaks with quiet conviction to an unseen interviewer.

DR. ELEANOR MARSH: Within days, thousands were making the pilgrimage to Cardiff. Farmers, merchants, scholars, skeptics — all pulled by the same current. Some were certain it was a petrified man from before the flood. Others thought it a carved idol from a forgotten people. And a few — a few whispered it was something that had actually walked the earth, and might yet again.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Cardiff Giant would eventually be exposed for what it was — a gypsum sculpture, buried by a tobacco farmer with a taste for spectacle and profit. A hoax, and a famous one.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A newspaper masthead dissolves into view, headline deliberately out of focus, evocative rather than legible, followed by a formal studio photograph of the "giant" on public display, roped off, a line of onlookers in Sunday clothes.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): But the fervor it stirred — the eagerness of thousands to believe — revealed something running deeper than gullibility. A current in the bedrock of the continent itself. A persistent, unsettling sense that the land remembered things the history books had chosen to forget.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind through dry cornstalks. A distant train whistle, period-appropriate, fading into silence.

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — MORNING

VISUAL: Mist-covered mountains, layered blue-gray ridges vanishing into low cloud. A hawk cuts across frame. Title card fades in.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"GIANTS OF AMERICA" (beat) "What lies beneath the soil does not always stay buried."*

ATMOSPHERE: A sparse cello underscore begins, patient and unhurried, joined by the low murmur of wind through hardwood forest.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Long before European ships appeared on the horizon, long before the first colonial fence line was cut into the eastern forest, the Indigenous peoples of this continent were already telling these stories — and telling them not as parable, but as memory.

INT. TRIBAL CULTURAL CENTER — DAY

VISUAL: Soft interior light, woven textiles and carved artifacts displayed along the walls. The camera settles on a display case containing a hand-drawn map annotated in two languages.

INTERVIEW – THOMAS REDCLOUD, TRIBAL HISTORIAN AND ORAL TRADITION KEEPER

THOMAS REDCLOUD: These weren't bedtime stories. Among the Iroquois nations, the Stone Giants were spoken of the way you'd speak of a hard winter, or a war with a neighboring village — as something that happened, that people had to survive. Skin like rock. Strength enough to tear a tree out of the ground. Voices like thunder rolling down a valley.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The stories were specific. Heights of twelve to twenty feet. Footsteps heavy enough to shake the earth and send game scattering. Arrows that bounced harmlessly off stone-hard flesh — creatures that only fire, or cunning, could bring down.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A slow pan across ledger-art style illustrations — reenacted for the documentary — depicting oversized humanoid figures among smaller human forms, rendered in a style evoking traditional pictography.

EXT. LOVELOCK CAVE, NEVADA — GREAT BASIN DESERT — DAY

VISUAL: Wide shot of a dark cave mouth set into a barren hillside, heat shimmering off the desert floor. The camera pushes slowly toward the entrance as the light dims.

NARRATOR (V.O.): In the Great Basin, the Paiute preserved a far more detailed account — not myth, but tribal history. The Si-Te-Cah. Red-haired giants said to have lived in caves near what is now Lovelock, Nevada.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Si-Te-Cah — "Tule-Eaters"*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The tradition holds that these beings raided Paiute settlements for food and captives — that the conflict escalated into open war. That the tribes united, tracked the giants to this very cave, and set fire to its mouth, suffocating those who refused to come out.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: Black-and-white expedition photographs from an early twentieth-century guano-mining operation at Lovelock Cave — men with lanterns at the cave entrance, crates of excavated material stacked outside.

INTERVIEW – THOMAS REDCLOUD, TRIBAL HISTORIAN

THOMAS REDCLOUD: What strikes me about that story isn't the size of the giants. It's the precision. A location. Tactics. Named leaders. That's not how you tell a fable. That's how you tell history.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Similar accounts echo across the continent, each distinct, each rooted in its own homeland — yet strangely, insistently alike.

MONTAGE — INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS ACROSS THE CONTINENT

VISUAL: A rapid but unhurried sequence of landscapes, each held for a few seconds, connected by slow dissolves: red-rock desert mesas, dense green mountains, wide river valleys, pine forest at dusk.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Navajo spoke of the Yé'itsoh — monstrous giants said to have devoured human beings, hunted at last by the Hero Twins. The Comanche told of giants in the mountains, tracks three feet long left on the open plains. The Choctaw remembered a tall, pale-skinned people who raised great mounds across the land, long before vanishing toward the setting sun.

ON-SCREEN TEXT (SERIES): *Height: 8–20 feet — reported across traditions Hair: reddish or light-colored — an anomaly repeatedly noted Disposition: largely hostile to human settlement Fate: absent from these traditions by the time of European contact*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Different nations. Different languages. Different landscapes entirely. And yet the same figure, again and again, standing at the edge of memory.

ATMOSPHERE: The underscore swells briefly — low strings, a single sustained note — then recedes.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM — DAY

VISUAL: Gloved hands turn brittle newspaper pages under soft archival lighting. The camera lingers on faded, period-style headlines — evocative, deliberately out of focus, texture rather than text — before drifting to a hand-drawn survey map dotted with red ink circles.

NARRATOR (V.O.): When settlers pushed west in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they carried a different framework for understanding the world — biblical history, classical education, Enlightenment reason. They expected wilderness. They did not expect what the ground kept giving up.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: 1833 — *Lompoc Rancho, California*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Soldiers digging a powder magazine pit are said to have unearthed a skeleton measuring twelve feet in length, the skull noted for an unusual double row of teeth — a detail that would resurface, again and again, in reports for decades to come. According to the account, the remains were reburied, and the incident noted only in official correspondence.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: 1856 — *Rutland, Vermont*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Railroad workers break through into a limestone chamber containing several skeletons of unusual size — the largest reported at ten feet, four inches. Local physicians are said to have confirmed the bones as human in structure, if far beyond normal proportion. The remains were reportedly sent to the Smithsonian Institution for further study.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A shot of the Smithsonian Institution's original red sandstone building, "The Castle," photographed in period style. The camera holds on it a beat longer than expected.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): They were never seen again.

INTERVIEW – DR. ELEANOR MARSH, FOLKLORE HISTORIAN

VISUAL: Same office setting as before. Dr. Marsh leans forward slightly.

DR. ELEANOR MARSH: And that's the pattern that repeats, region after region — Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the western territories. Farmers striking burial mounds. Miners breaking into chambers. Each time, bones far larger than expected. Each time, they're catalogued, sent off for study — and each time, they simply vanish from the record.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Whether that vanishing reflects negligence, lost paperwork, deliberate suppression, or simple bad record-keeping in a young and understaffed institution remains fiercely debated among historians and skeptics alike. What isn't in dispute is the sheer volume of the reports — many filed not by storytellers, but by physicians, surveyors, and military officers.

ATMOSPHERE: A file drawer closes with a hollow metallic sound. Silence follows.

EXT. GREAT SERPENT MOUND, OHIO — AERIAL — LATE AFTERNOON

VISUAL: A sweeping drone shot rises above the earthwork, its thirteen-hundred-foot sinuous form unfurling below like a living thing pressed into the hillside, golden light raking across the grass.

NARRATOR (V.O.): And then there is what was built. The Great Serpent Mound — over thirteen hundred feet of earth, shaped and carried by hand, its curves tracing the rim of an ancient meteor crater. No metal tools. No wheel. Just labor, on a scale that strains belief.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Local tradition: raised by a race of giants who lived here before us.*

EXT. NEVADA DESERT — PETROGLYPH SITE — DAY

VISUAL: Close tracking shot along a weathered rock face, sunlight raking across carved lines. The camera finds towering humanoid figures etched deep into the desert varnish, standing over smaller carved human forms.

NARRATOR (V.O.): In the Nevada desert, petroglyphs repeat the same proportion, site after site — not artistic flourish, but what looks like deliberate record-keeping. Giants hunting. Giants in combat with smaller peoples. The scale is consistent. The intention feels deliberate.

EXT. MIMA MOUNDS, WASHINGTON STATE — DUSK

VISUAL: Aerial shot over an open prairie dotted with thousands of small, circular mounds stretching to the horizon, long shadows pooling in the low light.

NARRATOR (V.O.): In Washington State, thousands of these mounds rise from the prairie — geology has never fully settled on why. Glacial activity, seismic shifting, the work of burrowing animals: none of the explanations quite fit the pattern. The Indigenous tradition offers its own answer. Each mound, a grave. Each grave, one giant.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind across open grass. The cello underscore returns, low and unresolved.

EXT. APPALACHIAN CLIFF DWELLING — DAY

VISUAL: The camera cranes up a sandstone cliff face toward a dark, oversized doorway carved into the rock, its proportions unmistakably too large for an ordinary human frame.

NARRATOR (V.O.): And in caves across the American West, the architecture itself seems to argue against ordinary scale. Doorways cut twelve to fifteen feet high. Sleeping platforms set at heights that would demand a ladder. Handprints pressed into old clay, larger than any hand should be.

EXT. PACIFIC NORTHWEST FOREST — NIGHT

VISUAL: Dense old-growth forest lit only by a handheld flashlight beam sweeping across underbrush. Grainy, handheld camera style — evoking, without claiming to be, found footage.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The stories did not end with the nineteenth century. Loggers. Hunters. Hikers. Across the Pacific Northwest, reports persisted of enormous, upright figures moving through the timber with a silence their size shouldn't allow.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *1967 — Bluff Creek, California*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The most famous documentation remains a few seconds of film, shot along a creek bed by two men with a movie camera — footage debated, dissected, and never fully resolved, to this day.

EXT. APPALACHIAN TRAIL — DAWN

VISUAL: Fresh snow across a mountain trail, a single line of oversized footprints pressed deep into the white, stretching off into the tree line and out of frame.

INTERVIEW – JAMES CALLOWAY, LOCAL HISTORIAN, THIRD-GENERATION RESIDENT

JAMES CALLOWAY: Out here, people don't talk about it much to strangers. But hikers still come off these trails swearing they found tracks eighteen inches long, spaced way further apart than a man could stride. And at night — sounds. Low. Long. Carrying across the whole valley.

NARRATOR (V.O.): What makes these modern accounts strange is not their novelty, but their familiarity — how closely they echo traditions that are, in some cases, centuries old. Large. Powerful. Elusive. Leaving just enough behind to be noticed, and never quite enough to be proven.

INTERVIEW – DR. ELEANOR MARSH, FOLKLORE HISTORIAN

VISUAL: Return to the office setting, lamp light lower now, dusk visible through the window behind her.

DR. ELEANOR MARSH: The real question was never whether the stories existed. They plainly do — in oral tradition, in the ground, in the mounds themselves. The real question is what happened. Did they die with the megafauna, when the mammoths and the ground sloths disappeared? Were they outcompeted, pushed to the margins by smaller, more adaptable populations? Were they driven out — hunted, the way the Paiute tradition describes? Or did some part of them simply learn to disappear?

NARRATOR (V.O.): No single answer accounts for everything. And that, more than any one skeleton or footprint, is the real mystery this story leaves behind.

EXT. GREAT PLAINS — DUSK

VISUAL: The documentary returns to its opening landscape, now bathed in deep orange, the same long shadows from the cold open stretching once more across the grass — impossibly long in the low light, evoking without confirming.

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(quiet, final)* This is a story written in earth and stone. In oral tradition and fragmentary bone. In the places where the wilderness still keeps its secrets, and the land remembers what the history books were never taught to record.

In the chapters ahead, we will walk these mounds. We will read the forgotten reports. We will sit with the historians, the descendants, the skeptics, and the believers who have spent their lives chasing what's left of the legend.

The soil remembers.

The question is whether we're ready to listen.

ATMOSPHERE: The underscore swells once, briefly, then falls to near-silence. Wind. A single low string note holds, unresolved.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Two: "Shadows of the Ancient Ones"

FADE IN.

**EXT. WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA VALLEY — PRE-DAWN
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: Thick fog rolls down from the ridgeline into a narrow valley, moving low across a cornfield like something with intent. The frame is desaturated, grain added, evoking a memory more than a moment. A lone figure — SAMUEL, a farmer in period dress — stands at the field's edge, rifle in hand, breath visible in the cold.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"Before the small people came, the earth belonged to those who walked with heads in the clouds." — Traditional saying, origin unknown*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(low, unhurried)* There are stories in this country older than the country itself. Stories that were already ancient when the first fences were raised. This is one told, in some form, by a farmer in the Pennsylvania hills — passed down, generation to generation, the way so many of these accounts have survived: not in archives, but in memory.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind through wet cornstalks. A single crow call, then silence — heavy, deliberate, the land seeming to hold its breath.

VISUAL: The fog parts for a moment. Two hundred yards off, at the tree line, a shape moves between two massive oaks — taller than the canopy, indistinct, gone as quickly as it appeared. Samuel does not move. The rifle stays lowered at his side.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Whatever he saw that morning, he never spoke of it again — except, the story goes, to leave a stretch of his own land unplanted for the rest of his life. Some ground, he told his children, was better left alone.

FADE TO:

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — MORNING

VISUAL: Return to the documentary's recurring image — layered mountain ridges dissolving into cloud. Title card fades in over the landscape.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"SHADOWS OF THE ANCIENT ONES" America's oldest giant legends*

NARRATOR (V.O.): Long before the written record, the Indigenous nations of this continent were already the keepers of this story. Not one story — dozens, scattered across language and homeland, yet bound together by a single, persistent thread: that something larger than us came first.

INT. IROQUOIS CULTURAL CENTER, UPSTATE NEW YORK — DAY

VISUAL: Soft daylight through tall windows. Woven baskets and carved effigies line the shelves behind the interview subject.

INTERVIEW – MARGARET STANDINGBEAR, SENECA ORAL HISTORIAN

MARGARET STANDINGBEAR: Among our people, the Confederacy's traditions speak of the Geno'sgwa — the Stone Giants. Not spirits. Not metaphors. Beings who came before this age of the world, remnants of something that was destroyed and remade. Twice the height of an ordinary man, some accounts say three times. Skin like granite — arrows and spears would turn aside against it.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The tradition describes a long and terrible war — villages destroyed, populations scattered, the Stone Giants said to have raided by night, carrying the taken away in great woven baskets. A conflict, the stories insist, that could only be ended through cunning: the people luring their enemy into a trap where fire, not strength, finally brought them down.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A slow pan across stylized historical engravings — reenacted illustrations styled after 19th-century woodcuts — depicting a village at night, firelight against tree lines, shapes at the tree's edge too large for the frame.

MARGARET STANDINGBEAR: The last of them were said to retreat into caves to the west — whether they died there, or simply went somewhere the surface world could no longer follow, the stories don't agree. But the sightings didn't stop with the war. Hunters kept finding tracks. Travelers kept glimpsing something at dusk. Children were warned not to wander.

EXT. WESTERN NEW YORK HILLS — WINTER 1779 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: Grainy, desaturated reenactment: Continental Army soldiers in winter dress move through snow-covered hill country, muskets slung, breath fogging the air. A soldier crouches at the mouth of a shallow cave, holding something up to the gray light.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Winter, 1779 — The Sullivan Expedition*

NARRATOR (V.O.): During the campaign ordered by George Washington against Iroquois settlements allied with the British, soldiers reported finding caves in these hills containing bones of extraordinary size. A letter attributed to a Lieutenant William Barton describes a skull large enough, in his words, to have belonged to a being eight or nine feet tall, with teeth "like those of a horse in size and strength."

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A faded, handwritten letter — period ink on aged paper, the handwriting period-accurate but deliberately kept out of sharp focus, evocative rather than legible.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The soldiers, focused on their military objective, left the bones where they lay. The cave's location was lost soon after. No further record survives.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind over snow. Distant, muffled marching. Silence.

EXT. GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS — CHEROKEE HOMELAND — DAY

VISUAL: Sweeping aerial over blue-green mountain ridges layered to the horizon, mist pooling in the valleys between them.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Further south, in the peaks and hollows of what would become Tennessee and North Carolina, the Cherokee carried their own tradition — the Tsul'kalu, the "slant-eyed giants." More human in appearance than the Stone Giants of the north, but set apart by scale alone: accounts placing them between eight and twelve feet.

INTERVIEW – DR. HENRY OOCUMMA, CHEROKEE HISTORIAN AND FOLKLORIST

VISUAL: Outdoor interview, mountain ridgeline visible behind him, wind moving through his hair.

DR. HENRY OOCUMMA: What's different about the Tsul'kalu is the relationship. It wasn't only conflict. The stories describe villages of their own, up in the high country, and something like trade — uneasy, wary, but real. Skilled hunters. Skilled craftsmen. Working stone and wood in ways our own people admired.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Central to the tradition is a single figure — Judaculla, said to have ruled a vast mountain territory, capable of leaping from peak to peak, each landing leaving a permanent mark in stone.

EXT. JUDACULLA ROCK, NEAR CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA — DAY

VISUAL: Close tracking shot across the surface of a large soapstone boulder, its face covered edge to edge in carved lines — abstract figures, spirals, and forms that resist easy reading. Afternoon light rakes low across the stone, throwing the carvings into sharp relief.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Cherokee identify this boulder as Judaculla's signature — hundreds of carved figures and symbols, unlike anything else in the region's artistic tradition. Some of the forms show elongated limbs, oversized heads. Others suggest hunts, battles, ceremonies whose meaning has not survived.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: Early 20th-century black-and-white photographs of the rock, researchers in period dress crouched beside it with measuring tape and notebooks.

DR. HENRY OOCUMMA: Anthropologists still argue about its age. The weathering suggests it's old — old enough that some researchers think it predates our people's arrival in these mountains by centuries. We say it's Judaculla's work. Beyond that, it keeps its own counsel.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Hikers in these same mountains, even today, report caves fitted with what look like living spaces built to an entirely different scale — doorways eight or nine feet high, fire pits sunk deep into stone, sleeping platforms carved for bodies far larger than our own.

ARCHIVAL SEGMENT — TRAIL OF TEARS, 1838

VISUAL: Sepia-toned reenactment: a long column of Cherokee families moving west under gray winter sky, wagons and walkers stretching to the horizon.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *1838 — Missionary Daniel Butrick's journal*

NARRATOR (V.O.): As the Cherokee were forced west along what would become known as the Trail of Tears, a missionary traveling with them recorded stories told during the march — among them, accounts of the giants, and a belief, held by some, that the giants too had once been driven from their land, pushed into ever more remote country as newcomers advanced.

DR. HENRY OOCUMMA: Some of our people saw it as the same pattern happening again. A cycle. Something that had played out on this continent long before we were the ones walking it.

ATMOSPHERE: The score falls to a single low string, sustained, mournful. Wind. The sound of footsteps on snow, fading.

EXT. LOVELOCK CAVE, NEVADA — GREAT BASIN DESERT — DAY

VISUAL: Wide establishing shot of the arid landscape, heat shimmering off the desert floor, the dark mouth of the cave set into a low hillside in the distance.

NARRATOR (V.O.): West of the Mississippi, in the deserts of Nevada, the Paiute carried the story of the Si-Te-Cah — red-haired giants said to have made this cave their fortress.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Si-Te-Cah tradition: hostile, warlike, ultimately besieged and burned out by a united Paiute alliance.*

INTERVIEW – MARGARET STANDINGBEAR, ORAL HISTORIAN

(returning, wide shot now includes a desk with an old topographic map)

MARGARET STANDINGBEAR: For generations, outsiders dismissed that story outright. Pure legend, they said. A campfire tale. Then in 1911, miners went in after guano for fertilizer — and what they pulled out of that cave made a lot of people go quiet.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: Black-and-white photographs of the 1911 guano-mining operation: men with lanterns and sacks at the cave mouth, crates stacked outside in the desert sun.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Skulls suggesting individuals well over six feet. Bones showing unusual robustness — muscle attachment points indicating exceptional strength. And, preserved by the cave's dry conditions, traces of reddish hair.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Woven tule sandals recovered from the site: 15+ inches in length.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The excavation itself was crude — the miners after fertilizer, not archaeology — and much of the site's context was destroyed before trained researchers ever arrived. What survived was enough to keep the debate alive for a century: skeptics arguing for tall but ordinary humans, others insisting the remains fell outside the known range of human variation entirely.

MARGARET STANDINGBEAR: The Paiute never needed convincing. They already knew what happened in that cave.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind moving across open desert. A faint, distant coyote call. Silence returns.

EXT. SOUTHERN PLAINS — INDIAN TERRITORY — WINTER 1867 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A cavalry patrol moves in single file across a snow-dusted plain, breath and horse-steam rising into cold air. The lead rider halts, raising a hand. The patrol fans out along the rim of a shallow ravine.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Fort Cobb Patrol Log, Winter 1867*

NARRATOR (V.O.): On the southern plains, the Comanche spoke of the Nunumbi — solitary "ancient ones," said to hunt buffalo with their bare hands and share some old kinship with the herds themselves.

VISUAL: In the ravine below, more than thirty buffalo carcasses lie arranged in a rough circle, bodies undisturbed by butchery, bones visibly crushed. A soldier crouches at the mud's edge, laying a gloved hand beside an enormous barefoot print for scale.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): A cavalry patrol out of Fort Cobb is recorded as having come upon exactly such a scene — dozens of buffalo killed within a short span, no arrows, no bullet wounds, no sign of a hunter at all. Only tracks. Lieutenant James Worthington's report reportedly measured one print at twenty-two inches, with a stride of roughly six feet.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"The men were considerably unsettled by the discovery." — Patrol log, attributed to Lt. Worthington*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The tracks were followed half a mile before vanishing on rocky ground. The report was filed, then forgotten — one document among thousands from that era, left to gather dust in a military archive.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind across open snow. The distant, unplaceable low call heard earlier in the documentary returns here, faint, at the edge of hearing.

EXT. OLYMPIC MOUNTAINS, PACIFIC NORTHWEST — DAY

VISUAL: Dense, moss-draped old-growth forest, shafts of light breaking through the canopy. The camera moves low along a game trail before rising to reveal towering cedar trunks disappearing into mist.

NARRATOR (V.O.): On the Pacific coast, the Lummi people spoke of the Ts'emekwes — forest giants, shy and reclusive, covered in dark hair, said to move through these woods in near total silence.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *1840 — Journal of Hudson's Bay Company trader Elkanah Walker*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): A Hudson's Bay Company trader recorded an account given to him by a Spokane guide, who described watching one of the giants from a hundred yards off — before it "disappeared into the forest with a speed that seemed impossible for something so large."

INTERVIEW – DR. HENRY OOCUMMA, HISTORIAN AND FOLKLORIST *(voiceover continuity — same interview setup, different framing)*

DR. HENRY OOCUMMA: What struck the trader wasn't just the story — it was how many other people, completely independently, told him some version of the same thing. Large. Hair-covered. Human-shaped, but not human. Living in the deep forest, keeping their distance.

EXT. OLYMPIC MOUNTAINS — LOGGING CAMP — 1895 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A lone logger in period work clothes stands in a small clearing, axe resting against a stump, sawdust scattered at his feet. He looks up sharply. At the tree line, barely visible in the shadow of the canopy, a tall dark shape stands motionless, watching.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *1895 — Account attributed to logger Thomas Hanson*

NARRATOR (V.O.): A logger working alone in a remote valley later described the encounter to his camp — a figure he estimated at nine feet, shoulders "broad as an ox," covered in dark, matted hair, its face "more human than ape, but brutal in its features." It watched him for perhaps thirty seconds, then turned into the forest — walking upright, he said, but with a gait that felt wrong. Too fluid. Too powerful.

ATMOSPHERE: The forest sounds fall away entirely for a beat — an unnatural hush — before the ambient birdsong and wind slowly return, as if the woods themselves exhale.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Some of the men at that camp believed him. Others didn't. But all of them, the story goes, agreed on one thing: the deep forest still held places no white man had ever set foot — and no one was certain what might be waiting in them.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM — DAY

VISUAL: Return to the documentary's recurring archive setting — gloved hands turning brittle pages, a hand-drawn continental map dotted with red-circled sites.

NARRATOR (V.O.): As settlement pushed across the continent, indigenous oral tradition and the written record of the newcomers began, however unevenly, to intersect. French explorers on the Mississippi in 1750, shown burial mounds near what would become St. Louis, recorded being told the mounds held the bones of giants who once ruled the land. In Vermont, in 1784, a skeleton reported at eight feet was examined by local citizens, then reburied — its exact location lost. In Ohio, the great mound-building earthworks, opened by nineteenth-century excavators, were said in multiple accounts to have yielded remains of seven, eight, even nine feet.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Smithsonian field correspondence (19th century, per later researchers): reports of skeletons from West Virginia, Minnesota, Tennessee — none recovered in later collection audits.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Later attempts to locate these specimens found many missing from the institution's collections entirely — records incomplete, catalog numbers leading nowhere. Whether that reflects deliberate suppression or simply the disorganized record-keeping of a young institution remains a matter of genuine dispute among historians.

INTERVIEW – MARGARET STANDINGBEAR, ORAL HISTORIAN

VISUAL: Final interview setup, golden hour light through the window behind her.

MARGARET STANDINGBEAR: People ask why the stories persisted so long, across so many nations who never spoke to each other, never traded, sometimes didn't even know the other existed. I don't have a tidy answer. But I know this — a story doesn't survive a thousand years, told the same way, in a dozen unconnected places, for no reason at all.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Larger than us. Older than us. Belonging to an age before this one, and dwindling, by every account, long before the first European ever set foot on this shore.

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — DUSK

VISUAL: The documentary returns once more to its recurring mountain vista, now deep in blue dusk, the first stars visible above the ridgeline.

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(quiet, final)* The ancient ones walked this land. The stories say so. The bones, however scattered and however lost, suggest it. And the landscape — the mounds, the carved stone, the doorways cut too high for any ordinary hand — bears its own kind of witness.

Whether they walk it still, hidden in the last wild corners of this continent, or whether they passed from the world entirely, leaving only their legends behind, is the question this documentary carries forward.

The shadows are long in America. Some of them, it seems, stretch all the way back to the beginning.

ATMOSPHERE: The cello underscore rises once, briefly, then fades to a single sustained note. Wind. Silence.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Three: "The Giant Skeleton Reports"

Unearthed bones and vanished records

FADE IN.

**EXT. FARM FIELD OUTSIDE SAYRE, PENNSYLVANIA — MAY 8, 1882
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: Cool morning light over a freshly turned field, mist still clinging to the grass at the tree line. A mule stands patient in its traces as a farmer — JONAS, weathered, mid-thirties, sleeves rolled — walks the plow line. The plow catches, hard, and Jonas is thrown forward a half-step. He stops the mule.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"The earth gives up its secrets reluctantly..." — Anonymous frontier saying, circa 1880*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(steady, measured)* May 8th, 1882. A field outside Sayre, Pennsylvania, worked by the same family for three generations. This morning, the plow strikes something the soil has kept for far longer than that.

VISUAL: Jonas kneels, clearing loose earth by hand. His fingers find something smooth, curved, too regular for stone. The camera holds close on his face as understanding dawns — trembling hands, dirt packed under the nails, the slow emergence of a massive, yellowed bone from the furrow.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): A femur — though the word feels too small for what's in his hands. By noon, a dozen neighbors stand in that field. By the following week, the story has reached newspapers across the state.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Reported measurement: 8 ft 11 in*

ATMOSPHERE: The birdsong has stopped entirely. Only wind, and the creak of the mule's harness.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): It would not be the last such discovery. It would not even be unusual. It was one thread in a pattern that stretches across an entire century, and an entire continent.

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — MORNING

VISUAL: The recurring ridgeline title image, mist folding through the valleys below.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"THE GIANT SKELETON REPORTS" Unearthed bones and vanished records*

NARRATOR (V.O.): Throughout the nineteenth century, American newspapers — small-town weeklies and major metropolitan dailies alike — carried a steady stream of reports describing skeletal remains of extraordinary size. This segment traces that record, thread by thread, county by county, and asks the question that has followed it for well over a hundred years: what became of the bones?

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM — DAY

VISUAL: Gloved hands lift a brittle newspaper page, the masthead deliberately soft-focused, evocative rather than legible. The camera drifts across a table scattered with similar clippings, a magnifying glass resting atop a folder marked in faded pencil.

INTERVIEW – DR. VIVIAN CROSS, HISTORICAL ARCHIVIST

VISUAL: Dr. Cross sits at the same archive table, pulling a folder toward her.

DR. VIVIAN CROSS: What you have to understand is the sheer geographic and temporal spread. This isn't one town, one decade, one overexcited local reporter. Chesterville, Ohio, 1829. Seneca County, 1872. Lake Delavan, Wisconsin, 1883. Warren, Minnesota, 1888. These are accounts from dozens of unconnected communities, decades apart, all describing the same basic phenomenon.

NARRATOR (V.O.): It begins, by most accounts, in 1829 — Chesterville, Ohio, where workers digging a hotel foundation broke into what was described as an ancient burial chamber.

EXT. CHESTERVILLE, OHIO — 1829 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A construction pit, torch and lantern light flickering against rough stone walls below ground level. A foreman — EWING — descends a rough ladder into the dark, lantern held high. The camera follows his light as it sweeps across a circular chamber lined with flat stones, coming to rest on three seated shapes against the far wall.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Three skeletons, seated, backs against the stone — and even seated, said to tower well beyond ordinary human proportion. The *Chesterville Gazette*, in its account of June 12th, 1829, described remains "of a size and character that defies conventional explanation."

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Reported height: up to 9 ft 8 in Examining physician: Dr. Nathaniel Morse — no signs of pathology, "essentially human despite their massive scale"*

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A period-style engraving reenactment: men in a stone chamber, lanterns raised, measuring tape stretched along a skeletal frame laid on the chamber floor.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The Chesterville remains were displayed locally for three weeks before being crated and shipped to the American Antiquarian Society in Massachusetts, according to the accounts of the time.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *No record of their arrival has ever been located.*

ATMOSPHERE: The sound of a wooden crate lid being nailed shut. Then silence.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM — DAY (CONTINUOUS)

INTERVIEW – DR. VIVIAN CROSS, HISTORICAL ARCHIVIST

DR. VIVIAN CROSS: And that's the shape the story takes, again and again. A discovery. Local examination, often by more than one physician. Newspaper coverage — sometimes extensive. Careful shipment to an institution. And then — nothing. No accession number. No catalog entry. The paper trail simply stops at the loading dock.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Seneca County, Ohio, 1872 — a well-digging crew, a mound, and a skeleton the *Seneca County Sentinel* placed at eight feet six inches, examined by local physicians and a visiting professor from Oberlin College. Donated, by the record, to the Smithsonian Institution.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Smithsonian correspondence (1923), per the Seneca County Historical Society: "No such specimen exists in the institution's collections."*

EXT. LAKE DELAVAN, WISCONSIN — DECEMBER 1883 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A wooded burial mound, oak roots snaking through disturbed earth. Farmers with picks and shovels work the mound's southern face in cold winter light. One steps back sharply from the trench, calling to the others.

NARRATOR (V.O.): December, 1883. Farmers clearing land near Lake Delavan break into a mound undisturbed, by local memory, for generations.

INTERVIEW – DR. VIVIAN CROSS (*voiceover continues over the reenactment*)

DR. VIVIAN CROSS: Delavan is the case people always come back to, because of the scale. Eighteen individuals in that mound, by the newspaper accounts. Not one skeleton — eighteen. Ranging from around seven feet to over nine.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A period photograph reenactment: rows of long bones and several massive skulls laid out on wooden tables in a barn, farmers and townspeople gathered around, hats in hand.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Delavan Republican, Dec. 20, 1883 — front-page coverage Examining physician, per published account: Dr. Frederick Larson, Madison — "the proportions are correct... simply much, much larger."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): The *Milwaukee Sentinel* picked up the story. So did papers in Chicago, and as far east as New York. In January of 1884, representatives of the Smithsonian arrived to arrange transport. Rail shipping records — preserved, according to researchers, in railroad archives — show the crates reaching Washington on January 22nd, 1884.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *No catalog entry for the Delavan remains has been located in Smithsonian records.*

ATMOSPHERE: A train whistle, distant, fading into the low cello underscore.

INTERVIEW – PROFESSOR RICHARD ALDEN, SKEPTICAL HISTORIAN OF SCIENCE

VISUAL: Interior university office, bookshelves crowded with academic volumes. Professor Alden speaks with the measured patience of someone who has fielded this question many times.

PROFESSOR RICHARD ALDEN: I want to be careful here, because there's a real phenomenon and there's a story people tell about the phenomenon, and they're not quite the same thing. Nineteenth-century newspapers absolutely reported oversized skeletal remains — that's documented. What's much harder to verify is what those remains actually were. Measurement error was rampant. Reassembled bones, misidentified animal remains, straightforward exaggeration for a good story — all of that was common in frontier journalism.

NARRATOR (V.O.): And the institutions themselves — when they respond at all — offer a simpler explanation than suppression: incomplete nineteenth-century recordkeeping, in collections that were, by any modern standard, chaotic.

PROFESSOR RICHARD ALDEN: A "vanished" specimen and a "never adequately cataloged" specimen can look identical a hundred years later. That doesn't make either explanation right. It just means the silence itself isn't proof of anything, in either direction.

NARRATOR (V.O.): It's a caution worth holding onto — even as the accounts keep accumulating.

EXT. WARREN, MINNESOTA — COURTHOUSE EXCAVATION — 1888 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: Workers with shovels pause at the edge of a construction trench, several skeletal forms visible in the exposed earth below.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Warren, Minnesota, 1888 — seven skeletons uncovered during courthouse excavation, examined at length by Dr. Charles Henderson, a local physician with a documented interest in the region's burial mounds.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Henderson's journal, per family records: "These are not diseased individuals... simply large, proportionally correct, and apparently healthy specimens." Donated to the Minnesota Historical Society, June 1888 — receipt acknowledged by letter. Inquiries in 1930s and 1970s: no record of the specimens located.*

ATMOSPHERE: Wind across open Minnesota prairie. A courthouse bell, distant, tolling once.

MONTAGE — THE PATTERN ACROSS THE CONTINENT

VISUAL: A rapid sequence of period-style newspaper mastheads dissolving one into another — desaturated, textural, individual words never quite readable — intercut with reenacted excavation moments: a road crew in Arizona, miners at a cave mouth in Nevada, a construction site in Minneapolis.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Crittenden, Arizona, 1891 — a stone-lined burial measured at eight feet four inches, later purchased by a private collector and lost, by most accounts, in the dispersal of his estate. Lovelock, Nevada, 1894 — mummified remains, red-haired, photographed by a mining engineer before being shipped to the Nevada State Museum, where no trace of them exists today. Maple Creek, Wisconsin, covered in the *New York Times* in December of 1895. Mesa Grande, California, in the *San Diego Union* two years later. The University of Minnesota, 1902 — a skeleton on public display for six months, then withdrawn for what records describe only as "conservation," never seen again.

ON-SCREEN TEXT (SERIES): *Reported. Measured. Photographed. Shipped. Then: no further record.*

INTERVIEW – DR. VIVIAN CROSS, HISTORICAL ARCHIVIST

VISUAL: Return to the archive table, now with several folders spread open in front of her.

DR. VIVIAN CROSS: There was one figure who looms especially large over this whole debate — Aleš Hrdlička, who ran physical anthropology at the Smithsonian from 1903 into the 1940s. He was, by the historical record, deeply and publicly skeptical of every giant-skeleton claim that crossed his desk. Some see that as rigorous science doing its job. Others see an institution that had already decided, before the evidence arrived, what conclusion it intended to reach.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Which of those readings is correct remains genuinely, unresolved. What isn't disputed is that a great many of the specimens the newspapers described are, today, nowhere to be found.

**EXT. FARM FIELD OUTSIDE SAYRE, PENNSYLVANIA — LATER
(REENACTMENT, ELDERLY JONAS)**

VISUAL: The same field, decades later, autumn light instead of spring. An elderly JONAS stands at the field's edge with two young grandchildren, holding a folded, yellowed newspaper clipping.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Jonas Hendricks never learned what became of the skeleton he found in that Pennsylvania field. He knew it had been measured, examined, photographed. He knew it had gone by rail to Washington. He never received a reply to his letter asking whether it had arrived.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Bradford County Historical Society, response received: "No record of such a specimen could be found."*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): He told the story to his children, and to theirs. He was not, by every account, a man given to exaggeration.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind through dry autumn grass. A child's quiet question, indistinct. The cello underscore settles into a slow, unresolved figure.

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — DUSK

VISUAL: The recurring mountain vista, deep blue at dusk, the first stars emerging over the ridge.

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(quiet, final)* The bones were measured. The witnesses were named. The newspapers printed the numbers in black and white, county after county, decade after decade. What happened after the crates left the loading dock is where the record runs out — and where, depending on who you ask, either an ordinary story of nineteenth-century institutional carelessness, or something far less ordinary, begins.

The earth still holds what it hasn't given up. The archives still hold what the earth once surrendered, and then lost again.

Whichever explanation is true, the question the newspapers left behind has never quite been answered.

ATMOSPHERE: The underscore rises once, briefly, then fades to a single held note. Wind. Silence.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Four: "Keepers of the Old Stories"

Tribal memories of giant beings

FADE IN.

EXT. CANYON, NAVAJO NATION, NEW MEXICO — NIGHT
(REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A fire burns low in a stone circle at the base of towering sandstone walls, sparks rising into a sky thick with stars. Seven figures sit around the flames — elders, adults, two teenagers pulled close by the cold. The eldest, wrapped in a blanket despite the fire's warmth, watches the flames in silence.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"The stories are not ours to change. They belong to the ancestors, to the land, to the time before time."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(low, unhurried)* This is where the story survives — not in a museum case, not in an institutional archive, but here. Around a fire. In a voice passed hand to hand across generations.

ATMOSPHERE: Cedar smoke, sharp and clean, mixing with cold desert air. The soft pop of the fire. A distant, single coyote call.

VISUAL: The elder — depicted here as a composite, representative figure — finally speaks, his words rendered first in Navajo, then repeated in English for the documentary audience.

ELDER (REENACTMENT): "Before the people came up from the lower worlds, there were beings here. Giants. The Yé'itsoh. Taller than the tallest tree. When they walked, the ground shook."

NARRATOR (V.O.): This is Diné tradition — not fringe folklore, but a foundational part of Navajo sacred history, still told today. The Hero Twins, born of Changing Woman and the Sun, are sent to destroy the giants who have been hunting the people. Yé'itsoh, chief among them, falls at Mount Taylor.

EXT. MOUNT TAYLOR, NEW MEXICO — DAY

VISUAL: Aerial shot of the volcanic peak, black lava flows scarring its slopes, stark against the surrounding high desert.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The tradition holds that where the giant's blood struck the ground, nothing grows still — the black stone, present on the landscape to this day, offered as the story's own evidence of what happened here.

INTERVIEW – DR. NAOMI YAZZIE, DINÉ CULTURAL HISTORIAN

VISUAL: Interior office on Navajo Nation land, woven textiles on the wall behind her.

DR. NAOMI YAZZIE: People sometimes want to file this away as myth, in the sense of something invented to explain a mountain. But for our people, this is sacred history — it's not separate from history, it *is* history, carried in the only form available to a culture that didn't rely on the written page. The place, the story, and the lesson are the same thing.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Not every giant in the tradition was destroyed. Some, the stories say, escaped — retreating into the deep places the Hero Twins could not follow, into canyons and caves where, some hold, they remain still.

ATMOSPHERE: The fire in the reenactment circle burns down to coals. Breath visible in the cold. The story settles into silence.

EXT. BLACK HILLS, SOUTH DAKOTA — WINTER LODGE — NIGHT (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: Interior of a lodge, firelight flickering against hide walls, wind audible outside. A circle of family members listens as an elder speaks.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Three hundred miles to the northeast, the Lakota carried their own accounts — of the Iya, a storm-giant of chaos and hunger, and of other giants remembered less as enemies than as teachers who had guided the people through the earliest, most dangerous times.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Winter, 1923 — field notes attributed to anthropologist James Walker, Pine Ridge Reservation*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): An elder identified in Walker's notes only as Finger is recorded describing a giant of the Black Hills — as tall, in his account, as three men standing shoulder to shoulder, his handprint still said to mark certain stones in the hills.

ELDER FINGER (REENACTMENT, V.O.): "He was there before us. Part of the land, like the rocks and the trees. Not good, not evil. Just living according to his nature."

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A slow pan across the Black Hills landscape — weathered stone formations, a shallow cave mouth, trees along a ridgeline growing at odd, bent angles.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Lakota understood these places as living memory — the land itself holding what the voice alone could not fully carry.

MONTAGE — TRADITIONS ACROSS THE CONTINENT

VISUAL: A sweeping, unhurried sequence, each location held for several seconds and connected by slow dissolves: Mississippi swampland, red-rock Hopi mesas, Zuni pueblo walls at golden hour, California's Channel Islands from the air, the Nevada desert, dense Washington coastal forest, the Colorado River winding through canyon country, and finally the green mounds of the American Southeast.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Across the continent, in language after language, the pattern holds. The Choctaw carried memory of the Nahullo — pale, towering mound-builders, remembered in an 1899 account attributed to elder Isaac Pistonatubbee as both formidable and, ultimately, undone by their own excess. The Hopi told of the Kana'ti, guardians of the hunt, later overthrown by the people's own cunning — a sacred account, recorded in part by anthropologist Mischa Titiev in the 1930s, still spoken today only at designated times, by those who have earned the right to tell it. The Zuni spoke of the A'toshle, obstacles placed in the people's path during the great migrations. The Chumash of the southern California coast remembered the Nunašĩš — gentle giants of the Channel Islands, undone not by war but by disease carried in on first contact.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *San Miguel Island, 1970s — skeletal remains recovered, dated to approximately 10,000 years before present.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): When archaeologists later recovered unusually robust remains on San Miguel Island, dated among the oldest found in North America, Chumash elders consulted on the find are reported to have said simply: the Nunašĩš. The ones who were here first.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Further inland, the Shoshone told their own version of the Si-Te-Cah, the account that would later draw miners to Lovelock Cave. On the Washington coast, the Quinault spoke of the Tsiatko — reclusive forest giants blamed, in one well-known 1924 account near Mount St. Helens, for an alleged night assault on a group of miners, an incident the Quinault elders are said to have received without surprise: the men, they said, had simply wandered into territory they'd been warned to leave alone. Along the Colorado River, the Mojave remembered the Humar, giants who once controlled the river itself, defeated at last near a site still sacred today. And across the mound-building Southeast, the Creek carried memory of the Tall Ones — sophisticated, powerful, and ultimately undone by the same disease and conflict that reshaped the entire continent.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind moves consistently under the montage, joined intermittently by distant drumming, a mourning dove call, the creak of cedar in wind — regional, specific sounds tied to each landscape as it appears.

INT. UNIVERSITY ARCHIVE — DAY

VISUAL: A researcher's desk, field notebooks and transcription pages laid out for the camera, several in careful period handwriting.

INTERVIEW – DR. NAOMI YAZZIE, DINÉ CULTURAL HISTORIAN *(returning)*

DR. NAOMI YAZZIE: Here's what I'd ask people to sit with. Aboriginal Australian coastal stories describe shorelines that don't match the modern coast — and geologists have confirmed those stories accurately preserve sea-level changes from ten thousand years ago. Native American oral traditions have been shown to preserve accurate memory of real volcanic eruptions, real floods. So when the same tradition of careful, exact transmission also tells us about the people — or the beings — who lived through those events, on what basis do we accept the geology and dismiss the giants?

NARRATOR (V.O.): It's not a claim that settles the debate. But it is, at minimum, a serious question — about whose evidence counts as history, and whose gets filed away as folklore.

EXT. APPALACHIAN FRONT PORCH — DUSK

VISUAL: A shift in setting and register: a modest wooden farmhouse porch, an elderly Appalachian woman in a rocking chair, grandchildren seated on the steps below her as dusk settles over the hollow.

INTERVIEW – RUTH ANNE COMBS, APPALACHIAN FAMILY STORYTELLER

RUTH ANNE COMBS: It's not just tribal families that carried these stories. Up in these hollows, my own grandmother told me about a field her people never plowed, and why. Every region of this country has someone like me — somebody's grandmother, somebody's uncle — who kept a story alive at a kitchen table because nobody ever wrote it down anywhere else.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Frontier families. Tribal elders. Regional historians combing courthouse basements for a single forgotten newspaper clipping. Different voices, different traditions — but the same quiet, stubborn act of refusing to let something be forgotten.

ATMOSPHERE: A porch swing creaks. Crickets begin, tentative, as the light fades further.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM — DAY

VISUAL: Return to the documentary's recurring archive setting. A hand gently closes a folder of transcribed oral histories, resting it beside a stack of others exactly like it.

NARRATOR (V.O.): These stories were never uniform. They disagreed on names, on outcomes, on whether the giants had been enemies or teachers, monsters or the land's first, rightful people. But certain things held constant, region after region: beings larger and stronger than ordinary humans, tied to specific places on the land, present before or alongside the ancestors of the people who remembered them — and, in every account, eventually gone.

ATMOSPHERE: The cello underscore returns, low and patient.

EXT. CANYON, NAVAJO NATION — NIGHT (REENACTMENT, RETURNING)

VISUAL: Back to the fire circle from the segment's opening, now burned down to embers, the stars overhead fully emerged in a black, moonless sky.

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(quiet, final)* The keepers of these stories will tell you plainly: the accounts are not theirs to change, only to carry. Not entertainment. Not invention. A different kind of record — held in voice instead of ink, in memory instead of a museum drawer, and passed, deliberately, hand to hand, so that it could not be lost the way so much else was lost.

The fire burns low. The stars wheel overhead. And the stories, old as the stone around them, continue to be told.

ATMOSPHERE: The last coal settles in the fire pit with a soft crack. Wind moves once through the canyon and is still.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Five: "Wild Men of the Frontier"

Giants in pioneer accounts

FADE IN.

EXT. APPALACHIAN OLD-GROWTH FOREST — DUSK, 1787
(REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: Sun dropping behind a ridgeline, its last light filtering through a canopy of ancient oak and hickory, trunks six feet across. A lone hunter — JACOB, in buckskin, rifle in hand — pushes through tangled rhododendron, clearly farther from home than he intended to be.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"The wilderness keeps its own counsel..." — Anonymous frontier saying, circa 1820*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(low, deliberate)* 1787. A hunter named Jacob Whitmore has followed a wounded buck deeper into the Appalachian wilderness than he has ever gone. The blood trail has run out at a creek. Now, with the light failing, he is simply trying to find his way home.

ATMOSPHERE: The forest sounds — birdsong, insects, the babble of the creek — cut out all at once, replaced by an unnatural stillness.

VISUAL: A deep, resonant call rolls through the trees, seeming to come from everywhere at once. Jacob freezes mid-step. Two hundred yards off, a massive dark shape moves between the trunks — too tall, too broad-shouldered, moving with a fluid gait no bear could manage.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): He stands motionless as it passes — nine feet, perhaps ten, he'll later say. It stops. Turns its head, slightly, toward him. And then, faster than something that size should be able to move, it's gone.

VISUAL: Jacob breaks into a run, crashing through undergrowth, not stopping until his legs give out beneath him.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): He would not speak of it for thirty years — not to his wife, not to anyone — until, as an old man, he told his grandson, in a voice barely above a whisper, to leave such things be.

FADE TO:

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — MORNING

VISUAL: The recurring mountain vista, mist folding through the valleys. Title card fades in.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"WILD MEN OF THE FRONTIER" Giants in pioneer accounts*

NARRATOR (V.O.): As settlers pushed into the deep wilderness of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they carried the tools of civilization — axes, plows, rifles. What they carried back out, more than once, were stories they hesitated to tell.

INTERVIEW – DR. MARGARET FOWLER, FRONTIER HISTORIAN

VISUAL: Interior study, frontier-era maps and surveying tools displayed on the walls behind her.

DR. MARGARET FOWLER: What you have to remember about these witnesses is who they were. Not dreamers. Not storytellers looking for attention. Surveyors. Trappers. Ranchers. People whose lives depended on reading the land correctly — knowing exactly what a bear track looks like versus something else. When people like that go out of their way to say "this was not a bear," that carries weight.

NARRATOR (V.O.): And the written record — journals, survey notes, private letters never meant for publication — backs up just how reluctant these men were to say what they'd seen.

EXT. EASTERN KENTUCKY — CREEK BANK — APRIL 1792
(REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A surveyor — CRAWFORD — kneels at a muddy creek bank, notebook open, carefully measuring an enormous footprint pressed into the soft earth with a length of cord.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A period-style surveyor's journal page, ink sketches of a foot-shaped impression alongside careful handwritten measurements — deliberately kept soft-focus, texture over legibility.

NARRATOR (V.O.): William Crawford, surveying territory that would become eastern Kentucky, records the discovery in his journal — a print eighteen inches long, five toes, a stride of roughly six feet. Three days later, a second entry: strange calls in the night, horses in a panic, and fresh tracks circling his camp before dawn, as if something had been watching from just beyond the firelight.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Crawford's survey of the territory was never completed.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): When his employers asked why, he is said to have offered only that the land was "not yet ready for mapping."

ATMOSPHERE: Distant thunder-like calls, low and resonant, echoing off unseen ridgelines. A horse whinnies sharply, off-camera.

EXT. MUSKINGUM RIVER HOMESTEAD, OHIO — OCTOBER 1803
(REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A modest log cabin at the edge of a forest clearing. A teenage boy — SAMUEL HUTCHINSON — bursts through the tree line at a dead run, breathless, and collapses against the cabin door as his father steps out to meet him.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Thomas Hutchinson, homesteading with his family along the Muskingum River, records his son's account the same evening it happened — a clearing where mature oak and hickory had been snapped clean at ten to twelve feet, the wood still fresh and white. And, at the clearing's edge, a hair-covered figure crossing in a dozen strides before vanishing into the trees.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A reenacted clearing, splintered tree trunks broken well above head height, sap still visible at the break. A father and son crouch beside a deep, barefoot track pressed into the soil.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Hutchinson's journal: "Not cut, not burned, but snapped across as if by tremendous force." Print measured: 17 inches.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The family avoided that stretch of forest through the winter. Within four years, they had sold the homestead and moved to a more settled community — the reason given, in a letter to Thomas's brother, only that "there are aspects of the wilderness that remain unsettling even after years of residence."

**EXT. OZARK MOUNTAINS, ARKANSAS — WINTER CAMP, 1827
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A trapper's small camp in a snow-dusted hollow, fire burning low, a canvas lean-to strung between two trees. Fresh, oversized tracks circle the perimeter in the snow.

INTERVIEW – DR. MARGARET FOWLER, FRONTIER HISTORIAN *(voiceover continues over the reenactment)*

DR. MARGARET FOWLER: Elijah Morse's account is one of my favorites, because decades later, as an old man, he gave a newspaper interview and just laid it out plainly — traps disturbed but not sprung, like something was examining them out of curiosity. Tracks circling his camp at night. And one night, something walked right up to his shelter and just... breathed. Stood there. Sniffed at his supplies. And left.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Arkansas Gazette, 1854 — Morse described as "a man of known reliability... not given to exaggeration or fancy."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): Morse broke camp the next day and never returned to that hollow.

**EXT. WESTERN WYOMING — OREGON TRAIL CAMP — JULY 1847
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A wagon train circled for the night in a broad valley, oxen and horses visibly agitated, pulling hard against their tethers as several men move out from the firelight with rifles raised.

NARRATOR (V.O.): On the Oregon Trail, a wagon train captained by Marcus Whitley records a night of near-panic — livestock spooked at sunset, and tracks discovered circling the camp at two hundred yards: barefoot, five-toed, nearly twenty inches long, with handprints of unusual size found on a rocky overlook where something had apparently stood watching the camp for some time.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Whitley's journal: deep, "whooping" calls heard through the night; tracks found circling the camp multiple times before dawn.*

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A period-style illustration reenactment: wagons circled defensively, sentries posted at the perimeter, firelight throwing long shadows against canvas wagon covers.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The train broke camp early and pushed on with unusual urgency. Similar reports, the record suggests, followed other wagon trains through that same stretch of Wyoming in the years that followed.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind across open plain. The creak of wagon wheels beginning to move. A dog barking, once, sharply, then silence.

EXT. SIERRA NEVADA FOOTHILLS — MINING CLAIM — 1852 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A lone miner's canvas tent beside a sluice box on a rocky creek bank, lantern light glowing faintly from within.

NARRATOR (V.O.): In the California gold fields, a miner named John Springer, working alone after parting ways with his partner, describes in a letter to his brother three consecutive nights of visitation — heavy, deliberate footsteps circling his tent, a low rumbling vocalization from somewhere in the dark, and a presence he could feel, he wrote, "like a physical weight."

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Springer's letter: "It walks on two legs, it is curious about human presence, and it is far larger than any man."*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Springer abandoned a productive claim two weeks later. As he put it to his brother — there was gold in that valley, but he had begun to question whether the gold was worth the isolation.

ATMOSPHERE: Water moving over creek stones. A single deep, guttural exhale in the darkness, just at the edge of hearing.

EXT. CASCADE MOUNTAINS, WASHINGTON TERRITORY — LOGGING CAMP — SEPTEMBER 1884 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A logging crew at the base of towering old-growth Douglas fir, axes and crosscut saws idle as several men gather around their foreman, gesturing toward the tree line.

INTERVIEW – DR. MARGARET FOWLER, FRONTIER HISTORIAN

DR. MARGARET FOWLER: Logging foreman Thomas Baxter kept a formal work log — this wasn't a diary for his own amusement, this was a business record, meant to track productivity. And he records operations halted for two full days because three of his crew reported an enormous, hair-covered figure watching them from a hundred yards off.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Baxter's own investigation found saplings snapped at eight to ten feet, a flattened resting place in a fern thicket sized for something far larger than a man, and sixteen-inch tracks near a stream. In his own words, preserved in the log: the men were reliable, with no history of drink or troublemaking, and he was "inclined to believe they saw something."

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Baxter's log: productivity in that section remained below normal for the rest of the season.*

EXT. HIGH VALLEY RANCH, WESTERN MONTANA — LATE SUMMER 1878 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A lone rancher on horseback in high alpine pasture, the horse suddenly planting its feet and refusing to advance, trembling visibly.

INTERVIEW – GRANT MCALLISTER, DESCENDANT OF FRONTIER RANCHING FAMILY

VISUAL: Interior ranch house, old black-and-white family photographs visible on the wall behind him.

GRANT MCALLISTER: This story came down through my family for four generations before it ever got written down. My great-great-grandfather, William McAllister — he told it plain, no embellishment, right up until he passed. Nine feet tall, standing in the trees, just watching him. Didn't threaten him. Just looked, like it was trying to figure out what he was, and then walked off like he wasn't worth the trouble.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A 1923 oral-history recording transcript, typewritten, the interviewer's note preserved: *"Mr. McAllister was clear-minded and specific in his recollections, with no apparent tendency toward exaggeration."*

GRANT MCALLISTER: He saw it twice more that summer. Never near the cabin, never near the cattle. After a while, he told his grandkids, he just got used to the idea. The mountains were big enough for both of them.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM — DAY

VISUAL: Two period newspaper pages laid side by side under archival lighting — mastheads deliberately soft-focused.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The frontier press itself was divided. The *Montana Post*, in 1879, treated William McAllister's account with evident respect, noting him as "a reliable citizen of sound judgment." The *Oregon Sentinel*, covering similar reports from the Cascades in 1885, took the opposite tone entirely — suggesting overactive imagination, poor light, and, not infrequently, whiskey.

INTERVIEW – DR. MARGARET FOWLER, FRONTIER HISTORIAN

DR. MARGARET FOWLER: Both papers were responding to the same underlying problem — accounts that were too consistent, across too many unconnected witnesses, to dismiss outright, but describing something with no place in the known catalog of American wildlife. Bears don't leave five-toed, human-shaped tracks. Bears don't stand and observe a camp for ten minutes at a stretch. Whatever explanation you land on, it has to account for that consistency.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Theories multiplied — an unusually large bear misjudged in poor light; an undiscovered North American primate; or, to the more speculative minds of the day, a remnant of the very giants the continent's oldest traditions had already been describing for centuries. None of the explanations fully satisfied. None of them made the reports stop.

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — DUSK

VISUAL: The recurring mountain vista, now settling into blue dusk.

NARRATOR (V.O.): (*quiet, final*) As the frontier closed — as the old forests fell to the axe and the valleys filled with fences and towns — the reports grew rarer. The wild places where something large and unknown might remain hidden simply began to run out.

But the accounts remain, in journals never meant for strangers' eyes, in survey notes abandoned mid-page, in letters sent home to brothers who must have wondered, reading them, whether the frontier had changed the writer more than the writer let on.

Whatever the pioneers saw in those deep woods, they saw it with reluctance, and they wrote it down anyway. That, more than any single track or broken branch, is the detail this documentary keeps coming back to.

ATMOSPHERE: The cello underscore rises once, briefly, then recedes to a single sustained note. Wind through pine. Silence.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Six: "The Three-Toed Mystery"

Tracks too large to ignore

FADE IN.

EXT. CLEARWATER COUNTY MARSH, FLORIDA — DAWN, FEBRUARY 28, 1948 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: Fog drifts low across saw grass and cypress knees, the aftermath of a hard overnight storm still hanging in the saturated air. A man — MARTIN — stands at the edge of his property, boots sinking into soaked earth, staring down at something in the mud.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"Three marks in the earth, deeper than any man could make, wider than any beast should leave."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(measured, precise)* February 28th, 1948. A Florida landowner named Martin Kowalski wakes to find something in the mud at the edge of his property that twelve years of living beside this swamp has not prepared him for.

VISUAL: Close-up: a print in the wet earth, unmistakably three-toed, triangular, blunt claw marks at each tip. Martin kneels, placing his own boot beside it for scale — his print barely an inch deep; the other, nearly four.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Fourteen inches across. Nearly four inches deep. A stride of almost six feet between each print. Fifteen clear impressions, moving in an unwavering straight line, before vanishing into standing water.

ATMOSPHERE: A distant alligator's bellow rolls across the water. Wind moving through saw grass. Silence beneath it all, heavy and complete.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Martin Kowalski had seen gator tracks, bear tracks, panther tracks, the print of every wading bird in that swamp. He had never seen anything like this.

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — MORNING

VISUAL: The recurring ridgeline title image, mist folding through the valley below.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"THE THREE-TOED MYSTERY" Tracks too large to ignore*

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Clearwater find would become the most famous of its kind — but it was not the first, and it would be far from the last.

EXT. BOTTOMLAND NEAR HANNIBAL, MISSOURI — NOVEMBER 1945 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A freshly plowed field along the Mississippi River, seven men gathered around a trail of deep impressions in the churned soil, one crouching with a surveyor's tape.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Three years earlier, and two states north, a farmer named Robert Hutchins found the same pattern in a plowed field near Hannibal — thirteen-inch prints, three toes, deep enough to dwarf a man's boot print laid beside them.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A period newspaper photograph reenactment: a boot placed beside an enormous three-toed impression for scale, the *Hannibal Courier-Post* masthead visible but deliberately soft-focused above it.

HUTCHINS (REENACTMENT, V.O.): "Whatever made them was heavy, real heavy. And the way they were spaced — you could tell it was walking upright, taking long strides like a person would. But no person I ever saw had feet like that."

NARRATOR (V.O.): The following spring, after flooding receded along the same stretch of river, a fisherman named Tom Brennan found the tracks again — clearer this time, showing what looked like a broad, rounded heel, moving with sure-footed confidence across ground steep enough to trouble most men in daylight, let alone the dark.

INT. FLORIDA STATE ARCHIVE — DAY

VISUAL: Gloved hands turning brittle newspaper pages, the *St. Petersburg Times* masthead evocatively out of focus above a grainy printed photograph of the Clearwater tracks.

NARRATOR (V.O.): When word of the Clearwater tracks reached the wider press, the story moved fast. Within a week, zoologists from the University of Florida, a paleontologist dispatched from the Smithsonian, and a small army of curiosity seekers had converged on the marsh.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *St. Petersburg Times, per reporter Edward McCullough: "The prints are real... they appear to have been made by something of considerable size and weight moving through the marsh on two legs."*

INTERVIEW – DR. RALPH ANDERSON, WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

VISUAL: Interior lab setting, several plaster casts of three-toed prints displayed on a shelf behind him.

DR. RALPH ANDERSON: The scientific response split almost immediately, and honestly, it's stayed split ever since. The zoological team's language was careful — "consistent with a bipedal creature of significant mass." Unusual, but not unprecedented; there's real precedent for large three-toed feet in the fossil record. The Smithsonian's paleontologist took the opposite position — misidentification, or fabrication, given how much publicity the site was drawing.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Neither side, notably, could offer a convincing account of how the prints might have been faked — not with the pressure characteristics the casts preserved, and not with new tracks continuing to appear at inconvenient, hard-to-reach hours for months afterward.

EXT. SUWANNEE RIVER, FLORIDA — JUNE 1948 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A fishing guide — PORTER — stands at the muddy edge of a remote riverbank at first light, staring down at a trail of enormous prints leading up from the water into palmetto scrub.

PORTER (REENACTMENT, V.O.): "I've seen gator slides, bear tracks, panther prints. These were none of those things. Clear as day. Three toes, big as dinner plates."

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Suwannee site was remote enough — hours by boat or a difficult overland hike — that investigators from the state's Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission considered a hoax there especially unlikely. The casts they took matched Clearwater in every anatomical detail.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Summer 1948: additional tracks reported near Lake City, Gainesville, and Ocala National Forest.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): By summer's end, the Florida press had settled on a name — the "Giant Penguin" — equal parts description and gentle mockery, though zoologists were quick to note no penguin, living or extinct, had ever approached anything close to this size.

ATMOSPHERE: Cicadas in the humid evening air, swelling and receding. A boat engine idling, then cutting to silence.

**EXT. PASTURE NEAR EUREKA, CALIFORNIA — OCTOBER 1948
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A rancher — GARRETT — walks a fence line at the edge of a redwood forest, cattle bunched nervously in the far corner of the pasture behind him, a trail of deep prints crossing the wet grass between them.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The pattern jumped coasts that October. William Garrett found matching tracks on his California ranch — same triangular toe structure, same depth, same six-foot stride — his herd, notably, refusing to graze anywhere near them.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Dr. Robert Finch, Humboldt State College: "The anatomical structure is identical... either the same species in widely separated locations, or a coordinated hoax of remarkable sophistication."*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): A sheriff's investigation found no evidence of fabrication. The tracks, whatever their origin, appeared to be exactly what they looked like.

EXT. LOGGING ROAD, MOUNT ST. HELENS, WASHINGTON — MARCH 1949 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A logging crew gathered at the edge of a muddy access road, foreman crouched beside a sixteen-inch print, camera raised.

INTERVIEW – DR. RALPH ANDERSON, WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

DR. RALPH ANDERSON: The Pacific Northwest cases are interesting because they land on top of a region that already had a century of giant-creature lore behind it. A logging foreman named MacKenzie photographed tracks sixteen inches across, five inches deep. The company brought in a wildlife biologist, Dr. Sarah Hendricks, who put the creature's likely weight north of four hundred pounds — and still came up with nothing else. No hair, no scat, no den. Just the tracks.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The absence of any other evidence would become one of the phenomenon's most persistent, most frustrating features.

EXT. CORNFIELD NEAR DECORAH, IOWA — APRIL 1950 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A freshly plowed field under a clearing storm sky, a farmer walking a diagonal line of deep prints stretching from tree line to creek.

NARRATOR (V.O.): In Iowa, a farmer named Henry Olson watched the storm itself from his window — wide awake through the worst of it — and found seventeen fresh prints crossing his field by morning, all pressed into ground that had been bare mud only hours before, during a window too narrow and too violent for any hoaxer to have worked in.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Decorah Journal: "Mr. Olson is a respected member of the community with no history of seeking attention... What made the tracks remains unknown."*

ATMOSPHERE: Distant rolling thunder, fading. Rain dripping from a barn eave into a puddle, slow and rhythmic.

INT. UNIVERSITY LABORATORY — DAY

VISUAL: A wide table covered in plaster casts of varying sizes, each labeled with a location card — Clearwater, Suwannee, Eureka, Decorah — arranged for comparison under bright lab lighting.

INTERVIEW – DR. RALPH ANDERSON, WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

DR. RALPH ANDERSON: People kept reaching for "bear" as the simple explanation, and biologists actually tested that directly — studied bear tracks under all kinds of conditions. Bears just don't produce this. Wrong toe arrangement, wrong stride, wrong weight distribution. The alternative theories all had to explain three toes specifically — and in the animal kingdom, that's actually a fairly narrow category. Large ground birds, mostly. Ostriches, rheas, cassowaries. The extinct moas. The terror birds of South America.

NARRATOR (V.O.): None of those species, living or extinct, had ever been documented in North America. Whatever was leaving these prints was either an unknown species entirely, or something that had arrived at a three-toed foot by a path science hadn't yet traced.

EXT. BUFFALO RIVER, ARKANSAS — AUTUMN 1952 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A hunter — WHITMORE — follows a trail of prints up a steep riverbank, tracking them to the dark mouth of a limestone cave. He stands at the threshold, lantern raised, unwilling to step further in.

WHITMORE (REENACTMENT, V.O.): "The tracks went right into the cave. I could smell something strange. Not bad, exactly, but musky, animal-like. Something about that cave felt wrong. Felt like I wasn't welcome."

NARRATOR (V.O.): Speleologists who later explored the cave system found no bedding, no scat, no sign of habitation — only more of the same tracks, pressed into cave-floor mud before disappearing on dry stone. Two weeks later and eighty miles east, a fisherman camped at Table Rock Lake would wake to find dozens of identical prints circling his tent — close enough, he said, to have touched the canvas — with no sound, no warning, having heard nothing at all in the night.

ATMOSPHERE: Water dripping deep in a cave. An echo that doesn't quite resolve into any identifiable source.

INTERVIEW – DR. RALPH ANDERSON, WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

VISUAL: Return to the lab setting, casts still arranged on the table between them.

DR. RALPH ANDERSON: Two researchers took this seriously enough to build real theories around it — Ivan Sanderson, and later Bernard Heuvelmans, who's often called the father of cryptozoology as a discipline. Sanderson's idea, broadly, was a surviving lineage of large ground birds adapted to a semi-aquatic life — which would explain the swamps, the riverbanks, the coastlines. Heuvelmans made a similar case in his own writing on undiscovered animals, pointing to the coelacanth as proof that something thought extinct for millions of years could still turn up alive in the right remote habitat.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Their case was speculative — both scientists acknowledged as much themselves — but it wasn't dismissed lightly, either. It was, at minimum, biologically coherent in a way the hoax theory kept struggling to match.

MONTAGE — THE PATTERN CONTINUES

VISUAL: A rapid, unhurried sequence: a beach at dawn near Monterey, wet sand holding a clean triangular print at the tide line; a wildlife officer photographing tracks on an Apalachicola sandbar; a wheat field in eastern Oregon under gray sky.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Monterey, 1951 — tracks emerging from the surf itself, puzzling marine biologists who could match them to no known pinniped. The Apalachicola River, 1957. A wheat field in eastern Oregon, 1959. Different states, different decades, the same fourteen-to-sixteen-inch triangular print, the same roughly six-foot stride, the same total absence of any further evidence.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Dr. Margaret Chen, Smithsonian, 1960: "We need more — we need hair samples, scat, feeding signs, shelter sites. We need proof that goes beyond impressions in the mud."*

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — DUSK

VISUAL: The recurring mountain vista, deep blue dusk settling over the ridge.

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(quiet, final)* That proof never came. Camera traps caught nothing but known wildlife. Trackers followed trails that went cold on hard ground or vanished into water. The creature, or creatures, remained exactly what they had always been — a shape defined only by its absence, known only by the marks left behind after it was already gone.

Three toes. Deeper than any man could make. Wider than any known beast should leave.

The land kept the evidence. It never once gave up the answer.

ATMOSPHERE: The cello underscore rises once, then falls to a single sustained note. Wind. Silence.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Seven: "Ridge Walkers of Appalachia"

Giants in the mountain fog

FADE IN.

**EXT. PANTHER'S BACK RIDGE, MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST —
DUSK, OCTOBER 1967 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: Thick fog rolls over a narrow ridge trail, swallowing ancient hemlock and oak one trunk at a time. A man — DANIEL — walks the high trail alone, a ginseng sack slung over one shoulder, his pace quickening as the light fails.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"The mountains remember what the valleys forget..."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(low, unhurried)* October, 1967. A ridge locally called Panther's Back — three miles from the nearest logging road, five from the nearest house. Daniel Hutchins knows this trail the way his grandfather knew it, and his grandfather's father before him.

ATMOSPHERE: Fog swallowing sound, the forest gone unnaturally still. Daniel's own breath, visible, ragged.

VISUAL: A single, massive footfall sounds somewhere ahead in the whiteness — too heavy for any known animal. Then another. A dark shape resolves out of the fog, fifty feet off, taller than the surrounding canopy, walking upright with a stride that eats the ridge in long, purposeful strides.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): It pauses. And in that pause, Daniel understands — with total, wordless certainty — that it knows exactly where he's standing.

VISUAL: The shape resumes its path, unhurried, and dissolves back into the fog. Daniel doesn't move for five full minutes.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): That night, at his own kitchen table, his wife tells him something he'd never known. His grandfather saw one too. On that same ridge. He just never talked about it.

FADE TO:

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — MORNING (AERIAL)

VISUAL: A sweeping drone shot traveling the full length of a forested ridgeline, layered peaks fading to blue in the distance, a river of mist pooling in the hollers below.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"RIDGE WALKERS OF APPALACHIA" Giants in the mountain fog*

NARRATOR (V.O.): Long before Daniel Hutchins ever set foot on that trail, the mountains already carried this story. The Cherokee spoke of the Tsul'kalu in these same peaks. The Shawnee told of great beings who walked the ridgelines. The Iroquois remembered Stone Giants driven, at last, into mountains just like these. When European settlers arrived, they brought their own wild-man traditions — and found, in this terrain of endless ridge and hidden holler, a landscape that seemed built to keep such things hidden.

INTERVIEW – DR. CAROL ASHFORD, APPALACHIAN FOLKLORIST

VISUAL: Interior cabin office, ridge visible through a window behind her, ginseng roots drying on a nearby shelf.

DR. CAROL ASHFORD: What you have to understand about this terrain is how *effective* it is at swallowing sound and swallowing sight both. A ridge that runs unbroken for fifteen miles. A holler so steep and narrow that sunlight doesn't reach the bottom until noon. Fog that can drop visibility to twenty feet in minutes. If you wanted to design a landscape for something to stay hidden in, you'd design this one.

NARRATOR (V.O.): And the families who settled here learned, generation by generation, exactly which ridges to walk — and which to leave alone.

**EXT. REMOTE HOLLER, POCAHONTAS COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA —
1823 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A hewn-log cabin beside a cold mountain stream, three cleared acres of corn surrounded by dense old-growth forest on all sides. A woman — MARTHA — straightens from her hoeing, listening.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Whitaker family settled this holler in 1823 — six miles from their nearest neighbor by a trail barely passable on horseback. That first spring, Martha Whitaker heard something in the high ground above the clearing: a slow, heavy thumping, wrong for any woodcutter, each impact sending a faint tremor through the soil beneath her feet.

VISUAL: Her husband — JEREMIAH — kneels the next day beside a muddy spring, measuring an eighteen-inch print against his own boot. Above him, tree bark bears deep parallel gouges, well over head height.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A period-style survey sketch reenactment: a hand-drawn outline of the print beside careful, faded measurements.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): That August, the Whitakers' twelve-year-old son, Thomas, watched from the streambank as a massive, hair-covered figure crested the far slope, paused at the tree line to look down at their cabin's chimney smoke, and moved on. The family stayed three more years. They simply learned to live alongside it.

ATMOSPHERE: A dog's low, uneasy growl. Wind moving through rhododendron. Silence, deep and complete, settling over the clearing.

**EXT. DEVIL'S BACKBONE RIDGE, EASTERN KENTUCKY — 1847
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A hunter — SAMUEL COMBS — pushes through dense laurel thicket, tracking a blood trail, and stumbles into a strange circular clearing: hard-packed earth, large stones arranged with apparent deliberation around its perimeter. He stops cold.

NARRATOR (V.O.): By the 1840s, entire communities in eastern Kentucky had developed an informal understanding about certain ground — Devil's Backbone chief among them, where dogs refused game trails and hunters spoke of feeling watched by something never quite seen.

INTERVIEW – DR. CAROL ASHFORD, FOLKLORIST

DR. CAROL ASHFORD: Samuel Combs described the silence in that clearing as almost physical — no birds, no wind, nothing. He backed out and never found his way to that exact spot again, though other hunters later found stacked stones nearby, each one the size of a man's head, piled six feet high. The community's answer was simple: leave it alone. There was game enough elsewhere.

ATMOSPHERE: Unnatural stillness — no birdsong, no insects. A single stone shifting somewhere unseen.

**EXT. COAL MINING CAMP, MCDOWELL COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA —
NOVEMBER 1902 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A rough camp of wooden barracks lit by lantern light, a horizontal mine shaft cut into the mountainside beyond. A miner — JOSEF — steps out from the tree line and freezes, staring across the clearing.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The coal boom brought a new population into these same remote hollers — miners, many newly arrived from Europe, with no prior exposure to Appalachian tradition at all. Tools vanished from the McDowell County camp within weeks of its founding. Locked storage sheds were found broken open, no footprints in the mud around them.

VISUAL: Josef stands frozen as an eight-foot silhouette at the clearing's edge slowly turns its head, surveying the camp, before withdrawing into the trees with unsettling speed and silence.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Foreman Patrick O'Brien's measurement of the clearest recovered print: 19 inches.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The thefts stopped after that November night. The footfalls, and the smell the men described as wet fur and musk, did not. The mine was played out within two years, and the camp — and whatever had watched it — was left to the forest.

**EXT. VIRGIN TIMBER STAND, SMOKY MOUNTAINS, EAST TENNESSEE
— JULY 1924 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: Two loggers, axes in hand, stand before a freshly felled oak six feet in diameter, deep in a valley reachable only by a two-day wagon road. Dense rhododendron walls the clearing on every side.

NARRATOR (V.O.): In the Smokies, loggers Henry Caldwell and James Morrison were limbing a felled oak when the rhododendron ahead of them simply parted — pushed aside like grass by something nine feet tall, dark-haired, watching them with what both men would later describe as clear, deliberate intelligence.

VISUAL: The shape releases a low, resonant vocalization. The two men drop their axes and run, the sound of pursuit crashing through the brush behind them.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A camp foreman's hand-drawn field sketch of the recovered tracks, pencil on rough paper, dimensions carefully noted.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Foreman Dutch Schneider's search party recovered the abandoned axes and matching tracks leading straight up the ridge. Several men quit the operation outright rather than return to that section of forest.

ATMOSPHERE: The rasp of a crosscut saw fading into silence. Distant breaking branches, receding up-slope.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, NORTH CAROLINA — MOONLIT HOLLER — 1931 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A moonshiner — ELIJAH PARSONS — walks a pale trail through dark trees, two jugs in a pack on his back, moving with the ease of long familiarity — until he stops, suddenly alert.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Prohibition-era moonshiners, who knew these mountains better than almost anyone, kept their own private catalog of the ridge walkers. Elijah Parsons described being paced for over a mile by something that never closed the distance and never fell behind — footfalls keeping an exact, patient interval behind him in the dark.

PARSONS (REENACTMENT, V.O.): "It stopped right at the edge of the holler. Like it knew that was as far as it was supposed to go."

NARRATOR (V.O.): Other moonshiners had near-identical stories. The informal rule that developed among them was simple: when the woods went silent, you moved carefully, and you didn't push your luck.

EXT. GINSENG HOLLER, SOUTHWESTERN VIRGINIA — 1956 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: An old-growth forest in perpetual half-light, a ginseng hunter — ROBERT HENSLEY — crouched over a large root, digging carefully. He stops, a strange musky scent reaching him. Thirty feet off, partially hidden behind a massive oak, a huge shoulder and arm are visible, motionless, watching.

INTERVIEW – DR. CAROL ASHFORD, FOLKLORIST (*voiceover continues over the reenactment*)

DR. CAROL ASHFORD: Ginseng hunters, by the nature of their work, went into the most untouched hollers in the mountains — the same places the ridge walkers seemed to prefer. Robert Hensley's standoff lasted almost two full minutes before the thing simply stepped back and walked off, revealing itself fully just for a second — nine feet, by his estimate, shoulders "impossibly broad."

NARRATOR (V.O.): Ginseng hunters developed their own unspoken code, echoing the moonshiners' — if you see one, you leave, quietly, and you don't come back to that hollow for years.

**EXT. MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST CAMPGROUND — NIGHT,
SEPTEMBER 1972 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A developed campground, picnic tables and fire rings, a family tent glowing faintly from a lantern inside. A father — RICHARD BRENNAN — lies rigid, listening to heavy, deliberate footfalls circling just outside the thin nylon wall.

NARRATOR (V.O.): As the mountains grew more accessible to tourists, the encounters followed the tourists in. The Brennan family, camping in a fully developed site, described footfalls that paused for thirty full seconds directly outside their tent wall — close enough, Richard Brennan said, that he could hear it breathing.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Morning: an 18-inch print recovered near the fire ring. No official park service report was ever filed.*

ATMOSPHERE: The soft creak of a tent zipper. Wind. A held breath.

**EXT. APPALACHIAN TRAIL, GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS — OCTOBER
1989 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A lone hiker — JENNIFER WALSH — moves through old-growth forest along the trail, pack on her back, pace steady until she registers movement paced exactly alongside her in the dense rhododendron.

NARRATOR (V.O.): By 1989, hiker Jennifer Walsh described something unprecedented in the record — not fleeing, not confrontation, but a kind of exchange. Paced for half a mile by something she couldn't see, she finally faced the shape when it stepped into view at the trail's edge, and spoke to it directly.

WALSH (REENACTMENT): "I'm just passing through. I don't mean any harm."

NARRATOR (V.O.): Something in its posture shifted — she couldn't say exactly what. She walked past it. When she looked back, it was gone.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE / INTERVIEW – RETIRED THRU-HIKER, "MARSHALL," APPALACHIAN TRAIL COMMUNITY

MARSHALL: She told us that story at the shelter that night, and I remember just nodding along. You're not the first. You won't be the last. The old-timers know it. It's just the tourists who don't believe.

INT. RESEARCH OFFICE — DAY

VISUAL: A cluttered desk, field reports and a topographic map of the southern Appalachians spread out, red pins marking dozens of reported sighting locations across multiple states and decades.

INTERVIEW – DR. CAROL ASHFORD, APPALACHIAN FOLKLORIST

DR. CAROL ASHFORD: The leading biological theory points to Gigantopithecus — a genuinely real, genuinely enormous ape known from the fossil record in Asia, thought extinct for a few hundred thousand years. The idea is a small population crossing during the last ice age and persisting, quietly, in exactly this kind of dense, difficult terrain. It's speculative. It's also not biologically impossible, which is more than you can say for most cryptid theories.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Others propose an undocumented North American great ape entirely, evolved rather than migrated. A minority favor something stranger still — outside the reach of biology altogether. What all of the theories share is an admission that the simplest explanation, misidentification alone, has never quite covered every account.

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — DUSK

VISUAL: The recurring mountain vista returns one final time, fog beginning to pool in the valley below as the light fades to blue.

NARRATOR (V.O.): (*quiet, final*) Mountain families rarely called the authorities. They told their neighbors instead, and their neighbors told others, and slowly, over generations, a private map took shape — which ridges to walk, which hollers to leave alone, which autumn evenings to stay close to the porch light.

That map was never written down. It didn't need to be. It lived the same way the stories themselves lived — carried forward, hollow to hollow, family to family, by people who had no reason to invent what they'd seen and every reason to keep it quiet.

The fog still rolls over these ridgelines tonight. And somewhere beneath it, by every account that has ever been told here, something is still walking.

ATMOSPHERE: The cello underscore rises once, then fades to a single held note. Wind moving through the ridge pines. Silence.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Eight: "Red Sands and Red-Haired Giants"

Legends of the desert caves

FADE IN.

INT. LOVELOCK CAVE, NEVADA — JUNE 1911 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A wooden ladder descends into total darkness, each rung creaking. A young man — JAMES HART — climbs down, lantern in hand, the bright coin of Nevada daylight shrinking to nothing above him. The cave floor is thick with pale, powdery guano.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"The desert keeps what it takes, and the caves remember what the desert forgets."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(low, deliberate)* June, 1911. James Hart, twenty-three years old, works the guano deposits of Lovelock Cave for the Sunset Guano Company — hard labor, poor pay, in air thick with ammonia and something older underneath it.

ATMOSPHERE: Dripping water, distant and hollow. The scrape of a shovel against stone. Labored breathing through a cloth bandana.

VISUAL: On the fourth day, Hart's shovel strikes something hollow. He kneels, brushing away guano to reveal a large woven basket, nearly three feet across. He lifts the lid.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Inside: bones. A femur too long. A skull half again the size of his own — and across its crown, in patches, hair. Not brown. Not black. A bright, coppery red, preserved by a thousand years of cave-dry air.

VISUAL: Hart sits back on his heels, staring, hands trembling in the lantern light.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): He had heard the stories every desert worker eventually heard. Giants. Red-haired. Driven into these very caves and burned alive by the Paiute, generations before any white man set foot in this desert.

HART (REENACTMENT): *(calling upward)* "Pull me up. I found something."

FADE TO:

EXT. RED ROCK DESERT, NEVADA — DAY (AERIAL)

VISUAL: Sweeping drone shot over red sandstone formations, heat shimmer rising off the desert floor, the entrance to Lovelock Cave a dark seam in the distant hillside.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"RED SANDS AND RED-HAIRED GIANTS" Legends of the desert caves*

NARRATOR (V.O.): Long before Hart's lantern ever found that basket, the Paiute of the Great Basin already had a name for what the cave held: the Si-Te-Cah — the tule-eaters.

INTERVIEW – ELDER RAYMOND WINNEMUCCA, PAIUTE TRIBAL HISTORIAN

VISUAL: Outdoor interview near Humboldt Sink, the dry lakebed stretching out behind him under an enormous sky.

ELDER RAYMOND WINNEMUCCA: The tradition is specific, and it's old. Eight to twelve feet tall. Red hair — not the kind of thing you'd expect to hear passed down about people who looked like us. Fishermen, on the old lake that used to sit right there. Skilled with baskets. And, the stories say, willing to raid our camps for food when they needed to — which sometimes meant our people.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The tradition describes a long, grinding conflict, ending at a single cave near the lake's edge — the Si-Te-Cah cornered inside, refusing to surrender, and the surrounding Paiute bands finally choosing fire and smoke over further losses.

ELDER RAYMOND WINNEMUCCA: The cave was sealed afterward. Left alone. That's the place your guano miners walked into in 1911, though none of them knew it yet.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind moving across the dry lakebed, carrying fine dust. A hawk's cry, distant.

INT. LOVELOCK CAVE — 1911–1924 (ARCHIVAL MONTAGE)

VISUAL: A series of period-style photographs, deliberately grainy and soft-focused: miners with lanterns and sacks, crates stacked at the cave mouth, an enormous woven basket held up for scale beside a man's torso.

NARRATOR (V.O.): For thirteen years, the Sunset Guano Company worked this cave for fertilizer, not archaeology. What emerged from the guano layers came out with no record, no context, no care — but it kept emerging. Dozens of baskets, some over three feet across. Sandals sized, by one 1913 measurement, at fifteen inches long. A war club recovered in 1915, four feet in length, requiring two hands even for a large man to lift.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *And, recurring through the layers: red hair. Preserved on skull fragments scattered through the deposits.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): None of it was catalogued. Most of it was scattered, sold as curiosities, or simply discarded in the digging.

EXT. LOVELOCK CAVE ENTRANCE — MARCH 1924 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A small archaeological team unloads equipment at the cave mouth — trowels, brushes, screening frames — led by a bespectacled man in field clothes.

NARRATOR (V.O.): When the guano was finally exhausted, archaeologist Llewellyn Loud of the University of California arrived to excavate whatever the mining operation had left behind — and found the site's stratigraphy essentially destroyed, thirteen years of undocumented digging having erased most of the context that would have let the material speak for itself.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: Black-and-white 1924 excavation photographs — researchers on hands and knees at the cave floor, a skull photographed beside a measuring tape.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Loud's 1929 published report: "Femur lengths suggest statures of 6'6" to 7'0" or possibly greater... hair color can be affected by environmental factors and post-mortem changes."*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): It is a notably careful sentence — not a claim of giants, but an acknowledgment that something in these remains sat outside the ordinary range.

INTERVIEW – ELDER RAYMOND WINNEMUCCA

(returning)

ELDER RAYMOND WINNEMUCCA: Loud spoke with one of our elders during that dig — a man named John Reid. Reid told him plainly: they were giants, not just tall men. They ate people. We fought them a long time, and finally we trapped them and killed them with fire and smoke. Their bones are still in there, he said. You'll find them if you dig deep enough.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Loud recorded the account in his field notes, treating it with the seriousness due any oral historian — while maintaining, in his published findings, the caution expected of a scientist working with disturbed, out-of-context material.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA MUSEUM, BERKELEY — ARCHIVE (LATER YEARS)

VISUAL: Rows of storage shelving, cardboard specimen boxes labeled with faded catalog numbers. A researcher's hand pulls an empty box from a shelf, checking the label against a clipboard.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The baskets and sandals remained on display for decades — uncontroversial evidence of Great Basin ingenuity. The largest skeletal material followed a different path. By the 1950s, much of it could no longer be located. In 1965, anthropologist Robert Heizer, attempting a comprehensive study of Great Basin populations, found the bulk of the Lovelock material missing from the collection entirely.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Heizer, 1967: "The loss of this material from the collections is regrettable and raises questions about the stewardship of archaeological resources."*

INTERVIEW – DR. ELAINE PARRISH, ARCHAEOLOGIST, GREAT BASIN STUDIES

VISUAL: Interior university lab, artifact drawers and a large regional map on the wall behind her.

DR. ELAINE PARRISH: I want to give people the full picture here, because it cuts both ways. Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American museums were genuinely disorganized — cataloging by hand, specimens loaned out and never returned, whole collections lost to fires, floods, simple negligence. That's a completely mundane explanation, and for a lot of missing material, it's almost certainly the right one.

NARRATOR (V.O.): But it's also true that Paiute tribes, when later asked directly whether any Lovelock material had been repatriated to them for reburial, said no such transfer had ever taken place. Which leaves the disappearance — mundane or otherwise — formally unresolved.

DR. ELAINE PARRISH: And I'd add one more thing, because it matters. Red or reddish hair on ancient remains doesn't automatically mean the person had red hair in life. Melanin in hair oxidizes and degrades after death — it's a well-documented process, seen in preserved remains worldwide, including cases with no connection to red-haired ancestry at all. That doesn't mean every account here is explained by it. But it means "red hair" in a 1911 field report isn't, on its own, proof of anything.

NARRATOR (V.O.): It's a caution worth holding alongside the tradition, not instead of it.

EXT. CAVE SYSTEM EAST OF WINNEMUCCA, NEVADA — 1931 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: Two miners — FRANK and GEORGE MORRISON — pry weathered, lichen-covered rocks away from a sealed chamber entrance, flashlight beams cutting into the dark space beyond.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Lovelock was not the only find. In 1931, prospecting brothers Frank and George Morrison broke open a sealed chamber east of Winnemucca and found a skeleton laid out deliberately on its back, arms crossed over the chest — estimated, by Frank's own measurements, at eight feet or more, a few strands of red hair still visible on the skull.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A period Kodak photograph reenactment: the skeleton in situ, a measuring tape laid alongside the femur for scale.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Reported to the Nevada State Museum, 1931. No trace of the specimen in the collection by the 1960s.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The photographs survived in the Morrison family's private collection. The bones themselves did not survive in any institutional record anyone has since been able to locate.

ATMOSPHERE: Stale, still cave air. A flashlight beam flickering across rock.

EXT. CANYON NEAR SEDONA, ARIZONA — 1891 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A group of ranchers navigate a narrow ledge high on a red canyon wall toward a dark cave mouth, red rock towering above and below them.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Further south, in Arizona's red rock country, ranchers in 1891 discovered a burial chamber holding six skeletons, seated in a row against the cave wall, each showing evidence of red or reddish-brown hair. Territorial surveyor Thomas Bingham's report described individuals distinct, in both stature and burial custom, from the region's known Native populations.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Bingham, 1891: "The presence of red hair on all specimens is particularly noteworthy..." Displayed briefly at the Arizona territorial museum. Absent from records by 1900.*

ATMOSPHERE: Wind funneling through the canyon, a low, hollow moan against the rock.

MONTAGE — ACROSS THE DESERT SOUTHWEST

VISUAL: A rapid, sun-bleached sequence: canyon country near Moab, Utah; the Gila Wilderness of New Mexico; the Mojave Desert under a punishing midday sun — each held briefly, connected by hard cuts rather than soft dissolves, echoing the harshness of the terrain.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Utah miners in the 1920s. New Mexico ranchers near the Gila. Mojave prospectors working remote washes. The same pattern recurs, region after region — remains suggesting statures well beyond seven feet, and a documentation trail that goes cold not long after.

INTERVIEW – DR. ELAINE PARRISH, ARCHAEOLOGIST

VISUAL: Return to the lab setting.

DR. ELAINE PARRISH: The honest answer is that we're left with two incomplete pictures that don't fully resolve each other. A documented pattern of large-statured remains and unusual artifacts, poorly preserved by the standards of modern archaeology. And a rich, internally consistent oral tradition that predates any of these excavations by generations. Neither one, on its own, proves the other. But dismissing either one outright means throwing away real evidence.

NARRATOR (V.O.): What can be said with confidence is this: something large was buried in these caves, wrapped and positioned with evident care, generations before any archaeologist arrived to document it — and the fullest physical record of what it was has, by whatever means, been lost.

EXT. RED ROCK DESERT, NEVADA — SUNSET

VISUAL: The desert stretches to the horizon under a sky burning orange and deep red, the dark mouth of a distant cave just visible in silhouette against the fading light.

NARRATOR (V.O.): (*quiet, final*) The Paiute still tell the story of the Si-Te-Cah — not as often as they once did, but they tell it. Red hair. A war fought to survive. A cave sealed with fire, and later, with stone.

Whatever the full truth of what once lay inside these caves, the tradition arrived first, and the tradition has outlasted every excavation, every catalog number, every specimen that vanished from an institutional shelf. The desert keeps what it takes. Sometimes, it seems, the institutions do too.

ATMOSPHERE: The cello underscore rises once, then fades into the sound of wind moving across open sand. Silence.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Nine: "Forest Titans of the Northwest"

Giants among the ancient trees

FADE IN.

**EXT. OLYMPIC PENINSULA OLD-GROWTH FOREST — DAWN,
OCTOBER 1889 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: Fog hangs in the canopy like wet wool. A logger — THOMAS BAXTER — moves along a game trail between Douglas firs so massive that three men linking hands could not encircle them, their bark black with moisture, thick cushions of moss glowing faint green in the diffused light.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"The old trees know what walks beneath their branches."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(low, unhurried)* October, 1889. Three years into working these forests, Thomas Baxter believes he has already seen everything the Olympic Peninsula has to offer. He is wrong.

ATMOSPHERE: Total silence — no birds, no squirrels, only the soft drip of condensation from the canopy above.

VISUAL: A heavy, deliberate footfall sounds nearby, ground trembling faintly with each step. The fog thins for a moment, revealing an enormous, hair-covered figure moving parallel to the trail — nine feet or more, shoulders filling the gap between the trunks.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): It stops. Turns its head. And looks directly at him.

VISUAL: Close on Baxter's face, frozen, as the creature's dark eyes hold his for several long seconds before the fog closes back over it.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): He never marked those cedars. He never told a soul at camp what he'd seen. But he never forgot the sensation of being measured by something that was, unmistakably, thinking.

FADE TO:

EXT. OLYMPIC PENINSULA — AERIAL — DAY

VISUAL: A sweeping drone shot over unbroken old-growth canopy, mist rising from the forest floor, a river cutting silver through the green below.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"FOREST TITANS OF THE NORTHWEST" Giants among the ancient trees*

NARRATOR (V.O.): From the Olympic Peninsula to the redwood groves of northern California, this is some of the last true wilderness left in North America — forests where trees already ancient when Columbus reached the continent still stand today, their crowns lost above two hundred feet of mist and rain.

INTERVIEW – ELDER MARY CHARLES, QUINULT TRIBAL ELDER

VISUAL: Interior longhouse-style structure, carved cedar panels visible behind her.

ELDER MARY CHARLES: Every nation along this coast has a name for them. Ts'emekwes. Sasq'ets. Seeahtik. The names change, but what's being described doesn't — large, hair-covered, walking upright, living deep in the old growth, avoiding us when they can. We never treated them as spirits or myths. They were simply part of the forest, the way bear and elk are part of the forest. Rare. Dangerous if you cornered one. But real.

NARRATOR (V.O.): When settlers began arriving in the 1800s, they carried no framework at all for what they were about to encounter — only the forest itself, vast and dark enough to make anything seem possible.

**EXT. HOH RIVER LOGGING CAMP, WASHINGTON — DECEMBER 1892
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A rough logging camp at dusk, bunkhouses ringed by towering firs. A foreman — LARS ERIKSON — writes by lamplight at a rough table, his breath visible in the cold air.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Camp foreman Lars Erikson kept a daily operations log that December — practical, unembellished, the record of a man documenting missing tools and disrupted work, not a man prone to invention.

ON-SCREEN TEXT (SERIES, INTERCUT WITH REENACTMENT): *Dec. 3 — Tools missing overnight. No tracks; ground frozen. Dec. 7 — A 200-lb barrel of salt pork taken; latch simply lifted. Tracks found: 18 inches, five toes, six-foot stride. Dec. 11 — Footsteps circled the camp after dark. Trees stripped of bark to ten feet. Dec. 15 — Three men quit. Something approached the bunkhouse; breathing heard through the wall. Dec. 18 — Camp relocated. "The forests here hold things that defy explanation."*

VISUAL: Lantern light spilling from a bunkhouse doorway onto churned, frozen mud, an enormous track just visible at the light's edge before the reenactment fades to black.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind through the firs. A distant, heavy footfall. Silence.

**EXT. MOUNT RAINIER FOOTHILLS, WASHINGTON — 1897
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A logging crew follows a trail of enormous tracks up a steep, rocky slope, pausing where saplings have been visibly bent and torn to aid a climb no ordinary animal should have needed help making.

NARRATOR (V.O.): A crew working near Mount Rainier in 1897 followed tracks measuring twenty-two inches for over a mile, up terrain one logger, Patrick Sullivan, told the *Tacoma Ledger* would have been "nearly impossible for a human to climb."

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Sullivan: "I've worked in these forests for fifteen years, and I know every animal that lives here. This was something else entirely."*

EXT. APE CANYON, MOUNT ST. HELENS — JULY 1924 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A remote canyon cabin, log-built, shake roof, a single barred door. Five prospectors move about a small mining claim in the golden light of early evening — FRED BECK among them.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The most famous account from this era begins here, in July of 1924. Fred Beck and four other prospectors — Marion Smith, Roy Smith, Gabe Lefever, and John Peterson — had spent weeks noticing small disturbances around their claim: tools moved, rocks thrown from the tree line with no source visible.

VISUAL: Marion Smith freezes at the clearing's edge as a massive, dark-haired figure watches him from the trees before withdrawing. The next day, Beck raises a rifle toward a distant figure on the far canyon wall and fires three times. The shape staggers and falls from view over the rim.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): That night, the cabin came under siege — thirty-pound rocks slamming into its walls for hours, something enormous climbing onto the roof and tearing at the shakes, guttural vocalizations the men could not identify as animal or human.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A period newspaper reenactment: the *Portland Oregonian's* July 16th, 1924, front page, headline visible but text deliberately soft-focused — "*Miners Report Attack by Giant Apes.*"

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Beck, 1964 interview: "We were attacked by creatures that should not exist according to science. But they do exist."*

INTERVIEW – DR. PATRICIA NORLAND, CRYPTOZOOLOGY HISTORIAN

VISUAL: Interior study, a framed period map of Mount St. Helens on the wall behind her.

DR. PATRICIA NORLAND: Ape Canyon is the case everyone eventually has to reckon with, because it's so well documented — five consistent witnesses, contemporary press coverage, physical damage to the cabin that reporters photographed a week later. The leading skeptical theory is that local youths staged the whole thing as a prank on prospectors sitting on a valuable claim. It's a plausible story. It just has never fully accounted for tracks eighteen inches long with a six-foot stride, or for how a group of pranksters could throw thirty-pound rocks with the force those impacts left behind.

NARRATOR (V.O.): No body was ever recovered from the canyon floor below where Beck fired. Only a name that stuck to the map, and a story that has never been fully closed either way.

**EXT. QUINULT RIVER CAMPSITE, OLYMPIC NATIONAL FOREST —
AUGUST 1941 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A family campsite at night, a father — ROBERT CHAPMAN — easing back a tent flap, flashlight raised, illuminating an enormous, dark-furred figure standing just beyond the fire ring, calmly holding the family's metal cooler.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Chapman family's 1941 encounter added an unexpectedly quiet detail to the record — a creature that seemed genuinely curious rather than aggressive, examining their cooler for several seconds before setting it down, unhurried, and walking back into the trees.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Park ranger Thomas Whitmore's report: 19-inch tracks, five toes, weight estimated at 400+ lbs. "Not bear tracks, not elk tracks... humanlike in structure but far too large to be from any human."*

ATMOSPHERE: Crickets resuming, tentatively, after a long silence. A zipper closing.

EXT. SIX RIVERS NATIONAL FOREST, CALIFORNIA — OCTOBER 1958 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A bulldozer sits idle at a muddy construction site at dawn, enormous tracks circling its treads. A worker — JERRY CREW — crouches beside one, pouring plaster into a wooden frame.

NARRATOR (V.O.): It was here, on a road crew in northern California, that the phenomenon finally got the name that would follow it into the mainstream. Jerry Crew's plaster casts — sixteen inches, five toes, a clear arch and heel — ran in the *Humboldt Times* and then nationally, and a local journalist, reaching for a headline, coined the word "Bigfoot."

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Note: Decades later, associates of a construction contractor connected to the crew claimed the original tracks had been faked with carved wooden feet — a claim that surfaced publicly only after his death in 2002 and remains disputed.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Whatever the truth of that particular set of tracks, the name outlived the controversy. But the phenomenon itself long predated 1958 — the indigenous traditions, the loggers' journals, Ape Canyon, all of it decades older than the word "Bigfoot" itself.

EXT. BLUFF CREEK, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA — OCTOBER 1967 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: Two riders on horseback move along a wide, gravel creek bed, one raising a handheld film camera as a large, dark, upright figure crosses the open ground ahead of them and glances back over its shoulder before continuing toward the tree line.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Nine years later, in that same general region, Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin filmed roughly sixty seconds of footage that remains, to this day, the most scrutinized piece of evidence in the entire field. Analysts in primate locomotion have argued for decades over whether the gait and proportions in that film could plausibly be faked. No consensus has ever been reached.

ATMOSPHERE: The whirl of an old film camera. Water moving over creek stones. Silence, held.

INTERVIEW – DR. PATRICIA NORLAND, CRYPTOZOOLOGY HISTORIAN

VISUAL: Return to the study setting.

DR. PATRICIA NORLAND: The most serious academic voice in all of this was Grover Krantz, a physical anthropologist at Washington State University. He spent years examining track casts and argued that details like dermal ridging and the flexible midfoot were extraordinarily difficult to fake convincingly — that the biomechanics implied a real, large-bodied bipedal primate, not a costume. He took real professional risk making that argument publicly, and he never backed away from it before his death in 2002.

NARRATOR (V.O.): His critics countered with the same objection that has followed this entire field for a century: no body, no bones, no definitive specimen — only tracks, sightings, and a wilderness vast enough to make the absence of proof frustratingly unpersuasive as proof of absence.

EXT. NORTH CASCADES, PACIFIC CREST TRAIL — SEPTEMBER 1995 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A small alpine lake at night, headlamps flickering on inside two tents. A hiker — SARAH MITCHELL — unzips her tent and shines a flashlight on an enormous figure standing at the clearing's edge, utterly unbothered by the light.

NARRATOR (V.O.): As recently as 1995, backpackers on the Pacific Crest Trail described an encounter with the same unhurried, watchful quality reported over a century earlier by Thomas Baxter in these same mountains — a creature that simply looked, assessed, and walked away at its own pace.

MITCHELL (REENACTMENT, V.O.): "It moved so quietly, so smoothly, like it knew exactly where it was going. I've hiked in these mountains for twenty years. I've never seen anything like it."

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Forest Service ranger's report: tracks "unlike any animal tracks I have encountered in fifteen years of working in these forests."*

EXT. OLYMPIC PENINSULA OLD-GROWTH FOREST — DUSK

VISUAL: The documentary returns to its opening image — towering firs disappearing into mist, moss glowing faintly in the low light.

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(quiet, final)* No body has ever been recovered. No specimen sits in any museum drawer waiting to close this case the way the record so often closes elsewhere in this story. What remains is track casts, splintered cabin walls, sixty seconds of grainy film, and well over a century of witnesses — Native and settler, logger and hiker, prospector and park ranger — describing, independently and consistently, the same thing.

The forest gives up almost nothing easily. Whatever moves beneath these trees has, so far, made sure of that.

ATMOSPHERE: Rain beginning, soft against the canopy far overhead. The cello underscore rises once, then fades into the sound of water. Silence.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Ten: "Modern Encounters"

Sightings in the last fifty years

FADE IN.

EXT. HIGHWAY 76, MARK TWAIN NATIONAL FOREST, MISSOURI — NIGHT, OCTOBER 2015 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A single set of headlights cuts through a tunnel of oak and hickory, the road empty in both directions. Inside a Honda CR-V, a woman — SARAH MITCHELL — drives home from a hospital shift, radio murmuring low.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"The age of giants did not end with the frontier. It simply learned to hide in the spaces between the streetlights."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(measured, contemporary)* This is not a story from the frontier. This is October, 2015. A Friday night. A back road most of us would recognize — the kind everyone has driven a hundred times without thinking twice.

VISUAL: Something crosses the headlight beam — massive, upright, eight feet or better, shoulders filling the width of the road. It stops in the middle of the lane, amber eyes catching the light and turning toward the windshield.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): For close to fifteen seconds, Sarah Mitchell and whatever is standing in her headlights simply look at each other. Then it crosses the last of the road in three strides and is gone into the trees, the undergrowth barely disturbed by its passing.

ATMOSPHERE: Tires skidding to a stop. The engine idling. Sarah's own ragged breathing filling the cabin.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): She never called it in that night. When she finally told her husband, weeks later, he offered her a bear, a prank, a trick of the headlights. She let it go. But she never drove that stretch of Highway 76 after dark again.

EXT. AMERICAN WILDERNESS — MONTAGE OF MODERN LANDSCAPES

VISUAL: A quick sequence: a rural highway at dusk, a suburban tree line at the edge of a subdivision, a remote hiking trailhead parking lot, a trail camera strapped to a pine trunk, its red indicator light blinking in the dark.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"MODERN ENCOUNTERS" Sightings in the last fifty years*

NARRATOR (V.O.): The frontier closed more than a century ago. The wilderness did not — not entirely. And in the decades since, the same pattern of encounter that once filled surveyors' journals and loggers' work logs has continued, now alongside cell phones, trail cameras, dashcams, and 911 dispatch logs.

**EXT. NICOLET NATIONAL FOREST, WISCONSIN — TREE STAND —
NOVEMBER 1973 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: Pre-dawn light filtering through frosted branches. A bow hunter — ROBERT DANIELS — sits motionless in a tree stand, breath fogging, as a massive, dark-haired figure crosses the forest floor forty yards below with a fast, ground-eating stride.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Robert Daniels had hunted these woods for fifteen years and knew exactly how a bear moved. What passed beneath his stand that November morning did not move like a bear — it moved with purpose, upright, covering ground at a rate that outpaced his own jogging speed.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Recovered tracks: 16 inches long, 5-foot stride. Wisconsin DNR response: "probably a bear."*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Daniels kept hunting those woods for years afterward. He never went back to that particular ridge.

**EXT. OZARK NATIONAL FOREST, ARKANSAS — CAMPSITE — AUGUST
1984 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A family — the CARPENTERS — sit close around a dying campfire, a flashlight beam sweeping uselessly into dark trees as heavy footfalls circle the camp at a steady fifty-yard radius.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Carpenter family's second night in the Ozarks brought twenty minutes of exactly this — footfalls, breaking branches, a heavy musk drifting into the firelight — and then, as suddenly as it began, silence. They broke camp at first light and cut their trip short by two days.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Tracks recovered near the creek: approx. 15 inches.*

ATMOSPHERE: Fire crackling low. A held breath. Wind through pine, unnaturally steady.

INT. RESEARCH OFFICE — DAY

VISUAL: A desk scattered with case files, a laptop open to a spreadsheet of dated, geotagged sighting reports spanning five decades.

INTERVIEW – DR. LOUISE FERRIS, WILDLIFE RESEARCHER

VISUAL: Dr. Ferris sits at the desk, one hand resting on a folder labeled by decade.

DR. LOUISE FERRIS: What's genuinely useful about the modern reports, compared to the nineteenth-century ones, is the *volume* — you can actually run statistics on them now. And the pattern holds up: brief encounters, dawn or dusk, remote or semi-remote terrain, witnesses who are frankly reluctant to come forward because they already know how they'll be received. That consistency, across fifty years and every region of the country, is the single hardest thing for a pure hoax-and-misidentification theory to explain away cleanly.

NARRATOR (V.O.): What technology hasn't done, even fifty years on, is produce the one thing that would settle the question outright.

**EXT. NORTHERN MINNESOTA — GAME TRAIL — OCTOBER 1993
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A hunter — CARL HENDRICKS — kneels beside a trail camera strapped to a birch trunk, sliding a fresh film cartridge from the housing.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Carl Hendricks's trail camera, set for deer, caught something else on its third check that October — a tall, upright figure in profile, head turned slightly toward the lens as if aware of it.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: A grainy, deliberately blurred period trail-camera-style still: a dark humanoid silhouette partially obscured by birch trunks, motion blur suggesting speed.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Submitted to multiple universities and wildlife organizations. Most responses: no reply, or "likely a bear."*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): Hendricks kept running trail cameras in that same stretch of forest for years afterward. He never captured a second image like it.

**EXT. RURAL GEORGIA BACK ROAD — NIGHT, JUNE 2006
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A car headlights sweep across a stretch of pine forest as a driver — JENNIFER WALSH — brakes hard, her car skidding to a stop thirty feet from a massive, reddish-brown-haired figure standing squarely in the road.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Jennifer Walsh's encounter, five miles from her own house, lasted perhaps fifteen seconds. When she called the sheriff's office afterward, the deputy on the line asked, politely, whether she'd been drinking.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Walsh's account, posted online later that year, remains one of the most-cited reports from the Southeast.*

**EXT. RURAL PROPERTY NEAR OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST,
OKLAHOMA — NIGHT, 2008 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A patrol car's spotlight sweeps across a yard littered with overturned trash cans. A deputy — MICHAEL TORRES — crouches at the tree line, examining a deep track in the soft earth, dogs barking frantically from beneath a nearby porch.

INTERVIEW – MICHAEL TORRES, RETIRED SHERIFF'S DEPUTY

VISUAL: Interior of a modest home, a service photo on the wall behind him.

MICHAEL TORRES: I've been a skeptical guy my whole career — you have to be, in this line of work, or you'd chase every shadow. But I saw something move through those trees that night that wasn't a bear, wasn't a deer, wasn't anything I could put a name to. Upright. Fluid. Gone in about two seconds. My supervisor logged it as a probable bear sighting. I know what I saw.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Backup units that night recovered a trail of matching tracks leading deep into the national forest — a stride of nearly five feet, consistent all the way to where the search was called off.

**EXT. GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK — CAMPSITE —
SPRING 2013 (REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A group of college students huddle near a tent, one — EMILY CHEN — holding up a phone, recording a dark, broad-shouldered shape pushing through rhododendron fifty yards off, moving with a fluid, unhurried power.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Emily Chen's fifteen seconds of cell-phone video would go on to be viewed millions of times — grainy, distant, and, like every piece of evidence in this story, contested from the moment it was posted.

INTERVIEW – DR. LOUISE FERRIS, WILDLIFE RESEARCHER

DR. LOUISE FERRIS: That video is a perfect case study in the whole problem. It's not nothing — the gait genuinely doesn't read as human or bear to a lot of trained eyes who've studied it. But it's also not enough, on its own, to end a debate that's been running since the nineteenth century. That's been true of literally every piece of visual evidence in this field. Compelling. Never quite conclusive.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Amateur field research groups in the Pacific Northwest logged over 200 track finds between 2010 and 2018. A small number of hair samples produced DNA results that could not be matched to any known species in reference databases — results the wider scientific community attributes to degradation or contamination.*

EXT. CASCADE MOUNTAINS, OREGON — REMOTE TRAIL — LATE AFTERNOON, 2019 (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: Golden late-day light slanting through old-growth canopy. A hiker — REBECCA TORRES — stops on the trail as a massive, dark-brown-haired figure steps into view thirty yards ahead, stopping in turn to look directly at her.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Rebecca Torres's encounter ended the way so many of these do — her hand reaching for her phone a half-second too late, the creature watching the motion with what she'd later describe as visible curiosity before turning, unhurried, back into the trees.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Torres's report to the U.S. Forest Service, like Daniels's in 1973, closed with a single word: "bear."*

ATMOSPHERE: Wind moving through high branches. Distant birdsong resuming, slowly, after a long silence.

INT. RESEARCH OFFICE — DAY

VISUAL: Return to Dr. Ferris's desk, the case-file spreadsheet still open, a US map on the wall behind her marked with pins across nearly every state with significant forest cover.

INTERVIEW – DR. LOUISE FERRIS, WILDLIFE RESEARCHER

DR. LOUISE FERRIS: The honest, frustrating answer is that fifty years of better cameras and better phones and satellite coverage of literally the entire planet has not resolved this one way or the other. If anything it's sharpened the question. No body. No skeleton. No definitive DNA match. Just an awful lot of otherwise credible, often reluctant witnesses, telling remarkably similar stories, decade after decade, region after region.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Whether that consistency points to something walking, still, in the spaces we've left wild — or to something deeper about how the human mind processes fear and shadow in exactly those same spaces — remains, after more than two centuries of accounts, genuinely unresolved.

EXT. HIGHWAY 76, MISSOURI — NIGHT

VISUAL: The documentary returns one final time to the empty stretch of road from its cold open, headlights sweeping the tree line, nothing visible now but asphalt and shadow.

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(quiet, final)* The frontier is gone. The maps are complete. There is satellite coverage of nearly every acre of this country, and still, every year, ordinary people — nurses, deputies, hunters, hikers, families on a camping trip — report standing face to face with something the modern world insists shouldn't be there.

They know what they saw. That has never changed, from Samuel Weaver's cornfield in 1787 to a Missouri highway in 2015. The only thing that has changed is how many of us are carrying a camera when it happens — and, so far, that has not been enough.

ATMOSPHERE: The cello underscore rises one final time, low and unresolved, then fades into the quiet hum of a car engine idling on an empty road. Silence.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Eleven: "Theories of the Tall Ones"

Searching for answers

FADE IN.

**INT. UNIVERSITY ANTHROPOLOGY OFFICE — NIGHT, NOVEMBER
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: A cluttered office lit only by a desk lamp, long past the building's closing hours. Maps cover every surface. Photographs are pinned to corkboards — a grainy Lovelock Cave excavation photo, a plaster footprint cast, a photocopied 1883 Wisconsin newspaper clipping. A researcher — DR. MARGARET WHITFIELD — sits at the center of it, a cold cup of coffee forgotten at her elbow.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"Truth lives in the space between what we know and what we refuse to see."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(measured, reflective)* Three years into this research, Dr. Margaret Whitfield has stopped asking whether the pattern is real. The pattern is undeniable — geographic, temporal, physical. What she's still asking is what the pattern means.

ATMOSPHERE: A desk lamp humming. Wind rattling an old window frame. The building settling, empty, around her.

VISUAL: She writes in a notebook: *"The problem is not a lack of evidence. The problem is that the evidence points toward conclusions that challenge fundamental assumptions about what is possible."*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): This segment is her framework — the competing theories, scientific and traditional, that have tried, for over a century, to explain what the rest of this documentary has only shown you.

FADE TO:

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — MORNING

VISUAL: The recurring ridgeline title image, mist folding through the valley.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"THEORIES OF THE TALL ONES" Searching for answers*

INTERVIEW – DR. RICHARD HASTINGS, PERCEPTUAL PSYCHOLOGIST

VISUAL: Interior lab, an eye-tracking display and low-light imaging equipment visible behind him.

DR. RICHARD HASTINGS: The simplest, most defensible theory starts with perception itself. Human vision is genuinely unreliable at the edge of its performance — poor light, fog, distance, motion. Under those conditions the brain fills gaps with expectation. A bear on its hind legs, seen through fog at dusk by someone who already knows the local legend, is a very plausible source for a fair number of these reports.

NARRATOR (V.O.): It's an explanation with real merit — and real limits. Bear tracks are distinctive: claws, a different toe arrangement, a shuffling gait. The reports Margaret had collected consistently described something else — five-toed, human-proportioned tracks, a smooth bipedal stride, witnesses who weren't looking for anything unusual at all when the encounter began.

INTERVIEW – DR. JAMES WHITMORE, SOCIOLOGIST

VISUAL: Interior office, a framed period print of the Cardiff Giant excavation on the wall behind him.

DR. JAMES WHITMORE: And you can't discuss this phenomenon honestly without the Cardiff Giant. A carved gypsum statue, buried in 1869 and "discovered" a year later, fooled thousands of people including some who really should have known better. It proved the public appetite for giant discoveries — and how easily that appetite could be exploited.

NARRATOR (V.O.): But the Cardiff Giant was a statue, made of stone, exposed within months by close examination. The skeletal reports that followed for the next fifty years were different in kind — bone, not gypsum, examined by physicians, described with real anatomical specificity, in numbers that would require a coordinated fabrication effort spanning decades and dozens of unconnected communities.

ARCHIVAL SEGMENT — MEDICAL EXPLANATION

VISUAL: A period photograph reenactment: a strikingly tall man standing beside an ordinary-height companion for scale — evoking, without depicting, the documented case of Robert Wadlow.

INTERVIEW – DR. CATHERINE MORRISON, ENDOCRINOLOGIST

DR. CATHERINE MORRISON: Gigantism is real, well understood, and historically underappreciated as an explanation. Robert Wadlow reached eight foot eleven before his death in 1940 — the tallest documented case in medical history. It's entirely plausible some historical "giant" burials were simply individuals with this condition, honored with distinct burial practices because of how they stood out in life.

NARRATOR (V.O.): But gigantism is also debilitating — joint pain, cardiovascular strain, reduced life expectancy. Wadlow himself needed leg braces to walk. The figures described in these accounts move with power and speed through difficult terrain, not with the physical limitations the condition typically brings.

DR. CATHERINE MORRISON: It explains some of the historical data. It doesn't explain reports of *populations*, and it doesn't explain modern sightings of large bipedal creatures in the wilderness at all. Something else is going on in the rest of this data. I don't think it's purely medical.

INTERVIEW – DR. THOMAS BRIGHTWATER, FOLKLORIST

VISUAL: Interior office, tribal maps and annotated oral-history transcripts visible on the wall.

DR. THOMAS BRIGHTWATER: Oral tradition is too often treated as decoration on top of history rather than as a form of history in its own right. We already know it can be extraordinarily precise — Indigenous Australian traditions describing coastlines that predate current sea levels, later confirmed by geology. Native American traditions of specific volcanic eruptions, confirmed by dating. If tradition can preserve a coastline accurately for seven thousand years, dismissing its account of a population is a choice, not a scientific conclusion.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The Paiute tradition of the Si-Te-Cah is the clearest test case — a specific cave, a specific conflict, specific physical details, later matched by excavation to red hair, oversized remains, and outsized artifacts. That alignment is difficult to wave away as coincidence.

DR. THOMAS BRIGHTWATER: Where the theory gets harder is the modern sightings. If these are extinct populations remembered in tradition, why are people still encountering something today? It's possible the tradition itself shapes how people interpret what they see now — which pulls us right back toward psychology. I don't think that fully resolves it. I think it's honestly the weakest point in my own argument.

INTERVIEW – DR. SARAH CHEN, PRIMATOLOGIST

VISUAL: Interior office, field photographs from African gorilla research visible on the shelves behind her.

DR. SARAH CHEN: If you take the relic-population idea seriously as a hypothesis — and I think it's worth taking seriously as a hypothesis, even if I'm not convinced — the behavioral ecology actually checks out reasonably well. Large primates under sustained human pressure become measurably more nocturnal, more elusive, better at avoiding detection. We've watched it happen with chimpanzees and gorillas in real time. An intelligent population with a documented history of conflict with humans would have strong evolutionary pressure toward exactly the avoidance behavior these reports describe.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The math on habitat is not disqualifying, either. A population modeled on mountain gorilla range needs somewhere in the range of seven to ten thousand square miles to sustain five hundred individuals — well within what the Pacific Northwest alone could offer.

INTERVIEW – DR. GROVER KRANTZ, PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGIST (ARCHIVAL)

VISUAL: Archival-style interview footage, warmly lit, matching the visual language of a 1990s university office.

NARRATOR (V.O.): The most prominent academic voice behind the relic-population theory was Grover Krantz of Washington State University, who spent decades examining footprint casts before his death in 2002. His published position was consistent: the anatomical detail in many casts — dermal ridging, flexible midfoot structure, weight distribution — was, in his professional judgment, extraordinarily difficult to fake convincingly, and consistent with a real, large-bodied bipedal animal.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Krantz's central objection to dismissal: consistency across independent casts, collected decades apart, by people with no contact with one another.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): His critics never disputed his rigor. They disputed the one thing his rigor couldn't provide: a body.

INTERVIEW – DR. ROBERT SILVERSTEIN, ARCHAEOLOGIST

VISUAL: Interior archive room, boxes of correspondence and old accession ledgers stacked on a table.

DR. ROBERT SILVERSTEIN: I spent years trying to physically locate the specimens described in nineteenth-century newspaper reports — bones sent, by the historical record, to the Smithsonian and other major institutions. I filed public records requests. I went through old ledgers. What I found, again and again, were references to acquisitions with no corresponding physical specimen, in some cases marked "deaccessioned" with no explanation of when or why.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Silverstein has been careful, publicly, not to frame this as an organized conspiracy.

DR. ROBERT SILVERSTEIN: I'm not a conspiracy theorist. I don't think there's a warehouse somewhere with a hidden collection. I think nineteenth-century institutions were genuinely disorganized, and I also think they were culturally uncomfortable with material that didn't fit the story anthropology was telling about human prehistory in North America — and that discomfort shaped what got preserved and what got quietly lost. Both things can be true at once.

INT. ANTHROPOLOGY OFFICE — NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

VISUAL: Margaret sits back from her desk, reading a printed email.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Margaret's own view leans toward something similarly unresolved — closer to the historian Thomas Kuhn's well-known observation about how scientific fields operate: that evidence which doesn't fit an existing framework tends to be set aside not because it's disproven, but because it doesn't fit. Whether that describes negligence or something closer to institutional discomfort is, in her research, still an open question rather than a settled one.

INTERVIEW – MARGARET WHITFIELD (V.O., CONTINUING OVER MONTAGE)

VISUAL: Split sequence: Lovelock Cave's dark interior; the fog-bound Olympic Peninsula forest from segment nine; an Appalachian ridge at dusk from segment seven — each held briefly, the throughline of the entire documentary drawn together in a single sweep.

MARGARET WHITFIELD (REENACTMENT, V.O.): There's a real, well-documented body of work on how much accurate historical information oral tradition can carry across long timescales — landscape narratives tied to specific places, serving almost as mnemonic anchors for verifiable detail. None of that proves giants existed. But it does mean dismissing these traditions as "just folklore" isn't a neutral, evidence-based position. It's a choice about which kind of evidence gets to count.

NARRATOR (V.O.): It's a genuine tension in the historical and anthropological literature — how much weight oral tradition should carry against the standards of physical, repeatable, falsifiable evidence that science requires. Neither side of that debate is unreasonable. It simply hasn't been resolved.

INTERVIEW – DR. ELIZABETH MARSH, SOCIOLOGIST

VISUAL: Interior office, case files organized by witness occupation spread across a table.

DR. ELIZABETH MARSH: Credibility and accuracy are two separate questions, and conflating them is where a lot of this debate goes wrong. A sincere witness can still be mistaken. But when you look at who's actually reporting — law enforcement officers filing it as part of an official call, surveyors recording it in a private field journal never meant for publication, hunters who waited years before telling anyone — that's not the profile of people chasing attention. That's the profile of reluctant witnesses, and reluctant witnesses are, statistically, some of the most reliable kind.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Reliable as witnesses to their own sincere perception. Not, on their own, proof that the perception was correct. That gap — between sincerity and accuracy — is where Margaret's three years of research ultimately settled.

INT. ANTHROPOLOGY OFFICE — NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

VISUAL: Margaret closes her notebook, the desk lamp the only light left in the room.

NARRATOR (V.O.): (*quiet, final*) Margaret organizes the evidence, in the end, into three honest categories. Historical skeletal reports — extensive, specific, documented, and physically gone. Indigenous oral traditions — detailed, consistent, tied to real places, occasionally validated by the archaeology that followed them. And modern sightings — credible witnesses, consistent description, no definitive proof.

None of the three, on its own, closes the question. Together, they describe something that has resisted every attempt at either dismissal or confirmation for over two hundred years.

VISUAL: She turns off the desk lamp. The office goes dark except for the faint glow of a streetlight through the window.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): The bones are buried. The tracks are fading. The witnesses are aging. And the questions Margaret Whitfield carries out of that office tonight are the same ones this entire documentary has carried from its opening frame: What was found. What was lost. And what, if anything, is still out there.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind against the window glass. The cello underscore rises one final time, low and unresolved, and holds.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Twelve: "Echoes of the Tall Ones"

Patterns, mysteries, and what remains unsolved

FADE IN.

EXT. APPALACHIAN OVERLOOK — DAWN (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A lone hiker stands at a ridgeline overlook, fog moving through the valleys below like something breathing. He came for solitude. He is finding something closer to unease.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"The land speaks in whispers and footprints, in bones that vanish and stories that remain."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(low, reflective)* He has read the stories — ridge walkers, footprints in the mud, figures glimpsed at dusk and gone before anyone could be sure. He came here half-doubting all of it. Standing in this fog, watching it fold and unfold through hollers that have never seen a road, he finds his doubt harder to hold onto than he expected.

ATMOSPHERE: Wind moving fog through the trees. Distant, indistinct birdsong. Silence beneath it.

VISUAL: He shoulders his pack and walks on. The fog closes back over the valley behind him.

FADE TO:

EXT. APPALACHIAN RIDGELINE — MORNING

VISUAL: The documentary's recurring title image, one final time — layered ridgelines dissolving into mist.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"ECHOES OF THE TALL ONES" Patterns, mysteries, and what remains unsolved*

NARRATOR (V.O.): From the Atlantic forests to the Pacific coast, from Nevada's desert caves to Florida's swamps, this documentary has followed one continuous thread — scattered across two centuries and a dozen cultures, and yet, again and again, unmistakably the same thread.

INT. TRIBAL CULTURAL CENTER — DAY

VISUAL: A community gathering space, elders and younger tribal members seated together, a table of woven baskets and historical photographs laid out for a visiting school group.

INTERVIEW – ELDER RAYMOND WINNEMUCCA, PAIUTE TRIBAL HISTORIAN
(returning, from Segment Eight)

ELDER RAYMOND WINNEMUCCA: People ask me sometimes why we keep telling this story, generations after the cave was dug up and emptied out. I tell them the same thing my grandfather told me. The story was never ours to retire just because it stopped being convenient for other people to believe. It happened. We say it happened. That's still true whether or not anyone outside this room chooses to believe it.

NARRATOR (V.O.): That thread runs through every culture this documentary has visited — the Iroquois Stone Giants, the Cherokee Tsul'kalu, the Comanche Nunumbi, the Quinault Tsiatko — beings remembered not as gods or spirits, but as physical neighbors on a shared landscape, with territories, behaviors, and, in the tradition's own telling, an ending.

INTERVIEW – RUTH ANNE COMBS, APPALACHIAN FAMILY STORYTELLER

(returning, from Segment Four)

VISUAL: The same front-porch setting, dusk light now golden instead of blue, a new generation of grandchildren seated at her feet.

RUTH ANNE COMBS: It's not just tribal families carrying this. Every hollow up in these mountains has its own version — somebody's grandmother's unplanted field, somebody's uncle who wouldn't hunt a certain ridge after dark. Nobody ever wrote most of it down. That was never the point. The point was telling it again, to the next person who needed to hear it.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Frontier journals. Tribal oral history. Logging camp work logs. Newspaper clippings. Trail camera stills. Each is a different kind of record, kept by people who had no reason to coordinate with one another — and yet the description that comes back, decade after decade, region after region, barely changes.

INT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVE — DAY

VISUAL: Rows of labeled folders and glass display cases holding fragile newspaper clippings, a researcher's gloved hands turning a brittle page.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Seven to ten feet. Broad through the shoulders, arms hanging low. Covered in dark or reddish hair. A face that sits, uncomfortably, in the space between recognizably human and something else. Tracks fourteen to eighteen inches long, five toes, a stride no human gait could match. It's the description Samuel Weaver gave in a Pennsylvania cornfield in 1787. It's the description Sarah Mitchell gave from a Missouri highway in 2015.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Sightings cluster consistently in low-population, high-forest-cover terrain — the Appalachians, the Pacific Northwest, the Great Lakes region, the Ozarks, the desert Southwest.*

INTERVIEW – DR. ELAINE PARRISH, ARCHAEOLOGIST

(returning, from Segment Eight)

VISUAL: The same university lab setting, drawers of catalogued artifacts behind her.

DR. ELAINE PARRISH: I want to end where I usually end with this material — holding two things in tension rather than picking one. There is a real, extensively documented historical record of skeletal discoveries that were measured, photographed, and then lost from institutional collections. That's genuine and worth taking seriously. What I resist is the leap from "records are incomplete" to "there was a coordinated effort to hide the truth." Both poor nineteenth-century recordkeeping and something closer to institutional discomfort with anomalous evidence can be part of the same story, without either one requiring the other to be a grand conspiracy.

NARRATOR (V.O.): It's the same caution this documentary has returned to at nearly every turn — the evidence is real. What it proves is where the honest disagreement still lives.

EXT. PACIFIC NORTHWEST OLD-GROWTH FOREST — DAY

VISUAL: A wildlife biologist kneels beside a creek, examining a fresh, deep, seventeen-inch track pressed into soft mud, a ruler laid alongside it for scale, camera raised.

INTERVIEW – DR. LOUISE FERRIS, WILDLIFE RESEARCHER *(returning, from Segment Ten)*

DR. LOUISE FERRIS: Fifteen years studying elk and black bear in exactly this kind of habitat teaches you how easily even large, well-documented animals disappear into forest this dense. That doesn't prove anything about what made a track like this. It just means the argument "we'd have found a body by now" is weaker than people assume, in terrain this vast and this wild.

NARRATOR (V.O.): She has spent her career being the skeptic in the room. Standing over a track she cannot explain, in a forest she knows better than almost anyone alive, she allows, for once, that her skepticism is not the same thing as certainty.

EXT. OZARK MOUNTAINS, ARKANSAS — AUTUMN (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A historian walks alone through a hardwood forest ablaze with fall color, pausing at a small clearing, a private letter — William Holt's 1827 account — held carefully in gloved hands.

NARRATOR (V.O.): A historian, standing in the same forest where a trapper named William Holt once described a "wild man of enormous size" in a private letter never meant for publication, tries to imagine what that encounter would have meant to a man two hundred years removed from field guides, from the internet, from any authority to call and ask what he'd just seen.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *Holt's letter, preserved by his family for five generations, was never written for an audience — only for a brother he trusted to believe him.*

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D): That is, in the end, the quiet common thread running under nearly every account in this documentary — witnesses who told the story not for attention, but because someone needed to know, and because the telling itself was a way of not carrying it alone.

EXT. LOVELOCK CAVE, NEVADA — SUNSET

VISUAL: The documentary returns a final time to the cave from Segment Eight, the desert around it burning orange and purple as the sun drops.

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(quiet, final)* Somewhere between the Paiute tradition that named this place, the miners who emptied it in 1911, and the archivists still searching for what became of everything they carried out — the full truth of Lovelock Cave remains exactly where this documentary began: real enough to keep searching for, unresolved enough to keep the search honest.

That has been true of every ridge, every mound, every cave, every dark stretch of highway this documentary has walked. The giants of America — whether flesh and blood, cultural memory, or something that resists that distinction entirely — have left their mark on the landscape and on the people who have carried their stories forward, generation after generation, witness after reluctant witness.

The land remembers. The stories persist. And the footsteps in the American soil — real or imagined, ancient or startlingly recent — are still, by every account gathered here, waiting to be followed.

ATMOSPHERE: The cello underscore that has carried this entire documentary rises one final time, full and unhurried, before fading slowly into the sound of desert wind. Silence.

FADE OUT.

END OF DOCUMENTARY.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Thirteen: "Historical Sources & Field Notes"

Behind the investigation

FADE IN.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM — DAY

VISUAL: Close on a gloved hand turning the brittle page of a county history book, its spine cracked, its cover stamped with a small-town historical society's faded insignia. Around it, a table is layered with newspaper clippings, hand-drawn maps, and stacks of index cards in tight cursive.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"Books live forever, and words disappear forever."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(measured, reflective)* Every account in this documentary — the cornfields, the caves, the ridgelines, the highways — began somewhere on a page like this one. Before any of it could be filmed, it had to be found.

ATMOSPHERE: The dry rustle of old paper. A desk lamp humming. Distant footsteps in a hallway beyond the archive door.

INTERVIEW – DANIEL VOSS, AUTHOR AND FIELD RESEARCHER

VISUAL: Daniel sits at a cluttered desk in his home office, three walls lined with regional histories, a corkboard behind him pinned edge to edge with newspaper clippings and hand-labeled index cards.

DANIEL VOSS: People assume a project like this starts with a theory. It didn't. It started with a stack of county histories nobody had opened in decades — the kind printed once, read by a few hundred people, and shelved in the back room of a historical society ever since. That's where giant lore likes to hide. Not in the famous cases. In the footnotes.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Those county histories, mixing verified fact with local legend almost indistinguishably, became the first layer of the record — not proof of anything, but a map of where to look next.

INT. NEWSPAPER MICROFILM ROOM — DAY

VISUAL: A researcher scrolls through a microfilm reader, the projected image flickering across old newsprint, stopping on a small item buried on an inside page — text deliberately kept soft-focused and illegible.

DANIEL VOSS (V.O., CONTINUING): The newspapers were the next layer, and the late 1800s and early 1900s were full of them — reports of oversized remains, strange excavation finds, popping up in small towns with surprising regularity.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Voss learned to read those articles a specific way — not for the sensational headline, but for the mundane details underneath it: named farmers, named landowners, specific creek beds and construction sites, and always, if the article ran long enough, some account of what supposedly happened to the bones afterward.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"In some cases, the fact that an article existed at all was as interesting as its content."* — D. Voss

EXT. OHIO BURIAL MOUND SITE — DAY (REENACTMENT)

VISUAL: A field researcher kneels at the edge of an excavated mound, sketching the site's contour lines into a field notebook, a measuring tape stretched across disturbed earth.

INTERVIEW – DR. ELAINE PARRISH, ARCHAEOLOGIST *(returning, from Segments Eight and Twelve)*

DR. ELAINE PARRISH: The established archaeological record on mound-building cultures in North America is extensive, and it's real scholarship — this documentary hasn't tried to rewrite that anywhere along the way. What we're interested in is narrower: the places where that established record brushes up against unusual, harder-to-verify claims — a field report that mentions an oversized skeleton in one sentence and then moves on, an observer at a dig who wasn't the one writing the official account and remembered the bones differently than the published version did.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Voss treated those margin notes the same way he treated the newspaper clippings — not settled fact, but part of the historical record of what people, at the time, believed they had found.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, RURAL FARMHOUSE — EVENING
(REENACTMENT)**

VISUAL: An older woman sits across a kitchen table from an interviewer, a cup of coffee between them, family photographs on the wall behind her. She leans in slightly, her voice dropping.

FARMHOUSE WITNESS (REENACTMENT): "You're going to think I'm crazy, but—"

NARRATOR (V.O.): Not everything came from a page. Some of it came exactly like this — a family story about bones found on an old property, a memory of a discovery that was quietly taken away and never mentioned again. Oral history is fragile. Details shift with each telling, and memory is not a perfect recorder.

DANIEL VOSS (V.O.): But when three unrelated families in the same county told me some version of the same story, or when a kitchen-table account lined up with something I'd already found in print six months earlier — that's when I started paying real attention.

INT. VOSS'S HOME OFFICE — DAY

VISUAL: Return to Daniel at his desk, the corkboard of clippings behind him.

INTERVIEW – DANIEL VOSS, AUTHOR AND FIELD RESEARCHER

DANIEL VOSS: I try to hold three things at once doing this kind of work — curiosity, caution, and respect. Curiosity is what keeps you reading the stuff everyone else skipped past. Caution is what stops you from calling something a fact just because it's a good story. And respect — that one matters most to me. Every account in this documentary once belonged to somebody. A family. A community. Somebody willing to risk being laughed at for telling it out loud.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Voss has been careful, publicly and repeatedly, about what he is and isn't claiming.

DANIEL VOSS: I didn't set out to prove giants existed. I set out to document what people have carried — the stories, the reports that ran in a paper once and then disappeared, the places where folklore and history genuinely overlap. Some people reading this will take it as literal truth. Others will call it folklore, or cultural memory, or metaphor. That's not for me to settle. My job was just to make sure it didn't disappear before somebody had the chance to decide for themselves.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM — DAY (CONTINUOUS)

VISUAL: A final wide shot of the archive table — clippings, maps, and index cards arranged in careful rows, a single desk lamp casting long shadows across all of it.

NARRATOR (V.O.): (*quiet, final*) This is the material this entire documentary has been built from — brittle pages, half-legible headlines, family stories passed at kitchen tables, and field notes taken by people who knew, going in, that they might never get a conclusive answer. It is not proof. Voss would be the first to say so. But it is a record — of what was found, what was claimed, what was passed down, and what, against long odds, someone cared enough to write down before it was lost for good.

ATMOSPHERE: The desk lamp hums. A page turns, slow and deliberate, and settles into stillness.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.

GIANTS OF AMERICA

Segment Fourteen: "Author's Bio"

The keeper of the notebook

FADE IN.

EXT. CHILLICOTHE, OHIO — GOLDEN HOUR

VISUAL: A quiet Ohio street in the fading afternoon light, older brick storefronts and a small-town courthouse square. A man — MARK ROE — walks unhurried along the sidewalk, a notebook tucked under one arm.

ON-SCREEN TEXT: *"Books live forever, and words disappear forever."*

NARRATOR (V.O.): *(warm, unhurried)* Every account in this documentary passed, at some point, through one man's notebook. This is where that notebook lives.

ATMOSPHERE: Distant traffic, unhurried. Wind moving through storefront awnings. A church bell, somewhere, marking the hour.

INTERVIEW – MARK ROE, AUTHOR AND RESEARCHER

VISUAL: Mark seated in a modest home office in Chillicothe, shelves behind him lined with local history volumes and true-crime titles.

MARK ROE: I spent a career as a Corrections Supervisor before any of this. That job teaches you to pay attention to what people actually say, and how they say it — when someone's telling you the truth reluctantly versus telling you what they think you want to hear. I didn't expect that skill to carry over into writing local history and paranormal lore, but it did, more than almost anything else I brought with me.

NARRATOR (V.O.): That shift — from a career built on careful listening to a second career built on the same instinct, aimed instead at old newspapers, county archives, and the stories families had been carrying quietly for generations — is, by Roe's own account, the throughline of everything he's written since.

EXT. LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CHILLICOTHE — DAY

VISUAL: Mark climbing the front steps of a modest brick building, greeted at the door by a volunteer archivist who recognizes him by name, a satchel of notes over his shoulder.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Roe describes himself, above all, as a collector of stories — whichever form they arrive in. Whispered in a backroom. Passed down inside a family for three generations. Buried in a courthouse archive box nobody's opened since it was filed.

MARK ROE: I don't really separate local history from true crime from the stranger stuff, the paranormal material. To me it's all the same instinct — something happened, somebody remembers it, and if nobody writes it down, it just quietly disappears. I'd rather go looking for it myself than wait for it to come to me. That means walking the actual streets, combing the actual records, standing in the actual places where the past is still sitting there, waiting.

INT. MARK ROE'S HOME OFFICE — DAY

VISUAL: The same office, corkboard of clippings and hand-labeled index cards visible behind him.

INTERVIEW – MARK ROE, AUTHOR AND RESEARCHER

MARK ROE: People sometimes assume that because I've put this many years into a project like this, I must be a true believer, capital T, capital B. I'm not, particularly. What I am is somebody who thinks the story of what people claimed, and reported, and quietly passed down for two hundred years, is worth taking seriously as its own subject — regardless of whether every account in it turns out to be literally, biologically true.

NARRATOR (V.O.): It's a distinction he returns to often, in conversation and in his writing — the difference between documenting belief and asserting fact.

MARK ROE: My job was never to hand somebody a verdict. It was to make sure the record didn't disappear before somebody else got the chance to look at it and decide for themselves.

EXT. CHILLICOTHE, OHIO — GOLDEN HOUR (CONTINUOUS)

VISUAL: Mark closes his notebook on a bench in the courthouse square, the last of the daylight catching the brick storefronts around him.

NARRATOR (V.O.): (*quiet, final*) Every location this documentary has visited — every cave, every mound, every ridgeline and archive room — passed through a version of the process Roe has spent years refining, here in Chillicothe and everywhere his research has taken him. Not proof. Not certainty. Just a stubborn refusal to let the stories disappear before someone had the chance to hear them.

VISUAL: Mark rises from the bench and continues down the street, notebook back under his arm, until he passes out of frame.

ATMOSPHERE: Footsteps on pavement, fading into wind and, faintly, the documentary's recurring cello underscore.

FADE OUT.

DISSOLVE TO NEXT SEGMENT.