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WHEN MASTODONS AND MAMMOTHS ROAMED CHICAGO AND ITS ENVIRONS

By ELMER S. RIGGS

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A question often asked is, "How long is it since Mastodons and Mammoths lived in and around what is now Chicago?"

It is estimated that the ice-sheet finally disappeared from the "Wisconsin area" (including the site of Chicago) some twenty thousand years ago. The bones of Mastodons and Mammoths are found in bogs and small lakes which were formed after the ice had melted away. Mastodon and Mammoth bones now in Field Museum which were excavated near Minooka, Illinois, came from gravels around a spring left there by the melting glacial ice. The animals had apparently come there for a drink, become mired in the bog around the spring, and, unable to extricate themselves, had sunk to their deaths in its bottom. A Mastodon skull which the Museum obtained at Yorkville, Illinois, came from black muck only eighteen inches below the surface, which would indicate that a comparatively short length of time, geologically speaking, had elapsed for the remains of the animal to be covered to that depth. So, from this and many other evidences, it seems to be a safe conclusion that Mastodons and Mammoths lived in

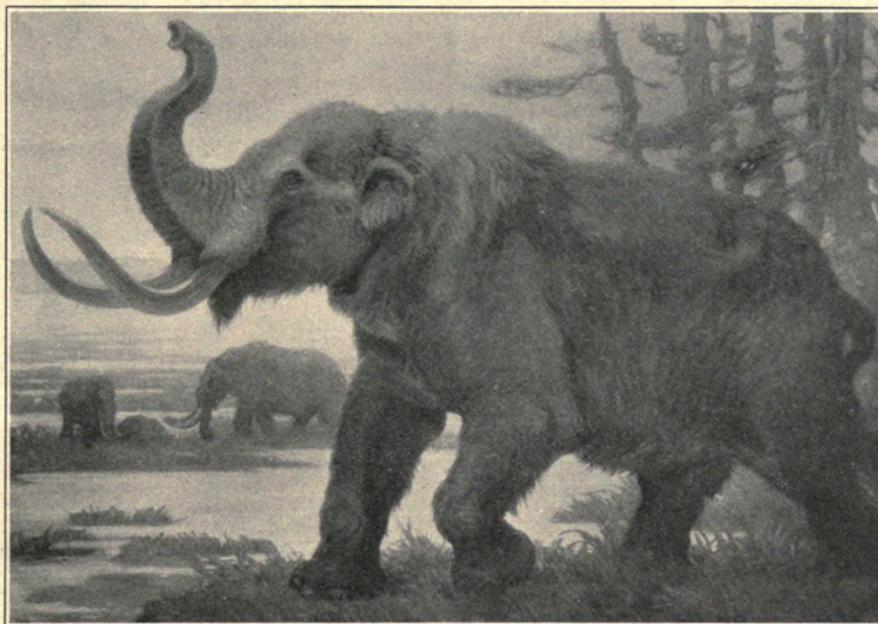
the Chicago area as late as ten thousand years ago.

One eminent authority believes that the Mastodon lived in North America after the coming of the American Indian, and that

region, or how long they lived here. They had among them, so far as is known, no traditions of these animals. They left no implements in America carved of Mastodon or Mammoth bones or ivory, such as are found in the Old World. They left no carvings or picture-writings of these animals such as decorate the cave-dwellings of primitive man in western Europe. Therefore we have no evidence that the Mastodon or the Mammoth were ever hunted, or that they were known to any race of primitive men about Chicago.

We do know from abundant evidence that both these races of extinct elephants were very common throughout North America; that the Mastodon came first and that his race was well established here some millions of years ago. We know also that the Mammoths came later, from Asia; that both lived throughout the greater part of the United States; and that both races died out on this continent after the Ice Age and apparently long after the ice had melted in this latitude. The region about the southern end of Lake Michigan is one where

their fossil remains are very abundant. Therefore it may be said with full assurance that these elephants roamed about Chicago only a few thousand years ago.



Mural Painting of Mastodon

One of the series of prehistoric studies by Charles R. Knight, on exhibition in Ernest R. Graham Hall.

the red man doubtless had a hand in exterminating it. This conclusion is largely based on apparent probabilities. Nobody knows when the first Indians came to the Chicago

A PREHISTORIC NEEDLE

By HENRY FIELD

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A perfect bone needle, 25,000 years old, has come to Field Museum as a result of the recent Marshall Field Archaeological Expedition to Europe. This bone needle, which is more than three inches in length, is complete, and has as perfect an eye as if it had been made yesterday. It was made by a prehistoric Magdalenian craftsman, and was undoubtedly used for making clothes out of reindeer skins.

The needle was excavated by Jean Cazedessus in a rock shelter at Ganties in the south of France, and was found associated with implements of flint and bone, representatives of a cold-loving fauna, and a typical Upper Magdalenian culture. The entire results of these excavations were acquired by the expedition.

Field Museum has on exhibition near Stanley Field Hall the only complete Magdalenian skeleton in the United States. When this young man was alive, western Europe was cloaked under a mantle of ice and snow. Reindeer and other animals adapted to the specialized life of a cold climate were abundant, and there was a plentiful supply

of food for the Magdalenian hunter. Hence there was time for relaxation, and this resulted in the dawn of art.

This beautiful bone needle, fashioned with a flint blade and drilled by a flint borer, is a witness to the advanced technique evolved by the Magdalenian hunter-artists more than twenty thousand years before the beginning of the Christian era.

Museum Cooperation in Jubilee

Field Museum participated in the recent Chicago Jubilee by remaining open in the evening from 6 to 10 P.M. on Tuesday, May 12, at the request of the committee in charge of the jubilee. Although the day was one when normally admission is charged, during the evening hours the public was admitted free.

Museum Handbook in Press

A new Handbook of Field Museum, containing in brief form general information concerning the institution, its history, its building, its exhibits, its expeditions, and its varied activities, is now on the press. It will be published soon, and placed on sale at a nominal price.

MR. AND MRS. MARSHALL FIELD PRESENT LIONS AND FILMS

Field Museum received last month, as gifts from Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Field, five specimens of lions which they shot in Africa, and several thousand feet of motion picture film depicting wild life on that continent.

The films, which were made by Mrs. Field, contain especially good views of groups of lions amid rock dens as well as in the open. An unusual and most interesting bit of motion photography was achieved by Mrs. Field in filming two cheetahs in action, these being among the most difficult of all animals to photograph because they rank with the fleetest of mammals.

The specimens and films result from the recent hunting trip of Mr. and Mrs. Field in Tanganyika Territory, British East Africa. Included among the lions are a large full grown male, a female, and two cubs. The male is between nine and ten feet long, which is almost the maximum size attained by lions. It is heavily maned.

The lion specimens are to be used in the preparation of a habitat group which has long been desired for addition to the Museum's African exhibits.



Field, Henry. 1931. "A Prehistoric Needle." *Field Museum news* 2(6), 1–1.

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