

brickyards, and the masonry methods were basically the same as those of American bricklayers. Notable also is the selection of examples of cuneiform writing, the bone stylus with which this writing was done, and the tablets illustrating the various types of things that were recorded—historical events, and the more prosaic documents of law and business, such as a real



**Kish Citizen of 4,500 Years Ago**

Front and profile views of a tiny Sumerian portrait sculpture found by the Field Museum-Oxford Expedition. The actual object is only about one-seventh the size of the illustrations. The head possesses characteristics typical of the art associated with this period.

estate contract, a land survey, records of the sale of various commodities, receipts, loan records, and school exercises.

#### GAMBLING DEVICES SHOWN

Even as now, illegitimate business also had its sway, as is revealed by a large number of gambling devices of various sorts. The visitor's attention will be arrested likewise by the exhibits of glass vessels of the Sasanid period; the variety of lamps ranging from 3000 B.C. down to Arab times; the weights and measures used in petty transactions by the small merchants equivalent to the corner grocers and butchers of today; the great variety of figurines ranging from the beautiful to the grotesque; the important cylinder and stamp seals from the enlargement of which construction of the hall's great frieze was made possible; artistic inlay work, and amulets and charms to cause good fortune to one's self or ill fortune to one's enemies; the tools of industry and the weapons of warfare; the personal ornaments and the toilet articles and cosmetics which indicate that then, as now, women were anxious to embellish their natural charms; and finally, of interest to the sportsman, a collection of bronze fish-hooks and net-sinkers of pottery and stone.

#### Earliest Fossils Shown

The life of the Cambrian, earliest period from which fossils have been abundantly preserved, is represented in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38) by an extensive series of trilobites, brachiopods, seaweeds, and other primitive forms.

Models of the famous palace of Mitla in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, and of the earliest known Maya building—a stucco-covered pyramid at Uuxactun, Guatemala—are exhibited in Hall 8.

### SEMINOLE GREEN CORN DANCE

BY ALEXANDER SPOEHR  
ASSISTANT CURATOR OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY  
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

To a small handful of Indians in the interior of Florida, June is probably the most important month of the year. A few days before the new moon makes its appearance, these Indians—the Cow Creek band of the Florida Seminole—start for a secluded spot far from the highways and towns of the whites. In the appointed place, the Indians gather for the annual spring rites they have celebrated since time immemorial and which go by the name of the Green Corn Dance. The spot selected for the dance is so inaccessible that few whites attend and the Indians are left to themselves.

The dance ground of the Cow Creek band is simply a fresh green meadow set in the midst of a pine forest. A place is cleared of leaves and grass for the dancers, a fire is built in the center, an open-sided arbor for the men is constructed at one side, and the dance ground is ready. Around it the five or six clans set up their individual camps and the celebration commences. Usually it lasts for a week or ten days with the last four or five nights devoted to dancing. Ostensibly the Green Corn Dance has both a social and religious purpose. It is partly a big get-together with plenty of hard liquor for everybody. However, the last day is primarily religious. It is then that men rid themselves of the year's accumulation of sins through the purifying effects of fasting and taking the "black drink," an emetic to which the Indians ascribe magical powers, while by common participation in the dance the whole group achieves a feeling of social solidarity and oneness. The dancing continues through the entire last night, with short spells of rest. Around and around the fire the Indians pound, singing the ancient songs that combine the strength and melancholy so characteristic of much Indian music. The light from the fire flickers on the faces of the dancers and spectators. Finally the dawn breaks. The exhausted dancers stop, and the men strip to the waist and with sharp needles scratch each other's backs, arms, and legs until the blood flows. The scratching lets out the "bad blood" and like the black drink has a purifying effect. Finally there is a ceremonial eating of the green corn, in ancient days a principal food supply, and the ceremony is over for another year.

#### FOUGHT U. S. IN 1835-42

The Florida Seminole are the remnants of a tribe that fought bitterly to stop the invasion of the whites. The Seminole War of 1835-42 cost the United States the lives of 1,500 American troops and \$20,000,000, even though the Indians numbered only a few thousand in all, including women and children. Eventually the tribe was defeated and most of them moved to Oklahoma. A few refused to surrender and retired into

the fastness of the southern interior. Today, the Florida Seminole number approximately 600, with about 175 belonging to the Cow Creek band. Although the development of Florida has once again engulfed them in the white civilization which many of the Indians consider to be one of the less attractive weeds in the garden of history, they cling to much of the old life and the ceremonies are not forgotten.

The costumes, ornaments and utensils of these people are shown in Case 1 of James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Hall (Hall 4), which is devoted to the Ethnology of the Woodland Tribes.

### THE FOUR-TUSKED MASTODON

A skull of a four-tusked Mastodon from Pliocene deposits of Nebraska is among the new exhibits in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38). These animals, like other members of the elephant order, were immigrants from Asia, and reached North America by way of a land bridge across Bering Strait. They appeared suddenly and in considerable numbers on the plains of Nebraska and Kansas, and were doubtless distributed over a large part of this continent.

The four-tusker, a species of *Serridentinus*, was a large-headed animal which stood about eight and one-half feet in height. The upper tusks were only three feet in length; the lower jaws were long and narrow and from them projected a pair of slender tusks barely a foot long. The animal was a browser, and apparently lived upon the shrubs and trees which grew along the valleys of larger streams. Its appearance is well illustrated in a mural painting, by Mr. Charles R. Knight, in Hall 38. The larger species, *Mastodon americanus*, abundant in the woodlands of the central and eastern states, was a later member of the elephant order which had grown larger and had lost all but the merest vestige of the lower tusks.—E. S. R.

### THE KEY TO THE GREAT FRIEZE IN THE HALL OF BABYLONIA

is provided by *Ancient Seals of the Near East*, a leaflet by Mr. Richard A. Martin, Curator of Near Eastern Archaeology, just published by Field Museum Press. The leaflet contains collotype plates of 22 of the mythological scenes represented in the frieze which, like all the exhibits in this new and remarkable hall (see page 1 of this FIELD MUSEUM NEWS) was prepared and installed under Mr. Martin's direction.

On sale at THE BOOK SHOP of  
FIELD MUSEUM—25 cents.





1940. "The Four-Tusked Mastodon." *Field Museum news* 11(8), 3-3.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25715>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/364785>

**Holding Institution**

Field Museum of Natural History Library

**Sponsored by**

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the Chicago Field Museum.

For information contact [dcc@library.uiuc.edu](mailto:dcc@library.uiuc.edu).

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.