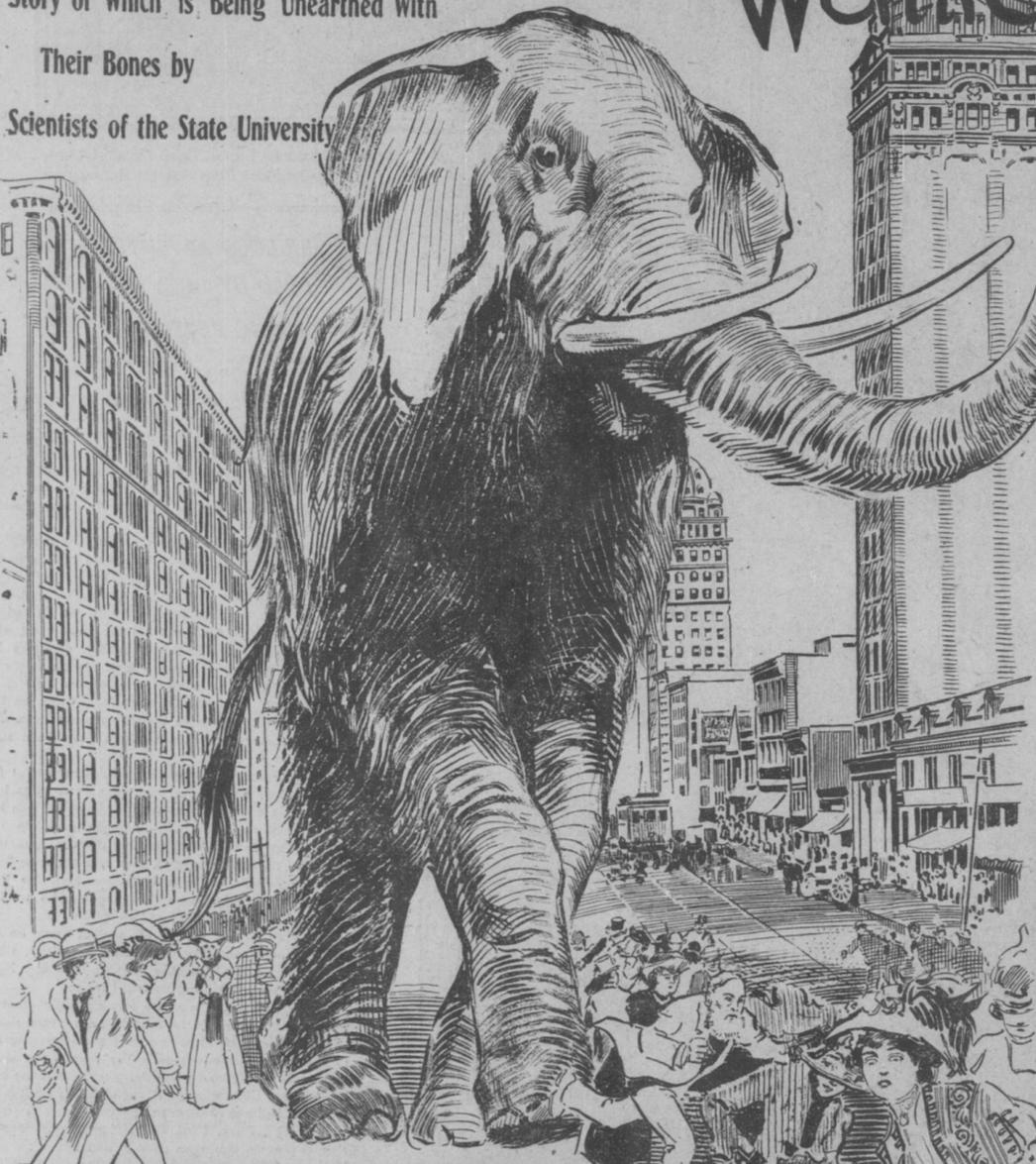


The Remarkable Bad Dream Creatures  
That Once Inhabited California, the  
Story of Which Is Being Unearthed With  
Their Bones by  
Scientists of the State University

# When the Mastodon Walked Up Market Street



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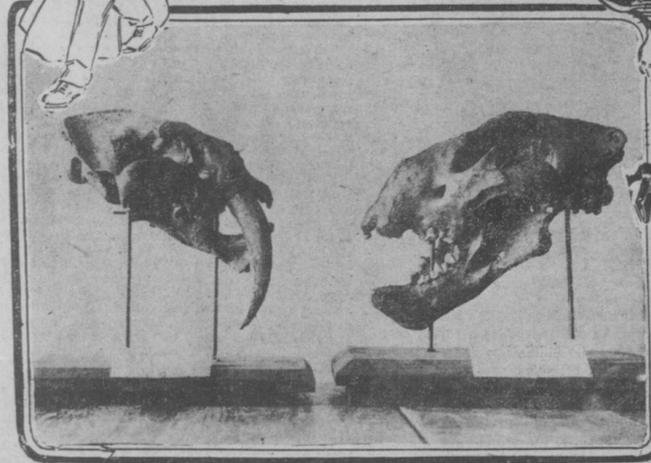
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mammals and birds: The great wolf, coyote, timber wolf, gray fox, the wild cat (of which one of the varieties is possibly extinct), the great American lion, the saber toothed tiger, bison, small deer, camel, horse, mastodon, elephant, ground squirrel, teratornis (a gigantic extinct bird), California peacock, prehistoric goat and the prehistoric bear.

Of all this amazing assortment the most specimens have come from the well known oil sump at Rancho la Brea near Los Angeles. In this pool, widely described as the death trap of the ages, there have been dug up from the asphalt beds a vast number of skulls and remains of prehistoric creatures. As an active collection agency the tar pool was more efficient than the best fly trap ever invented. In digging through the asphalt the geologists in one spot encountered the bones of not less than seven saber toothed tigers. In four cubic yards of material 17 perfect skulls of the saber tooth were discovered. Besides this, there were unearthed one complete skeleton and 40 perfect skulls of a great prehistoric wolf. Indeed, the tar pool has revealed more of the history of the prehistoric animal life of California than any other source.

For nearly half a century the asphalt deposits that stretch through the region of the Los Angeles tar pool were known to contain hundreds of bones, but no investigator had a suspicion of



TO THE LEFT—SKULL OF SABRE TOOTH TIGER TO THE RIGHT—GREAT AMERICAN LION

By Hamilton M. Wright

At Berkeley, in an upper room in South hall in the University of California, there were recently assembled the bones of a prehistoric mammal of massive and startling proportions. Even the skeleton revealed the prodigious nature of this giant creature, its huge and almost irresistible bulkiness.

The skeleton is that of the prehistoric ground sloth of California. No where else in the world has a skeleton of this particular kind been assembled. No complete skeleton has ever been found. The huge bony framework is comprised of the recovered bones of several individual specimens, all of which have been so cleverly brought together by Dr. John G. Merriam, associate professor of paleontology and historical geology at the University of California, and by his associates, that even to the uninitiated layman that huge framework bespeaks the ponderous stride of this bulky, grubbing creature.

Looking at the skeleton one can almost see, stepping out of the centuries, the reconstructed sloth, with its pebbled hide, huge legs, great claws, deep belly, and the altogether terrifying aspect which the cautious scientist tells us it undoubtedly possessed.

Once California was a veritable hunter's paradise. It is not a travesty on prehistoric California to imagine the huge mastodon as it must have stalked through the jungle that led from what we call Kearny and Market streets to Twin peaks. Superb, ponderous, irresistible, its wicked eyes must have gleamed with vicious contempt at the smaller creatures who fled from its path. One can imagine the great creature riding down small trees between its tusks and chest and stripping them greedily of their foliage. One, too, can

imagine the prehistoric goat, odd, ungainly, big as a 2 year old steer, occasionally wandering down from the rough mountain regions into the lower edge of the Sacramento valley. And throughout the Sacramento valley itself and in the San Joaquin valley and southern California roamed great herds of bison, camels and wild horses. In the shades of the dense forests the giant ground sloth, prehistoric cousin of the armadillo of South America, dug deep for roots. Packs of great wolves, greedy and full of the chase, must have ranged the dense forests and perhaps pulled their quarry down at Santa Cruz. At, perhaps, an earlier period, the peacock called, when the roaring of the great American lion as he set out to make his kill shook the jungle in what has come to be the heart of Los Angeles.

The huge saber toothed tiger, the great American lion, prehistoric wolf and the enormous prehistoric bear roamed the country in quest of prey. There were no doubt vast herds of the grass eaters, bison, camels, horses and deer. Another herbivorous mammal was a prehistoric goat, the bones of which were discovered in a cave in Shasta county and have been assembled at the University of California in complete skeleton form. This prehistoric goat was easily as large as a 2 year old steer. How the bones came to be in the cave no one knows. Perhaps the carcass was dragged into the cave by some powerful flesh eating animal. It could not have been dragged in by the huge prehistoric bear, an animal mightier and far more formidable than the great kadiak bear of Alaska or the wickedest grizzly California ever produced. This bear was evidently extinct before the species of goat represented by the large mounted species came into existence. Others of the grass eaters were the mastodon and elephant. No doubt these tremen-

dous mammals were unmolested; their great size rendered them safe from attack by the beasts of prey; only young or stricken mastodons could have been attacked. Prehistoric man, if he lived then, had no weapons with which to conquer such formidable game.

Among the flesh eaters there was an amazing variety of cruel and hungry beasts, and their great numbers, as shown by the many skeletons found, tell of the still vaster numbers of the grass eaters upon which the carnivora preyed. Of the flesh eaters the most terrific and formidable were the great cats, the American lion and the saber toothed tiger.

Hugest of all the cat tribes was this American lion. Several specimens of the lion are now known. It was a larger, more powerful creature than the African lion of today. The skull was enormous, the jaws massive and when once they had fastened upon the

throat of an adversary nothing could withstand their irresistible crunching power.

From the skulls of the lion and the saber tooth the scientist is able to picture what a battle between the two must have been like, when, vicious and hungry, they met in combat over the carcass of a giant sloth. The tiger, doubt, would leap at its heavier adversary, slashing and stabbing with its daggerlike teeth, and striking down as a walrus does. Perhaps the great sabers of the tiger, which were fully eight or nine inches long, may have stabbed through the skull of the lion in an instant. At close quarters, in a prolonged fight, the lion would probably win, just as the Asiatic lion is said to destroy the Siberian tiger when the latter strays into the lion's territory. A blow from the lion's paw would easily break off the knife-like teeth of the saber tooth, or, as the tiger raised its head to strike down-

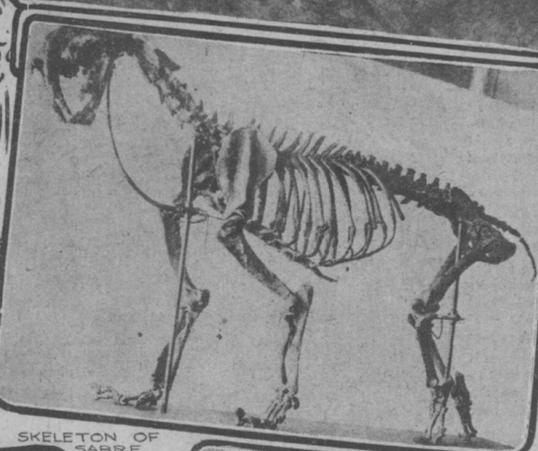
side of tame peacocks) are found in the region of India, and as both the lion and peacock lived here in the quaternary period, the inference is that at a comparatively late period, as the historical geologist measures time, North America and Asia may have been connected by a broad belt of land.

Years before the bones of the ground sloth were discovered geologists inferred that the great teeth of the saber toothed tiger indicated that it must prey on larger animals with thick necks which could not be killed by a tiger with the ordinary canine teeth. Perhaps the reason that the bones of the saber tooth are so much more plentiful than those of the lion is that the tiger was more successful in getting a square meal. In any event the giant sloth was apparently just such an animal as the tiger preyed on, and though its very bulk and thick pebbled hide offered resistance to most of the flesh eaters, yet when the tiger had once leaped on its quarry and fastened its huge claws firmly in the sides or back of the sloth, it must have had but little difficulty in tearing away the thick fleshy neck and dislocating the vertebrae of its prey.

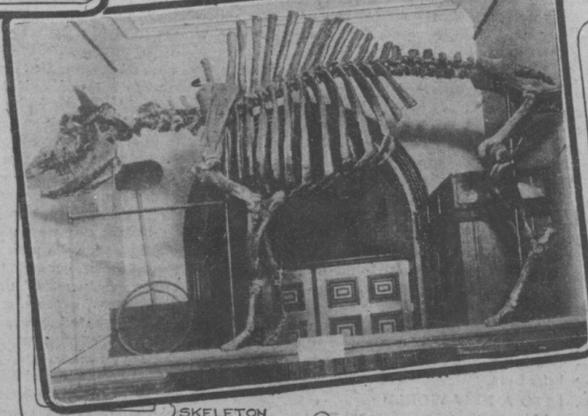
The saber toothed tiger was great



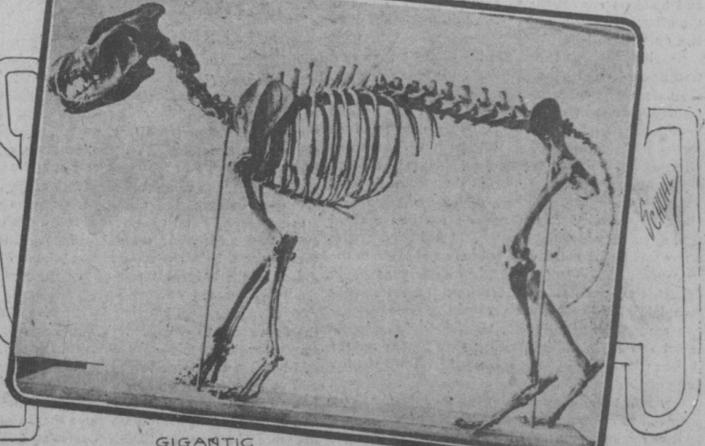
UNVEILING BONES OF PREHISTORIC ANIMALS AT THE ASPHALTUM LAKE NEAR LOS ANGELES, THE "DEATH TRAP OF THE AGES"



SKELTON OF SABRE TOOTHED TIGER



SKELTON OF EXTINCT BISON



GIGANTIC EXTINCT WOLF, LARGER THAN GREAT TIMBER WOLF OF CANADA

what the bones were. In 1875 Major Hancock, owner of the Rancho la Brea, gave William Denton one of the huge fossil sabers that he had found in the asphalt. Since that time W. W. Orcutt, a noted California geologist, was the first to consider the bones as those of prehistoric animals. He showed his collection to P. M. Anderson of Berkeley and in this way the specimens came to the attention of Professor Merriam. Perhaps the most valuable skull among those dug up by the University of California from the asphalt is that of the great American lion. The skull was found by Dr. William Bobb of Los Angeles in 1903 and he presented it to the university. The skull resembles

for the roots upon which it fed. Its hide was densely thick and covered with long, coarse hair, and the inner side of the skin contained a great many small pebblike bones which formed a sort of coat of mail worn by the knights in the days of chivalry. The claws of the saber tooth, however, could cruelly pierce between the pebbled bones, just as a shaft from the long bow would sometimes find its way between the links of an armored vest.

The first specimen of the ground sloth showing the pebbled armor was found in Patagonia about 13 years ago by Dr. F. P. Moreno of the Chile-Argentine boundary commission. This had outside of its skin a coat of hair like that of a true sloth, but on the inside was this bony armor consisting of pebbled bones somewhat like the hide of its living cousin, the armadillo.

The collection of the University of California includes more specimens of the species found than were previously known in the museums of the world. In the university collection there are the remains of the following extinct

the skull of a lion discovered by Prof. Joseph Leidy near Natchez, Miss., in 1836. Professor Leidy called it the great American lion, and while the skull found in California is evidently of a similar variety it is more definitely called that of the great California lion.

Remains of the huge prehistoric bear have been found at Potter Creek cave, in northern California, and E. L. Furlong secured the first specimen for the University of California.

To the average man a bone is a bone, whether it is half a million years old or whether it was picked off a Christmas turkey, but the vast assortment of bones at the University of California have been so cleverly assembled, under the direction of Professor Merriam and his scientific associates, that the amazing variety of wild life that once lived in California is as clearly revealed almost as if one could see the stuffed specimens.

There is no evidence of the presence of man in California at the time when the creatures described above were living.