



LAS October 2014 Headlines:

Perot Museum getting rare, intact mammoth skeleton found in Ellis County gravel pit

By David Flick, Dallas Morning News, August 24, 2014

Wayne McEwen's 138-acre farm in southern Ellis County produces hay, cattle and — from the gravel pit on his property — the occasional arrowhead or shark tooth.

His son and grandson were gathering road bedding material from the pit in May when McEwen's excavator hit something even more rare: a 6-foot mammoth tusk. It was the first clue to what would become an unusual paleontological find.

Mammoth remains are not unknown in this area, but they are almost never as well-preserved as the specimen on McEwen's farm — a nearly complete mammoth skeleton, intact and unmolested by scavengers, lying on a bed of sand where the creature died 20,000 to 40,000 years ago.

Usually the bones are scattered and you get the remains of maybe 30 or 40 percent of the animal. But anyone can look at this and know it's a mammoth. It looks exactly like what it is," said Tom Vance, the Navarro College professor who oversaw the scientific excavation.

The specimen appears to be that of a female Columbian mammoth, which lived in the region in the Late Pleistocene Epoch. The Columbians were slightly larger but less hairy than the more famous woolly mammoth, which lived near the northern glaciers. The Ellis County mammoth was about 8 or 9 feet at the shoulder and was smaller than average, about the size of a modern-day female Asian elephant.

Handling with care

In July, volunteers alerted officials of the Perot Museum of Nature and Science in Dallas. The Perot Museum sent a representative to McEwen's gravel pit to take a look. Museum officials were impressed by what they learned. McEwen, in turn, donated the mammoth to the museum.

Colleen Walker, the museum's CEO, praised the McEwen family, noting that in less caring hands the mammoth "very well could have ended up as part of our Texas highway system."

McEwen said his family was intrigued from the first.

"We realized there was something interesting there," he said. "We knew this was something nice, not something to just haul away."

A McEwen neighbor who had been a student of Vance contacted the professor, who organized a group of students, staff and amateur paleontology enthusiasts to dig out the remains. Over the next two months, they carefully brushed away sand and silt that had encased the mammoth — growing increasingly excited about what they found.

"We'd find one bone and there would be another one next to it and another and another, and we realized they weren't just scattered," Vance said.

'Huge contribution to science'

McEwen looked on Friday with satisfaction.

"It was fun just watching the volunteers," he said. "They'd come out of the pit and they were grinning from ear to ear. They were just so excited."

Equally excited is Ron Tykoski, a staff paleontologist, who called the McEwens' donation "a huge contribution to science."

Tykoski is working against time to get the bones to the safety of the museum's research lab. After thousands of years protected by sand, the excavated bones are now exposed to the elements. Last week's rains washed silt back into sections that had been painstakingly excavated. Mice made a nest out of the paper tags Tykoski used to label the remains.



Loveland Archaeological Society, Inc.

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While water poses a menace to the mammoth bones now, it was water that guaranteed their preservation for thousands of years.

In the Late Pleistocene age, what is now Ellis County was prairie, much as it is now, but much wetter. The area was crisscrossed by rivers, with sandbars that formed at the bows.

Tykoski speculates that the mammoth got bogged down in the wet sand and died. Soon after — so soon that there is no sign that the carcass was ever disturbed by scavengers — floodwaters covered the body with silt.

Much research to be done

Within a few weeks, Tykoski will wrap the bones in a protective jacket of plaster and burlap for delivery to an unmarked museum warehouse near the Dallas Design District. He will spend at least a year researching the remains for clues to age, diet and perhaps cause of death.

It is not known yet if the bones will ever be publicly displayed.

Even if the remains had not ended up as road fill, the mammoth bones might have been sold to a private collector. The McEwens' gift to the Perot Museum means that the specimen can be researched and cataloged by an accredited institution — a necessary condition for any findings to have scientific validity, Tykoski said.

"Without their gift, this magnificent creature might have gone onto the auction block, never to be seen again," he said.



Michael Ainsworth/Staff Photographer

Ron Tykoski, a staff paleontologist with the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, is working to get mammoth bones discovered on an Ellis County farm out of the elements and to the safety of the museum's research lab.

We Appreciate You!

A special "**THANK YOU**" goes out to all those who assisted with the 2014 Loveland Stone Age Fair from September 26th through September 28th. We'd like to thank all of our members who put in time and effort, and also for those who displayed at the Fair. Your support did not go unnoticed!

And of course we can't overlook the contributions and dedication of our 2014 Stone Age Fair Committee: Mike Burch, Andy Coca, Sharon Lundt, Jean Steinhoff, Gary and Sue Yeager, Mark Boswell, and Kevin Zeeck.

Thank you for helping us make this year's Stone Age Fair another great success!

Find of the Month Recap, October 2013 – September 2014



October 2013
Robin Guthrie



November 2013
Steve Campbell

No meeting was held in December 2013 or February 2014 due to inclement weather.



January 2014
Shellene Karst



March 2014
Shane Skutvik



April 2014
Alvin Plucker



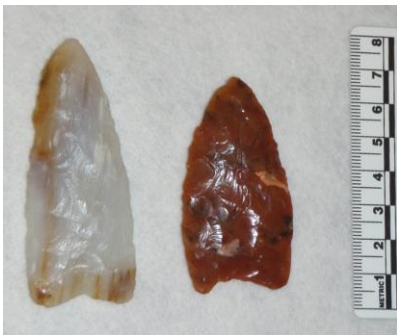
May 2014
Steve Campbell



June 2014
Steve Campbell



July 2014
Robin Guthrie



August 2014
Steve Campbell & Shane Skutvik



September 2014
Lary Pachner



LAS Find of the Month, October 2014:

Members can bring an artifact to be entered into the competition at the monthly meeting, which will be judged based on the following rules:

1. Must be a member of LAS in good standing.
2. The artifact must be a personal find.
3. It must have been found within the specified time frame, i.e., within the month prior to the meeting.
4. The artifact doesn't have to be a Colorado find—all that matters is that it was found in the last month.

The Find of the Month for October 2014 was made by Shellene Karst

Type: Hannah

Material: Petrified Wood

Location: Weld County, Colorado



LAS News and Upcoming Events:

- In memoriam: Craig Murray, age 66, of Westminster, passed away October 14, 2014. Craig worked in the Sheriff's Department, Adams County, CO since he was a young man retiring as a Sergeant at age fifty-five. Craig was a long time member of the Loveland Archeological Society. He thoroughly enjoyed the meetings and the Loveland Stone Age Fair when he was able to attend. Craig was an insightful and disciplined person who amazed us with his knowledge and he will be greatly missed.
Obituary: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/denverpost/obituary.aspx?pid=172848623>
- Speakers Needed! We need speakers for our 2015 meetings! If you would like to give a presentation or know of someone who would give a great program please contact Andy Coca, Jean Steinhoff or Kevin Zeeck. No experience is necessary. All that is needed is a passion for our hobby and a willingness to share that passion. Thanks!
- November 4, 2014 November meeting. This will be our annual Native American Foods program. We will be taking donations in the form of gifts, gift cards, or money to provide a Christmas for Native American families in the area. If you can't attend and would like to make a donation please contact Sharon Lundt at (970) 669-2375. We will also vote on the October 2013 to September 2014 Find of the Year, so look over the finds on page 4 and be ready to cast your vote!
- December 2, 2014 December meeting - annual Christmas party. Bring a dish to share for the annual feast. Also, we will be taking donations in the form of gifts, gift cards, or money to provide a Christmas for Native American families in the area. (See notes for November 4, 2014 meeting above.) More information will be included in the November 2014 newsletter.