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Note on the Occurrence of the Mammoth in Sioux County, Nebraska

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NOTE ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE MAMMOTH IN SIOUX COUNTY, NEBRASKA.

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Owing to the general interest taken in the prehistoric elephants, mammoths and mastodons, it seems well to record the occurrence of specimens in new localities in order to add to our knowledge of their range. That their distribution was nearly world-wide is becoming common knowledge, and it is interesting to note that they have now been reported from nearly every county in the State. As yet, but one specimen of mammoth, a tooth, has been found in Sioux County. Although rather fragmentary, early mastodon remains are abundant in the Snake Creek beds in the southeastern part of the County.

In July, 1906, the writer found the first specimen of a mammoth reported from the extreme western part of the State (No. H C 132, collection of the writer). It was washed out by a flood from the Pleistocene gravels which underlie the surface deposits in the bottom of the Niobrara valley at Agate, Sioux County, Nebraska. This specimen is a lower left milk molar of Elephas ? columbi, the Columbian Mammoth. It is only slightly damaged, and is well fossilized. The tooth had little wear, so that the posterior eight transverse folds or ridges are unworn, while the anterior seven folds are just worn enough to show the enamel ridges well. The tooth is well-cemented, indicating a rather advanced type. The posterior unworn crests furnish an unusually fine example of digitation, from seven to ten tiny cones appearing on each ridge. Although slightly damaged at the posterior end, the tooth is now 160 mm. (about 6¼ in.) long, by 65 mm. (about 2¼ in.) wide, by 94 mm. (about 3¾ in.) high, and weighs 2¾ pounds.

The writer recently saw a damaged tooth of another specimen found near Crawford, Dawes County, Nebraska, about 30 miles northeast of Agate. This was secured in a gravel pit, and is very similar to the specimen mentioned above, and is probably from the same species. This adds one more to the list of counties in the State in which mammoths are found.

About six years ago, Professor F. B. Loomis of Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts, found portions of the tusks and skeleton of an immense mammoth, about 40 miles west of Agate, near Rawhide

Butte, Wyoming. This specimen was not even fossilized. It was found in an alkali pocket on the surface of the prairie, where it had been preserved from decay. The bones had dried and weathered out. This occurrence and condition would indicate that the animal had lived very recently, geologically speaking, probably within the last few thousand years.

Unfortunately, people living in the region, not realizing the care that must be exercised in exhuming fossil bones, ruined what would otherwise have been a valuable specimen. As a result, Professor Loomis was unable to secure more than fragments.

When those not trained in handling fossils find strange bones or teeth, they should not attempt to take them out, but should notify the State Geologist, or some other trained person, at once, and get information as to proper methods. Many rare and instructive specimens that might easily have been saved, are partly or totally destroyed every year by people who do not curb their curiosity, and who do not wait to get competent advice before attempting to remove specimens from their natural matrix.

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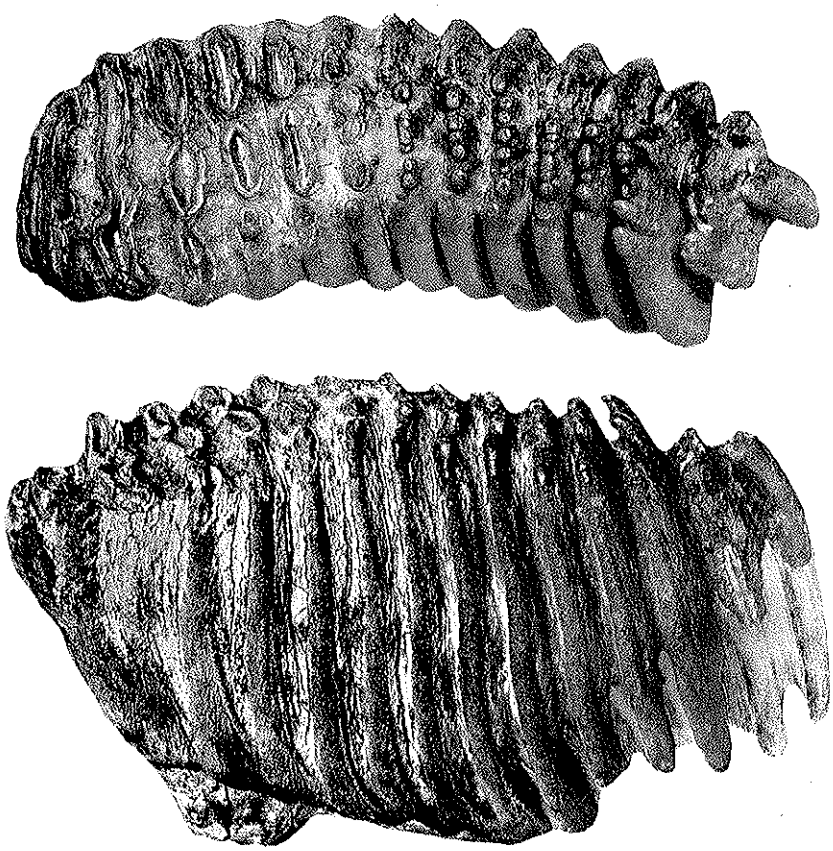

Crown and side views of the left lower molar of Elephas ?colombi (young). Two-thirds natural size.