

ANIMALS IN COMBAT



In this re-created scene at the La Brea Tar Pits at Los Angeles' Hancock Park, a prehistoric Bison is mired in one of the open tar pits while three vicious Saber Tooth Tigers fight over this choice morsel. The Saber Tooth was one of the most ferocious of all animals of this age. Strange as it may seem, such creatures did at one time, roam through El Cajon Valley.

— Courtesy of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce

First Life In Valley Some 40 Thousand Years Ago

By W. S. HEAD

Beginning of first life in El Cajon Valley as a rather difficult matter to explain with any degree of accuracy, this is due to the considerable variance in theory and opinion of modern day scientists. All are agreed, on one fact, that prehistoric animal life did exist here, some 40 to 60 thousands years ago. It is contended that the same life was ex-istant over the entire Southern California area. Other than sea life, very little actual proof has been found to confirm this fact in the immediate area.

The La Brea Tar Pits, at Hancock Park in the city of Los Angeles, is perhaps the best and most accurate source of information on this animal life. Here have been collected and preserved the bones of prehistoric creatures from the recent pleistocene era, a geological time interval measure.

The appearance of these pits and its general contents are the same today as they were in the dark past. From a short distance the tarry surface appears as small

lakes of water. Huge mammoths, bison and believe it or not, camels would venture into these treacherous prehistoric traps to quench their thirst. Suddenly, they would become mired helplessly in the sticky masses without bottom. Sabor tooth tigers would fall upon these hapless beasts in their death struggle, then find themselves mired along with their victims. Great birds of prey, known as Teratornis (a far distant cousin of the California Condor) with a wing spread of 11 to 12 feet, would attack the sabor-tooths. Eventually, gorged with its greed, it would come to the same fate. Thus today we read these tragic

episodes in the survival of the fittest among the animals of 60 thousands or more years ago. Archaeologists have pieced together the remains of these creatures to verify the likeness of the life which must have been a part of this Valley.

THREE THEORIES

There are three theories presented. One is, that the most of Southern California was an arid region offering no forage for animal life. Another tends to the theory that this area was flooded by the mighty Colorado River. Lastly is the fact that very little actual investigation and study have been done in the area, to search for such evidence.

The accounts of the first man in El Cajon Valley are even more vague when we try to give accurate information. Here again, we can only rely upon several theories, all of which appear to have some basis, but none have been fully accepted or rejected.

Briefly here is the way these authorities tell us of the beginning of local man. At sometime in the past, a race of possible Mongolians ventured out onto the frozen Bering Sea or the chain of Aleutians Islands (when they were possibly connected). Each year they would travel further in search of a better source of food. One guess is, that there may have been a sudden thawing of the frozen seas, or a volcanic sinking of part of the islands. Those, who were cut off from returning whence they came, continued on to the North American mainland. Weather and food caused many of these savages to migrate to the south.

FROM SOUTH SEAS?

Another theory is, that certain south sea islanders may have become storm bound in their crude boats and could have been carried to the present coast of California. And yet a third version of this perplexing question. Although it smacks of a considerable taste of fiction, when Ignatius Donnelly wrote his still popular classic, "ATLANTIS" in 1882, he told of that great missing continent which sank back into the Atlantic. From this story rises the contention that the survivors of this disaster must have sought refuge and thus came upon the South and Central Americas. From these southern climes, the first man may have migrated to this locality.

Thus, we leave the reader with a problem. Take your choice, and we will go along with you. Perhaps some day the problem may be solved more satisfactorily.

As to the type of savage these

first men were we do have definite information. These humans who did inhabit the surrounding country were perhaps the most ignorant and savage that ever existed in North America. They spent their entire life hunting for food which they ate raw. They lived in caves and other natural shelters and did not build structures. They had little or no form of clothing, nor family ties. This was still evident when the first civilized man arrived here. They lived, most often, close to the sea for its abundant supply of food which could be taken by hand. And, they knew no form of agriculture.

NEW FINDS

Even as this article is being written, certain interesting 'finds' are being studied at the confluence of the Murrieta Creek and the Santa Margarita River near the town of Temecula. Estimates, as to the age of these ruins or remains have been placed at perhaps 500 to 1000 years. Among these remains have been found sea shells used as possible personal adornments which would indicate that they may have been a slightly advanced class of native from those tribes along the sea.

From these accounts and theories, that the back country and ocean shores were inhabited by a pre-historic animal and man, it is strange that they missed the luxury of such a mid-land valley as El Cajon.