

# The Palm Coast Historian

Published by the City of Palm Coast Historical Society Editor: Debby Geyer Issue 20 April – June 2008  
<http://community.webtv.net/pchistorical/TheCityofPalmCoast> History Center Phone # 446-2880

## Cataloging Committee Making History and Preserving It by Patricia Eldridge, Chairman

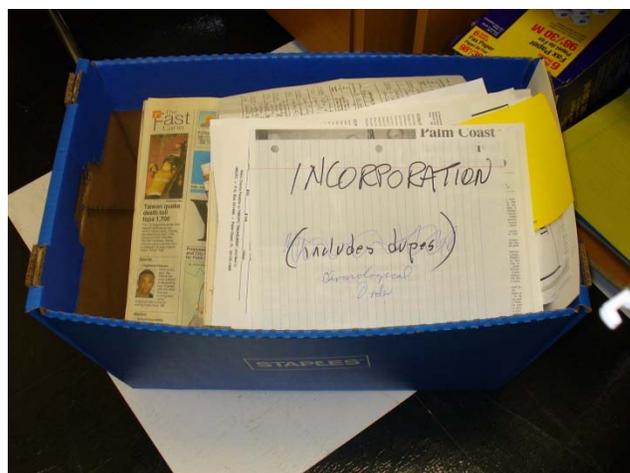
Our group has been up and running since January 14, 2008. After developing an organizational plan and procedure, we are now in the process of sorting the materials and items by subject and chronological order. This is a very time consuming process, but it is necessary before anything else is done. This is the area where we need volunteers the most. We have boxes of newspaper clippings, magazines, binders, photos and all need to be reviewed for subject and sorted. While working together we have found this to be a wonderfully informative experience as each of us is learning so much about Palm Coast.

We have designed forms for our cataloging process and once the organizing is complete, we will start the actual cataloging. Our long-range goal is to utilize a cataloging software system for all our materials. However, initially we will use separate binders for subject and some title searches so items can be cross-referenced.

Thanks to our wonderful volunteers as they are making this project move along much faster than any of us anticipated. They include Betty Buchanan, Mary Ann Kirby, Eileen Carter, Ed Moore, George Libonate, Carol Lemieux, Norma Kendrick, and Steve Ripley.

Our hours of service are from 1:30 to 4:00 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons at the History Center located at City Hall. Some volunteers come once a week, others every other week, depending on their schedule. No experience is necessary and we will give you all the help you need if you select to help develop your Historical Society so it becomes a true research center. Gives us your support and help make history as well as preserve it.

**Call 446-2880**

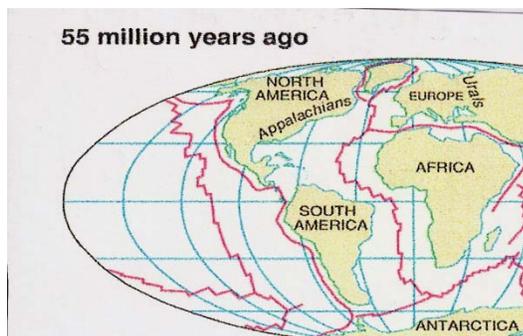


# No Dinosaurs in Palm Coast: The Earliest Archaeology of Flagler County, Florida

by Art Dycke, City Historian

In the beginning, Palm Coast, Flagler County, like the rest of Florida, was under water. Although there are rocks in North America dating back 3 billion years when our earth consisted of a single continent called Pangaea, none of these were found in this state. When the North and South American continents began to drift away from the original land mass 180 million years ago, the life forms which had been developing since 500 million years ago and were then dominated by the dinosaurs were transported to their present locations along with them. Dinosaurs ruled the earth for 150 million years. After the demise of the dinos, eventually a new animal hierarchy dominated North America and the other continents for an 80 million year period called the "Age of Mammals."

The oldest vertebrate fossil ever recovered in Florida was an aquatic turtle whose partial skeleton was found in a well core sample taken from sediment dating back to about 120 million years ago. A map of our continent drawn after it had drifted away from Pangaea 55 million years ago would have shown an east coast along the Appalachian Mountains without any of Florida above water.



## Where is Florida?

Florida did indeed emerge from the ocean about 25 million years ago.

It is this author's personal quirk to designate Palm Coast, Flagler County, Florida as the "center of the universe." As such we should also have had dinosaurs here like so many other places did but you will not find any evidence of them ever living here in Palm Coast. The reason is found in a magazine article written by Roger Hoefler entitled, "A Bad Day

65 Million Years Ago." He describes what you might have experienced if you had been in Palm Coast then:

"Suddenly an enormous, brilliant ball of fire coming in from the Southeast streaked across the sky and impacted the earth in the shallow sea we now call the Gulf of Mexico, near the modern day Yucatan Peninsula. In just seconds, the nearly 6-mile wide asteroid blasted a crater more than 100 miles wide and several miles deep. The heat of the impact sent a searing vapor cloud racing northward that set most of the continent aflame. The giant tsunami generated by the blast raced across the oceans and ravaged the land for hundreds of miles inland from the coast. A blanket of pulverized rock and metal affected by the blast covered both the land and the sea floor for more than 1,000 miles in all directions from the crater. A cloud of vaporized rock, metal and glass spread out in the stratosphere around the earth and within a matter of days completely blocked all sunlight for many months. During the months of darkness that followed, the lingering debris cloud triggered a decline in global temperature, making the Earth uninhabitable, not only for the dinosaurs, but also for most other animals and plants. The dinosaurs passed into extinction ending more than 150 million years of evolution and dominance over life on Earth."

Scientists now generally agree that this cataclysmic event brought about the demise of the worlds dinosaurs. By simple logic, if dinosaurs were extinct 65 million years ago and if Florida was still under water 55 million years ago, they could not have been here to leave their bones for us to find. Thus, the answer is NO for dinosaur bones in Palm Coast, Flagler County, Florida but, yes for many, many other animal bones in our area.

Florida does have a 50 million year fossil history of marine animals including sharks and the whale-like Basilosaurus found in limestone quarries in North and Central Florida. As Florida emerged from the ocean 25 million years ago, its tropical climate lured existing mainland mammals and other animals to it. They included saber-tooth creatures related to dogs and cats, small three-toed horses, early bears, coyote sized dogs, tapirs, badgers, raccoons, skunks and hornless rhinoceroses. Later there are recorded findings of Smilodon (saber-cats), giant capybaras (large squirrel-like rodents), and giant beavers.

All these existed in Florida in the years before the "ice age" which began about 2 million years ago. A

very informative *News Journal* article entitled “Ice Age Sent People, Animals off to Florida” by staff writer Lind Trumble suggests why Palm Coast, Flagler County was attractive even then:

“When winter dawned in Florida during the Ice Age, glaciers were as far away as Illinois and snow only rarely dusted the peninsula. Escaping the harsher weather to the north were the Paleo-Indians, who lived on Florida's sand-dunes beside giant sloths, camels and a less-hairy version of the woolly mammoth. An armadillo the size of a car, called a glyptodont, whacked predators with a tail resembling a spiked club. Saber-toothed cats sported 9-inch fangs- the largest of any feline in Earth's history. But beavers weighing up to 500 pounds could out-chomp them with teeth up to a foot long.

During the Ice Age, one-third of the planet was covered in glaciers, but Florida had temperatures that were only five to ten degrees cooler than today's and an even bigger perk: there was virtually no humidity. The temperate climate and unfrozen water lured mammoths and mastodons, which were followed by the Paleo-Indians who needed food.”

If you were here 25,000 years ago, you could walk out into the Gulf of Mexico almost half the distance to Louisiana," said Bruce MacFadden, Associate director of the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville. "Likewise if you lived here 100,000 years ago during one of the warm stages of the Ice Age, Miami and Tampa would have been under water."

A recent exhibit at the Museum of Natural History in Gainesville showed that Florida has one of the largest fossil collections of pre-historic animals in North America. It includes an 11,500-year-old mastodon that Holly Hill resident Don Serbouseck found years ago. He also discovered a 130,000-year-old giant ground sloth in a fossil site off Nova road in South Daytona. Its bones (pictured on page 4) have been on display the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Daytona Beach since 1980.

Before we leave the topic of Florida's prehistoric animals we should examine some evidence of their existence in Flagler County. Certainly you will want to go to the Flagler Beach Museum to see the mastodon bone and other artifacts displayed there.



The eminent local archaeologist Dana Ste. Claire, author of [True Natives: The Prehistory of Volusia County](#) reminds us regarding mastodons and giant sloths in our area:

"The areas they once inhabited are now under water because ancient coastlines were miles beyond where they are today due to the lower sea levels of this earlier time. If they have survived the destructive nature of rising sea levels, these archeological sites will be found far offshore..."

The first clue that I personally got regarding the origin of the Flagler Beach Museum mastodon bone came while I was researching early Palm Coast history and spotted an article that included the statement:

"Can you imagine seeing mastodons, giant sloths, ancient camels, mammoths and big ole animals like that which once lived here? I know because I once dug up (in 1963) some parts of them from an ancient watering hole here in Flagler County"

Frances Edmonson, [Palm Coast News](#), Oct. 25, 1978

Then I found a copy of an unpublished manuscript entitled, “History of Flagler County” by Robert Moody Jr. in the Florida State Historical Society Library in Titusville. The Moody family is deeply entwined in Flagler County history and I am



reproducing this section of Robert's work exactly the way he wrote it.

### CAMELS IN PALM COAST

In 1910 my brother, who was a registered surveyor and Tax Assessor for 30 years, ordered field notes for a large part of what is now Palm Coast to make a survey for a man who was buying it. As he was going over the notes he found one by George Clements, the first surveyor, saying that there were strange bones lying on the ground, on what was the south end of the old Johnson farm. There is a long strip of land that is low ground now, but in 1836 when the notes were made it was a willow swamp with fresh water.

My brother went and looked at the ground, and after digging around, he soon found the main location of the bones. He covered them and left them undisturbed until 1962, when he decided to dig them up. The Johnsons had already found a few bones on top of the ground. The Smithsonian Institute in Washington said the reason there were so many in that one pile was that the animals had come to get water, bogged down and couldn't get out. The Smithsonian sent a team down here to study the bones. They said that it was the largest collection ever found. They stayed for a few days studied the age of the bones and typed them for us. There were camel bones, mastodon, mammoth and others, such as birds and wild horses. It was also proved that man was there then, as we found human bones under the animal bones. We also found sharp tools made by men. Archaeologists from everywhere came to study them, and they all agreed that the bones were between 50,000 and 60,000 years old.

Being a taxidermist, I soon found a method of putting the bones together, and also found how they had to be treated so they would not crumble. We were building

a museum to house the find, and we had enough bones to make a mastodon when my brother died suddenly of a heart attack. The bones were sold and stored in a warehouse which caught on fire, destroying most of them. That broke my heart, as we had great plans for them. But that's life.

I found the final piece of the puzzle in the ITT COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 1974 Vol. 4, "History and Archaeology". The person who authored this section of our CLUP did extensive research regarding his subject and has left us with an invaluable resource, a relevant section of which is reproduced below:

### BON TERRA SITE

Bon Terra may well prove to be one of the more interesting sites on the Palm Coast property. Its history as revealed by archeological literature has been recounted in the Phase I report. Other activity at the site has come to light since that writing. According to a story in the December 22, 1963, Daytona Beach News-Journal, a large number of animal bones was collected at the Bon Terra Site by Mr. D. D. Moody, Flagler County Tax Assessor, and a land surveyor by profession. Most common were remains of mammoth and mastodon, however, giant sloth, turtle, camel, horse, deer, and several other species are reported. Bone needle fragments were said to have been taken from a spring in association with a mastodon bone. As pictured in the article, these appear to be of more recent manufacture, probably Archaic Period, but the alleged association of human and extinct Pleistocene vertebrate remains should not be readily dismissed.

The location and present condition of this pre-historic site and of the human inhabitants of our area is a story for another time.

**\*The foregoing article is part of a larger work presently in progress. It may not be duplicated or reproduced without the written permission of the author.**  
Thank you to Debby Geyer, President and Newsletter Editor of the Palm Coast Historical Society for typing and presenting this article.