Titanothere models in the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina. Bob Tur

A FOSSIL FIRST FOR CANADA

by RON TILLIE*

In late June, 1973, a report of fossilized bone being uncovered near Eastend, Saskatchewan, was phoned in to the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History. Thanks to the interest and co-operation of Ken Wills, Bud Hanson and Victor Hicks, all from the Eastend district, we were able to collect the only partial skeleton of a Titanothere found in Canada which still had bones in the proper position.

The specimen was found when dirt from a hillside was being moved to fill a 4-foot water run in a roadside ditch. The maintainer blade scraped the lower edge of one mandible breaking off a portion. Another slice of dirt was to be cut when the operator noticed the broken bone and checked further by hand. The owner of the land and a p son interested in fossil material w contacted and further digging by ha commenced to check its value. Bef long it was evident that this was specimen valuable enough to invol the Museum of Natural History. T museum personnel went to the site July 2. They completed the excavati within 3 weeks and recovered all t was there, approximately 60% of skeleton.

The skeleton was that of Titanothere, a herbivore from Oligocene Era, 35,000,000 years a These early mammals resembled present-day Rhinoceros. They sto approximately 7 feet high at t shoulder. These mammals are believ to have become extinct when the s plants, which their teeth were capa

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Quarry where Titanothere was found, northwest of Eastend, Sask. Ron Tillie

of chewing, were replaced by tougher varieties. These new hardier varieties wore the teeth much quicker, thereby, reducing their lifespan drastically and leading to their extinction.

Most of the bones were in excellent structure. They were, however, in very fragile condition and were treated with a shellac-like substance called gelva, as soon as the exposed surfaces were dry. Once the gelva had dried, wet tissue paper was tamped over the exposed bone. Pieces of burlap soaked in plaster were then placed over the specimen and surrounding dirt. Once enveloped by plaster and burlap, they were ready for transportation back to the lab for preparation.

It is hoped that preparation will begin by mid-October, and is expected to last for several months. It will then be decided what type of design will be appropriate to best display this specimen.

It is hoped that assistance from the general public in reporting sites of this nature will be continued. Without their help, much of our earth's history may be lost forever.

Head, jaw and neck vertebrae of Titanothere in natural position. Ron Tillie