

Moments in Time

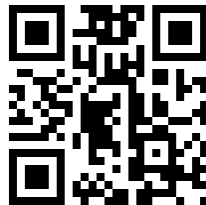


The fossils on display are from different periods in Earth's history. The mastodon bones are estimated to be around 25,000 years-old, while the other fossils are believed to be 200 million years-old. The timeline above the display is 35 feet long. If it were done to scale, that trilobite, which lived 270 million years ago, would be 6/10 of a mile away, putting that end of the timeline near the barn at the Watchung Stable or by the bridge at Lake Surprise.

For more information on the Mastodon Exhibit, go to:

www.ucnj.org/mastodon

Or use a smart phone to scan:



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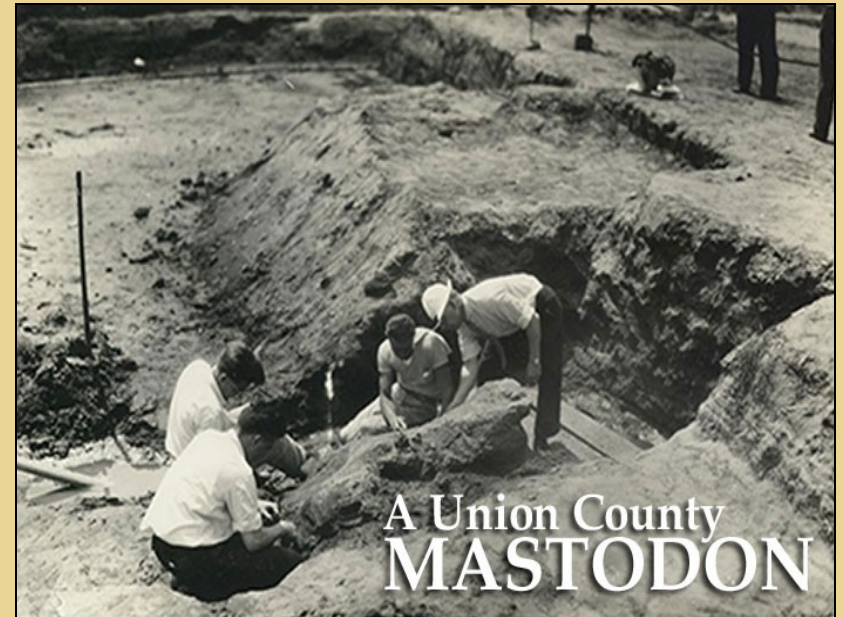
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Trailside Nature & Science Center Presents



What's In Your Backyard?

See the 25,000 year-old tusk of a Mastodon discovered in Lenape Park, on loan from the NJ State Museum, along with 200-million year-old fossils found in the Watchung Reservation, on loan from the Yale Peabody Museum.

WHAT ARE MASTODONS?



- They are an extinct group of mammals closely related to modern elephants (Loxodonta of Africa and Elephants of Asia) and resemble them in many ways.
- The ancestors of Mastodons appeared in the fossil record in northern Africa about 50 million years ago in late Eocene time.
- These boar-sized animals, swamp-dwelling and rather tapir-like, form a basal part of the vast and complicated family tree of the proboscideans (animals with trunks) which spread to all the continents except Australia and Antarctica.
- One large branch of this hypothetical tree represents the mastodons. They reached North America via Siberia and the Bering Strait land bridge in Miocene time, approximately 20 million years ago.
- They had been here a long time when the first human immigrants to America used the same bridge from the Old World to the New, probably less than 50,000 years ago.
- Perhaps several waves of migrating mastodons and people came to this country by the same route.



WHY HERE?

In the last Ice Age, the Wisconsin Glacier extended across Canada and as far down as North Jersey. As the glacier receded, rivers carried the melting waters out to sea. The oceans were far lower at that time because so much water was locked in the ice, so much so, that fishing trawlers working off the coast of the New Jersey we know today have found Mastodon bones hundreds of miles out from the present shoreline.

Scientists believe that the Mastodon bones discovered in Lenape Park, not far from the Rahway River, may have washed down to that location from Mastodons that were roaming farther north, closer to the glacier.

WHAT'S AT THE EXHIBIT?



The Mastodon tusk (above) and the jaw (left) were found in Lenape Park in Cranford in 1936. They were from a young male.

The Mastodon foot (below) was discovered in 1971 in the northwest corner of New Jersey and was part of a virtually complete skeleton.

The fish fossils (below left) were found in the Watchung Reservation in a geologic area known as the Feltville Limestone.

