



Keytone Photo, from a mural in the Los Angeles Museum

AT LA BREA PITS, THE DEATH TRAP OF THE AGES

... 40,000 years ago saber-tooth tigers, elephants, giant bears, camels, horses, wolves came to drink; remained to die in the thick, sticky, oily deceptive death traps.

Science

Fossils

On Wilshire Boulevard, twelve miles from the center of Los Angeles, and surrounded by newly-built stucco houses, billboards, hot dog stands, oil wells, are the La Brea asphalt pits, already proved invaluable as indices to by-gone ages. Little noticed by the passing motorist and considered an eyesore by the realtor, the La Brea Pits have recently been accused of being a menace to human life.

Reason: About the edges of these oily pools were prone to play young lads, disregarding warnings of danger, thereby running great risks of being entrapped in the deceptive snare of being lured to gruesome death as the oil-soaked surface enmeshed them, held them fast.

Last week one Mrs. Anna E. Klintnick, who lives nearby the pits, took her pen in hand, wrote the Los Angeles County Supervisors demanding that the pits be fenced, that no casualties similar to the prehistoric death-trappings be permitted to occur. She referred to the recent narrow escape of three adventurous youths, who last month were saved only by the timely intervention of firemen attracted by their screams. The Supervisors took the matter under advisement.

Famed throughout the world as the most important, most significant of all fossil deposits, the La Brea Pits are now believed by scientists to have lured their victims to destruction in a manner not unlike that depicted by perturbed Angelon Mrs. Klintnick. Thick, sticky was the oil, covered lightly by a thin incrustation of dust. Rain water, soaking into the earth, may have remained longer on the surface of the oil, attracted thirsty animals. They came to drink; remained to die.

Loud were the shrieks emitted by the struggling beasts as they felt themselves sinking deeper and deeper into the dense, slimy ooze. Attracted by their screams were other animals, who came to investigate; were likewise inveigled into the deceptive death-traps.

No sooner had the creatures given up their desperate struggle than down from the sky swooped the giant vultures, monstrous buzzards, fierce eagles, intent on a carrion-feast. Their first gorge over, they may have rested for a moment on the dust-incrusted surface, then repeated the death-battle of their erstwhile victim.

Aided by the rich deposits of fossils — preserved remains, impressions, traces of animals of past geological ages—which have been unearthed in the La Brea Pits, scientists have not found the task of describing the life which existed in the Southwest many thousands of years ago a difficult one. They have been able to re-fabricate a forgotten world to depict vividly the Southern California of the Pleistocene Epoch—that geological era which ended some 25,000 years ago and which may itself have lasted a half-million years.

No deserted wilderness, no lonely barren waste-land was Southern California then, geologists have declared. More moist was its climate, more luxuriant its vegetation; rich, swaying grasses, tall, stalwart trees, a cultivated,uberant herbage, shrubbery overlooking its rolling hills, undulating valleys.

Rich and luxuriant though the plant life was, animals dominated

the epoch. Thousands of savage beasts roamed California's mountain ranges, ravaged the bountiful vegetation, ferociously stalked and smothered, rent them limb from limb. Saber-tooth tigers thrust their sharp sabers deep into the blood vessels of their prey, wolfed the raw flesh, gulped down the warm gushing blood.

All this has scientists been able to set forth, using the fossil remains as invaluable authentic data. Yet of the existence of the La Brea Pits virtually nothing was known until the early years of the twentieth century, when geologists, geologists, historians of Southern California had referred briefly to oil pools, asphalt deposits, in Los Angeles County; had attributed no meaning to them. One of these asphalt deposits was put to profitable use some fifty years ago, worked extensively. An occasional strange bone was uncovered, casually examined, tossed aside.

It was not until 1906 that interest was evidenced in this area as a possible repository of remains of prehistoric animals. It was then that University of California's Dr. J. C. Merriam decided to investigate the pits, excavate their contents, determine their significance—a historical, geological, paleontological. Not alone was he; soon joined by his professional colleagues, by the Los Angeles High School, the Southern California Academy of Sciences, Occidental College, interested in the pits.

Exhaustive, detailed, but intensely interesting was the task of excavating the pits, of arranging the unearthed prehistoric bones into their original order, of rebuilding the skeletons of the age-old animals. Elephant remains were found in one asphalt bed, since named the "Elephant Pit." The massive bones indicated that the Pleistocene elephants who inhabited this region so long ago were the largest of all land mammals, from 12 to 15 feet tall; larger than Jumbo, modern elephantine elephant.

The animal most characteristic, perhaps, of the Pleistocene Epoch was the so-called "saber-tooth tiger," so named because of highly developed upper canine teeth; really not a tiger, but an enormous wild-cat. Next to the Dire Wolf, more bones of these creatures were found than of any single other animal. This does not indicate that they were more numerous; it might signify they were less intelligent, more prone to be entrapped by the oily pools, to be lured to destruction. No less than 200 of these beasts were represented in the conglomeration of bones.

Most numerous of all were remains of the Dire Wolf, powerful, massive; attracted to the pits, perhaps, because of growing scarcity of food throughout the region.

Several animals, now known only in distant lands, were found to have inhabited Southern California during the Pleistocene age. Among these were the giant ground sloth, much like the South American species, huge, unwieldy, heavy-bodied, short-legged, equipped with immense claws; the little ground sloth, much smaller, much more slender; the camel, which originated in North America, later perpetuated itself in Asia and Europe, becoming extinct in the West; the "western horse", large-headed, already in the one-toed stage.

From the asphalt were recovered bird remains, great quantities, many species. To date sixty have been identified; mostly carrion, flesh-eating. A surprise to excavators was the discovery of three peacocks, otherwise unknown in this region. Since mankind is a product of the present epoch, entirely unknown before its opening, diggers were startled to find in one pit a human

skull, nearly perfect, surrounded by fragmentary bones unquestionably from the same skeleton. Scientists were unable to explain the incongruity; could only hazard the belief that the pit in which the skull was found was a newer pit, not necessarily Pleistocene in origin.

Dr. Merriam began explorations at the La Brea Pits in 1906; a decade later, they were completely excavated and the prehistoric treasures amassed into the Hancock Collection (so named because of territory-owner G. Allan Hancock), placed in the Los Angeles Museum. In 1916, Benefactor Hancock presented Los Angeles County the who's 32-acre tract, including all the fossil-bearing pits, other acreage. Purpose: to preserve the scientific area, the remainder to be made into a modern park.

Education

Angelika's Debut

Debuts are usually made by vividly-hued movie misses, by deep-bodied prima donnas, by sun-burnt athletic social buds. But "Angelika," who last week made her debut before Governor Young, sponsored by Turlock's Reverend A. Hallner, is none of these; she is nothing more nor less than a new world-wide mother language.

"Angelika's" progenitor spent some ten years perfecting his brain-child, now believes she will be the forerunner of world understanding, of world-wide radio hook-ups, of an invaluable short-cut to knowledge, enabling reduction of school years; of school tax rates, too.

"Angelika" is based on English; has one simple key rule: "Write as you speak." It completely eliminates errors in spelling and pronunciation, last week pointed out by Author Hallner, since it is entirely phonetic. It is pronounced exactly, as it is spelled, and vice versa.

Author Hallner last week presented Governor Young with the first reader in "Angelika," which starts with: "Anor thy father and thy mother dat thy das ma bi lang upan the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Translated, this is: "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Practicality is the goal of "Angelika." In the foreword he pointed out that common school courses could be reduced from eight to six years by means of "Angelika." Students could graduate from high school at 15 rather than 18, thereby receiving three additional "working years."

No doubt has Reverend Hallner but that his phonetic guide to universality will soon be adopted; already is Turlock's Beniah Tabernacle preparing to establish preparatory schools in "Angelika."

Requiescat in Pace

Not much longer will high school students find it necessary to burn the midnight oil wrestling with Greek roots, Latin conjugations, declensions. Last week their oft-repeated accusation that both languages are dead, should be permitted to rest in peace, was upheld by State Superintendent of Instruction Virgil Kersey, at a conference. Not unqualified was Superintendent Kersey's statement. He affirmed the value of a comprehensive knowledge of both languages, but declared that the average high

school pupil would be wise to devote his time to other subjects, less cultural, perhaps, but more profitable.

The high school student should study the "new America" culture, last week, opined Superintendent Kersey. Such subjects as these would be included: essences of American democracy, the new sciences, the new vocabulary; commerce; also the art of installment plan buying.

"Consumers' credit" was Kersey's descriptive name for this last topic. He refused to discuss its merits, demerits; declared simply that because of its almost universal usage, it would be wise for students to understand it, to be able to make intelligent use of it in the future.

Of American culture, Kersey spoke briefly; said it was "still a bit vague—in a metamorphic state"; was certain of its ultimate development.

Western Relics

California's history, colorful, vivid, picturesque despite its brevity, was permanently re-invigorated many months ago when old-time Border Scout Jonathan Tibbett and his wife presented to Claremont Colleges a collection of western relics, valued at \$250,000; to be viewed by Southern Californians interested in the history of the West.

Much sought-after by the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, many museums and colleges has been this collection, containing more than 5000 articles; only recently completely catalogued. A fortnight ago Donors Mr. and Mrs. Tibbett and the Claremont Colleges Museum sponsored the first private showing, invited friends, eminent educators, 75 representatives of the different tribes of Mission Indians in the Southwest.

Included in the famous collection are many articles, reminiscent of romance, of adventure, of stirring activity, such as: Jesse James' rifle, Wild Bill's pistol with 15 notches, a jacket owned by Sitting Bull, the first automobile brought into the State of California, Fremont's old saddle trappings, an Indian chief's \$1000 water bottle, countless other relics of the gold-rush days, of the Indians of California, of the early Alts. Also included is one of the world's finest Indian basket collections.

Religion

Religious Merger

Mergers—commercial combinations of a number of interests into one to bring about additional efficiency, greater economy—have long characterized Big Business; have hitherto been supposedly restricted to commercial enterprises.

Last week, however, religious merger was imminent. In Santa Paula 50 representative residents and church-ers met, discussed a pending merger of the Santa Paula Methodist-Episcopal Church and the Santa Paula Presbyterian Church, pointed out that similar amalgamations had taken place in England, Scotland, and Canada.

No definite decision was made; it was inferred that none could be forthcoming until a proposition had been legally submitted to the quarterly Southern Conference of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, to be acted upon decisively at that time by conference officials. Stated purposes of proposed merger:

avoidance of duplication of expenditures.

Anti-Aimee

Undismayed by the secession of more of her Southern California churches (Long Beach, Hyde Park), Sister Aimee Semple McPherson last week displayed her white teeth in a wide smile, mouthed a number of statements for the press, helped convey asserted financial records of the Echo Park Evangelistic Association to the Los Angeles District Attorney, by whom they had been subpoenaed. (News Review, Oct. 7-13, et. seq.)

Not at all harassed seemed Evangelist Aimee, branded a "sensationalist" and "self-advertising" by Opponent Reverend James W. Lynd, Whittier pastor. She raised her arched eyebrows at the thorough investigation of a "mysterious \$100,000 fund" deposited in the Security-First National bank, credited to Elizabeth and Edith Johnson; was willing enough to explain the fund, its whys and its wherefores. But the District Attorney's office continued to investigate.

Thrown at Mrs. McPherson last week was the charge of having visited Mrs. Lois Fantages on the night of her conviction for manslaughter. Auburn-haired Aimee emphatically denied the accusation. Later she acknowledged she had prayed at the convicted woman's bedside, had held the gunt, haggard, weeping woman in her arms.

Late last week one George Armstrong of the Bureau of Investigation, affiliated with the District Attorney's office, began to check the income and outgo of Aimee Semple, to audit meticulously the accounts, to compare and contrast statistics. Mrs. McPherson was ready to tell all she knew of the Temple's finances; was told she would be asked to talk over at the District Attorney's office had completed its investigation.

Meanwhile, Reverend John Goben, who declared last week he had tendered his resignation before Mrs. McPherson had discharged him, staunchly carried on his battle against his one-time Sister Aimee. He challenged her to deed back to local churches the property taken from them by the amended-by-laws of the Temple, offered to drop suit if she would. He prepared last week to form a new organization of Anti-Aimee Churches.

Both factions—the McPherson hordes, the Goben clique—held rallies during the week, keyed up their followers, prepared to do battle to the finish.

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