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A LIFE-SIZE RESTORATION OF THE THREE-TOED HORSE, MESOHIPPUS

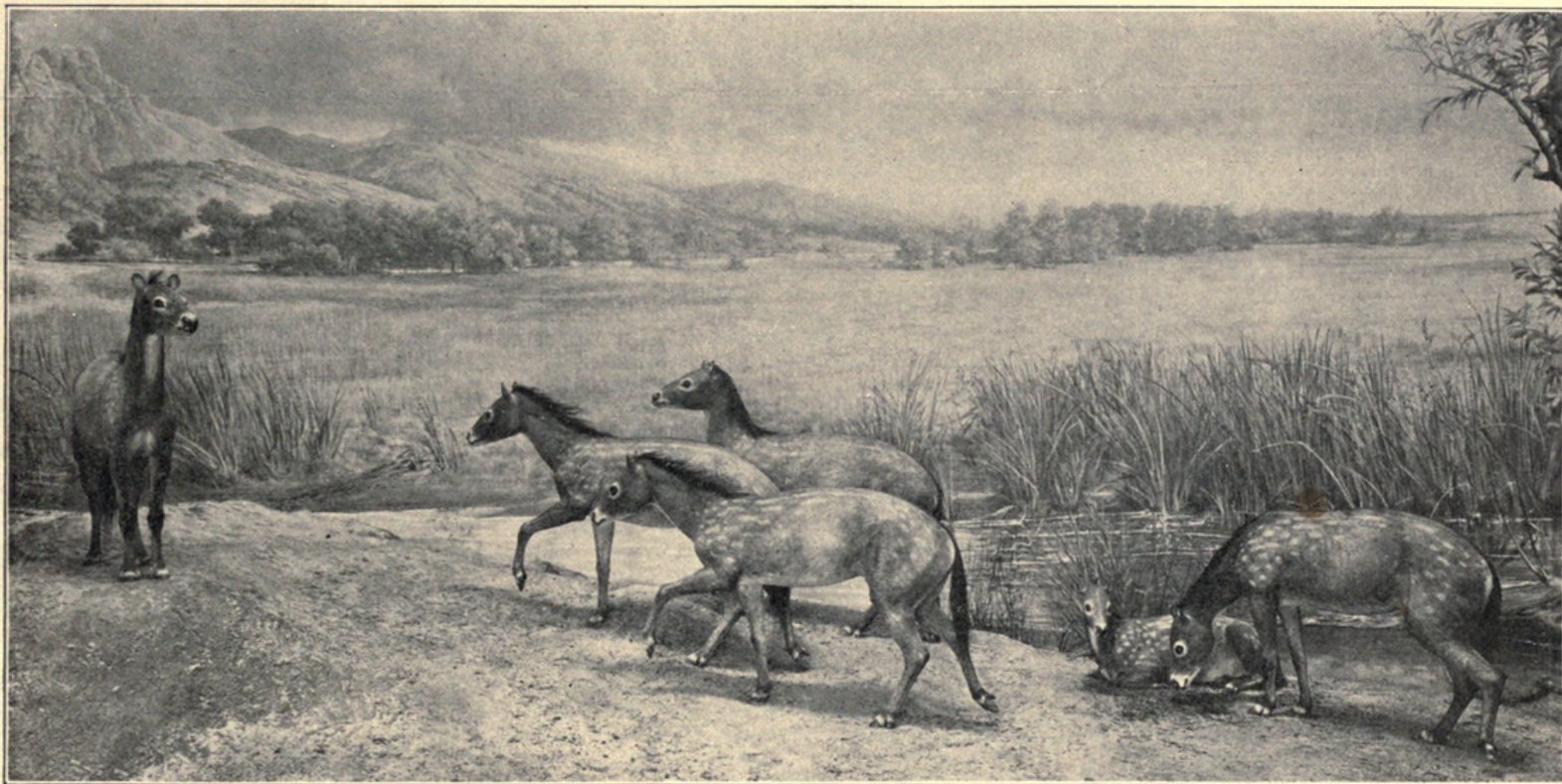
By ELMER S. RIGGS
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A life-size group, representing a species of small three-toed horses which lived in North America millions of years ago, was completed at Field Museum in July and is now on exhibition. So far as is known this is the first group restoration of extinct mammals,

and the outward markings of the animals have been reproduced for life-like effect.

The painted background, a reproduction of a scene in the Black Hills of South Dakota where these animals were fairly common in their day, is the work of Charles A. Corwin, Museum staff artist. Messrs. Blaschke and Corwin had the scientific advice and super-

Field Museum. The bones are so well preserved that they show every mark for the attachment of ligament or tendon, the outlines of every muscle, the small openings for the passage of nerves or blood vessels, and the minutest pattern and tracery of every tooth. Study of this wealth of fossil remains has made it possible to assure the utmost



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Group presented by Ernest R. Graham, now on exhibition in Hall 38. Modeling by Frederick Blaschke. Background by Charles A. Corwin.

represented as in life and in the surroundings amid which they lived, which has been produced anywhere.

The group is a gift to the Museum from Ernest R. Graham, member of the Board of Trustees, who is sponsor for a comprehensive program whereby scenes and types of life which have existed on the earth at various periods, from as far back as one and one-half billion years, are to be shown. The new group is the latest step to be executed in this program, which is now well under way in Ernest R. Graham Hall of Historical Geology.

The group was designed and modeled by Frederick Blaschke, sculptor, of Cold Spring-on-Hudson, New York, who was responsible also for the Neanderthal man group opened in Graham Hall last year. Six figures—two full-grown males, one male colt, and three mares—compose the Mesohippus group. The models are based upon a comparative study of fossil skeletons of this animal, in relation to the anatomy of modern animals. They have been faithfully prepared after profound study and consultation with a number of leading authorities on extinct animals. For the first time, the skin, hair,

vision of the Curator and other members of the staff of the Department of Geology of Field Museum during creation of the group.

Valuable assistance and cooperation were also given by Professor Henry Fairfield Osborn, president of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and Professor William Diller Matthew of the University of California. Field Museum takes this opportunity to thank these eminent authorities who are foremost among scientists conducting research in connection with extinct horses.

Mesohippus was no larger than a collie dog. He had three toes on each foot, fore and hind. Each toe bore a small hoof. The little horse fed upon leaves and fleshy plants. He was alert, keenly sensitive of eye and ear, and he ran swiftly to escape the wolf and saber-tooth tiger which preyed upon his kind.

Mesohippus is known from fossil remains found in the bad lands of Nebraska and South Dakota, and in other states. Many petrified skulls and frequently entire skeletons have been recovered, which are now preserved in various institutions including

accuracy in the construction of the Museum's Mesohippus group.

Fossil remains of a species of Mesohippus were first discovered in 1850 by Joseph Leidy, the pioneer authority on fossil animals of America. Some years later Professor O. C. Marsh, of Yale University, determined that this animal was an ancestor of the modern horse. The line of descent of the horse family was then definitely established through Mesohippus and other fossil horses belonging to earlier and later geological periods. Mesohippus became known familiarly as the "three-toed horse." Before him had lived others, smaller and less horse-like; after him came a long line of descendants, growing taller and more fleet-footed until finally came the horse as we know him.

Mesohippus lived in the Great Plains region when it was but little elevated above the level of the sea. The Rocky Mountains were then more abrupt than now. The Sierras had not yet risen high enough to cut off the moisture-laden winds from the Pacific. Plenteous rains fell upon the eastern slopes, and a most variegated (Continued on page 4)



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