

## SEWELL AVERY EXPEDITION TO EXPLORE GUATEMALA

A botanical expedition to Guatemala, sponsored by Mr. Sewell Avery, a Trustee of the Museum, recently began operations. It is being conducted by Mr. Paul C. Standley, Curator of the Herbarium, who left Chicago November 14, and sailed from New Orleans two days later.

It is planned to spend approximately five months in the field, gathering herbarium material for use in preparation of a descriptive account of the flora of Guatemala, similar to that of Costa Rica, whose publication by Field Museum is now almost completed.

Guatemala's vegetation is more varied in type than that of other Central American countries, although in number of species probably not equal to the 6,000 flowering plants found in Costa Rica. On the tops of several high volcanoes are alpine meadows in which are found northern plants such as buttercups, Indian paint-brushes, lupines, etc. The higher mountain slopes support extensive forests of pine, fir, Douglas fir, and even bald cypress, associated with willows, maples, box-elder, alders, and oaks. There are large areas of rain forest of the type that continues southward to the Amazon Valley, with the usual abundance of orchids and other epiphytes. One of the most distinctive features is the Zacapa Desert of eastern Guatemala, whose abundance of cacti of various forms rivals that of the Sonoran Desert.

Mr. Standley plans to visit as many of these regions as time permits, with the expectation of obtaining many plants new to Guatemala, and some that are quite unknown to science.

The Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Affairs has extended special courtesies to facilitate the success of the Museum expedition.

## NOTABLE ADDITIONS MADE TO CHINESE CERAMICS

By C. MARTIN WILBUR  
Curator of Chinese Archaeology and Ethnology

Pottery often serves an archaeologist in the way that "index-fossils" help the geologist, assisting the excavator to date a site or a particular stratum in it. Field Museum, in the exhibits in George T. and Frances Gaylord Smith Hall (Hall 24), attempts to present a chronological sequence of Chinese ceramics which will enable visitors to recognize pottery of different periods. A number of additions have recently been made to this ceramic series.

The most unique addition is a brown pottery jar in Case 8, about ten inches high, its body covered with a stamped design of stags or ibexes. This piece comes from the region of Loyang in Honan, and is thought to date from the third century B.C. The decoration, almost unique in Chinese pottery, bears a striking resemblance to animal motifs found on bronzes of the Sino-Scythian type. Somewhat similar jars are known only in the University Museum, Philadelphia, and in the Louvre, Paris, each of which has one.

Mortuary figurines of two guardian knights of the T'ang period (A.D. 618-906), clad in full armor and scowling with a ferocious look, have been added to Case 17. It was their function to scare evil spirits from the tomb. They are a noteworthy addition to the interesting exhibit of mortuary figurines.

Three beautiful bowls of the type known as *chiün yao*, dating from the Sung period (A.D. 960-1280), and manufactured at Chün

Chou in the present prefecture of K'ai-feng, have been installed with other Sung pottery in Case 28. They were acquired in a bequest from Mrs. Frances Gaylord Smith. Fine *chiün* ware has a thick, bubbly, opalescent glaze in many colors, with blue, red and purple predominating. The three new specimens were made to hold plant bulbs, possibly for the imperial palace, and are superb examples of this much coveted type.

Also from Mrs. Smith's bequest are 29 specimens of porcelain from the last Chinese dynasty, dating 1644-1911. Case 34 has been completely reinstalled to include these pieces, with an attempt to display each as effectively as its peculiar beauty merits. An interesting bowl, with a painted scene showing Chinese fishermen with cormorants, presented several years ago by the American Friends of China, has also been given its chronological place in this case.

## THINGS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

### The Clouded Leopard

One of the rarest, as well as one of the most beautiful, members of the cat family is the clouded leopard of southern Asia and the East Indies. Field Museum is fortunate



Rare and Beautiful

Field Museum's specimen of the clouded leopard, one of the handsomest members of the cat family.

in possessing a specimen, which is on exhibition in the systematic collection of mammals in Hall 15. Probably not more than seven or eight such specimens are to be found in all the museums of the United States, and probably not more than fifteen in the museums of the world, according to Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Chief Curator of the Department of Zoology.

The clouded leopard is very shy, and inhabits the depths of heavy forests, usually in regions difficult of access to hunters. Even in the wild its numbers are very limited. Strictly speaking, it is not a true leopard, and is somewhat smaller than the ordinary leopard. Its tawny body is marbled with black markings, in pattern very distinct from those of most of the cats, and these contribute to its handsome appearance. The dark color predominates in the animal's long heavy tail. The Museum's specimen was mounted by Staff Taxidermist W. E. Eigsti.

## TIMELY—

*Chicago Winter Birds*, by Colin Campbell Sanborn (Field Museum Zoology Leaflet No. 2). 10 cents.

*The Wild Turkey*, by John T. Zimmer (Field Museum Zoology Leaflet No. 6). 10 cents.

At THE BOOK SHOP of FIELD MUSEUM.

## UNIQUE FOSSIL SKELETON PLACED ON EXHIBITION

By ELMER S. RIGGS  
Curator of Paleontology

An almost complete skeleton of a huge prehistoric animal known as the mountain ground sloth of South America, the first of its kind to be erected in any museum, has been placed on exhibition in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38). The specimen was discovered and excavated in a mountain valley of southern Bolivia by Captain Robert M. Thorne, a member of the Second Marshall Field Paleontological Expedition to Argentina and Bolivia. The work of repairing and reassembling the bones, many of which were in fragments after having lain buried for probably a million years, was a tedious and exacting process.

The animal, which is designated by the scientific name *Pseudomegatherium lundii*, has the proportions of a bear of the most gigantic type. It had a short neck and a ponderous body set upon stout legs, and was armed with a massive tail. Its deep jaws were equipped with strong grinding teeth.

The specimen had been covered by 150 feet of accumulated clay sediments washed down from the mountain side. Weight of this mass lying above had compressed and distorted the bones. Finally, softened by rains, the clays had "crept" or slid on the sloping surface in the manner of a glacier moving down its course, partially uncovering the skeleton at the surface and thus leading to its discovery. In this process, vertebrae were broken and displaced, the flat bones of the pelvis were cracked into many pieces, and plant roots had entered and further damaged the specimen. Nevertheless, it was a practically complete skeleton with all parts more or less in place, and lacking only a few joints of the toes.

While the mountain megatherium is not the largest, it is one of the rarest species of the family of ground sloths, as is evidenced by the fact that the one in Field Museum is the only complete one known. It is also only the second skeleton of a megatherium of any species to be mounted in any North American museum. The first one, a great skeleton of the species *Megatherium americanum*, largest type known, is also on exhibition at this Museum, having been installed in 1935.

## Staff Notes

Mr. Rudyerd Boulton, Curator of Birds, during November conducted field work in southern Mississippi, near Ocean Springs. At the invitation of Messrs. James R. Leavell and Carl A. Birdsall, of Chicago, owners of a large tract of wilderness land in this region, he participated in a preliminary natural history survey to determine the possibilities for conservation projects and special zoological studies. In connection with this, he made small collections needed for special purposes by the Museum.

Mr. C. Martin Wilbur, Curator of Chinese Archaeology and Ethnology, recently spent a month making a survey of Chinese collections in eastern museums. Among cities in whose institutions he conducted research are Detroit, Toronto, Buffalo, Boston, Cambridge, New Haven, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Cleveland.

A unique collection of raffia cloths from Madagascar, decorated with elaborate designs made by the warp-dyeing process, is exhibited in Hall E.





Riggs, Elmer S. 1938. "Unique Fossil Skeleton Placed on Exhibition." *Field Museum news* 9(12), 3-3.

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