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THE WHITE RHINOCEROS

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The white rhinoceros is a strange animal. To begin with, it is not white and, so far as anyone knows, it never has been white. Yet white is its name and about all that can be said in explanation is that the early Dutch settlers of South Africa are probably responsible for it. They found two kinds of rhinos on the veldt, one of which they called the white and the other the black, although the difference in color between the two is rather slight.

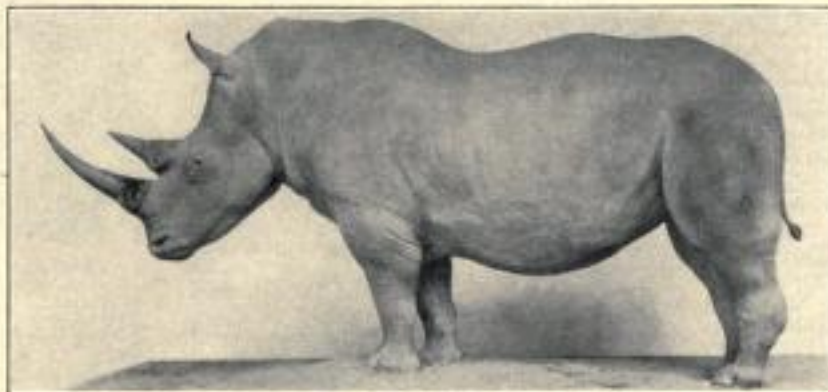
Although closely approached by the Indian one-horned species, the white rhino is the largest of living rhinoceroses. With the exception of the elephants, therefore, it is the largest existing land mammal. Its very long head gives it a grotesque appearance, and it might well pass as some fanciful or long-extinct beast.

It is, in fact, well on the way to extinction, and if some untoward circumstance should arise, it might easily disappear in a decade. In South Africa, where it was once very abundant, it is reduced to a "mere handful," scarcely more than a dozen animals living on a private estate in Zululand. In Central Africa west of the Nile, mainly in Belgian and Sudanese territory, a small colony remains in the wild state under some legal protection, but it is quite limited and its fate is uncertain. Elsewhere it is gone, although smaller black rhinos are still common enough to furnish a thrill to nearly every hunting party that goes to Africa.

Unlike the black rhino, which is noted for its furious charges, the white or square-lipped species does not menace the hunter except upon extreme provocation and, in general, it is rather stupid and inoffensive. Its habits may have contributed to its diminution but, at least, this cannot be laid at the door of the sportsman, for it took place mostly in pioneer days before Africa was overrun with tourists and seekers of pure sport.

The white rhino which has just been installed in Field Museum is unquestionably one of the finest zoological preparations ever produced in the Museum. It is the latest result of Taxidermist Leon L. Walters' "celluloid process," and illustrates an important advantage this process has, quite aside from the matter of technique in faithfully portraying nature. This is the opportunity it provides, in the case of a very rare or valuable animal, of producing a satisfactory exhibit and, at the same time, of preserving a specimen in the reference collection, available for years to come for close examination

by students and investigators. Although the skin of the animal is used in making the exhibit, and its every detail is recorded with almost microscopic accuracy, the skin itself does not go into the exhibit but may be preserved separately in a closed case guarded against deterioration. This matters but little with common and easily replaceable animals, but with rare ones, like the white rhino, which will soon be unobtainable, it is, of course, of the highest importance.



White Rhinoceros
Now on exhibition in Hall 15

The specimen used in the preparation of this exhibit was obtained by H. B. Conover, R. H. Everard, and J. T. Zimmer during the Conover-Everard African Expedition of 1926-27. Field Museum is greatly indebted to British officials whose permission to take the specimen was courteously granted.

Reinstallation Progresses

Reinstallation of the exhibits illustrating the lives of the Indians of the Great Plains, in Hall 5, has been completed, and similar work is progressing not only in other sections of the Department of Anthropology, but also in the Departments of Botany, Geology and Zoology.

Three cases of new and reinstalled material relating to the Apaches of Arizona has been added to the exhibits in Hall 7. Included are buckskin sashes warranted to cure sickness, bring rain, make the wearer invisible and screen him from missiles of an enemy, and perform other miracles.

Important Botanical Collection

The Department of Botany of Field Museum has completed the determination of several thousand specimens of plants sent by the Botanical Museum of Copenhagen for this purpose. The collection, according to Associate Curator Paul C. Standley, is a remarkable one, made ninety years ago in Mexico and Central America by two of the earliest botanists to visit the region. The collectors never named the plants in the collection, and they had remained thus unidentified until the present time. Field Museum will receive a set of the plants which are represented.

NEW METEORITE ACQUIRED

Field Museum is now the possessor of the largest single meteoric stone ever seen to fall. This messenger from space arrived on the earth February 17, 1930, at 4:05 A.M. It fell at Paragould, Arkansas, on a farm owned by Joe H. Fletcher. The stone as received at the Museum weighs 745 pounds, being 100 pounds heavier than any previously recorded meteorite which was seen to fall. The original claim of the finder was 820

pounds, but part was lost to souvenir hunters and through other causes. In falling it penetrated hard clay to a depth of nine feet. The largest stone previously known which was seen to fall from a meteor weighs 646 pounds. This fell at Knyahinya, Hungary, June 9, 1866, at 5 P.M. It penetrated the earth to a depth of eleven feet. It is now in the Vienna Museum. The meteor which brought the stone now in Field Museum attracted attention in three states, Missouri, Illinois and Arkansas. Its light was so bright that persons in St. Louis who saw it thought it was an airplane going down in flames. It burst with detonations which were heard as far north as Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and as far east as Covington, Tennessee. The meteor came from the southwest. At Paragould nearly every one in the town was awakened by the detonations, and live stock was stampeded.

A small stone weighing eighty pounds, which fell at the same time, was discovered the next day at a point three miles distant, by a farmer who noticed earth freshly thrown for a distance of thirty feet. The stone had also made a furrow in the soil in a northeast direction. This stone was found at a depth of thirty-four inches. Finding of this stone led to a search for others and a month later, on March 16, the large mass, which weighed 820 pounds, was discovered.

The meteorite was purchased and presented to the Museum by President Stanley Field.

(Photograph on page 3)

Egyptian Pottery Lamps

Pottery lamps and jars representing the Roman period in Egypt (from about the second to fourth century A.D.) have been placed on exhibition in Hall J. Most of the lamps have single burners, but one with two and one with eight are exhibited also. Some of the lamps are of thin, hard polished ware, and are impressed with scenes from classical mythology. On others there is depicted a frog or a "frog-and-grain" design. In ancient Egypt the frog symbolized Heket, goddess of birth, while grain was associated with Osiris as an emblem of reawakening life, according to Dr. T. George Allen.