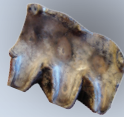


Discovered Here in Tualatin

In the 1870s, Tualatin pioneers discovered a huge jawbone while digging a drainage ditch. The curious settlers sent the jaw to the Smithsonian Institution, where scientists examined it and declared it came from a “prehistoric creature.”



Most of the skeleton remained buried in the muck for the next several decades, until town marshal Charles Roberts unearthed part of a rib and a huge tooth—which he used as a doorstop.



In 1962, Tualatin resident John George was looking for a project for his Portland State College geology class. Remembering Marshal Roberts’ unusual doorstop, which he’d admired as a boy, George announced that he would “dig up a mastodon.” Together with friends Ron and Gordon Sund, George spent a month digging the bones from the swampy area near Nyberg Road where Roberts had found the tooth and rib. When they were done, they had nearly half of a skeleton: two legs, a spine, many ribs, skull fragments, molars, and a tusk.

For years, the skeleton was on display at Portland State College. In 1969, Tualatin City Administrator Yvonne Addington visited the college. Noticing the display was labeled “Tigard Mastodon,” she demanded a correction. To her surprise, the college offered to give the skeleton to the city. She accepted.

It would take several more decades, however, for the Tualatin Mastodon to go public again. The crated bones spent years in storage at a City maintenance building—and took a brief sojourn to the Portland Zoo. In 1996, the Tualatin Historical Society, along with a dedicated group of residents and businesses, raised the money to have the bones cleaned and restored by Eugene paleontologist Robert Linder and put on display. Today, the Tualatin Mastodon stands once again, near the swamp where her bones rested for so many centuries.

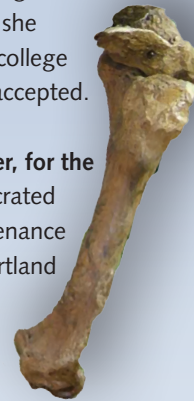
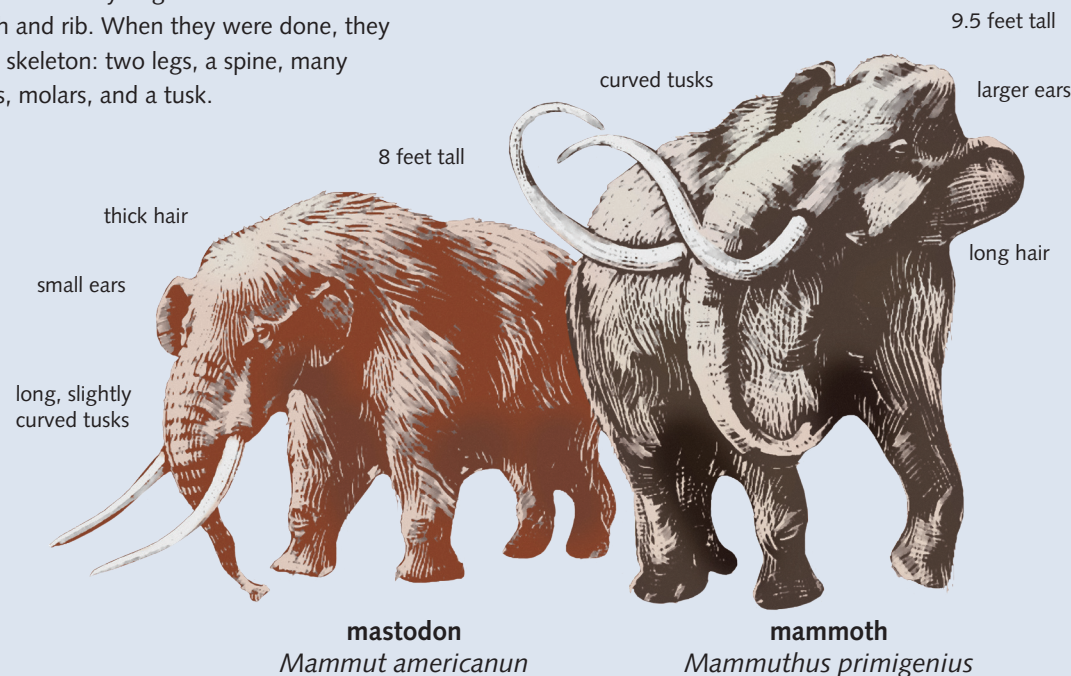


Photo courtesy of the Illinois State Museum, by Robert G. Larson.

When Mastodons Roamed

Around 14,000 years ago, (when the Tualatin mastodon was alive) the area was a land of small hills with open evergreen forests, meadows, and wetlands. Just north of Mt. Rainier in Washington, stretched a huge glacier, thousands of feet thick and thousands of miles wide.

Through that chilly world, the mastodon walked, munching leaves and twigs, avoiding predators such as dire wolves and scimitar cats. Although we don’t know for sure how she died, scientists speculate from where her bones were found that she may have drowned in a bog.



Mastodons and mammoths were both members of the elephant family, but they were very different creatures. Mastodons were primarily woodland browsers, feeding on shrubs and trees. Mammoths were open-country grazers. Both mastodons and mammoths died out in North America around 10,000 years ago.

Illustration courtesy of the museum of Natural History, Department of Library Services Neg. No. 32040.

The huge bones of the mastodon skeleton are on display at the Tualatin Library. The mastodon, now extinct, was once common in North America. The 14,000 year-old bones of this large mammal were discovered by Tualatin residents just a short distance from the Library.



Tualatin Public Library
18878 SW Martinazzi
Tualatin, OR 97062

Information Desk
503-691-3071

www.TualatinLibrary.org



City of Tualatin



The Tualatin Historical Society has led the effort to preserve, display, and interpret the Tualatin mastodon.



Printed on recycled paper.

The Tualatin Mastodon

Sometimes, *strange* and *surprising* things are buried in your own backyard!



George (left) and Sund (right) received 'A' grades for their colossal class project.

