

ANCIENT LIFE IN KENTUCKY

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*The
Kentucky Geological
Survey*

WILLARD ROUSE JILLSON
DIRECTOR and STATE GEOLOGIST



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*Ancient Life In
Kentucky*

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AN EARLY KENTUCKIAN

ANCIENT LIFE IN KENTUCKY

A Brief Presentation of the Paleontological Succession in Kentucky
Coupled with a Systematic Outline of the Archaeology
of the Commonwealth.



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*Illustrated with One Hundred and Seventy-six Original Photographs,
Maps and Diagrams.*

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DEDICATED
TO
PROFESSOR ARTHUR McQUISTON MILLER
whose sound scholarship and kindly
interest furnished the incentive and inspiration for
the work reported in this volume.

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Letter of Transmission

Dr. W. R. Jillson, Director
Kentucky Geological Survey,
Frankfort, Kentucky.

Dear Sir:

We beg to transmit herewith illustrated manuscript report on, "Ancient Life in Kentucky," as requested and outlined by you.

This report attempts to survey briefly the prehistoric life of that part of the Mississippi Valley which is now this Commonwealth and to present a statement of the research completed to date on Kentucky archaeology.

The authors are together responsible for the study since collaboration was carried out in all parts of the report.

Respectfully submitted,

W. D. FUNKHOUSER,
W. S. WEBB.

University of Kentucky
Lexington, Ky., July 1, 1927.

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ANCIENT LIFE IN KENTUCKY

INTRODUCTION

The State of Kentucky is extremely rich in paleontological and archaeological material and has furnished many of the most valued of the specimens which are on display in the great museums both of the United States and of Europe.

There are several reasons why Kentucky is able to present this wealth of material. In the first place, the State as a whole was not disturbed by glacial erosion and in general the superficial strata have suffered little change since preglacial times. Again, the State is extremely rich in caves, some of them of enormous size, and these caves from time immemorial have been the homes of animals and of man whose remains, covered with deposits of soil and rock, have been but slightly disturbed if at all. Moreover, many of the caves are of the so-called "saltpeter" type and this chemical seems to be a natural preservative of organic material. But most important of all, the caves are often filled with stalagmitic formations which, if they happen to enclose an ancient skeleton or other prehistoric object, preserve it in a most efficient fashion.

It seems, in fact, not unreasonable to suppose that if evidences of ancient man, comparable to the famous types which have been discovered in the caves of France and Belgium, are to be found in the Western Hemisphere they should be found in Kentucky where so many similar conditions obtain—the distance from the glacial drift, the climate, the approximate latitude and the abundance of limestone caves with southern exposures. Indeed, Kentucky is unusually well supplied with evidences of early human occupation. Mounds, fortifications, graves, rock-houses and ceremonial structures are abundant in practically all parts of the State.

Yet, except in the field of Geology, there has been made almost no attempt to uncover the valuable accumulations which might add so much to the knowledge of various departments of science. Geologists for many years have collected fossils in Kentucky, some of the species represented being unique and many of the formations being of unusual interest.

In the field of Paleontology, Big Bone Lick has supplied the world with Pleistocene mammal material. As early as 1795 General William Henry Harrison made a collection of such material, including a four-horse wagon load of mastodon teeth alone. Later, about 1800, Dr. Samuel Goforth of Cincinnati made an even greater collection which was eventually secured by the College of Surgeons in London. In 1805 President Thomas Jefferson secured another large collection in Kentucky, part of which went to the Philadelphia Academy of Science and part to the Paris museum.

Of equal importance are the Indian relics which have been found in this State. Choice artifacts with Kentucky labels are to be found in museums throughout the world and particular specimens from such regions as the famous "Fox Fields" and "Indian Knoll" are nationally known.

It is most unfortunate, however, that practically all of this valuable material has been taken from the State, and Kentucky, after having supplied the world, has no great public collection within her own borders. It is believed that the apparent lack of interest in these subjects has been due largely to the fact that few persons have had their attention called to the possibilities offered in investigation and study along these lines. The study of this ancient life affords a fascinating field but little research work has been done in this State on some of the most interesting of the problems.

The object of this brief report, therefore, is to record some of the information already secured and to stimulate if possible further work in paleontology and archaeology in Kentucky.

This report is written for the layman. Technical terms have been avoided and an endeavor has been made to tell something of the Ancient Life of Kentucky in as simple and concise a fashion as possible with no attempt to introduce original ideas or philosophical discussions.