

Wooly Mammoth Fossils Found At Quarry Site

Fossilized remains of a prehistoric mammoth, a huge hairy elephant which ranged through what is now Santa Cruz County, have been unearthed by workmen in an excavation project connected with Highway 1 freeway construction between Aptos and Watsonville.

The fossils were discovered at a quarry site near the county dump off Buena Vista Road.

The fragments, discovered by Bill Hatch and Bob McDonald of

Granite Construction Co., the freeway contractor, are thought to date from the end of the Pleistocene epoch, some 15,000 to 25,000 years ago.

William Miller, Soquel High School science instructor now on leave at the Moss Landing Marine Institute, tentatively has identified the fossilized bone parts as those of an animal commonly known as the Wooly Mammoth. The mammoth, now extinct, was one of two lines of elephant - like animals, Miller explained. The other, the mastadons, evolved into the present - day elephant.

The fragments, a 10 - pound, 18 - inch section of tusk, a 10 - pound tooth and a smaller tooth fragment, were found at a level some 75 feet below the surface. The major fragments are true fossils — rock - like material molded to the precise contours of the decayed bone. However, one small jaw - bone piece — which fits one of the tooth fragments — is actual bone.

Miller believes the bone particles were washed to their discovery site by a river long after the mammoth was dead. He said it is unlikely that further remains will be found there.

Glenn Dorey, Granite vice president, confirmed that the Buena Vista quarry site has been in use some 10 to 15 years and this is the first fossil discovery at the location.

Dorey now has the fossil



Glenn Dorey, vice president of Granite Construction Co., holds a 10 - pound fossilized tooth, one of the bone fragments of a prehistoric mammoth unearthed by his company during a quarrying operation near Wat-

sonville. In the foreground is another tooth fossil. Farthest from the camera is an 18 - inch section of the tusk of the huge beast which roamed what is now Santa Cruz County some 15,000 to 25,000 years ago.

remains in his office, but noted they have been donated to the county museum.

The American Mammoth was perhaps the largest of all elephants, Miller observed, attaining heights up to 14 feet. Their tusks were as long as 11 feet, but Miller thinks the fragment from the Buena Vista find

was part of a tusk only some six feet long.

Dorey said Granite has uncovered a number of fossils during its construction activities and made a find of mammoth remains similar to the latest one some 18 years ago during Highway 17 construction near San Jose.