

Dig In *To Local History*



Montgomery County Illinois' historic legacy pre-dates human accomplishments ranging from contemporary Ultimate Fighting Champions to Abe Lincoln's stops in the county during his journeys. Montgomery County, Illinois is the farthest north location in the world that has documented remains of Ice Age giant tortoise — *Hesperotestudo crassicutata* to be exact. The giant tortoise remains date back to approximately 124,000 years ago during the last interglacial warming period. 30,000 years later, mastodonts roamed the area.

At least one decided to stick around as evidence in this photo shows. Vertical view (taken from present day surface onto the excavation floor) of Clark Hood excavating part of the pelvis of the Hopwood Farm mastodont. Note that the bones occur in depressions in the whitish marl, just beneath the gray clay.



This close-up of a 2" paint brush centered in a depression of whitish marl after the gray clay has been re-

moved shows a circular basin of size and shape reminiscent of disturbance of wet ground by African elephants, and is interpreted the same way for mastodonts at Hopwood Farm north of Fillmore in Montgomery County — 97,000 years ago.

A close-up view of the incisor of a giant beaver, *Castoroides ohioensis*, in place in the gray clay at the Hopwood Farm locality, May 28, 1980.

It was found by Dr. Hilt Johnson, and is now in the collections of the Illinois State Museum, Springfield.

Because the fossil occurs in the gray clay above the gray clay/marl contact which is the location of the mastodont skeleton, the giant beaver tooth is younger than the mastodont bones.

Similarly because the remains of giant tortoises found at Hopwood Farm occur within and beneath the whitish gray marl, they are interpreted as older than the mastodont skeleton from the same locality

