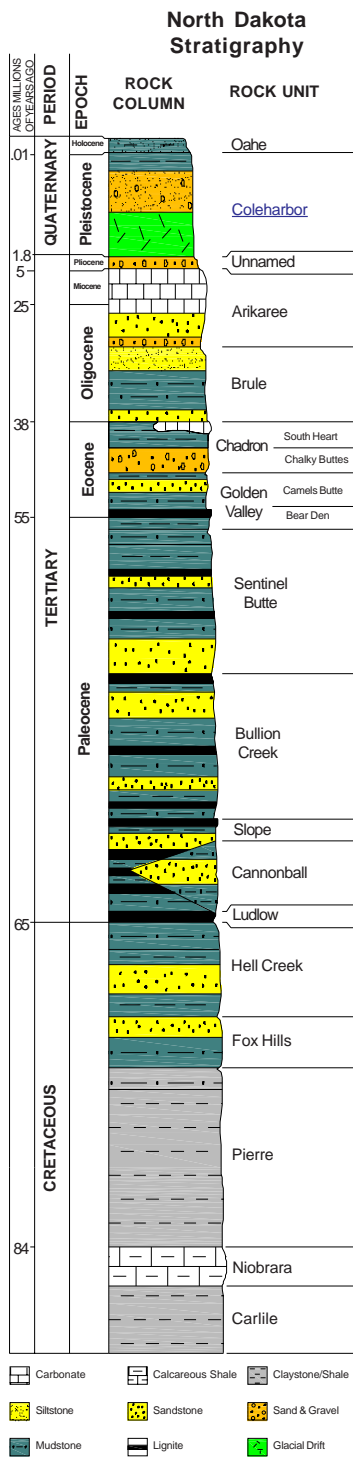


Mammuthus primigenius



Common Name:
Woolly Mammoth

Classification:
Class: Mammalia
Order: Proboscidea
Family: Elephantidae



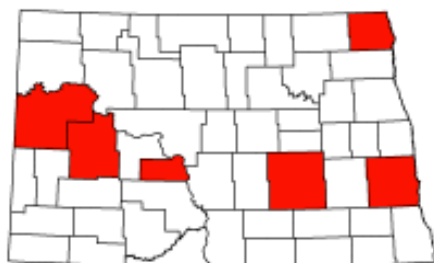
Tooth of the woolly mammoth, *Mammuthus primigenius* about 11,000 years old. Oliver County. Length 332 mm. Tooth is in the collection of the State Historical Society of North Dakota and is on exhibit at the North Dakota Heritage Center in Bismarck.

Description:

Mammuthus primigenius, or woolly mammoth, is in the same family as modern elephants. It was relatively small for a mammoth growing to heights of about 9 feet. Like today's elephants, the upper incisors of woolly mammoths were greatly elongated to form tusks. These tusks were used to dig up roots, debark trees, and for fighting. Woolly mammoth teeth were huge and flattened and were used for grinding vegetation. It was mostly a grass eater. Woolly mammoths had thick coats of shaggy, black hair for insulation in the cold, Ice Age, tundra climate. They also had an undercoat of fine hair and a layer of fat to help stay warm. A lot is known about the anatomy of woolly mammoths because frozen carcasses of these animals have been found in Siberia. Paleo-Indians hunted them for food and clothing. Early people painted and etched images of woolly mammoths on cave walls in France and Spain. They became extinct about 10,000 years ago at the end of the Ice Age except for a small group on an Arctic island that survived until about 6,000 years ago.



Mammuthus primigenius. Painting by and courtesy of Dorothy S. Norton.



Locations where fossils have been found