
RECENT FOSSIL DONATIONS TO THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE FOSSIL COLLECTION

By John W. Hoganson

Important fossils are often discovered in North Dakota and reported to the North Dakota Geological Survey by amateur collectors, ranchers, farmers, hunters, and others. Many of these fossils are donated to the state to be incorporated into the North Dakota State Fossil Collection at the Heritage Center in Bismarck, to be taken care of by the NDGS for perpetuity. One example would be the claw of the Ice Age ground sloth, *Megalonyx jeffersonii*, found by Linda and Doug Vannurden of Mandan. Greg McDonald and I described this fossil in a recent issue of the Journal of Mammalogy and it is now on exhibit in the Heritage Center. Fossils of *Megalonyx jeffersonii* had not been found in North Dakota before. In this and future issues of the NDGS Newsletter I will identify fossils donated to the State Fossil Collection and acknowledge the donors of significant fossils.

Like so many of us who end up becoming geologists, Kyle Staskywicz, a grade school student, found an interesting rock in the back yard of his Kenmare home and dug it up. He broke the rock open and found it was full of fossils. Kyle

contacted Brett Woodward, our paleontology laboratory specialist, to learn about what he had found. The rock is a concretion from the Cretaceous Pierre Formation that contains several *Inoceramus* fossils. *Inoceramus* is a bivalve (clam) that inhabited the shallow, warm water Pierre Sea that covered North Dakota about 80 million years ago. It is unusual to find Pierre Formation concretions in Ward County. Who knows, maybe someday Kyle will become a geologist.

Gordon Kucera, now retired, was a gravel pit operator for many years and found a mammoth tooth in a pit near New Hradec, Dunn County, in the 1960s. For many years Gordon took the tooth to schools to show children the fossil. Recently, Gordon and his wife Florence, who now live in Bismarck, brought the tooth to the Heritage Center and donated it to us. Mammoths roamed many areas of North Dakota at the end of the Ice Age about 12,000 years ago and their fossil remains are at times found in glacial outwash gravels and ancient beach ridges. Only one other mammoth tooth has been found in Dunn County.



Kyle Staskywicz with Pierre Formation concretion containing *Inoceramus* fossils.



Florence and Gordon Kucera with mammoth tooth.