



Stovall's Mammoth: Together Again

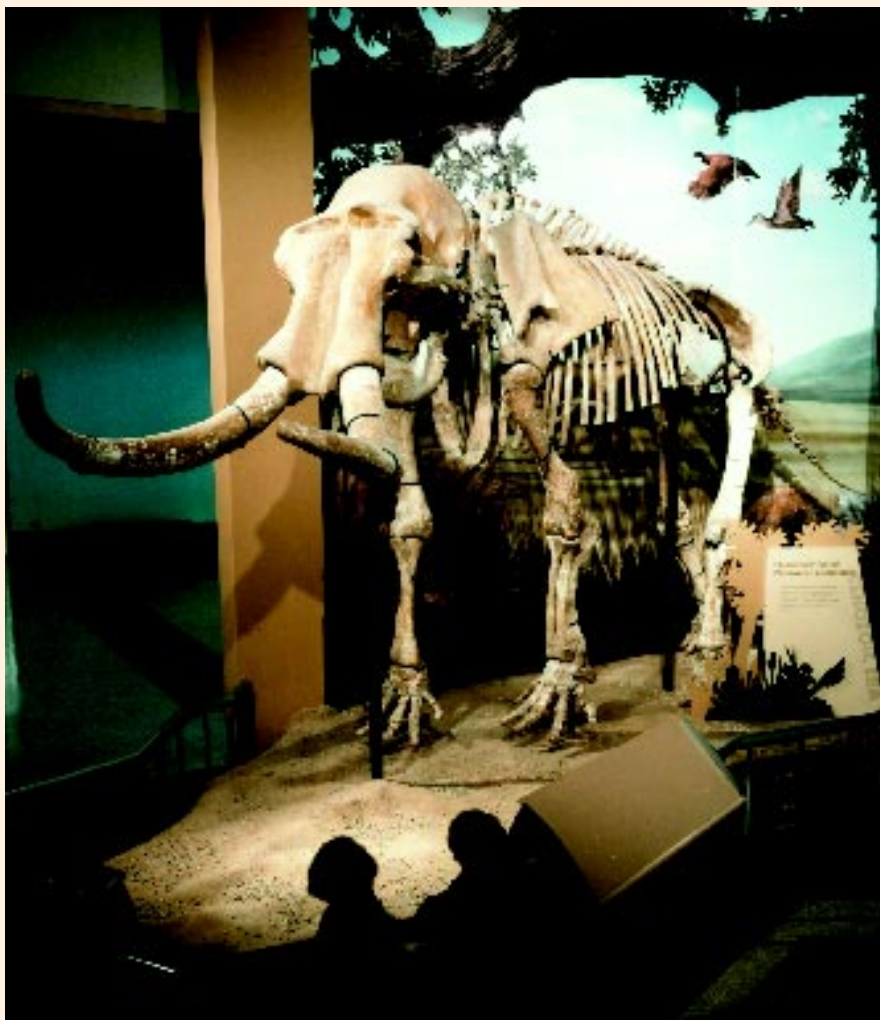
Keeping one's head when others are losing theirs is a maxim worth following, but one that has been nigh onto impossible for the old Stovall Museum's Columbian Mammoth—until now.

For some 12,000 years, the prehistoric giant's scattered remains lay buried where he fell in Jackson County. Unearthed by OU paleontologist J. Willis Stovall in 1931, the mammoth's skeleton later became the centerpiece for the OU natural history museum named for its discoverer. But museum director Stovall had a problem. Since the museum's ceiling was too low to accommodate the mammoth's own skull, the skull of a smaller specimen had to be substituted. In the late 1980s, a proper-size skull was taken from storage and displayed at the mammoth's feet.

Today, visitors to the spacious Hall of Ancient Life in the new Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History are greeted by their old friend—the Columbian Mammoth, wearing his own head.

A similar heady problem existed around the corner from the mammoth exhibit, where the *Apatosaurus* skeleton, the larger combatant in the Clash of the Titans, was topped by a head much too small for his body. In June 2001, fossil preparators were able to replace the inappropriate head with a cast of suitable size from one of only two existing *Apatosaurus* skulls in the world.

Sanford Mauldin



TOP: After 70 years Stovall's Columbian Mammoth is finally reunited with its proper head in the SNOMNH Hall of Ancient Life.

LEFT: In the 1980s an adult skull was removed from storage and placed beside the Columbian Mammoth, which had been forced to wear a juvenile skull in the cramped confines of the old Stovall Museum.



Robert Taylor

ABOVE: The new, larger *Apatosaurus* skull gives a grin of approval as it takes its place in the Clash of the Titans exhibit.