

## Greene County Gleanings

By Raymond Beecher

Over the last three decades local residents have occasionally found and brought in rock formations for identification. Some resemble human faces or, even more specifically, anatomical parts of the human body. One such find might well have come from the Cardiff Giant hoax itself. Most turn out to be a quirk of nature from the early periods of the earth's formation while a few could be fossils.

From colonial times, as the land was settled, gigantic mastodon teeth and bones have surfaced with scientists labeling the middle and lower sections of the Hudson Valley as prime regions for such discoveries due to its prehistoric topography and vegetational growth. If there are any such mastodonic remains in Greene County's subsoil, they are still waiting to be discovered. We are not as fortunate as neighboring Ulster County in that regard.

In the late summer of the year 1845 the mid-Hudson Valley was stricken with one of the severest droughts ever experienced. Bogs, ponds and springs were drying up at unprecedented rates. At the same time, while reducing crop growth, it provided farmers with an unprecedented opportunity to secure tons of lacustrine (stratified silt and peat deposits) to spread over adjacent acres. Farmer N. Brewster was no exception. His bog was dry for the first time anyone could recall and he used the opportunity to dig and spread the free fertilizer.

It was during this digging of his dried bog that his hired farm workers first hit what they thought was a large rock or log but soon discovered to be an immense bone. Cautious digging next revealed a massive skull and long white tusks. What Brewster and his men had discovered in his near Kingston bog was an almost perfect skeleton of a mammal of the genus Mammut that flourished from the Miocene through the Pleistocene epochs.

As might be expected, the rumors spread and the crowds gathered. To Mr. Brewster's credit, he continued about his business, not even taking advantage of the public's curiosity by charging a viewing fee. Slowly and carefully, by means of poles and tackle, the mastodon gigantus was raised from its ancient bog bed. It was finally concluded the prehistoric mammal had been mired while attempting to cross the then much larger and deeper bog. Beneath the pelvic bones were even found several bushel of twigs which were apparently meant for a meal.

The skeletal remains appear to have eventually reached the private Boston museum maintained by Dr. John Warren. It was his hobby to develop an extensive collection of such specimens. Any financial arrangements between Dr. Warren and Mr. Brewster remained confidential. Twenty-nine years later, the story of this find would be a feature article by H. Butterworth appearing in the May 1874 issue of "The Popular Science Monthly." To date this columnist has not located any original newspaper story; he seeks the help of readers who may have more details, Mr. Butterworth's article being skimpy on details.

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