



More than a Fossil-Hunter:

The Life and Pursuits of Charles W. Beehler

BY R. BRUCE MCMILLAN

In the decade preceding the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, a St. Louis native of German descent became well known for his discovery of mastodon remains and other fossils he excavated from the legendary Kimmswick “bone-bed” in Jefferson County, Missouri. C. W. Beehler spent the dawn of the twentieth century amassing a large collection of fossils that he housed in a small frame building at the site along Rock Creek, which he referred to as a museum. Beehler promoted his enterprise in St. Louis, and as the World’s Fair approached he arranged for day trips by train from St. Louis for people to view his excavations and large collection of fossils. As word of his endeavor reached learned individuals around the country, including scientists in the hallowed halls of the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, Beehler became well enough known that he was guaranteed a place in the region’s history.¹ But Beehler was far more than a fossil collector or amateur paleontologist. His story begins much earlier in this bustling riverfront community of the mid-nineteenth century.

Charles William Beehler (1844–1914) was born to Francis and Catherine Beehler in St. Louis on April 4, 1844, the eldest of six children, including four sisters (Mary, Catharine, Sophia, Louisa) and a brother (Francis), the latter named after his father. His family called him William, but as an adult he preferred to use his initials and thereafter went by the name of C. W. Beehler. Both of his parents were German immigrants, his father listing Baden and his mother Prussia as their homelands.² C. W. Beehler’s father was a successful business entrepreneur,

an upholsterer and mattress maker by trade, catering to the needs of steamboats and hotels from his business near the riverfront on north Second Street.³ The Beehler residence was situated three blocks away on Fifth Street.

When C. W. Beehler was seven years old a massive fire (June 19, 1851) destroyed the block of buildings on Second Street owned by his father, a loss estimated at \$45,000. The buildings housed Francis Beehler’s mattress factory and a furniture store owned by W. H. Harlow. Only a fraction of the loss—\$5,000—was covered by insurance.⁴ Ironically, soon afterward Francis Beehler became a board member of the St. Louis Mutual Life and Health Insurance Company.⁵ After the fire Francis Beehler moved his business a block south to 78 North Second Street where he reopened his mattress and upholstery company.

Prior to 1850 C. W. Beehler’s father began investing in land that he purchased from the General Land Office of the United States, government land made available through the 1820 Act of Congress that provided for the sale of public lands. The real estate he acquired was in Jefferson County south of St. Louis. He acquired three contiguous parcels in 1848–49 on Joachim Creek northwest of Festus that totaled 107.25 acres, and he later purchased 212.5 acres in partnership with an individual identified as John James. This latter acreage was located in western Jefferson County near La Barque Creek about three miles south of the Meramec River. There was a hiatus in his land acquisition of a few years while Francis Beehler recovered from his loss sustained from the fire, but by 1857 he had sufficiently recovered to purchase 240 acres adjacent to

C. W. Beehler posing with mastodon bones at the Kimmswick bone-bed. (Image: George Stark, Missouri History Museum)

52 ST. LOUIS BUSINESS DIRECTORY.

JOHN BRAUN,
MUSICIAN AND INSTRUMENT MAKER,
 No. 160 North Sixth Street,
 ONE DOOR FROM FRANKLIN AVENUE,
ST. LOUIS, MO.
 Violin repairing done with neatness and dispatch. All orders for Parties and Balls attended to.

A. BERNSTEIN,
 IMPORTER OF
HAVANA CIGARS,
 And Dealer in
MEERSCHAUM PIPES,
 No. 44 FOURTH STREET, under Planters House,
ST. LOUIS, MO.

FRANCIS BEEHLER,
UPHOLSTERER,
 No. 78 NORTH SECOND STREET,
 Between Olive and Locust, opposite the Monroe House,
ST. LOUIS, MO.
 Steamboats and Hotels furnished in the best manner, cheap for cash. Feather Beds, Hair, Moss, Shock and Spring Mattresses, constantly on hand or made to order. Carpets and Oil-Cloths cut and made, Beds and Mattresses refilled, Chairs and Sofas repaired at short notice. Families supplied cheaper than any other house in St. Louis.

GEORGE BAYHA. CHARLES BAYHA.
G. & C. BAYHA,
Packers of Pork & Beef,
 AND
PROVISION DEALERS,
 Nos. 291 & 293 South Second St.,
ST. LOUIS, MO.

Page from the *St. Louis Business Directory* advertising Francis Beehler's upholstery business on N. Second Street in St. Louis.

the parcels he already owned on Joachim Creek. As a boy, Charles would have had the opportunity to become familiar with Jefferson County, a region that became important to him later in life when he explored the fossil beds around the mineral spring at Kimmswick.

St. Louis tax records reveal that in 1861 Beehler's father's holdings were assessed at \$68,290, earning Francis Beehler an entry on a roster of firms and persons with assessments exceeding \$9,000—an exclusive list advertised as including only the names of the “solid men” of St. Louis.⁶ Thus, Beehler grew up in a financially secure home, but little else is known about his childhood. Records at St. Louis University document that he was enrolled as a student in a boarding school operated by the

university in 1851–52 when he was seven years old, one of 218 registered students.⁷ The older students had been separated from the younger students four years earlier and assigned distinct playgrounds, dining rooms, and study halls.⁸ There is no evidence that Beehler attended the boarding school for more than the one year, but a half century later (1904) the university proudly listed him as a former student whom they revealed “is the fortunate possessor of the famous antediluvian bone deposit at Kimmswick, Mo, from which the celebrated mastodon now in the British Museum was taken.”⁹

By the time Beehler had reached 18 years of age, he was working as a clerk, although his place of employment was not identified.¹⁰ With the onset of the Civil War, little is known about his activities. His father volunteered for the Missouri Militia with loyalties to the Union Army. Francis Beehler enrolled in September 1862 and was ordered to active service seven months later on April 24, 1863. He was discharged a month later from active duty when he was declared exempt for being over age. The question is did his eldest son, Charles W., follow him into service to defend the Union? Perhaps not, since the 1864 *St. Louis*

Advertisement for the U.S. Box Lock Company that appeared in the monthly trade journal *Packages*, a periodical published in Milwaukee. Beehler's company advertised regularly in *Packages* and a second trade journal, *Barrel and Box*, published in Chicago.

Beehler Box Lock. Patented April 19, 1887, and Dec. 15, 1903.

Climax Box Lock. Patented.

A. B. Inside Box Lock. Patented Oct. 27, 1903.

OVER 10,000,000 OF OUR BOX LOCKS AND HINGES
 Are Used by the Largest Bottlers in the United States.

U. S. BOX LOCK CO.
 1540-44 Blair Ave., ST. LOUIS, MO.

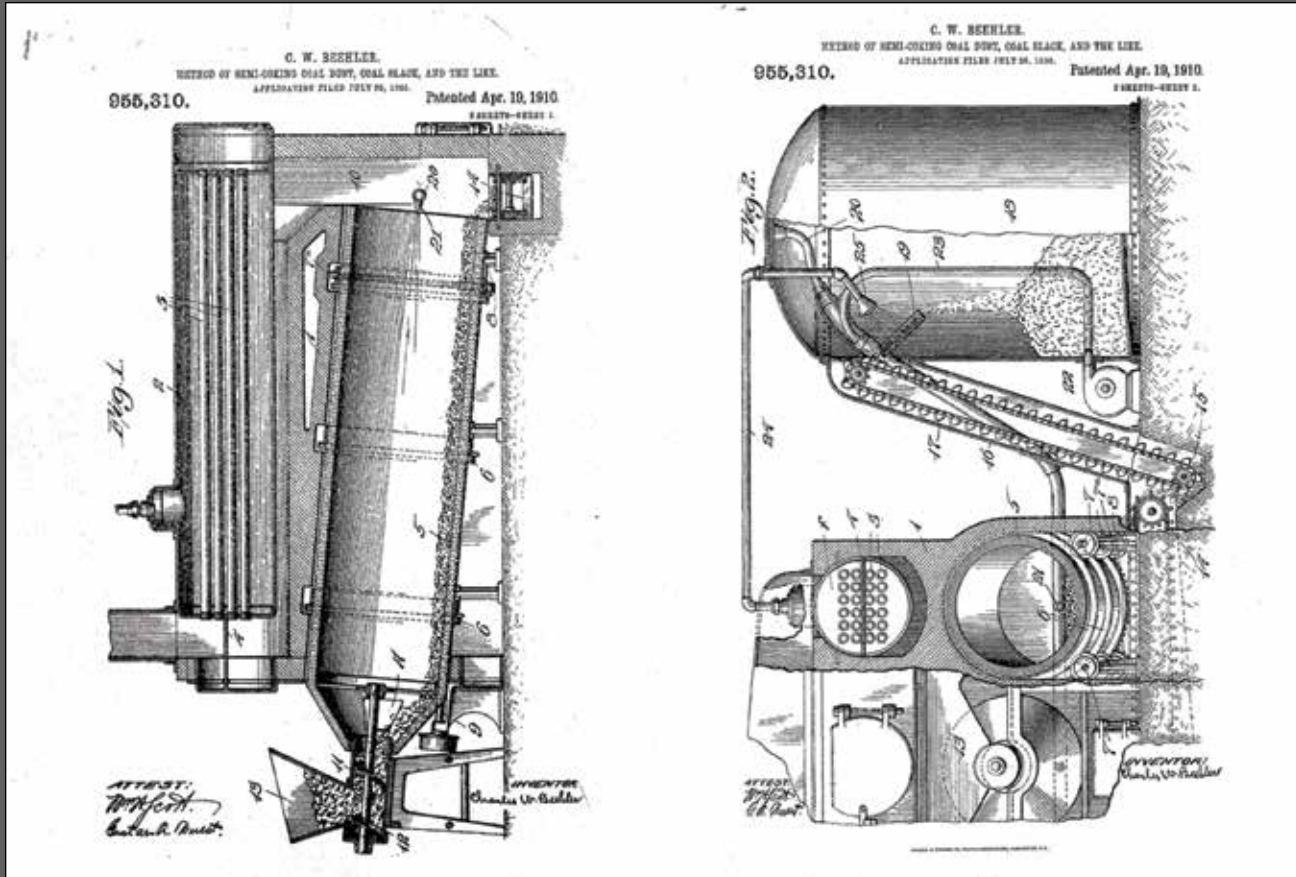
3 in. to 6 in. Light and Heavy Strap Hinge. Chest Hinge, bent for 1/2, 3/4, 1 in. Lumber.

Mention PACKAGES
 Write for Catalogue and Prices

Improved Leo Box Lock. Patented Oct. 6 1896, and Sept. 28, 1903.

Inside or Outside Acme Lock. Pat. Mch. 11, 1890, and Nov. 24, 1893.

B. B. Box Lock. Patented April 17, 1904.



C. W. Beehler's drawings that accompanied his patent application for "method of semi-coking coal-dust." The patent for this process along with the associated machinery and hardware was issued on April 19, 1910 (Patent no. 955310).

City Directory lists William Beehler as working as a clerk in the grocery store of Vanarb & Bros. on Franklin Avenue in St. Louis.

C. W. Beehler's father, Francis, died on October 2, 1867, three years after the death of his mother, Catharine.¹¹ His father executed his last will and testament on his death bed, leaving his estate, both real and personal property, to his six children to be divided equally. Although C. W. was the eldest, he was not appointed the executor of his father's estate. Instead, Francis Beehler appointed his son-in-law, Richard Koster, the husband of C. W. Beehler's older sister Mary.¹² Of interest here is whether C. W. Beehler inherited any of the land in Jefferson County owned by his father. Examination of St. Louis Probate Court documents indicates that Francis Beehler's real estate holdings were liquidated to pay claims against the estate, a process that lasted for most of a decade. Notes and bills that were due the estate were listed as worthless or uncollectable.¹³ There is no evidence that C. W. Beehler or his siblings gained an inheritance from their father's estate.

The C. W. Beehler Family

C. W. Beehler met and later married Emma Blanche Scollay in St. Louis sometime in the late 1860s. She was born in St. Louis, a daughter of parents who had moved to the Gateway City from Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Born in 1850, she was six years younger than her husband. The couple had four children: John Charles (b. 1869), who later adopted the name Charles Francis; Mary Blanche (b. 1871); James Frank (b. 1873); and Joseph E. (b. 1878). The three elder children lived into adulthood, but Joseph died at only four years of age of a form of meningitis, or what was then described as "inflammation of the brain."¹⁴

The C. W. Beehler family moved six times over a forty-year period between 1870 and 1910. They resided at 1009 St. Charles Street, just west of North 10th Street, and then moved further north and west, where they occupied residences along Biddle Street, and later on north 20th Street. By the 1880s they again moved to be closer to the facility where C. W. was employed. These new residences were on Cass Avenue and North 14th Street, within a block of Beehler's workplace at the corner of Blair Avenue and Mullanphy Street.

If necessity is the mother of invention, C. W. Beehler exemplified this principle through a series of inventions he patented between the years 1886–1910. For the most part, his inventions were practical solutions to needs presented by his workplace. Although he had served as a clerk and bookkeeper during the 1870s, working at times as an upholsterer to follow in his father’s footsteps, by 1882 the *St. Louis City Directory* listed the industrious 38-year-old working as a machinist and drill-press operator. Records demonstrate that in 1886 he opened a metal fabricating shop at 1540-1544 Blair Avenue, advertising the business as the U.S. Box Lock Company. An ancillary business he called the Mound City Novelty Company that manufactured “novelty” hardware was located at the same address; Beehler was identified as the manager.¹⁵ The definition of novelties in this context almost certainly refers to special hardware for wooden box shipping containers, and over the next few years, Beehler spent much of his time inventing new and improved locking mechanisms for his box lock business, among other items.

At the time, wooden boxes were the standard shipping container for all kinds of commodities, and Beehler’s shop specialized in latching mechanisms and hinges for wooden boxes, especially bottle boxes.¹⁶ In fact, a 1908 advertisement claimed that Beehler’s box locks and hinges were used by the largest bottlers in the United States.¹⁷ Box hardware was a measure of the quality of a shipping container. Beehler’s designs were soon put into production and advertised in leading trade journals that featured a wide range of box locks, including those that he patented.¹⁸ The ads for the U.S. Box Lock Company that appeared in *Packages* and *The Barrel and Box* between 1905 and 1910 marketed a variety of box locks and hinges, several of which were patented by C. W. Beehler. So, were the Mound City Novelty Company and the U.S. Box Lock Company the names for Beehler’s business prior to the time the company was formally incorporated under Missouri state statutes on July 19, 1907?¹⁹ Records suggest the affirmative. Today, the Beehler Corporation with offices in St. Louis and its manufacturing plant in Mountain Grove, Missouri, traces its roots back to this hardware novelty company that began operations in St. Louis in 1886.

The 1907 documents filed with the Missouri Secretary of State reveal that C. W. Beehler, in partnership with his two sons, Charles F. and James Frank Beehler, officially established the Beehler Manufacturing Company at 1831-1833 Hogan Street. This was an expansion of the Blair Ave. business, which meant the company was now operating out of two plants in St. Louis with additional buildings used for storage.²⁰ The business was incorporated with \$50,000 capital stock divided into 500 shares.²¹ C. W. Beehler owned controlling interest with 498 shares, with each son owning a single share. The trio of father and sons served as the board of directors, with C. W. Beehler listed as chairman and president. The company was created to manufacture, buy, and sell, both wholesale and retail, locks of all kinds, hinges, springs, as well as



Promotional card issued by C. W. Beehler and the Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad. The card depicts an image of Albert Koch’s 1838 mastodon skeleton attributed to the Kimmswick site that Koch toured through the United States and later took to Europe and sold to the British Museum. As seen in the image, Koch lacked the expertise to properly assemble the skeleton, but it was later assembled by Sir Richard Owen following its acquisition by the British Museum. The image for this promotional card was taken from one Albert Koch used in a German publication entitled *Die Riesenthier der Urwelt* published in Berlin in 1845. The reverse side of the card gives details on rail transportation on the Iron Mountain Railroad to and from Union Station in St. Louis to the Kimmswick site.

other hardware specialties and novelties. In addition, it acquired, owned, and sold patent rights pertaining to such appliances.

Beehler the Inventor

It is notable that C. W. Beehler’s eldest son, Charles F. Beehler, listed on his father’s death certificate that he was an “inventor of patents.” Aside from the malapropism, the son’s reasoning was clear, for inventions were the hallmark of his father’s life. In addition to obtaining patents on thirteen new or improved designs for box fasteners between 1886 and 1905, in 1892 he had designed an improved pouring spout for oil cans that permitted one

to fill lamps (or similar receptacles) without spilling the contents. The nozzle was said to be simple, inexpensive, and a durable improvement, designed so it could be readily closed and sealed.²² A year later he sought and received a patent on a fire-grate that he designed for a second party, since it was assigned to A. Kuehne and F. Hausperger of St. Louis.²³ In 1899 Beehler patented a bin for holding coffee, cereals, or similar merchandise. His objective was to provide a means whereby the contents could be maintained within convenient reach. This was achieved by placing a flexible bag within the bin, then using a roller and straps to raise the contents.²⁴ Perhaps one of Beehler's more novel inventions was a 1901 patent, advertised as an improved sunbonnet. He claimed that his newly designed sunbonnet was lighter, yet rigid enough to hold its shape, and contained superior non-conducting properties to the bonnet's crown. It also allowed for the skirt or cape to be readily attached and detached as needed.²⁵ One can only puzzle over what might have prompted Beehler, whose inventions centered on industrial hardware, to try his hand at designing women's outdoor wear.

However, two processes Beehler patented were related to mining and gained international attention. In 1893 he received a patent on what was termed a hydrothermal mining process.²⁶ Once again, this patent was assigned to A. Kuehne of St. Louis.²⁷ This development called for filling a closed casing with a liquid, inserting it in the bore hole, and heating the encased liquid with an electric resistance coil until it expanded, thus exerting expansive force within the drill hole. The process was widely advertised. Journals such as *Scientific American* and the *Western Electrician* listed the invention, and several leading journals described the process as a new development in drilling technology.²⁸ Several years later (1903) Beehler invented a new method of semi-coking coal dust and coal slack.²⁹ He maintained that his method would produce a low cost, marketable fuel from coal dust and slack, a raw material that could be obtained inexpensively at coal mines. The method was described as reducing coal dust and slack to a semi-coke that could be used for fuel, with the heat necessary for the operation being generated from the gases arising from the coal dust and slack itself during the semi-coking process. *Chemical Abstracts* listed this new and improved process, and journals such as *Industrial World* and *Mines and Minerals* included Beehler's process under their new inventions related to mining.³⁰

The Growth of the Beehlers' Manufacturing Enterprise

When C. W. Beehler died in 1914, he was serving as president and chairman of the board of the company. Following his death his eldest son, Charles F. Beehler, was elected president, and in 1916 the stockholders voted to change the name of the company to the Beehler-U.S. Box Lock Company, officially restoring the name that had been used during the final decade of the nineteenth century until the company was incorporated in 1907. The stockholders also voted to increase the stock to \$75,000 with 750 shares

at \$100 each. A document filed with the Missouri Secretary of State a year later lists the stockholders and the number of shares of the corporation each of the stockholders owned. It is obvious that upon his death C.W. Beehler divided his stock in the company among his spouse and children. Although two additional individuals, F. W. and L. W. Goessling, had been added as stockholders, with the latter serving as secretary, the Beehler family had controlling interest in the company. C. W. Beehler's wife, Emma, owned 122½ shares, as did Charles F. Beehler, the company's president, and Beehler's daughter, Mary Blanche Schreiner. His younger son, James Frank, who served as secretary at various times in the company's history, owned 127½ shares. Each share was worth \$100.

Charles F. Beehler relinquished the president's position in the early 1920s, but J. Frank Beehler served as secretary as late as 1931. J. Frank and Mary Blanche Schreiner were still listed as stockholders in the late 1920s. By the mid-1930s the only legacy of C. W. Beehler left with the company was his name. In 1920 the U. S. Box Lock Company's name was changed to the Beehler Steel Products Company, then almost eight decades later, in 1999, just prior to its move to Mountain Grove, Missouri, the company was renamed the Beehler Corporation, a title it holds today.

The Kimmswick "Bone Bed"

Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, C. W. Beehler became actively involved in exploring a late-Pleistocene paleontological deposit that is often referred to as the Kimmswick "Bone Bed." This feature is now part of the State of Missouri's Mastodon State Historic Site, located at the junction of Rock and Black Creeks a few miles south of the Meramec River in Jefferson County. Early settlers referred to a spring-fed artesian fen associated with the bone deposit as Sulphur Spring, not to be confused with a second spring and adjacent hamlet by the same name located a few miles south along the Mississippi River.³¹ "Saline," as a designation for the spring, would have been more appropriate given that the salt-laden water of the spring is typical for saline springs found throughout the central Mississippi and lower Ohio River valleys. In fact, prehistoric Mississippian Indians had located a large village nearby—the Herrell Village (J'55)—and were evaporating salt from the spring several centuries prior to European settlement of the area.³²

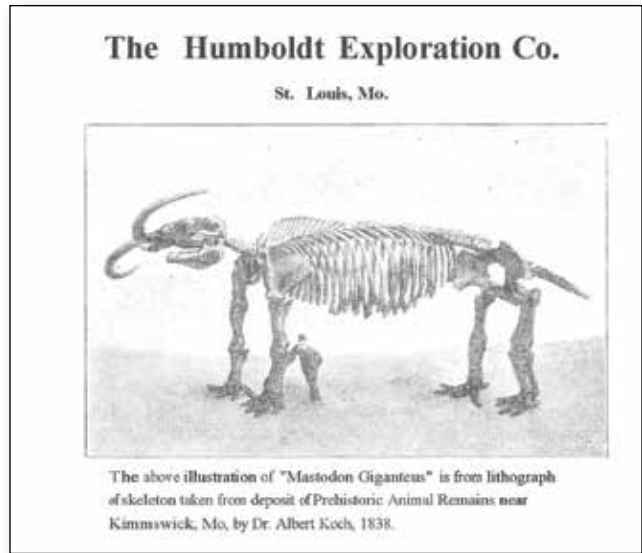
The "bone bed" was first recorded by the pioneer botanist John Bradbury in 1809, when he wrote "at a salt lick about three miles from the Mirramac (sic) River, and twelve from St. Louis, several bones have been discovered, evidently belonging to the same species of mammoth (e.g., mastodon) as those found on the Ohio, and in Orange county, state of New York."³³ Local oral history about the bone deposit was amplified in the 1840s when Albert Koch, a museum proprietor in St. Louis, excavated mastodon remains at the site and sold a composite skeleton he had assembled from bones he procured at Kimmswick, and from a comparable spring deposit along the Pomme de Terre River in western Missouri.³⁴ The fact that Koch

subsequently sold the skeleton to the British Museum for a sizable sum (£ 1,300) undoubtedly became legendary in Jefferson County. As a lad, C. W. Beehler must have been exposed to this local folklore, for it was less than a decade after Koch sold his skeleton that Beehler's father was acquiring land in Jefferson County. Beehler as a boy could very likely have accompanied his father on trips to this region. Evidence of his familiarity with Koch's earlier work is supported by Beehler's use of an image of Koch's mastodon skeleton when advertising his venture during the years leading up to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis.

Beehler, described as a small man but quick and alert and a genuine worker, initially came to the Kimmswick Site in 1893 when he was prospecting for silica.³⁵ He befriended the local farmer and landowner, Fritz Miller, who lived across the stagecoach road, and while sharing a meal at the Miller residence he observed bones that Miller had collected from the site. Period newspaper accounts state that Miller subsequently leased the site containing the bone bed to Beehler.³⁶

Beehler began serious work at Kimmswick in 1897, two years before plans were formalized to hold a world's fair in St. Louis to commemorate the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase. Records suggest that Beehler began work sometime in the fall since he was still in St. Louis during May where he filed a complaint in U.S. Circuit Court against Frank X. Hausperger for alleged infringement of one of his patents.³⁷ Beehler may have been working at the site by August when Benjamin E. Blow, a St. Louis attorney, arrived in Jefferson County and made a sizable collection of artifacts from the Herrell Village site. A friend who accompanied Blow collected mastodon bones from the nearby Kimmswick site.³⁸ Beehler and W. B. Swan, a St. Louis businessman who later partnered with Beehler in forming the Jefferson Mining Company,³⁹ were digging at Kimmswick in late November and conferring with William Bleeker Potter, Allen Professor of Mining and Metallurgy at Washington University in St. Louis, on identifications of fossils they were unearthing.⁴⁰ Potter was a member of the Archaeological Section of the St. Louis Academy of Science and noted for his expertise in Mississippi Valley archaeology after penning his volume *Archaeological Remains in Southeastern Missouri*, published in 1880.⁴¹

It is uncertain whether or not Potter was the stimulus, but the following year patrons of Washington University became interested in the site. Pursuant to this a number of wealthy St. Louisans began making arrangements to work with Beehler to uncover the bones in a more scientific manner, and to present the collection to Washington University.⁴² These individuals formed a corporation they named the Humboldt Exploration Company, which was incorporated as a prospecting company on April 4, 1898. The company was founded with \$5,000 capital and divided into 100 shares.⁴³ Distinguished St. Louis citizens affiliated with this company were Bernard Griesedieck, President; J. W. Caldwell, Secretary; Joseph Griesedieck; J. H. A. Meyer; W. B. Allison; Dr. A. C. Peterson; Gustave Nieman; D. I. Bushnell; Charles Rippe; C. W. Martin; J.



Cover of a brochure printed by the Humboldt Exploration Company in St. Louis soliciting subscriptions to help with the exploration of the deposit at Kimmswick. Subscribers were also entitled to select for their own use specimens amounting to the amount of their subscription. Subscriptions were listed at ten dollars per share. The same image of Koch's mastodon was used on this brochure that was depicted on Beehler's promotional card for attracting visitors on the Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad.

B. Groeninger; Frank Beebe; A. A. Kleinschmidt; H. C. Griesedieck; Dr. H. M. Kinner, Jr.; and E. P. Ohlshausen. A brochure advertising the company stated that the afore named individuals "desire a few gentlemen to assist in its [Kimmswick] further development, and for this purpose have placed on sale subscriptions at ten dollars per share to be paid upon delivery of stock. Subscribers are entitled to select for their own use, specimens amounting to the amount of their subscriptions."⁴⁴

A month later Dr. Jacob L. Wortman, Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, visited the site and identified the bones of several species of extinct fauna in addition to the ubiquitous mastodon remains. Specimens of horse, ground sloth, American ox (muskox), and what he simply described as "other rare animals," were listed.⁴⁵ The involvement of patrons of Washington University in Beehler's Kimmswick project, especially William B. Potter, along with Jacob Wortman's analysis of the site, may have alerted representatives of the Smithsonian Institution to the potential of this paleontological mecca. At the time, curators at the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian were trying to obtain a skeleton of a mastodon or mammoth for the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. In August 1900, Frederic A. Lucas, Curator of Comparative Anatomy at the U.S. National Museum, visited Kimmswick and observed that it was the largest deposit of mastodon bones yet discovered. He went on to say that "for some reason, which I have not



W. H. Holmes and DeLancey Gill from the Smithsonian Institution are shown unearthing bones at the Kimmswick Site. Left to right: Water Miller, son of the land owner; DeLancey Gill; W. H. Holmes; C. W. Beehler; and H. C. Townsend, ticket agent for the St. Louis Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad. Photograph by George Stark, September 1901. (Image: Missouri History Museum)

had time to investigate, the local conditions were favorable to the formation of deposits there, and I have never seen anything to equal them.”⁴⁶ Lucas was accompanied by his assistant, Alban Stewart. The two collected some fossils from Kimmswick, and they were accessioned into Smithsonian’s collections (37551–Nov. 19, 1900) under Stewart’s name.⁴⁷

The publicity on Kimmswick attracted two additional scientifically prominent individuals. Dr. W. C. Mills, from Ohio State University, visited the site and collected several specimens. Professor Mills retained for his university collection several small lower tusks of the mastodon as well as two teeth of a giant ground sloth (*Megalonyx jeffersonii*).⁴⁸ Later, the renowned vertebrate paleontologist Oliver P. Hay, an associate of the Carnegie Institution in Washington, visited Beehler when on a trip to St. Louis. Hay listed the following animals in Beehler’s collection: mastodon, mammoth, horse, deer, stag-moose, shrub-ox, muskox, and extinct and modern bison.⁴⁹ Russell Graham, a vertebrate paleontologist who conducted excavations at the site in the 1980s for

the Illinois State Museum, cautions that the faunal list attributed by Hay to Kimmswick may contain specimens from other localities. Graham questions the inclusion of mammoth, a proboscidean that was not recovered by later investigators.⁵⁰

By 1900 Beehler was compelled to construct a small frame storage building that he opened to the public as an onsite museum. Completion of the building satisfied the need for storage as well as providing a display space to satisfy the curiosity of the increasing number of visitors. Specimens were arranged along the sides and center of the building that measured 40 x 18 feet with numerous windows on all sides.⁵¹ An artist’s sketch of the site rendered in 1901 shows the location of the museum, the excavation with a tent covering a portion of the dig, and a second tent pitched on the east edge of the site.

Beehler was now prepared to promote his attraction during the dawning of the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair.

Prominent visitors arrived from St. Louis and other parts of the United States, attracted to Kimmswick by the increasing publicity that Beehler generated in the local

press that was subsequently picked up by newspapers throughout the country. Some individuals were interested in obtaining specimens, which was possible through a subscription to the Humboldt Exploration Company. Edward H. Angle, a famous pioneer orthodontist, visited the site and asked in a subsequent letter how he could procure a mastodon molar as well as an elephant's tooth.⁵² This was probably a common occurrence, but it is impossible to determine just how many people requested and secured specimens from Beehler's collection. There is a record that Beehler denied an overture from Dr. Oliver C. Farrington, Curator of Geology at the Field Columbian Museum, to transfer to him exclusive rights to explore the site.⁵³ The offer was rumored in the Kimmswick community to be \$10,000, but newspaper accounts place it closer to \$3,000. Regardless of the amount, Beehler was in no mood to relinquish his ownership of the site, which was bringing him fame if not a fortune.

During late 1900 a St. Louis newspaper, *The Republic*, sensationalized Beehler's finds by claiming that the intrepid St. Louisan had discovered, along with prehistoric animals, three large human skulls that could ostensibly represent the "missing link." The story was immediately carried from coast to coast, appearing in newspapers as widely separated as the *Washington Times* and the *San Jose Evening News*.⁵⁴ As with most hyperbole, the story quickly evaporated once it was found to lack substance. Such tales

may have sparked Beehler's imagination because soon thereafter reports had him digging for buried treasure a few miles south of Kimmswick near the small railroad hamlet of Sulphur Springs, where local legend alleged that Spanish gold was buried around the springs from which the town derived its name.⁵⁵

By 1901 planning for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis was well underway. Dr. Frederick True, Curator of Zoology at the U. S. National Museum and Smithsonian's representative for planning for the 1904 World's Fair, became interested in Beehler's discoveries and believed they would prove an attractive exhibit for the exposition. During July Pierre Chouteau and F. W. Lehman, Chairmen of the World's Fair Committee on history, ethnology, and anthropology, and W. B. Stevens, secretary of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, visited Beehler to ascertain if a suitable exhibit for the World's Fair could be made from the Kimmswick remains.⁵⁶ Beehler believed that he possessed enough bones to build a complete skeleton of a mastodon.⁵⁷ Apparently the World's Fair emissaries were not convinced, as there is no evidence that a full mount of a mastodon skeleton from Kimmswick was exhibited at the 1904 exposition. There was a report in some national newspapers that "a wagon load of mastodon bones" was being articulated into skeletons for exhibition in Washington.⁵⁸ At best, this was simply rumor.

W. H. Holmes and C. W. Beehler examining a stratigraphic profile of an excavation next to a bluff at Kimmswick Site. (Image: George Stark, September 1901, Missouri History Museum)



The Question of Human-Extinct Faunal Associations

Scientific interest in Kimmswick continued when word reached W. H. Holmes, Head Curator of Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution, that Beehler had found a human bone associated with the mastodon remains. Holmes, accompanied by Smithsonian photographer DeLancey Gill, was on his way to Afton, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), to examine the context of human artifacts unearthed along with mastodon remains at a sulphur spring near Afton. The antiquity of humans in the New World was a fundamental topic of debate within the scientific community at the turn of the twentieth century. The issue was whether “Paleolithic Man” was present in North America, as was the case in Europe. If one could demonstrate an association with extinct megafauna, a much earlier antiquity of humans would be established. Holmes was central to this debate, believing that archaeological remains were related to modern tribes and of no great antiquity.⁵⁹ He therefore placed the burden of proof on the proponents for greater antiquity to demonstrate the existence of early humans on this continent.⁶⁰

The possibility that Beehler had found a human bone associated with the remains of extinct animals at Kimmswick convinced Holmes to stop in St. Louis for a few days in late September 1901 to visit with Beehler and T. D. Townsend, who is listed in the St. Louis City Directories (1905–1907) as a St. Louis book dealer.⁶¹ Holmes said that he spent a very instructive day at the site, alleging that “the question of the association of human remains with those of the mammoth and mastodon raised at this place is not at all conclusive.” He further stated “that the bones found, which so closely resemble the humerus of man, may be portions of the fibulae of young mastodons, and that the flint implements reported as occurring with the fossil remains may have been recently introduced.”⁶² Holmes indicated, however, that he would suspend judgment until more critical and exhaustive studies could be carried out and resolved to return to Kimmswick at an early date.

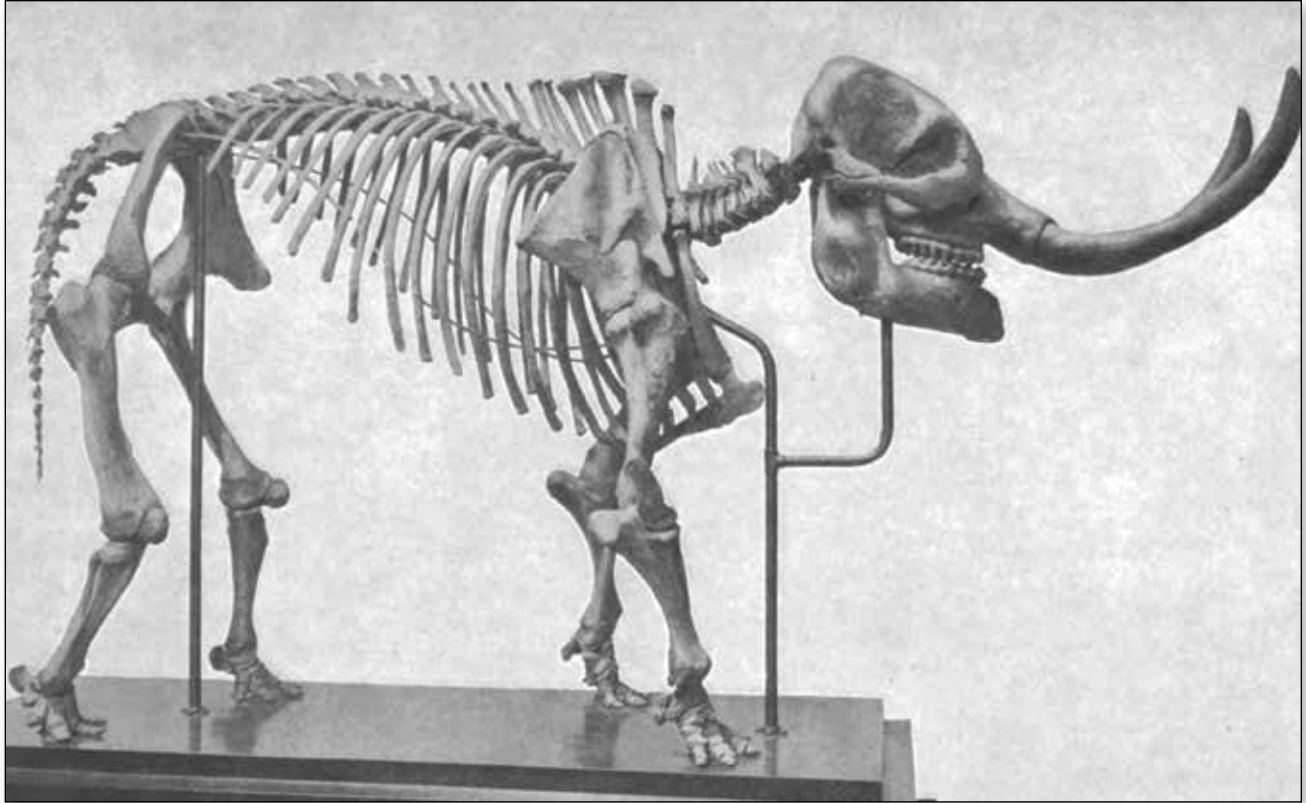
W. H. Holmes kept his promise and returned to Kimmswick a year later accompanied by Gerard Fowke, a Smithsonian archaeologist, to investigate more thoroughly the potential for human association with the extinct fauna at Kimmswick. The pair arrived in September and began work on a trench that began 60 feet from the bluff and reached a depth of 12 feet. Presumably this was with Beehler’s blessing, because this was the period when Beehler was promoting his site as a tourist mecca. It was probably not lost on Beehler that having famous Smithsonian scientists digging at the site would have been an attraction in itself. Fowke reported that they found abundant mastodon bones but the remains were broken and scattered.⁶³ He further noted that anatomists had definitely determined that the fibula was not human. Holmes summed up the work by reporting that no traces of man were found in direct association with the fossil

remains.⁶⁴ Fowke was even more emphatic, stressing that “nothing has been found at the site, or anywhere else in the region, which tends to show that man existed here as a contemporary of the mastodon.”⁶⁵ Some fossil bones and artifacts from a nearby mound were retained for the Smithsonian’s collections.⁶⁶

The irony of Holmes’ interpretation is that Beehler may have unearthed evidence that humans were contemporaneous with the mastodon, but several factors precluded Holmes from recognizing an association. Although Beehler’s Washington University associates had advocated that he improve his scientific techniques, his excavation procedures were not refined enough to collect critical contextual information, and the discovery of fluted projectile points with extinct fauna at Folsom, New Mexico,⁶⁷ the first site to demonstrate an indisputable association between Early Man and extinct fauna, was still a few years in the future.

Excavations at Kimmswick in the 1980s by the Illinois State Museum established that Clovis hunters had either killed or butchered mastodon (*Mammot americanum*), peccary (*Mylohyus nasutus*), and deer (*Odocoileus* sp.) at the site.⁶⁸ Beehler had found artifacts among the bones, but Holmes believed the flint implements may have been recently introduced since identical forms were plentiful on the surface.⁶⁹ That may have been the case because the Illinois State Museum confirmed that the Holocene colluvium that overlies the mastodon deposits contains chipped stone artifacts of Early and Middle Archaic age, cultural material that is more recent than the extinct faunal assemblage.⁷⁰ But there was an artifact from Kimmswick that Holmes remembered seeing that was different. It was a projectile point “that had a concave base and a long flake struck from the base on either side passing longitudinally beyond the middle of the point.”⁷¹ Holmes related to Matthew W. Stirling, who was Chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology, in the winter of 1927–1928 that he was shown this point when he visited the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis, most likely in 1902. He said the point had come from Albert Koch’s excavations. This may have been a mistaken attribution because even during Beehler’s time Kimmswick was often associated with Koch. Beehler, himself, advertised the site as the “deposit of prehistoric animal remains from which ‘Mastodon Giganteus’ was taken by Dr. Albert Koch in 1838.” Ashley Montagu points out that at the time of Stirling’s conversation with Holmes, the latter was not aware of the recent finds at Folsom, New Mexico, where fluted projectile points were found in direct association with extinct bison. In a word, Holmes had not had an opportunity to observe the Kimmswick fluted point *in situ* and, for that matter, would have been unaware of its probable antiquity. After all, one of Holmes’ criteria for acceptance of Early Man in America was that an implement of Early Man be discovered, verified, and found to bear indisputable evidence of context and use.⁷²

The question then became was the fluted point from Kimmswick that Holmes observed at the Missouri Historical Society from C. W. Beehler’s work, instead of



Mastodon skeleton mounted by Alban Stewart under the direction of Frederic Lucas of the Smithsonian Institution and exhibited at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. The bones for most of the skeleton were from a peat bog near Church, Michigan; however, the bones used for the left hind limb came from the bone bed at Kimmswick. Image from Plate XXXV, Notes on some recent additions to the exhibition of vertebrate fossils by Charles W. Gilmore. (Image: *Proceedings of the United States National Museum, Vol. 30*)

the earlier work there by Albert Koch? There is evidence to the affirmative. A St. Louis dentist, Dr. W. F. Parks, a member of the St. Louis chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America and a member of the advisory committee to the Missouri Historical Society, was asked to visit Beehler's excavation to view a fluted point left *in situ*, and situated among the bones of mastodon, horse (*Equus complicatus*), and ground sloth (*Megalonyx jeffersonii*).⁷³ Parks was able to secure this point and take it to St. Louis. Eight years later he passed the specimen on to Byron Knoblock, a commercial artist and artifact collector in Quincy, Illinois, who subsequently donated it to the Field Museum in Chicago along with a diagram drawing of the location and an affidavit signed by Parks detailing the circumstances of the find. The artifact, identified as a Clovis projectile point, is catalog number 205526 in the Field Museum's Anthropology collection. Although circumstantial, it is likely that this is the concave-base, fluted specimen shown to Holmes during his visit to the Missouri Historical Society and was the one that came from C. W. Beehler's Kimmswick excavation. As mentioned earlier, it is ironic that this went unrecognized during the early 1900s and had to wait until the 1980s for recognition that early human hunters were associated with

the large extinct mammals represented in the Kimmswick deposits.

Kimmswick and the World's Fair

Records from the Louisiana Purchase Exposition suggest that although officials from the fair had expressed considerable interest in Beehler's Kimmswick discoveries, and had explored the possibility of an exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair, a Kimmswick exhibit never materialized. The U.S. National Museum representatives did mount a skeleton of a mastodon at the fair, but the specimen came from a peat bog near Church, Michigan. The skeleton, mounted by Alban Stewart under the direction of Frederic Lucas, was essentially complete with the few missing parts restored in plaster. An exception, however, was the left hind limb, which came from a similar sized individual from the Kimmswick bone bed. So, in a small sense, Beehler's excavation was represented at the St. Louis World's Fair. Following the fair, this mastodon skeleton was taken to Washington and placed on exhibit in the U.S. National Museum.⁷⁴

Few images survive from Beehler's work at Kimmswick. A small number of photographs taken by George Stark, Sr., a St. Louis photographer who traveled



Interior view of C. W. Beehler's museum. Photograph by George Stark, September 1901. (Image: Missouri History Museum)

to Kimmswick to take publicity photographs for the St. Louis exposition, are archived at the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis.⁷⁵ Stark, who operated a studio at 3251 Missouri Avenue in St. Louis, is best known for his photographs of scenes taken at the World's Fair. The Kimmswick images were taken during the fall of 1901, during W. H. Holmes' first visit to the site. These photographs are the only images of C. W. Beehler known to exist (Fig. 7).

Kimmswick became an attraction for visitors both before and during the St. Louis World's Fair. Although C. W. Beehler did not rival Albert Koch as a showman, he was effective in publicizing his Kimmswick enterprise and attracting numerous people. Travel from St. Louis to Kimmswick was convenient by rail, providing an opportunity for Beehler to work with the Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad to attract visitors to the site. Excursions were advertised as running daily, except Monday, with trains leaving Union Station in St. Louis at 8 a.m. and returning at 3:25 and 6:15 p.m. Round trip tickets cost 50 cents. An advertisement issued by Beehler prior to the fair promoted the site as a must see attraction:

[You]...and [your] friends are invited to visit the great bone deposit near Kimmswick, MO, 20 miles south of St. Louis, on Iron Mountain & Southern R.R. This is the largest and most interesting bone deposit of prehistoric animal remains in the world and the oldest in America. There is a museum on the grounds containing some of the finest and largest specimens ever discovered. Excavation [is] now in progress. The remains are to be used as the basis of a great natural history museum in St. Louis.

One of the attractions for visitors was Beehler's small museum packed with the bones of numerous animals. A 1901 account described the contents as those of "the mighty mastodon, the monstrous mammoth, the great American ground sloth, and the prehistoric horse."⁷⁶ In all, 3,000 bones were said to be arranged along the sides and down the center of the building. Posters and newspaper

C. W. and Emma Beehler gravestone in Calvary Cemetery (Section 21, Lot 1433), St. Louis. (Image: Connie Nisinger, May 2012)



articles adorned the walls. Visitors could marvel at the size of the specimens and the magnitude of the collection. Thus, the combination of viewing fossils being unearthed in the excavation and visiting the museum gave people a memorable and unforgettable experience.

The Post-World's Fair Years

During the years that C. W. Beehler spent at the Kimmswick Site he apparently retained his residence in St. Louis and presumably his family remained in the city. He listed his contact information on one of his promotional leaflets as both 1513 North 14th Street, St. Louis, and Kimmswick, Missouri. That would suggest that he was commuting periodically between his St. Louis residence and Kimmswick. After all, during the years he was involved with Kimmswick he applied for and received nine patents, indicating that he was still involved with his metal fabrication business. How long Beehler remained in Jefferson County following the 1904 World's Fair is unknown, but he was still there a year later when he had a well drilled on a property near the site.⁷⁷ But there is little doubt that he began to phase out his work at Kimmswick as public interest subsided after the World's Fair. Beehler may have left Jefferson County in 1905 since one Jefferson County history mistakenly reports his death that year.⁷⁸ Instead, he may have moved back to St. Louis and resumed his interest in manufacturing. That is the same year the property containing the bone bed was acquired by the Glencoe Lime and Cement Company and a large lime kiln was erected on the site. Thus, a chapter ended in the life of C. W. Beehler.

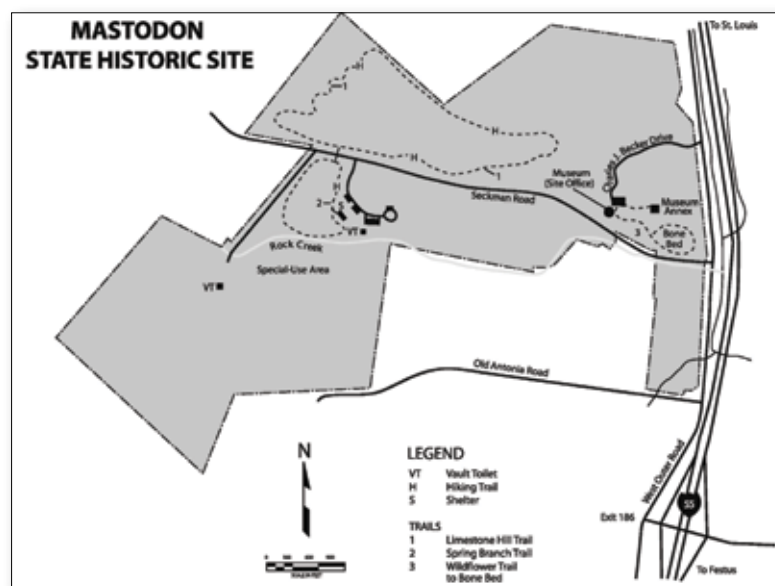
The paramount question is what happened to Beehler's collection that was housed in his onsite museum, the

collection of fossils that was to be used for "a great natural history museum in St. Louis"? In essence, this was the *raison d'être* for the formation of the Humboldt Exploration Company. But the founding of a great natural history museum in St. Louis never happened, and Beehler's collection was apparently dispersed.⁷⁹

Beehler most likely returned to St. Louis in late 1905, but he was unquestionably living there by 1907 when he and his sons formally incorporated their business, the Beehler Manufacturing Company, with the State of Missouri. His sojourn to Jefferson County during the World's Fair years seems to have reinvigorated his business appetite. He would serve as president and chairman of the board until December 19, 1914, when he died of esophageal carcinoma.⁸⁰ He is buried with his wife, Emma, in Calvary Cemetery in north St. Louis, the Catholic cemetery under the auspices of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Charles William Beehler was an inventor, a manufacturing entrepreneur, and an amateur paleontologist. One might also add the term "promoter," since his occupation was listed as just that in the St. Louis City Directories for the year preceding and the year of the St. Louis World's Fair.⁸¹ There is no doubt that his place in history was bolstered by his work at Kimmswick, an enterprise that attracted the attention of the national press and, more importantly, the nation's scientific community. Without the work of C. W. Beehler and his predecessor, Albert Koch, the nationally acclaimed Mastodon State Historic Site listed on the National Register of Historic Places, acquired in 1976 to interpret this scientific marvel, could very well lie buried beneath the urban sprawl of the expanding metropolitan St. Louis area.

(Fig. 13) Mastodon State Historic Site is in Jefferson County, south of St. Louis. The site is located just west of I-55 and north of the Imperial exit (186). The entrance is off the west outer road and is clearly marked. The bone bed is east and down the bluff from the modern museum. This image depicts the layout of the site. (Image: Mastodon State Historic Site, Missouri Department of Natural Resources)



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