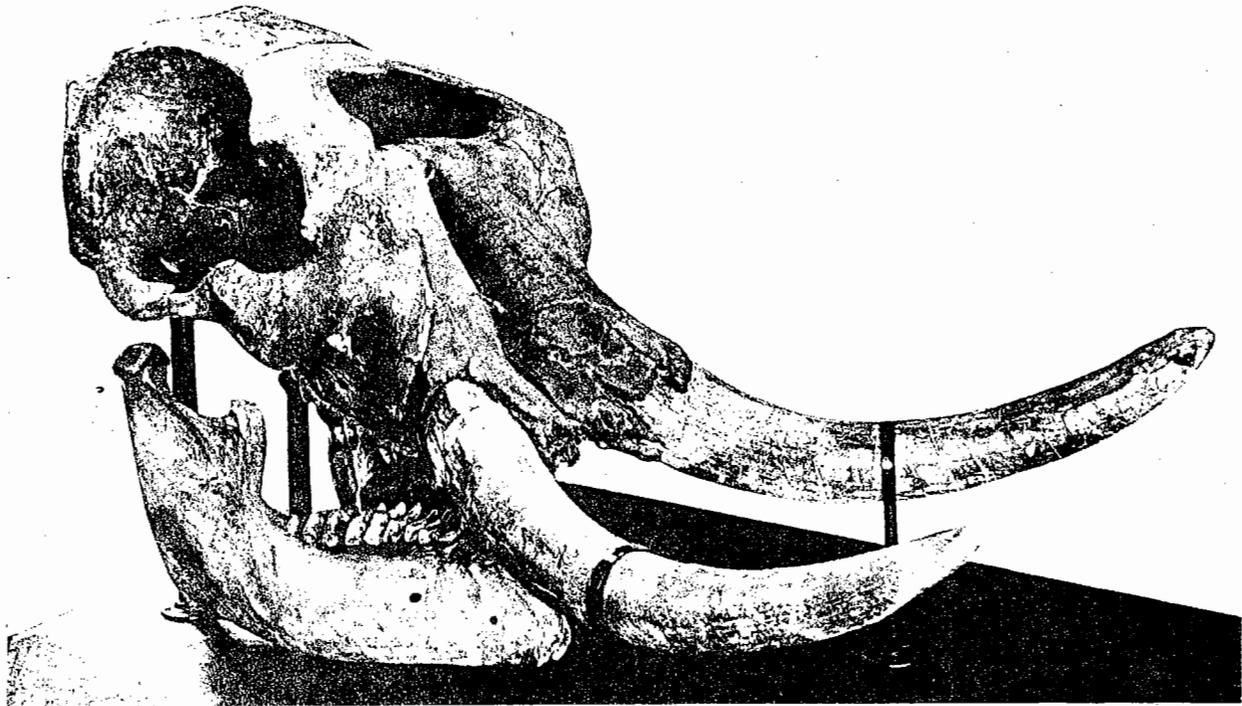




In September of 1934, during the Great Depression, a WPA project was under way to dredge the pond and construct a stone wall around it's perimeter. The workers were digging with a steam shovel near the south end when one scoop held a curious surprise; bones, very old bones. A worker on the project suspected they might be dinosaur remains and asked the Cranbrook Institute for identification.

Careful excavation proceeded. A layer of peat, two or three feet deep, covered a thick layer of sticky gray shell marl that contained abundant shells of small fresh water gastropods and bivalves, pieces of decayed branches of evergreen trees and other organic debris. The area around the initial find was explored by thrusting a long iron rod into these soft pond bottom layers. While some additional bones were located near the surface of the ground, others were found beneath five feet of marl using the probe method. In this way the skull, lower jaw and a few vertebrae were located and then exposed by digging into the muck with shovels and trowels.

Our specimen turned out to be a young mastodon still retaining the last of its milk teeth. The tusks were about half the size of an average full grown individual. While most of the remains had decayed, broken or not been found; the skull, jaws, ribs and a few vertebrae were removed from the pond site. The parts were taken to Ann Arbor, freed from the adherent marl, hardened and then reassembled. Apparently the remains were on view at the University Museum for awhile but last attempts to find them were fruitless.



The Bloomfield Hills Mastodon, 1935

Mastodons in Michigan are not a rarity. At least eighty specimens have been uncovered over the years and probably more are still waiting to be found.

Curiously, their teeth and jaws were best adapted to a browsing style of eating, much like deer and goats, so it seems they preferred our lowlands and swampy areas with an abundance of leaves, twigs and small branches to eat. Since these areas were invariable wet and soft many mastodons remains were successfully preserved by nature; as was ours.

The next time you drive or walk by our pond squint your eyes a little and see if anything moves. Perhaps if you let your imagination go just a bit, you'll see a large brown shape on the south side near the waters edge. The trees might rustle as if a thick trunk were pulling off leaves and branches...or maybe its just the wind.