

# WONDERS

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Seeking the Truth in a Universe of Mysteries

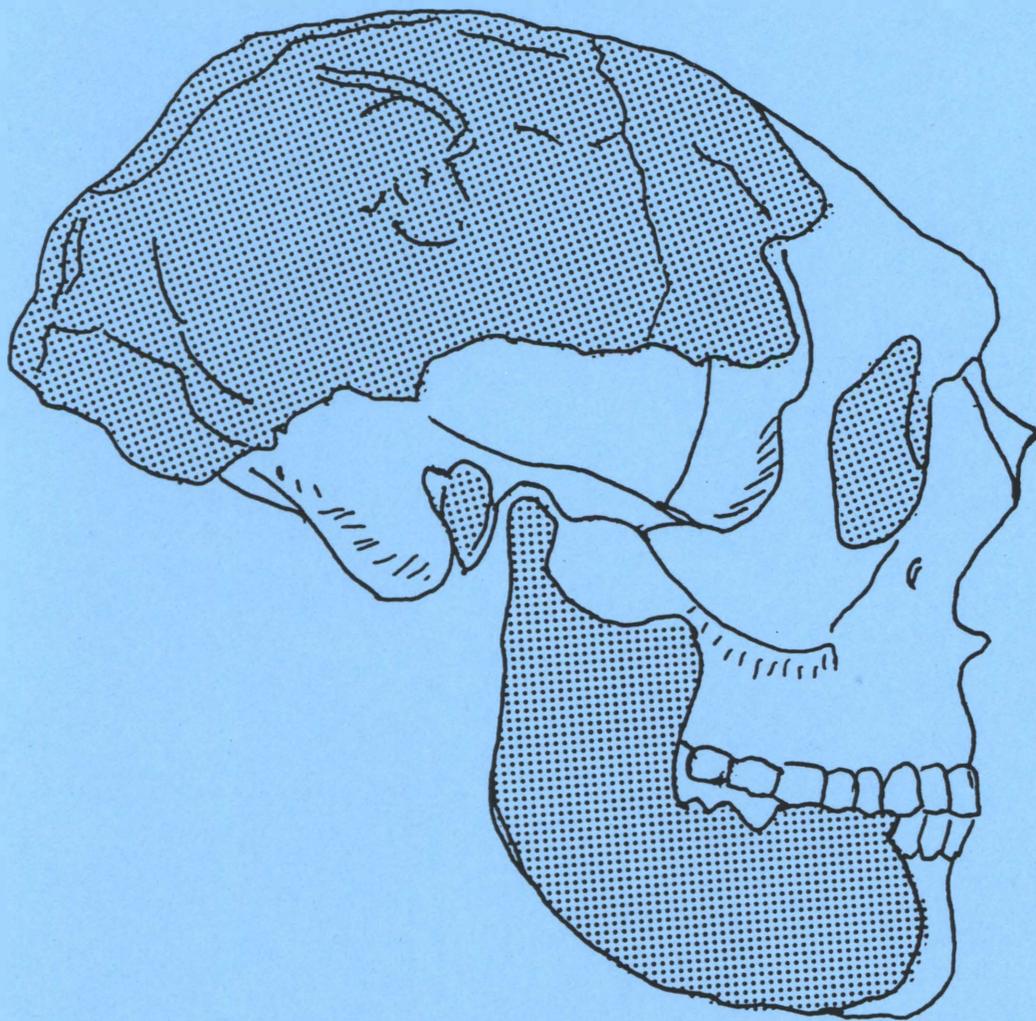
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Vol. 4 No. 1

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## The Gardar Skull



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# WONDERS

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## EDITORIAL

### DIFFERENT ASSUMPTIONS

Dr. Raymond Eve, a social psychologist from the University of Texas at Arlington, showed up at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science this year and told them something they didn't want to hear. He delivered the results of his study of "believers in pseudoscience." According to Nancy Ross-Flanigan writing for the Knight-Ridder News Service, the current definition of "pseudoscience" is "the belief that there is a scientific basis for things that can't be explained through accepted scientific methods."

I would prefer to apply the words "belief" and "believers" to the run-of-the-mill scientists who are the ones that exhibit a blind faith that they are doing a wonderful job at everything. Our viewpoint is that there is a scientific basis for things that would be explained if scientists truly applied the scientific method or if they expanded their methods to embrace new approaches such as telebiology. The language is stacked against us when they insist on using words such as "pseudoscience" and "fantastic science."

Dr. Eve rose at the AAAS to burst one of the balloons of the establishment. "Up to now, most scientists have tended to depict believers in pseudoscience as ignorant, psychopathic, backwoods ignoramuses or something along those lines, but we strongly suspected it was not that simple."

What Eve and others found was that people fell into one of two groups. The first were traditional and conservative people who accepted Biblical creation and Noah's Ark, and were otherwise conservative in their views. They had beliefs based upon "tradition, faith, authority, and revelation," according to Eve.

The second group was interested in "fantastic science" which included, according to Ross-Flanigan, "tales of mysterious monsters, sunken continents, psychic powers, ancient astronauts, and UFOs.... These believers feel that neither science nor religion has all the answers, so they're more willing to explore the unorthodox."

## THE GARDAR SKULL AND THE TALLER-HOMINID

by Mark A. Hall

In 1926 a Danish archaeological excavation unearthed remains of skeletons from a graveyard in Greenland. The bones all dated from the twelfth century A.D. and came from the same Norse churchyard. In 1929 Prof. F. C. C. Hansen of Copenhagen published a description of a massive part of a skull and a lower jawbone that were found at that site. As related by Sir Arthur Keith, Professor Hansen "saw they were parts of the same individual -- a man -- and that both showed in an extreme degree characters which mark the human skulls of an ancient type, such as the La Chapelle and Rhodesian skulls." [1] Prof. Hansen gave the name *Homo gardarensis* to this find.

The meaning of this find for us today is that one of the types of living man-like primates reported in North America already has a scientific name. This name has been awarded based upon the physical evidence desired for acceptable scientific classification. The skull found at Gardar, Greenland, in 1926 belonged, in my view, to a Taller-hominid, a relative of mankind that has lived and in all likelihood still lives in that part of the world. The Taller-hominids have been described by the Eskimos and described elsewhere in North America as bygone inhabitants. Their lineage is known and goes back millions of years to fossil finds in Africa. The Gardar skull, the Taller-hominid the Eskimos have known, and the ancestry of the skull will all be taken up in this article.

The skull is illustrated in Fig. 1. The context in which it was found is as important as the appearance of the skull itself. Gardar was a Viking settlement in southern Greenland. Keith tells us:

By the twelfth century the Norse settlement at Gardar -- in the modern district of Ikaliko -- had so prospered that it built a Cathedral and buried its dead in a neighboring churchyard. In 1926, when an archaeological expedition sent out by the National Museum of Copenhagen visited the locality, Gardar had become a memory; it had to be searched for with the spade. In the course of excavations the old burial place was opened; about fifty graves were examined. In one was found the remains of a bishop, with his staff by his side and his gold ring on the bones of his finger. The men and women found in the other graves -- all of the twelfth century -- were the descendants of the Vikings. Some of the men buried in these graves had strongly built bones and skulls. In one grave was found a lower jaw so massive that it caught the attention of the excavators; this jaw, with a part of an equally massive skull from the same grave, and also skeletons from adjacent graves, were retained and duly carried to Copenhagen, where they were deposited in the laboratory of Professor F.C.C. Hansen early in 1927. The massive piece of skull and the lower jaw, Professor Hansen observed, were in the same state of preservation as the other bones. They were parts of a man who lived in Gardar in the twelfth century and was buried there in a Norse churchyard, under the shadow of the Cathedral. [2]

Our knowledge of the Gardarene Skull comes from a chapter devoted to it in **New Discoveries Relating to the Antiquity of Man** by Sir Arthur Keith (1866-1955). The Scottish anthropologist first learned of the skull in a newspaper article. Later, upon communicating his view of the skull to Prof. Hansen, Keith received drawings, photographs, and measurements from Hansen.

The two had somewhat different views of the origin of the skull. Hansen was an expert on the Eskimos. Writes Keith, "in his opinion the cranial fragments were devoid of all Eskimoid traits; he ascribed them to an ancient Norseman who, by some freak of inheritance, had suddenly reverted to an early stage of human evolution."

When presented with Keith's views Hansen held to his original view, citing "the regular proportions seen in the jaw and cranial bones of the Gardarene skull and the harmony of all of its features."

Sir Arthur Keith held the view that the skull was an extreme case of acromegaly, a pathological enlargement of the bones due to overactivity in the pituitary gland.

Keith's observations included these:

...the Gardarene skull, like those of Neanderthal and Rhodesian men, was very long and low. Further, it was stamped with primitive marks: the bony attachment for the neck was enormous, theinion projected backwards to an extreme degree, the lambda was low in position; the lines which mark the upper limits of the temporal muscles almost met along the middle line of the vault, as in the female gorilla. The lower jaw was such as I had never seen before in any kind of skull, human or anthropoid, so massive was it. [3]

Keith's view was that acromegaly would bring about the same results as found in primitive man. He wrote that "the cranial and facial features of primitive men and those of acromegalic men and women are of the same nature -- only in primitive man they were produced by a normal or physiological action, whereas in the acromegalic they are the result of an abnormal or pathological action."

As Keith notes in his chapter, he and Hansen were not far apart in their views on the skull. Hansen saw it as representing a leap backward to a primitive stage. Keith saw acromegaly as bringing about the same result.

A modern view of the Gardarene skull puts it into a context that neither Hansen nor Keith considered. We co-exist with the living descendants of the Neanderthals, Rhodesian men, and other fossil men and apes. They are not extinct. They remain mostly out of sight but are still around. [4]

The Eskimos, for example, have always spoken of the Tornit (singular = Tuneq), a tall and somewhat backward people who once shared their land. The Tornit tried to live like the Eskimos, but the two peoples did not get along very well. The Eskimos eventually found it convenient to kill off the backward Tornit. However, some of them are still thought to survive in remote locations in the Far North.

From anthropological sources here is what we know of this people.

The **Handbook of the Indians of Canada**, published in Ottawa in 1913, provides an excellent summary of the subject.

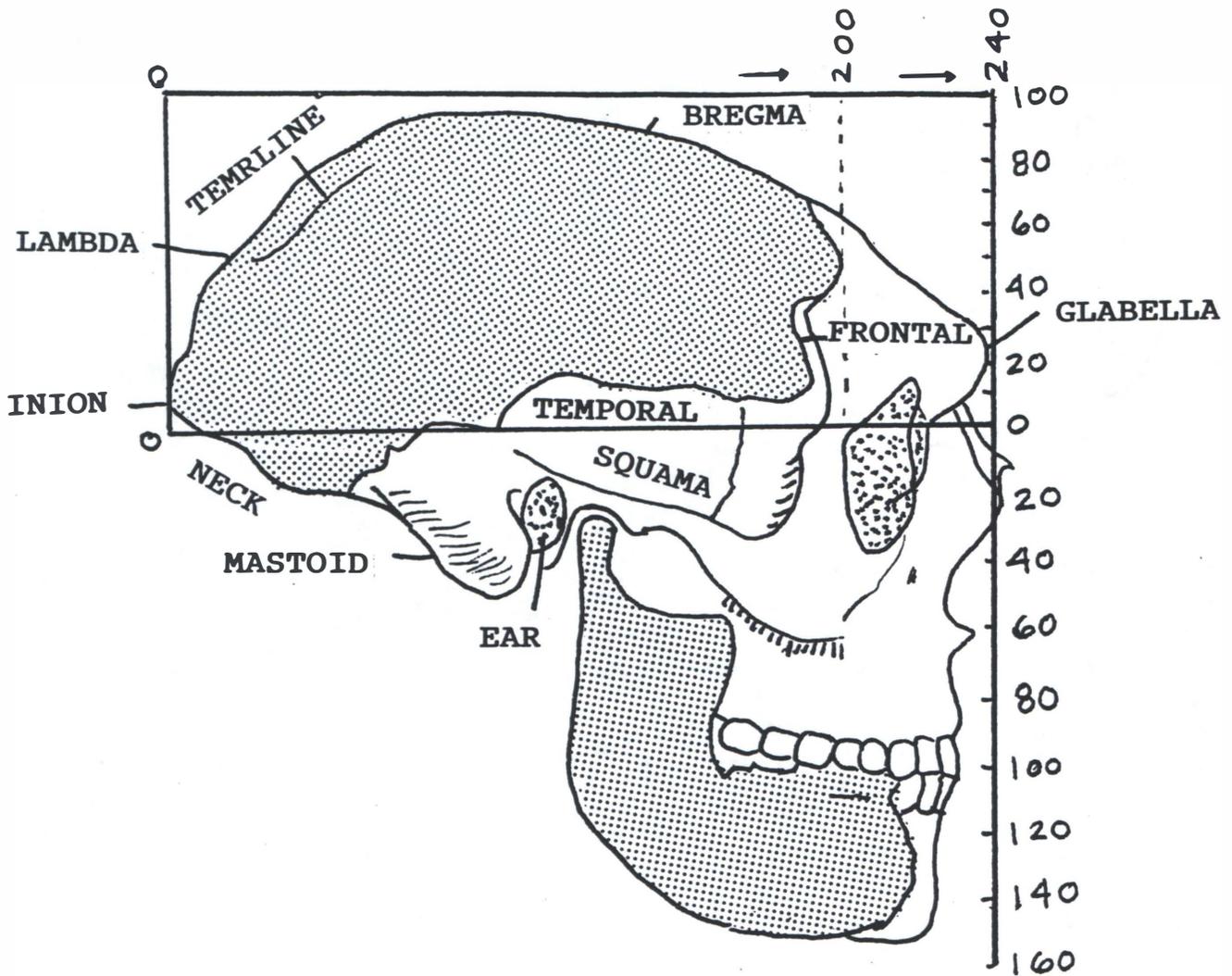


Fig. 1. Professor Hansen's reconstruction of the complete skull of *Homo gardarensis*. On the drawing Keith has "indicated the subcerebral plane and erected on it a framework of lines, 100 mm. high and 240 mm. long in place of the usual 190 mm." The shaded areas are the recovered bones. The reconstruction is shown by outline. After Keith's Fig. 176 in *New Discoveries*, p. 485.

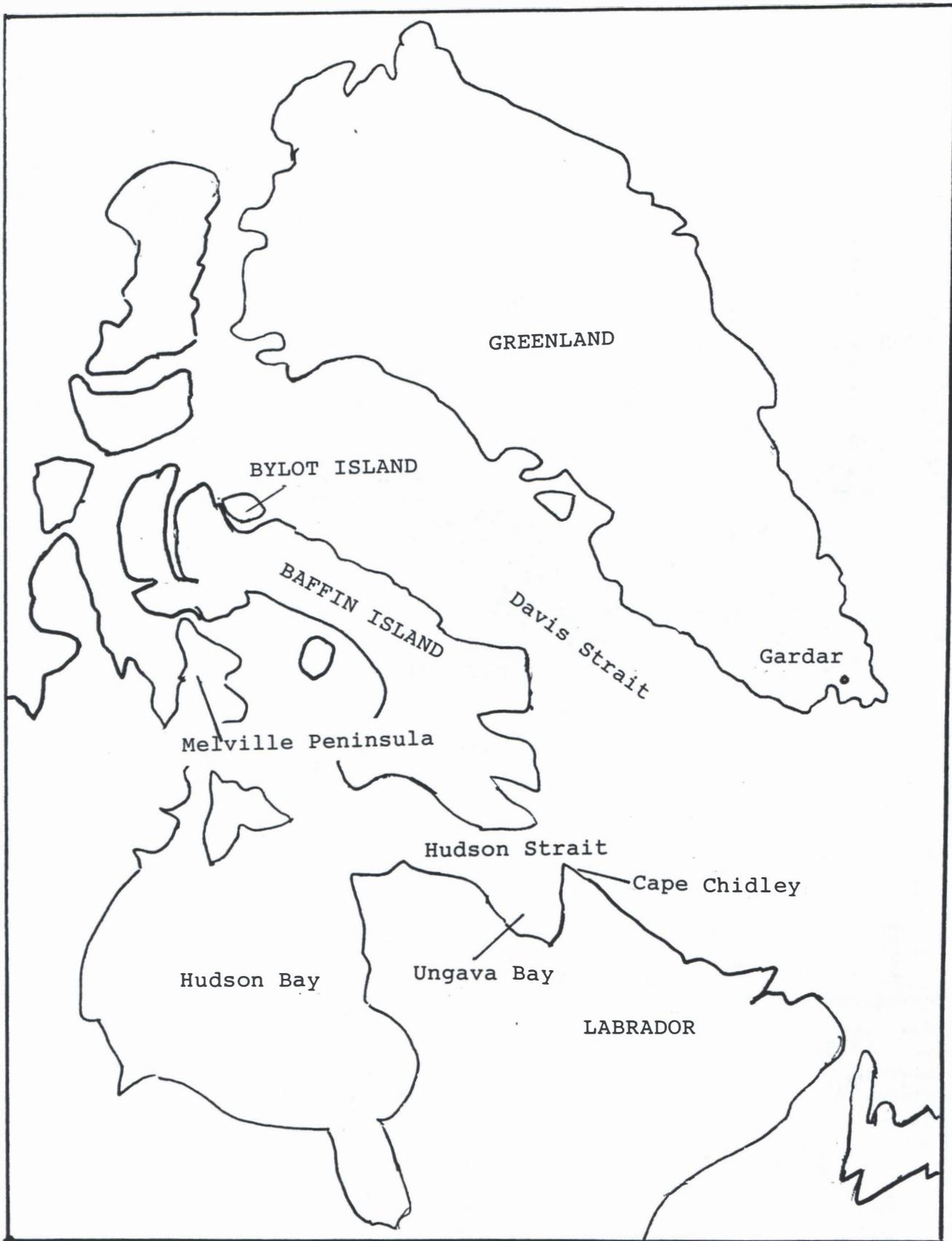


Fig. 2. The area reputedly inhabited by the Tornit.

**Tornit.** A fabulous race which the Central Eskimo believe to be akin to themselves, but much taller and stronger, having very long arms and legs and being able to toss huge boulders as though they were pebbles. The Akudnirmiut call them Tuniqdjuait. They lived with the Eskimo in stone houses larger than theirs, as shown by the ruins that are still pointed out. Under their long deerskin coats they carried lamps with which to cook their meat of seals as soon as they were killed. They could make stone implements only, no bows nor kiaks, but these they stole from the Eskimo, who were afraid to defend their property until a young Eskimo drilled a hole in the skull of one of them who had ruined his kiak, while the giant was asleep. The Tornit then feared that they would all be killed, and secretly stole away, cutting off the skirts of their coats and tying up their hair so that they should not be recognized if pursued. The Greenland Eskimo believed the Tornit to be a mythical race of giants who lived on the ice cap and were seen rarely hunting at the heads of the fiords. The Labrador Eskimo, like those of the Hudson bay and Baffin island, imagine them to be more like themselves. -- Boas in 6th Rep. B.A.E., 634, 640, 1888; Trans. Roy. Soc. Can., v, sec. 2, 38, 1888. [5]

In **Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo** Dr. Henry Rink (1819-1893) gives this account of them:

The natives of Labrador tell how our ancestors and the **tunneks** (or **tunnit**, in Greenlandish **tornit**, plural of **tunek**) in days of yore lived together; but the tunneks fled from fear of our people, who used to drill holes in their foreheads while yet alive. With this view they removed from here to the north, crossing over to Killinek (Cape Chudleigh). While dwelling among us they had sealskins with the blubber attached for bedrobes. Their clothes were made in the same way. Their weapons were formed of slate and hornstone, and their drills of crystal. They were strong and formidable, especially one of them, called by the name of Jauranat, from which is formed **javianarpok** Greenlandish, **navianarpok**). Huge blocks of stone are still to be seen which they were able to move. Some ruins of their houses are also to be found here and there in our country, chiefly upon the islands, having been built of stones, and differing from the abodes of our people. One of the our ancestors when kayaking had a tunnek for his companion, who had a bird-spear, the points of which were made of walrus-tooth. [6]

Writing in **Danish Greenland** in 1877 Dr. Rink mentions the Tornit in this way:

Various beings, partly resembling mankind, partly beasts, people the vast interior of the country. The most renowned 'inlanders' are the 'tuneks,' who have their dwellings also in regions frequently visited by man, the entrances to their habitations being covered with sod and shrubs. They are twice, or even several times, as large as men, and very conversant with sorcery. [7]

One of the few to write at length on the Tornit was Ernest William Hawkes (1883-?) in *The Labrador Eskimo*. [8] Here is some of what he had to say:

Tunnit (Tornit, Baffin Island), according to tradition, were a gigantic race formerly inhabiting the northeastern coast of Labrador, Hudson strait, and southern Baffin island. Ruins of old stone houses and graves, which are ascribed to them by the present Eskimo, are found throughout this entire section, penetrating only slightly, however, into Ungava bay. Briefly we may say that there is evidence, archaeological as well as traditional, that the Tunnit formerly inhabited both sides of Hudson strait. The oldest Eskimo of northern Labrador still point out these ruins, and relate traditions of their having lived together until the Tunnit were finally exterminated or driven out by the present Eskimo.

\* \* \*

For all their bigness and strength, the Tunnit were a stupid slow-going race (according to the Eskimo version), and fell an easy prey to the Eskimo, who used to stalk them and hunt them down like game. They did not dare to attack them openly, so cut them off, one by one, by following them, and attacking and killing them when asleep.... The Tunnit built their houses of heavy rocks, which no Eskimo could lift. They used rocks for walls, and whale ribs and shoulders blades for the roof. Ruins of these houses can still be seen, overgrown with grass, with the roof fallen in. They may be distinguished from old Eskimo iglus by the small, square space they occupy.

The Tunnit did not use the bow and arrow, but flint-headed lances and harpoons with bone or ivory heads. They were so strong that one of them could hold a walrus as easily as an Eskimo a seal.

\* \* \*

Until trouble arose between them, the Tunnit and the Eskimo used to intermarry, but after it was found that an alien wife would betray her husband to her people, no more were taken. A Tunek woman, who betrayed the Eskimo of the village she lived in to the Tunnit, had her arms cut off. After that no women were taken on either side.

Katherine Scherman, in her 1956 book *Spring on an Arctic Island*, heard the oral history telling of the Tornit on northern Baffin Island. She saw ruins on Bylot Island attributed to them. [9]

Raised boulders on the Melville Peninsula were attributed to the Tornit by the Eskimo. They were visited and photographed by E. H. Mitchell of the Hudson Bay Company. [10]

We lack contemporary records of encounters with the Tornit. If they are still seen in the modern day, no one has made the kind of records we would like. Elsewhere in North America we have descriptions of appearance and behavior, and records of tracks for such "wildmen." In records elsewhere there are creatures that parallel the Tornit in the characteristics the Eskimos give. This similarity causes me to equate the Tornit with the unrecognized primate I call

the Taller-hominid. The Taller-hominids appear to have lived at one time in groups beside both the Eskimos and the American Indians. While taller and stronger than their neighbors, these primates were not as bright. They came to blows with their competitors and have been driven into hiding in places around North America. They are still seen and reported in scattered locations from Alaska to Florida. They are a distinct group among the several kinds of primates seen in living form but still not acknowledged officially by human beings.

The Gardarene skull in my opinion is quite likely to be the remains of a Tuneq (Tunek). I would suggest that a situation developed in southern Greenland on a parallel with the famous case of Zana in the Caucasus. As described by Myra Shackley in *Still Living?*, a female **Almas** lived in a mountain village and was "domesticated." [11] The **Almas** is not the same as the Taller-hominid in my view, but this distinction is not important. Both creatures at issue were of sufficient intelligence to join human beings and to be accepted as a member of the community. Both Zana and the Gardarene creature lived out their lives with humans and were accorded a burial among the human graves.

It is my surmise that a Tuneq became familiar with the population of the community of Gardar in the twelfth century A.D. At the time of the death of this individual, he was buried in the churchyard.

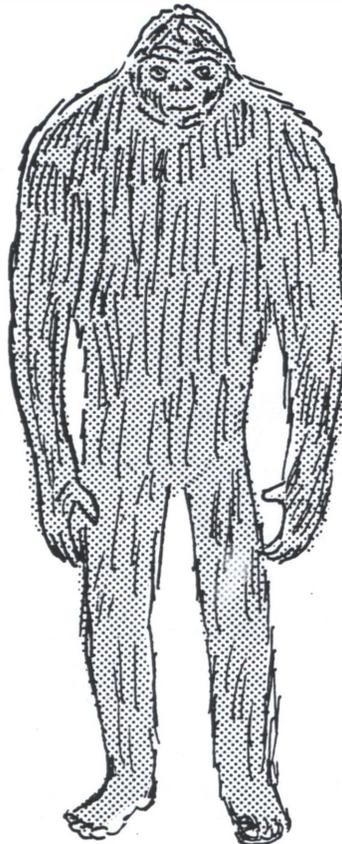


Fig. 3. The Taller-hominid as reported in North America and Asia. The typical height is seven feet.

The Taller-hominid is represented outside of North America as well. In Asia the same tall, thin, muscular primate has been reported. Typically it is about seven feet tall. (See Fig. 3.) Better records of the unknown primates in the future are likely to identify this type as a widespread species. I think its lineage will ultimately be traced back through *Pithecanthropus dubius* (Sangiran 5) [12] in Southeast Asia and Rhodesian Man in Africa.

Proof of my view of the Gardarene skull will come when other skulls of Taller-hominids are recognized and properly described. We may already have such skulls. They were found in northern Minnesota in 1968. The find was kept secret for four years. By the time they were publicized they had been sent to the Smithsonian Institution and lost. [13] Along with California's "Minaret Skull" [14] they have joined the "Modern Museum of Lost Unique Bones" that science has fumbled away into uselessness. We cannot say what the Minnesota bones truly might be because the bones are lost and the U.S. Forest Service has refused to release their description on the pretext that the description includes the locations of archaeological sites. Such repeated blunders are the way of modern science.

In my view the Gardarene skull, *Homo gardarensis*, will one day be recognized as one find of the Taller-hominid. This primate will be found to be still living, perhaps at the back of the fjords of Greenland as the Eskimos claim. This close relative of humankind may even be known one day as *Homo sapiens gardarensis*, so capable and like us did it become.

#### NOTES

1. Arthur Keith, NEW DISCOVERIES RELATING TO THE ANTIQUITY OF MAN (NY: Norton, n.d.), 484. Published circa 1930. "The Problems Raised by the Discovery of *Homo gardarensis*," pp. 483-499.
2. Ibid., 483-4.
3. Ibid., 486.
4. Mark A. Hall, THE YETI, BIGFOOT & TRUE GIANTS (Minneapolis: MAHP, 1994).
5. HANDBOOK OF THE INDIANS OF CANADA, published as an Appendix to the Tenth Report of the Geographic Board of Canada, reprinted by permission of Frederick Webb Hodge, under the direction of James White (Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, 1913), 461.
6. Henry Rink, TALES AND TRADITIONS OF THE ESKIMO (London: Blackwood and Sons, 1875), 469-70.
7. Henry Rink, DANISH GREENLAND: ITS PEOPLE AND ITS PRODUCTS (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1877), 204.
8. Earnest William Hawkes, THE LABRADOR ESKIMO, Memoir 91, Canada Department of Mines Geological Survey, No. 14 Anthropological Series, Ottawa, 1916, pp. 143-150.
9. Katherine Scherman, SPRING ON AN ARCTIC ISLAND (Boston: Little, Brown, 1956), 158-59, 161-63.
10. E. H. Mitchell, "Stones of Mystery," THE BEAVER, December 1953.
11. Myra Shackley, STILL LIVING? (London: Thames & Hudson, 1983), 112.
12. M. Day, GUIDE TO FOSSIL MAN 4th (London: Cassell, 1986), 354.
13. Hall, THE YETI, BIGFOOT & TRUE GIANTS, 93.
14. Ibid., 93, 100-101.

## GIANT SNAKES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by Mark A. Hall

The giant snakes of North America were introduced in *Wonders* for December 1994. They are found first in monuments in stone, earth, and paint created in prehistoric times. Next, oral traditions of the North American Indians have described frightful snakes dozens of feet long. No such snakes are recognized to have existed in North America. Further still, there are records of encounters with giant snakes in Minnesota, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, New York, and Ontario to name a few. Examples of nineteenth century records were presented in the previous issue.

Here I will continue with the accounts of giant snakes reported seen in the twentieth century in states east of the Rocky Mountains, from Montana to Georgia.

### ALABAMA -- EARLY 1900s

The recollections of T.E. Wyatt of the Clanton (Alabama) **Union-Banner** as communicated to Loren Coleman in 1965 included the following:

For several years there was a report of a huge snake down on the Coosa River near Clanton. Several people I talked to said they saw it, sometimes in the water and sometimes out in the bushes near the water. One man said he was walking along a trail and stepped over something he thought was a log, but as he walked away from it, it began to move. He saw it good, and said it was about eight inches in diameter and about thirty feet long. There have been no reports about it since the water was impounded by a hydro-electric dam in 1922.

### INDIANA - 1913-1952

The state of Indiana has a history of reports describing immense snakes from 1913 through 1952. The consideration of such things in Indiana, Ohio, and neighboring states must include an acknowledgment of the past presence of the Great Swamps. Vast swamps once extended through these states. Black Swamp, Limberlost Swamp, and Kankakee Marsh have now vanished. These and lesser swamps were poorly recorded pieces of the landscape that were recalled and described in my **Natural Mysteries**. [1] (See Fig.1.)

When I first came upon the giant snakes of Indiana I was puzzled by their number and locations. Then I pursued the fragmented history of the vanished wetlands of the Great Swamps. I realized these snakes were probably a legacy of the natural landscape that had been cut, ditched, and drained without regard for the wild inhabitants both known and unknown.

For a dozen years, from 1940 to 1952, giant snakes were big news in the state of Indiana. Historical appearances of the big snakes appear not to have been confined to this period. We have the most information about this period due to the resources of the Indiana State Library and to my efforts to extract those reports.

People's recollections in the 1940s hearkened back to snakes seen earlier in the century. The slim older reports that are based on memory and briefly-cited newspaper research would benefit greatly from further research. All the giant snake stories of record would, of course, likely benefit from additional research.

I will present all the reports from Indiana in chronological order. The sources are given with the report. See Fig. 2 for a map of locations in Indiana.

### 1913 - French Lick, Orange County

In 1951 it was recalled that a giant snake "wintered at French Lick in 1913." (Indianapolis News, 3 November 1951)

### ca. 1920 - Adams County

After a snake 18 feet long was reported north of Berne in 1940, it was recalled that its

...first introduction to Adams County was 20 years ago when David Wickey reported he stopped mushroom hunting when the monster hove into view. [Indianapolis Star, 17 November 1940]

Limberlost Swamp was located south of Berne until 1913 when it was drained and its trees were cut. [2]

### 1921 - Petersburg, Pike County

No particulars were given for "the large snake seen near Petersburg recently" in the Winslow (Indiana) Dispatch for 25 November 1921. It was recalled in 1946 and cited in **Doubt: The Fortean Society Magazine** No. 18, p. 273 (1947).

### 1923 - Napoleon, Ripley County

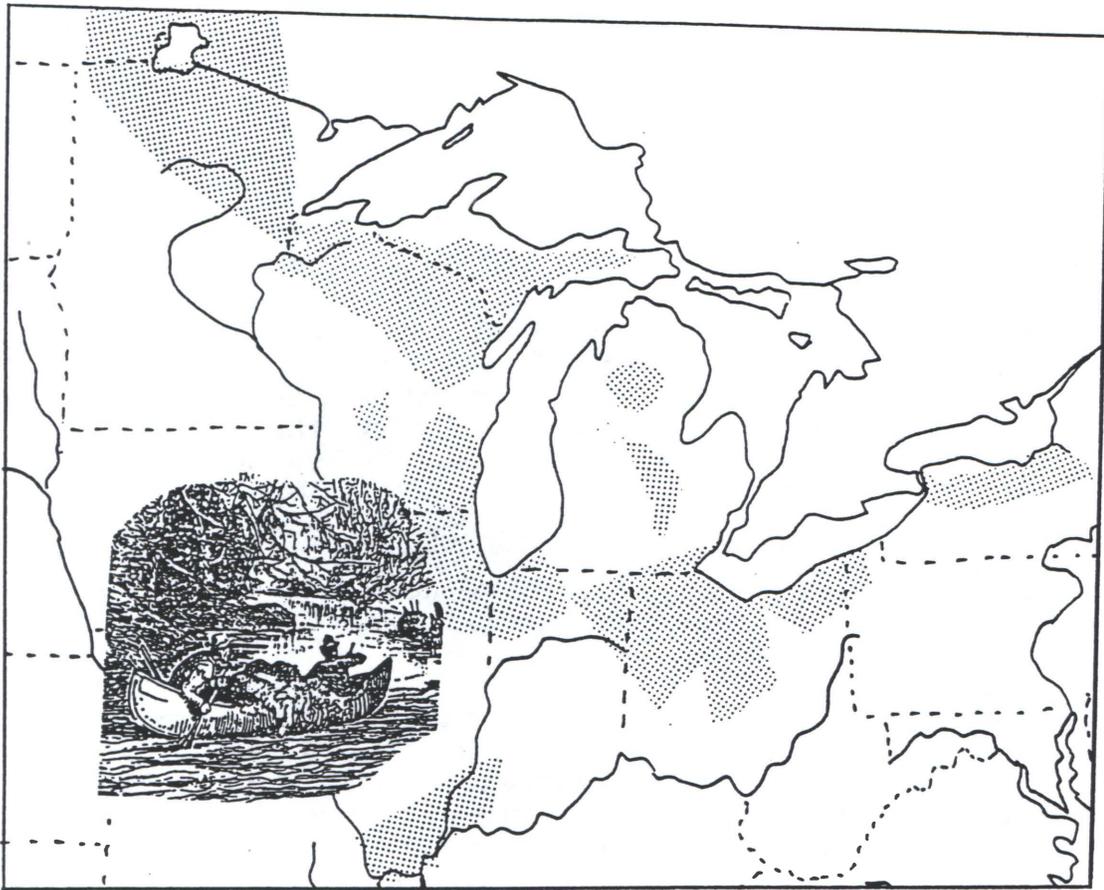
A 1946 hunt for a giant snake near Norristown caused one Shelbyville, Indiana, resident, Mrs. Addie Jones, to relate this story:

In 1923, Mrs. Jones said, a 20-foot snake was seen by several residents in the vicinity of Napoleon shortly after a boa constrictor had escaped from the zoo at Cincinnati.

Cincinnati zoo officials even organized a posse to search for the giant reptile, but a thorough hunt through the wild country of Ripley county failed to locate the monster.

Since boas are wont to live to a ripe old age, Mrs. Jones pointed out that the snake could easily have made its way northwest as far as Shelby county.

She recalled that her husband, who died nine years ago, once saw the Ripley county snake's tracks in a wheat field and said the description was identical to that given by those who have seen the serpent's tracks near Norristown. [Shelbyville, Indiana, Democrat, 8 July 1946]



**Fig. 1.** The Great Swamps extended through states bordering on the Great Lakes.

As we will see, there is no record of Ohio zoo officials returning to Indiana in 1926, 1937, 1940, 1946, 1951, and 1952 to search for such a missing boa. Perhaps it is possible for a zoo in Ohio to lose a boa, if this occurred, and for people to see unrelated snakes in Indiana. It is natural to look for such connections, as the record will also show, but such connections have not been established.

#### **1926 - Jasper, Dubois County**

Again during 1946, a member of the Fortean Society (i.e., MFS) was the source of a recollection.

MFS Kerr writes as an old Hoosier that he saw a whopper about two miles from Jasper in the Summer of 1926 AD. He tried to kill it but the snake laughed at him. [from *Doubt*, No. 18. p. 273 (1947)].

#### **1937 - Adams County**

Recalled in 1940:

Harvey Laughry while cutting oats three years ago said he saw a snake, its head reared above the oats, going through the field almost as fast as a horse can run.

Section hands also say they have seen the huge reptile. [Indianapolis *Star*, 17 November 1940]

#### 1940 - Berne, Adams County

From the Indianapolis News for 17 November 1940:

Well, that big snake's prowling around again. Carl Schug, a farmer living north of Berne, said he saw the snake a few days ago while working the field. Eighteen feet long, thick as a fence post and with its head at least three feet in the air, the monster was racing down the field, Schug said.

#### 1943 - White River, Pike County

Snakes reported in 1946 caused a news report from Pike County to inform the readers of the Indianapolis Star for 5 August 1946:

What excites the citizens of Pike County most is that for some seven years, local legend has it, a snake answering to the generally vague description of the Flat Rock [i.e., Norristown] version, had made its headquarters around Cato. But three years ago fisherman saw it, supposedly, swim the White River and crawl up the opposite bank into Daviess County.

#### 1943 - Shelby County

After the Norristown snake surfaced, an editorial in the Indianapolis News for 6 July 1946 called it the "scaly old rapscaillon who hadn't been seen around those parts since 1943. A man who saw it then said it was at least twenty feet long. Looked something like a snake, he said, only much more bizarre, one gathers."

#### 1946 - Norristown, Shelby County

Big snakes were in the news around Indiana in 1946. The excitement brought back into the news many of the previous reports. Snakes were seen in Shelby County, Pike County, and Marion County. The Adams County reports cited for 1920, 1937, and 1940 were not mentioned in any of the 1946 reporting that I have read.

The Shelby County sensation began in July of 1946. Mary E. Bostwick, writing in the Indianapolis Star for 7 July, told the world:

George Gearhart, a Norristown farmer, saw its tracks in a cornfield on the banks of the Flat Rock River a few days ago. Mr. Gearhart was running a cultipacker and rotary hoe, and noticed the track, running at right angles to the furrows. It reached for about 50 feet, and whatever made it was so heavy it packed down the dirt for a width of about 10 inches and squashed little wild morning glory plants.

"I thought at first it was made by somebody dragging something," said Mr. Gearhart, "but there weren't any footprints of any sort. I wish I could have gotten a picture of it, but the corn had to be looked after, and the track is gone now."

Mr. Gearhart told about it that night at the general store run by Mr. Orpha Hatton, which is a sort of club for the residents

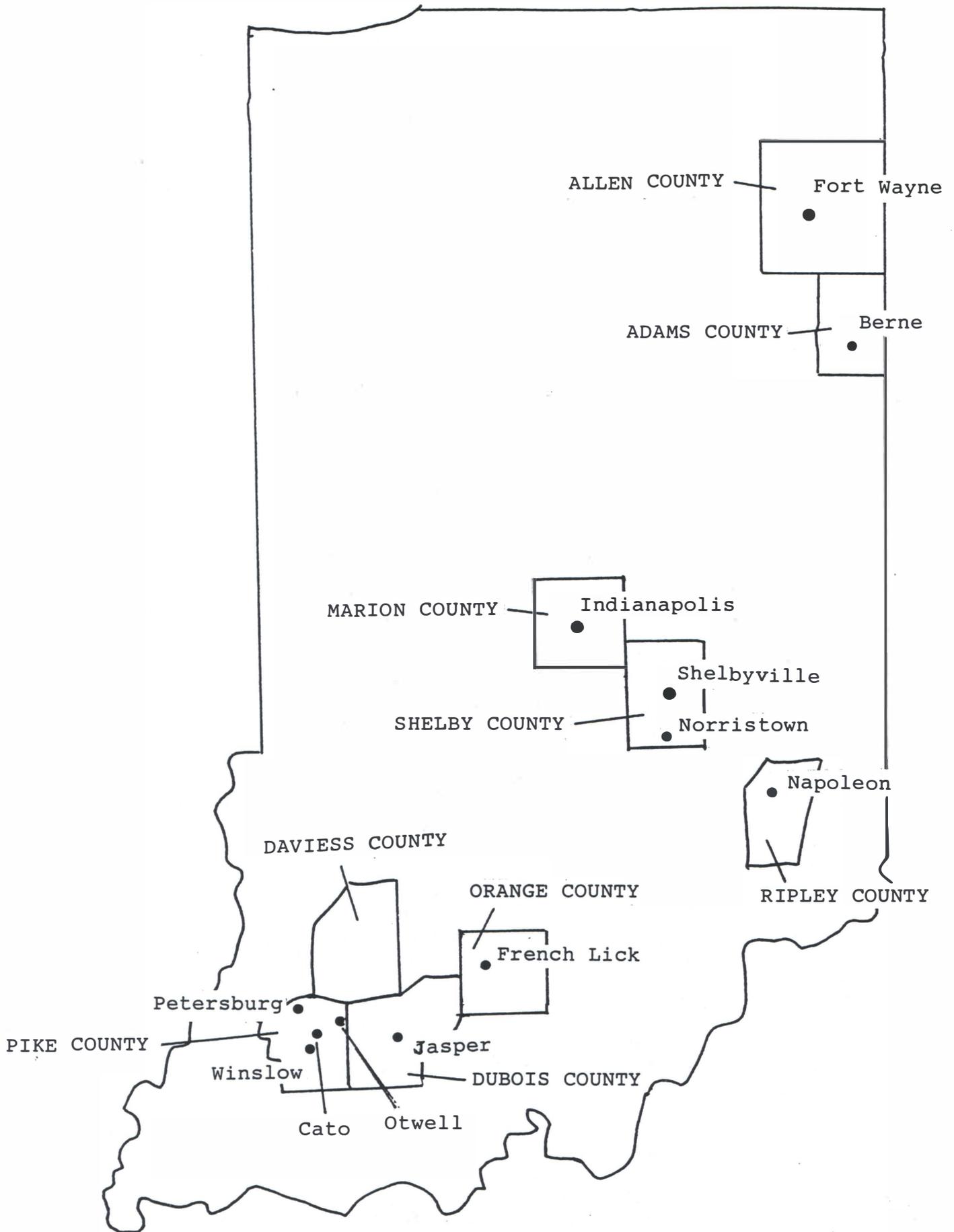


Fig. 2. Locations in Indiana where giant snakes have appeared.

of this little community. This brought forth other reminiscences on the part of his listeners which makes it look as though any zoo or menagerie that lost a big snake within the last few years may possibly find it by coming here and prying around among the limestone caves and caverns that line the banks of the Flat Rock River.

Three men of the community have seen the snake with the last half dozen years or so, and estimate its length from 18 to 25 feet. Robert Collins saw it when he was "dipping for minnows" in Tough Creek, a tributary of Flat Rock, a few years ago. He left his minnows and departed rapidly. Dolph Harrod was coming along in his car, driving along a winding road, when the snake slid across the road. George Slusher saw it in a cornfield.

In early July two score of Boy Scouts combed the bottomlands of Flat Rock River. News of the snake had been spreading. Campers arrived from around the state hoping to see the thing. [Shelbyville Democrat, 13 July 1946] Later Norristown was visited by a man who identified himself as a "trainer of jungle beasts." He was Alfred A. New of Pendleton, Indiana. He declared that he would pitch a tent and spend a week at the Flat Rock River. He would see the "python" (for such he said it was) and then catch it with his bare hands. A private detective from Indianapolis, Robert M. Dodd, also inquired after the snake by interviewing George Gearhart. [Shelbyville Democrat, 27 July; Indianapolis Times, 26 July]

The snake made no appearance until the weekend of 20-21 July.

The three who are telling all comers about their week-end experience are George Gearhart, whose discovery of the snake's tracks a few weeks ago revived the serpent story after a three-year lull; Ralph Keller, Gearhart's son-in-law, and Ray Rush. Gearhart lives in Norristown and the other two live south of the town.

Plowing with a tractor near the east end of Cozy Bluff, the three men went to the river to get water for their tractor.

Suddenly one of them spotted a moving object which looked like a huge fish, two-thirds of the way across the stream. Then another fish-like object appeared ahead of the first. Then a third. It was the undulating body of the serpent -- they'll swear to it.

To clinch the deal, they'll even tell you they saw its huge head.

One of the men rushed to their car, where they had a .22 caliber rifle, and returned while the serpent was still in sight. They fired five shots at it with the small-caliber weapon and it disappeared after the fifth.

The snake was at least 100 feet away when they spotted it, however, and none of the men thinks the .22's would have hurt it much.

How big was it this time?

"Why, it was as big around as a telegraph pole -- and just

as long," Gearhart will tell you. [Shelbyville Democrat, 22 July 1946]

#### 1946 - Pike County

On 4 August a report from Petersburg told of the disappearance of Glennie Craig's cat. Craig lived "two miles south of Otwell and about six miles northeast of Cato."

Last night the dog howled somewhat more perniciously than usual, Craig reports, and this morning at feeding time there was no cat out front but only a long track about five inches in width that could have been made by a snake but certainly was not made by a dog dragging away a cat. Craig has not disturbed the track and spent most of the day showing it to curious visitors. [Indianapolis Star, 5 August 1946]

#### 1946 - Indianapolis, Marion County

In early August of 1946 another monster snake was heard of on the edge of Indianapolis, perhaps having emerged from the White River. It was reported by Fremont Power of the Indianapolis News on 7 August as having been seen "the other afternoon." Here is his account in full:

##### MONSTER SNAKE GETS BOLDER, INVADES YARD OF FARM HOME

by Fremont Power

It was enough to chill the blood in your veins. Anybody's veins except Henry Rood's, anyway.

The thing was long -- twenty-five feet, at least -- and when it moved it hunched up the middle part of its body, swayed wildly from side to side and then lurched forward at a gait that would freeze your heart. It never took those two brilliant eyes off you. And you shouldn't take yours off it.

While the thing swayed and lurched and came always closer, it kept opening and closing its mouth, a mouth big enough to swallow a fifty pound pig, squeal and all.

For a man, it might take two swallows. But he acted hungry enough.

It was a writhing creature that a man's memory never will free him from, that snake that Henry Rood saw as he sat quietly on the porch the other afternoon at the Russell A. Jennings farm, about a mile and a half west of Road 52 in Forty-sixth street. That's where Mr. Rood lives and where he told this story today with gestures and frequent pointings to just where it happened.

Maybe that Norristown snake is traveling. Or was it a Petersburg snake to begin with? Of course, it doesn't really make much difference.

"I was just sitting there on the porch by myself," Mr. Rood said. "That was before we got it screened in."

"Well, I heard a rustling in the weeds right out there." He

pointed to a stretch of knee-high weeds twenty feet from the porch.

"I looked over there and that head was sticking out there then. Then it began to move out and still you couldn't see the end of its tail."

Mr. Rood hesitated for an ill-advised interruption.

"What did I think? Why, I thought that's a snake and a big one. I wasn't scared.

"I just sat there quiet. I didn't say anything. He came right up there," he recounted, pointing to the second crack from the end of a short sidewalk off the porch.

"He'd hunch up his middle and rock back and forth and then he'd go. And all the time he was opening and that mouth of his. That was an awful mouth. Why, it could've swallowed a fifty-pound pig."

Mr. Rood patiently paused for another interruption.

"Eyes? It had the awfulest eyes you ever saw. Right in the top corners of its head. They were kind of snapping, and brilliant. And it had 'em right one me.

"It got up to there. No, about there. About ten feet."

Mr. Rood marked the place by drawing the edge of his shoe across the grass.

"Then I said to myself, 'Boy, you're getting too close,' I ran and jumped off the end of the porch and called to the men folks but they didn't hear me.

"When I yelled he took out. Like lightning, I tell you he was.

"I'd have given \$10 for a camera or" -- and Mr. Rood's eyes snapped in a menacing way -- "a shotgun. Why, I could've shot right down his throat.

"Well, he's nowhere around here now. That's sure. Those things travel by night. Oh, they can travel all right.

"It was about so big," Mr. Rood explained, making a circle about eight inches in diameter. "But his head was the biggest thing about him.

"He was gray on the sides and darker on top. And he was twenty-five feet long if he was one. Why, he could have tied you up in a minute."

Mr. Rood was ready for a question.

"Yeh, a couple of them kidded me about drinking down at the filling station on the corner. But you know, I don't drink whiskey. Maybe a glass of beer now and then."

Mr. Rood, who was third owner of the Spencer hotel from 1890 to 1938, is eighty-six now and never in his life has he seen a snake like that one.

But then, few have. Or ever will.

\* \* \* \* \*

A photograph with Power's story had this caption:

"He had a mouth so-o-o big" -- "He had a mouth, oh, it was that big." Henry Rood tells Roll Hamilton. That snake that Mr. Rood saw before Roll came to live with his aunt on the Russell A. Jennings farm northwest of town. It's a story Roll will probably hear often.

When this encounter occurred is not clear from the content of the article. It appears to have happened weeks or months prior to August 1946 and to have been taken down due to the snake excitement that began in July.

#### 1951 - Flat Creek, Pike County

A dispatch from Pike County appeared in the Indianapolis News for 3 November 1951. Here is the complete text:

Petersburg, Ind., Nov. 3 -- A 17-foot snake almost as long as Ind. 61 is wide and 3 to 4 inches in diameter was sighted last night in Flat Creek bottoms by Bud Martin, a miner.

The appearance of the monster raised speculation that it is the same giant snake that wintered at French Lick in 1913.

It has been seen repeatedly in Pike County up to 10 years ago, when it was sighted near Cato, having come down the Patoka River in the high waters and then worked its way up Flat Creek.

However, since that time nothing had been reported on the snake until Martin observed it.

Recently Patoka Coal Co. began stripping coal in Flat Creek bottoms, about 1 ½ miles east of where Martin saw the reptile. The stripping shovel may have unearthed the snake's winter quarters and the reptile may have been seeking a new place for hibernation.

Martin said the snake wriggled across Ind. 61 and disappeared into some weeds.

#### 1952 - Fort Wayne, Allen County

My records of snakes in Indiana stop in 1952 with the Great Snake Hunt for "Pete the Python" in Allen County. Pete was no one's pet. Here is another of those snakes said to have been seen for years in the area. But let's not get ahead in our story. You should be advised that Fort Wayne is at the western end of what once was the dreaded Black Swamp, a place of ill-repute and a menace to land navigation until the mid-nineteenth century. [3]

The Black Swamp may have been the breeding place for the kind of snake that crossed a road on the edge of Fort Wayne on 13 June 1952. The next day the United Press reported:

Sheriff Harold Zeis and a posse beat thick underbrush in a city park along Spy Run Creek today for a big snake described by a building contractor's family as "18 feet long, sickening blue, with a head as big as a bulldog's."

The D. A. Crance family of Ft. Wayne reported they stopped their auto on Ind. 234 Friday night to let the snake cross the road. All four members of the family said it was "the biggest snake we ever saw."

"The thing raised its head three feet off the ground," said Mrs. Crance, who was driving. Mr. Crance pointed to a 14-foot two-by-four timber and said the snake was longer and thicker.

Sheriff Zeis said he investigated and saw the snake's trail.

He said he didn't doubt the story and thought the snake might have escaped from a carnival or circus.

A check showed no shows in the area lost snakes recently and Mr. Zeis contacted Michigan state police after he heard a rumor one or more snakes escaped from a carnival in that state. [Indianapolis Times, 14 June 1952]

Here is how the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel introduced the story to its readers on 14 June:

Snake-hunting today became Fort Wayne's favorite outdoor sport. A clearly marked trail and the report of the D. A. Crance family, R. R. 3, who so far are the only persons to have seen the reptile, have inaugurated a search for a snake described as being 18 feet long and about five inches in diameter.

Crance, his wife, and some 30 of their neighbors took up the search this morning where the trail disappeared Friday near the intersection of Cambridge Drive and U.S. Highway 30.

Shortly after 1 p.m. Sheriff Harold Zeis, who led the search Friday, had an organized posse of about 100 men, drawn from the emergency reserves, conservation clubs, and the Izaak Walton League, covering the same territory.

Zeis called out the 24-man mounted posse from the Sheriff's Emergency Reserves, even though horses have a natural fear of snakes.

Lt. Charles Morrow and Sgt. Guy Foltz of the mounted group planned to take advantage of that natural fear, because the horses will become nervous when they are in the vicinity of the snake.

A plane and walkie-talkie radios were being used in the search.

Fearing the snake has entered the city, two men from the Park Board were patrolling Franke Park, and all police cars in the area were alerted to be looking for the reptile and to be prepared to assist promptly if anyone locates it. [Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, 14 June 1952]

Later this same article got around to reporting the specifics of the snake being sought:

The snake was spotted Friday by the Crances while driving east on the California Road. At first they thought it was a log but then the reptile raised its head as high as the automobile's radiator ornament. Mrs. Crance stopped the car, and the snake sped into the brush along the road.

The snake's head was unlike any the Crances had ever seen before. It resembled a doubled fist rather than the triangular-shaped heads they had seen on snakes in this country.

The color was described as grayish blue but the body had some darker markings.

Officials were fearful that the snake was of the constrictor type.

Sheriff Zeis and Deputy Frank Nagel began following the trail the snake had left across plowed fields and grass on the

Harry Stolte and Fred J. Kraft farms, northwest of the city, and along the Newhouse Ditch.

Indiana State Police were checking to determine whether any snakes had escaped from zoos or carnival sideshows.

Harry G. Rapp, Hayden Road, told the Sheriff's Department today that he had seen a pale blue snake about 11 feet long and four inches in diameter about three weeks ago. It was spotted along the Wabash Railroad tracks near Hayden Road.

The Fort Wayne **Journal-Gazette** for 14 June reported that the snake was traveling east when seen. Also, Mrs. Crance "was afraid to drive over the snake thinking parts of it might be whipped through the open windows. In the bright sunlight, the Crances said, the reptile was a sickly blue in color." It was reported elsewhere that Mrs. Crance had read of an incident where a snake was run over and the head had been whipped into the car window and the driver was bitten by the snake.

The next day Wesley D. Bashore had some progress to report in the Fort Wayne **Journal-Gazette** for 15 June:

The hunters believe they have tracked the snake down to its probable lair in the square mile bounded by the California Road, U.S. Highway 30, the Butler Road, and the Hillegas Road.

More specifically Sheriff Harold S. Zeis said the evidence uncovered yesterday appears to limit the snake's normal habitat to the Parker Whiting farm on the Butler Road.

The farm is almost due south of the spot where the Crances first encountered the reptile. At first they thought a log had fallen across the road. They stopped their car. Then the "log" reared its head about the height of the radiator cap.

"It had a head like a bulldog," Mrs. Crance said at the time. She added that it stretched across the complete width of the road, about 18-feet wide. She estimated its diameter to be about five inches.

After a quick glance the snake slithered off into the bushes. The Crances, whose two children were also in the car, said it was a "sickly blue" color.

"Apparently it has been living in the hollows in the area for years," Sheriff Zeis said. "Probably living off the wildlife, chickens and pigs, and making its home in muskrat holes or haymows during the winter."

Later in his article Bashore reported how the snake had been seen in the area for at least ten years:

The only evidence found by the hunters was pointed towards the Whiting farm. The crawling path was discernible by the way the weeds lay. Zeis said they found one spot where the snake had crawled through a fence.

The path led up to the fence and the tall weeds had been pushed over the lower strand of wire where the reptile had slithered across the barricade. They also found a spot where it had coiled up for a while.

Chris Prange, who farms the Whiting farm, said the snake had been seen in the area, off and on, for years. He said he was driving a team of horses and a wagon through a field there about 10 years ago, when the snake reared up under the wagon. The horses, in turn, reared and bolted. Other old-timers in the area relate similar stories.

Bashore concluded his piece with the inevitable comments from a reptile expert:

Robert Sneedgar, curator of reptiles at the Brookfield Zoo near Chicago, had some comment last night about seeing snakes.

He said the Crances may actually have seen a pilot black snake, which is blue-black in color, but grows only six-feet long. It is native to Indiana.

A python, he said, grows longer and has blue iridescence, "but they don't have heads the size of bulldog's."

Most people, he said, "always see snakes as longer and more frightening than they actually are."

The Crances vehemently stick to their story.

The evening of the next day the snake was seen again. The **Journal-Gazette** gave it a name. Now it was "Pete the Python."

"Pete" the python, an illusive reptile of "fire hose" proportions, reportedly was sighted again at the northern edge of the city last night.

Three young persons said they spotted what appeared to be a huge snake in the glare of the headlights of their car on Parnell Avenue about 200 yards south of the California Road. That was about 9:15 p.m.

Eugene Le Favour, 21, of 2102 Cambridge Blvd., a shipping dispatcher with the General Electric Company here, said he stopped his car immediately.

"I was curious to see what it was," Eugene said, "it looked like a fire hose."

Violet Schnieders, 22, and Marguerite Schnieders, 17, sisters, both of 228 S. Seminole Circle, who were riding with Le Favour, confirmed seeing what at first looked like a "two-by-four half out in the road."

"Nobody said anything until we saw it move," Violet asserted. "Then somebody -- it wasn't me -- blurted, 'That must be the snake.'"

Le Favour and the two girls said they're convinced they saw only about half the reptile as it slithered off the road in a westerly direction and into the underbrush. They said the part they saw was about eight or 10 feet in length.

"When I first stopped the car I expected that someone was pulling a trick of some kind by pulling a large rope or something across the road," La Favour related. "I got out of the car expecting to find a couple of children but there were none."

La Favour explained that before getting out of the car he parked it off the road with the headlights playing on the spot

where the reptile disappeared.

All three occupants of the car described the snake's movement as "very slow." Le Favour estimated that it took the reptile about 30 seconds to disappear into the underbrush.

Le Favour and the two girls immediately drove to a house near the Parnell Bridge and called the Sheriff's Department reporting what they had seen.

The next day's **Journal-Gazette** (18 June) reported that "a sheriff's posse, armed with mosquito oil, shotguns and floodlights, turned up nothing after searching the area for several hours." Also, taking their cue from the previous day's report, three youngsters made a 15-foot canvas replica of a snake daubed with green and brown paint. They dragged it over a bridge and boulevard in the area, causing some amusement for motorists but no alarm.

The last newspaper report that I found for the Allen County "python" was in the **Journal-Gazette** for 19 June.

Nineteen-year-old Walter Kilmer, 1215 Wall St., got a verbal spanking yesterday after he admittedly faked a tussle with "Mr. Big" of the Allen County snake kingdom near the Parnell Avenue Bridge.

Witnesses said they saw Kilmer beating through the roadside brush with a club. In a short time, every available deputy sheriff and several police officers were beating the brush, too, in a continued search for the reported serpent which has alarmed residents of the northern fringe of the city for a week.

At the scene, Kilmer exhibited a slashed finger. He said he came upon a huge coiled snake just off the pavement during a long hunt for "Pete the Python." After beating at the serpent for some time, Kilmer said, he was bitten and ran for help. He was taken to the Lutheran Hospital for first aid.

As the hunt progressed, something about the whole thing made Sheriff Harold S. Zeis and Deputy Lester King suspicious. Kilmer relented too, as he saw the sweating officers at work in the brush.

"I made it all up," he confessed to the officers. Kilmer did not disclose how he had injured his finger, but he said he was interested in the publicity.

Kilmer was turned loose after a heated session with the two officers.

With this episode the Great Snake Hunt of 1952 on the North Side of Fort Wayne came to an end.

#### OHIO - 1944

For notoriety the rival to the snake hunts of Indiana took place in Ohio in 1944. Dubbed the "Peninsula Python" after an Ohio town, a snake that was guessed to be 15 to 19 feet long was seen and hunted in June and July. We are indebted to Robert Bordner for researching and writing up the events of 1944 for the **Atlantic Monthly** of November 1945. His article appeared under the title "The Peninsula Python:

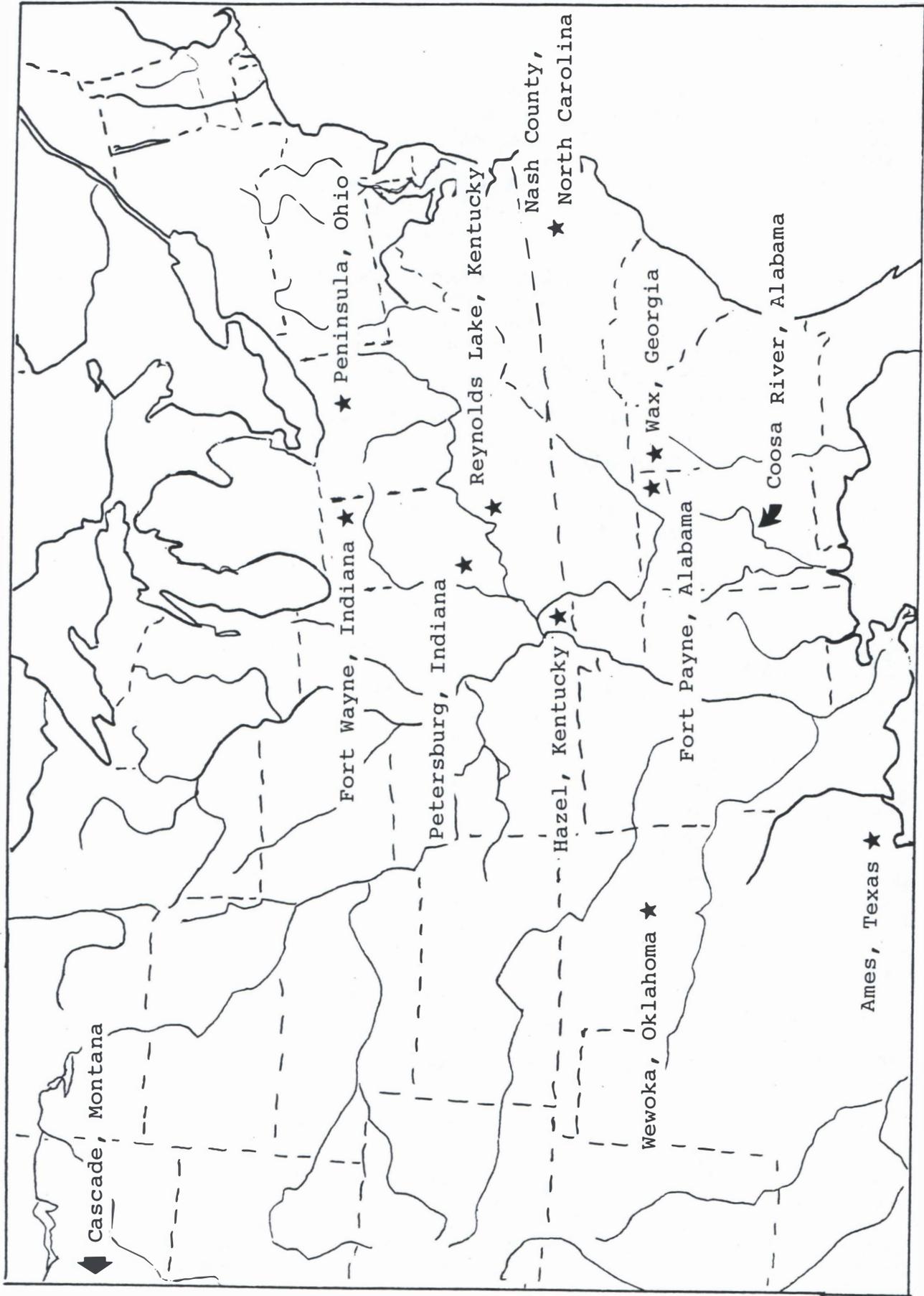


Fig. 3. Locations of giant snakes reported in the twentieth century.

An Absolutely True Story."

The series of events took place in northern Ohio along and near the Cuyahoga River. They began with Clarence Mitchell.

Clarence Mitchell was hoeing his piece of corn ground between Everett swamp and the abandoned bed of the old Ohio Canal on June 8. "Two-three days the dogs were nervous, and finally they wouldn't go over there with me at all," he said. "I thought they was acting kind of funny, but I didn't pay much mind. I don't know what made me look up, but there, about fifteen paces away, was the biggest snake I ever see, sliding along easy and slow in plain sight on the bare ground." [4]

He watched about ten minutes as it slid into the river and crossed over to the other bank. He thought the snake was as thick as his thigh and "every bit of fifteen feet long -- maybe more like eighteen -- sort of brownish spotted." The track it left behind looked like someone had rolled an automobile tire along.

Another man, Mike Bobacek, was working the other side of the river and saw the snake come out of the river on its way eastward.

On 18 June the track of the snake was seen again near Peninsula, Ohio. In Old Cassidy's Bottom two men had disked a field. They came upon a track "like from an auto tire" going from the old bed of the canal to the river.

Two days later the snake became big news and the world began to notice its presence at Peninsula, Ohio. Mrs. Roy Vaughn saw the snake from the second floor of her hen house. It was struggling to get over a fence due to an obvious bulge in its body. It made it over and went down a ravine. A chicken was missing.

The local fire brigade was summoned. They measured the distance that she saw the snake cover. It was nineteen feet. The next Sunday was set for a snake hunt.

The snake story was all over the newswires and radio. The last circus to visit the area was asked if they had lost a snake. They hadn't. The snake experts were saying Ohio snakes didn't get over six feet long. Bordner tells us:

The Columbus Zoo bid \$500 for the beast. Carnival men, concessionaires, hunters, "snakeologists," and just plain screwballs began drifting in, snooping, making offers.

Sunday the 25th of June was a beautiful day for a snake hunt. But the only event was a false alarm -- a bogus phone call -- that sent the posse of snake hunters into the woods and briars where there was no snake. The posse was disbanded. A few select men under the charge of the police chief, Art Huey, would hunt the snake.

On 27 June the snake was reported to the north at Boston Mills. Mrs. Pauline Hopko saw it in a tree across the river. She sent a boy to phone for the snake catchers. He came back with more boys to look at the snake but didn't make the call. When they finally arrived they could only survey what Bordner describes as "the ten-foot weeds, the rank vines, and the tangled flood-plain debris of the river bottoms."

Two days later the snake turned up four miles up Brandywine Creek from the Cuyahoga River. Ernest Raymond thought he saw a stump where none should be. Then it moved. The snake was coiled up and moved its head. Raymond ran for his shotgun. The snake moved off through deep grass.

On the first of July it was seen by Mrs. Ralph Griffin:

I saw something man-high where the path enters the woods at the back of the yard. It was like a man in a white shirt, till I looked good. It was the snake, reared up and looking around, his throat white and shiny.

The snake catchers had no luck along Brandywine Creek. The snake was seen later dropping out of a tree at Boston Mills. Bordner writes that it was "reported a few more times." When winter came it was no longer seen. It was thought to have holed up under the banks of the Cuyahoga.

#### GEORGIA - 1940s

Bob Harrell of the Atlanta **Constitution** interviewed E. F. Entrekin at the age of 67, in 1976. His recollections appeared in Harrell's "Dateline: Georgia" newspaper column. Entrekin was a pipeline inspector. He used to walk the lines in the 1940s, covering 60 miles every six days. His territory stretched from the Etowah River in Floyd County to the Chattahoochee River in Carroll County. The Etowah joins with another river to become the Coosa River that flows through Alabama.

It was in Floyd County between Wax and Seney that Entrekin came upon a large snake.

I was going through honeysuckle and it was dry and rustling. It was shattery. Directly I heard something shatter ahead of me. I looked close and, Bob, I seen at least 10 foot of the back end of a snake that was moving on. I had never seen such a (part of) snake in my life. Next week I was walkin' through the area again and they's a man plowing. I said a few words to 'im and then told 'im about the biggest snake I'd ever seen in my life and how it's got to be 15 feet long. And he says to me, "That snake's over 20 feet long."

People near Wax and Seney said the snake was 20 to 26 feet long. Harrell asked what kind of snake Entrekin thought it was. His reply was "Coachwhip. I seen a lot of racers during my walking but never many poisonous snakes unless I was going through some swamps or lowlands." [5]

#### 1950 - OKLAHOMA

A newswire report from Oklahoma has been turned up Benoit Crevier of Montreal. It appeared in the French-language daily **La Tribune** of Sherbrooke, Quebec, for 26 August 1950. The translation is courtesy of M. Crevier.

**SNAKE 25-FEET LONG, WEIGHING 250 POUNDS**

Wewoka, Oklahoma -- A trapper is reporting today that he captured alive, a snake more than 14 inches large, 25-foot long, and weighing 250 pounds. This pretty beast was keeping the region's inhabitants on the lookout, for more than 15 years.

G. W. Tonkawa said that he captured the "monster" after he patiently set traps, for a week and a half. He has not been able to identify the snake's species, but it is certainly a "very big one, different from anything ever seen up to now." Although the monster has been talked about for the past 15 years in the region, it was only last month that a farmer reported officially seeing a snake "as big as a man and as long as two trucks."

The authorities rejected that information, but teams of searchers immediately organized to hunt the reptile.

**1959 - ALABAMA**

The Associated Press reported on 14 July 1959 about a snake said to be 20 to 30 feet long. It had brown spots. It was sought in Marshall and Dekalb Counties, specifically around Kilpatrick.

Mary Tutwiler Anderson recalled it this way in the **Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin**:

In the summer of 1959, the papers were full of a monstrous snake seen up in Albertville. It was said to be 30 feet long and as big around as a telegraph pole. Every week's issue of the Fort Payne **Journal** was filled with rumours and tales of people who had seen the monster. They said it had swallowed at first report, a calf, then a cow, and finally a tractor. It was never really proved, however. [6]

**1962 - KENTUCKY**

The Associated Press reported another snake on 21 June 1962:

In southwest Kentucky, around the Hazel community, they're looking for a snake "28 feet long." Farmer Hildred Paschall first reported the snake and gave the length estimate, and said it appeared as big around as a stove pipe.

Ernie Collins, a snake handler with a carnival, went into the area yesterday and reported to Dr. Hunter Hancock of the biology department at nearby Murray State College that he found belly tracks and other signs that indicated a snake some 20 feet long was in the vicinity. He also said he found raided squirrels' nests, about 20 feet off the ground.

Hancock said if the reptile was a climbing snake it possibly could be an Indian python, a non-poisonous variety. He said the markings described by Paschall corresponded to those of the Indian python.

There were no reports of escaped reptiles. [7]

**1965 - KENTUCKY**

A large snake as big around as a stove pipe was said to be eating everything in Reynolds Lake in 1965. Some people said they had seen more than one of the snakes in the lake in Oldham County near LaGrange. It was thought to have eaten fish and frogs in the lake, and outside of the lake, hogs. [8]

**1974 - NORTH CAROLINA**

In March of 1974 a dead snake was found in Nash County, North Carolina. It was 16  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet long and about 10 inches in diameter. It was "believed to be someone's discarded boa constrictor" by the finder, Dale Lamm. It appears that no one really knew what the snake was. It was a great curiosity, attracting many people from Franklin and Nash Counties to view it. Its fate we can surmise, as notice was taken that it was beginning to smell. The evidence simply rots away. [9]

**1978 - MONTANA**

Two and a half miles south of Cascade, Montana, a motorist saw a giant snake in late October of 1978. Eileen Blackburn of Helena went to the Chief of Police in Cascade to report what she saw going north on Interstate 15.

It was between 20 and 30 feet long and its coils were at least three feet across. It covered my side of the freeway. It was standing, with its head up, and it was taller than the hood of my car. I tried to slow down and I'm sure I hit it or it struck at the car because it hit high on the left hand side of my car. It appeared to be a sort of gray-white in color with a tan strip. It had a flat head that came down to a point and the head was wider than the body. The body was about six inches in diameter at its widest point and, from the way it stood and the shape of the head, it looked like a cobra. [10]

**1982 - TEXAS**

The most recent of this century's snakes that I've heard of turned up in East Texas in 1982. So accustomed have we become to dismissing North American giant snakes as introduced from foreign parts that little interest was stirred up by this report. A Houston snake expert was quoted at length on how it was probably a Burmese python, though no one had reported losing a Burmese python.

The snake was reported by Cindy Horswell writing in the *Houston Chronicle*. The report came from Clifton Louviere who has a 6-acre farm by a swampy marsh in Ames, Liberty County. The squealing of his pigs woke him up at 2 a.m. on 10 April.

He went outside and saw what looked to be "a huge grayish, black snake at least 25 feet long and as big around as a one gallon bucket." Here is what transpired, according to the reporter:

"It was hanging off a low limb of an oak tree inside my pig pen," said Louviere, 36. "When the snake saw me, it started back up the tree and looked as if it were coming toward me."

So, Louviere, who had taken his 12-gauge shotgun with him to investigate the squealing, shot the snake, hitting it near its head. The snake dropped into the pig pen and appeared to be dead.

Using a garden hoe, Louviere dragged the snake from the pen and left it in his back yard.

He planned to show the snake carcass to the Liberty County Sheriff's Department the next morning, but when he awoke, the snake was gone and so was one of his 10-day-old piglets, he said.

He thought he must have only stunned the snake. A similar giant reptile had been reported twice before within two miles of this farm during the previous 15 years. [11]

There are other giant snakes mentioned in this century that remain obscure. The "Salem Serpent" seen in Washtenaw County, Michigan, prior to 1964. A giant snake recorded in folklore centering on Jenner township in Pennsylvania. [12] Another Keystone State snake is forty-feet long and identified with "Broad Top Mountain" -- said to have been seen since 1919. Howard Coffin writes from Bridgewater, Vermont, that "some old Vermonters claim that giant brown snakes, 12 feet long and more, live back in the hills." [13] How we would like to know more about all these slithering wonders!

#### NOTES

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6. Mary Tutwiler Anderson, "Mountain People," TENNESSEE FOLKLORE SOCIETY BULLETIN 26(4): 88-89 (December 1960).
7. Associated Press, 21 June 1962; Madison (IN) COURIER.
8. Newspaper clipping without citations; FATE Magazine, Dec 1965.
9. "16-Foot Snake is Found in Franklin," Durham (NC) MORNING HERALD, 14 March 1974.
10. "Unidentified Crawling Object Sighted," Great Falls (MT) TRIBUNE, 28 October 1978.
11. Cindy Horswell, "Welder Reports 25-foot Snake," Houston (TX) CHRONICLE, 22 April 1982, Sect. 4, p. 5.
12. "Story of a Mysterious Snake, told by William Johnson," pp. 192-93 in "Folk-lore from Maryland," collected by Annie W. Whitney and Caroline C. Bullock, MEMOIRS OF THE AMERICAN FOLK-LORE SOCIETY, Volume 18 (1925).
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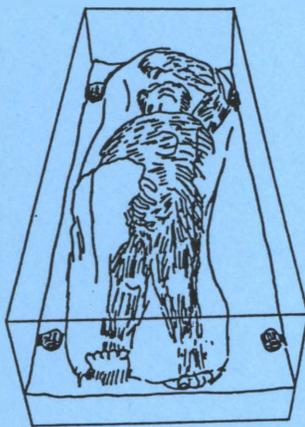
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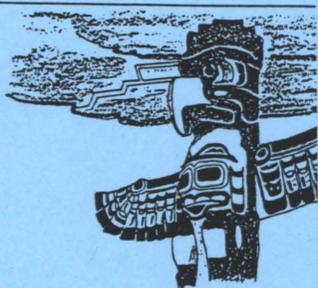


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& True Giants

APPEARANCES	NAMES	TRACKS
	Yeti (Dryopithecus indicus)	 9" x 11"
	True Giant (Giganto- pithecus)	 10" x 21"
	Woo-Giant (Paranthropus; Australo- pithecus robustus)	 9" x 20"

An Introduction

by Mark A. Hall