

There Were Giants in the Earth in Those Days...

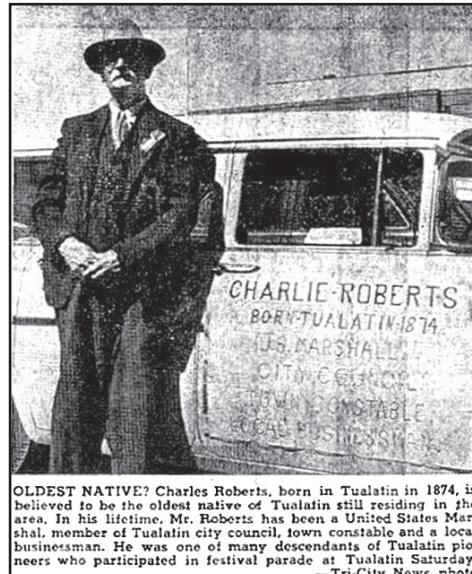
BY LOYCE MARTINAZZI

Yes, right here in Tualatin: This was a valley of the giants. Mastodons, giant ground sloths, bison and more lumbered over the same ground now covered with massive pavement, mammoth McMansions, strip-malls giganticus, and Lake Artificialis. As the Pleistocene Epoch drew to a close with the melting of the great glacial ice sheets some 12,000 years ago, Tualatin looked a lot different than it looks today.

Those giant animals that were once so plentiful, are now extinct. Scientists still spend many hours researching, speculating and theorizing why.

Giant bones were found on the old Barr Donation Land Claim (now part of downtown Tualatin) in the 1870s when the rich beaver dam land was being drained so that onions could be cultivated by local landowners. Almost a century later, the bones were finally exhumed, cleaned, and reconstructed to reveal the skeleton of a giant mastodon. The mastodon remains—affectionately known as the “Tualatin Mastodon” are now prominently displayed at the Tualatin Public Library, with a tusk and molar at the Tualatin Heritage Center.

The amazing story of the “Tualatin Mastodon,” and other stories about the Ice Age will be told Sunday, February 6, at the Winona Grange hall as the Tualatin Historical Society, founded in 1986, celebrates its 25th year anniversary with a program called “Tualatin in the Ice Age.”



Charlie Roberts was grand marshal of the Tualatin Crawfish parade in 1959. He remembered where the big bones were located. Photo from 1959 Tri-City Times

“Tualatin in the Ice Age,” will take the audience back 15,000 years, when giants roamed the earth and floods inundated the entire Tualatin and Willamette Valleys.

Prominent experts will tell of the massive 400 foot floods that raged through the valley, scarping out Lake Oswego and the Tonquin scablands, and gouging out the rivers and streams we know today. Everywhere around us are reminders of those giant floods. Erratics, in the form of granite rocks from as far away as Canada, were carried along in the turbulent waters. Several erratics, as well as a sacrum from a giant ground sloth have been donated to the historical society and can be viewed at the Heritage Center.

Speakers are:

Yvonne Addington, Tualatin’s first city manager, will tell about the mastodon’s strange journey

David Ellingson, Woodburn High School teacher, will show the ancient bison, horse and other mammal bones he and his students unearthed

Danny Gilmore, graduate Geology student at PSU will talk about the newest methods of dating ancient bones

Mike Full, retired policeman, will bring fossil bones recovered in the Yamhill River



In 1962 John “Bob” George dug in the swamp behind the current Fred Meyers and unearthed this mastodon for a PSU geology class. He got an A

Rick Thompson, from the Ice Age Floods Institute will tell how the floodwaters shaped the area

Mark Buser, also with the Ice Age Floods Institute, will tell about the Willamette Meteorite which came down with the floodwaters

Scott Burns, head of PSUs geology department will describe the effects of the



Early farmers drained the swamp and grew onions on the rich beaver dam soil. This Nyberg field is close to where the Tualatin Mastodon was unearthed. The land has now reverted back to swamps known as wetlands

ice dam breaks and show a film about the floodwaters

Larry McClure will discuss how Tualatin can benefit from all the new interest in the Ice Age

Photos courtesy of the Tualatin Historical Society

This exciting and educational program will begin at 2 pm on Sunday, February 6. Power Points, films and artifacts can be viewed. Refreshments celebrating the historical society's 25th birthday will be served. Suggested donation is \$5.

Historic Winona Grange Hall is located on the west side of the Lake of the Commons, at 8340 SW Seneca.