

## LOS ANGELES SKELETONS MAY NOT BE SO OLD

Scientists are not yet ready to say whether or not the human skeletons unearthed in the southwest district of Los Angeles by a construction gang represent an early age of man heretofore undiscovered on this continent.

But assembling of the fragments of bone is in progress and chemical analyses of the skeletal remains are being made in order to determine how completely organic matter has been eliminated. This will give evidence as to whether the bones date from the Ice Age or are more recent.

Fear of the coroner threatened at the time of the discovery to put an end to the scientific evidence. A gang of laborers excavating for a sewer uncovered the first signs of human remains and they immediately began to destroy the bones for fear that legal interference would be invoked by the municipal authorities. Fortunately the contractor intervened before much of the priceless evidence was destroyed. Souvenir hunters have also hindered the scientific study by carrying off pieces of the skeletons, but arrangements are being made to recover some of this material.

The several hundred bones are so much broken it is impossible to determine their stage of development. Some pieces ring like vitrified pottery, however, indicating a long period of chemical transformation. A fairly complete jaw bone shows its owner was a highly developed man in advanced stage of evolution. His chin is well developed.

The bones are stained grayish brown from fine alluvial soil in which they were buried. This is a highly micaceous deposit whose geologic age is not known. It lies from 19 to 23 feet below the surface. The undisturbed strata indicate very great age since alluvial deposition in arid southern California is very slow.

No bones showing primitive or ape-like characteristics have been found though restoration of the skulls may reveal type as yet unsuspected. The remains are apparently those of one woman and four men. The fourth man excavated was found to be similar to the others. One of the men is of large frame but they can not be considered giants or dwarfs.

Material so far collected is in the hands of Director William A. Bryan of the Los Angeles Museum and will be assembled by expert anatomists. This is a very difficult task because of the excessive breakage.

Despite the fact that the graves are in the midst of the city outfall sewer construction operations, the contractor is cooperating in a praise-worthy fashion. Steam shovels and hydraulic apparatus are in service, but much interference has been caused by the heavy rains and the resulting cave-ins. No tools, weapons or other man-made devices have come to light, nor have any bones or fossils of lower animals which might indicate geologic age been found.

Dr. John C. Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, Dr. Loye Miller, professor of biology of the University of California, and Dr. Chester Stock, head of the University of California's department of paleontology, have investigated the discovery, but neither they nor any other scientist of professional repute are willing to draw any further inferences as to the age

of the remains. Some local amateurs interested in geology believe the remains to be of the glacial period, but there is as yet no definite proof.

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#### WHALE SHARK, LARGEST LIVING FISH, INTRODUCED TO NEW YORK.

A truly delicate monster is the whale shark. A small scale model of a 30-foot specimen has just been placed upon exhibition in the American Museum of Natural History, and the public pauses to admire the creature for his fancy coat and his coy eye without appreciating his amiable disposition. The whale shark is as harmless as a guinea pig. He has never tasted man. He does not even eat his brother fish, although he himself is the largest fish in existence - the whale, of course, being not a fish but a mammal.

Whale sharks have been measured up to a length of 45 feet, and whale fishermen, whose keen eyes are accustomed to taking such measurements, declare that they have seen whale sharks 70 feet long. How strange, then, to discover that the teeth of this giant of the ocean are no longer than one-eighth of an inch! But he has six or seven thousand of them, including both jaws. He wears his tiny eye in the upper jaw, where it can observe his continuous dinner.

Possessing teeth so dainty, the whale shark has but one weapon of defense - his tail. He never harms men unless he happens to rub up against the side of a boat, probably to rid himself of barnacles, and if he overturns or smashes the craft upon these occasions it is not with malice aforethought.

When he dines he does not gobble large fish, like the other sharks. Instead he swims with his mouth open and collects the small animals that float upon the surface of the sea. The water passes over his gill-rakers, and these sift out the food. It then passes out through his gill-slits. He swallows everything that is taken in, and of course the quantities of little jelly fish, crabs and other small fry that he requires in a day are enormous.

Why do they call him a whale shark? Because he is a whale in size and in his manner of feeding and because he is often found with whales. More generally he is seen in company with other sharks, but he is so much larger than they that by comparison with him they seem no bigger than the pilot-fish or shark-suckers when seen beside the ordinary small shark. This statement was first made in 1840 by a pearl-fishery inspector, who amazed the world with his account of a giant fish seen in the Indian Ocean.

If the whale shark's behavior is handsome, so is his appearance. His coat is a delicate smoke-gray, thickly covered with white spots, which cause him to resemble a marine Milky Way. Unfortunately, one is not likely to see him on a fishing trip. Only five specimens have been taken in the Atlantic