



### Beaver's Little Cousin

**M**ANY persons are incredulous when they are first told that the beaver is a rodent, a more or less close kinsman of rats and mice. His size, his utterly unratlike tail, above all his astonishingly complex set of instincts, seem to set him off from these household pests even more remotely than man is set off from monkey.

There is, however, an excellent intermediate animal to serve as connecting link between the beaver and the more familiar rodents. Nobody will deny that the muskrat is a rat, in spite of his larger size and longer fur. His teeth and his tail alike proclaim the kinship.

As his bodily build marks him an unmistakable rodent, so do his habits point beaverward. He is quite as aquatic as his larger cousin, and like him lives on a diet of twigs and green stuff at the water's edge, though he doesn't go in for quite such ambitious gnawings. Like the beaver, the muskrat builds domed winter houses out of mud and sticks, though these again are not so pretentious. Finally, just as the muskrat lives in burrows as well as in houses, so also do beavers resort to river banks. "Bank beavers" are quite familiar animals to naturalists, though they are not played up much in most natural history books.

The muskrat has survived contact with civilization much better than the beaver, partly because of his greater multiplying powers, partly because he is less fussy about interference with his works, and partly because at first his fur was not held in very high esteem. Now, however, with the increasing rarity of the more valuable pelt-bearing animals, muskrat is coming into greater favor, both on its honest own and plucked and dyed, under a variety of trade names.

*Science News Letter, October 24, 1931*

### ARCHAEOLOGY

# Science Loses When Steam Shovel Wrecks Indian Mound

**S**TEAM SHOVELS have completely leveled an ancient Indian mound in Jonesville, La., proper excavation of which might have shed new light on the mound-building Indian tribes of this country.

The site has been visited by Winslow M. Walker, anthropologist, of the Smithsonian Institution, who was working within a hundred miles of the place and who came to Jonesville as soon as he heard what had been encountered.

Mr. Walker, who has returned to Washington, reports that, "When I got there I found the largest and most important mound leveled by highway workers. What was left in the debris indicates that the loss to science was inestimable."

The mound was made of red, yellow, and gray clays unlike local soil, Mr. Walker states. It appears that the Indians had transported material for building the mound from a considerable distance. The mound covered an area 250 by 160 feet, and is estimated to have stood more than 65 feet high.

In the debris were pieces of cane matting, which Mr. Walker believes may have been part of walls of a building which stood on the mound. Archaeologists have hoped to find remains of one of the temples or a chief's house in a mound settlement like this, and if the

matting had been undisturbed it might have shown how the Mound Builders' "public buildings" looked. Even in its damaged state the cane matting is considered an important find.

In another Louisiana county workmen have unknowingly broken into an old Indian site, destroying several burials before the scientific importance of the place was thought of. This place, also visited by Mr. Walker shortly after the excavation, is at Natchitoches, where a Government fish hatchery is under construction.

### One Skull Unharmd

The anthropologist arrived in time to find one remarkable skull unharmd. The skull was artificially flattened front and back, probably by tying flat boards to the forehead and back of the head. These had evidently been applied when the Indian was a young child. As the child grew, the bones were pressed until they conformed to local standards of physical beauty.

This type of head flattening was characteristic of some Indian tribes, notably the Flatheads of the Northwest coast, and some Southeastern tribes. A skull of this sort, however, has not heretofore been found in the Louisiana region where the Caddo tribes lived.

*Science News Letter, October 24, 1931*

## CONVENIENCE COUPON

for New or Renewal Subscription to Science News Letter

Send this coupon to Washington while you are thinking of it.

**Science News Letter,**  
21st and Constitution Avenue,  
Washington, D. C.

Please ☐ start ☐ renew my subscription to SCIENCE NEWS LETTER. I am enclosing remittance as checked below:

☐ 2 years, \$7  
☐ 1 year, \$5

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City and State \_\_\_\_\_

If this subscription is a renewal, check here . . . . .