seaplane pontoons at speeds up to 80 miles an hour. Carderock's emphasis will be on regular ships.

American warships and merchant vessels have for years enjoyed good reputations as outstanding design achievements. Some of the ships now joining an augmented fleet have been praised lavishly by foreign experts who are ordinarily jealous of any other nation's naval activities. Ships to be built five years from now will be even more efficient. The credit for those vessels to come will go at least in part to this new Navy testing plant.

Science News Letter, August 26, 1939

PALEONTOLOGY

Skull of Biggest Monster Arrives in America

THE MASSIVE skull of the biggest prehistoric sea monster ever found, a 60-foot plesiosaur which swash-buckled the oceans 120,000,000 years ago when dinosaurs ruled the earth, has been assembled and prepared for exhibition at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology.

Authorities described the beast as "the most amazing specimen of its kind known to the world." It was discovered by William E. Schevill of the Museum staff in an exposed ancient sea bed in Queensland, Australia. Others have previously been found in various parts of the globe but never one even approaching this one in size.

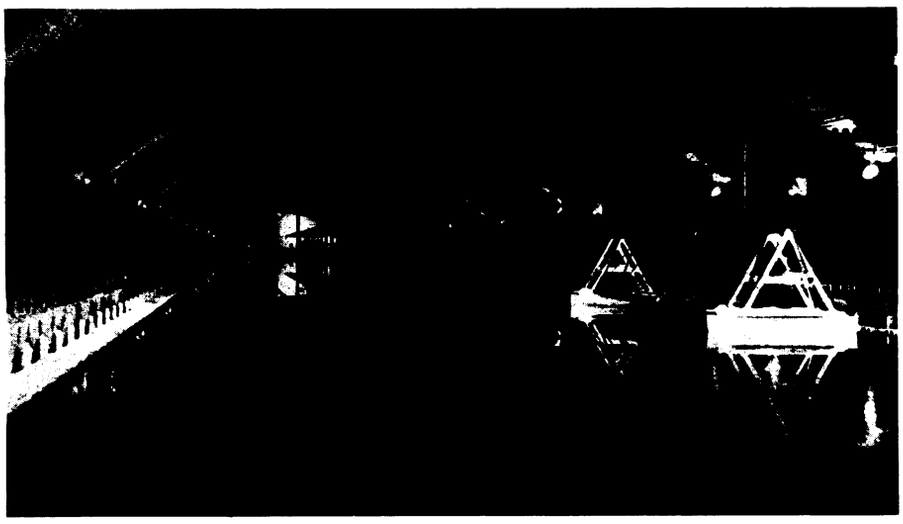
The skull measures 10 feet in length and three feet in height and has heavy alligator-like jaws studded with 92 interlocking spiked teeth from two to eight inches long. The specimen was prepared by George Nelson of the Museum staff.

Scientists have described the giant plesiosaurs as resembling in many ways the mythical sea dragons which terrified ancient mariners. They ranged in length from about 10 to 60 feet with long heads and stubby tails. They used four powerful paddle-like limbs to propel their tremendous turtle-shaped bodies through the water.

They were the greatest marine reptiles which ever lived, masters of their realms as the dinosaurs were on the land, and they roamed the great seas which covered most of the earth devouring fishes and reptiles in their mammoth jaws.

Both plesiosaurs and dinosaurs were confined to the Mesozoic era which extended from about 150,000,000 years ago to 100,000,000 years ago.

Science News Letter, August 26, 1939



TUNNEL-LIKE TANK

Perfect reflection off the water surface of the Navy's new towing tank at Carderock, Md., makes it hard to tell top or bottom of this interior view of the 1,170-foot tank. Sealed and air-conditioned, the tank will be the Navy's testing ground for models.

ASTRONOMY

Amateur Astronomers Can Make Vital Contributions

If You Have No Telescope, You Still Can Aid Science By Watching for Meteors and Occasional Aurorae

By LESLIE C. PELTIER

America's Foremost Amateur Astronomer

Eminent among American amateur astronomers is Leslie C. Peltier of Delphos, Ohio, toy designer by day and star gazer by night. Discoverer of seven comets in his 23 years of comet-hunting, his work is so valuable to astronomy that for the last 15 years Princeton Observatory has loaned him a fine six-inch refracting telescope for his self-appointed task of searching for comets and for studying variable stars. Mr. Peltier received honorary life membership in the Amateur Astronomers Association at its meeting in New York City, Aug. 19-20.

PROBABLY no other science has received so much advancement and development through the work of the amateur as has the science of astronomy. A large share of the important discoveries in the past were made by men who, whether from choice or necessity, earned their living at some entirely unrelated task.

But even the skill and genius of these earlier amateurs has far from exhausted the field and a wealth of opportunities still await those who have a genuine desire to be of service to astronomy.

For those with no other optical equipment than a pair of good eyes there are dozens of meteors to be observed and plotted every clear night, there are occasional aurorae to classify and there is the ever-present Milky Way to scan in the hope of finding a new star.

Still more opportunities for original work are in store for the fortunate possessor of even a small telescope. The observing of variable stars is one of the most important fields of research in which the amateur can engage. Others may prefer the recording of sun spots, the careful watching of the surface markings of the brighter planets or the fascination of comet hunting. Those with a penchant for photography may wish to record auroral forms, meteor trains, or expose plates on the Milky Way in the hope of catching a nova in its early stages.

None of these astronomical by-paths requires any special mathematical training nor are large and costly instruments necessary. Of far greater importance is a plentiful supply of diligence and persistence.

Science News Letter, August 26, 1939