

The Oldest Dinosaur

➤ ALL THINGS must have beginnings. Even the mighty dynasty of the dinosaurs, lumbering beasts that ruled the earth for more than three hundred million years, grew from other forms of life, lived their span and disappeared from the world forever.

The bones of the earliest dinosaur so far known date back to the geologic period known as the Triassic Age, roughly 400,000,000 years ago. The first such bones found in this country were dug up in Connecticut over a century ago—first a few fragments, then a complete skeleton with a skull. Scientists were able to build up a model of what the creature looked like in the flesh. They named it *Anchisaurus*.

It was not large, as dinosaurs go. An average specimen reached a length of about six feet. Its bones were light, indicating that it could probably move fairly rapidly. Its teeth showed that it lived on a meat diet. It was a hunter, a beast of prey.

There were no men on earth when the dinosaurs swam the seas and strode the hills. Man did not appear until well within the last million years, and there is no really definite evidence of his existence until the last hundred thousand. The day of the dinosaur ended long before, about 60,000,000 B. C. (Cavemen had enough to face, what with mastodons, cave bears and woolly rhinoceroses; it is just as well that

they were spared casual allosauri and dipodocuses.)

The dinosaurs were huge reptiles. They were not lizards, although when early scientists got around to naming the dinosaur branch of the reptile family, they threw together the Greek words "deinos," meaning "terrible," and "sauros," which means lizard.

Even in its earliest form the dinosaur family showed characteristics that justified its name. There was a small head on a long neck, balanced by a long powerful tail at the other end of the body. The forelegs were diminished, but were offset by tremendous power and size in the rear pair, which in some of the later "saurians" became so highly developed that their owners were as much bipeds as are men or kangaroos.

There was the general tendency of the body to settle heavily back upon the pelvis, developing the potbellied figure we have come to think of as the real dinosaur shape. *Anchisaurus*, first of the dinosaurs, was a true granddaddy of his race.

Science News Letter, January 13, 1951

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mexican Canned Meat Now Allowed in U. S.

➤ THE UNITED STATES has opened its Rio Grande border to the importation of canned meat from Mexico, breaking an embargo which has stood as long as there has been a government meat inspection system.

Bureau of Animal Industry specialists said, however, that the ban against live animals or fresh meat, imposed in 1946 when foot-and-mouth disease hit Mexico, is still in effect.

Only meat from healthy animals, cooked, sterilized and canned, will be allowed across the border. The change in U. S. regulations, the Agriculture Department said, was made possible by the establishment of a Mexican meat inspection system which has met U. S. standards.

Prior to the detection of foot-and-mouth disease on Mexican cattle ranges, there was practically no meat-canning industry in Mexico and no inspection system. Except for one brief period, canned meat has never been allowed to cross into this country.

When the border was closed to live animals, they began to pile up in northern Mexico. To provide an outlet, a canning industry sprang up. With it came a rigorous new inspection system imposed by the Mexican Agriculture Ministry.

The United States has now recognized Mexican inspection of its canned meats as meeting American standards, and has changed its import regulations accordingly.

The change has nothing to do with the four-year-old fight by Mexican and American scientists to stamp out the foot-and-mouth plague below the border, a spokesman said.

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PHYSICS

Pocket Alarm Warns Of Radiation Danger

➤ LIKE AN ALARM watch that rings a warning, the Atomic Energy Commission has announced the invention of a pocket radiation alarm.

Designed to sound an alarm when exposure to radioactivity or other harmful radiation accumulates to too high an amount, the new device was patented by R. J. S. Brown of Laundale, Calif., and H. G. Weiss of Waltham, Mass. (U. S. Patent 2,531,106.) It can be set for the desired amount and it can be carried anywhere on the person.

The AEC will grant non-exclusive, royalty-free licenses.

Science News Letter, January 13, 1951

BACTERIOLOGY

Food-Spoiling Spores Have Ten Lives

➤ TINY bacterial spores which cost the world great sums each year in spoiled food have to be hit from as many as 10 different directions before they are destroyed, a bacteriologist at the University of Illinois has discovered.

The knowledge that such spores or "seeds" have more lives than the proverbial cat is a new clue in science's battle to prevent food spoilage in car or jar.

Illinois professor of bacteriology H. O. Halvorson used higher mathematics to uncover the multiple lives of spores. Looking for the answer to bacterial resistance to high temperatures, he guessed that multiple killing might be necessary—that each spore might have more than one vulnerable spot which must be destroyed for the spore to die completely.

He computed the mathematical odds of life or death for spores if such multiple killing were the answer. Then he subjected spores of a food-spoiling bacteria known as "flat sour" to high temperatures. He took samples at intervals to check how many spores remained alive.

The curve he got matched the mathematical probability curve for 10 "lives" or vulnerable spots.

Science News Letter, January 13, 1951

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