

## ZOOLOGY

## Giant Land Tortoise Holds Old Age Record

**C**ENTURIES-OLD reptiles and other animals may have their place in folklore but the oldest recorded life span ever attained in backboned animals, that science knows for a certainty, is 152 years.

For a century and a half dwellers on the island of Mauritius near Madagascar observed a giant land tortoise originally brought from islands in the Indian Ocean in 1766. When Mauritius was handed over to the British in 1810 the tortoise was moved to the artillery barracks of Fort Louis and lived there until 1918.

Karl P. Schmidt, assistant curator of reptiles at the Field Museum in Chicago, says that from this recorded case there is substance to the reputed antiquity of reptiles. Actual records of longevity, however, are hard to obtain.

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### MODERN BABYLON

*This structure at Boulder Dam represents the application of all the newest knowledge of engineering, yet in appearance it is reminiscent of long bygone days.*

## PUBLIC HEALTH

## Smallpox May Increase With Return of Prosperity

**W**ILL our economic recovery be marred by an increase in smallpox? This unpleasant possibility was pointed out by Dr. A. W. Hedrich of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health at a recent conference of health officers in Washington.

Dr. Hedrich called attention to the fact that in the past the number of cases of smallpox in the United States has shown a tendency to rise and fall synchronously with the increase and decline of prosperity. Smallpox seemed to reach peaks in 1920, 1924 and 1930. Since 1930, during a period of economic depression, there has been a decline in smallpox cases in almost all parts of the country. A similar decline took place during the economic depression of 1921-1922.

### Due To Labor Movements

The explanation for this observed relation between smallpox incidence and economic conditions is to be found in the movements of laborers during periods of prosperity and depression, Dr. Hedrich believes.

"It seems entirely possible that the increases during prosperous periods reflect such forces as the movements of negroes from the rural regions of the South into the industrial centers of the North and the importation of Mexican labor," Dr. Hedrich stated. "Conversely during periods of depression the movement tends to be away from the city back to the farm to escape the high cost of food and shelter in the city.

"This raises the question whether with the return of prosperity and the probable smuggling of Mexican labor into the United States we shall not again be confronted with an increase in malignant smallpox. Certainly the greatest vigilance in this respect is called for."

A study of the smallpox history of the United States shows that cases coming into large American cities from other countries have been responsible for many of the severe outbreaks of the past. In addition it appears that it is the migrant laborer, the hobo and persons of similar type who have imported virulent smallpox into the United

States, or have brought it from unvaccinated rural regions into the cities where it spread to epidemic size among their large, crowded populations.

"National protection from smallpox depends largely upon well vaccinated cities," Dr. Hedrich declared.

Apparently it would be well for the Blue Eagle of recovery to carry smallpox vaccine with him on his flights to farm and city.

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## ARCHAEOLOGY

## Will Seek Prehistoric Remains on Damsite

**B**EFORE engineers pour in tons of water to create an artificial lake at the great Bonneville dam on the Columbia River, an archaeologist will make the last attempt to explore the dry land for signs of prehistoric Indian life.

Herbert W. Krieger of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., will make the search for Indian remains. The region is of particular interest in ancient American events because the Columbia River Valley was one of the natural highways along which migrating groups of people of Asiatic origin would presumably have pushed their way down into the United States.

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