Fossils reveal elephant-like animals once roamed Texas

By Kay Vandette
Earth.com staff writer

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During the Great Depression, around 15 million people (20 percent of the workforce) were jobless which led to the creation of the Works Project Administration (WPA) by President Roosevelt in 1935.

With the WPA, people were put to work building roads, bridges, parks, hospitals and schools, laying new sewer lines and storm drains, and for workers in a few Texas counties, digging up fossils.

From 1939 to 1941, the WPA in partnership with the University of Texas Bureau of Economic Geology funded the State-Wide Paleontologic-Mineralogic Survey where county residents were paid to dig up fossils.

Thousands of fossils were uncovered in dig sites across Texas even though the project was in operation for just three years, and a large majority of the fossils are stored in the Texas Vertebrate Paleontology Collection at the Jackson School