



A MONUMENT TO VERNAL is represented in this picture. The skeleton dinosaur at the left, known as "Dippy", is recognized all over the country. The entrance to the Utah Field House of Natural History, built by determined local leaders, and the friendly

couple, Ernest and Billie Untermann, who have greeted tourists and friends over the past 20 years are trademarks of the Vernal area known as "Dinosaur Land".

Early Plans for Utah Field House Started by Vernal Lions Club in 1934

The idea of constructing a museum in Vernal was proposed and urged by Lions Club members at a meeting September 9, 1934. Pursuing the idea, Lions members again proposed a Field House Museum for Vernal at a meeting September 8, 1943.

A VISITING dignitary, H. J. Plumbhof, commissioner of the State Department of Publicity and Industrial Development, stressed the importance of a museum which would be of great worth to Vernal and to Utah.

Because of its significance as a powerful tourist attraction, the aspects of a museum were lauded by Mr. Plumbhof who said he would support legislative pressure to finance the structure. He also stated at the 1943 meeting that taxpayers would be willing to contribute taxes to pay for the structure because of its importance.

MANY REASONS were outlined for a museum in Vernal. It was noted that the Uintah Basin contains the most complete geological record of any region of the world. Its most important mineral, phosphate, is concentrated here in the richest beds in the world.

Mammals uncovered in the basin in recent years were lauded as more interesting

than dinosaurs.

OFFICIALS stated that the Carnegie Museum would help secure specimens for the proposed museum. Dr. Dorett of Carnegie Museum had collected 5,000 specimens of mammals in the region, many not found anywhere else on the continent.

Mr. Plumbhof said a field house here would be headquarters for scientists and students in study of geology.

ADDING TO Mr. Plumbhof's plea, J. H. McGibney, assistant regional forester of the area, stated that it is deplorable that many valuable dinosaur bones and relics have been lost. He said they should, by all means, be preserved.

In June of 1944, the proposed museum became less of a dream and more of reality as preliminary action began on the fieldhouse museum as Uintah County's primary postwar aim.

SITUATED IN the "heart of a dinosaur graveyard", Vernal would be an ideal location for a museum of national significance. It would serve a triple purpose—to house displays (an outstanding tourist attraction); as an information bureau; and as a national summer school for research study.

The proposed museum had at this time already received endorsement of state and national leaders.

ADDED TO previously mentioned attractions of the basin, factors in favor of the museum are the exposed formations in the Uinta Mountains covering thousands of years "near cross-country-section of

the earth."

Dinosaur National Monument 12 miles from Vernal at the time (and at present) was one of the most remarkable deposits ever found, according to a national curator of vertebrate paleontology.

SOME OF the most interesting items found in the basin were listed by Dr. J. LeRoy Kay of the Dinosaur Monument as the oldest fossilized ants, the oldest sabre-toothed mammals, the oldest fossil rabbits and evidence of prehistoric man.

A tentative site for the proposed museum was designated as east of the courthouse on busy Highway 40.

THE VERNAL project would emphasize life-like reconstructions of prehistoric life; would provide information on Indian tribes, ancient and modern, and would promote modern-day Indian handicrafts.

Geology and paleontology classes were scheduled for July 23, 1945, to be held for two weeks.

IN DECEMBER of 1945, Governor Herbert B. Maw approved \$200,000 for the financing of the field house museum in Vernal. He told his committee to proceed with designs so construction could start as soon as labor and material were available. Governor Maw said the money would be made available August 1, 1946.

The building site of the museum was dedicated August 2, 1946. Aaron Tracy dedicated the site.

IN DECEMBER of 1946, \$188,000 was allocated and it was announced that bids for

This event marked the culmination of a five-year effort by Vernal Lions Club and construction would be let soon.

The dedication of the Utah Fieldhouse of Natural History in Vernal was held October 16, 1947, attended by Governor Maw and other state and civic leaders, as well as most of the residents of the city.

A SEALED copper box was placed in the masonry of the cornerstone holding a scroll on which were recorded events of the day and specimens from the five geological eras represented by the exposed formations in the Uinta Mountains. Also placed in the box was a register signed by all persons attending the dedication, other groups to secure the project.

G. E. UNTERMANN was named director of the institution in 1946, and made the first

contributions of 14 large paintings depicting prehistoric and present animal life of the basin and local scenic attractions.

At the time of the dedication, construction was progressing by contractor, C. H. Dorland Construction Company of Salt Lake City who was awarded the bid after bids were called for three times.

BECAUSE OF the high costs of construction, an observatory tower and one room of the museum's original plans were omitted from the final blue prints.

With the completion of the museum, the Vernal field house has become one of the most heavily visited institutions in the state, attracting thousands of tourists each year.