## Memorial to Charles Lewis Camp 1893-1975

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The bold image of Charles Camp and the record of his intense endeavors stand in clear relief on the summits of two major frontiers of study—science and history.

Charles Lewis Camp was born of pioneer stock in Jamestown, North Dakota, on March 12, 1893. He spent his boyhood in southern California where he developed lifelong scientific interests through study with the noted naturalist Joseph Grinnell. Frequent visits to John C. Mirriam's fossil beds at Rancho La Brea in Los Angeles further stimulated his curiosity and set the course of his career.

Camp first attended Throop Academy (now California Institute of Technology) and then followed Joseph Grinnell to the University of California at Berkeley, where he graduated in 1915 with a degree in zoology.

He went on to perform graduate work at Columbia University and the American Museum of Natural History where, under the inspiration and guidance of William King Gregory and Henry Fairfield Osborn, Camp earned his master's and doctor's degrees.

World War I temporarily interrupted Camp's education. He served with distinction as a combat officer with the 7th Field Artillery, U.S. 1st Division, both as a front-line artillery spotter and a commander of troops. He received unit and individual citations for action during 1918 at Menil-la-Tour, Cantigny, Soissons, and Meuse-Argonne. From his own division commander, Camp received, under general orders, a citation as "an officer of most splendid courage and ability. Throughout the operations, he repeatedly volunteered for the most dangerous missions. He established his observation posts even in front of the infantry and was constantly under severe shell fire. . . ."

After a postwar term as an assistant at the American Museum of Natural History, Camp returned to Berkeley in 1922 where he commenced a brilliant and lifelong association with the University of California. He served as professor of paleontology, director of Berkeley's Museum of Paleontology from 1930 to 1939, and as chairman of the Department of Paleontology from 1939 to 1949.

Camp traveled and studied in Europe, South Africa, and China in 1935 and 1936 under a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. He directed the University of California's major South Africa Expedition in 1947 and 1948 and another expedition to northern and central Australia in 1960. Other investigations took him to many sites in New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and California.

When University of Nevada authorities asked Camp in 1954 to undertake excavation of large ichthyosaur fossil beds in the Shoshone Mountains, his first answer was strongly negative. The "fish bones," so-called by gold-seekers working the bleak Union Mining District in the 1860s, were in deposits of solid marine limestone—the kind that rattled miners' teeth and broke their picks. Camp was 61 years old in 1954, a veteran of countless field trips and scientific expeditions. The thought of chipping limestone for several more

years in remote central Nevada simply did not appeal to him. But the chimeric call of ancient ichthyosaurs, mewling and bleeping their primordial call from deep in the rocks, proved to be a siren song the devoted scientist could not resist.

Camp assembled a crew of worthy assistants and willing students and embarked on a four-year program of excavation and classification. The result is today's Berlin-Ichthyosaur Paleontologic State Park and National Natural Landmark, where skeletons of the 60-foot, 50-ton Triassic "fish-lizards" lie under a permanent shelter for public view. Also on display, next to the huge building, is a life-size sculpture of an ichthyosaur, which Camp persuaded famed Western artist William Gordon Huff to execute in concrete.

Camp's prodigious scientific writings during this period include such major publications as the nine-volume Bibliography of Fossil Vertebrates, 1928-1972, a standard reference in the field; Methods in Paleontology; Stories of Fossils, written especially for children of elementary school level; and Earth Song, A Prologue to History. The last is a remarkable blend of science, history, literature, and poetic beauty that tells the story of Nevada and western America since the dawn of time. His published technical works deal with all manner of mosasaur, phytosaur, ichthyosaur, cynognathus, labyrinthodont, dicynodont, pseudosuchian, aplodontia, thrinaxodon, and many other subjects.

Camp became a Fellow of the Geological Society of America, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus, a historical miners' fraternity dating from the California Gold Rush days. He retired from active teaching in 1960, but continued his close association with the University of California as a very active professor emeritus of paleontology.

Charles Camp's "other career" dealt directly with a better-known frontier, a genuine frontier—the exploration and settlement of the American West. Here, Camp reached a wider readership. He did not abandon his love for "old bones," to be sure, but combined his acquired scientific methods and inquisitiveness with a natural gift for expression and applied them to human history.

During his studies at Columbia University, a young and homesick Charles Camp frequented bookstores and libraries to read about the West. Interest led to obsession. His first writing effort remains one of the outstanding documents on Western expansion: James Clyman, Frontiersman. He interviewed relatives and friends and their survivors. His exhaustive research led him to treasure-troves of historical diaries, journals, and letters collected and forgotten in dusty attics. The late Bernard DeVoto termed Camp's Clyman book "one of the half dozen classics in the field."

After that book came finely detailed examinations of the lives of a bright array of noted Western pioneers: Kit Carson, George C. Yount, Benjamine Dore, William Alexander Trubody, Philo White, Peg-Leg Smith, Nicholas (Cheyenne) Dawson, and John Doble. Camp became a renowned authority on John C. Fremont, the Donner Party, Alexis Godey, William Henry Ashley, Tom Fitzpatrick, Black Harris, the Sublettes, Hugh Glass, Andrew Henry, Jim Bridger, and the Simpson Survey. He came to know and understand mountain men, explorers, and early settlers, and to thoroughly appreciate their significance.

A fourth edition of his monumental bibliography of Western literature, *The Plains and The Rockies*, written with the late Henry R. Wagner, was published in 1982 by John Howell. The late publisher Lawton Kennedy called this work Camp's "magnum opus" which will grace library shelves for decades to come.

Eminent historian Herbert Eugene Bolton once asked Camp why he, a paleontologist, "dabbled around" in history. Camp explained that paleontology is a part of history. "You can link them up very nicely. It's a good thing to do. It's a good thing to forget that there

are boundaries between paleontology, geology, anthropology. . . . Just forget the boundaries and think of the whole thing as a great sweep of history."

In the *Pacific Historian* for November 1963, the late Sierra Nevada historian Francis P. Farquhar lauds Camp as the premier "biographer of the West."

Camp helped Wagner reactivate the long-dormant California Historical Society in 1922. He later served as a director and for many years as chairman of the society's publications committee. Camp earned the society's distinguished Henry Raup Wagner Memorial Award in 1970.

The University of California bestowed its highest award on Camp in 1968, an honorary doctorate for his numerous and remarkable achievements in the separate fields of science and history.

He leaves a wide spectrum of accumulated and recorded knowledge. In his energy and devotion to science and history, even in his last days, he was amazing. In his personal associations, measured by the love and respect of all who knew him, he was incomparable.

Charles Lewis Camp died at the age of 82 on August 14, 1975, in Santa Clara, California. His first wife, Jessie, died in 1971. A son also preceded him in death. He is survived by three children, six grandchildren, and his second wife, Joanna.

A paragraph quoted at Camp's memorial gathering at Berkeley on September 7, 1975, fittingly explains his vision of history as he saw it in the larger sense. More than an epitaph, it stands as a legacy to all who knew him and have read his works. The words are his own, taken from *Earth Song*:

The play is not finished; the suspense is supreme, for we cannot look behind the dark curtain to see what new actors may be waiting to take the stage. Each act of the life story with its inventions and achievements prepares the way for the next. New forms find new ways to live, adding their structures to the inventions of the past and using the old in new combinations to perform new functions. New forms of life expand over what has gone before, and build upon the past. The long history of early life merges into ours and helps us to comprehend our own.

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