In Ice Age days, when America and Asia were one continuous land mass, elephants marched where now rolls the Bering Sea.

Photo copyright by Field Museum of Natural History.

New Discoveries of Vanished Lands of Long Ago

By Ronald L. Ives

THE prince of Atlantis, sitting sadly on the shore of Mexico, weeping for his vanished homeland, may be only a novelist's dream. Perhaps the homesick wanderings of the exiled children of Mu, after the foundering of their continent into the depths of the Pacific, never took place. Perhaps man never saw lands such as those.

Vanished lands, however, are being discovered yearly by geologists. Deep under the waters of the Atlantic are canyons that could hold the Grand Canyon of Arizona with room left over. Under the English channel is the valley of the ancestral Rhine. Deep in the Mediterranean Sea is the ancient harbor of Tyre. Cities under the sea are not uncommon; and man has occupied the earth for only about 1/2500 of geologic time. Great lands were engulfed during the millions of years before man appeared on earth.

Atlantis, perhaps, was only a myth started by Plato, but recent studies by geologists indicate that at one time, probably 300,000,000 years ago or more, when the ancestors of our common toad were the highest forms of life, there were great land areas where now is the Atlantic Ocean.

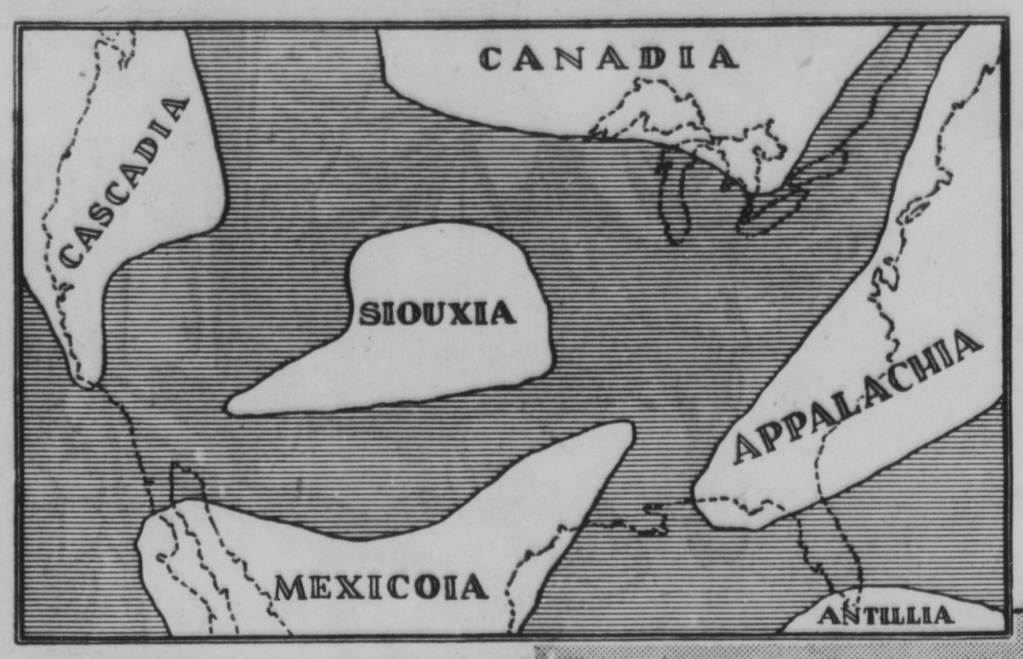
Measurements of the gravity of the ocean floor, conducted in recent years, have given us some surprising facts, which may be explained by the presence at some great depth under the ocean of a foundered land mass.

Recently, Dr. Richard M. Field, of Princeton University, suggested that under the Atlantic there may be "a vast area of down-warped pre-Cambrian and Paleozoic geology," perhaps as complicated in structure as the up-warped structures of similar age (more than 300,000,000 years) on the continents.

The evidence for this vast Atlantis of bygone pre-human ages is not complete. Recent studies have supplied more facts, and more work is being done. Perhaps, if these suggestions are supported by later findings, we may find that some millions of years ago, instead of lemmings fleeing from central Europe into the sea, amphibians, similar to our modern toads, migrated from Europe to America!

AMERICAN geologists, studying rocks that make up our Appalachian Mountains, find that they must have been formed from materials eroded away from a mountainous land to the east—probably far to the east, in a place where the waters of the Atlantic now are. This land, called Appalachia by Charles Schuchert, eminent student of the lands of the past, may have been a part of the ancient and now submerged Atlantic Continent.

The Pacific, too, once swallowed a continent, according to legends collected by the late Col. James Churchward. who wrote a number of books in an ineffectual effort to prove the former existence of the continent of Mu. Perhaps, from the mass of evidence collected by many workers, we may eventually find evidence, in the Pacific area, of a former chain of islands which furnished stepping stones by which ancient man crossed the Pacific. Mu, as a great continent, probably never existed, but islands in the Pacific do occasionally disappear. Only a few years ago, astronomers planned to observe an eclipse from little Sarah Ann Island, and when they arrived at the site, with a shipload of telescopes and cameras, the island "showed up missing."



North America today is made up of the joined fragments of the ancient continents of Cascadia, Canadia, Siouxia, Mexicoia, Antillia, and Appalachia.

Perhaps the nearest thing to a reenactment of the mythical foundering of Atlantis occurred in the Cook Island Group, in 1836, when Tuanaki Island suddenly sank into the Pacific, with a loss of thousands of lives. Perhaps some of the legends of lost continents originated from a similar occurrence.

THE ruins on Easter and islands in the South Pacific have been used as evidence of a lost continent in that area. Now, with modern knowledge of the migrations of ancient races, and some ideas about the rising and falling of sea levels, it seems more probable that there never was, during man's occupance of the earth, any really great interchange of land and sea. Relatively small areas have submerged, and similarly small areas have emerged from the sea, but the continental masses have not changed appreciably since the beginning of the Pleistocene ice age.

Continental masses have divided up during geologic time, and have sometimes been rejoined. Much that is now land was once shallow sea, and some of our present seas were land areas at one time. Hudson Bay was, until a few million years ago, an area of dry land. Perhaps the most interesting example of a land mass that has been sea bottom is the area known to geologists as Siouxia, and shown on ordinary maps as parts of Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona.

These giant statues set up by the long-gone inhabitants of lonely Easter Island in the South Pacific have been used as evidence of a lost continent in that area.

Siouxia, during the time when life was just beginning on earth, was a part of the ancient North American Continent. Some 500,000,000 years ago, ancient North America foundered into the Paleozoic Sea, leaving Siouxia as an island. Some millions of years later, a slight uplifting of the foundered land masses raised the little continent of Siouxia and joined it to the ancient continent of Canadia.

Shortly after this, as geologists measure time, the lands sank again, leaving Siouxia an island continent, about one-third as large as Australia. After a few million years more, Siouxia was joined to another island continent, Mexicoia, by a slight lowering of the level of the ancient seas.

While the great reptiles were evolving from simpler forms, Siouxia was a land mass, sometimes a part of a vast southern continent, sometimes only a small island in a slimy sea. Part of it later became a mountain range, in the same location as our present Rocky Mountains. As the great dinosaurs reached their development, little Siouxia foundered under waters of the Cretaceous Sea, never to appear again as Siouxia.

As reptilian forms gave place to the warm-blooded mammals, lands all over the earth emerged from the sea, and Siouxia became a part of an Eocene North American Continent, which was very similar in shape to the North America of today. Now Siouxia, the little continent that was so many times submerged, lies a mile or more above sea level as a part of the great plains of the western United States.

Many biologists believe that land bridges once connected the various continents for a few million years, allowing various animals and plants to migrate from one continent to another.

VANISHED land bridges in the area around the Bering Sea may explain man's coming to the American Continent. Perhaps he migrated along with the Mammoth and Mastodon, when Asia became overpopulated in some era of the remote past.

At the present time, our continental masses seem to be growing. North America, today, is made up of the joined fragments of the ancient continents of Cascadia, Canadia, Siouxia, Mexicoia, Antillia, Appalachia, and perhaps others which geologists haven't discovered yet. South America and the other continents are likewise made up of fragments of older land masses, which, after uncounted millions of years of independent existence, of growing, shrinking, submersion and reemergence from the sea, have joined together.