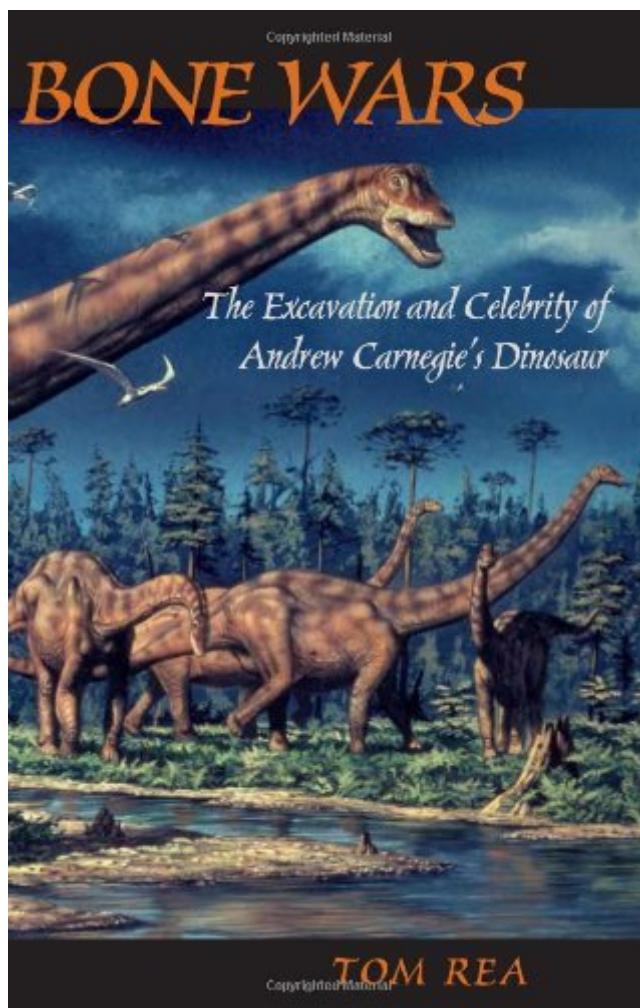


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Bone Wars: The Excavation Of Andrew Carnegie's Dinosaur



Synopsis

Winner of the 2002 Spur Award for Best Western Nonfiction - Contemporary

Less than one hundred years ago, *Diplodocus carnegii* "named after industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie" was the most famous dinosaur on the planet. The most complete fossil skeleton unearthed to date, and one of the largest dinosaurs ever discovered, *Diplodocus* was displayed in a dozen museums around the world and viewed by millions of people. *Bone Wars* explains how a fossil unearthed in the badlands of Wyoming in 1899 helped give birth to the public's fascination with prehistoric beasts. Rea also traces the evolution of scientific thought regarding dinosaurs, and reveals the double-crosses and behind-the-scenes deals that marked the early years of bone hunting. With the help of letters found in scattered archives, Tom Rea recreates a remarkable story of hubris, hope, and turn-of-the-century science. He focuses on the roles of five men: Wyoming fossil hunter Bill Reed; paleontologists Jacob Wortman "in charge of the expedition that discovered Mr. Carnegie's dinosaur" and John Bell Hatcher; William Holland, imperious director of the recently founded Carnegie Museum; and Carnegie himself, smitten with the colossal animals after reading a newspaper story in the New York Journal and Advertiser. What emerges is the picture of an era reminiscent of today: technology advancing by leaps and bounds; the press happy to sensationalize anything that turned up; huge amounts of capital ending up in the hands of a small number of people; and some devoted individuals placing honest research above personal gain.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It was gift and it was well received.

Not much intrigue in this book. The author did an excellent job of researching 'who done what and when', but the story lacked excitement. I was counting pages to read about midway. Someone who is really into the history of dinosaur bone hunting a century or so ago would probably get a lot out of this book, I did not. One thumb up.

Where Dead Voices GatherNick ToschesLittle Brown and Companywriter: BRUCE MILLERWith his big bushy moustache and sun-weathered skin, Tom Rea looks like one of the tough paleontologists staring out of one of the black-and-white photographs in his book, *Bone Wars: The Excavation and Celebrity of Andrew Carnegie's Dinosaur*. His voice, though, has the soft polite tone of a professional who has worked indoors for the better part of his life. Imagining Rea to be like one of the men he wrote about is probably a tribute to how vividly he portrays the people who made Carnegie's dinosaur such a sensation. Rea is quick to cite the abundance of letters he used as primary source material. "The whole story is filled with interesting characters," says Rea. "The personalities are so strong in those letters. I don't know if it's the line of work that draws strong-minded people to it -- they certainly weren't in it for the money -- but in any case they didn't want other people to get in the way of finding out what the bones could tell them. Sometimes they disagreed quite strongly." Rea comes from a family that knows geology and paleontology -- his uncle is a geologist; his brother is a geologist at the University of Michigan; geology was also his mother's avocation -- but he came to write his book by following a less scientific path. He grew up in Pittsburgh looking at Carnegie's dinosaur at the Carnegie Museum. After graduating from Williams College in Massachusetts in the early 1970s, Rea spent a few summers visiting his uncle's ranch. He became a reporter for the Wyoming's Casper Star-Tribune for the next 13 years, though he maintained an amateur interest in geology and paleontology. In 1990, he started working on an article for the paper about how Carnegie's famous dinosaur made its way from Wyoming to Pittsburgh. During his research, he became fascinated with the fossil digs and disputes that surrounded the unearthing of the bones. When he quit the paper in 1998, he wanted to write a book about a number of these

controversies, but an editor suggested he focus on just one. Then, in 1999, he came to the Carnegie Museum. "Not until I got here did I realize how many letters they were," says Rea. "They had archives there that yielded all the resources to write the book I wanted to write." Correspondence between Carnegie and then-museum director William Holland, who Rea says figures as "the Darth Vader of the story," was right next door at the Carnegie Library. Rea ended up using the archives of a number of Pittsburgh groups. "[Holland's] secretary typed and saved every letter, even putting them in chronological order, so it was very easy to follow," Rea says. The first person who caught Rea's attention was Bill Reed, the tough, autodidactic Wyomingite who found Carnegie's dinosaur. "He was a frontiersman who was dealing with people from the East who didn't particularly respect him because he was a Westerner," Rea says. "It was a different time back then. A guy like Reed who'd been a buffalo hunter and snow shoveler on the railroad was one acquaintance away from the richest man in the world. Although the men were divided profoundly by class and opportunity, they were still all connected." The story of Carnegie's dinosaur was "a natural for a book," and Rea easily sold the idea to the University of Pittsburgh Press, then wrote it in a year and a half. This is Rea's first published book, though perhaps not his last. Now he is considering writing a book about Earl Douglas, the paleontologist who found the Jurassic quarry of dinosaur bones that is now the Dinosaur National Monument in Utah and Colorado.

Knowledgeably written by former journalist Tom Rea, *Bone Wars: The Excavation And Celebrity Of Andrew Carnegie's Dinosaurs* is the award-winning true story of how a *Diplodocus carnegii* fossil (named after famous industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie) found in the Wyoming badlands helped bring about public fascination with the great beasts of millennia past. Though *Bone Wars* is entirely nonfiction, it is so deftly written that it reads like a novel as it follows the battles of individuals, conflicting scientific theories, and even instances of backstabbing and double-crossing in the bone-hunting world of a century past. An extensive bibliography and index enhance this truly enjoyable and informative history, which is especially recommended for dinosaur and paleontology enthusiasts.

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