

FOREWORD

Very few things capture one's imagination quicker than finding a fossil while on a nature walk or even a walk through a museum. There is an almost mystical drawing power associated with fossils. Questions of What? Where? When? Why? and How? immediately flood one's mind, and in some cases may remain there forever, as the relic from the past is contemplated.

This booklet — *The Yellowstone Fossil “Forests”* — is the outcome from Dr. Harold Coffin's lifelong quest for answers concerning not just one fossil but literally a whole “forest” of fossils, the fossil forests of Yellowstone National Park (YNP). Through the years Dr. Coffin has pioneered research into the various fossil areas of YNP looking for clues that would help him unravel the questions of origins for these magnificent fossil trees. He has been responsible for introducing numerous other investigators to the “intrigue” of the forest, always seeking, always asking, never leaving one stone left unturned, if that stone might help answer the questions of the “Fossil Forest.” Dr. Coffin's quest for answers has taken him from the tops of high mountains, to encounters with grizzly bears, to walks into the destruction zone of Mount Saint Helens. His drive for answers is equaled only by the prospector bitten by the gold bug or the diver searching for the lost Spanish galleon.

As you read through Dr. Coffin's narrative on the Yellowstone Fossil Forest it is my wish that you will not only become enthralled with the *Fossil Forest* but that you will also recognize and appreciate the careful scientific work that has brought Dr. Coffin to his conclusions.

There is still a list of unanswered questions that continue to beckon researchers for answers. If you feel a desire for adventure, why not consider the intrigue of a fossil forest?

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