

Student Handout 2-Paleontologist Biographical Background

Edward Drinker Cope (1840-1897)

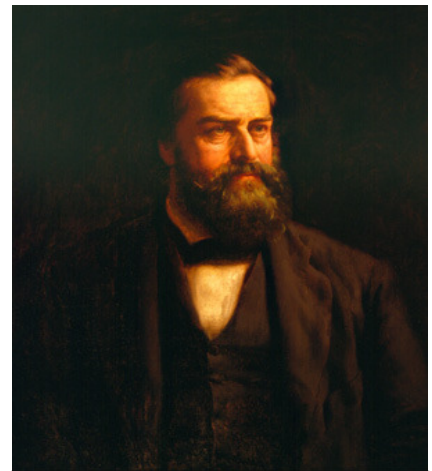
- Internationally renowned vertebrate paleontologist and zoologist
- Born into a wealthy Quaker family in Philadelphia, PA
- Interested and schooled in natural history and science
- Worked at the Academy re-cataloging reptiles and amphibians
- Studied and trained with Pennsylvania paleontologists Spencer Baird and Dr. Joseph Leidy
- At age 22 was recognized as one of the nation's reptile experts
- In 1865, began to analyze fossilized dinosaur bones
- Discovered and named dozens of new dinosaur species
- Earned many honors and the presidency of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1896
- In 1869 he mistakenly placed the head on the wrong end of an elasmosaurus. This mistake was gleefully pointed out by his rival, Othniel Marsh, which only added more fuel to their rivalry (now known as "The Bone Wars").



Photo from private collection,
Courtesy of Maxilla and Mandible, Ltd., New York

Joseph Leidy (1823-1891)

- Called the "Father of American Vertebrate Paleontology"
- Lived most of his life in Philadelphia, PA
- Graduated from medical school in 1844
- Studied fossils of fish and reptiles, but most of his paleontology work was on prehistoric mammals, especially those in the American West
- Leading American teacher and expert of anatomy and vertebrate paleontology during the mid-1800s
- Authored nearly 230 articles and books on Paleontology
- Educated others like Edward Cope
- In 1869, he gave his professional opinion on the correct species classification and structure of the elasmosaurus.



Joseph Leidy by James L. Wood,
after a portrait by Bernard Uhle,
ca.1900
*Courtesy of the American
Philosophical Society Library*

Othniel C. Marsh (1831-1897)

- Considered one of the pre-eminent paleontologist of the 19th century
- Born in Lockport, New York
- Graduated from Yale College in 1860 and studied geology, mineralogy, anatomy, and paleontology
- Appointed professor of vertebrate paleontology at Yale University
- In 1871, found the first American pterosaur fossils and later found the remains of toothed birds, flying reptiles, early horses, and dinosaurs like Apatosaurus and Allosaurus
- In 1869, was part of the "Bone Wars" with Edward Cope. He proved that Edward Cope placed the head of an elasmosaurus on the wrong end of the skeleton.



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