Local man saves specimens at gravel pit.

You might call Stan Johnson a history buff.

While a scoutmaster in Brady, Johnson shared a book about Native American chiefs with young boys.

“I was fascinated with the different tribes and shared that with the scouts,” he said.

Perhaps his interest in the past is what kept him from throwing away large pieces of petrified rock that plugged up the end of equipment he operated while pumping gravel for Lincoln County.

“I couldn’t throw them away because I knew they were some kind of teeth,” Johnson said.

Johnson later identified the six specimens of varying size as mammoth teeth after studying pictures in a book called The Cellars of Time about paleontology and archaeology in Nebraska.

Local biologist Mark Peyton confirmed that they were mammoth or mastodon teeth after viewing a picture of the specimens.

Mammoths, which are now extinct, were large elephants from the Pleistocene era and were typically hairy with a sloped back and long, curved tusks.

Peyton said both mammoths and mastodons, described as elephant-like mammals, roamed North America during the Pleistocene era which was two million to 12,000 years ago.

“It’s believed that both were hunted to extinction and lived as late as 4,000 years ago, which means they were present in the Holocene era which is today or modern time,” Peyton explained, noting that the mastodon is much older and lived as long ago as 20 million years.

Johnson guessed that the largest tooth, which is a yellowish color, weighs over 12 pounds.

The 86-year-old found the teeth in the late 1980s to early 1990s while pumping gravel about three miles south of Brady.

“It’s surprising what’s buried in the Platte Valley,” Johnson said.

Johnson said he generally pumped

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