

Become a Museum Member

Benefits of membership include:

- Free admission on every visit
- 10% discount in Excavations Gift Shop
- 10% discount on birthday parties
- Invitation to members only events
- Free or discounted admission to over 300 museums and science centers worldwide.

For details or an application, stop by the admissions desk, visit our website, or call us.



Let us Host Your Tour or Event

We offer guided tours for school field trips, tour buses, or other groups. Call **785•628•5517** to schedule a tour. We also have rooms available for meetings, birthday parties, or special events. Call **785•628•5516**.

Tell us about your museum experience with this short survey...



FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY

06/2025

Welcome to:



Admission Fees:

General Public Admission

\$10 for adults (age 13-59)
\$9 for seniors (age 60+)
\$7 for youth (age 4-12)
\$6 for FHSU students (with valid ID)

Free Admission for:

Museum Members
Members of ASTC Passport Program
Children 3 and under

Summer Hours:

(April 1—September 30)

OPEN DAILY

Monday—Saturday: 9 a.m.—6 p.m.
Sunday: 1 p.m.—6 p.m.

Winter Hours:

(October 1—March 31)

Tuesday—Saturday: 9 a.m.—6 p.m.
Sunday: 1 p.m.—6 p.m.

877•332•1165 sternberg.fhsu.edu
3000 Sternberg Drive ▪ Hays ▪ Kansas ▪ 67601

The Western Interior Seaway

Kansas under water? Millions of years ago a large inland sea, the Western Interior Seaway (sometimes referred to as the Cretaceous Interior Seaway), covered much of the area that is now known as the Great Plains region which includes Kansas. Living in this tropical sea were large fish, reptiles, sharks, turtles, ammonites, and other unusual characters.

Today, preserved in the surface rocks of western Kansas, are the fossilized remains of many of these prehistoric creatures that lived 80 to 100 million years ago.



During the first half of the 20th century, the Sternberg family collected some of these spectacular fossils. Their finds, displayed in major museums around the world, have played a dominant role in initiating the study of North American fossil vertebrates.

The Geologic Time Scale

Era	Period	Examples of Life Forms	Age
Cenozoic	Quaternary	mammoths sabre-toothed cats	2.5
	Neogene	early horses Megalodon (sea)	23
	Paleogene	crocodilians (sea) primates (land)	66
Mesozoic	Cretaceous	Tyrannosaurus flowering plants	145
	Jurassic	Allosaurus (land) birds (air)	201
	Triassic	Ichthyosaurus (sea) pterosaurs (air)	251
Paleozoic	Permian	mammal-like reptiles (land)	299
	Pennsylvanian	amphibians & reptiles (land)	318
	Mississippian	Arthropods & Crinoids (sea)	359
	Devonian	vertebrate fishes	416
	Silurian	terrestrial plants	444
	Ordovician	clams (sea)	488
	Cambrian	Trilobites (sea)	542
Precambrian		one-celled animals	

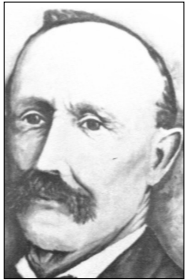
Several geologic periods are preserved at the surface in Kansas. The oldest rocks are in the southeast corner of the state, and the bedrock generally gets younger to the west.

Mississippian, Pennsylvanian, and Permian age rocks outcrop in the eastern half of Kansas, and Cretaceous and younger rocks outcrop in the west. Most of the fossils on display highlight the Cretaceous Period, the last age of the Mesozoic.

Who are the Sternbergs?

Dr. George M. Sternberg, renowned Civil War surgeon and later Surgeon General of the United States Army, was assigned to Fort Harker (Fort Ellsworth), Kansas in 1866. While stationed in Kansas, Dr. Sternberg often visited posts along the Smoky Hill Trail. During his travels, Sternberg helped to identify fossil bones that had been found by soldiers on patrol in western Kansas.

When Dr. Sternberg purchased a ranch near Fort Harker, his brother Charles H. Sternberg was invited to help manage it. Charles became interested in collecting fossil leaves found in the sandstone hills near the ranch. Many of the specimens that Charles found are preserved in larger museums in North America and Europe.

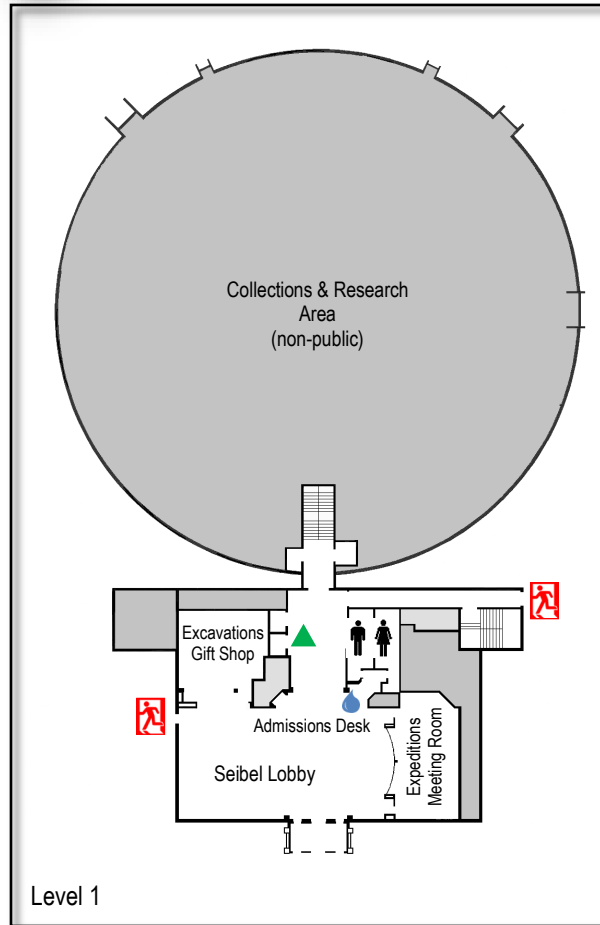


Charles H. Sternberg

Charles' three sons, George F., Levi, and Charles M. followed in their father's footsteps and became fossil hunters. At the age of nine years, the eldest son, George F., discovered an unusual fossil reptile, a plesiosaur. This prompted George to devote his life to hunting, collecting, and preparing fossils now displayed in museums around the world.



George became affiliated with the museum of what was then known as the Western Branch of the Kansas Normal School and was named curator in 1928. In 1952, George discovered the famous *fish-within-a-fish*, the most complete specimen of its kind known. George remained with the college museum until his retirement in 1962. After George's death in 1969, the museum was renamed in honor of the Sternberg family.

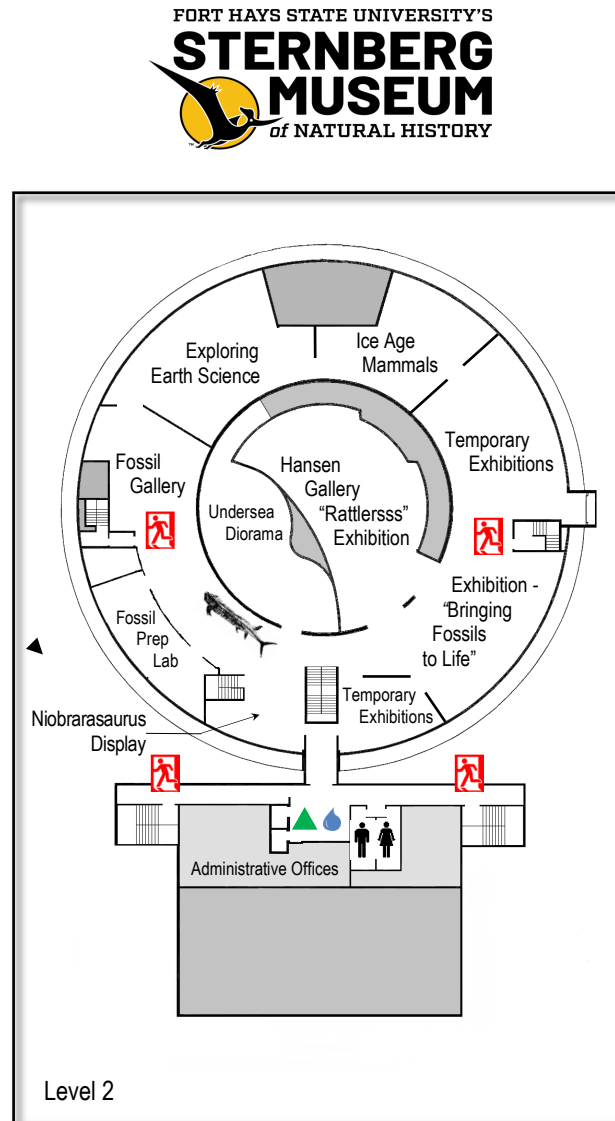


For Your Comfort...

The museum is fully accessible and is equipped to accommodate many special needs. Inquire at the admissions desk.

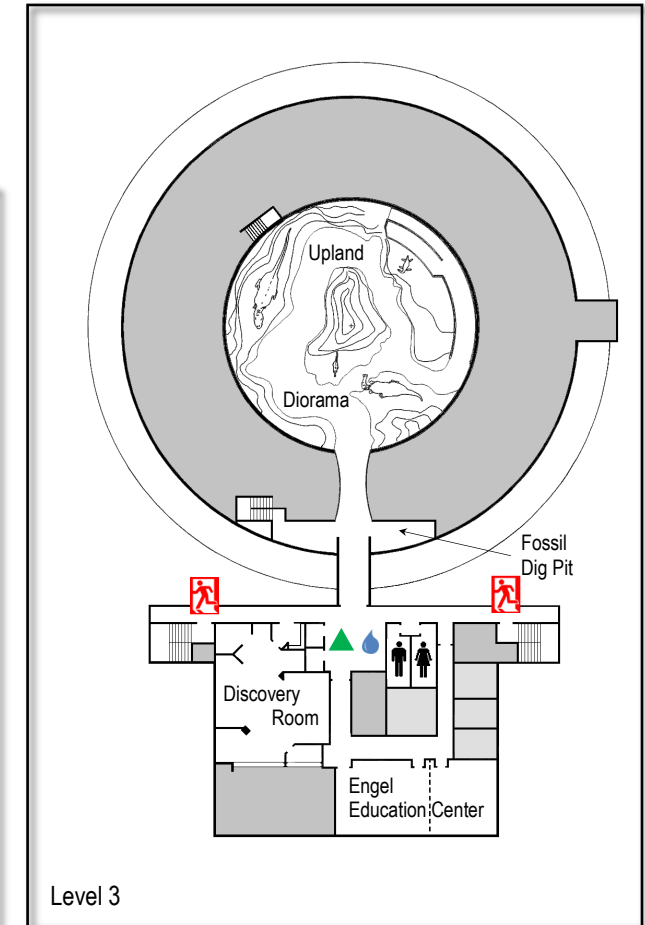
Courtesy wheelchairs are available for museum patrons' use. Inquire at the admissions desk.

Baby changing stations are located in the restrooms on first and third levels. A nursing area for mothers and babies is located in the women's restroom on the main level.



For Your Safety...

Please remain on the pathways in the galleries and dioramas. Please do not climb into or on displays. Some of our exhibits contain live reptiles including rattlesnakes. We ask that you do not tap on glass enclosures.



Key to Symbols:

- Elevators
- Emergency Exits
- Restrooms
- Water Fountain