



For a long time streetcars were a major source of transportation to the Zoo. Cincinnatians, loaded with picnic baskets, would scurry off the streetcars through the Zoo's Vine Street entrance in anticipation of a day full of fun and enjoyment.

The Cincinnati Zoo- 100 Years of Trial and Triumph

by Oliver M. Gale

The Cincinnati Zoo may well owe its existence to an invasion of caterpillars. In 1872 "Cincinnati was taken possession of by caterpillars in such numbers as to destroy the foliage of all the trees," according to a later account.¹ Andrew Erkenbrecher, miller, inventor, first president of the local telephone company, and a renowned citizen, knew just what to do about it.

Erkenbrecher had been from his youth a lover of animal life; in fact, as a hobby he had a private collection of exotic European song birds. Clearly insect-eating birds would be the salvation of Cincinnati, and Andrew called together a number of friends and public-spirited citizens. The Society for the Acclimatization of Birds was formed, five thousand dollars in cash quickly subscribed, and Armin Tenner sent to Europe "under instructions to purchase pairs of all the useful insect eating birds, as well as varieties of the best songsters."²

About a thousand birds were brought over and housed in an unoccupied building in Burnet Woods. "In the collection," the account continues, "were English larks, nightingales, German bullfinches, bobolinks, linnets, orioles, robins, starlings, and dozens of other varieties and a few wonderfully productive English sparrows." (It is only in the post-Watergate spirit of complete disclosure that the admirers of Erkenbrecher admit to the starlings and the "wonderfully productive" English sparrows.) The birds were soon released ("it was," the account states, "one of the proud days of Mr. Erkenbrecher's life") but then came the question, what to do with the Society of Acclimatization?

Erkenbrecher and his business associates, F. Marmett and Albert Fischer, had discussed the possibility of opening a Zoo, and written a world-famous zoologist, Dr. Brehm of Berlin, Germany, for advice. His reply was encouraging. The letter was read at a meeting of the Society in June, 1873, a discussion followed, and a committee was appointed to explore the idea.³ With lightning speed an affirmative decision was reached, incorporation of a joint-stock company completed effective July 11, 1873, a capitalization of \$300,000 consisting of 6,000 shares of \$50 each was authorized, and within two weeks had been secured. Incorporators were Andrew Erkenbrecher, Clemens Os-kamp, Armin Tenner, John Simpkinson, and George H. Knight.⁴

Officers and directors were elected at a meeting on July 28, 1873, consisting of Joseph Longworth, president, John Simpkinson, vice-president, Charles P. Taft, recording secretary, and Andrew Erkenbrecher, John Shillito, John A. Mohlendorff, Andrew Pfirrmann, George H. Schoenberger, Julius Dexter, Armin Tenner, and Clemens Oskamp, directors. The latter two were appointed corresponding secretary and treasurer, respectively. All were names to conjure with in Cincinnati of the 1870's—and the Zoo, on paper at least, was off to a rousing start.

First order of business was a site. Eden Park was a contender, but interest soon focused on Burnet Woods. Negotiations for a long-term lease were completed with the Park Commissioners, approved by the Board of Aldermen, and, in a revised form, by City Council. The Mayor, however, G. W. C. Johnston, had the power of veto, and he exercised it. This was done, he wrote “with great reluctance” since he was “most ardently desiring that a zoological garden should be organized.” He simply questioned whether such a large tract of land “which is increasing in value as the tide of population surges around it,” should be turned over to a private venture without a tighter leasing and buy-back arrangement.⁵

The search continued. Finally, in a lease dated September 25, 1874, the Zoological Society of Cincinnati acquired from William Wilshire, George Wilshire, and Augustus S. Winslow “66.4 acres more or less” at the present site, an area then known as Blakely Woods, for a period of ninety-nine years starting October 1, 1874. Rent was \$5,000 a year for the first five years, \$6,000 for the next five, and \$7,500 a year thereafter. For the Society, the lease was signed by Julius Dexter, who by then was president of the Society. The Annual Report for 1874 commented, “The grounds are more remote from the City than could have been wished, but they are not too far from it.”⁶

September 18, 1875, was set for the grand opening; 1,200 people by engraved invitation were invited to attend, but the doors were open to everyone. Stockholders came in free, others paid the regular admission: 25 cents for adults, 15 cents for children.⁷

And the animal exhibits? One elephant bought from a bankrupt circus, one tiger, and one blind hyena. Construction delays meant that few of the shelters were ready for occupancy, and the larger assortment of animals for the most part remained in crates, out of sight.⁸

Soon, however, the collection was a respectable one for those days. In fact, only one other zoo existed in America, the one in Philadelphia opened fourteen months earlier. Nucleus of the zoo was the fine variety of imported birds assembled over the years by Erkenbrecher. Many animals had been bought from G. Hagenbeck, a distinguished animal dealer in Hamburg, Germany; some in New York and “at the auction sale of Barnum’s Hippodrome at Bridgeport, Connecticut”; and arrangements had been made with Brig. Gen. James S. Brisbin, U. S. A. at Omaha, the second annual report for the

year 1875 states, for the purchase of "native animals from the plains and the Rocky and Sierra Nevada mountains."⁹

The Zoo at its inception, was clearly organized for profit to the shareholders. Dexter, in the annual report for 1874, said for example, "The prospects of the Society are flattering for success In Europe, there are now in operation or in process of construction more than eighty zoological gardens, and almost without exception they are profitable, and in some cases very largely so." He continues, "The object of the Society is to establish a garden which will be a profit to the stockholders, a credit to the city, and a continual source of improvement to its visitors."

The early years, however, read like the Perils of Pauline. Crisis was followed by salvation, to be followed by near disaster, and precarious relief. It was not until the zoo definitely abandoned its commercial basis and became an organization operated not for profit that it began consistently to operate *with* a "profit". The excess earnings, however, are now turned back into zoo improvements—and few institutions in the City today stand higher in their credit rating than the Zoological Society of Cincinnati.

At the outset, however, despite the rosy prospectus, disappointments were not long in coming. The panic of 1873 put a sudden stop to the sale of subscriptions, and of the total \$300,000 authorized for sale, only \$120,600 had been subscribed by the end of 1874.¹⁰

Meanwhile costs had proved larger than anticipated, and problems more difficult of solution. "This showing is not satisfactory," Dexter said in the 1874 report, even before the gates had opened. "Some errors were to be expected in an enterprise so novel in America as the establishment of a Zoological Garden, but more have been made than can be accounted for from that reason. The principal cause has been the attempt to organize and manage a great new enterprise in the leisure time that a Board of nine men can spare from their individual occupations." At his urging, the Board effected a change in the Constitution to authorize payment of a salary, not to exceed two thousand dollars, to the President of the Society "which will secure the whole time and attention of a competent man." This authority was never exercised.

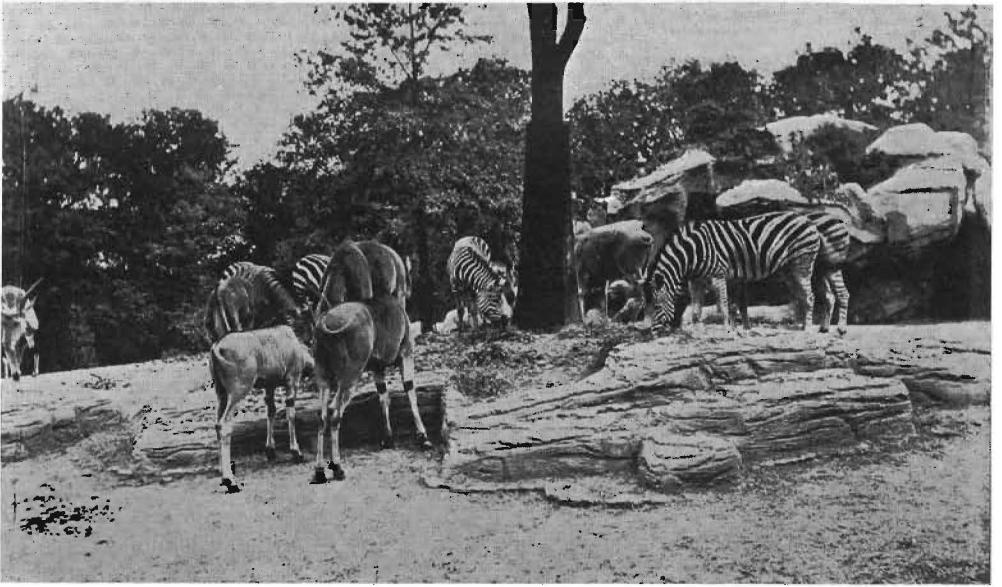
Deficits continued to appear with each year's operations. An assessment was levied on stockholders at the end of 1877; 1881 showed a "falling off in receipts from all sources" because of a "winter long and cold, spring wet and late" and a summer that "was unprecedented for long continued hot weather";¹¹ 1882 was depressed by a smallpox epidemic that kept Cincinnatians behind closed doors and drawn shades; and in 1885, with a floated indebtedness of \$60,000 and the refusal of banks to extend further credit, shareholders were told "The present financial condition of the Gardens is such that relief must come at once . . . to prevent the closing of the gates and the sale of the animals."¹²



The Cincinnati Zoo was one of the first to build barless grottoes for the lions, tigers, and bears. The idea of barless enclosures remains popular and widely used by zoos today.

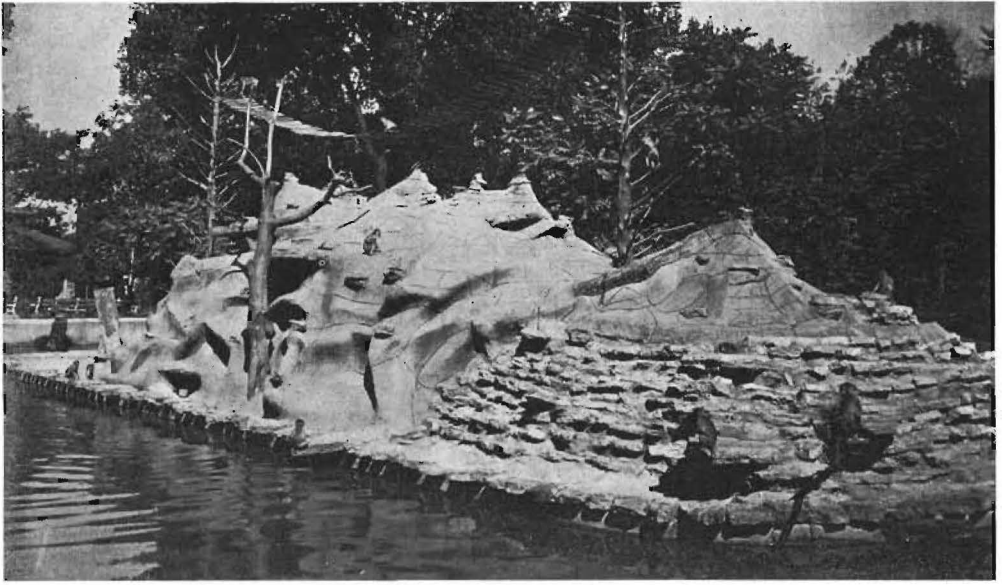




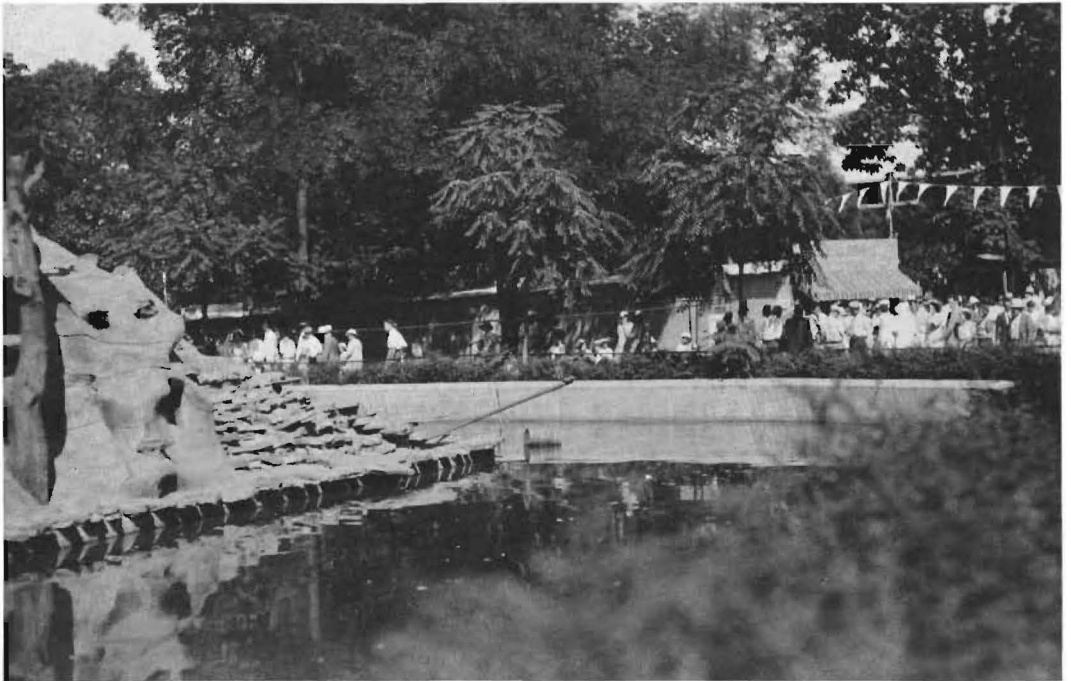


Visitors to the Zoo have viewed the antelope, zebra, and other hooved animals from a bridge or from ground level. The African Veldt permits the animals to roam in an open terrain and duplicates their native environment.





Over sixty monkeys roamed at will on monkey island entertaining the people with their humorous antics.



There was a further complication: the Society's right to purchase the grounds from the City for \$2000 an acre expired at this awkward time, in October of 1884. Rent was an important element of expense, and if the Zoo were to continue operating eventual ownership of the land was highly desirable. At the last minute came salvation: John Hauck and his associates offered to put up the needed funds, and on March 13, 1885, he loaned the Society \$135,000. The City took the money, Hauck took title to the property, and the Zoo took a new, perpetual lease with privilege of purchase at any time in the future. A further provision authorized the Zoo to "sell any part of the land hereby leased," with Mr. Hauck to receive no less than the \$2000 he was paying for the property.

That helped. But the debt remained large, rent and interest together constituted an oppressive burden of \$12,000 a year, and the Zoo was still in trouble.

At the annual meeting of 1886 a solution was offered and approved by a majority of the shareholders: that they relinquish all rights to dividends on the stock of the Society, with the proviso that the citizens of Cincinnati would contribute \$60,000 to what would then be a non-profit organization to enable the Society to pay off its debt. Only one hitch developed: many stockholders refused to give up the right to prospective dividends, and the plan disintegrated.¹³

Thereupon the Society sold, for \$90,000, twenty-one and a third acres out of its original sixty-six. Of this, seventeen acres were inside the gates, or in the block now occupied by the Zoo; two and three-quarters acres, which had served as a carriage stand, were across Carthage Pike; and one and a half were on Forest Avenue. The debt to John Hauck was cut from \$135,000 to \$85,000, the floating debt was reduced, both the rent and the interest were substantially lowered, and spirits rose. They were even higher two years later when the annual report could say, "Receipts in 1888 . . . demonstrate beyond a doubt the future success of the Zoo;" operations that year were \$19,000 in the black—the "best year by far in the history of the Society."¹⁴

The euphoria continued. "We have the largest and most complete zoological gardens in the country," the report for the year 1890 observes; "ours is the only important institution of its kind that has neither state nor municipal assistance." And 1891 was reported "a season of success unprecedented in the preceding seventeen years of the Society's existence."

But costs were continuing to be large, and the debt, never more than nibbled at, was mounting gradually but steadily. At the annual meeting in February, 1896, stockholders were again given the choice of abandoning the project and liquidating the zoo, or giving up their rights and putting the Gardens "on the same basis as that of our Art Museum, the College of Music, or the Music Hall." "When it becomes generally known," the proposal went, "that the stockholders intend to surrender all their interests, which aggregate \$225,000 paid into the

Society some twenty years ago, it may have a tendency to arouse such a spirit of enthusiasm and interest among our citizens who have the future welfare of the city at heart, that they will lend their influence and assistance toward perpetuating the Zoological Garden.”¹⁵

Debts had accumulated beyond any possibility of their being paid by the operations of the Garden, and the banks again were unwilling to carry the Zoo any longer, even with the personal endorsement of some of the Directors. So on January 22, 1898, the company was placed in receivers' hands. The court named as receivers Albert Fischer, who had been a staunch friend of the Zoo since its inception, and Hon. Gustav Tafel.

Predictions proved correct. With the liquidation of the commercial investors, public spirited citizens did subscribe enough to satisfy the debts of the defunct Zoological Society of Cincinnati (the first), especially since many debtors were lenient in presenting their claims. Liquidation of the Zoo was thus avoided.

So in 1899 was organized the Cincinnati Zoological Company, with L. B. Harrison playing a key role in the effort. And less than two years later, in December, 1901, the Cincinnati Traction Company, which had just leased the local street railway system and saw the Zoo as an important traffic builder, completed plans whereby that Company secured control of the Zoo through the purchase of stock of the Cincinnati Zoological Company.

The succeeding years went smoothly, but with mounting restlessness on the part of the Traction Company. The cost of operation grew each year; the running of a zoo did not always fit easily into the running of a traction company. And as the popularity of the Zoo increased, a movement started among citizens to purchase it. City Council, interested in exploring the possibility, passed an ordinance authorizing Mayor Spiegel to appoint a committee of five citizens for the purpose. The committee was organized on February 22, 1915, consisting of August Herrmann, who was appointed chairman, Andreas E. Burkhardt, George W. Weedon, Samuel R. Meyer and Alfred Mack. A Ladies' Auxiliary Committee was also organized, with Mrs. Robert Ralston Jones as chairman.

Then came into the picture two people who are enshrined in the Zoo's memory forever. Mrs. Charles P. Taft, daughter of David Sinton, and Mrs. Mary M. Emery agreed each to put up \$125,000 to purchase the Zoo if an additional \$125,000 would be raised from the public to be spent on Zoo improvements. The purchase price had been \$375,000; but in consideration of this offer, it was reduced to \$250,000.

The public funds were quickly raised, and on October 1, 1916, Mrs. Taft and Mrs. Emery assumed ownership of the Zoo, to be run not for profit. A Cincinnati Zoological Park Association was organized and assumed active operations on May 1, 1917. Mrs. Taft was elected president, Charles J. Livingood, representing Mrs. Emery, vice president; C. H. Rembold, treasurer, and Charles G. Miller, secretary and business manager.

Furthermore, under an agreement signed May 7, 1917, Mrs. Taft and Mrs. Emery agreed that each would pay one-half of any deficit occurring from operations for a period of five years. Mrs. Emery died on October 11, 1927; but even in 1928, her estate was paying half the Zoo deficits, along with Mrs. Taft.

The Cincinnati Zoo of today can be said to have had its inception early in 1931. The history of tribulation and stress was drawing to an end, and a period of steady growth and complete financial stability was about to be inaugurated. It was early in 1931 that under a plan suggested by The Commercial Club and endorsed by other civic organizations, Mrs. Taft said she would pay the 1931 deficit if the City of Cincinnati would arrange to purchase the Zoo and provide a sufficient income by charter amendment to carry it in the future. The City agreed in principle—and Mrs. Taft assumed any 1931 deficit.

There were some anxious moments, as City Council ran into delays in accepting the details of the proposal or offering their own plan; Mrs. Taft's death later in 1931 made final agreement even more imperative in settling the estate, and the executors at one point even ordered that "the Cincinnati Zoo be sold immediately, and the proceeds used in the payment of the debts of the Association, the balance to be turned over to the Cincinnati Art Museum."¹⁶ But conferences between the City Finance Committee, the Mayor, the City Solicitor, representatives of the two estates, the Cincinnati Zoological Park Association, and a Civic Organizations' Zoo Committee resulted in a plan on which agreement was reached.

On November 3, 1932, therefore, the Zoo was purchased by the City for \$325,000. Six weeks later, on December 14, Mayor Russell Wilson signed an ordinance transferring the property of the Zoo Gardens to the Board of Park Commissioners, with the understanding that it would "execute an agreement with some corporation organized not for profit for the operation of the Zoological Gardens."¹⁷

Thus the present Zoological Society was born, with five members of the Board to be appointed by the City, another twenty-one to be comprised of volunteer citizens of the community. The Society was made fully responsible for the ownership and maintenance of the animal collection and for meeting all operating expenses through operating revenues. It was estimated that Cincinnati taxpayers would pay \$57,625 the first year "for the privilege of 'saving' the Zoo," in addition to the \$325,000 purchase price: \$13,000 for redemption of the first year serial bonds, \$14,625 as interest on the debt, and an estimated \$30,000 to meet the anticipated deficit. After that, the Cincinnati *Post* for November 4, 1932, comments, "The taking over of the Zoo by the City will not be justified in the eyes of the taxpayers if it does not pay its own way From now on, as a municipally owned property, the Zoo must stand on its own feet. The taxpayer has done his part. After 1932 he cannot be expected to guarantee any deficit." Nor was he.

To the original Board of the present Society the City appointed C. A. Dykstra,

Irwin M. Krohn, Charles L. Harrison, Walter Schmidt, and C. O. Rose. The balance of the Board consisted of Otto Armleder, A. S. Bossong, Andreas E. Burkhardt, Albert H. Chatfield, Jr., Walter A. Draper, Julius Fleischmann, Gerritt J. Fredriks, Sol H. Freiberg, Dr. W. D. Haines, Fred W. Hinkle, B. H. Kroger, L. P. Lewin, William H. Miller, A. C. Moorhaus, A. K. Nippert, John Weld Peck, James A. Reilly, John G. Robinson, Allison F. Stanley, Robert J. Sullivan, and Charles F. Williams. The Board elected Reilly, president, Krohn and Lewin, vice-presidents, Fredriks, secretary, and Haines, treasurer.

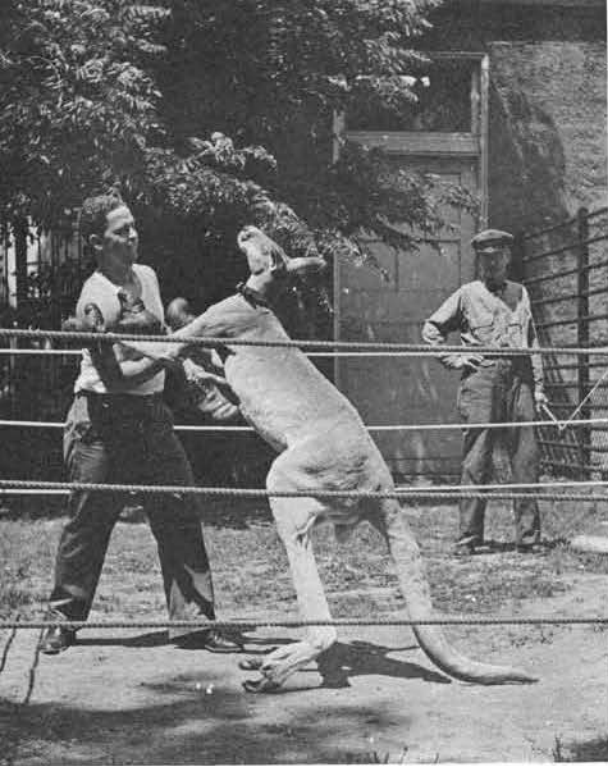
Special events—some animal oriented, some not—have always played an important part in the life of the Zoo. As far back as 1893 Charles F. McLean, Secretary of the Society, reporting on the meeting of the financial crisis a few months earlier, said, “The new management then set to work to vigorously stimulate attendance; for experience had taught that, no matter how great the (animal) collection, something more than the menagerie alone was necessary to keep the public interested. Many, and novel entertainments were given; summer night musical fetes were established. They soon became the most popular and fashionable affairs of the summer season.”¹⁸

From the start, the management has been working “vigorously to stimulate attendance”; and “many and novel entertainments” have indeed been given.

In 1877 a July 4 balloon ascension was “great success,” doubling attendance.¹⁹ “One hundred or more Sioux Indians were sent from their Western reservation and were with us almost three months” in the summer of 1896, an event “never witnessed before.” They set up a village within the Zoo and lived, according to the billing, their normal life, giving “a rare opportunity of showing the character and mode of life of the Indian tribes.” This was a financial failure, but the courageous Zoo president, John Goetz, Jr., hailed it as, from an educational standpoint, “an incalculable success.”²⁰

A bridge tournament in 1934 with a trip to Chicago as first prize; a Chautauqua Week, with lectures, recitals, concerts, reading from the Bible, magicians, and games of skill in 1918; an annual “New Citizens’ Day” sponsored by the Citizenship Council and honoring foreign born citizens with folk dancing and other old country festivities during the ’30’s; “Milk-cap Days” when admission was free on presentation of a milk cap; a 1937 marble-shooting tournament in the parking lot; a fete to raise money during World War II for the Fatherless Children of France; a wild animal circus in 1963; baby contests and even a Grandmother’s Contest; these through the years have added life and color to the Zoo, with varying degrees of effect at the turnstiles.

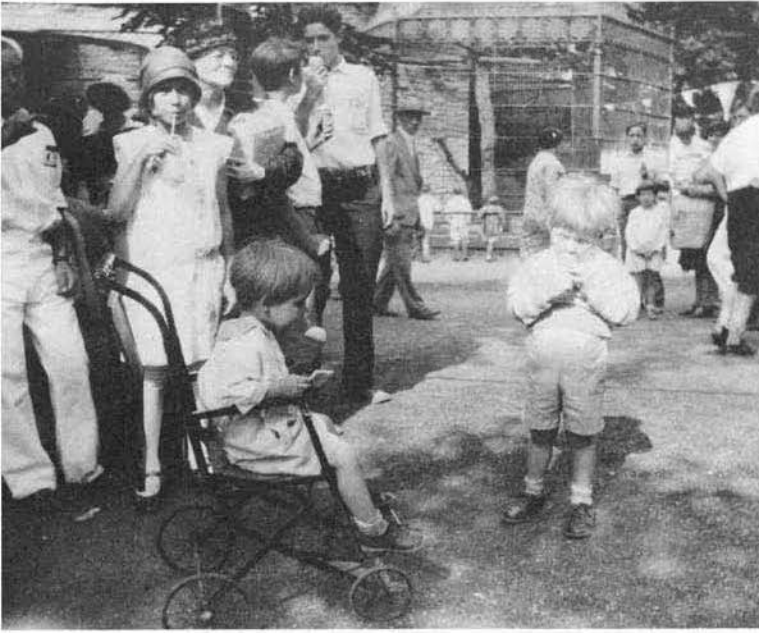
For fifty years the Food and Home Show, originally called the Pure Food Show, loomed large among the special events, with great giveaways of food and household appliances, entertainment in the form of acrobatic acts, bands and performances by local celebrities, and the atmosphere of a county fair. It was originally staged by a private concern under contract, but problems arose. For the last twenty or more years of its existence, it was supervised by Eugene



Special attractions such as Rodney, the Boxing Kangaroo, and trainer Howland Kirby, were employed to draw crowds to the Zoo in the early years.



The sea lion and seals have always been a popular attraction. Today these animals have a large new arena and pool from which they entertain their enthusiastic audiences.



Young and old enjoyed the displays, exhibits, and refreshments at the Zoo Food and Home Shows.





Special events: Milk Bottle Cap Day, Zoo Fetes, Food and Home Shows, and bazaars were sponsored by the Zoo and other groups to arouse public interest and increase Zoo attendance.





Zachman, long-time chairman of the committee and treasurer of the Zoo Board, and then Robert Acomb, Zoo Board member, always with a strong assist from Charles Beal, operator of the various concessions at the Zoo.

This show was once called by the president of the National Retail Grocers' Association "the most successful event of its kind in America";²¹ but with increased costs, changing public tastes, and the growing sophistication of the Zoo itself, the Food and Home Show had its final closing in 1969. It had missed only one summer in half a century: in 1943 it gave way to a "Win the War Exhibition," in which defense agencies and the fighting services put on displays of bombers, planes, and other war equipment.

But while the razzle-dazzle and the giveaways inevitably dominate the scrapbooks from the olden days, the primary business of the Zoo was going forward, solidly and effectively. The Cincinnati Zoo throughout the last of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth was generally recognized as the number two Zoo in the country, second only to the New York Zoological Park. Even with hard times and the advances of many zoos, it never dropped from the first ten, and is today probably one of the top five or six in the nation.

Early in this century Cincinnati was developing methods of keeping and exhibiting animals in something other than cages. It was one of the first to build grottoes for lions and bears—large outdoor areas walled on three sides by gunnite fashioned into realistic rock, and separated from the public by moats. The open veldt, where hooved animals disported themselves in herds on a terrain duplicating as far as possible the native environment of the animals, was a revolutionary concept when first displayed at the Cincinnati Zoo. The whole idea of barless enclosures is popular today; Cincinnati had some of the first ones ever built in this country, and even today they remain modern in concept.

In 1877 the Cincinnati Zoo made the national press by exhibiting the very rare Indian rhinoceros. The nearly extinct whooping crane was featured here in 1884; and in 1889 the first cape hunting dogs to be exhibited in this country were found at the Cincinnati Zoo. That same year, October 20, the very first giraffe born in America made news in Cincinnati. The Prewalski horse became extinct in the wild, preserved only in private collections and zoos. Gradually its number increased, and it was restored to the wilds. The Cincinnati Zoo was the first in this country ever to exhibit this rare and historic animal, which made its appearance here on December 30, 1904.

Music has always been a vital part of the Zoo; a band shell, constructed in 1877, was almost part of the original Zoo complex. "The experiment of evening concerts tried in August and September," the annual report for 1889 said, "warrants the belief that summer night music can be made a popular feature." Enough additional revenue was in fact produced to pay for the "handsome new music stand, which is a permanent addition to the Garden." An early

venture, the production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Pinafore* "on the lake" was a mixed success: the "great expense . . . was about met by increased receipts"; but the silver lining was found in the fact that the event "aided greatly in advertising the Gardens throughout the country, the benefit of which we will feel for some time to come."²²

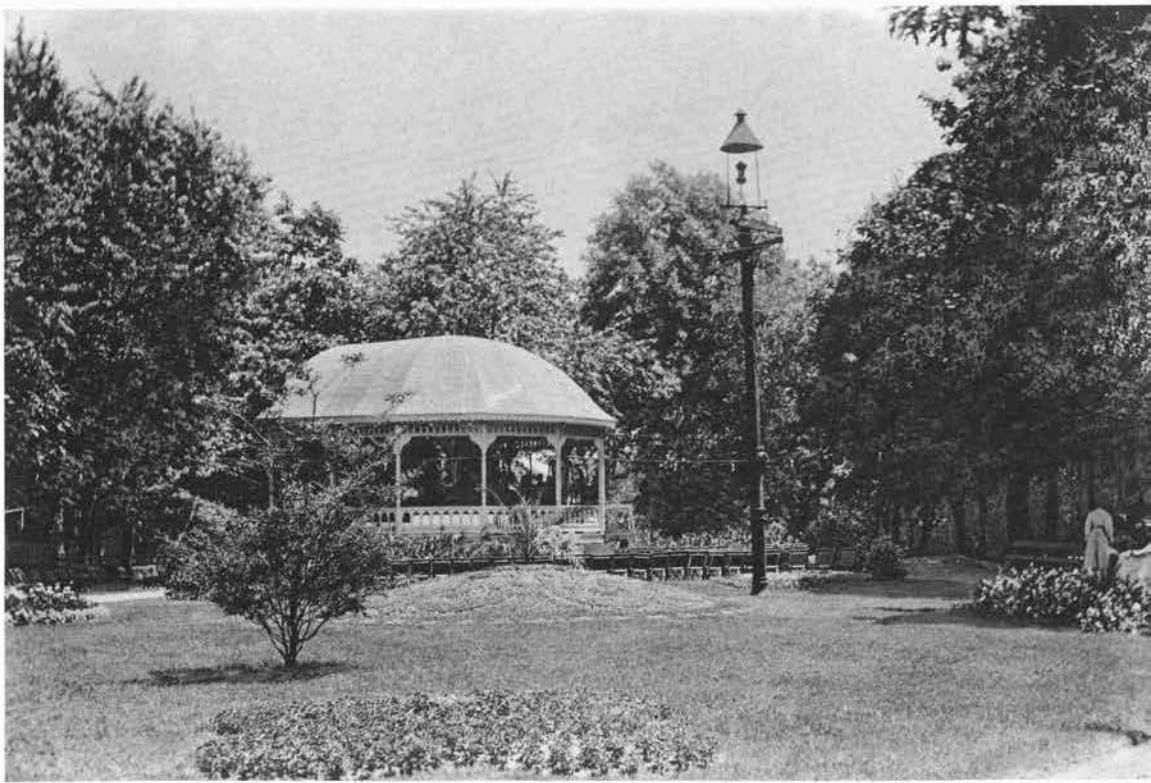
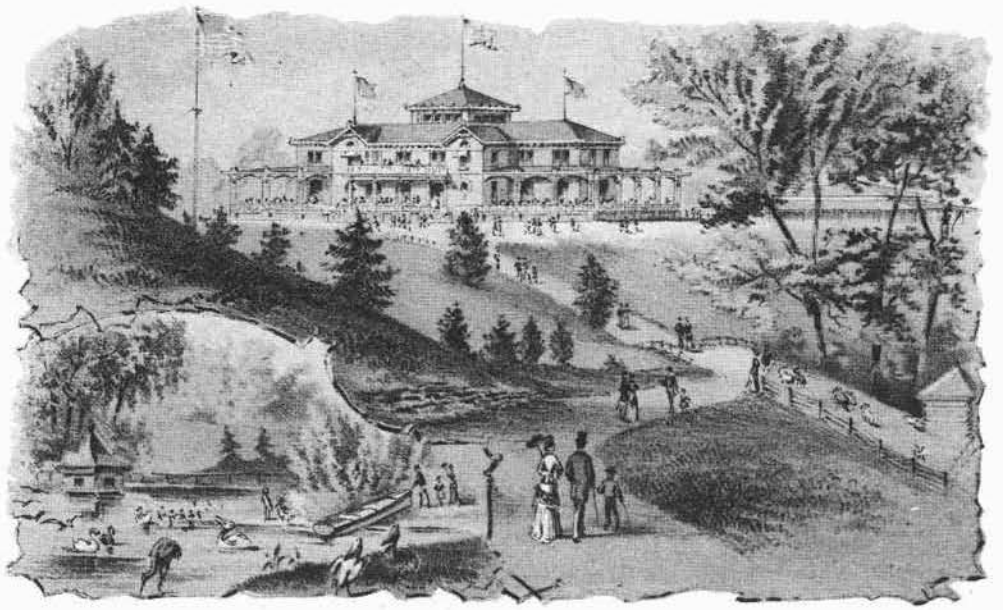
Band concerts, however, became traditional, with a success, according to the annual report for 1891, that "was the wonder of those who were professionally interested in summer amusements." The extent of this effort is indicated by the program for 1892; twenty-three grand concerts by Bellstedt and Ballenberg's military band on Tuesdays and Fridays; four exhibitions of fireworks by Professor A. L. Due; two concerts by the Cincinnati Orchestra Company's string orchestra on Thursdays; two concerts by the Royal Bell Ringers of London, and six evening concerts and two matinees by Liberti's Band and Concert Company. Total net profit: \$6,000.²³

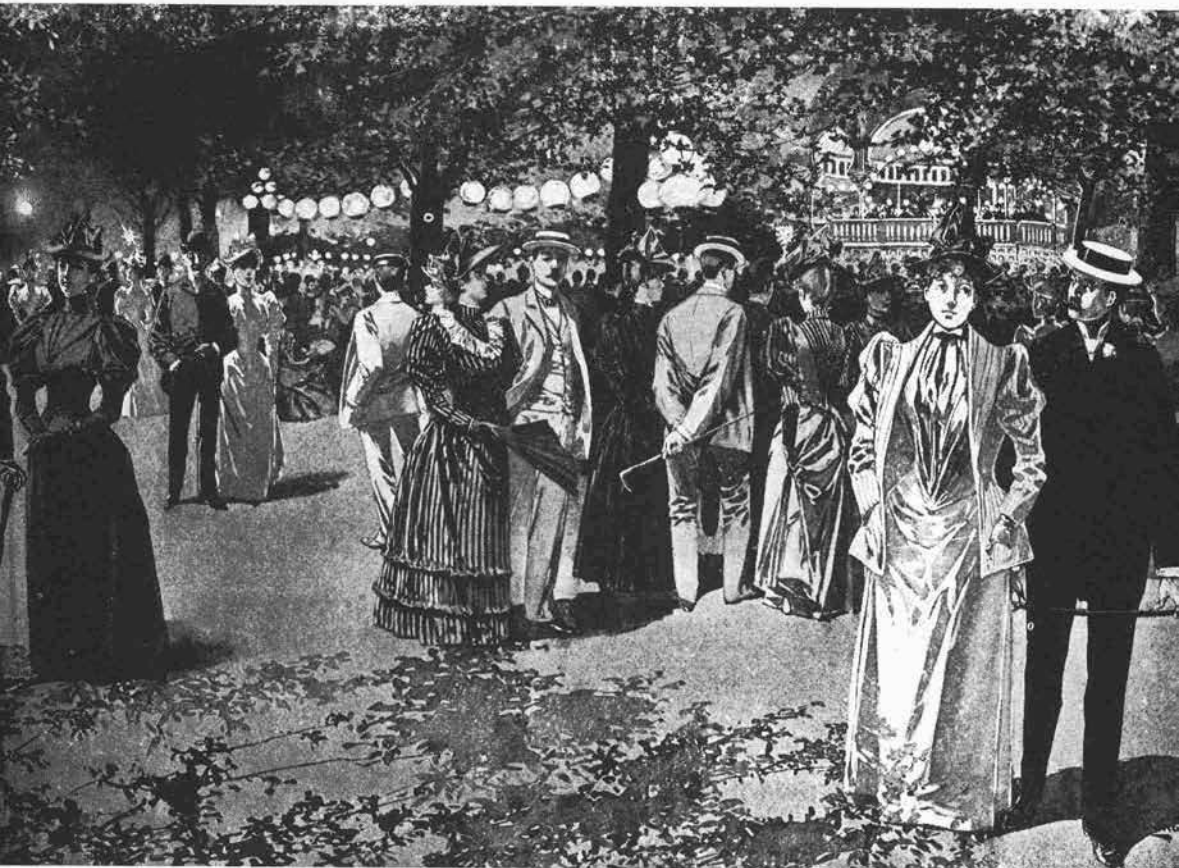
An addition to the original band shell was built in 1907; twelve years later the upper pavilion of the Zoo's large Clubhouse was connected to it; in 1920 the shell gave way to a full fledged stage, with a basement, new lighting, and theatrical fixtures. Music at the Zoo truly came of age in that year, when the Cincinnati Summer Opera opened for the first of fifty-one seasons. During these years the Zoo summer opera attained world-wide note as a unique musical venture; grand opera with top Metropolitan stars, singing outdoors to occasional accompaniment of screeching peacocks and braying wild asses.

It was a golden age, "the glory days," as Bill Styles recalled them in the *Cincinnati Post* in 1955. "It was strictly black tie then," he wrote, "a glamorous full dress affair and social excursion of considerable importance, not the least part of which was dining in the Clubhouse where a table overlooking the audience and the stage below was more vital to society than one of the better boxes."²⁴

Added sparkle was given to the performances when, as "just a fortunate improvisation of the 1931 season, a sketchy picture of life in a Vine Street beer garden back in the gay '90's" was put on as a preliminary to the regular opera season, featuring some of the opera stars themselves. It proved immensely popular, according to a *Times-Star* report, and was made part of the regular feature for the next few years.²⁵

Summer opera was threatened in those difficult '30 years, however, when the Zoo was in peril and was bought by the City. The new owners vehemently stated they could have no part of underwriting Zoo Opera deficits; the new Zoological Society was equally clear. Responding to strong public sentiment, Mrs. John J. Emery and Mrs. Horace Schmidlapp provided leadership in putting together a guarantee fund; and in the Spring of 1933 the Opera Committee of the Zoological Society fostered the organization of the Civic Opera Association, to produce opera—and take responsibility for its financing—under contract with the Zoo Society.

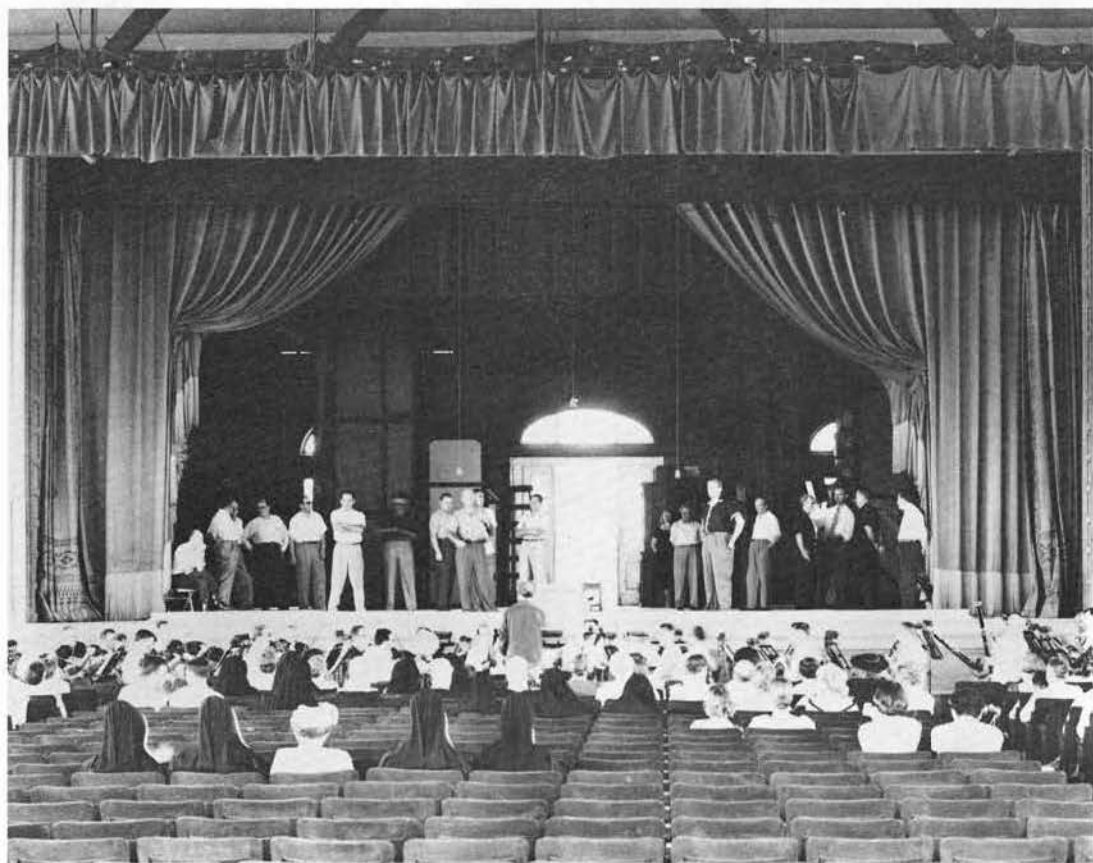




The Summer Night Concerts and Musical Fetes were the great events of the summer season in Cincinnati. Around the bandstand, in the restaurant, and on the verandas "people representing the fashion, beauty and intelligence of Cincinnati Society" could be seen.



The Zoo Club House and Opera Pavilion were scenes of glamorous social events during the fifty-one seasons of the Zoo summer opera. However, the pavilion was razed in 1972 after the Summer Opera moved to the renovated Music Hall.



During much of this period ice shows were a part of life at the Zoo. Starting about 1917, a skating area was open “day and night,” with an adjoining heated sun parlor providing “a warm place for changing wraps and putting on skates.” In addition, a 1918 newspaper account states, “hot coffee and other refreshments are served skaters. There is no extra charge for the skating or the use of the sun parlor. The lake is lighted by electricity at night.”²⁶

In addition, “three ice shows are given daily during the summer months,” a 1921 Zoo guide book states, “at 3:00, 7:30 and 9:00 p.m. at the open-air Woodlawn Theatre, situated southeast of the Clubhouse. The best professional skaters in the country are engaged for this show which is, indeed, a very novel attraction, the Zoo Ice Rink being the only open air rink in the world where real ice is provided in the sunshine during the warmest days of summer.” The skating surface measured twenty-one by forty-one feet, with brine pipes below it and cooling coils beneath that.

Many social events were centered at the ice rink, reported colorfully by Marian Devereaux of the *Enquirer*. Bill Styles recalls the time when “forty-five minute intermissions were allowed (at the opera) so you could slip out and catch the nearby ice show.”²⁷

One by one these features disappeared with time. The great sixty-year-old stone Clubhouse, with wide porches on two floors and a maple dance floor on one of them, was the first to go. “The building had outlived its usefulness,” recalls the 1950 Zoo annual report reviewing the past. The high quality restaurant, launched in 1876, was difficult to maintain in the face of increased competition. “The use of automobiles was increasing rapidly and night clubs and golf clubs reaching for their share of patronage. Termites added to the disintegration of the structure, which was costly to keep in repair.” (“The termites did more eating than the patrons,” is the way Styles put it.)

The Clubhouse was razed in 1937, and a new pavilion erected on the site. The dance hall, where in gayer days an orchestra played each summer evening from 7:30 to 11:30 and one could dance to “lively” music for five cents a couple,²⁸ went with it, yielding place to the Sea Lion basin and the Children’s Zoo.

Finally, air conditioning and more ambitious opera productions made the old Zoo pavilion obsolete, and with the 1972 season, Cincinnati’s Summer Opera moved to Music Hall; “old and hopelessly beyond repair, inadequate for any Zoo use,”²⁹ the old Opera House had to come down.

“Lost in the shuffle,” says Zoo News under the heading “Gone but not forgotten,” are the pre-opera picnics under the huge old trees. Blue jeans on opening night (Times had changed since the ’30’s!). Dripping ice cream cones nursed through the first act. Cold beer at intermission. No more arias shattered by the distinct bray of a donkey.³⁰ Gibbons now play on two islands in the midst of a new lake where gentlemen and ladies once enjoyed a French cuisine in Victorian surroundings and dined to the music of a fifteen piece

orchestra while waiting for the curtain to go up.

The Zooauc was more short-lived. Started in 1964 and running through 1971, the Zoo each year sponsored a formal dinner followed by an auction of items given the Zoo for the purpose. The first was held on the Zoo grounds "at a huge tent between the elephant house and Swan Lake," as *Vogue* reported. "Champagne and a massive smorgasbord helped things along inside the tent, where Japanese paper fish in yellow, black, orange, red and green wafted about overhead At eleven the rains came, the paper fish dripped, the floor got wet, and the Cincinnatians? They lifted their long skirts, jumped on tables, and carried on."³¹

Photographing expeditions to far-away places under Zoo sponsorship were inaugurated in 1964 when thirty-two, led by Zoo Director, Bill Hoff, and his wife, Lynn, spent two weeks in Central East Africa viewing big game. Subsequent annual "safaris" went to the Galapagos Islands, Central America, and the Antarctic, where a bonus was added in the form of a shipwreck. Alumni of these expeditions formed a Zoo Safari Club, designed originally to look at each other's pictures, later a source of strong support for the Zoo in many areas.

The Zoo's chief attraction over the years, however, was of course the animals. When the Zoo opened in 1875 the entire collection, most of it out of sight awaiting completion of the exhibiting areas, consisted of three deer, eight small monkeys, one buffalo, a tiger, an ancient hyena, a talking crow, a pair of elk, an alligator, a pair of grizzly bears, an old elephant, six raccoons, and four hundred birds. Today the Zoo displays some 2,500 mammals, birds, and reptiles. Its feline collection is regarded as the most outstanding in quality of any in the United States. With only nineteen Persian leopards in captivity in the world, the five in the United States are all in Cincinnati, three born here by Caesarean section. The Cincinnati Zoo, with one of the great primate collections of the world, holds the records for successful births of the great lowland gorillas.

Individual stars emerge from the Zoo's history, many of them still fondly recalled. Mr. and Mrs. Rooney, the educated chimpanzees, forerunners of today's Eddie and Nelson, featured in the 1888 annual report; Martha, the last of the Passenger pigeons who died at the Cincinnati Zoo September 1, 1914, and memorialized today at the Zoo and at the Smithsonian Institute; Incas, a male, the last of the earth's Carolina Parakeets, who died here February 21, 1918; Sam and Samantha, gorillas born a month apart and featured for weeks in the local news media, as a twenty-four hour watch of volunteers under the direction of Bob Lotshaw, animal curator, stood by to help whenever birth occurred, a top pediatrician consulted with Jerry Theobald, the Zoo's veterinarian, and the Good Samaritan Hospital helped nurse the youngsters past the critical period.

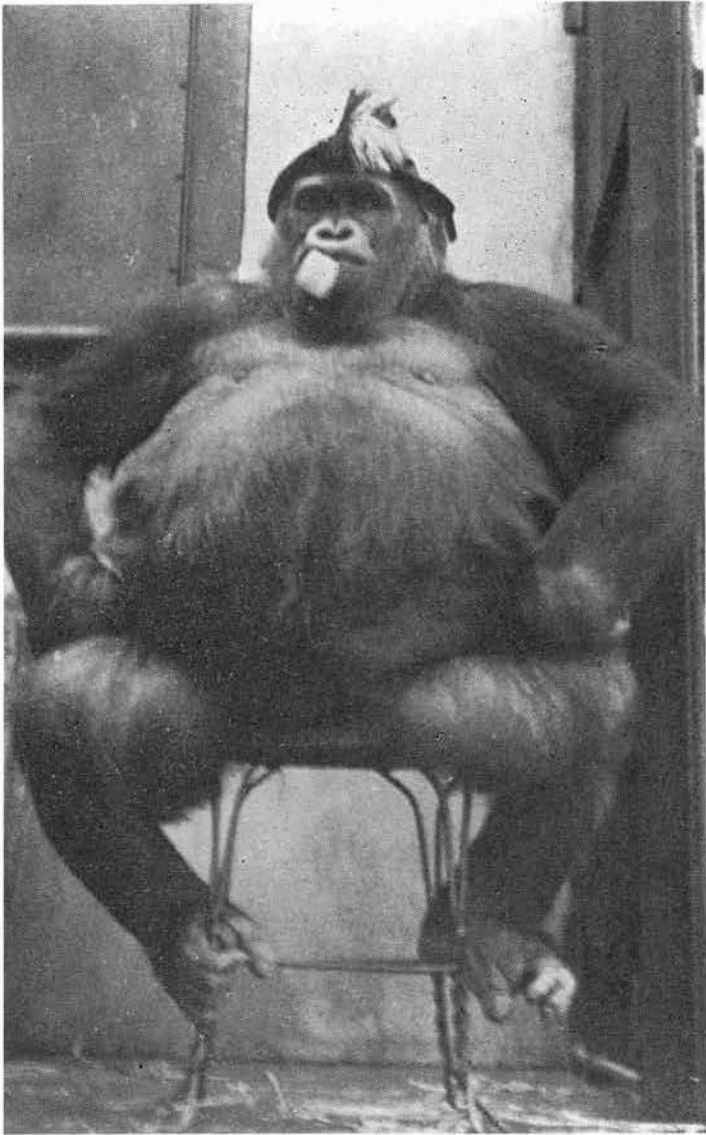
Beauty, the talented chimpanzee, gave a one-man show of her finger-paintings in New York, where individual canvases sold for \$75 (one hangs, or did



Martha, the last surviving Passenger Pigeon, was hatched at the Cincinnati Zoo in 1888 and died on September 1, 1914. Martha is believed to have been the last of a vanished species ruthlessly slaughtered between 1880-1900.

Beauty, the talented chimpanzee, delighted crowds with her finger painting. She appeared on news programs and had a one-man show of her work in New York.





For years the most famous animal in the Zoo's collection was Susie, the world's only trained Lowland gorilla. Susie came to the Zoo in 1931 and for years thrilled patrons with her daily performances.

hang, in Leonard Bernstein's New York apartment). In her brief career she appeared on ABC, NBC, and CBS news programs, was photographed by *Life*, *Look* and other magazines, and appeared in the *Journal-American's* "People in the News" column. When her inspiration faded, her colleague, Angel, took over with similar success. Benzoo, the Bengal tiger chosen as mascot for the Bengals, Cincinnati's professional football team, so thoroughly enjoyed her Sunday outings to the stadium that she would pace impatiently in her cage as the hour approached, and leap unprodded into the wheeled conveyance that would parade her before fifty thousand fans. King Tut was a beetling-browed gorilla whose bout with wasting illness grieved thousands—until it was discovered he had a simple allergy to wheat and with a new diet regained his 475 pounds in no time.

But the greatest of these was Susie, the world's first trained gorilla and for some years the only one in captivity anywhere. Susie, a native of the Belgian Congo, was captured in 1927 when a few months old, exhibited in Europe for two years, and then brought to the United States on the maiden voyage of the Graf Zeppelin. In 1931 she was purchased by the Cincinnati Zoo, and for years she sat down at a table twice a day with her trainer, William Dressman, and to the delight of thousands ate a meal with knife, fork and napkin. The *Enquirer* called her "the best educated and most highly trained gorilla that has ever lived,"³² and she was as vital a part of the Cincinnati scene as any leading citizen. Paramount News spent two days in Cincinnati filming "A Day in Susie's Life" for showing in motion picture houses throughout the world; on her August 7 "birthday" each year she was always "the recipient of gifts including fruit baskets, candy, nuts and other things" and children attending her birthday party received ice cream and cake.³³

It was front page news when she died on October 29, 1947. She had been ill for more than a week, the *Post* reported, after suffering a stroke. "In Cincinnati the kids have been asking anxiously for news about her. Several mothers have called to the Zoo to say their children have been praying for Susie."³⁴

Today the emphasis has shifted less to entertainment and more to conservation. The ecological note was struck early by then-president E. W. Townsley in the annual report for 1955, when he wrote: "We are now faced with the responsibility of doing all possible for the protection of wild life . . . Zoos must give more consideration to the code of objectives and fight more vigorously for the cause of wild life protection."

In the ensuing years the Cincinnati Zoo has achieved wide recognition for its success in this cause. Of a total of 350 Siberian tigers alive in the world today, in or out of captivity, seven are a product of Cincinnati Zoo breeding. It has produced three of the less than 400 snow leopards in existence. The first sand cat, caracal, and pampas cat to be born anywhere in captivity were born in Cincinnati; nineteen of the thirty-six known species of cats have been reproduced in the Cincinnati Zoo's collection.

Maudie, a pygmy hippopotamus, was “the only one ever born in captivity and that,” comments the *Times Star* somewhat superfluously in announcing the event on April 24, 1931, “is what makes her so rare.”³⁵ Five black rhinoceros, on the endangered species list, were also born at the Zoo.

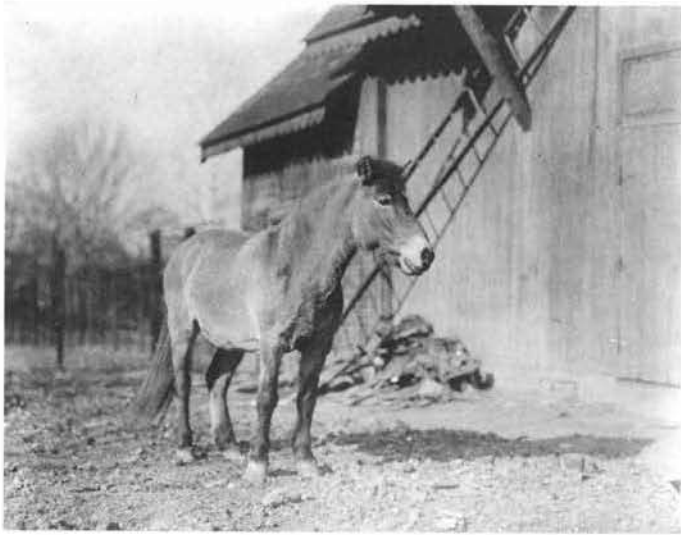
The Rothschild Myra bird, from the Isle of Bali, is rare and endangered. But starting with a pair a few years ago, the Zoo now has more than thirty, with the number increasing at such a rate that they are being shipped to other zoos, eager to have them.

“The only three giraffes born in this country were born in the Cincinnati Zoo,” according to an article by Dr. R. W. Shufeldt in *Scientific American Supplement* in 1916, which goes on to quote Hagenback, a leading German animal dealer, as saying “that within the last fifteen months he had visited all the principal zoological institutions in the world, and that, as to the condition of the collection, buildings, grounds, the care displayed and success achieved with the animals and birds, the Cincinnati Zoological Garden was second to none, without exception, and superior to any other in many respects.”³⁶

Conservation and preservation of species have become more and more an important part of the Zoo’s many-faceted educational program. As early as 1897, the Ohio State legislature recognized the Cincinnati Zoo as “an educational institution.” The preceding year the Board of Education by an ungrammatical resolution permitted “all of the children of our public schools to at least visit the Zoo two days in each school year for educational purposes.”³⁷ In one form or another these official classroom visits continue to the present day. A 1939 news account, for example, estimates that in June of that year ninety thousand school children accompanied by teachers and parents would spend a day at the Zoo, fifty thousand from Cincinnati schools and forty thousand from nearby communities, in a series of educational tours over a six-week period.”³⁸

The “School Days” program was further formalized in 1965 when a set of materials was developed with the cooperation of school personnel. These included pre-visit preparation in the classroom, structured tours to emphasize certain themes regarding the animal world, and follow-up studies for classroom use. Volunteers, mostly women, trained as tour guides, were brought into the program and, the schools agreed, these school visits became not only joyous days for the children but a meaningful educational experience.

Special programs were developed for high school and college courses—including one three-semester pioneering course in Zoo management offered at the University of Cincinnati for the first time in 1974 to students who had shown academic excellence and prior interest in biological science. Edward J. Maruska, Zoo Director, was instructor. Limited to thirty-five participants, it was fully subscribed three hours after it was announced. The same year a one-semester course was launched at Xavier University for teachers, outdoor education counselors, youth leaders, and others interested in using zoos as edu-



Once on the brink of extinction the Prewalski horse was exhibited in 1904. The Cincinnati Zoo was the first in this country to display this rare and historic animal.



The Zoo's pygmy hippopotamus, Maudie, was erroneously reported by a Cincinnati newspaper as the first pygmy hippo born in captivity.

cational resources.

Perhaps the first clearly youth program was one launched by the newly formed Zoological Society in 1934, in recognition of "the important place that children occupy in the present and future development of the institution." This was a radio club popularly known as "Uncle Steph's Zoo Club" for young between ages four and fourteen. By writing an essay or story about the Zoo (and purchasing a one dollar Junior Membership), a child could get "an attractive lapel button and a membership pass good for the current season."³⁹

Today some five hundred youngsters are embraced in a program that started in 1968 when two or three boys with time on their hands started following Barry Wakeman, the Zoo's young zoologist, on his Saturday morning rounds. Others joined them. Within a year or two, Junior Zoologists was established, primarily by the youngsters themselves, with strict membership requirements (must be ten to fifteen years old, must pass strict exams covering Latin names of species, characteristics of animals, knowledge of wildlife generally), field trips, attendance standards, and the beginnings of a library of its own. Of necessity the group was limited to fifty; but the pressures were irresistible and in 1972 Zoologists of Tomorrow was launched, to provide "an enjoyable and educational series of lectures (Monday mornings, July and August) for children . . . as a beginner's step toward the more advanced Junior Zoologists Club." The objective: "to establish an understanding of zoos and wildlife, and to explain and encourage an appreciation of ecology in one's own backyard, as well as on an international scope."⁴⁰

For those children who might not otherwise visit the Zoo, a special program was inaugurated in 1971 whereby through grants in the twenty-five dollar range companies could underwrite the cost of admissions for underprivileged. Each year about seven thousand children from orphanages, boys' clubs, and similar organizations are admitted free in organized groups.

Women have always played a significant role in the Zoo's activities. Existence itself was assured in 1916 only through the generosity and leadership of Mrs. Emery and Mrs. Taft. Another principal benefactor was Mrs. Lilly Ackerland Fleischmann, who supplied funds for the construction of the African veldt, the lion and tiger grottoes, the bear pits and the hippopotamus area, and was made an honorary life member in 1936, the first to hold that title. The following year she was the first woman to be elected to the Board of Trustees. Her son, Julius Fleischmann, and daughter, Mrs. Benjamin E. Tate, subsequently gave the Memorial Aquarium in 1950 and the salt water addition, opened in June, 1972.

In 1956 two other women joined the Board, Mrs. M. Chester Martin and Mrs. Justin Stevenson, Jr. The latter became Beauty's art counsellor and "agent," selecting from a broad spectrum of paintings those which best met artistic criteria.

On a different cultural level, a few years later the annual report for 1960

noted that "Something new this year is the planned Arts Festival which is being promoted by a score of prominent Cincinnati ladies." Mrs. Fred Lazarus III and Mrs. Philip Wyman were co-chairmen; Mrs. Stevenson and Mrs. Martin were the Trustee participants. Started to give local artists an opportunity to display and sell their products, the Arts Festival over the next dozen years under Mrs. Martin's direction became one of the important regional art shows of the country, with outstanding figures in the art world serving as judges of the main show, and hundreds of less ambitious artists displaying their wares on benches throughout the Zoo.

By 1974, five of the twenty-six members of the Board were women, and some four hundred volunteers, mostly women, were taking part in a variety of activities for the Zoo, principally the Membership campaign. Annual support in the form of ten dollar memberships was first suggested by the Zoo president, A. E. Burkhardt, in 1886. For many years coupon books were sold, giving the possessor admissions to the Zoo at reduced rate. But in 1932, as a "foundation cornerstone" for the revitalized Zoo planned under the reorganization of that period, a major membership program was launched. "Sixty organizations—possibly more," the *Enquirer* reported on March 29, 1932, "will be represented this afternoon at the organization meeting of the Membership Campaign Committee of the new Zoological Society of Cincinnati." Listed were such groups as Shriners, Knights of Columbus, Rotary, Kiwanis, war veterans, business organizations, B'Nai Brith, the Automobile Club, and others. The campaign was to start May 1 under A. C. Moorhaus, acting general manager of the Union Gas & Electric Company, with a goal of 30,000 members. Seventeen-day-old Standish Meachem, Jr., was one of the first members enrolled; Susie was another, her \$100 Life Membership fee contributed by two visiting vaudeville performers who were impressed, on visiting the Zoo, "by her intelligence."⁴¹

The goal proved overly ambitious, but in recent years under board member Mrs. Frank Gusweiler and others an annual drive, with hundreds of volunteer workers, has produced over \$100,000 a year toward the Zoo's support.

The first Zoo Director, Curt Terne from Savannah, lasted three months. Dr. H. Dorner of the Hamburg Zoological Gardens was employed in 1875—and discharged in 1876. Armin Tenner, the Society's indefatigable general agent, then served—for three weeks, at the end of which period he resigned "unexpectedly" for reasons unknown. H. P. Ingalls served six months, and then Frank J. Thompson broke all records by holding the position for seven years.

It was obviously a hard job to fill satisfactorily. But when the first elephant arrived in 1874 it was accompanied by its handler, Sol Stephan. No one else could control the animal, so Sol was "asked to stay on for a few days." He stayed sixty-two years, until 1937, when he retired at the age of eighty-eight. The problem of Director was solved in 1886 when Sol was advanced from animal curator to general superintendent—and in the years to come he had become a legend in the Zoo world.



While delivering an elephant to the Zoo Sol Stephan was asked to stay on "a few days." Sixty-two years later Colonel Stephan retired at age eighty-eight having risen from animal handler to general superintendent of the Zoo.

A news story in 1889 is revealing. The Zoo then “was in such precarious condition that the Directors decided to abandon it and sell the property. But Sol Stephan was convinced that this would be a mistake.” He called his employees together, the news account states, and said to them, “Boys, I have a few hundred dollars saved up. I want you to stick with me through the winter. I can’t give you a regular wage at this time but whenever you need five or ten dollars come and see me. By spring I am confident everything will be all right.”

“The employees,” the story continues, “to a man pledged to stick with him. Col. Stephan then went before the Zoo Board and told them what the men had decided A week later John Getz came to Col. Stephan and told him he had raised \$10,000 to see the Zoo through the winter. He was prompted to do this, he said, by the sacrifice the men were making to keep the Zoo going, and Stephan’s confidence in the future.”⁴²

Between retirement at age 88 in 1937 and his death at one hundred years and six months in 1949, Sol Stephan was General Manager Emeritus, but the Director position was filled by John F. Heusser, the only one to occupy that spot since the Zoo’s mature years who was not primarily an animal man. Heusser was an accountant who started as a gate attendant; he is remembered most for his leadership role in making the Food and Home Show an important—and profitable—event.

William Hoff became Director in 1961, and soon found himself the leading figure in a weekly television program, “Your Zoo.” Displaying a few animals each week, he gave lessons in zoology—made more interesting by an occasional successful bite or peck from the beleaguered animal, and a flurry now and then when some beast broke away and ran through the WLW-TV studio. It proved a popular program, highly regarded by school teachers and children alike, and was discontinued only when Hoff followed his early mentor, Marlin Perkins, to St. Louis late in 1967.

When Hoff came from Chicago he brought with a young animal keeper, Edward J. Maruska. He became Cincinnati’s animal curator and, on Hoff’s leaving, the Zoo Director. Under him the Zoo launched a major program of revitalization. The transition from the old-style bar-enclosed cage to the more open grottoes and display areas had begun in the ’30’s, a move in which Cincinnati was a pioneer. The new lion-tiger area, opened in May, 1934, with five new Bengal tigers, given by B. F. Kroger, was called “the last word in barless grottoes,” and the same news story adds, “Contracts will soon be let for construction of an African veldt or natural forest which will be even more unique in plan and design.”⁴³

A Chicago firm of architects and designers drew up a Master Plan for the Zoo in 1960, but the modern surge toward major improvements was really initiated with a document dated June, 1963, entitled “A Long Term Program for the Zoo.” This was presented to the City Planning Commission, the Park Board, and City Council itself. It was modified and changed over the years,

under three successive presidents, Carson Whiting, Oliver Gale, and Andrew Hopple, but the decade saw the acquisition by the Zoo of property and houses along Erkenbrecher and Dury to bring the grounds to sixty-three acres from its previous fifty-seven acres; the issuance by the City of \$2.7 million revenue bonds to be used for Zoo improvements and be a financial obligation of the Zoo itself; and the development of a new ambitious Master Plan involving the expenditure over a five-year period of an additional eight million dollars. Of this, four million dollars is to be raised from private sources, the remaining four million from new revenue bonds issued by the City on a matching-fund basis. Henry Hobson, Jr., and W. J. Williams, a Board member, are serving as chairmen of the 1974-75 fund raising program.

The Zoo prides itself on its self-sufficiency. Owned by the City, it theoretically can look to City Hall for capital improvement funds. But these monies are limited, and the competition for them is great. The City contributes nothing toward meeting operating expenses; it does help with major maintenance items such as repaving parking lots and maintaining interior access roads. But a review of capital improvement expenditures over the past ten-year period shows that for every dollar that has come from the City for Zoo improvements, five have been generated by the Zoo itself, through contributions, bequests, special fund raising events, and operating revenues.

Early predictions have proved accurate: the change from a private commercial venture to a non-profit institution has indeed brought generous support from public spirited citizens, as well as lowered costs through the abolishment of rent, and reduction of other overhead items. As the Zoo enters its second one hundred years, the succession of financial tribulations and near-bankruptcies seems very remote.

A. E. Burkhardt was premature when as Zoo president he told the 1888 annual meeting that the year's receipts "demonstrate beyond a doubt the future success of the Zoo, and its permanent establishment as one of the greatest attractions of which any American city can boast." But as one looks at the Cincinnati Zoo today, and its plans for the future, one finds his statement an accurate one. So also is his conclusion: "After years of varying fortunes, we congratulate ourselves that the Zoo is here to stay."⁴⁴

OLIVER M. GALE *has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Cincinnati Zoo since 1965. He served two terms as president of the Zoo Board and is presently chairman of its Public Relations Committee.*

(1) Elizabeth Thorndyke, *The Zoological Gardens*, in souvenir program, Cincinnati Charter Centennial Year, 1818-1919 (Cincinnati, 1919).

(2) Pamphlet of The Erkenbrecher Me-

morial Committee, Tribute to Andrew Erkenbrecher, 1907.

(3) Cincinnati *Commercial*, June 20, 1873; entire letter is reproduced.

(4) First Annual Report for year 1874,

Zoological Society of Cincinnati.

- (5) *Ibid.*, Appendix E.
- (6) *Ibid.*
- (7) Annual Report for 1875.
- (8) *Cincinnati Zoo Guide*, 3rd Edition, May, 1928.
- (9) Annual Report for 1875.
- (10) Annual Report for 1874.
- (11) Annual Report for 1881.
- (12) Annual Report for 1885.
- (13) Annual Report for 1886.
- (14) Annual Report for 1888.
- (15) Annual Report for 1895.
- (16) *Op. Cit.*, 1928 Zoo Guide.
- (17) City Ordinance #525-1932, December 14, 1932.
- (18) Charles F. McLean, *Guide Book, Cincinnati Zoo* (Cincinnati, 1893).
- (19) Annual Report 1877.
- (20) Annual Report for 1896.
- (21) *Cincinnati Times Star*, August 26, 1936.
- (22) Annual Report for 1885.
- (23) Annual Report for 1892.
- (24) William Styles, *Cincinnati Post*, Magazine Section, July 9, 1955.
- (25) *Cincinnati Times Star*, June 10, 1931.
- (26) *Cincinnati Commercial*, January 6, 1918.
- (27) Styles, *op. cit.*
- (28) *Guide Book, Cincinnati Zoo*, 1921.
- (29) *Your Cincinnati Zoo News*, Winter, 1972-73.
- (30) *Ibid.*
- (31) *Vogue*, December, 1964.
- (32) *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 17, 1936.
- (33) *Cincinnati Post*, August 7, 1939.
- (34) *Cincinnati Post*, October 29, 1947.
- (35) *Cincinnati Times Star*, April 24, 1931.
The paper reported somewhat superfluously and somewhat inaccurately too: the first pigmy hippo born in captivity arrived at the New York Zoological Park in 1920.
- (36) Dr. R. W. Shufeldt, *The Zoological Society of Cincinnati*, in *Scientific American Supplement*, Vol. LXXXII, No. 2116, July 22, 1916.
- (37) Annual Report for 1896.
- (38) *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 11, 1939.
- (39) Annual Report for 1933.
- (40) *Your Cincinnati Zoo News*, Spring, 1972.
- (41) *Cincinnati Times Star*, April 18, 1932.
- (42) *Cincinnati Times Star*, June 21, 1932.
- (43) *Cincinnati Bulletin*, April, 1934.