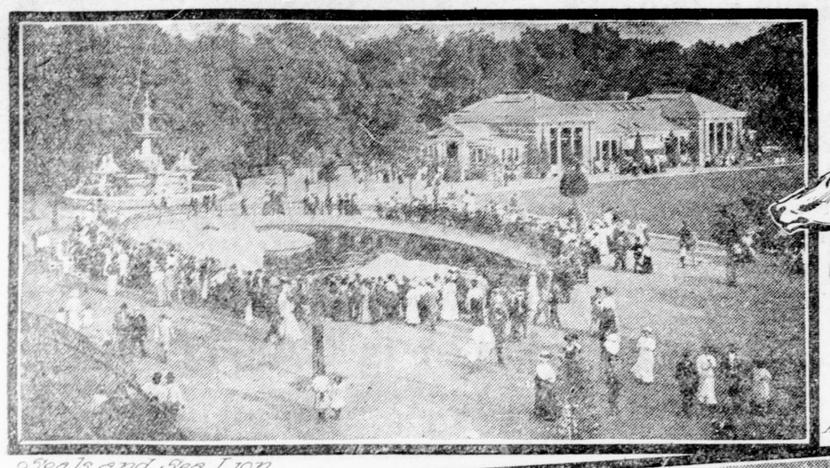
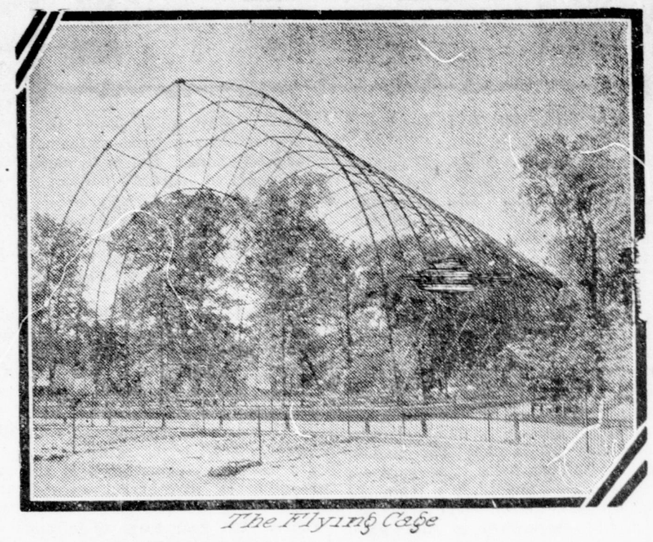
The WORLD'S GREATEST ZOO

BY L. P. PEYTON

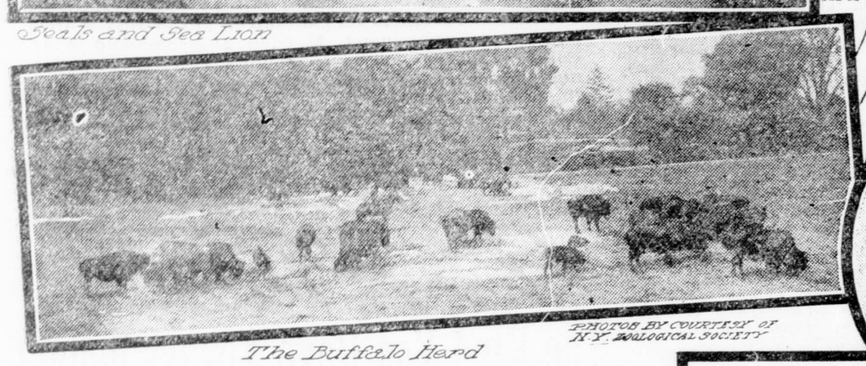


Seals and Sea Lion

The King of the Zoo



The Flying Cage



The Buffalo Herd

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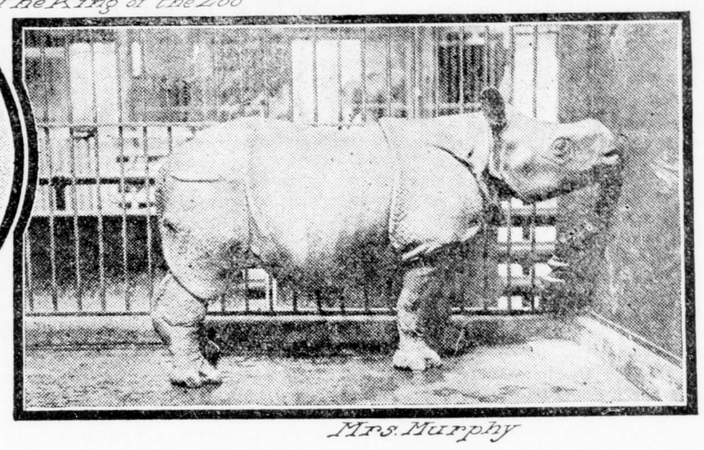
Mr. Dooley



Mrs. Murphy

JUST 13 years ago Father Knickerbocker awoke to the fact that the Zoological Garden in Central Park was not commensurate in size, appointments and variety of specimens there shown with the Greater New York then in contemplation. Accordingly, the New York Zoological Society was chartered, its object being the founding of a public zoological park, the preservation of our native animals and the promotion of zoology in general. What was then looked upon as a herculean task is today fast nearing completion, and although but seven-eighths completed, the new Bronx Zoological Park is the largest zoo in the world, both in point of acreage and the number of specimens there shown.

According to the animal statistics of the largest zoological gardens in the world, for which I am indebted to the official reports of Dr. G. Loisel, of Paris, on "Une Mission Scientifique dans les Jardins et Etablissements Zoologiques, Publics et Prives," they rank as follows:

Institutions.	Mammals.	Birds.	Reptiles and Amphibians.	Tl.
New York....	507	2,530	897	4,034
Berlin.....	946	2,176	27	3,149
London.....	873	1,621	478	2,072
Philadelphia..	487	952	1,087	2,526
Hamburg....	473	1,665	251	2,389
Schoenbrunn..	593	1,351	171	2,085
Cologne.....	424	1,479	98	2,001
Breslau.....	502	1,067	184	1,843
Frankfort....	644	1,002	158	1,804

Just how kindly New Yorkers have taken to the beautiful garden where nature is seen at her best is readily shown by a record of attendance during the year 1907, which totaled 1,276,041 visitors. The largest daily attendance was on June 16, when 36,052 persons passed through the various turnstiles of the park. As nearly as possible, those who designed the grounds and buildings of the Bronx Zoo have endeavored to show the various mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians in their natural state. Their work in this respect was materially aided by nature herself, for the topography of that tract of land now known as the Bronx Zoo was ideal for the purposes of the engineers, landscape gardeners and architects, whose duty it was to further enhance the beauty of this naturally attractive spot. Many acres of magnificent forest trees are here found, while a number of rippling streams thread their way through forest and meadow, lending themselves to the practical as well as ornamental purposes of the engineers. With such a reservation for a working basis it is not surprising that Zoo Park already bids fair to become a formidable rival to Central Park as a rendezvous for the millions who live within the narrow confines of Greater New York when in quest of a green spot and a chance to closer observe nature at her best.

The most notable feat of the landscape gardener has been the construction of an italian garden, which is by far the most pretentious bit of formal planting ever attempted in Greater New York. It has been developed as the central feature of an elaborate architectural design consisting of stone stairway and balustrades, and lies in a stooping position, extending from the lower to the upper levels of an embankment. Preliminary to the planting of this garden it was necessary to excavate about 300 yards of solid rock, after which about 500 yards of soil and fertilizers had to be supplied, but these obstacles were easily surmounted and, when completed, the garden itself was a blaze of color and a bower of loveliness.

William T. Hornaday, Sc. D., as director and general curator of the Zoo, is ably assisted by Raymond L. Dittmars, the curator of reptiles. To these two officials more credit is due, perhaps, for the high state of excellence this vast municipal playground has attained than any others connected with the conduct of its affairs. Both have devoted the best years of their lives to the study of the manners, customs and habits of wild and domestic animals, reptiles and birds. Each knows his especial branch of the work so thoroughly that the affairs of the Zoo move as smoothly as a piece of well-oiled machinery. When it is taken into consideration that they have to deal with 188 species of mammals alone, of which there are 607 specimens, it is but natural that their knowledge of the animal kingdom must be profound. These species are divided as follows: Primates, 33; Carnivora, 51; Pinnipedia, 1; Insectivora, 1; Rodentia, 26; Ungulata, 65; Marsupialia, 8; Edentata, 3. Of the bird family there are 543 species and 2,530 specimens; 118 species of reptiles, of which there are 712 specimens, and 16 species, or 185 specimens of amphibians.

A stroll through the animal houses is well worth the while of every student of natural history. The very finest specimens of the feline family are here shown. Lions, tigers, panthers, leopards, jaguars, cats, large and small, are all restlessly pacing the narrow confines of their cages, and all in the finest physical shape. The elephant house is equally interesting, and here several of the largest animals in captivity afford never-ceasing delight to the thousands of little folk who haunt the Zoo.

By far the most interesting portions of the Zoo are devoted to those animals that are allowed to run at large in their respective corrals. There are 50 or more species of deer, including those common to all parts of North America, as well as the Yucatan and Molucca deer, the Muntjac and various small African antelopes that graze about the grassy slopes of their confines. The buildings and yards in the various deer runs are admirably adapted to their purposes, especially those for the accommodation of tropical deer, where a considerable number of valuable and zoologically important animals, such as the markhor, male barasinga, male burnes and thameng are housed. Infinite care is taken with these rare specimens, and so far the death rate among them has been infinitesimally low. Near the deer runs, that shelter the most valuable of these specimens, has been established an ideal small range for a herd of white tail deer, which embraces a bit of timber and brush, a grassy hillside and a square of dry, paved yard, all surrounded by a background of coniferous planting. Close by are spacious yards for the herd of llama, while adjoining are the elk corrals and the four small ranges for mule deer and Columbian black tail deer. The pride of the Zoo, however, is the magnificent herd of bison, which have a splendid corral and pasture to themselves, and it is to this herd that the federal government mainly relies upon for the restocking of the Western plain, where buffalo were once wont to roam by the hundreds of thousands. Each year a number of bull and cow calves are shipped from the Bronx Zoo to the National Reservation in the Far West, where they are zealously guarded by federal herdsmen.

When conducting a visitor through the park officials take the keenest pride in pointing out those specimens there born. Last year the birth rate was most encouraging. Of the primates a long arm baboon, a green monkey and a ringtail lemur first saw the light of day at the Zoo. Additions to the Carnivora include two Syrian bears, two Russian hairy-eared bears, four black coyotes and three lions. Of the Ungulata, two Nylghais, one Grant's zebra, two Malay Sambar deer, two Eld's deer, two Barasingha deer, five Indian Sambar deer, five elk, three Axis deer, four Sika deer, four red deer, six Fallow deer, two Persian wild goats, one Tahr and 12 American bison. Each and every one of the new born specimens has been christened by its respective keeper and by actual count there are 27 Teddys, 20 Bill Tafts, 10 Bill Bryans and eight Hetty Greens.

One of the most interesting departments of the Zoo is that devoted to birds. Here the specimens are splendidly exhibited and admirably labeled and explained. The most important addition to this department last year was one of more than 100 birds from the London Zoological Gardens, received in exchange for a shipment of American birds. Among the rarer birds in this lot was a Kolbe vulture, lammergeier, Australian edge-tailed eagle, brush turkeys, black-footed penguins, bearded titmice, piping crows, crown shrikes, greater spotted woodpeckers, white-crested touracous, Hyacinthine macaw and hoopoe. Another notable feature is the large collection of American song birds, especially the wood warblers. Of this latter group 23 species have been placed on exhibition, including such rare and delicate birds as the Connecticut, mourning, palm and worm-eating warblers. The sight of these living migrants in their winter plumage is new even to the learned ornithologist, and to the ordinary lover of birds it is a treat to be able to follow them through their annual changes of plumage. Nowhere else, except in Mexico and Brazil, can these species be seen alive at this period of the year. Many American birds, which have been reduced almost to the point of extinction by the influence of civilization, are here found. Among them are two specimens of the rare whooping crane of our Northwest. Of the many smaller birds of brilliant plumage special interest in centered in the green hunting crows and wandering tree magpies of India, the strange rollers, cayenne wood rail, Patagonian lapwings, pine, grossbeaks and black-banded aracari toucans. Many of the rarest species of birds in the Zoo nested this past summer and those to hatch include sand hill cranes, white-breasted guans, rufous tinimous, curassows, weka rails, griffin vultures, brown pelicans, double striped stone plovers, rheas and emus. The huge flying cage which occupies a conspicuous place in the garden is admirably adapted for its purpose and is never without its quota of votaries among those who visit the Zoo.

The reptile house is under the personal supervision of Raymond L. Dittmars, who has traveled the world over in search of the rarest as well as most venomous specimens of snakes. Snakes and saurians are here found by the hundreds, among them the very finest specimens of constrictors in captivity. Mr. Dittmars is intensely proud of his pets, and none is too vicious or venomous for him to handle at will.

That the Zoological Garden is a valuable acquisition is evidenced by the large number of school children that attend the monthly lectures on natural history given at the park by heads of the various departments. A large rustic pavillion, near the wolf and bear dens, has been constructed and there three lecture courses were delivered to the pupils of the Bronx schools. The average attendance at each lecture was about 3,500 pupils and as each lecture was followed by a demonstration it can readily be seen that the Zoo has its practical side and is well worthy of the support accorded it by the municipality of Greater New York, augmented by the receipts taken in at the gate one day in each week, which is designated as "pay day." Strange as it may seem, the attendance on "pay days" compares favorably with the other six days of the week.

FONDAVERA

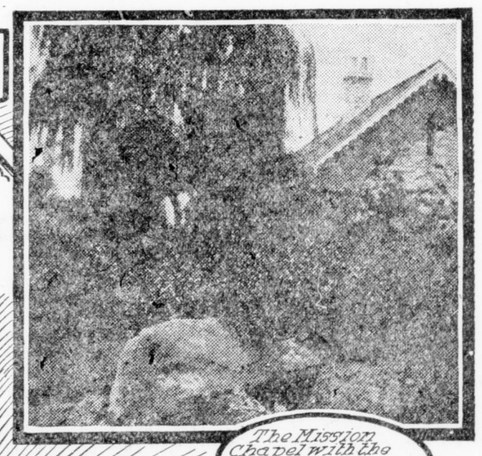
THE OLD STONE HOUSE of MYSTERY

The House of Fondavera

The Insane Dog

A. V. H.

From his Hands a Rosary Sways



The Mission Chapel with the Weeping Willow

RICH in romance, fable and legend, the abode of a French king while in exile, the scene of the occasional wanderings of the spirits of an old mission priest and his sweetheart, a fair French maiden whom the mandates of the church kept from the arms of her priestly lover, and the dwelling place of a dog, said to be insane, that obeys unheard commands and at times accompanies his spirit master in a ghostly vigil—such is Fondavera, the oldest residence on the historic Bardstown pike, two miles distant from Louisville, Ky.

The house is indeed a travesty on its name, for the Spanish word, "Fonda," meaning "place of rest," and "Vera," the Russian word meaning "in all truth," were never more misapplied than to this quaint old building around which the colored people of the neighborhood declare the restless spirits of its former occupants roam at midnight and re-enact the turbulent scenes of their past lives.

THE OLD STONE HOUSE.

This "place of unrest," as it might more appropriately be called, is built of huge slabs of rough-hewn, white stone, colored a rich ivory by the relentless years that have sifted down their toning compound of winter snows, summer showers and golden floods of sunshine over the sloping roof and long narrow French windows set deep in their massive frames. Many of the stones are 10 feet in length and all are from two to three feet thick. A new roof and a frame porch have been added by the present occupants, who are interested in the growing of ginseng. Over the sun-tanned face of the stone at the rear of the building the slow-creeping ivy has draped its evergreen veil, through which the glass of the quaint French windows gleam like crystal eyes, resentful of concealment.

Close by, as was the custom of the devout French, stands a little chapel, like a sentinel, keeping watch over those who dwelt within the old chateau. Well-set, deep-creviced and boldly outlined in its huge blocks of stone is a Latin cross, emblematic of the religion taught within when those sturdy first settlers hewed their lonesome way through the wilderness to rest upon the fertile lands of Kentucky. In the yellowed leaves of an old history called "The French Missions In Kentucky" Fondavera is mentioned as the home of a wealthy French family who built the place prior to 1798. Close by the chapel and almost under the great cross, carved deep in the massive stone, is a weeping willow tree, beneath whose drooping branches is buried the body of one of the French mission priests, who long years ago followed the call of the Christ Child into the Kentucky wilds.

SHROUDED IN MYSTERY.

The place seems shrouded in mystery, and the negroes living nearby give it a wide berth when the shades of night have fallen. The stones at the northern corner of the house, where is located the room occupied by the fair daughter of the French family that dwelt there over a century ago, are much whiter than the others. And the present occupants, people no more superstitious than the average, say that about once a year a scraping noise can be heard in that corner of the building as though spirit hands were scrubbing the stones. In the morning the stones are wet, while the rest of the exterior of the building is dry and shows no change in color.

At the present time, at Fondavera, there is a red Irish setter whose actions are, to say the least, not recognized as normal by the best society of the canine world. The colored people declare the dog is insane. And his attenuated frame, shifting eyes, quivering unrest and strange erratic actions seem to support that theory. The animal will suddenly dart aside as though dodging a blow from an unseen hand. Again, it rushes madly forward as though in obedience to a sharp command heard only by its own alert ears. Then, in an instant and for no apparent reason, it stops suddenly, rises on its hind feet and walks several yards. Again it's off, tearing around the right and left and again coming to the place at full speed, swerving crazily to a sudden halt and rising on its hind feet.

NOT A VICIOUS ANIMAL.

After such a performance, it usually stands rigid and immovable, staring straight ahead, for at least 20 minutes. The dog has never been seen to lie down anywhere except under the old willow beneath whose drooping branches the body of the mission priest is buried. It is, fortunately, not vicious. Indeed, one cannot come within five feet of him, for he's off in an instant. But it is at night that the animal's actions are strangest. Then it walks up and down the path leading from the mission chapel to the baywindow in the house of Fondavera, whining in a low, gruesome tone. After a final run to the willow tree, it crawls into an old empty box there, curls up and goes to sleep as would any sane, healthy dog. The animal has never been able to "stand fire" and hence is of no value in the hunting field.

Though it is hard to believe in the present day, there are those dwelling near Fondavera who say that not once, but several times in their lives, they have seen a most marvelous and "creepy" exhibition of "ghost walking" at the old chateau.

From the double portals of the chapel, down the path leading to the window in the room formerly occupied by the French girl, they say, a ghost of a mission priest, presumably the one buried under the old willow, has been seen to walk. His tall, vaporish figure, wrapped in its coarse, brown cowl, moves with stately, measured tread. From his hands a rosary sways as the long, nervous fingers tell off the "Ave Maria" and "Pater Noster."

And there is a strange, pathetic legend told about this restless spirit of the church. In the long ago he loved, so the story runs. It was a love that burned with all the intense fire of repression, for he never spoke of it, not even when the dark eyes of the young French girl were lifted to his with their story bursting forth through the limpid windows of her soul. The stern voice of duty—to his church and his God—sealed his lips, for he was a mission priest, true to his high calling, and she one of his faithful communicants. He had looked upon the face of woman and dared to love!—he who had already chosen his bride, the church! But his strength was as the strength of ten. And so his love burned into the ashes of outlived heartbreakings, or found solace and rest in that "peace of God that passeth all understanding." And so, too, with the beautiful French girl, for, though she returned his love, the story runs, she fretted out her life in silence through all the years.

HER SPIRIT HAUNTS THE ROOM.

Even to this day, the legend continues, the maiden's soul haunts the room which in life was warmed by her presence. They say she has been seen, on the nights when the priest has kept his lonely vigil, standing in the low French window that faces the chapel, half-hidden in the shadow and the filmy curtain. There she stands with clasped hands and burning eyes gazing longingly, tearfully at the restless priest, love-tortured, pacing to and fro without. Neither greets the other, for neither knows that the other is near. Only the pale stars, the silver moon and the eye of the Eternal Listener see.

However true or untrue the story may be, the fact remains that that room in the house is never occupied. The family now living at Fondavera frankly admit that they heard peculiar noises in the room at the dead of night. If one is skeptical, they are usually willing to put the room at his disposal for the night.

The history of Fondavera deals with important personages. When the exiled king of France, Louis Philippe, taught school at Bardstown—which is not far distant from the chateau—he made the intervals between his labors bright days of rest at Fondavera, for it was strikingly similar, in many respects, to the dwellings of his own land, which ever lay enshrined in his heart. Indeed, Fondavera made such an impression on the exile's mind that years later, when the bishop of Bardstown came to call upon him—as he had often done in the woods of Fondavera—at Paris, where Louis Philippe had assumed his rightful place in his own kingdom, he recalled with relish the many happy days spent at Fondavera and the quaint incidents that brightened his lonely exile.

HOME OF A COUNTESS.

The Countess Octavia Hensel, a noted French woman, gifted in numerous ways, later owned the place for many years.

"I love Fondavera," she was often heard to say, "because it is so like the little chateau the Emperor Napoleon gave to Josephine, and in which she lived for so many years in the suburbs of Paris."

The Countess died some years ago. She was well known throughout the Middle States as a musician or rare talent, and won much fame at home and abroad.

What further mysteries, what other noted personages, if any, will dwell at Fondavera, what will eventually become of the old building and its rugged mission-house—who can tell? From its solid outline and its deep-dug foundations, it bids fair to stand for another century, weathering the fiercest gales of the Storm King and defying the devastating hand of Time.

Where Were Potatoes Grown First?

In the garden of "Elizabeth's House," Brixton Hill, in England, are said to have been grown the first potatoes in Europe. A rival site, however, is that of Lord Burghley's old garden in the Strand. In favor of the former it may be said that Sir Walter Raleigh, who shares with Sir Francis Drake the honor of first introducing the potato in England, lived at Brixton Hill near "Elizabeth's House." Formby, in Lancashire, also claims the honor of being the site of the first culture of the potato in England.

They are said to have been grown there by a Formby man, who sailed with Sir Walter. The earliest cultivation of the potato in the British Isles was probably at Youghal, on the south coast of Ireland, where this navigator had an estate. It has been generally accepted that the potato was brought from Virginia, and that it was cultivated there by the natives.

Sir Joseph Banks and De Condelle both lent the weight of their authority to this view. But it has been ascertained that the Indians of Virginia, though they used a number of tuberous roots, did not know our potato.

One of these roots was the plant sometimes grown as an ornamental climber in our gardens and called by botanists "Aplos tuberosa."

The Indians called the roots potatoes, and the French Canadians knew them as Pommes de terre. The potato being really a native of South America, was scarcely likely to be known to the Indians of Virginia. And yet the potato undoubtedly was brought to England as part of the cargo of one of Sir Richard Grenville's ships and landed at Plymouth, and the ship had come direct from Virginia and called nowhere on the way. On the voyage home, however, it had encountered and captured a Spanish ship from Santo Domingo. The potatoes were a part of the cargo of the vessel. Thus the potato first reached England as part of the booty taken from a Spanish war prize.

More than half of France's tobacco imports come from the United States.