B&C CONSER

MEMBER PROFILE:
James L. Clark (1883-1969)

By Leonard H. Wurman B&C Regular Member

James Lippitt (Jimmy) Clark, like his Boone and Crockett Club colleagues Carl Akeley and Roy Chapman Andrews, was an adventurer, explorer, and hunter whose career was intimately associated with New York's American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). Clark also gained professional renown as a wildlife taxidermist and bronze sculptor.

Early Years

Born on November 18, 1883, Clark was raised on a Rhode Island farm where, as he described it, his family instilled a deep appreciation of nature. At age 16, he dropped out of high school to work at a foundry designing silverware and casting other artists' bronzes. There, the young man experimented with and became skilled at sculpting clay models of animals.

Taxidermy at this time was akin to stuffing rags into sewn-up animal skins. As a freelance taxidermist at Chicago's Field Museum, Carl Akeley had developed a method using clay forms, but refused to share his technique. Hoping to emulate Akeley, the AMNH recruited the 18-year-old Clark to sculpt life-size clay models, over which their own taxidermists would apply the skins.

Clark visited local zoos to sketch and study the animals. When a zoo animal died, he would remove the skin to study the skeleton and muscles, and in short order became a proficient taxidermist. Carl Akeley visited the AMNH in 1904 and was so impressed with Clark's skills that he invited the young taxidermist to Chicago to learn his own method.

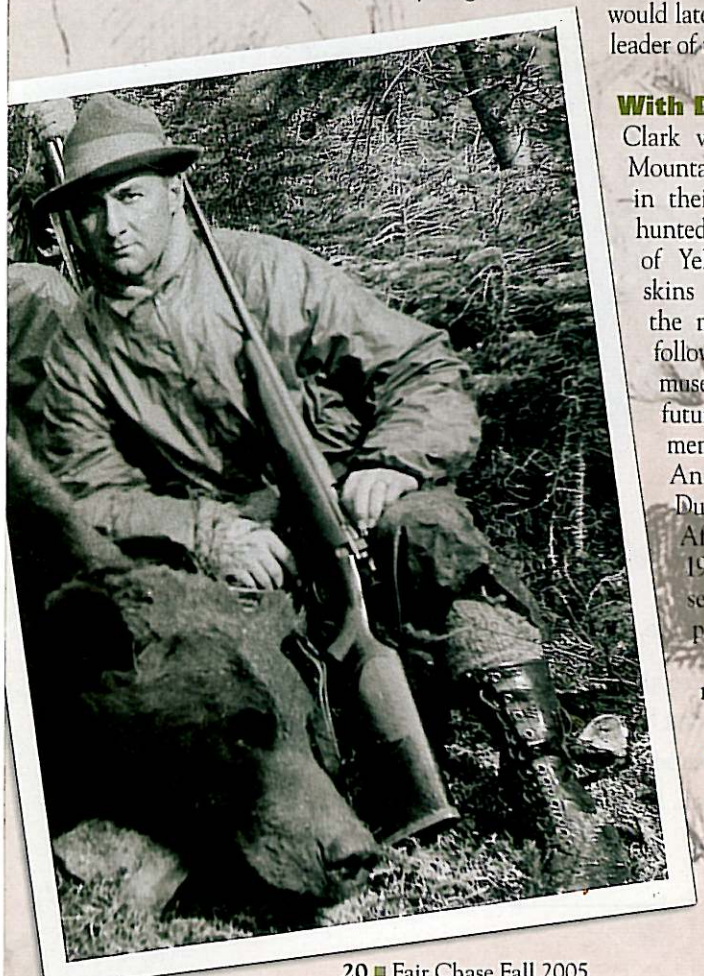
Two years later, Roy Chapman Andrews joined Clark at the AMNH, and the two became fast friends. When a whale washed up on Long Island, they dissected the animal and spent two years assembling the skeleton and mounting the skin. Andrews would later gain fame as the extraordinary leader of the Central Asiatic Expeditions.

With Dugmore in Africa

Clark visited New York's Adirondack Mountains to study deer and birds in their natural settings. In 1907 he hunted mule deer, elk, and sheep east of Yellowstone Park, collecting the skins and skeletons while sketching the muscles and facial details. The following year, he resigned from the museum and accompanied another future Boone and Crockett Club member, Arthur Dugmore, to Africa. An early wildlife photographer, Dugmore planned to return from Africa while Theodore Roosevelt's 1909 safari was still in progress and sell his photos to an eager press reporting on TR's trip.

Clark and Dugmore had many frightening experiences. They induced rhinoceroses to charge in order to photograph them at close range, killing several in self-defense. Clark once fell into a 10-foot-deep elephant pit, the bottom of which contained sharp poison-tipped stakes. He landed with one stake four inches below his crotch, yet was unharmed.

After Dugmore returned home, Clark remained in Africa and financed his hunts by selling prepared skins and skeletons to museums. Carl Akeley was also in Africa at the time, and Roosevelt, going after elephants, asked both Akeley and Clark to join him and prepare the hides. After spending 14 months in Africa, Clark returned to New York to begin work on the Roosevelt and Akeley trophies. The four elephants that the ex-president killed formed the basis for the eight-animal elephant group that later became the centerpiece of the AMNH's African Hall.



JAMES L. CLARK WITH A GRIZZLY BEAR TAKEN IN NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA IN SEPTEMBER 1925.

Back in New York

Clark sold his African collection to the AMNH and opened a taxidermy studio that mounted trophies for both museums as well as private individuals. The studio frequently expanded and moved during the next 31 years and had as many as 20 employees at a time. Clark also sculpted his bronzes at the studio. He became a popular speaker on Africa and was invited to join both the Explorers Club and the Camp Fire Club.

Akeley himself spent several months working at Clark's studio on projects for both the Field Museum and the AMNH. Clark assisted when his friend founded the Akeley Motion Picture Camera Company. Pursuing his passion for hunting, Clark killed an Alberta grizzly in 1917. Another passion was kindled the following year with his marriage to Sally, an acquaintance of eight years who now became his companion for another fifty. They had no children.

When Akeley returned from Africa in 1921 with a collection of gorilla specimens, the AMNH began to raise funds in earnest for the African Hall. Despite having other business interests, Clark and Akeley were hired by the museum for this project.

Africa Again

Clark took his wife on his second African trip in 1923. They were the first Americans to visit the Ngoro Ngoro crater in the Tanganyika Territory. Their guide was an unlucky Englishman who had just been hos-

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pitalized following a mauling by a wounded lion, and who was killed by an elephant shortly after the Clarks left.

The museum had several projects underway, and Clark, now the assistant director of preparation and installation, traveled throughout the United States and Canada recruiting young men to work at the museum. Preparation of the South Asiatic Hall of Mammals was in full swing, and Akeley was working on his elephant group. A new wing to house both the African and North American Mammal Halls was under construction. Despite these demands, Clark and Sally traveled in 1925 to the Cassiar Mountains of northern British Columbia to collect specimens of Osborn Caribou, named after the museum's director Henry Fairfield Osborn, another Boone and Crockett Club member.

A Harrowing Asian Trip

The following year, the AMNH sent Clark and William Morden to explore central Asia, a trip that provided some exciting moments. They sailed in February for India and traveled by train and truck north to Kashmir. Crossing five Himalayan passes by foot and horseback, they entered Russian Turkistan, where a week of negotiations were required before the Russians allowed them to hunt the Marco Polo sheep.

Continuing eastward, they entered the Tien Shan Mountains of western China and collected the skins and skeletons of elk, sheep, red and roe deer, ibex, wolves, and snow leopards. The original plan was to return the way they came, but an early cold snap closed the Himalayan passes. The two men sent their servants and collection back to Kashmir by commercial caravan and then organized their own eastbound caravan, planning to cross 2,000 miles of Gobi Desert and eventually reach Peking.

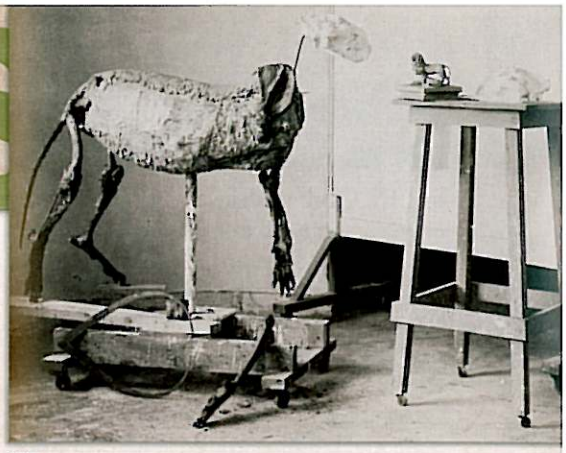
The trip was cold and miserable. They gathered firewood wherever they could find it. Drinking water froze. After a month of travel, they were captured by Mongol bandits who, believing all Westerners were spies, bound and tortured the two men. The Mongols transported the pair 350 miles north and handed them over to Russian traders, who recognized their passports. Another 350-mile trek through the sub-zero Siberian forests eventually brought them to a railroad, where they were put on a Peking-bound train. Here they arrived nine months after leaving India. A telegram awaited Clark informing him of Akeley's death in Africa and ordering him to return to the museum.

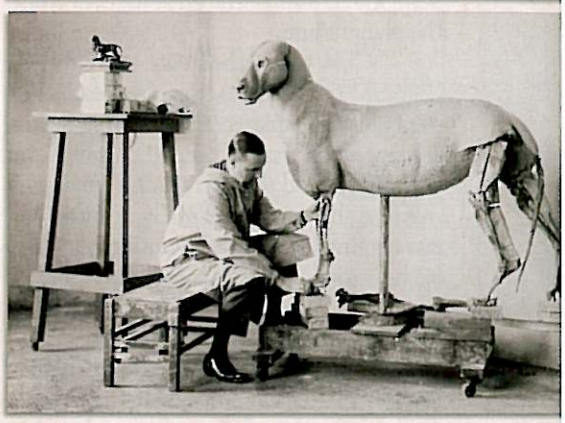
The Museum and More Africa

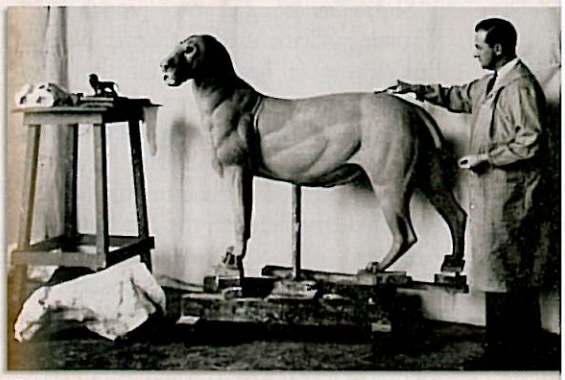
Back at the museum, Clark hired a workforce of more than 100, including taxidermists, sculptors, and carpenters, to work on the three halls. The booming stock market provided funds for both the museum and for private hunting and collecting safaris in India, Africa, and Indo-China. Yet his museum responsibilities did not stop Clark from further expeditions.

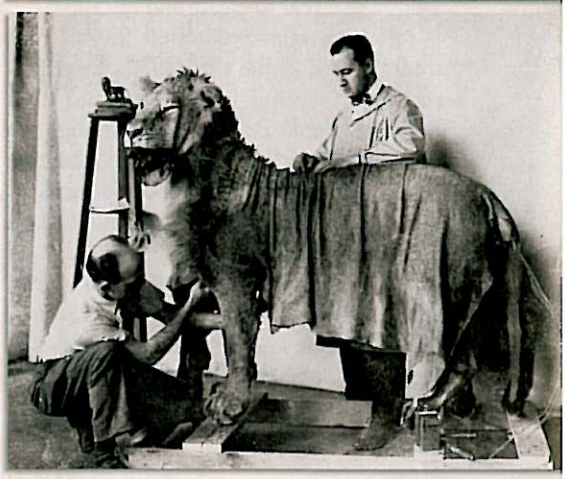
In 1928, he resigned as president and sold his stock in the Akeley Camera Company, and by the fall he and Sally were back in Africa collecting background specimens of plants, brush, and grasses for the museum's lion and kudu groups. The couple took several lions with prime coats and then returned to civilization by driving from Nairobi 1,100 miles northwest into central Africa, and then taking watercraft down the Nile River for another 2,700 miles to Cairo.

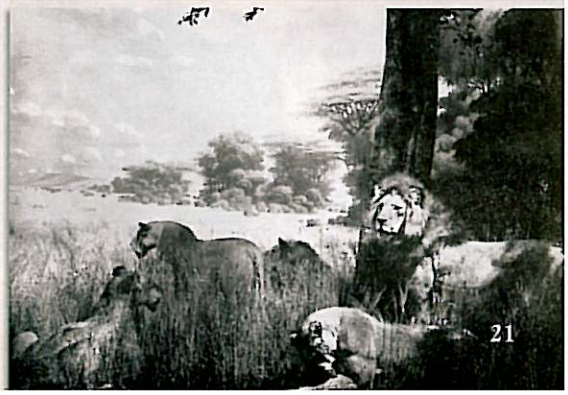
Clark sent another museum-sponsored expedition to Angola to gather background material for the sable group. The museum was dedicated to displaying the mounted animals and the habitat accurately. Local vegetation was photographed and measured, casts and notes taken, and color sketches were made to illustrate the region's flowers, lichens, rocks, bark, and even the insects. Most of the money for the museum's projects had already been donated, and the backlog of work to be done was little affected by the stock market crash











FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: AN EARLY STAGE OF MOUNTING A LION. The rough frame supported by an upright carries the leg bones and skull on which the clay is modeled. **INTERMEDIATE STAGES OF MOUNTING A LION.** With the clay body beginning to take shape, Clark works the legs so they can be more accurately adjusted to receive the clay and modeled in all their subtle anatomy. The next image shows Clark adding the "finishing touches" to the sculptured form of the lion. In the foreground lies a plaster cast of the lion's head and shoulder taken in the field. **THE FINAL STAGE OF MOUNTING A LION.** The lion's skin, already tanned into a soft, permanent leather, is moistened and applied with an adhesive to the manikin and worked in all its details before it is allowed to dry. **THE FINISHED DIORAMA.** The completed lion group as it appears in its habitat setting, the Serengetti Plains of Tanzania, Africa.

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in 1929. Clark was elevated to the director of preparation and installation.

In 1928, he and Sally built a cabin on the Camp Fire Club's grounds in Westchester County, and for the rest of their lives used it as a weekend retreat. Work at the museum was progressing nicely with the construction of the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Building, the great halls, and also the planetarium.

Clark joined the Boone and Crockett Club in 1930. The next year he steamed up the Nile and explored the Sudan in search of giant eland. Few of the animals had ever been taken, and the party didn't see any for the first three weeks. Finally, a large bull was obtained, but it wasn't until the last day of the six-week hunt that a cow was found.

North American Hunting

Clark and Sally hunted the Canadian Rockies in 1931. Two years later, they took a Shiras moose and two pronghorn in Wyoming. Clark used authentic National Park scenes as backdrops for the North American mammal groups. In 1934 the couple toured Yellowstone and several other western parks. The following year they studied sheep and caribou in Alaska. Clark estimated that between the African, North American, and South Asiatic Halls, and the Hall of Fishes, Hall of Birds, and Hall of Birds of the South Pacific Islands, there were close to 100 groups, each one taking an average of a year to create and install.

As a sales promotion for his own studio, Clark in the early 1930s copyrighted a point-scoring system patterned after Rowland Ward's British one. Although the Boone and Crockett Club adopted some aspects for its 1932 and 1939 records books, the system received a fair amount of criticism. In 1949, after World War II, Clark and five other Club members spent a year creating the present Boone and Crockett scoring system, one that has required few modifications since.

Indo-China

Clark led a 1936 expedition into present-day Vietnam, collecting a large water buffalo, an old bull gaur, and many colorful birds, but was unsuccessful in acquiring a banteng. Much of the game species had become nocturnal, so the party collected their specimens at night with headlights, often firing at eye reflections, and discovering only afterwards what they had shot.

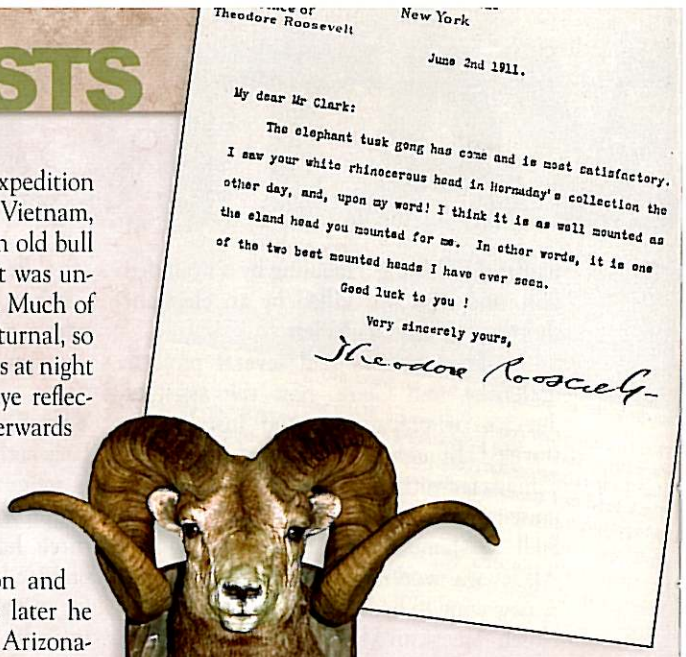
North America Again

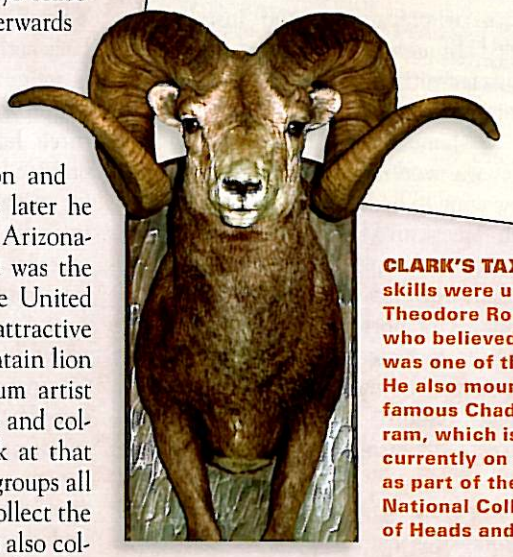
Clark took another western tour the following year to study bison and collect elk specimens. Two years later he successfully hunted cougar on the Arizona-Utah border, which at that time was the great cat's last stronghold in the United States. He also identified an attractive Grand Canyon vista for the mountain lion diorama and dispatched a museum artist and a scientist to paint the scene and collect samples and materials. Clark at that point was sending out collecting groups all over North America, not just to collect the animal skins and skeletons, but to also collect the local flora, fauna, soil, and rocks. The museum presentations had to be exact to the smallest detail.

The start of World War II saw many employees going to war and a major decline in hunting outside of North America. Clark closed his taxidermy studio and consulted for the military on extreme weather and survival methods and gear. He continued to sculpt and concentrated his hunting on the grouse and duck of New England.

Final Years

Clark took his final African trip in 1948, initially hunting in central Africa, and then finishing his expedition by traveling 2,500 miles northwest from Nairobi into the sub-Sahara, where few whites had entered. He identified several new species, shot more than 15,000 feet of movie film, and photographed aboriginal peoples in traditional pursuits. He retired from the museum the next year, and in 1964, his book *The Great Arc of the Wild Sheep* was published.





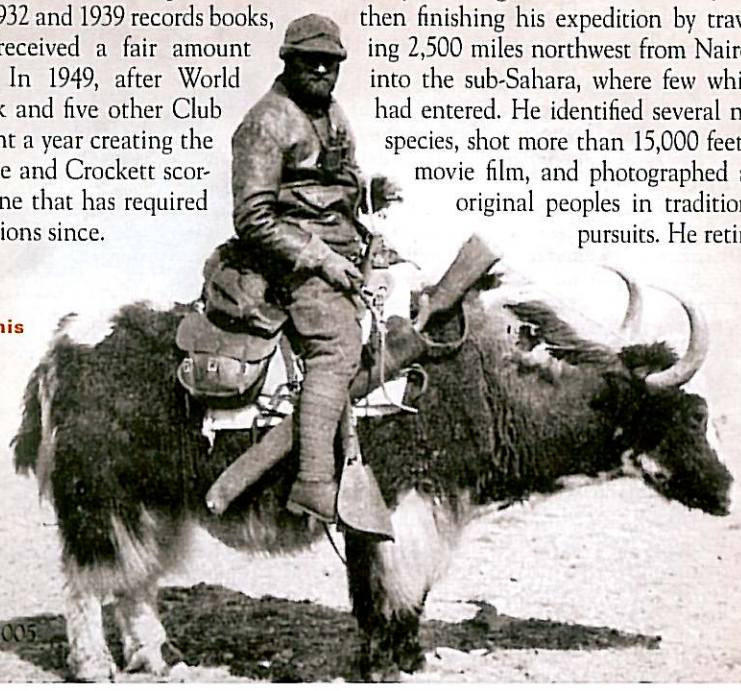
CLARK'S TAXIDERMY skills were used by Theodore Roosevelt, who believed Clark was one of the best. He also mounted the famous Chadwick ram, which is currently on display as part of the Club's National Collection of Heads and Horns.

Clark was a vigorous supporter of the Boy Scout movement throughout his life and received scouting's highest commendation, the Silver Buffalo Award. He had created and sold more than 25 editions of his bronze sculptures. One received first place from the National Academy of Design in 1930, another was owned by Theodore Roosevelt, and yet another, that of a standing grizzly bear, graces the entrance to the Boone and Crockett Club's headquarters in Missoula.

Clark died on March 16, 1969, three years after completing *Good Hunting*, his autobiography. One of the final paragraphs of that book says much about the man:

"I believe in God and worship nature — which is not far apart from God. The mountains are my temples; the forests, my cathedrals; the running brooks, my sermons; the open meadows, my green pastures; and the sunset, a statement of faith accompanied by an orchestration of nature."

The twentieth century's age of individual exploration ended with World War II. Along with other Boone and Crockett Club members such as Roy Chapman Andrews, Theodore Roosevelt, Carl Akeley, and Charles Sheldon, "Jimmy" Clark stood tall among that era's legendary adventurers. ■



RIGHT: Clark mounted on his hunting yak, "Pegasus," atop the Russian Pamirs in 1926.