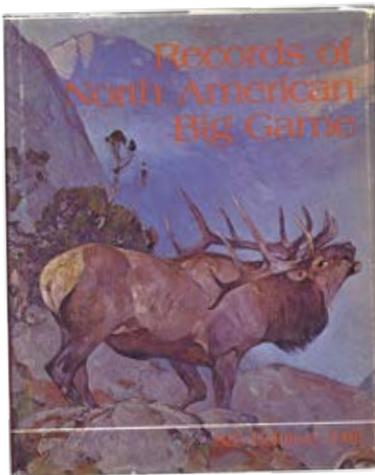


THE NATIONAL COLLECTION OF HEADS AND HORNS

A Historical Perspective



The National Collection of Heads and Horns in historical perspective poses a real paradox. How could the world's finest big game trophy collection be assembled just after the turn of the century by one of the country's strongest hunting opponents while America was decrying the destruction of its vanishing wildlife? Yet, three-quarters of a century later, how could that same collection be discarded when the sporting fraternity has its largest membership, is enlightened, organized and politically active? These curious questions can only be answered by searching for clues amongst the available record woven by history.

The history of the National Collection starts with the beginning of the New York Zoological Society in 1895. At the Boone and Crockett Club's annual meeting in January, 1895, Club President Theodore Roosevelt appointed a committee chaired by Madison Grant to monitor legislation introduced in the State of New York relating to game preservation. The creation of a zoological park in New York City was one of the committee's objectives. As early as 1880, attempts had been made without success to establish a zoological garden in New York City.

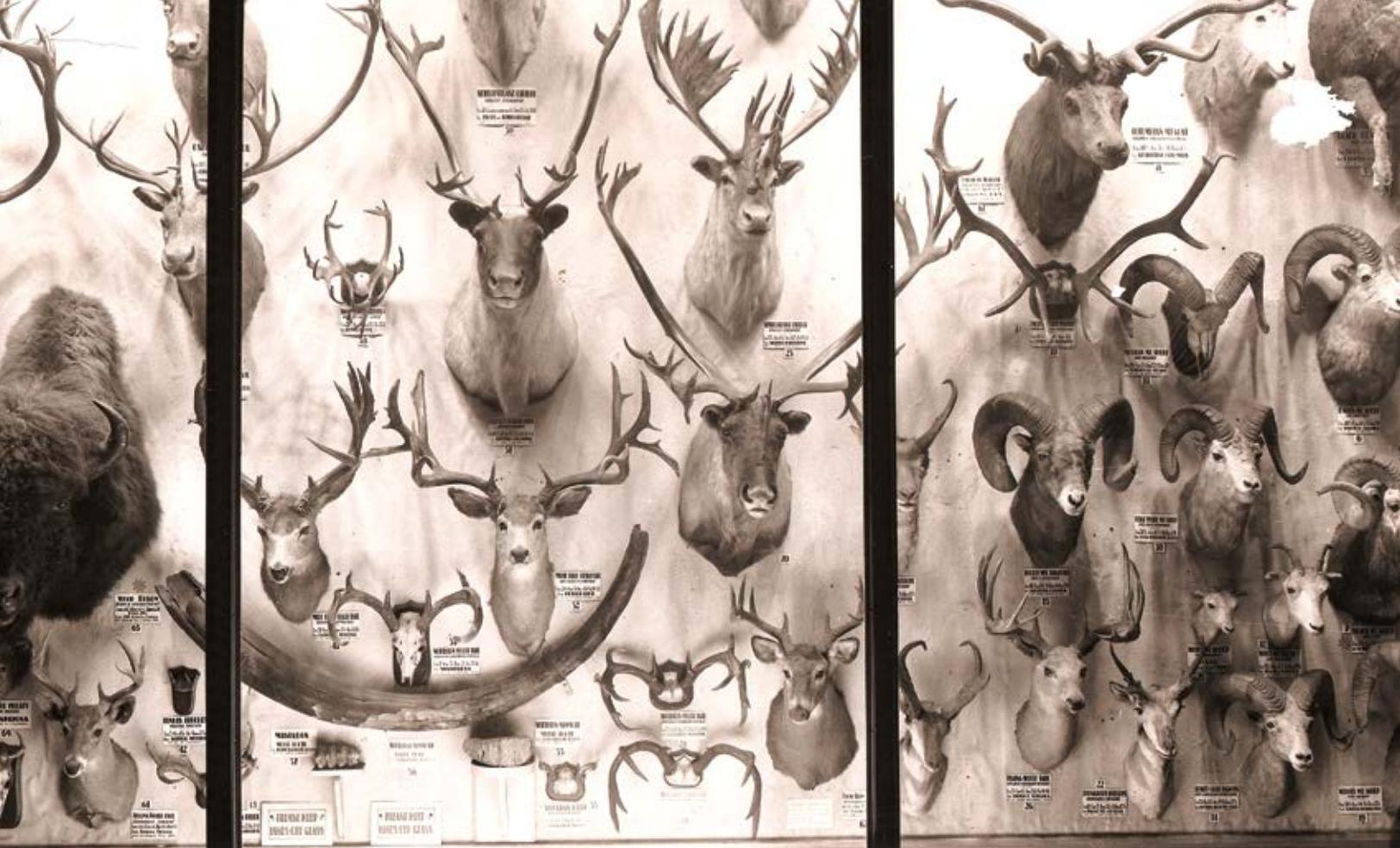
When Madison Grant revived interest in this project in 1895, legislation was reintroduced on the condition that the Boone and Crockett Club would organize a zoological society and that some of its members would appear as incorporators. The bill passed the New York State Assembly, and the New York Zoological Society was organized May 7, 1895. Included as incorporators were Club members Madison Grant, C. Grant LaFarge and Charles F. White-head. The New York Zoological Society's 1896 Board of Managers (now Board of Trustees) included 11 members of the Boone and Crockett Club. In the Boone and Crockett Club's early history (written in 1913 by George Bird Grinnell) Grinnell observed that, "The New York Zoological Society has been and is a child of the Boone and Crockett Club."

PART 1

This four part series will narrate the history and legacy of Boone and Crockett Club's National Collection of Heads and Horns. From its inception in 1906 to the big move next spring to Springfield, Missouri.

It is a story that begins with an undertaking to memorialize through museum displays big game species whose futures, at the time, looked bleak. It is, however, a story that ends on a far more positive note: the dramatic restoration of these same species to healthy and abundant numbers throughout much of their native range.

This historical recap was originally published the 8th edition of the Boone and Crockett Club's *Records of North American Big Game*



The purposes of the Zoological Society were clearly defined: The establishment of a zoological park and gardens unique in its concept and design; promotion of zoological science for research and education; and preservation of the native animals of North America.

The burden of organizing and operating the New York Zoological Society fell primarily to Madison Grant, C. Grant LaFarge, professor Henry Fairfield Osborn, Charles E. Whitehead and John L. Cadwalader, with later help from Percy R. Pyne, George Bird Grinnell, Winthrop Chanler and Philip Schuyler (all members of the Boone and Crockett Club), together with Andrew H. Green, John S. Barnes and Levi P. Morton. Immediately prior to final site selection, the principal Zoological Society organizers sought out a recognized individual with experience to aid in the final site

selection, take on the expanding affairs of the Society, and head up the development of the Zoological Park.

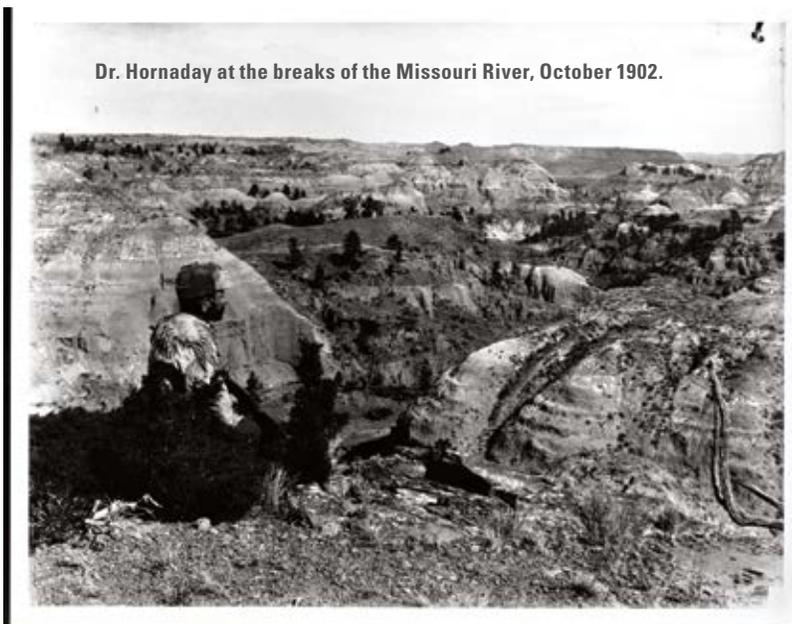
Enter William Temple Hornaday. Hornaday was hired in April 1896 at the age of 41 as the first Director of the Zoological Park. He made the final site selection of the South Bronx Park over three other locations for the zoo's home and continued to firmly impress his personality upon the development of the Zoological Park until his retirement in 1926.

Born prior to the Civil War in 1854 on a farm near Plainfield, Indiana, Hornaday later moved to Iowa and graduated from Iowa State Agricultural College. During college, he taught himself taxidermy and assembled a collection of native

mammals and birds for the college museum. Determined to become a naturalist, he joined Ward's Natural Science Establishment in Rochester, New York, as an assistant taxidermist in 1873. Ward's supplied mounted specimens for schools and museums throughout the world. In 1882,

Hornaday was appointed Chief Taxidermist for the U.S. National Museum in Washington, D.C., where he created artistic and lifelike displays that significantly advanced the art of natural history exhibitions.

Hornaday in his youth had been an avid hunter, a



Dr. Hornaday at the breaks of the Missouri River, October 1902.

hobby that had led him into his taxidermy career. Hornaday made a careful distinction between killing for sport or the market and killing for scientific study and exhibition in a natural history museum. Natural history was explained and studied in dioramas exhibiting native habitat scenes and full mounted animals, lacking access to the audio-visual equipment of today. “I have never been what you might call a sportsman,” he told a reporter in an interview soon after he became Director of the Zoological Park. “While I have killed scores of species

and hundreds of individuals of large game animals, I have never hunted save as a naturalist, bent on making studies and preserving in one form or another every animal killed that was worthy of a place in a museum.”

Hornaday grew up in an era in which the herds of big game that once populated this continent and the world were measurably vanishing from pressures of man’s increasing habitation and indiscriminate killing. Bison were slaughtered to virtual extinction; market hunting was still practiced; spring shooting of game birds was a universal practice; game management was an unknown science; and game laws were extremely liberal or non-existent. His book, *Our Vanishing Wild Life*, published

by the New York Zoological Society in 1913, became a hard-hitting indictment of America’s casual neglect of its wildlife resources.

During his career, he’d been called upon to inspect the hunting trophies of hundreds of men collected throughout the world; what were their families to do with them upon their demise? What about his own collection? He didn’t want it broken up and sold. An all inclusive exhibition of hooved and horned game of the world was impossible for the private collection but perhaps not for a widened range of interest with an institutional base. And, a precept of the New York Zoological Society was to foster zoological science for research and education, which to that

point was largely a product of studying fully mounted animals, heads and horns in schools and museums.

All of these thoughts and considerations slowly began to crystallize in Hornaday’s mind into a course of action. He wanted some central depository, some institutional trust, for his own collection and the collections of other sportsmen, where the finest trophies might find a permanent home and the systematic plan he had written about might be worked out on a grand scale! Such a depository would be, in essence and fact, “a national collection of heads and horns.” Hornaday discussed his plan with Madison Grant, the chief

executive officer of the Zoological Society, and secured his enthusiastic support before the Society’s executive committee.

On December 20, 1906, the executive committee, by formal resolution, assumed responsibility for the creation of two complete collections of all the heads, horns and tusks of the world’s ungulates, one to be arranged zoologically and the other geographically. The title designated for this great collection was “The National Collection of Heads and Horns.”

With John M. Phillips of Pittsburgh, President of the Lewis and Clark Club, acting as a liaison with the sportsmen, Madison Grant representing the Boone and Crockett Club, and Hornaday the Camp-Fire Club, a prospectus was addressed to the sportmen of America on March 20, 1907, setting forth exactly what they wanted: a depository for the finest wild animal trophies which it is possible to bring together accessible, spacious, fireproof, well lighted, finely appointed in every detail, and managed by sportsmen. There should be formed a zoological series and a geographical series—by continents—each as nearly complete as it can be made. Close on the heels of that prospectus came an announcement, dated May 1, 1907, that The National Collection of Heads and Horns was an actuality.

What Hornaday and Grant were undertaking was nothing less than preserving a complete and noble memorial to the vanishing big game of the world while there was yet time. To give the dream reality, Hornaday presented his personal collection of 131 heads and horns representing 108 species to the Society, a nucleus that defined many of the lines the completed collection would later develop. ■

A letter Roosevelt wrote to Hamilton Fish of the New York House of Representatives, asking for support of a bill to provide for a new zoological garden.

