



African Elephant Crossing A History of Elephant Care at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

It has been more than 120 years since Cleveland Metroparks Zoo was founded on University Circle as Wade Park in 1882, and elephants, both African and Asian, have been part of the Zoo for most of that history.

The Zoo began when Western Union Telegraph founder Jephtha Wade donated 73 acres of land and 14 deer to the city of Cleveland.

The Cleveland Zoo moved across town in 1907 to make way for the construction of the Cleveland Museum of Art, taking up residence in its present location which was known then as Brookside Park. Around the same time, *The Cleveland Press* sponsored a "Pennies from Children" campaign to raise money to buy an elephant for the Zoo. The campaign was a success, and Minnie arrived in Cleveland to a crowd of 25,000 on July 27, 1907.

Record keeping for animals, even zoo animals, in those days was not regarded with the same level of seriousness as it is now, so no one knows how old Minnie was when she passed away from lung disease in June 1921. The Zoo was without an elephant until September 1923 when another Asian elephant, Nemo, one of the few bull elephants to ever live in Cleveland, was acquired. Nemo's time at the Zoo was short, and the Zoo went through its longest period without elephants from 1924 to 1937 when a female Asian elephant named Trixie was purchased from what eventually became the Frank Buck Zoo in Texas.

In 1940, around the time the Cleveland Museum of Natural History took over the Zoo's operations, the Zoo purchased an Asian elephant companion for Trixie from the Frank Buck Zoo. *The Cleveland News* sponsored a contest to name her, and a 12-year-old boy from Cleveland Heights submitted the winning name, Osa. However, by this point, "Osa" was estimated to be between 40-56 years old, and had been going by the name "Frieda" for many years. It's pretty hard to change names in the middle of an elephant's life. A few years after she had been living at the Zoo, one of her ex-trainers came to visit her and called her by her original name. She responded in such a dramatic fashion that she was referred to as Frieda for the rest of her life.

In 1955 several Zoo staff members and supporters organized an African safari to acquire animals, a tactic that was considered perfectly acceptable before the Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969 banned the importation and sale of certain species in the U.S. The safari was a great success and the Zoo brought home two female and one male elephants, two hippos, two rhinos, three giraffes and many other smaller animals. This was the first time in its history the Zoo had both Asian and African elephants at the same time, although it wasn't for long. Frieda died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1956. Estimates of her age ranged from 56 to 72.

A new building to house the safari animals was needed and construction of the Pachyderm Building began. It opened in 1956 with the three new African elephants, Tara, Simba and the male, Flippy.

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AFRICAN
**ELEPHANT
CROSSING**
CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO

Management responsibilities of the Zoo transferred again in 1957, from the museum to the Cleveland Zoological Society.

Flippy passed away in 1962, and was the last full-grown male elephant to live at the Zoo until this year. The last male elephant to come to the Zoo overall was a little 6-month-old Asian elephant who came in with Siri, a female Asian elephant, in July 1965. A month later, another female Asian elephant, named Apasra, joined the herd. The youngster was transferred out a few days later, but that means for about four days in the summer of 1965, the Zoo had five elephants, its highest number ever at one time -- the two African females, Tara and Simba, the two Asian females, Siri and Apasra, and the male youngster.

By 1968, the city of Cleveland was no longer able to be in the zoo business and ownership was transferred to the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District. Management responsibilities would follow in 1975, transferring from the Zoological Society to the Cleveland Metroparks.

Siri and Apasra were shipped out together in September 1969, leaving Tara and Simba as the Zoo's only elephants until 1970, when Rainbow, the Zoo's last Asian elephant arrived. She was transferred to another facility in 1974.

Tara died in February 1979 and the Zoo knew Simba needed a companion. A few months later she was joined by Tiani, a female African elephant. In 1992, they were joined by Tribby, who came to Cleveland pregnant from the Pittsburgh Zoo. Her calf was born in March 1994, but didn't survive. Tribby passed away a year later in November 1995, followed closely by matriarch Simba in December 1995. Knowing that elephants need companionship, the Zoo searched for a home for Tiani and sent her to live at the Brownsville Zoo in Texas in April 1996.

The Zoo was without elephants of any kind for the first time since 1937. The Zoo began to rebuild its herd in the summer of 1997 when Moshi and Jo arrived from Wildlife Safari in Winston, Oregon and Martika came from the Erie Zoo in Pennsylvania.

In 2008, the Zoo was without elephants again when Moshi, Martika and Jo were sent to live at the Columbus Zoo while the 1950s-era Pachyderm Building received a long-overdue renovation. The transformation into African Elephant Crossing took more than two years to complete but is now ready to take elephant care at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo to a new level.

Moshi, Martika and Jo returned to Cleveland in November 2010, and await the arrival of Shenga, a 28-year-old female from Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo. Willy, a 32-year-old male elephant from Florida is also expected to be in Cleveland before the May 5 grand opening of African Elephant Crossing. Willy will be the first bull elephant in Cleveland since Flippy in 1962. He stands 11-feet tall at the shoulder and weighs about 13,000 pounds. He will be the largest animal to ever live at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.

Elephants help the Zoo create compelling experiences that connect people with wildlife and inspire personal responsibility to care about the survival of their wild counterparts. The new herd and African Elephant Crossing will serve as the inspirational beginning for the next 100 years of elephant care.

