

The American Bison: His Annihilation and Preservation

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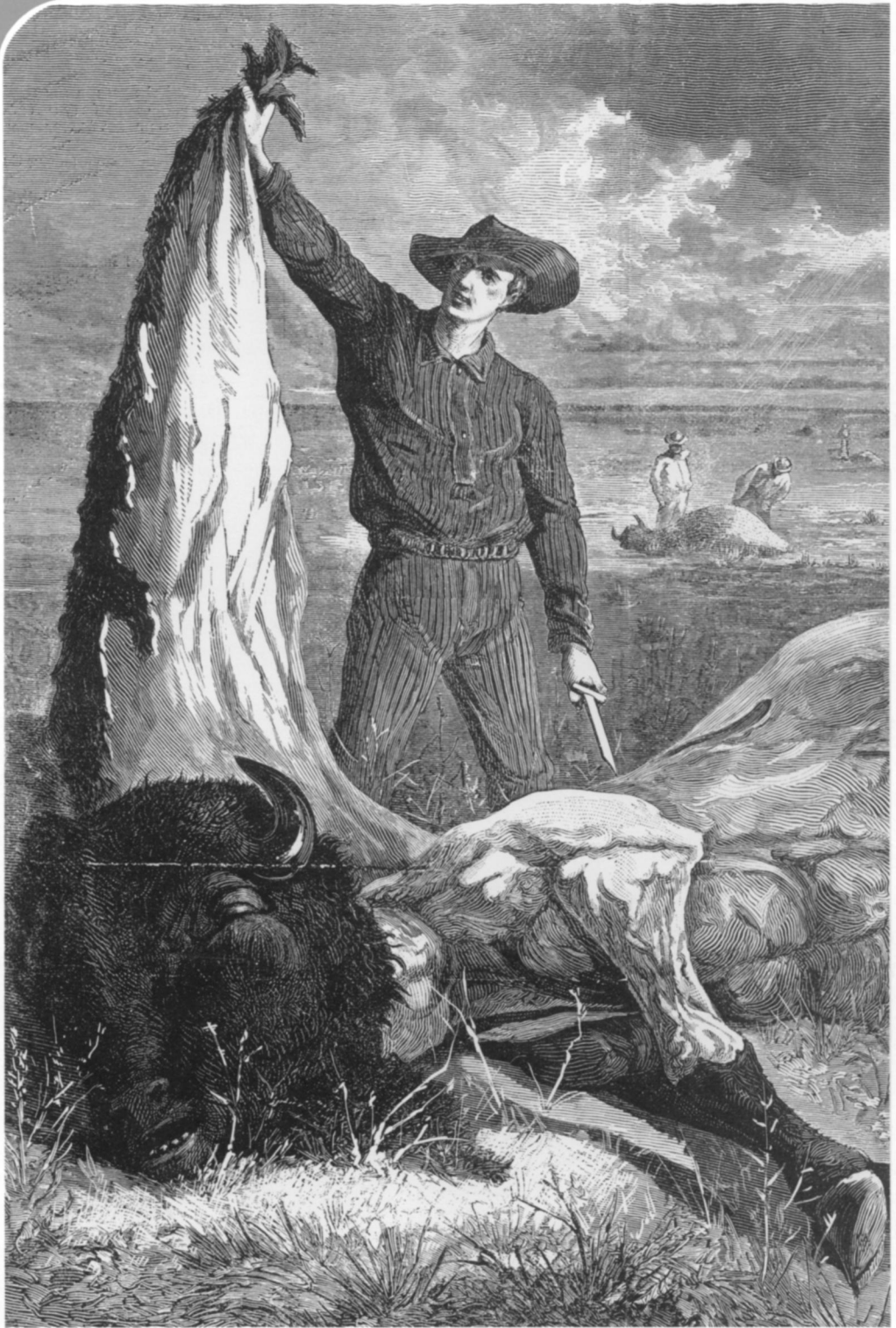
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THE AMERICAN BISON:

HIS ANNIHILATION



SLAUGHTERED FOR THE HIDE

Harper's Weekly, Dec. 13, 1874

AND PRESERVATION

by JAMES A. DOLPH and C. IVAR DOLPH

THE END CAME QUICKLY for the American bison. After professional hide hunters joined the pursuit, it took less than thirteen years, from 1871 to 1883, to bring him almost to extinction. As civilization moved westward, sportsmen joined the professionals in the destruction, providing the final thrust against the magnificent beasts whose numbers once reached some sixty million.¹ Grazing along routes of westward-moving railroads, the animals made placid, slow-moving targets for the rifle, and in a twinkling of an eye, the tremendous herds which Lewis and Clark reported had "darkened the whole plains," had all but disappeared from the American scene. The last, ghastly chapter came with the brief but brisk harvest of buffalo bones, dealt with elsewhere in this magazine.

There were, in truth, some early efforts to prevent the extermination. Seven states and territories recognized the threat and passed laws in the 1870's and 1880's which established closed seasons on bison and other game, but these were passed either after the herds were already gone or their provisions were simply ignored.

In Texas, lawmakers defeated a bill to protect the bison after General Philip Sheridan pleaded in favor of rewarding hunters for killing them. Sheridan felt that the hunters "have done in the last two years and will do in the next years, more to settle the vexing Indian question than the entire regular Army has done in the last thirty years. They are destroying the Indian's commissary; and it is a well-known fact that an army losing its base of supplies is placed at a great disadvantage."²

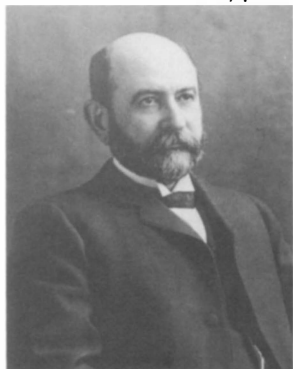
Similar efforts were made in the U.S. Congress during the 1870's, but the bills usually disappeared in committee. An exception was a measure introduced by Greenbury L. Fort, a congressman from Illinois. This bill, which almost became law, would have made it unlawful for any person who was not an Indian to kill a female buffalo in the territories or to kill more male bison than were needed for food or for the market. Although the bill passed both houses, President Grant killed it with a pocket veto. Although Grant offered no reason for his action, it was well known that his top military advisors, as well as his Secretary of the Interior were unsympathetic to the preservation of the buffalo. Thus ended any serious attempt on the part of the federal government to prevent what almost became an American tragedy.

1. Various ways of estimating the number of buffalo have been suggested, but there is no definitive computation. Most experts agree that the number was very high and that 60 million is a reasonable figure.

2. Quoted in Tom McHugh, *The Time of the Buffalo*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 285.

FOUNDERS AND ZEALOTS

Denver Public Library photo



WILLIAM T. HORNADAY

Library of Congress



THEODORE ROOSEVELT

from *Gathering of Animals*



ERNEST HAROLD BAYNES

PRESIDENT GRANT and his advisors had their way because they were voicing the contemporary attitude toward the wilderness and the advance of civilization. In later years, the bison would become a symbol of the frontier, but in the 1870's, the animals were a barrier to the "manifest destiny" of the country. The contention was that once the buffalo were gone, the Indians would abandon their nomadic, warlike ways, and the prairie, settled by ranchers and farmers, would become a useful resource.

In arguing against Fort's bill, James A. Garfield of Ohio cited Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano: "The best thing which could happen for the betterment of our Indian question — the very best thing which could occur for the solution of the difficulties of that question — would be that the last remaining buffalo should perish. . . . So long as the Indian can hope to subsist by hunting buffalo, so long will he resist all efforts to put him forward in the work of civilization . . . he would never cultivate the soil, never take a step toward civilization, until his savage means of support were cut off; and . . . his support . . . out of which he secures the very meat he feeds on, is the herds of buffalo which roam the plains of the west."³

Although there was then but little awareness of the necessity to provide for the wise management of natural resources and wildlife, men would come

forward by the turn of the century to reverse the trend toward exploitation. One of those who battled zealously for the buffalo was William T. Hornaday, chief taxidermist for the Smithsonian Institution and later director of the New York Zoological Society. Another was Ernest Harold Baynes, an energetic writer and lecturer. Together they founded the American Bison Society and within a decade were able to proclaim that the organization had accomplished its main purpose: the American bison was no longer in danger of extinction and was firmly reestablished and protected on several preserves.

Hornaday first became alerted to the bison's plight in 1887 when he led an expedition to Montana to collect a few specimens for the Smithsonian's collections. Because he could find so few, Hornaday was moved to compile the first bison census, concluding that there were then only 285 wild bison alive in the United States and only 550 in Canada.⁴

Fortunately, Hornaday was not alone in his dedication to preserve the buffalo. Several western ranchers had privately rounded up the remnants of once-mighty herds, giving them protection on their ranches. According to Hornaday's count there were 256 such buffalo in captivity in 1889.

3. Congressional Record, 43 Cong. 1st Sess. p. 2107.

4. William T. Hornaday, "The Extirpation of the American Bison," *Smithsonian Report*, 1887 (Washington, 1889), pp. 387, 525.

Fittingly, it was an Indian, Walking Coyote, who began the first captive buffalo herd. In 1873 he captured four buffalo calves near the Milk River in Central Montana and drove them over the mountains to the Flathead Valley in the western part of the territory. Later Charles A. Allard and Michel Pablo purchased this herd and continued to graze it on the lands of the Flathead Indian Reservation. After Allard died in 1896, his half was sold, but Pablo's herd grew from 150 to 709 head.⁵

Other herds maintained by private owners contributed to the slowly increasing numbers of bison. Colonel Sam J. Bedson of Stoney Mountain, Manitoba, Charles Goodnight in the Texas Panhandle, James Philip near Pierre, South Dakota, and Charles Jesse "Buffalo" Jones of Garden City, Kansas, all raised large herds.⁶

While these men were all interested in preserving the bison, they were also motivated by commercial considerations. They hoped to cross the bison with domesticated cattle to produce a hybrid, called "cattalo," which they hoped to raise for profit. Although a success as a cross breed, these animals never became important commercially.⁷

5. John Kidder, "Montana Miracle: It Saved the Buffalo," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History*, (Spring, 1965), pp. 52, 67.

6. The size of each herd is difficult to determine because the number changed each year. For Goodnight see J. E. Haley, *Charles Goodnight: Cowman and Plainsman* (Houghton, 1936); for Jones see Robert O. Easton, *Lord of Beasts: the Saga of "Buffalo" Jones*, (U. of Ariz. Press, 1961); and for Philip see Wayne Lee, *Scotty Philip: The Man Who Saved the Buffalo*, (Caxton, 1975).

In spite of all these efforts, and regardless of motivation, however, the future of the American bison was still in great peril in the closing years of the last century. It was not until the United States government took responsibility for perpetuating this colorful and historic species that his preservation could be guaranteed.

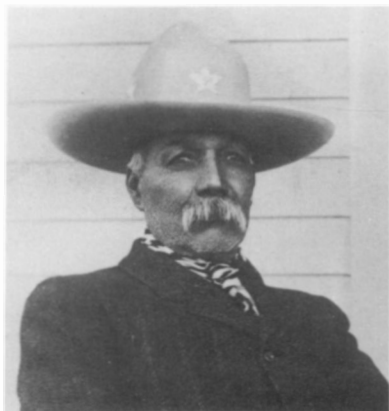
AFTER HORNADAY completed his collecting expedition in 1887, he wrote his findings in *The Extinction of the American Bison*. Published in 1889, this was the first of many protests against the indiscriminate destruction of America's wildlife. Hornaday, who had already established a national reputation as a collecting naturalist and taxidermist, hoped his account of the senseless slaughter of America's most distinctive wildlife species would "... serve to cause the public to fully realize the folly of allowing all our most valuable and interesting American mammals to be wantonly destroyed in the same manner."⁸

In this landmark contribution to wildlife conservation, Hornaday urged the government to acquire eight or ten buffalo to be cared for "... with special

7. The cattle-buffalo hybrid is not, as of this writing, a closed subject. With both beef and feed prices rising to astronomical heights last year, the October 7, 1974, *Newsweek* carried a feature about a successful cross, now known as a beefalo. Having overcome the problem of sterility which plagued earlier attempts with cattalo, California stockman D. C. Basolo has developed an animal which will grow large eating grass, and produces inexpensive and tasty steaks.

8. Hornaday, "Extinction," p. 371.

PRODUCERS AND PRESERVERS

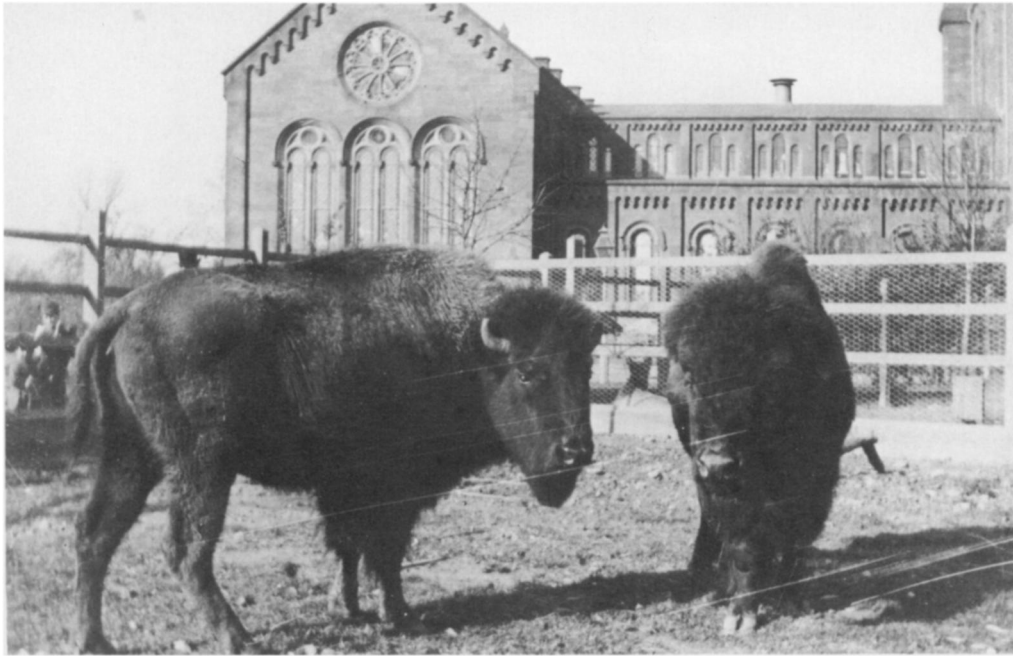


MICHEL PABLO



CHARLES A. ALLARD

THE SMITHSONIAN SANCTUARY



Two of the six buffalo placed in a small wire enclosure behind the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. posed balefully for the photographer in 1889.

reference to keeping the breed absolutely pure . . . as fine living representatives of this important species for centuries to come.”⁹

Largely as a result of his efforts, six bison were placed in a small enclosure behind the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. in 1889. Two years later, the animals were transferred to large enclosures at the National Zoological Park which had been founded to provide a breeding place for buffalo, antelope, elk, and other large native American mammals in danger of extinction. Hornaday himself had lobbied vigorously to persuade Congress to allocate the funds for the park, and had served briefly as the park’s first superintendent.¹⁰

In the meantime, Hornaday’s attention was turned to the other herd under the government’s protection — the wild herd in Yellowstone National Park. After Yellowstone was created as the country’s first national park in 1872, several hundred wild bison had wandered into the area and thus come under the protection of park regulations. But lack of enforcement provisions and the zeal of poachers had led to a steady decline in the number of bison in Yellowstone. By 1902 it was estimated that the

herd had dwindled to twenty-two animals and new measures were clearly necessary to protect it.

In that year, largely through the initiative of Charles J. Jones, who later became a member of the American Bison Society, Congress appropriated \$15,000.00 for the purchase of a new “tame” herd for Yellowstone. Jones was appointed game warden, and under his supervision, twenty-one buffalo were purchased and put into an enclosure erected near Mammoth Hot Springs in October, 1902.

Eighteen of these animals were purchased from Howard Eaton of North Dakota, who had obtained them from the heirs of Charles Allard. The other three were purchased from Charles Goodnight. These animals were branded with a U.S. on their horns and left flanks and became the first captive buffalo herd, other than the small exhibition herd in the National Zoological Park, to come under government ownership. The forty-two captive and twenty-two wild buffalo of the Yellowstone herd comprised a small number upon which to base a perpetuation

9. *Ibid.*, p. 528.

10. William T. Hornaday, *Thirty Years War for Wild Life*, Stamford, Conn., 1931), p. 167.

of the species, however, since an epidemic might wipe out that many in a few weeks.

Although there were by 1902 over 700 additional buffalo in private herds, according to a survey made by the Secretary of the Interior, there was no guarantee of the continued existence of the buffalo by this means. The privately owned animals might be sold or liquidated whenever their owners chose. If they sold the buffalo, it was usually for the market or for owners who wanted only one or at most a few head. Thus the private herds could be easily broken up and the chances of reproduction reduced.

IT WAS CLEAR to those who believed that the buffalo must not be allowed to become extinct that immediate and drastic measures must be taken to put more herds under governmental ownership and maintenance. Organizing for the purpose of promoting such ownership, a group of prominent easterners founded the American Bison Society on December 8, 1905. It was this organization, comprised of naturalists as well as concerned men of wealth, which assumed the leadership in the movement to permanently preserve the American bison.

The American Bison Society had its origins in the mind of Ernest Harold Baynes, a 36-year-old professional writer. During the summer of 1904 Baynes visited the Blue Mountain Forest and Game Preserve in New Hampshire which had been established by Austin Corbin, developer of New York's Manhattan Beach and Coney Island. The preserve was well-stocked with various species of big game, including twenty-two buffalo which Corbin had purchased from "Buffalo" Jones in 1888 and 1892. By the time Baynes made his visit, the Corbin herd had grown to 160 buffalo, one of the largest herds then in existence. So thrilled was Baynes by the sight of these huge, shaggy beasts that he became committed to the preservation of the species.

To interest the public in the fate of the few buffalo left in the United States and Canada, Baynes wrote a series of articles about the Corbin herd for the *Boston Evening Transcript* and began lecturing on the subject, chiefly in and around Boston. In August, 1904, Baynes' interest was deepened when he learned that the owners of the Corbin herd had approached the federal government about purchasing the animals, for the cost of keeping such a large herd was proving too expensive for the family. They

wanted, however, to keep the herd together, not disperse it piecemeal.¹¹

The threat of dissolution of the Corbin herd prompted Baynes to further action. He personally wrote many of the nation's leading citizens, urging them to become concerned with the fate of the buffalo. Among those whom Baynes contacted was President Theodore Roosevelt. An ardent outdoorsman deeply interested in the conservation movement, Roosevelt responded enthusiastically to Baynes' letter, saying that he would treat the problem of the vanishing bison in his annual message to Congress.¹²

Baynes' next step was to sell the public on the idea through forty articles about the buffalo which appeared in leading magazines and newspapers throughout the country during the fall and winter of 1904 and 1905. He admonished his readers that they had waited until the "eleventh hour" to attempt to rescue their "finest native animals." This was literally, he said, the last call — the buffalo must be saved at once or he would pass away forever. In his zeal, Baynes turned the deposed "monarch of the plains" into the symbol of the world's persecuted and made him into a veritable hero of the American frontier. The press responded kindly to these articles and the bison became the subject of many editorials favoring preservation.¹³

Baynes then took to the lecture platform again and again to spread his interest and concern. In January, 1905, he presented an illustrated lecture, entitled "The American Buffalo — A Plea for His Preservation" before the Boston Society of Natural History. Following the meeting Baynes met with several interested people who had attended the lecture to discuss plans for organizing a national society to assure the permanent preservation of the species. Following an address to the Camp Fire Club in New York, Baynes discussed his idea with Hornaday, who was now director of the New York Zoological Park (the Bronx Zoo). Hornaday agreed that such an organization was indeed needed, and reluctantly accepted Baynes' invitation to head the proposed society.

11. E. H. Baynes, "History and Proceedings of the Society," *Annual Report of the American Bison Society, 1905-07* (New York, 1907); *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 25, July 2, 18, Aug. 6, 18, 27, 1904.

12. Roosevelt kept his promise. His letter to Baynes, dated Sept. 16, 1904, is reprinted in *Annual Report, 1905-07*.

13. *Annual Report, 1905-07*, p. 2.

ENROUTE TO WICHITA



William T. Hornaday, left, observes as Supt. Rush of the Bronx Zoo stands before the stout wire cage in which a buffalo bull is to be shipped to Wichita in 1907.

ALTHOUGH HORNADAY seemed hesitant to proceed in subsequent months, organization of the group was assured when President Roosevelt agreed to serve as its honorary president. Baynes then sent notices of the organizational meeting to about 200 people throughout the country who were known to be interested in the conservation of wildlife. Of these, thirteen men and one woman attended a meeting in the Lion House at the Bronx Zoo on December 8, 1905, and proceeded to formally organize the American Bison Society. Hornaday was elected president and Baynes secretary.

After organization was completed on February 2, 1906, membership was opened to the public with a membership fee of five dollars. Although the group was a national organization, the majority of its 700 members came from the East, particularly Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Perhaps a part of Hornaday's reluctance to act as president of the new group was his conviction that the American Bison Society should maintain its

distance from the New York Zoological Society despite a common concern for the bison.¹⁴ Indeed, the New York group had already launched an independent effort to preserve the buffalo. Some nine months before the organization of the American Bison Society, Hornaday had proposed a plan to place some of the Bronx Zoo's buffalo under government ownership on the Wichita Forest Reserve, a part of the Comanche-Kiowa Indian Reservation in Southwestern Oklahoma. At the urging of several conservation groups, Congress had established the area in 1905 as the first reserve created especially for game animals.

Realizing that an animal as large as the bison could not perpetuate itself for long under the close quarters found in most zoos and private preserves, Hornaday believed that the only alternative was the establishment of a number of large herds on federal land under the control and administration of the federal government.

14. William Bridges, *Gathering of Animals: An Unconventional History of the New York Zoological Society*, (Harper, Row, 1974), pp. 257-66.

To get the government to participate in the crusade, Hornaday was convinced that private citizens and scientific organizations would have to "do more than offer advice and exhortations to Congress." If they wanted governmental action Hornaday felt the public would have to do something positive on its own. Thus Hornaday proposed that the New York Zoological Society donate a nucleus herd from its thirty-three head with a stipulation that the government provide a fenced range for the animals. The society board approved Hornaday's proposal and forwarded it to the Secretary of Agriculture on March 25, 1905. In June, President Roosevelt accepted the society's offer.¹⁵

After a survey of the Wichita Reserve, conducted jointly by the Bureau of Forestry and the New York Zoological Society, Congress appropriated \$15,000.00 to enclose 8,000 acres with a seven and a half foot high fence, and erect the necessary chutes, corrals, and sheds for handling the animals. When the range was ready in October, 1907, fifteen of the Bronx Zoo's healthiest buffalo were crated and shipped by express train to their new home in Oklahoma. As part of the national preservation effort, free transportation was provided by the railroads.¹⁶

While the New York Zoological Society was negotiating for the creation of the Wichita buffalo preserve, some of its members — including Baynes, Hornaday, Madison Grant, M. S. Garretson, F. H. Kennard, Edmund Seymour, F. W. Hooper, T. S. Palmer, C. H. Stonebridge and J. A. Loring — were building up the American Bison Society with the intention of ". . . endeavoring to create a strong workable organization for the purpose of establishing other government owned herds in various parts of the country."¹⁷

Because of their common membership, the American Bison Society had assisted the New York Zoological Society in carrying out the plans for the Wichita Reserve, although it had not claimed credit for the project. The success of this project now, however, served as a model to the American Bison Society in its efforts to institute more preserves.

AT THE SOCIETY'S first annual meeting held in January, 1907, Hornaday submitted a plan for a second federal bison range to be located on the Flathead Indian Reservation in northwestern Montana. Hornaday favored this area for two reasons. First, the Flathead Reservation had already proved itself to be an excellent location for a buffalo preserve since the Pablo herd — the largest captive herd in existence — had been raised on the reservation. Secondly, Hornaday felt the time was opportune for the government to purchase land because the Flathead Reservation was about to be opened for settlement.

Moreover, after the news of the opening of the reservation, Michel Pablo offered to sell his herd to the federal government, for he knew there would no longer be sufficient pasture to keep them, once settlement began. Although both President Roosevelt and Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock showed an interest in the offer, Congress failed to make the necessary appropriation. Hornaday later stated that congressional leaders thought Pablo had asked too high a price for his buffalo and that they could foresee no land on which to keep the animals, once the reservation was open.¹⁸

The Canadian government, however, proved to be an eager buyer for Pablo's herd. At the time the Dominion had only a few hundred buffalo, even fewer than did the United States, and Canada was anxious to preserve and replenish the species. They took an option on Pablo's animals, reportedly amounting to \$200,000, and in the summer of 1907 Pablo began the task of rounding up his buffalo which were then living in a semi-wild state. Before the year was out, he had shipped 410 animals north by rail. By 1911 he had shipped a total of 709 buffalo to Canada.¹⁹

The Canadian purchase proved an embarrassment, suggesting to many that Canada cared more about preserving the American bison than did its southern neighbor. As a result, Congress was awakened to the necessity for swift action to put some of the remaining private herds under government ownership.

15. William T. Hornaday, "Founding of the Wichita National Bison Herd," *Annual Report*, 1905-07, p. 56; James Trefethen, *Crusade for Wildlife*, (Harrisburg, Pa., 1961), p. 71.

16. *Annual Report*, 1905-07, pp. 56-9.

17. Martin S. Garretson, Memorandum, Papers of the American Bison Society, Denver Public Library.

18. Hornaday to Burns, Sept. 6, 1911, Papers of the American Bison Society; Kidder, "Montana Miracle," pp. 59-60.

19. Fred H. Byshe, "Canada's Part in the Preservation of the Buffalo," *Tenth Annual Report of the American Bison Society*, 1915-16, pp. 37-9.

ROUNDING UP FOR CANADA



Montana cowboys, white or Indian, never faced such a challenge as they did in 1907, when they rounded up buffalo owned by Michel Pablo for shipment to Canada.

In the meantime the American Bison Society had accepted Hornaday's proposal for a national bison range on the Flathead Reservation. After an onsite study, Morton J. Elrod, a member of the society and a professor of biology at the University of Montana, recommended a site at Moiese, near Ravalli, consisting of a minimum of twenty square miles and a maximum of twenty-eight.²⁰

These plans received enthusiastic support from President Roosevelt. In a letter to Baynes, dated October 24, 1907, Roosevelt noted the significance of the buffalo in the westward movement: "I feel real and great interest in the work being done by the American Bison Society to preserve the buffalo — the biggest of the American big game, probably on the whole, the most distinctive game animal on this continent, and which most deeply impressed the imagination of all the old hunters and early settlers. It would be a misfortune to permit the species to

become extinct, and I hope that all good citizens will aid the society in its efforts for . . . preservation."²¹

Following the procedure established by the New York Zoological Society, Hornaday suggested that the American Bison Society raise the money to buy a substantial nucleus herd for presentation to the government with the provision that Congress appropriate money for the purchase of land and fencing. Hornaday contacted Montana's Senator Joseph M. Dixon, who agreed to draw up a bill for the proposed bison range. The senator's bill included an appropriation request for \$30,000.00 for purchase of the land on the reservation and \$10,000.00 for fencing. This time Congress eagerly passed the legislation, and Roosevelt signed it into law on May 22, 1908.

20. Morton J. Elrod, "The Flathead Buffalo Range," *Annual Report*, 1905-07, pp. 15-49.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

AS ITS PART of the bargain, Hornaday and the American Bison Society immediately began a campaign to raise \$10,000.00 to purchase the nucleus herd of forty buffalo. Hornaday hoped to raise this sum by public subscription, keeping the minimum subscription at \$1.00 so the entire public might be able to aid in the cause, thus giving the campaign “. . . a national character.”²²

To carry out his plan, Hornaday wrote chambers of commerce, boards of trade, and the mayors of 150 cities throughout the United States to enlist their aid. He also wrote letters to the board of managers of the American Bison Society, asking each to bring in subscriptions amounting to at least \$100.00. Finally he requested that each member of the society secure no less than \$10.00 worth of subscriptions.

Hornaday was a dedicated crusader, and his efforts to raise the bison purchase funds were conducted in a most straightforward manner, pulling no punches in the effort to solicit support. Those who were guilty of almost extinguishing the buffalo, he said, should assist in the campaign for their perpetuation. For example, he wrote the president of the Indianapolis Board of Trade: “If any body of American businessmen should feel that they should not be called upon for contribution of funds to preserve the American Bison, I would remind them of the fact it was the ‘business interest’ of the country, represented by men who wanted buffalo hides to sell at \$2.50 each, that wiped out the buffalo millions! Between 1865 and 1885, the American Bison contributed billions of dollars to the wealth of this country. It now becomes the bounden duty of the well-to-do of this country to consummate the plans that are now proposed for the perpetuation of the American Bison species for centuries to come.”²³

When the secretary of the New Orleans Board of Trade said that his organization could not help because it had a rule against soliciting subscriptions, Hornaday wrote back bluntly: “We really cannot excuse New Orleans from participating in the national movement that we have now in hand. I therefore ask you to reconsider the matter. Your rule that members of your Board shall not be solicited

for subscription is a very bad one, and the quicker you amend it, the better. . . .”²⁴

In spite of Hornaday's efforts — or perhaps because of them — no help came from any of the business associations to which he wrote. The society did, however, obtain the cooperation of over fifty newspapers and magazine publications in various cities, especially the *Boston Evening Transcript* and *Forest and Stream*. Their printing of the society's call for support helped overcome public indifference and yielded many contributions.²⁵

A year after the campaign began, the society surpassed its goal and counted \$10,560.00 in the fund. Hornaday expressed surprise at the support from women; the interest of women in birds was well known, he said, but he had not expected them to respond with such enthusiasm on behalf of a “brutish mammal.”

24. Hornaday to Herring, Oct. 3, 1908, Papers of the American Bison Society.

25. Hornaday, *Second Annual Report, 1908-09*, p. 13.

CRATING FOR MOIESE



Williams photo—U. of Montana Archives

22. William T. Hornaday, *Second Annual Report of the American Bison Society, 1908-09*, p. 9.

23. Hornaday to Woolen, Oct. 8, 1908, Papers of the American Bison Society.

Buffalo from the Conrad herd in Kallispell present a crating and shipping problem as they begin their journey by rail and water to the National Bison Range in 1909.

THE MONTANA SANCTUARY



The several hundred bison which found sanctuary in 1908 at the National Bison Range at Moiese, in Western Montana, photographed in about 1920.

He was, however, disappointed that so little support came from the western states. Although the citizens of Montana responded to the call with \$366.00, not one cent was received from the other states which had once had large buffalo populations. A Nebraska bank, for example, wrote: "What do you take people for? In this country we have all we can do to take care of our hogs, horses, and cattle to say nothing of investing through you our hard earned money to raise buffalo. . . . No sir, we do not care for stock in the buffalo business. Wonder what will come next from Wall Street?" On the other hand, the citizens of New York and Massachusetts contributed \$5,213.00 and \$2,320.00 respectively.²⁶

OUT OF THE FUND, thirty-four buffalo were purchased for \$275.00 each from the herd of Alicia Conrad of Kalispell, Montana, whose animals, originally purchased by her husband, C. E. Conrad, from Michel Pablo in 1901, were closest to the new range. In addition, the number was swelled by three gift animals, two from Mrs. Conrad and one from the herd of Charles Goodnight.

26. Quoted in Bridges, *Gathering of Animals*, p. 268.

27. William T. Hornaday, "Report of the President of the Founding of the Montana National Bison Herd, *Third Annual Report of the American Bison Society, 1909-10*, pp. 4-17; McHugh, *Time of the Buffalo*, p. 302.

On October 17, 1909, the animals arrived from Kalispell after a journey by barge on Flathead Lake and by rail. A delighted Hornaday was present as the buffalo were uncrated at their "Paradise Regained . . . the richest and the most beautiful grazing grounds ever trodden by bison hoofs."²⁷

With the animals on their new refuge, the total number of buffalo owned by the federal government rose to 151 head — seventeen in the National Zoological Park, ninety-five in Yellowstone Park, nineteen on the Wichita Game Preserve, and thirty-seven on the National Bison Range at Moiese. In 1910, three more buffalo were delivered to the latter, a gift from Austin Corbin's Blue Mountain Forest Preserve in New Hampshire.

In the National Zoological Park and in the fenced corral at Yellowstone Park, the buffalo were confined in relatively close quarters; but at the National Bison Range in Montana and the Wichita Game Preserve, the United States had two large sanctuaries where buffalo could run freely under conditions as close as possible to those they had once known.

In addition to being one of the first two federal bison ranges in the United States, the National Bison Range at Moiese was also significant from another standpoint. It was the first wildlife refuge specifically planned to preserve a single big game animal and it was the first such tract of land for

which Congress appropriated funds. The creation of this refuge and the one in Kansas marked the beginning of this country's recognition of the value of its wildlife and resulted in the formation of federal wildlife refuges for other distinctive North American species.

Buffalo have thrived on government preserves in subsequent years and have today increased to such numbers that they are no longer facing extinction. Two years before the American Bison Society was formed, there were only 1,644 American bison throughout the world and only two small herds under government protection. Today there are just under 5,000 head of buffalo on state and federal preserves in the United States, and several thousand more in private ownership. The Wichita Preserve has over 1,000, while there are 580 in Yellowstone Park, 430 at the National Bison Range in Montana, 320 at Niobrara in Nebraska, and 224 at Wind Cave in South Dakota.²⁸

The establishment of the National Bison Range in Montana was the greatest achievement of the American Bison Society, but it was not the last. Members contributed directly to the establishment of Wind Cave National Game Preserve in South Dakota and Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska, both opened in 1913. Confidently, the American Bison Society could proclaim by 1915 that it had achieved its purpose and it wondered if it should cease operations. It did not completely disband, however. In 1930 the Society published its last report. Dues were dispensed with in 1935 and meetings were held less frequently, but until 1953 it continued to be listed among the wildlife preservation societies.

28. U.S. Department of the Interior, *Big Game Inventory of 1969*, (1970).

AMERICAN BISON SOCIETY



Members and officers of the American Bison Society met at the Bronx Zoological Park in New York on Jan. 10, 1934, for one of their final meetings. An aged Dr. Hornaday is the second man from the right in the back row, while the great photographer, W. H. Jackson, is seen second from the left in the front row. The two men at the right in the front row are Edmund Seymour, president of the Society, and M. S. Garretson, secretary. Women, who were always enthusiastic supporters of preserving the bison, are represented in the front row by Mrs. Charles C. Marshall.

Its mission achieved, the American Bison Society was honored in 1921 by the leading zoological organization in France, the *Societe d'Acclimation*, for ". . . its great achievement in the preservation of the American bison on a continuing basis." Thus, international recognition came to this pioneering conservation organization which had played an important role in preserving the symbol of the American frontier.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This article calls on the collaborative interests and abilities of two brothers. The historical emphasis is provided by James Dolph, who recently received his Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts. Currently assistant professor of history at Weber State College in Ogden, Utah, James tells us that this article is the by-product of research done for his M.A. on the American Bison Society. At Ogden, Prof. Dolph initiated the Great Ogden Community Nature Center, formerly a 240-acre military supply depot. The biological interest is contributed by C. Ivar Dolph, who received his M.A. from the University of Montana in 1961. He is now head of the Biology Department at Yakima Valley College in Yakima, Washington, where he teaches both zoology and physiology.