

## RMGA – FAM – April 3, 2019

### Museum of Nature and Science, City Park with Phil Goldstein, and the Zoo

Submitted by Nancy Brueggeman

#### **MUSEUM of NATURE and SCIENCE**

We met in the T Rex Café at 9:00 am. Maura O'Neal, Communications and Media Relations Manager; Frances Kruger, Senior Content Developer and Writer; and Dave Allison, On-site Programs Manager greeted us. About 250,000 students/year visit the museum. Some money comes from the SCFD and helps allow the museum to host free days and evenings at the museum. Some of the free days/nights are themed. Dave's team trains volunteers for these special events. The museum can provide interpreters for many languages – a person just needs to ask.

The museum will add anyone who sends in their email to the list of those who receive the MNS monthly updates.

Our tour was mostly through the permanent exhibits. We divided into two groups – I went with Frances – a 30-year veteran employee who has been instrumental in staging and populating various dioramas and exhibits.

Before we started our tour, they updated us on bus protocol. Due to the weight of buses, there can be only one bus at a time at the front door, subsequent buses will be called as needed to the apron of the top of the parking garage. Groups will enter on the south side of the building, so this should not be a problem. For visits like ours, use the Employee Entrance and check in with the receptionist there.

The first building was completed in 1908 and is the right wing today. The IMAX theater was added in 1936 (Phipps Auditorium) and the Atrium was added in the 1980s.

We started in the Prehistoric Journey – a trail through time – and scooted past specific times and samples of what the Earth looked like in various prehistoric periods. For instance, 4.5 billion years ago the moon was formed. The first glaciation was 1.2 billion years ago. The first evidence of life was 600 million years ago. We looked at the evidence case that tells us how we know what was here then.

The Paleozoic Era was 545-220 million years ago. Colorado was all undersea 425 million years ago. Stairs up to the mezzanine level bring the visitor along as though they were life forms rising from the seas to land. Wayfinding signs are very visible pointing the direction to the dinosaurs. We passed two skeletons helping each other – both are real, not cast – the lower one having tendons, skin, bones, muscles all on view. Elevators are available for visitors requiring accessibility.

The Kansas coastline was visible 295 million years ago. We then passed the dinosaur overlook – these dinosaur skeletons are all real, not cast. We descended another set of stairs for a closer look at what lived here 66 million years ago – just before the asteroid hit. In the dinosaur gallery there are many more specimens – each labeled with the percentage of what is "real" (actual fossil bone) and what percentage has been cast. Frances also pointed out the KT Boundary – this line is very visible in Colorado. There is a video here telling about the asteroid.

We then saw an American elephant and a mammoth skull. There are markings on the wall showing the shoulder height of bison (6' tall), mastodon (12' tall) and a mammoth (about 15-16' tall at the shoulder – this mark is at the ceiling).

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We saw ancient Denver through time – from 300 million to 16 million years ago – in reproductions of illustrations commissioned by the Museum. We then passed the wildlife halls and the IMAX Theater on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Wheelchairs need to go to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor for entry to the IMAX Theater. The museum won an award for its accessibility.

Then we buzzed through Expedition Health which is modeled on a climb up Mount Evans and the effects of that hike on each person. This is customized to you and your results. There is a base camp focusing on biology and a Taste Lab where you can volunteer to test various things for taste.

As we walked back to the center hall, we noted the real palm trees which were brought in in the late 1980s for the Ramses II exhibit. They are alive and growing. There are timeline artworks around the edge of the walls on the second floor.

There is a new installation about Australia in Charles Boettcher Hall. The cases depict the culture and the history. This area is on the list for a future complete renovation. Construction on the west side of the hall is updating the information on North American Indians.

There is an Earth topographical globe and a diorama of an exploration of Mars in the Space Odyssey exhibit. Make sure to look at the moon rock. The exhibit area is designed to be free-form and experiential.

The rings in the west atrium are oriented to align with shadows cast at sunset on the solstice and equinox. Here's a video of a former facilities director explaining the design: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxBmn0vjMGM>.

The new Muggerridge Family Wing has classrooms and early childhood education area and the Discovery Zone. There are two lower levels below ground in this wing for storage and preservation.

We passed the Gems and Minerals sections where there is a reconstructed crystal cave from Mexico. Frances told us the secret of the depth perception of the cave – mirrors. Of course, we had to look to see where those mirrors might be.

We had lunch at the Museum using pre-purchased vouchers. The vouchers would be useful for tour groups. The food was ample, tasty, and reasonably priced.

#### **CITY PARK with PHIL GOODSTEIN**

While we were finishing lunch, Phil Goldstein gave us a short paragraph on how he became a history writer and tour guide. Phil is a Denver native who went to East High and grew up around the City Park neighborhood. Phil went to several universities, earning his degree from Metro State. He wrote the front page articles for the *City Review* and in 1986 started giving tours for *Denver Free University*. Currently he offers 40 different tours. Phil has written many, many books and offered some of the titles to us at a discount.

Then Phil started the day's section about City Park with Lawrence Phipps and the KKK. Lawrence Phipps "bought" his Senate seat in 1918, the head of the KKK met with Phipps and Phipps gave \$60,000 to the KKK, who were "have-nots" to have them vote for Phipps' re-election in 1924. Phipps was the head of the Republican Party as well as a judge in Denver. He later locked up the head of the KKK who had embezzled money.

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History of City Park. Frederick Law Olmstead had just completed Central Park in New York. Other cities wanted a similar park. Denver was looking for a fringe area that would be cheaper land. Curtis Park was built at 32<sup>nd</sup> and Park Avenue in 1868 and contains one city block.

Population figures for Denver:

1870 – 4,759

1880 – 36,000

1890 – 106,000

As Denver grew, so did the need for park space. In 1880, land could be obtained cheaply – government land needed to reserve 1/36<sup>th</sup> to 1/18<sup>th</sup> for schools. So, the one square mile between Colorado and 26<sup>th</sup> and York Street and 17<sup>th</sup> became City Park. It started at 320 acres – 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> and York to Colorado – ½ mile wide and one mile long. The public protested. The landscaping was done originally in 1882.

Edwin Carter arrived in 1859, settled near Breckenridge. Carter was a naturalist – he collected specimens. In 1890s, Carter was getting old and wanted to keep his collection intact. He gave his collection to the city. His collection was housed in the basement of the Capitol along with art and other artifacts. Carter's gift required that it be housed in a separate building. So, the Museum of Nature and Science was built on the highest point in City Park in 1902. There were no operating funds attached to the gift, so no repairs, etc. until 1908. The Museum became a city institution with free admission until after WWII. The Museum had ties with other museums of Natural History. From 1918-1930 there were expeditions of the Folsom Man so the Museum traded dinosaurs for Folsom Man artifacts. In the 1970s there was a real estate boom. By 1981 the City was bankrupt, so the free museum ended. In January 1982, the Museum started charging admission. By 2001, the Museum had more money and was renamed as the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. As we walked along outside the Museum, Phil pointed out the sculpture of a Mastodon that was placed here in 2014. In 2011 more than 60 specimens of Mastodons were found around Snowmass, Colorado.

City Park also contained the Botanic Gardens. The Botanic Gardens moved to their present location at 8<sup>th</sup> and York in 1957 in what was once Calvary Cemetery. The original rose garden is still just to the west of the Museum. Phil commented that by the 1960s and early 1970s, the park was neglected. The view from Museum is still the best of the city – you will see it on most postcard views of Denver. The lily pond in the park moved to the Botanic Gardens and other ponds from other parks moved to the Botanic Gardens as well. The pond on 17<sup>th</sup> (1907) was the original city pond, the main water intake of the "City Ditch" whose headwaters were near the current Chatfield Dam. The Ditch had the reputation of being the oldest working thing in Denver.

The "Old Cronies Lane" from 1908 until the 1930s was a strolling path where old cronies (the city's elderly wealthy people) would have a leisurely stroll. The park needs maintenance and signage updates.

Jonas Furs began with taxidermy trophies in a shop near 10<sup>th</sup> and Broadway. In 1964 at the World's Fair New York City, dinosaurs were exhibited – presented by Paul Lewis Jonas. Boettcher was in real estate, mining, blasting powder and sugar – he made his first millions in hardware for the miners.

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City Park was fenced for many years and had a curfew from 11 pm to dawn. In 1913, Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. was commissioned to consult on both the city and mountain parks. He was soon dismissed and didn't finish the job.

Phil also noted the originator of Barbie and Ken lived in the apartment building across 17<sup>th</sup> street. Barbie and Ken were brother and sister. Harold Matson and partner Itzy Handler formed Mattel. Handler designed plastics. Matson sold his share to Handler. In 1959 Ruth Handler designed Barbie as a doll for her teen-aged daughter. Then Ken. And the rest is toy manufacturing history.

The Children's Fountain was sculpted in 1913. In 1912 Mayor Speer visited Dusseldorf and commissioned a copy of the fountain he saw there. The fountain was at 18<sup>th</sup> and York originally. Notice that the feet of children don't match the original sculpture. These, and other, protuberances were hacked off by vandals, then replaced.

The Pavilion was built in the 1890s – the original was at a location where the zoo is now. The current pavilion had jail cells for those who were disruptive and had indulged in too much alcohol. During Prohibition (1916-1933) the jail cells were moved out to be used as cages for animals at the Zoo. The Denver Municipal Band played here 5 nights/week and 1 night/week at Civic Center Park. Most musicians worked as school teachers during the winter, played here in the summer. It has been renovated several times. The island in the middle of the pond is a bird sanctuary. The Park Lake hosted ice skating in winter until the 1982 blizzard. Mayor Federico Peña then outlawed the ice skating. The fountain in the lake in 1908 had electricity and colored lights – a “prismatic” fountain. In 2008 it was restored for the DNC and worked for one evening. Tried again in 2009, but it was struck by lightning. Also around the park are crabapple trees – Mayor Stapleton wanted to copy the cherry blossoms in Washington, DC – but it's too cold here. The city tried a couple of times, until the landscape architect DeSacco said to try the hardier crabapples. And, we saw lilac lane – nothing ready to bloom yet, but should be beautiful in a couple of weeks.

Phil also noted that during the 1890s the land near the zoo was reserved for the men's driving club – they drove sulkies. Then the land was used for Little League baseball. They also had auto races. During WWII, it became Victory gardens. From the 1920s to WWII it was used by the Youth Athletic League (YAL) for organized recreation for kids. In the 1880s trees were planted on Arbor Day (May) and Flag Day (June 14<sup>th</sup>), which were big days at the park, drawing large crowds.

#### **DENVER ZOO**

Megan Deffner, Community Affairs Manager, and Andrew Rowan, External Relations (former zookeeper) gave us a very short overview and PowerPoint presentation about the zoo. The Edge – the new tiger playground and space is open. Megan talked about the black bear, who in 1896 became the first resident of the zoo. Then the zoo was run by City Park. In 1950 it became its own entity and now has an 80 acre campus. It is a non-profit organization and is the most visited cultural institution in Colorado. It is also one of the most diverse zoos with 3,500 animals representing 550 species. Of these, 50 species are endangered (i.e., Asian elephants, tigers). More than 150,000 school students (K-12) visit each year. Their outreach also reached 54,000 students. The Zoo offers a free day once or twice each year. Average annual attendance at the zoo is more than 300,000 people. The zoo offers access to scholarships with on- and off-site programs. They will also bring the zoo to you. They offer field trips, transportation and camps and can offset up to 90% of the costs.

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They have conservation teams on six continents – with varied countries such as Mongolia, Vietnam (to save the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey). The mountain parks maintain a herd of bison and have since 1914. Each bison has genetic markers so that in-breeding does not happen.

General Animal Information:

- Asian elephants have more freckles
- Asian elephants have smaller ears
- Asian elephants are endangered (30-40,000)
- African elephants are threatened (300,000)
- Billy the juvenile male African elephant broke his left tusk
  - His tusk will regrow – at about 6-8"/year
- Groucho – 49 years old, male Asian elephant – his tusks grow slightly each year
  - Groucho is the mentor for the others
- The elephants eat about 120#/day of hay (usually timothy grass) and veggies. They do not like green or red peppers
- The elephants sleep 4-6 hours/night lying down though they can sleep standing up
- The average life expectancy in captivity is about 45, though they can live into their 60s and 70s. In the wild the average life expectancy is about 35 years.
- The breeding program is both natural and artificial for elephants
- The zoo's elephant pride is all males, all but Groucho are young – 10-11 years old.
- In a few years, when the males mature, the zoo expects to import/exchange female elephants for breeding.

The Amur (Siberian) tigers are the largest breed of cats. They live naturally near the Amur River. The two at the zoo here are separated currently – one male, one female – soon to be introduced and hopefully will mate and produce a family. There are only 450 of these tigers in their natural habitat and possibly another 300 or so in facilities. The male eats about 10# of meat/daily, the female -8#. They like blood popsicles.

Future plans: the zoo has a new president and CEO. Added to the master plans of 2013 and 2015. There are continuous improvements being made. A new veterinary hospital will open in the summer of 2020 – this will allow visitors to actually see what goes on in an animal operating theater, how they handle a 2,000 pound elephant. Harmony Hills – the new grizzly bear area will open in May as well as another section about when these wild animals are close to us (i.e., Boulder sees wild bears in backyards).

Summer hours are from 9-4 – members have a 30-minute early access.

Prices – \$20/adult, \$17/senior, \$14/child (age 3-11), those under 2 years old are free. Groups receive a \$3 discount, free days this year are April 4 and November 8. Their memberships have programs to fit all lifestyles.

Megan reminded us that the worst time to visit (no parking available) is from 11am-1pm – that's when everyone wants to visit. The zoo is ADA accessible.

Security – phone 720.337.1447. Maps are available. The zoo offers up-close offerings and many docent and volunteer opportunities. They have training classes in February and July.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Tour Schedules: <https://www.liveandlovedenver.com/walking-tours/>

<https://denverwelcomehome.com/neighborhoods/phil-goodstein-walking-tour-schedule/>

Books: Capitol Hill Books, Colfax & Grant, Denver <http://capitolhillbooks.com/>

**Denver Zoo**

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