

B&C CONSER

PROFILE: MADISON GRANT (1865-1937)

By Leonard H. Wurman B&C Regular Member

Six years after George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt founded the Boone and Crockett Club, Grinnell sponsored for membership a young, assertive New Yorker named Madison Grant. The year was 1893. Grant had many successful years representing the Club, but he also became one of America's most controversial figures.

Madison Grant was born on November 19, 1865. His surgeon father, Gabriel Grant, had won the Congressional Medal of Honor for personal gallantry during the Civil War. His mother was the daughter of DeForest Manice, owner of the Gatlands country estate that became Belmont Park. Both of Madison's parents came from wealth, and on both sides traced their lineage to colonial times.

Young Grant was fascinated by zoology. His early education consisted of private schools and tutoring in both New York and, for several years, in Germany. He graduated from Yale University in 1887 and three years later received a law degree from Columbia University. Independently wealthy,

PORTRAIT OF MADISON GRANT FROM AROUND 1925.



he never seriously practiced law, but devoted himself to his hobbies, and remained a lifelong bachelor.

Grant is credited with being a major hunter, but this is difficult to document. The Boone and Crockett Club requires prospective members to have taken mature males of three North American big game species. Of numerous articles that Grant wrote for Boone and Crockett and New York Zoological Society publications, only one discusses a hunt. In that entertaining story, Grant describes hunting the headwaters of the Ottawa River in 1893 for several weeks before taking two bull moose within two hours. He mentions that this hunt was not his first trip to the region.

An article in the *New York Tribune Illustrated Supplement*, dated around 1900, mentions that Grant had many trophies in his apartment, and had killed "several score" of moose, quite an accomplishment for a 35-year-old. In addition, he is credited with discovering a new race of caribou on the Alaska Peninsula, which was subsequently named *Rangifer granti*. At that time, zoologists recognized four different races of woodland caribou and five of barren ground caribou. Grant became more interested in studying the zoology of, rather than the hunting of, big game.

The Adirondack Deer Laws

In 1884, George Bird Grinnell began using *Forest and Stream* to editorialize against deer hunting with dogs in New York's Adirondack Mountains. "Deer hounding" drove the animals into the lakes, where from boats they were either clubbed, had their throats slit, or were shot at close range. A bill outlawing this practice passed a year later, but there was so much resistance by guides and hotel owners that it was quickly repealed.

Ten years later, Theodore Roosevelt, then a Civil Service Commissioner in Washington, wrote Grinnell to urge the Club to again lobby and eliminate this custom. TR and Grinnell chose Grant to represent the Boone and Crockett Club in Albany, where Madison spent considerable time negotiating with senators and assemblymen, and testifying before their committees.

A compromise was reached in 1897. The long deer season, August 15 through November 1, would continue with no daily or season limits. However, "jack lighting"

(night hunting) and hounding would stop for five years, at which time the issue would be revisited. The Boone and Crockett Club offered a reward of \$50 for anyone giving evidence leading to the first conviction. The law was never reversed, and other states followed with similar legislation.

The Bronx Zoo

Grant's most acknowledged conservation success occurred within New York City. During the late 1800s, there was general fear that not only North America's large game, but Africa's and India's as well, were being hunted to extinction. Establishing zoological parks appeared the only way to preserve these animals. In 1889, Boone and Crockett Club Members wrote both the U.S. Senate and House bills that established the National Zoo in Washington, D.C.

Five years later, Grant wrote Roosevelt urging that a similar park be established in New York City, with conditions simulating as much as possible those found in the wild. The Club agreed, and Madison was given chairmanship of a committee for that purpose. Following Grant's advice, the New York state assembly approved the formation of the New York Zoological Society on the condition that Boone and Crockett Club Members would serve as the incorporators. The Society then prevailed on the City to donate 261 acres for the zoo. A year-and-a-half later, the New York Zoological Park (Bronx Zoo) opened under the Society's governance.

The Society and the zoological park were long considered offspring of the Boone and Crockett Club. Club Members dominated the Society's board for many years. Grant was secretary and CEO of the Society from its inception until 1925 and then president until his death. He was also the scientific and executive head of the zoo itself.

To ease access to the zoo, Grant laid out the route and designed the stone bridges for the scenic Bronx River Parkway. From 1907 until 1925, he was president of the Bronx Parkway Commission, and later served on the Taconic Parkway Commission.

Buffalo

By 1900, only a few small herds of bison remained in North America. Some were privately held. The Yellowstone herd had dwindled to 21 head, and inbreeding was feared. A wild herd was reported along the Mexican border, but it disappeared after entering

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Mexico. Another wild group of large bison near Great Slave Lake was transferred to Wood Buffalo Park in Canada. Bison transferred from private herds were used to establish wild herds on the Flathead Indian Reservation, in Banff National Park, and near Kalispell, Montana.

The Bronx Zoo received some bison from these private herds. To facilitate the exchange and transfer of buffalo, Madison Grant and a number of other Boone and Crockett Members formed the American Bison Society in 1906. The growing herd at the Bronx Zoo was used to establish herds at Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge and Wind Cave National Park. New transfers were made to Yellowstone National Park. Strange as it seems, New York City buffalo were used to invigorate and even create some of the western herds. The American Bison Society disbanded in the late 1920s, its mission completed.

Refuges

Grant's successes accelerated his rise with

in the Club and by 1900 he had become a member of the executive committee. He was Club secretary from 1903 until 1913. The executive committee met at Grant's home in 1901 and voted to draw up plans for establishing game refuges, a novel idea at the time. Grant was active politically in this effort. Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge was created in 1903, followed two years later by the Wichita Forest Reserve (now the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge) in Oklahoma. In 1908, the National Bison Range was established in Montana. The success of the federal refuge system was due in large part to the foresight of Club Members like Madison Grant.

Alaska

The Alaska-Yukon mining period

BELOW: GRANT, ALONG WITH FELLOW MEMBER WILLIAM T. HORNADAY (PICTURED HERE), HELPED THE BRONX ZOO ACQUIRE BISON FROM PRIVATE HERDS. INSET: GRANT IS CREDITED WITH DISCOVERING A NEW RACE OF CARIBOU, WHICH WAS NAMED RANGIFER GRANTI.

Caribou and Seal from *The Caribou* by Madison Grant



B&C CONSERVATIONISTS

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ALARMED AFTER SEEING THE DEVASTATION TO THE COASTAL REDWOODS, GRANT (PICTURED HERE SECOND FROM THE LEFT AT A GROVE DEDICATION) HELPED FORM THE SAVE THE REDWOODS LEAGUE IN 1917.

From *The Fight to Save the Redwoods* by Susan R. Schrepfer

hit its peak with the 1897 Klondike gold rush, but exploration was widespread throughout much of the region. The population influx put a demand on all commodities and prices skyrocketed. Beef was prohibitively expensive, and moose, caribou, and sheep meat became cheap substitutes. Bears, both black and brown, were killed indiscriminately under the pretense that their presence endangered progress.

The Boone and Crockett Club established a Game Population Committee with Madison Grant as chairman. Grant worked with Congressman John Lacey, also a Club Member, to write the Alaska Game Laws bill of 1902. The bill permitted subsistence hunting to continue but outlawed the commercial slaughter of game. It also limited sport hunting to certain seasons, and allowed the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture to stop hunting any animal in danger of extinction. An attempt to repeal the bill by commercial interests two years later was repulsed by the Club.

Redwoods

Fifty million years ago, redwoods blanketed

the earth. The ensuing ice ages pushed these giants toward extinction. Only remnant forests remained of the coastal redwoods in northern California and the mountain redwoods in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The wood of the Sierra trees was too brittle for general use, but the lumber of the coastal redwoods was stronger as well as rot and insect resistant. Coastal redwoods were being used for exterior construction material, for railroad ties, and for lattices in California vineyards.

The heavy-handed timber industry that had started on the east coast advanced westward, reaching California by the early 1900s. The federal government had sold the coastal redwood lands to the lumber companies. By 1917, a highway from San Francisco to the Oregon border, a railroad from the San Francisco Bay area to Eureka, and the Panama Canal had all been completed. With access to the heart of the coastal redwoods, and with the means to ship lumber all over the nation, companies began logging these giant trees in earnest.

In 1917, Madison Grant and two other Boone and Crockett Club Members, Henry Fairfield Osborn and John C. Merriam, drove north from San Francisco to view the carnage. Alarmed, the three formed the Save the Redwoods League to raise money and buy back from the logging companies outstanding groves of remaining redwoods. Grant used his eastern influence to convince several national railroads to boycott logging companies that were using the redwoods for ties. This also reduced the cost of the land that the league wished to acquire. The purchased redwood groves eventually became state and national parks.

In 1921, California passed a law empowering its own forestry department to acquire uncut redwood lands adjacent to highways through eminent domain. Meanwhile, Grant had become somewhat vehement and radical. He described loggers as vandals and barbarians, and argued that the general public should be taxed to compensate for the excesses of the timber industry.

Eugenics

Today, most people who know of Grant do not remember him as a conservationist. Grant was an American patrician, born into money, with free time to work on making America better. Like many of his class, he felt threatened by the influx of immigrants from Asia, southern and eastern Europe, and the migration of blacks from the rural south to the

northern cities. Grant became a leading American nativist, a movement that favored native inhabitants over new arrivals. He lobbied and was partially responsible for the immigration laws of 1921 and 1924. From 1922 until his death, he was president of the Immigration Restriction League. The nativists were prisoners of their time, upset by the country's modernization, urbanization, and non-Protestant immigration. It was a bunker mentality that longed for an earlier and simpler time.

Grant went further. He became president of the Eugenics Research Association, a group that focused on enhancing the quality of a race through selective breeding. Grant presumed that the Nordic, or northern European, race was superior to the Asian, southern and eastern European, and black races, as well as to the Irish and the Jew. He believed that Nordics must marry other Nordics and have large families, and that blacks should practice contraception. He decried interracial marriage, feeling that the characteristics of the supposedly weaker race would predominate. In Grant's view, the weak, the feeble-minded, the hereditary cripple, the pervert, and the mentally defective should be sterilized. Grant's book, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) became the bible of the eugenics movement and is still quoted by white supremacists today. To Grant, Nordic peoples were mankind's redwoods, and he sought to preserve the integrity of both.

The rise of European Nazism put an end to the American eugenics movement. Grant continued his conservation activity within both the Boone and Crockett Club and the New York Zoological Society. He died of kidney disease in New York on May 30, 1937.

Summary

It's unfortunate, but understandable, that Grant's racial excesses overshadowed his conservation successes. His publications furthered knowledge on the caribou and the moose. He contributed significantly to the outlawing of deer hounding in this country, the establishment of the Bronx Zoo and the Bronx highway system, the re-establishment of the bison in their ancestral homes, the creation of the refuge system, and the saving of California's coastal redwoods, as well as Alaska's moose, caribou, and sheep. It is for these conservation efforts that Boone and Crockett Club Members and Associates should remember him. ■