

## A Timeline & History of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

1841	Lambert's Landing aka Pig's Eye (because of Pig's Eye tavern) called Saint Paul by Father Lucian Galtier after building a log chapel there.
1849	Territory of Minnesota organized by Congress March 3, 1849.
1851	University of Minnesota Established February 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1851.
1858	Minnesota becomes a state on May 11, 1858.
1859	First Minnesota State Fair.
<b>1861-1865</b>	American Civil War.
1862	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dakota War of 1862.</li> <li>• Como Lake is named after the famous Lake Como in the Italian Alps.</li> <li>• Horace William Shaler Cleveland, (1814-1900) Aesthetic designer of landscapes and how they affect people, he was a protégé of Frederick Law Olmsted (19<sup>th</sup> century American landscape architect who designed Central Park in New York City.)His goal was 'to provide working people with a physical space that would be a respite from the grim realities of the Industrial Era'. He was friends with Henry Wordsworth Longfellow who wrote the "Song of Hiawatha."</li> </ul>
1872	Cleveland gives a speech at the University of Minnesota on "the Application of Landscape. Architecture to the wants of the West". In it he says "If the intended site of a city is characterized by hills and valleys, or is in the vicinity of a lake, every effort should be made to preserve its picturesque effects".
1873	300 acres of land on the shores of Lake Como were purchased on Cleveland's recommendation.
1880	Cleveland is hired by Minneapolis to design the Minnehaha Park and Grand Rounds area. His grave is located in Lakewood Cemetery.
1884	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convict workhouse is built where Como Pool is today. It remained open until 1960.</li> <li>• Current site of the MN state fair is chosen.</li> </ul>
1886	Cleveland meets Frederick Nussbaumer (from Baden, Germany) at the Botanical Conference in France. Nussbaumer was a gardener at the Royal Botanical Garden in London. Cleveland invites Nussbaumer to come work at St. Paul the next year.
1887	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saint Paul Board of Park Commissioners is formed.</li> <li>• City funds are allocated to develop the land into a 'landscape park' Cleveland is hired to create a preliminary design for Saint Paul parks, Nussbaumer is hired as a gardener.</li> </ul>
1890	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West picnic grounds created.</li> <li>• John Estabrook serves as Superintendent of Parks for all of one year.</li> </ul>
1891	Nussbaumer hired as superintendent of St. Paul Parks, holds position for 31 years and creates a "Banana Walk" or Palm Avenue along Nason and Kaufman. Plants were stored in greenhouses over the winter.
1892	Railway service connects to Como Park.
1894	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First version of Gates Ajar constructed from a design Nussbaumer has seen in Germany. First gates were located 150 feet east of the current location and were smaller than present day gates.</li> <li>• Channel created between Cozy Lake and Como Lake to facilitate traffic.</li> </ul>
1895	The Lily Pond, also known as the Aquarium, is built. They were filled with Amazonian or Victorian water platters. They were grown with water heated from boiler run off in the nearby park superintendent's house until the 1920's.
1896	The Schiffman fountain is installed by the Como Lake Pavilion. Donated by Dr. Rudolph Schiffman (member of original park board) making it the first fountain installed in Como Park.
1897	Zoo officially begins, with three deer donated to the park.
1898	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street car line put through the park so people could go from Ryan Hotel in Saint Paul to Lake Harriet in Minneapolis.</li> <li>• Goats, an elk and another deer added to zoo. Two enclosures built: a deer park and a buffalo park. Thomas Frankson, a real estate developer and former lieutenant governor, donated buffalo. Nussbaumer built the first cage from an old iron arch structure with a curved top. First zoo cage was erected in the buffalo pasture and covered with netting.</li> </ul>

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1900	Zoo visitors can see deer, elk, foxes, and two 'cebu' cattle.
1905	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The street car station is built</li> <li>Statue of German poet/playwright Johann Friederick 'Fitz' von Schiller (1759-1805) installed in the park.</li> <li>A formal Japanese Garden is installed on the North Bank of Cozy Lake, largely engineered and funded by Dr. Rudolph Schiffman who purchased and donated Japanese shrubs and trees from the Saint Louis World Fair in 1904. He also purchased sculptures and hired the designer, Yukio Ichikawa, a landscape gardener for the Emperor of Japan. Ichikawa selected the site on Cozy Lake.</li> </ul>
1906	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mannheimer Memorial is erected atop 'peony hill' It connects to the Lily Pond and had a sparkling marble fountain designed by famous architect Cass Gilbert.</li> <li>Longfellow Zoological Gardens in south Minneapolis is opened by Robert 'Fish' Jones and named for poet William Wadsworth Longfellow.</li> </ul>
1909	Japanese Garden no longer appears in Park records.
1913	Como Park has nine separate greenhouses which supplies all the plants for the park. Some date from 1891 and are badly in need of repair so Nussbaumer proposes a plan for single, large conservatory to replace the greenhouses, a Victorian glass house reminiscent of the palm house at Kew Gardens near London, where he trained.
1914-1915	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 60,000 sq foot Conservatory is built to house plants on a year-round basis. Nussbaumer and Toltz Engineering Company collaborated on the design. Foundation was graded and leveled by local workhouse inmates. Building itself was purchased as a prefabricated kit from the King Construction Company in New York. Total cost: \$65,000.</li> <li>Opened Sunday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1915, the building is 64 feet tall and 100 ft in diameter, with North and South wings.</li> </ul>
1914	Austin McFadden pays the Philadelphia Toboggan Company \$8,500 to build a carousel, bring it to Saint Paul and assemble on the MN State Fair grounds.
<b>1914-1918</b>	World War I.
1918	First annual fall chrysanthemum exhibit.
1922	Nussbaumer retires.
1924	George Nason becomes St Paul Parks superintendent.
1925	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>North End of Como Lake is drained and cut off. Cozy Lake dries up.</li> <li>Spring and holiday flower shows began.</li> </ul>
1926	American black bear is given to the zoo and put in a wrought iron cage with a rounded top.
1927	The South garden is recessed, becoming the Sunken Garden. Nason installs marbled steps and a keyhole pool. Additional flower shows are added to the annual schedule.
1928	Construction started for the golf course.
1929	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excedra is built with funds from W.E. King and John Cable.</li> <li>Granite bullfrog is added to the 'Nelumbium lotus pond', now forever known as the Frog Pond. Frog donated by Fred Crosby, originally at the Oliver Crosby Stonebridge Estate.</li> <li>McMurray Fields is created and named after businessman William McMurray.</li> <li>Golf course officially opens.</li> </ul>
1930	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robert 'Fish' Jones dies; Longfellow Zoo is operated by his family for a time.</li> <li>WPA projects start first major constructions on Zoo grounds: Work Project Administration is a program initiated under Franklin D. Roosevelt which Provides federal funds to create employment for unskilled workers during the Great Depression.</li> </ul>
1932	William Lamont Kaufman becomes St Paul parks superintendent.
1933	The East Gates are erected using limestone bricks from the demolished Ramsey Country Courthouse.
1934	Longfellow Zoo closes and donates 195 animals to Como Zoo.
1935	WPA builds Monkey Island.
1936	WPA builds Main Zoological Building based on a design by St Paul architect Charles Bassford.

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1937	West gates (Midway and Hamline) are installed, donated by E.E. Engelbert.
1938	The WPA builds the Old Barn and standalone restroom facility by Monkey Island.
1939	Fire scorches Carousel and destroys some of the original scenery panels, and damages 15 of the 68 horses.
<b>1939-1945</b>	World War II.
1951	Gates Ajar is moved to its current location; include iron gates from the Stonebridge Estate.
1953	Como-Harriet streetcar line is discontinued.
1954	St. Paul Humane Society building is built. Road is named Beulah lane, in honor of Beulah Bartlett, the executive director from 1923 to 1963.
1955	Saint Paul Nagasaki Sister City relationship is established, making it the first Japanese-American city partnership.
1956	Archie Brand brings his famous Seal Show to Como Zoo.
1957	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Fletcher hired as first director of the zoo, right when the city council is attempting to close it. He helps bring in endangered animals. Under him the zoo is the first zoo in North America to successfully raise Amur tigers.</li> <li>• Animal collection is expanded to include gorillas, orangutans, &amp; Amur tigers.</li> <li>• Children's Zoo is built.</li> </ul>
1960	Prison workhouse is demolished.
1962	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Como pool is built.</li> <li>• June 23, 1962 hailstorm inflicts damage on the Conservatory, forcing it to close for the first time. It reopens with fiberglass panes in October. Half of the glass in the show house and 2/3rds of the glass in the growing house is broken.</li> <li>• Fountain is installed in the Palm Dome.</li> </ul>
1963	Century plant blooms. Shoot grows 35 feet long and they remove a panel in the roof so it has room to grow.
1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaufman steps down and Bernard L. Edmonds is new superintendent of the St Paul parks.</li> <li>• Crest of the Wave, sculpted by Harriet Frishmuth in 1925 is donated to the Conservatory by the Andersen family.</li> </ul>
1966	Metropolitan Zoo Report of the Citizen's League state the Como Zoo could not be expanded into a major facility and recommended that a metropolitan zoo be built.
1967	Play Days, also sculpted by Harriet Frishmuth, is also donated the Andersen family.
1968	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metropolitan Zoo Emergency Committee is formed to raise funds to offset the budget shortage for Como Zoo.</li> <li>• Wolf Woods is built.</li> </ul>
1969	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Primate house opens.</li> <li>• Como Zoo Docent Association is officially organized.</li> </ul>
1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bernard Edmonds retires, and Robert Piram takes his place.</li> <li>• August 10, 1972, the gates to the perimeter fence surrounding the zoo area are closed for the first time at the end of regular zoo hours. This is the first time it had been closed to all visitors and traffic after visiting hours.</li> </ul>
1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservatory is added to the National Register of Historic Places (November 17, 1974).</li> <li>• May 24, 1974, Arlen Erdahl, secretary of state, signs the papers incorporating the Como Zoological Society.</li> </ul>
1976	MN State legislature approves zoo Master Plan and major funding allows for major renovations in the 1980's Including renovating the Large Cat exhibit, Monkey Island turning into Seal Island, Primates, African Hoofstock building and the Land & Water Bird Exhibit.
1977	April of 1977 City of Nagasaki sends a garden design to the city of Saint Paul, designed by Matsumi Matsuda a ninth generation landscape gardener.
1979	A Japanese Garden is built with funds from the Ordway family in memory of Charlotte Ordway.

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1980	Renovated Large Cat building is opened to the public in December, with exhibits for Amur tigers, African lions, cougars and snow leopards.
1982	Fall, Aquatic Animal Building opens to the public.
1983	Picnic shelters on the west side of Hodgson fields burn down (off midway) (they were built as comfort stations in 1917).
1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Como Conservatory Master Plan is published.</li> <li>• Masumi Matsuda visits Saint Paul and identifies critical Japanese garden improvements.</li> </ul>
1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Como Zoo first becomes accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.</li> <li>• Renovated Primate House reopens in April.</li> </ul>
1986	Land and Water Bird exhibit opens.
1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start of renovation for the Conservatory between now and 1992 all glass is replaced, heat system is updated, hydronic heat added to the Sunken Garden, structural elements are repainted, new electrical lighting is added, and all new growing ranges are built.</li> <li>• African Hoofstock Facility is renovated and reopened in Sept. Exhibit houses the first giraffe (named Sunny), sable antelope, greater kudu, and Grevy's Zebra.</li> </ul>
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After 74 years the Carousel (still at the State Fairgrounds) is put up for sale.</li> <li>• Non-profit organization Our Fair Carousel, Inc. is put together to buy the carousel.</li> </ul>
1989	Japanese Garden is renovated, and staff and volunteers are trained on how to prune and care for the garden.
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carousel is moved to Town Square Park, on the top level of a building in downtown Saint Paul.</li> <li>• A tea house is built in the Japanese Garden with rain gutters donated by the city of Nagasaki.</li> </ul>
1991	Japanese Garden is modified and expanded and officially reopens in July of 1992.
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservatory renovations.</li> <li>• Carousel seeks new location due to shift from retail to office buildings at Town Square and starts a renovation process for its 68 horses and two chariots.</li> </ul>
1995	The 40 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sister City relationship between Saint Paul and Nagasaki was celebrated with a cultural festival in the Japanese Garden.
1997	Como Zoo turns 100 years old.
1998	New picnic shelter to replace burned down ones put in. First Japanese Obon (lantern lighting) festival.
1999	July 31, 1999 conservatory receives the HortLandmark Award from the American Society for Horticultural Science.
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cafesjian's Carousel is put near the Conservatory and Como town with a new copper roofed pavilion.</li> <li>• Growing house roof of the Conservatory was replaced with impact resistant acrylic.</li> <li>• Conservatory and Zoo come together and unite under one management</li> </ul>
2001	June, zoo begins operant conditioning program for seals and sea lions, eventually this training system is used throughout the zoo.
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservatory is renamed The Marjorie McNeely Conservatory due to a generous donation from the McNeely family.</li> <li>• Animal Support Building is built, and Main Zoo Building is renovated and converted from animal exhibits to office buildings.</li> </ul>
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitor center, orchid hothouse, fern room, and exhibit gallery—then the bonsai room are built. Victorian Water Platters return to Como in the water garden in the front of the visitor center.</li> <li>• The Global Harmony Labyrinth opens on August 21<sup>st</sup> 2005 to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the St Paul-Nagasaki sister city relationship. It was designed by Cynthia McKeen.</li> </ul>
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 17, 2006 Tropical Encounters opens.</li> <li>• Stone sculpture 'Constructing friendship' by Michael Sinesio is installed by Hamline and Midway</li> <li>• Sparky the Sea Lion show turns 50.</li> </ul>
2009	Original Como swimming pool is demolished (reopens in 2012).

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2010	Polar Bear Odyssey opens on June 4th.
2012	The 100th anniversary of the gift of cherry blossom trees in Washington DC from Japan. New swimming pool also opened.
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lily pond gets restored as does the statue of Friederich von Schiller</li> <li>• Addition to the Ordway Gardens opens, features Bonsai gallery, Pine Grove Walk, and Bonsai Terrace</li> <li>• June, Gorilla Forest opens</li> </ul>
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gateway drive is renamed Nagasaki road, because 60 years of sister city ties.</li> <li>• Conservatory adds the Centennial Garden and pays homage to the 'Palm Walk' by planting exotic tropical plants along the entrance walkway.</li> <li>• Giraffe feeding station opens.</li> </ul>
2016	60 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sparky the Sea Lion Shows.
2017	Minnesota Garden and roundabout are placed in the front of the Conservatory.
2018	Sparky Amphitheatre and Seal Island demolished and renovated for Como Harbor construction.
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Cat Building indoor renovation face lift completed.</li> <li>• Seasonal Pollinators exhibit opens in mid-June.</li> <li>• Aquatics building indoor renovation begins.</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is closed to the public for three months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>• Huelsmann Foundation Meditative Garden completed.</li> </ul>