

# DEER & MONKEYS & BEARS, OH MY!

## Memories of Cadwalader Park

Cadwalader Park, established in 1888, was from its beginning a popular community park. Its landscape, designed by renowned American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., provided a perfect backdrop for childhood games or community events. Over time, many attractions came and went from the park, among them a skating pond, an observation tower, a carousel, a playground, pony rides, two lawn-bowling greens and, perhaps most memorably, a zoo.



Feeding time in Cadwalader Park, 1906.



Briar Patch and friend, c. 1980. The park's last bear, Briar Patch, is believed to have lived longer in captivity than any other black bear. She died in 1983 at the age of 31.



Deer paddock and barn, c. 1970.



Bison and elk, c. 1960



Bear cage, c. 1900. Over the years, Cadwalader Park was home to several black bears. The first black bear, named Kitty Hill, escaped from a barn in the park and was never recaptured.



The ice skating pond, Christmas Day, 1897. The pond was popular in winter but became a breeding ground for mosquitoes during warm weather. It was filled in a few years after it opened.



Monkey house, c. 1940.



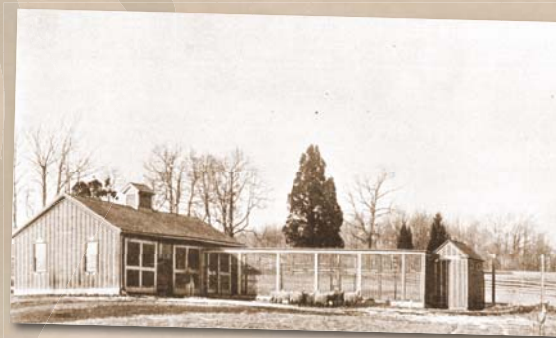
Lawn bowling, c. 1970. Lawn bowling was introduced in Cadwalader Park in 1910. Two greens were laid out near the Stuyvesant Avenue entrance.

## TAKE ME TO THE ZOO

Shortly after Cadwalader Park opened, citizens began donating small animals and birds for display in the park. The old stables and farm buildings of the Ellarslie estate were converted to house deer, sheep, elk, monkeys and a black bear cub.

Olmsted objected to setting aside land for animals, stating that there were other more important demands for space, especially on holidays when the park filled with picnickers and special events. The animals, however, were very popular and Olmsted's advice was ignored.

By 1913, the city had replaced the old farm buildings with a new deer paddock and barn in the west ravine and a monkey house, bear pit and aviary near Ellarslie mansion. In the 1930s, the Ellarslie mansion itself was converted into a monkey house for a growing collection of primates. At one time or another, the zoo sheltered prairie dogs, burros, alligators, peacocks, foxes, snakes, buffalo and a kangaroo.



Sheep fold, c. 1914.



Playground, c. 1950.



Mendel Abramowicz, aka "The Balloon Man," sold balloons at the Parkside Avenue entrance for more than 20 years from the 1960s to the 1980s.



Picnic Day, c. 1908.



Sailing model boats in the pond, c. 1960.

## GROWING UP WITH CADWALADER PARK

For many years growing up in Trenton has meant visits to Cadwalader Park. The park has long served as an all-purpose space for family picnics, athletics, nature explorations, parades, outdoor events and community celebrations.

Among the first attractions built in the park was a 50-foot-tall timber observatory. It offered fine views of the park and the surrounding countryside. In 1897, an ice-skating pond was dug out to a depth of two feet in the lower park, where the tennis courts are today.

As times changed, these early attractions were removed and replaced by others, including a natural history museum and ice cream parlor in Ellarslie, a playground with carnival rides, a greenhouse and even a Japanese garden.

In the 1960s and 1970s, financial cutbacks resulted in the removal of many park facilities, but the city and its residents have maintained a strong attachment to the park because of the many pleasant memories. In recent times, there has been a growing interest in preserving the park's history.

Observation tower, c. 1892.

