
Great Northern Virginia Elephant Hunt or The Pachyderm Panic of 1906

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A gang of escapees was rampaging across the countryside of Northern Virginia, terrorizing the populace. The gang smashed property, broke into barns and homes, galloped through gardens with a complete disregard for the destruction left in their path, sent men, women, and children fleeing in panic at the mere rumor of their approach. Everywhere the people were on guard. When the local authorities were unable to capture these fugitives, the eyes of a frightened region turned to the one man with the courage and the skill to do so. That man was Pawnee Bill, legendary proprietor of Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show. In truth, there may have been other men up to the task, but Pawnee Bill was already in the neighborhood. And if Bill alone was not enough, there were his assorted sidekicks: Mexican Joe, Potawatomie Harry Witchiway, California Frank, a few of Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders, some Russian Cossacks, and some Argentine Gauchos. The Great Northern Virginia Elephant Hunt was on.

The tale of elephants roaming the wilds of Northern Virginia begins with the construction of an amusement park at the mouth of Four Mile Run in what is now Arlington County. "Luna Park," *The Washington Times* reported, "is a people's playground on a gigantic scale."¹ Stretching from the side of Arlington Ridge with its view of Washington across the Potomac down to the left bank of the creek, the resort covered forty acres. Much of this land was devoted to picnic and playground areas; but at its ten-acre core were amusement rides, a dance hall, roller rink, movie theater, photography building where patrons could pose behind the steering wheel of an actual automobile, and a hippodrome—an arena that sat 8,000 spectators.

Visitors entered Luna Park under a great arch and walked up a main street called "The Trail" to its termination at the Dance Hall. Along this pathway were buildings crowned by tall towers and designed in architectural styles that variously suggested Gothic, Byzantine, Arabic, Japanese, Corinthian, French and Renaissance influences.² All of these structures were outlined with electric lights totaling 51,000 in number and visible from a considerable distance.³ It was like "a silver city set with diamonds," *The Washington Post* noted, as the "architectural and scenic wonders of Luna Park" revealed themselves under "fifty thousand scintillating lights."⁴

There was a roller coaster, merry-go-round, and a circle swing, "the cars of which are built in the shape of air ships...which whirl the passengers around the circle having a diameter of 110 feet at the rate of fifty miles per hour."⁵ A "Trip to Rockaway" ride circumnavigated the park as a sailing ship. *The Washington Times* described this "yacht" as "having a capacity of forty people and mounted on a trolley track," circling the area "in such a manner that the passengers are given exactly the same sensation as

that obtained by sailing through a rough surf in a small boat.”⁶ But the star attraction of the park was the Shoot-the-Chute. This ride placed thrill seekers in the seats of a canal boat that descended from the top of a tower, 160 feet tall, down a 350-foot long slope into a long narrow lagoon that reached to the edge of Jefferson Davis Highway.

The Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Railway Company promoted the construction of Luna Park and was among its investors. This electric-powered interurban rail line connected Washington and Alexandria along the route of the old Georgetown-Alexandria canal but had experienced a decline in revenue following the closure of the St. Asaph Race Track in Alexandria City in 1904.⁷ The Railway hoped that the amusement park would attract rail riders from both cities. The route for the line ran from the Aqueduct Bridge—ruins of which are still visible a few yards upstream from Key Bridge—to the park and beyond to Alexandria. The normal fee for the roundtrip on the line was twenty-five cents but the railway offered a special rate of fifteen cents to entice park patrons from both the Washington and Alexandria terminals.⁸

After much fanfare, Luna Park opened its gates to the public at 7:00 pm on May 28, 1906. The price of admission was ten cents. A big crowd was on hand opening night, despite heavy rains that evening. The *Alexandria Gazette* noted that “all who attended had a most enjoyable time” and the *Washington Times* reported that “all things considered, especially the weather, the opening was a gratifying success to the management of the park.”⁹ Visitors had access to all of the park’s attractions except for the Shoot-the-Chute, which was awaiting the arrival of a key part. The crowd was entertained by Liberati’s sixty-piece band and by the Bessie Valdare All-Girl English Bicycle Team.¹⁰

With advertisements in all the local papers, Luna Park continued in the summer of 1906 to attract and please large crowds. The Shoot-the-Chute went into operation a few days after the park opening and, in addition to the permanent attractions, specialty acts were booked each week. There were performers such as the “acrobatic comics” billed as the La Noles Brothers and the Navassars Ladies’ Band and Daredevil Bicycle Acrobat Ralph Johnstone and Miss Yvonne D’Arcy and her Marvelous Somersaulting Automobile and Don Philippini’s Spanish Band. Don Philippini was particularly entertaining as a conductor since he supplemented the usual manner of directing with gymnastic feats. “Philippini is a man of both earthly and aerial tumbling when in front of his players,” The *Washington Times* reported. “He is said to do three handsprings, a ‘nip up,’ and eleven twisters while interpreting the ‘Funeral March,’ by Chopin, and one would dread to think what his artistic temperament and musicianly enthusiasm would lead him to were he to tackle the ‘can-can’ music from Offenbach’s ‘La Helene.’”¹¹

Beyond the traveling acts passing through the park, there were special events. There were “balloon ascensions,” fireworks displays, and Alexandria County Day. September 23 was advertised as “23 Skidoo Day,” when every “lady who can claim any relation whatever to the number...can enter the gates free, ride on all the moving attractions free, and get free admission to all amusements along ‘The Trail.’”¹² The observance of Skidoo Day, the *Times* predicted, would be a “hilarious and unique affair.”¹³ But through that first summer of Luna Park it was anticipation of the impending arrival of the “Greatest Animal Act on Earth” that caused the most excitement. This act was Barlow’s Elephants, and they were scheduled to arrive in Alexandria from New York on August 19, 1906.¹⁴

With “many of the younger generation on the lookout for them,” Barlow’s elephants were delivered from Coney Island to Washington by the B&O Railroad on the 19th of August as scheduled. They crossed the Potomac by barge to Alexandria at eight-thirty in the evening and then, because the interurban railway was not capable of carrying elephantine-sized passengers, they were led in a procession to Luna Park.¹⁵ Four elephants had made the trip: a male whose name was Tommy and three females, Queenie, Annie, and Jennie.

The *Washington Times* heralded Barlow’s elephants as “the banner attraction of the season.” Performing in the hippodrome, they “accomplish almost as much as their human rivals on the entertainment stage, and some of their feats are quite beyond the possibilities that one would expect from such seemingly awkward beasts,” the *Times* reported. “They tumble, wrestle, juggle and perform other difficult stunts to the amusement of the crowds.” By the time Luna Park closed for the evening on the 20th of August, it was clear that their first day in Alexandria County was a huge success. In its review the following morning, the *Times* showed little hesitation in pronouncing Barlow’s elephants, “the greatest animal act now before the public.”¹⁶

Apparently, everyone found the first day of the elephant performance at the Park to be enjoyable except for the elephants themselves. At seven-thirty on the morning of August 21st, Park Manager Gill heard a commotion outside of his office. There were screams from men and women and the trumpeting of elephants coming from the direction of the hippodrome. Running to the window, Gill saw the annex to the hippodrome stage fly into the air, flip over, and crash to the ground. Charging out of the airborne rubble were Tommie, Annie, Jennie and Queenie, running at full gallop. Tommie and Jennie had been chained together but had broken their bonds. Annie and Queenie were chained together with shackles around their ankles.¹⁷

Tom abruptly halted his flight to freedom at the Ice Cream Parlor. He saw something there that triggered his anger. In an act of apparent rage against the exploitation he had endured at the hands of his captors, Tommie wrapped his trunk around the cash register, lifted it high above his head and then brought it crashing to the ground. It was smashed to pieces. Unfortunately for the escapees, the register had already been cleared of the proceeds from the previous evening, and the fugitives had to flee without any getaway cash. But before rejoining his compatriots, Tom made sure he upset every chair and table in the parlor and leaned his two tons into one of its supports in an effort to bring the Parlor to the ground.¹⁸

As they were making good their escape from the park, Annie tripped and was dragged along for a ways by Queenie. Just outside the Park, the chains broke and Annie was left exhausted and bruised from the ordeal. A mounted posse led by trainer Peter Barlow quickly set off in pursuit of the runaways. They caught up with Annie in a swamp about a mile distant from the Park and tethered her to a cypress tree. But the time lost in capturing Annie allowed Tommie, Jennie, and Queenie to perfect their escape.¹⁹

“Penetrating thickets, fording streams, and riding at breakneck speeds,” the *Washington Times* reported, Barlow and his assistants pursued the fugitives from that “most disgraceful affair at Luna Park.”²⁰ Barlow’s posse gained reinforcements as it continued the pursuit. But the elephants never looked back. “Across country, over ditches, fences,

cornfields, and right through barns, the trio lumbered at a speed which challenged the best the horses could do,” the *Washington Post* reported.²⁰ Just outside of Alexandria, still running at a gallop, Tommie lowered his head and smashed through the side wall of a barn and then smashed his way out the other side, barely breaking stride. Close behind, Jennie and Queenie also “butted their way through...(and) left the barn tottering on its foundation.”²¹ They trampled a path through a cornfield that Barlow observed “couldn’t have been cut cleaner with a scythe.”²²

Unable to capture his elephants after a day on the hunt, Peter Barlow posted a reward of five hundred dollars for the capture of any of the runaways.²³ The escape and subsequent reward inspired the *Post* to a rare poetic expression:

Four little elephants, chained in a row,
They break loose and away they go;
Keepers call it serious “Biz,”
And pachyderm price has surely “Riz.”²⁴

Most residents of Northern Virginia at that time had very little experience in capturing elephants. A young man named Joe Troy believed the best way to capture an elephant was to sneak up behind it and grab it by the tail. This method has now been discredited. Joe tried this technique on Tommie and Tommie demonstrated the fundamental flaws in the approach. Tommie dragged Joe through brush and bramble, over rocks and through various manmade obstacles. By the time Joe realized that five hundred dollars was not reward enough for the abuse he was suffering and released his hold on Tommie’s tail, much damage had been done. He was carried to the Emergency Hospital at Luna Park, “badly lacerated about the face and bruised on the legs and body.”²⁵ A hospital spokesman speculated that “his friends would probably be able to recognize Joseph in a week.”²⁶

M.C. Stevens, who lived near Arlington, reported that the elephants “came dashing through my grounds and up upon the front porch.” Because of the time of year, the front door of the Stevens home was open but the screen door was closed to allow any August breeze to pass through the house. One of the elephants pushed through the screen. When Mrs. Stevens approached the front door in response to the commotion, she saw “an elephant’s trunk wiggling about in the hall.” It was then that Mrs. Stevens tried a second method of capturing an elephant: slamming the front door on the elephant’s trunk. This method is also not recommended as it resulted in major damages to the porch and entryway to the Stevens home.²⁷

Late in the evening on the second day of the hunt, Barlow and his party succeeded in corralling Tommie. The capture took place on Leesburg Pike near Bailey’s Crossroads. Tom was led to the nearby Hampton Stock Farm and chained to a tree. The posse planned to travel back to Alexandria for the night and return the following morning to escort the captive to Luna Park. Tommie, however, had tasted freedom and when Barlow and his party returned for the third day of the hunt, they found only broken chains.²⁸

Hampton Farm covered two hundred acres and most of it was heavily wooded. Tommie, Jennie and Annie were loose and elusive in this environment and, though sighted several times in the early morning hours of day three of the hunt, they were able to

evade the hunters each time they were spotted. Shortly after three o'clock in the afternoon, Barlow crossed paths with Tommie by accident and recaptured him. Tom was again chained, and this time Barlow made a decision to camp on Hampton Farm himself in the hope of maintaining custody of Tommie and with the expectation that Tommie might attract the other fugitives.²⁹

But Queenie and Jennie did not fall into the trap. They remained at large. In fact, they gave new meaning to the term "at large." Most residents of Northern Virginia had never laid eyes upon creatures so large. "Terrifying tales of the prowess of elephants are circulating all about the country," the *Washington Post* observed, "and Virginia citizens are not inclined to join in the hunt for big game."³⁰ The *Post* also commented, mirroring the biases that were entrenching racial segregation in the early twentieth century, that elephants had deterred African-American criminal activity. "For once the watermelon and the chicken are safe from the depredations of the colored marauder," The *Post* noted. "Not a darky for miles around dares to wander from his own fireside while two elephantine charmers are abroad."³¹

"It was one of Daddy's favorite stories," Irene Rouse wrote some eighty-two years after the hunt about what she and her siblings had originally considered a tall tale frequently and fondly told by her father. "The tale goes that Daddy had done something wrong and was being punished; he was eleven, or so, and he escaped from the house to hide under the back porch," she recounted. While there, her father fell asleep and was awakened by the sound of "a great pounding of hoofs and the bellowing of tropical animals." Looking out from under the porch at the huge stomping feet, he was terrified and felt instant remorse for his earlier wrongdoing. "No doubt his conscience was both-ering him and he thought the devil himself was after him," Rouse wrote.³²

Queenie and Jennie left a trail of destruction across Northern Virginia. They trampled crops and scattered livestock. They demolished a cemetery. "It looked as if a Kansas cyclone had struck it from all four points of the compass," the *Washington Post* reported. "Their ponderous feet reduced the wooden and granite headpieces to powder."³³ They showed little respect for fences and apparently considered the etiquette of entering a property through its designated gate to be an unnecessary formality. With the toll of damaged property on the rise, the growing risk of injury to the animals, the reluctance of the locals to pursue the reward, Barlow decided he needed the help of professionals.

Peter Barlow needed someone who could track animals in the wilds of Northern Virginia. He needed someone who could ride like a Comanche and rope like a Texas cowboy. He needed someone with the courage to face a herd of bison or a herd of elephants. He needed a hero. He needed Pawnee Bill. And, as luck would have it, Pawnee Bill arrived in Washington on an unrelated mission on August 25th.

Gordon William Lillie—alias Pawnee Bill—was born in Illinois in 1860 but moved to Kansas at age thirteen when his family flour mill burned. Living on the Great Plains, he had contact with Plains Indians and developed friendships among the Pawnees. At age fifteen, he killed a man in Wichita in a gunfight and fled to Indian Territory to seek sanctuary with a Pawnee friend named Black Hawk. Living with the Pawnee, he learned the language and learned the skills of horsemanship and hunting. He partici-

pated with the Pawnee in a raid on the Comanches and was accepted as a member of the tribe. After working variously as an interpreter, trapper, wagon team driver, cattle drover and cowboy, Lillie led a group of Pawnees to join Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show in Omaha in 1883 and the experience gave him the idea to establish his own touring show.³⁴

In 1888, "Pawnee Bill's Wild West" toured the country with 165 animals, Indians from five different Native Nations, Annie Oakley and assorted western characters. In the years that followed he continued to travel the across the United States and Canada bringing the excitement of the American west to eastern audiences and, with each season, his troop was expanded. In 1894, his Wild West show appeared at the World's Fair in Belgium and toured Europe. In 1904 he changed the name of his act to "Pawnee Bill's Wild West and Great Far East,"³⁵ adding dancers from Ceylon and the South Seas, Prince Lucca's Cossacks from Russia, boomerang throwers from Australia, South American gauchos, and entertainers from West Africa.³⁶ Geronimo joined the troop in 1906. By that time, the show was attracting large audiences for outdoor acts and performances under the big top. With the advertising hyperbole surrounding promotion of the show and the exaggeration of Pawnee Bill's real life adventures by the writers of western fiction, Gordon Lillie had risen to the status of national hero.³⁷

When "Pawnee Bill's Wild West and Great Far East" show set up its tents at 15th and H NE in Washington on August 25, 1906, it billed itself as "America's National Entertainment." It boasted "An army of Cowboys, Cowgirls, Scouts, Trappers, Plainsmen, and Noted Western Characters." It claimed its act included one hundred Indians from different western tribes. In addition to the assortment of entertainers from Africa, Australia, Asia and the Pacific islands, Pawnee Bill promised a "stupendous spectacle" in the form of a reenactment of the "Mountain Meadow Massacre. There were also to be reenactments of the hanging of a horse thief, the burning of Trapper Tom's cabin, and, certain to be a real crowd pleaser, Custer's Last Stand. There were to be performances at two and eight in the afternoon each day with seats for ten thousand people.³⁸

In the midst of his performance in Washington on the 25th of August, Pawnee Bill received a telegram from the firm of Thompson & Dundy of New York—the investors behind Barlow's Elephants—requesting his assistance in capturing Jennie and Queenie. Lillie was willing but, as his show was only scheduled for one day in Washington before resuming its tour, he was preparing to leave town. A second telegram on the evening of the 25th made another plea for his services and this time Pawnee Bill responded affirmatively. He ordered most of his crew to move on to its next destination while asking four of his best cowboys to stay behind. Lillie also declined the offer of Thompson & Dundy to supply horses for his party from those stabled at Luna Park.³⁹ Pawnee Bill was not interested, as the *Washington Post* paraphrased his colorful response, in "any flea-bitten horse named Dobbin, or any of his cousins, [who] would be so afraid of the elephants that it would be impossible for the cowboys to get within roping distance."⁴⁰ Even Pawnee Bill's horses were national heroes, and they would join the hunt or there would be no hunt at all.

As the spectators from the eight o'clock performance were heading home and the nation's capital prepared to retire for the night, Pawnee Bill, his cowboys, and their

horses crossed the Potomac to Alexandria. Lillie had asked his blacksmiths to fashion chains and shackles strong enough to secure the fugitives and, with these and lariats at the ready, Pawnee Bill was ready to begin day six of the Great Northern Virginia Elephant Hunt.⁴¹

Pawnee Bill and his party rose at an early hour on August 26th to begin their search. They only knew that the elephants were in the area but were without any specific guidance. They had been told that Peter Barlow and a Luna Park official would join them. The park official did appear. Barlow did not. The official suggested waiting for Barlow but by this time Pawnee Bill had already waited over an hour and he considered that wasted time enough. Lillie, his four cowboy sidekicks, and *Post* reporter Charles Taylor left their hotel around seven o'clock. "As the procession wended its way to the stable, where the cowboys had left their cayuses," Taylor recalled, "small boys sprang up from the most unexpected places and fell into line."⁴²

"Alexandria is aroused at an early hour by clatter of steel-shod hoofs," a headline in the *Washington Post* reported, "as elephant hunters start their expedition."⁴³ The normal quiet of a Sunday morning in Alexandria was shattered by the sounds of horse-shoes on King Street as six riders headed west, under the railroad bridge, and up along Shutters Hill to Leesburg Pike. Riding alongside Pawnee Bill was Mexican Joe, an expert roping artist and trick rider.⁴⁴ The remainder of the posse was composed of cowboy California Frank Smith, Charles Aldridge, an expert rider, full-blood Pottawatomie Harry Withiway, "who rides as if he were part of the horse and swings a rope swiftly and accurately," and reporter Charles Taylor.⁴⁵

For the fashion conscious readers of the *Post*, Taylor offered a complete description of what the well dressed elephant hunter might don for an excursion in the Virginia wilds:

Pawnee Bill was clad in a red shirt, riding breeches, high cowboy boots, with Mexican heels and jingling spurs—the whole topped by a wide sombrero, while a silver revolver in an enormous holster completed the picture. Mexican Joe was gorgeous in a black and gold tunic, fitting his fine torso closely; high yellow boots, the indispensable large-roweled spurs, and a great red Mexican sombrero, heavily embroidered in gold. California Frank wore a black silk shirt, embroidered with flowers on the front and back, while his legs were protected by long-fleeced sheepskin chaparejos—chaps. Charles Albright had on a red shirt and chaps, while Harry Witichway varied the costume with a white silk shirt.⁴⁶

The saddles and stirrups on the horses were also ornate as would be expected for a show troop. "Altogether it was a cavalcade that did not remind Alexandria of anything in particular," Taylor concluded, "but which it will remember."⁴⁷

As the posse left town and moved into the countryside, the Luna Park official disappeared and, with Barlow himself nowhere to be found, Pawnee Bill and his sidekicks were on their own to find the runaways. But before the group had progressed very far along the gravel-covered roadway, local residents began to appear at roadside, pointing them on along Leesburg Pike to Bailey's Crossroads. As the riders moved closer to Bailey's, more and more witnesses reported seeing the elephants near Terret's Store at the Crossroads. Finally, the group could see the rooftops of the cluster of buildings

scattered around Bailey's Corner and the moment of truth was at hand. Pawnee Bill brushed his shoulder length hair from his face, rose up in his stirrups to get a better view of the terrain, and then turned to his colleagues. "My men," he said, "before us are the elephants! Behind us are Alexandria and the two men who were meant to come with us," referring to Barlow and the Luna Park official. "Choose which you will! Will you cleave to me and see the elephant or return to the bacon and egg of effete luxury? Your future lies upon your choice."⁴⁸

The men who rode with Pawnee Bill had not only arrived at Bailey's Crossroads, they were obviously at the crossroads of life. Would they take the safe route or would they move on in the tradition of the Light Brigade, the defenders of the Alamo, and Pickett's Charge? Without hesitation, the men answered in unison, "We will see the elephant."⁴⁹ And on they rode to face the unknown.

Pawnee Bill and his men turned from Leesburg Pike onto Columbia Pike, heading north toward Washington. Before they had traveled far, shouts were heard coming from the farmhouse of Thomas Rowe. The posse proceeded toward the shouts at a gallop and discovered that they were emanating from Mrs. Rowe. "There is an elephant out in the thicket," she screamed, "and he's tearing everything to pieces."⁵⁰ Riding past the house and through the cornfield, the party came to a thicket of oaks and vines. The underbrush was dense but with their leather chaps to protect them from thorns, the men rode into the thicket. They quickly found paths trampled flat by the elephants and knew they were close to their prey. After riding around for a few minutes, they heard the trumpeting of an elephant and then saw an enraged animal charge at them through the brush. "That beast looked about the size of Pike's Peak," Lillie later recalled, "and he came at me like an express train on a down grade." Luckily, the horses brought from the show were quick and agile and Pawnee Bill and his men were able to stay beyond reach of the elephant's wrath.

With the skills they had learned separating calves from a herd for branding, the hunters slowly maneuvered the elephant through the thicket and toward the open field. Harry Witchiway's war whoops proved effective in steering Jennie in the direction of Mexican Joe. Suddenly, onlookers saw Jennie rush at a gallop from the woods with Mexican Joe racing to get in front of her, lariat in hand. When Jennie raised her trunk to trumpet her rage, Joe needed only one toss, despite the speed of the action, to lasso the elephant. He then wrapped the rope around the saddle horn and ordered his cowpony to halt. The horse dug in its heels much as it would when roping smaller livestock and the rope tightened. But the momentum of a two-ton elephant is not halted as easily as a calf, and Joe and his horse had only an instant to decide whether they wished to be dragged through the cornfield behind a stampeding elephant or race alongside. They chose the latter option, and off they went. The taut rope stretched between the elephant and the horse mowed a path twenty feet wide through Thomas Rowe's corn. The rest of the party closed in around Jennie and gradually she slowed and calmed.⁵¹

When Mexican Joe emerged from the cornfield with Jennie in tow, a hundred spectators cheered his feat. "Me sooner catcha de devil next time," Joe announced in his broken English, "That craze fool el'phant near break Mexi Joe's head with damn craze actions."⁵² It had taken an hour and a half to effect the capture.⁵³ Lillie asked the specta-

tors if the remaining fugitive was in the area but the consensus was that Queenie had fled from Bailey's and was now a considerable distance away.

As Mexican Joe was leading Jennie off of the Rowe farm, Barlow's assistant trainer appeared at the scene with ten mounted men to take custody of the elephant. But when Pawnee Bill saw the trainer approach Jennie with an ankus—a sharpened prod that inflicts pain to make an animal manageable—he decided to escort the elephant back to Luna Park himself. At one o'clock in the afternoon, Lillie and his posse rode into the amusement park with a long procession of local citizens following them. Charles Taylor regretted that this Sunday adventure had kept “so many people away from church.”⁵⁴

At Luna Park, Peter Barlow told Lillie that Queenie had been spotted near Burke Station, about eight miles from Alexandria.⁵⁵ Earlier in the day, Queenie had “run amuck” on a farm owned by Courtland Smith and, apparently taking a page from the annals of Spartacus, had broken into his hog pen and liberated all of his livestock.⁵⁶ Barlow asked Pawnee Bill to go to Burke and capture Queenie, but Lillie said he was due in Havre de Grace the next morning for the opening parade with his show and could not devote another day to the chase.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, an impromptu posse of farmers from the Bailey's Crossroads area had been emboldened to join in the hunt. The Bailey's vigilantes chased Queenie for seven miles across the Northern Virginia countryside and cornered her near Clifton. When Barlow arrived on the eighth and final day of the elephant hunt, he discovered that the farmers had not been “satisfied with the victory of having located the missing elephant,” the *Washington Times* reported. Rather, they “stoned her and beat her with rocks, baseball bats, and any available weapon they could get their hands on, with the result that Barlow found her cut and bruised and in a fearful manner.”⁵⁸ When Queenie heard Barlow's voice, she surrendered to him without further resistance. She was led to Clifton Station and sent to Alexandria on the Southern Railway.⁵⁹ With Queenie headed back to Luna Park in a freight car, the Great Northern Virginia Elephant Hunt came to an end.

The *National Tribune* suggested that the escape and subsequent hunt were nothing more than a publicity stunt. “A great advertisement and a great scare lacerated the feelings of a section of Virginia adjacent to Alexandria last week,” the *Tribune* editorialized. “The scare was the escape, accidental or intended, as the case may be, of a couple of tamed elephants from Luna Park, a place of amusement near Alexandria.”⁶⁰ The *Tribune* argued that, although there were exaggerated reports of elephants “tearing up the earth in a rage” during the time of their freedom, in fact “they were peacefully uprooting gardens and trampling corn fields in their frantic efforts to find food.”⁶¹ The attention given to the escape by the press and the public interest it aroused, the *Tribune* pointed out, served to promote the interests of the Park and the Wild West show. “Pawnee Bill got enough advertising out of the business last week to last him till he comes back to Washington again,” the *Tribune* noted, “and the poor elephants, let out—well, we will call it ‘accidentally’—were about starved when they got back again.”⁶²

It is certain that Pawnee Bill's Wild West and Great Far East show and Luna Park both benefited from the publicity surrounding the elephant hunt, but it is doubtful that the escape and subsequent chase were part of a plan to boost ticket sales for either en-

terprise. The escape caused damage to the facilities at Luna Park. It is evident that at the time the elephants demolished the hippodrome annex and ice cream parlor they were not under the direction of their trainer. A conscious decision to allow the animals to run amok through the Park would have invited the risk of uncontrolled damage to life and property. Moreover, the elephants were valuable. The possibility of mobs armed with pitchforks and bats chasing them across the countryside—a possibility that did in fact materialize⁶³—would have been a sobering thought to any business owner who valued his investment. The time spent in capturing the elephants also forced Barlow to cancel a two-week engagement in Toronto and a show at St. Johns, New Brunswick. These cancelations were doubtless more costly in revenue loss than any gains that might have been generated by increased ticket sales in Virginia.⁶⁴ Once Queenie was captured, Barlow left town with his elephants. And, if Pawnee Bill really sought only publicity, he would have generated more notice in the press by capturing both elephants that were at large rather than quitting the chase after finding one.

Pawnee Bill continued to tour with his show in the years that followed the elephant hunt. In 1908, he and Buffalo Bill Cody merged their shows to create “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Pawnee Bill’s Great Far East,” and they toured together for the next five years. Bad weather and a slump at the box office sent the two Bills into bankruptcy in 1913 and all of the animals, wagons, tents and equipment were sold at auction. Personally, however, Pawnee Bill remained financially secure and investments in oil, cattle and the motion picture industry allowed him to settle into his ranch at Pawnee, Oklahoma. Mexican Joe became the ranch foreman. Pawnee Bill lived to the age of 82, passing away on his ranch in 1942.

Luna Park continued to be a popular amusement park for Washingtonians and Alexandrians in the years after the elephant hunt. The end came on April 19, 1925, when a fire destroyed the roller coaster and left other structures damaged. The park was dismantled later that year. The interurban railway made its last run on January 18, 1932. Its right of way in Alexandria is now Commonwealth Avenue and its Arlington tracks have long vanished from their route parallel to Eads Street. On the site where once stood Luna Park is the Arlington sewer plant.

Barlow’s Elephants—intelligent, sensitive, and social creatures that we now know their species to be—spent the remainder of their lives in chains doing tricks for human audiences. But the imagination runs wild with possibilities had the elephants made good their escape. Herds of elephants roaming the Northern Virginia countryside would likely have had an adverse effect on property values. A HOOOF lane might have been needed on the Beltway. As events turned out, however, the region was spared this fate and one of the most bizarre incidents in local history is recalled only on the fading pages of century old newspapers. But for those gallant souls who lived through those long days in the summer of 1906, the escaped elephants made an indelible impression. “I have been in a balloon from Paris to Belgium and I thought it was my most unusual experience,” Pawnee Bill reminisced, “but that is beaten to a standstill by the Virginia elephant hunt.”⁶⁵

Notes

1. "Crowds See Luna Park at Opening, Despite Rain," *Washington Times*, May 29, 1906.
2. *Arlington Historical Society Magazine* 6, no. 2 (1979), 64.
3. *Washington Times*, May 29, 1906.
4. *Arlington Historical Society Magazine* 6, no. 2 (1979), 64.
5. "Plan Luna Park for Washington," *Washington Times*, February 4, 1906.
6. Ibid.
7. *Arlington Historical Society Magazine* 7, no. 3 (1979), 30.
8. "Plans Are Completed for Luna Park Opening," *Washington Times*, May 28, 1906. *Alexandria Gazette*, May 29, 1906, 3.
9. *Washington Times*, May 29, 1906. *Alexandria Gazette*, May 29, 1906, 3.
10. Ibid.
11. *Washington Times*, August 19, 1906.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. "Elephants for Luna Park," *Alexandria Gazette*, August 18, 1906.
15. *Alexandria Gazette*, August 20, 1906.
16. "Luna Park," *Washington Times*, August 21, 1906.
17. "Seen Two Pachyderms?" *Washington Post*, August 22, 1906.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., *Alexandria Gazette*, August 22, 1906. It is probable that elephant identification was not a required credential for *Post* reporters in 1906. This article incorrectly reports that it was Queenie who was captured when it was actually Annie who was apprehended while Queenie remained at large.
20. "Elephant Hunt Through the Wilds of Old Virginia," *Washington Times*, August 22, 1906.
21. *Washington Post*, August 22, 1906.
22. Ibid.
23. "Elephant Hunt in the Country," *Alexandria Gazette*, August 22, 1906.
24. *Washington Post*, August 22, 1906.
25. *Washington Times*, August 22, 1906.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. "The Stray Elephants," *Alexandria Gazette*, August 23, 1906. (This paper carries an incorrect date of August 22, 1906.)
29. Ibid.
30. "Wants His Elephants Back," *Washington Post*, August 25, 1906.
31. Ibid.
32. Irene Rouse, "Amusement and Pachyderms," *Chincoteague Chronicle*, April 21, 1988.
33. "Wants His Elephants Back," *Washington Post*, August 25, 1906.
34. Allen L. Farnum, *Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West: A Photographic Documentary of the 1900-1905 Tours* (West Chester, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1992), 7-8.
35. *Washington Times*, August 19, 1906.

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36. Farnum, 11.
 37. *Washington Times*, August 19, 1906.
 38. Ibid.
 39. "Cowboys Chase Elephants," *Washington Post*, August 26, 1906.
 40. Ibid.
 41. Charles E. Taylor, "Cowboy Captures Truant Elephant," *Washington Post*, August 27, 1906.
 42. Ibid., A Cayuse is a breed of western horse developed by the Cayuse Indians of the Northwest.
 43. Ibid.
 44. Farnum, 11.
 45. Charles E. Taylor, op cit.
 46. Ibid.
 47. Ibid.
 48. Ibid.
 49. Ibid.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Ibid.
 52. "Missing Elephant Caught After an Exciting Chase," *Washington Times*, August 27, 1906.
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 54. Charles E. Taylor, op cit.
 55. "Another Elephant Caught," *Alexandria Gazette*, August 27, 1906.
 56. Ibid.
 57. Charles E. Taylor, op cit.
 58. "Elephant Found, Again a Captive," *Washington Times*, August 29, 1906.
 59. Ibid.
 60. *National Tribune*, September 6, 1906.
 61. Ibid.
 62. Ibid.
 63. "Missing Elephant Caught," *Washington Post*, August 30, 1906.
 64. "Elephant Found, Again a Captive," *Washington Times*, August 29, 1906.
 65. Charles E. Taylor, op cit.