

Space Farms ZOO & MUSEUM: A FAMILY AFFAIR

Welcome to Space Farms!

Unlike big city zoos, you can visit our animals up close. Who knows, maybe you'll even be joined by a friendly goose, llama or chicken during your walk around a few of our 100 acres!

With over 500 animals to discover, you can enjoy a full day of fun with your family. In fact, we have the largest private collection of North American animals in their natural surroundings in the entire United States.

It gets better!

The zoo has exotic species from around the world as well, including lions, tigers, hyenas, lemurs and much more!

You'll even have the chance to hand feed some of our friendlier residents. Now that's something to go wild over!

We are proud to be internationally famous for our bear and lion cub breeding programs, which have helped restore endangered populations all over the world.

Our museum is made up of more than 100,000 pieces of Americana. Antique cars, bikes and motorcycles, farm implements, tools, dolls, clocks and Native American artifacts are just a few examples of the enormous range of history on display at Space Farms Museum. We even have an authentic covered wagon from the turn of the century, not to mention the second largest privately owned collection of antique firearms in the entire United States!

Explore the Eskimo exhibit, florescent mineral theater and more than 100,000 other rare items.

History of the Zoo

Back in 1927, the last thing Ralph and Elizabeth Space were thinking of was opening up a zoo. In fact, when they bought their first quarter-acre of land the only thing on their minds was figuring out a way to support their growing family. And that they quickly did!



Photo by Tracy Klimmek/New Jersey Herald

Thanks to Ralph's mechanical ingenuity and keen business sense, they opened a small repair shop. The business took off and so did the idea to build on it. This time it was Elizabeth's plan – a small general store where locals could frequent for their small, basic necessities. This business, too, soon blossomed.

A few years later, Ralph was offered a job by the New Jersey State Game Department to trap predators that were killing local farm animals. Ralph, being an avid sportsman, businessman (and opportunist), quickly agreed. Most of the calls came from local farmers in the springtime. Raccoons, foxes and even bobcats had young to feed and preyed on the plentiful farm goats, sheep, chickens and ducks.

But rather than kill the animals caught, Ralph built small enclosures around his garage. His plan was to keep the animals until fall when the furs were valuable and sell them. But that plan fell apart when his three small children, Loretta, Edna and Fred, cried and begged their father to keep the animals.



Photo by Jake West / New Jersey Herald - Atilla the Lion takes a big yawn

By the following spring, the animals had multiplied and the collection of animals grew. People in the area soon heard about the Space family's wild collection and came to see for themselves. They'd buy some gas, maybe some candy and soda and visit the animals.

Although he never intended it, Ralph Space soon had a zoo!

The Space children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have continued the family tradition of conserving wildlife and preserving American history.

Origins of the Museum

So, that takes care of the zoo, but what about the museum? Well, when the Great Depression hit the country, local farmers in Sussex faced very difficult times.



Photo by Tracy Klimmek/New Jersey Herald - A few of the antique cars on display.

But they still needed the supplies and repairs, so the farmers coming to Elizabeth's shop paid with family heirlooms like firearms, dolls, tools, cradles and other items of local Americana. The items were given in good faith; all parties agreed that the items would be given back when bills could be paid. In the meantime, they were placed on the walls of the general store.

Visitors began to stop by and check out the animals and the growing displays of antiques, marking the beginning of Space Farms Zoo & Museum. As the years passed, the Space kids worked diligently with their parents creating a truly American family business.

Fred Space took a keen interest in building up the zoo, while Ralph's enthusiasm for collecting and history spurred the museum's growth. Grandma Elizabeth worked in her store right through its evolution into the current restaurant where you can enjoy a meal of freshly baked from scratch pizza, subs, salads and wings.

Today, Parker with his wife Jill, Lori along with her husband Doug are the third generation. Hunter and his wife Caitlin are the fourth generation. All together they handle the lion's share of the day-to-day work! A visit to Space Farms Zoo & Museum is a great way to spend the day. There's definitely something for everyone!

Don't forget to bring your camera!

We hope you enjoy your visit to Space Farms! Tell your friends and come back soon to see the many new things in progress. If you have any questions, please ask us!



Photo by Jake West / New Jersey Herald