

The legacy of Dr. E.H. McCleery

Diane Gallegos, Executive Director



Dr. E.H. McCleery with one of his wolves in a photograph taken sometime between 1929 and 1962 when his Lobo Wolf Park was located just east of Kane, Pennsylvania. *Dr. McCleery Lobo Wolves Digital Archives.*

Following is the remarkable history of Dr. E. H. McCleery and the McCleery Buffalo Wolf Foundation written by McCleery Foundation president Ed Wheeler. On June 1, 2018, Wolf Haven International accepted the donation of land, buildings, equipment, and the McCleery wolf sanctuary from the McCleery Foundation located in Montana.

Reprinted with permission from the E. H. McCleery Buffalo Wolf Foundation, Ed and Terry Wheeler.

By the end of the 19th century Montana and Wyoming had become relatively settled. Stock grazers ran herds over the vast areas of these states. The plains or Buffalo wolf ran as direct competition to the ranchers as the wolves adapted to the changes in the environment by replacing buffalo with domestic livestock as a food source. In response to the competition the ranchers and the state and federal agencies of the time made every effort to eradicate the wolf populations of the states to ease the stresses placed on the domestic herds. These efforts were very successful and so by the early part of the 20th century wolf populations in these states had been reduced to just a handful of wolf families or packs.

During this period Dr. Edward Heber McCleery, of Kane, Pennsylvania, made a journey from his home to “see the west” and became aware of the fact that in very short order there would be no buffalo wolves. He resolved to make an effort to save some of these wolves by collecting as many specimens that he could in the small window that he had and build a sanctuary for them at his home in Kane.

In pursuit of this task he began a series of correspondence with trappers, wolfers and government officials and by 1920 he received his first litter of wolf pups. These efforts continued into the late 1920's but by 1928 the supply of wolves from Montana and Wyoming had dwindled to the point that there was little reason to continue.



Visitors to Dr. E.H. McCleery's sanctuary, located east of Kane, Pennsylvania. The photo was taken some time between 1929 and 1972. All historic photographs and artwork are from the Dr. McCleery Lobo Wolves Digital Archives, www.McCleeryWolves.com.

Dr. McCleery turned his attention to other species of wolves for a period of time and collected wolves from Sonora, Mexico and Hudson's Bay Canada. Dr. McCleery believed that each variation of the wolf was unique, so he established separate containment areas for the various species. As time went on he allowed, for reasons unknown, the Mexican and Canadian

wolf populations that he kept to die out. During this period and until his passing on May 23, 1962 he turned all his efforts to the preservation of his beloved Lobo wolves. (Note: "Lobo" is now a common nickname for Mexican gray wolf subspecies.)

Overlapping the last few years of his life he was assisted by a man named Jack Lynch. When Dr. McCleery died

Mr. Lynch took over the operations and control of the wolves. Mr. Lynch was clearly as dedicated to the preservation of the wolves as was Dr. McCleery. During the period of time that Mr. Lynch managed the wolves he relocated the preserve first to Gardiner, Washington in the early 1970's then again in the early 1980's to Emigrant, Montana. The wolves remained in the hills west of Emigrant until Jack's passing on July 26, 2006. A combination of factors which included extremely difficult access to the preserve, Jack's passing, and a damaging forest fire led Mr. Lynch's wife Mary to make the decision to relocate once again.



Above: Ed and Terry Wheeler. *McCleery Buffalo Wolf Foundation.* **Wolf Haven's Wendy Spencer meets some of the McCleery wolves for the first time.**

Diane Gallegos.

It has taken four moves over nearly a century for the McCleery wolves to find their forever home. Jack Lynch is shown with some of the wolves at the Gardiner, Washington location in 1974. *Dr. McCleery Lobo Wolves Digital Archives.*



One of the McCleery wolves photographed in late June of this year. *Wendy Spencer.*

In August of 2008 after 18 months of preparation the preserve once again moved. Currently and hopefully permanently the wolves are located southwest of Bridger, Montana. It is of note that this is the closest this group of wolves has been to their original range in the Highwood mountains of Montana since their removal to Kane, Pennsylvania.

Final note: In the spring of 2016 Mary Lynch died unexpectedly after almost 40 years of dedicating her life to the care of the wolves. Because there was no one designated to take over the operations Mary's son, Ed Wheeler, took a leave of absence from his job in Oregon and moved to Montana

to care for the wolves. Later he was joined by his wife Terry, who retired early to help.

Ed, Terry and the McCleery board of directors worked to find an organization with a similar vision and shared values to provide the wolves with the highest level of care in their current Montana location. We are deeply honored that the Wheelers have entrusted Wolf Haven to care for the wolves that Ed's mother, her late husband, Jack Lynch, and the original founder, Dr. McCleery, dedicated their lives to.

Wolf Haven will manage the McCleery facility as a satellite sanctuary, allowing the wolves to continue receiving the best care while living out their lives in their current homes.

Assuming responsibility for the McCleery wolves provides Wolf Haven an opportunity to allow these non-socialized wolves to spend their remaining years in their current location. Wolf Haven will arrange for cryopreservation to fulfill the Foundation's mission of preserving the DNA of the buffalo wolf lineage from 1920. The property will also be proposed as a future prerelease facility in support of the Mexican Wolf Species Survival Plan (SSP).

The Montana facility will remain closed to the public and the remaining wolves will not be allowed to continue breeding.

