

“The Aquarium News” - An apparently unrecorded 1878 weekly publication of the Charles Reiche and Brother New York Aquarium.

By Lee Finley

The various publications produced by 19th Century public aquaria offer a good source of historical information relating to various aspects of their management and the variety of aquatic creatures under their care. The New York Aquarium which operated between 1876 and 1881 in New York City is no exception and this institution published a good number of high-quality interesting and educational works. Initially, the aquarium, which opened in October, was under the ownership of the circus great W. C. Coup and animal and bird dealers Charles and Henry Reiche. In late 1877 this partnership was formally dissolved, and the Reiche Brothers (usually listed as Charles Reiche and Bro.) became the sole proprietors. But Coup retained a very close relationship with the brothers, including maintaining an office and a mailing address at the aquarium. More information on this situation will be covered in an article next month relating to Coup’s Travelling Aquarium as an important part of his New United Monster Shows roadshow.

In any case, when the aquarium opened, a publication (dated October 11, 1876) noted to be semi-monthly and edited by W. S. Ward, was ready to go. On the cover, this publication is titled “New York Aquarium Journal And Guide”. On the masthead of page one, the given title is “New York Aquarium Journal”. To further confuse things, at the top of each page (for this, and the subsequent nine issues) is printed “The New York Aquarium Journal”. I guess that an argument could be made for the use of either of these designations, but probably the second one (or possibly the third) would be my choice. In any case, this is a large-sized publication - approximately 24.4 by 14.9 inches – consisting of a cover and eight pages. In all, 10 issues noted as Volume One and numbered one through 10, were published in this format. The last issue was dated May 1877. It should also be noted that no issue was published in February. These well-illustrated (artwork) and article-packed publications were apparently available as handouts for customers of the aquarium. But one-year subscriptions were also available. In the first issue, it is noted that the price for this was 50 cents! From the second issue onward, this was increased to \$1.00 (in terms of today’s money these prices would be the equivalent of \$13.85 and \$27.69). This publication has been widely discussed over the decades, usually at least as it’s being called the first aquarium magazine. In current times it is available on the internet and well worth both a casual look over or a more in-depth perusal depending on your level of interest. Copies of the set can be found on both Archive.org and Biodiversity.org.

With the demise of the large format volumes noted above was the immediate introduction of a smaller-sized magazine also edited by Ward. This is titled “The Aquarium Journal” and consists

of 16 pages plus covers in a 9 ¼ by 6 ¾ inch format. New articles and smaller pieces on various aquarium inhabitants were included. Some pages of advertisements were also present, and these included some for the aquarium itself. Interestingly, among the advertisements, a page listing all the fishes in the various tanks is also included. These lists, though similar, do vary in the available tank inhabitants in the two copies of this magazine that I have available for review. The first of these is noted to be “Vol. 1-New Series, Number 1” and is dated “June 1877.” The second available copy is also in the New Series and is dated “Sept. 1877” and it is noted to be “Number 4.” I have found very little information on this small-sized version of “The Aquarium Journal.” One contemporary note spoke well of the new format finding it “...for the better.” (An editorial in the July 16, 1877 issue of “Fancier’s Journal And Land & Water”, page 135). I have found this series to be quite rare. The two copies of this journal that I have reviewed are in the library of the MOAPH. For this, I am thankful in that I have been unable to locate additional copies from any other sources. Lastly, I will note that this series appears to have been short-lived. In the September issue (Number 4) Ward notes in an editorial that he has left the aquarium and that the Journal will not be continued.

And this now brings us to the New York Aquarium publication titled “The Aquarium News” of which there is a copy of below. This has been my “White Whale” for a couple of decades. I have constantly searched the internet and dived into more databases than I care to think about and come up with nothing to match or provide information on, this one publication that I have in my collection. Gary, at MOAPH, thinks that he may have a copy in the museum’s library, but as this is being written he has yet to lay his hands on it. The source of my copy goes back almost 50 years when it was found mixed in with a batch of old sheet music that had been discarded by a major east coast library. It came into my possession about 24 years ago and has resided there since...with me always looking to find out more about it. Maybe someone reading this can possibly help with this...please! Gary is still looking so hopefully that may also come to fruition. This page size of this piece is right on with the large dimensions of the first publication noted herein. This piece is in the form of a single folded sheet to make a presentation of four pages. The paper is of a soft acid-based type that literally falls apart with handling. In the copy below you can note that just being folded in half over the years had split it into sections (this way when I obtained it). The Reiche brothers were the owners of the aquarium at publication and Herman C. Dorner the manager (and editor of this publication). Dorner had come to the aquarium after serving as the head of the Hamburg Aquarium in Germany. I have backtracked the date based on the information on page one below and that would make the initial publication date of this title April 13, 1878. It is noted to be distributed daily, so I assume that it was a no charge item at the aquarium. As with the first two titles a yearly subscription was available at a price of \$1.00 (an equivalent of \$29.63 – inflation!). Interesting, on page three, is another noted volume number (11) as regards to the Sea-Side Aquarium. Backtracking the date would make the first mention of this to be June 15th, which was about one month after its initial opening. This facility was open to

the public, for a fee of course, but it also served as a holding facility for fishes and animals destined for the main city-based aquarium and/or for sale to other localities (including overseas). Included in this issue is a comprehensive listing of the inhabitants of the tanks in the New York facility on pages two and three. These are descriptive and quite well written. The publication appears well supported by various advertisement. My personal favorite is for the Aquarium Lager Beer Saloon. Had I been around back in the day, that would have been a nice follow up after a lengthy aquarium visit.

So, for now I can only bring this latter, previously unrecorded, publication to the reader's attention. My research in this area will continue and hopefully the publication of a copy of it might go towards helping to bring forth some additional information. Such information would surely include the question of what the New York Aquarium was providing as written information to its patrons in the time period between the last issue of "The Aquarium Journal [New Series]" in September of 1877 and the beginning of "The Aquarium News" in April of 1878. Could this have consisted of just a simple publication listing the various tanks and their inhabitants? Or a yet as unknown, other publication (or publications)? Certainly, a single sheet listing approach (especially if done on acid-based paper) would potentially create an even more ephemeral document less likely to survive the intervening of almost a Century and a half.

The W. C. Coup and Reiche Brothers New York Aquarium and the subsequent Charles Reiche and Brother continuation of it has over its time span received generally very good coverage. But it is obvious that there are many aspects requiring additional research and a more comprehensive approach to such studies especially in its later years as the aquarium became less and less of an "aquarium" and more of a theater and indoor circus of sorts. The ending of the aquarium deserves to be told as much as the beginning and the middle. It is all a part of history. This, plus a full table of other research areas, lies in my future and I, through the graces of the MOAPH, shall forge ahead with them. As always, I would be happy to communicate with others having the same, or similar, interests.

Lastly, I would like to offer my thanks to Gary Bagnall, the Director of the MOAPH, for his invaluable help both with this article and his general enthusiastic support over many years.

The Aquarium News.

Vol. 1.

Published Weekly, Distributed Daily.

No. 20.

Chas. Reiche & Bro., Proprietors.

WEEK ENDING, AUGUST 24, 1878.

Dr. H. Dorner, Editor.

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- 2d—Sailor in Hornpipe.
- 3d—Negro in "Essence."
- 4th—Italian Juggler.
- 5th—Scaramouch.
- 6th and 7th—Irishman and Woman.
- 8th and 9th—Man and Woman in Polka.
- 10th—Zouave—with ten small ones in drill.
- 11th—Pantaloons.
- 12th—Negro.
- 13th—Clown, Mule and Dog.

To conclude with the Clown in his great act of Horsemanship.

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Pat. July 10, 1877.



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The Aquarium News.

THE OFFICIAL PROGRAMME
OF THE
NEW YORK AQUARIUM

Broadway & 35th St.
LOUIS KLOPSCH, Publisher, 92 White Street.

NOTICE.

The "Aquarium News" will be mailed on application to any address for One Dollar, per annum.

NOTICE.—Visitors desiring explanation about the animals exhibited will please apply to the attendants.

The feeding of the fishes takes place after the performances, when the bell rings, beginning with the Seals, then proceeding to Tank No. 36, 37, 38 to 52.

The fishes in Tank No. 1 to 34 will be fed at the same time.

TWO YOUNG Hippopotamus

animals that have been captured by the collectors of Messrs. Chas Reiche & Bro., on their last expedition to the White Nile, have now reached us and are exhibited in the large tank in the center of the Aquarium.

Any curious snake, lizard, or insect which could be exhibited in this gallery, will be thankfully received by the Aquarium, and full acknowledgments made to the donors.

TANK 1. The big stone covered all over with beautiful Anemones, was picked up in the Bermuda Islands in May of this year. Near its top there are two splendid specimens of *Sabella*. These are worms living in calcareous tubes. Their handsome, fan-like branchiae or gills protrude from the tube, and are suddenly drawn back when the creature is frightened.

The little, leathery-brown Anemones fastened to a stone near the front, belong to the genus *Zoantha*; they are exhibited for the first time.

TANK 2. The stones in this tank are teeming with life; they are nothing but the secretion of little worms similar to the *Sabella*. These are called *Clinkers* by the fishermen. A knock against the glass makes them draw in their red gills or branchiae.

TANK 3. The Crabs in this tank are the handsome *Lady Crabs*, (No. 163 of the Guide). In spite of their beautiful and elegant movements they lead as ignoble a life as their relatives, feeding on dead, refuse matter and acting as

soft shell crabs. A hard shell crab placed into its tank a few weeks ago, is not troubled by its uncanny host.

TANK 13. A very old and venerable looking *Flat Lobster* and a large *Wing Snail*, (*Strombus gigas*) are the inhabitants of this tank. The *Flat Lobster* is a female; it deposited many thousands of pink eggs in May of this year, which partially were eaten by the old creature itself. The *Wing Snail* is exhibited alive for the first time; its large shells, which are roseate inside, are used as ornaments around flower beds.

TANK 15. The *Balloon Fish* is remarkable for its bony and spiny surface which is totally devoid of scales. It inflates with air or water, driving bottom upwards in the first case and sinking to the ground in the second.

The *Pipa Fishes* feed on the eggs of shrimp. It is curious to see them examine the under side of the transparent shrimps and bury their pointed snout among the numerous legs in order to tear the eggs away.

TANK 16. A few very large, and numerous small *hermits* make things lively in this tank. There is a perpetual fighting going on among them, the object being a convenient and a piece of dead fish, or anything else that appears eat-

sidered to be the best flavored fresh water fish in Europe. It is hatched and reared by the millions in artificial and natural ponds, and has become a household creature. Many varieties of it are known, some of which have an elongated body, others a short and high one; some have no scales at all, others but a few extremely large ones. The last variety is the best and is known under the name of King Carp. Our specimens belong to this variety.

TANKS 28 and 29. The *Electric Eels* are curious not only for mysterious power of benumbing and killing other creatures by merely touching them, but also for their strange way of breathing. They do not move the mouth and gill cover in order to send a stream of water through their gills as other fishes do, but they come to the surface to swallow air. They constantly have a large quantity of air in the mouth and around the gills. When they seize a fish, the air escapes in large bubbles all around the head.

TANK 30. The specimens of *Shining Dace* in this tank are a valuable present of Dr. Rob. Taylor, a gentleman who takes a great interest in the Aquarium. He personally went to the trouble and expense of catching these fish in the Housatonic River, West Cornwall, Conn., and transported them to this water-

Late Improvements.

A new gallery has been built near the entrance of the Aquarium, for the exhibition of snakes, lizards, curious insects, interesting caterpillars, and butterflies.

Cage IV of this gallery is inhabited by a *lizard* which in shape resembles a snake. Its name is *Scheltopusik* (*Pseudopus Pallasii*). It was brought from Dalmatia, Europe.

Cage VII contains a family of European *Blindworms* (*Anguis fragilis*). On August 5th one of them gave birth to six young. This is certainly the first time that the European *Blindworm* raises a family in America.

Both the *Scheltopusik* and the *Blindworm* are lizards, not snakes. The lizards have distinct eyelids; the *snakes*' eyes are permanently covered by a transparent membrane which becomes opaque when the snake prepares to cast its skin. Further, the snakes swallow entire animals without cutting them to pieces; the lizards eat their food piecemeal.

Cage VIII is inhabited by a very large specimen of the *Water Snake*, (*Nerodia Holbrookii*). It has been captured in Toms River, N. J., and presented to the Aquarium by Mr. I. P. Schenk, Editor of the *Ocean Co. Democrat*.

regular scavengers.

TANK 4. The "*Spider Crabs*" are ugly, filthy-looking creatures, and yet very interesting. You will find many of them covered with fragments of red seaweed, pieces of sponge, small stones, or even living anemones. They pick up odd pieces, cover them partly with a kind of glue secreted from their mouth and paste them deliberately on their back. Their object in doing this is to hide themselves from the fishes, which are fond of their meat.

TANK 8. An old *Stone Crab* from Bermuda resides in this tank over fifteen months. It generally is half buried under the stone in the centre, and as its surface is very similar to that of a stone, it requires some attention to detect it.

TANK 9. On both sides of this tank there are colonies of the only coral living on the New England coasts. The animals themselves are larger than coral individuals usually are, but the rocks built by them are very limited in size.

A beautiful fish from Bermuda, the *Silk Snapper*, is exhibited in the same tank. It derives its name from the silky appearance of its skin. When the fish becomes excited, it assumes a darker hue.

TANK 11. The *Devil Fish*, exhibited in this tank is a real gormandizer. It will not touch anything but oysters and

other nutritious matter; their bill of fare is more extensive than even that of the Chinese people.

TANK 17. The *Sheephead Labia* is a pretty little fish, particularly the male which shines with a brilliant metallic blue. If new bushes of sea-weed (*Enteromorpha*) are placed in their tanks, they graze on it like cows.

TANK 18. A curious growth of *Sertularia* or *Sea-Brush* is observed upon one of the *Flat Lobsters*. This brush consists of colonies of little polyps which secrete calcareous matter similar to coral rocks.

TANK 19. The transparent *Sword Prawns*, with their beautiful, large, glistening eyes afford an interesting sight. They are the same creatures that are sent to our market from the south, and sold under the name of *Southern Shrimps*.

TANK 21. The water in this tank had to be cooled, the experience of last summer showing that the temperature of the Aquarium water is too high for the *California Salmon*. Before entering this tank the water passes through a coil of lead which is surrounded by ice. The experiment has succeeded so far and the fishes are in excellent health.

TANK 27. The *German Carp* is con-

sidered to be the best flavored fresh water fish in Europe. They are, what their name implies, fishes with a brilliantly shining surface.

TANK 33 and 34. We are indebted to Dr. R. F. Walker for the fine collection of *Hellbenders* in these tanks. They are the largest of amphibious animals found in the United States.

TANK 36. This immense tank contains ten kinds of fishes, viz.: the *Hamlet* or *Grouper*, *Hind*, *Rock Fish*, *Margate Fish*, *Sheephead*, *Drum Fish*, *Black Fish*, *Sturgeon*, *Smooth Dog Fish*, *Spotted Ray*, further the *Bermuda Lobster*, and the *Green Turtle*.

The *Hamlet*, *Hind*, *Rock Fish* and *Margate Fish* were brought from the Bermuda Islands.

The *Hamlet* is a large, grayish fish, with brown, irregular stripes and figures which extend obliquely along the head and sides. Its eyes are of a brilliant blue color.

The *Hind* has a similar shape, and is easily recognized by its numerous red and brown spots.

The *Rock Fish* is brown, and mottled with large, irregular spots and lines of a darker color. Its skin shows a marbled appearance.

The *Hamlet*, *Hind* and *Rock Fish* belong to a group of fishes which are nor-

Sea-Side Aquarium.

ON CONEY ISLAND.
BRANCH OF CHAS. REICHE & BROS., N. Y. AQUARIUM.

L. KLOPSCH, PUBLISHER.

WEEK ENDING AUGUST 24. 1878.

Vol. 1, No. 11.

John Y. McKane,
Carpenter & Builder,
Sheepshead Bay, L. I.

Orders left at Sea-Side Aquarium will receive prompt attention.

...ally hermaphrodite, each fish after maturity carrying milk and roe at the same time.

The *Margate Fish* is a slender fish with 2 or 3 faint stripes along the body.

The *Sheepshead* is a big, clumsy fish with a dozen large bare teeth, and five conspicuous blackish cross-bands. It is found in our waters during summer, when it is eagerly looked after as a delicacy.

The *Drum Fish* has a silvery surface, and four or five blackish vertical bands. It is easily recognized by having about twenty cirri or tassels beneath the lower jaw.

The *Black Fish* or *New York Tautog* is blueish black, with irregular darker

blotches and bands. There are about fifty specimens of *Black Fish* in this tank, many of them will be found lying on their side. They are not sick, however, but lazy and sleepy, on account of the warm weather.

The *Sturgeon* is easily recognized by its showy armor, consisting of five rows of bony plates.

The *Smooth Dog Fish* belongs to the Shark family. It is a fish of slender form, in color a dull ashy gray above, white beneath. It generally keeps near the bottom.

The *Spotted Ray* has a round form; its sides are represented by the large pectoral fins which are attached to the hind part of the head.

TANK 38. The *Star Fish* is very destructive to oyster-beds, clinging to the oyster with its suckers somewhat after the manner of the Octopus. In the Aquarium it is fed on little snails. Its mode of eating is singular. It covers its food with the arms, turns the stomach inside out, and proceeds at leisure to suck the animal from its shell.

TANK 48. The body of the *Gar Pike* is covered with hard, enameled, lozenge-shaped plates, not with scales. This same covering is found on all the earliest fossil fishes, but occurs on only a few

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Grand Military Drill, - By the Entire Troupe.

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Evening Performances and the building brilliantly lighted with Gas.

species, now. Another remarkable peculiarity is, that the *Gar Pike* uses part of its air bladder as a lung, and comes to the surface to breathe.

The *Fresh Water Dog Fish*, like the *Gar Pike*, partly breathes from the atmosphere. It frequently comes to the surface either to inhale or exhale air. In some regions it is called "The Lawyer," because "it will bite at anything, and is good for nothing when caught."

TANK 45. *King Fish*, *Weak Fish*, *Smooth Dog Fish*, *Bermuda Lobster* and *Horse Shoe Crab* are the inhabitants of this tank. It is worth while noticing the different ways in which these creatures propel themselves. The *Horse Shoe* is particularly interesting in this respect.

TANK 46. The *Drum Fishes* produce a peculiar noise resembling the distant sound of a drum. The two specimens have been living in this tank for more than fifteen months.

TANK 47. The *Sea Robins* have a

beautiful, large pectoral fin which calls to mind the bird's wings. In front of each of these fins there are three fingers which can be moved separately. By means of these fingers the *Sea Robin* walks along the bottom and examines its nature.

TANK 50. The *Hamlet* resides in this tank over fifteen months. There is also a beautiful large *Rockfish* in the same.

TANK 51. This is one of the handsomest tanks in the Aquarium. The *Squirrels*, which are "the most conspicuous of the denizens of the rock pools in the Bermuda Islands," and the beautiful *Gorgon-headed Anemones*, surrounded by *Stalactites*, give the impression of a splendid picture.

TANK 52 is inhabited by our largest *Devil Fish*.

THERE is such an extensive demand for the newspaper JUDGE AND JURY that the form, already half distributed, had to be reset over again in order to issue a second edition of Ten Thousand Copies. This is something absolutely unparalleled in the history of journalism, and is another evidence that the public fully appreciate publications of intrinsic merit.

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The Detroit Free Press complains that "it takes three days to get a check cashed at a Turkish bank, and the money is then worth only sixty cents on the dollar." The St. Louis Republic replies that there are some American banks where you might try in vain for three years to get a check cashed.

"Clarence you've got a real kind heart," gratefully observed a young lady on the cars to a sallow-faced youth as he dropped a prize package of pop-corn in her lap. "Yes, Mary, my heart's all right," he sadly replied, "what I want is a new liver."

