

DEER PARK

Victorian Americans had a romantic emotional attachment to nature. It was a sanctuary from the changes industry and science were bringing to society. Victorian art, literature and architecture all incorporated “the freshness of the early world.” George and Clara Patterson even added nature into the carvings on the front of their house. Victorians sought a connection with nature, but nature scaled down to human proportions and domesticated.

Clara loved the outdoors and around 1896 established her own Deer Park at the farm. It had a tall fence surrounding 20 acres and a herd of 16-20 deer. The family and neighbors would often picnic here enjoying the beauty of deer in a “natural” state.

But keeping wild deer caused problems. Farmhands were pinned against the fence or bucked by the deer. One worker was run up a tree by a buck and was so frightened that he stayed there all night. Finally, in 1908, the deer were released back into the wild.



*“The deer are Mrs. Patterson’s special pets and she passes many pleasant hours watching them.”
Washington Press, September 1898*



*“Its dense undergrowth and generally wild appearance make it an ideal home for the handsome animals. They are captives with none of the elements of captivity.”
Washington Press, September 1898.*

All photos courtesy of the Patterson House Collection



The deer were fed every day between 4:00pm and 6:00pm.