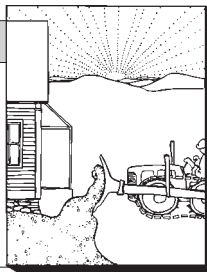


Elephant Rehab No Small Tusk

by Karen Kummer



Elephant Facts

1,000,000 pieces of timber
8,560 ribs or arches
200 kegs of nails
4 tons of bolts and bars
12,000 square feet of tin
Body—38 feet long, 80 feet in circumference
Head—16 feet long, 48 feet in circumference
Neck—6 feet long, 48 feet in circumference
Legs—22 feet long, 10 feet in diameter
Ears—17 feet long, 10 feet wide
Tusks—22 feet long
Tail—26 feet long
Source: *The Story of Lucy the Elephant* by William McMahon.

How do you go about moving and restoring a six-story-high, 90-ton elephant? Very carefully. . .

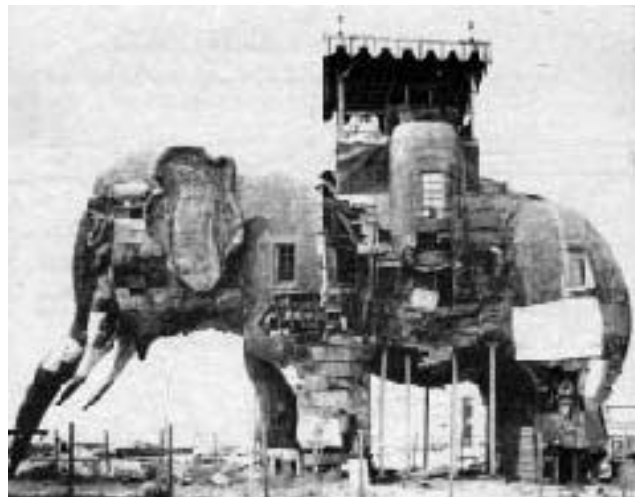
The Save Lucy Committee of Margate, N.J., has worked for over 15 years to preserve and restore this giant pachyderm. During this time they have battled odds that even the nearby Atlantic City casino owners wouldn't bet on, and they have turned doubters into elephant believers. In the meantime, they have become experts on the "care and feeding" of historic elephants.

Surprisingly, Lucy the Elephant is not one-of-a-kind. At one time there were three giant elephants built in the U.S. The Light-of-Asia elephant was a 40-foot wooden beast in South Cape May, N.J.; she was demolished and the "remains cremated" in 1900. Lucy's other cousin was Elephantine Colossus at Coney Island, New York who measured 122 feet in height and had more than 31 rooms inside. She

burned and crumbled to the sand in 1896. Thus, Lucy sat alone and deteriorating, an endangered species in need of protection. The Save Lucy Committee was formed in 1970 to move and rehabilitate this famous elephant.

Lucy was built in 1881 by James Lafferty, a South Atlantic City land speculator who hoped that it would attract visitors and property buyers to his rather desolate and barren area of sea coast. The Elephant cost \$25,000 to construct, although Lafferty always claimed that he spent \$38,000 before the beast was completed. Lafferty received a U.S. patent for his elephant idea and even included his thoughts on building giant fish or birds in his patent application.

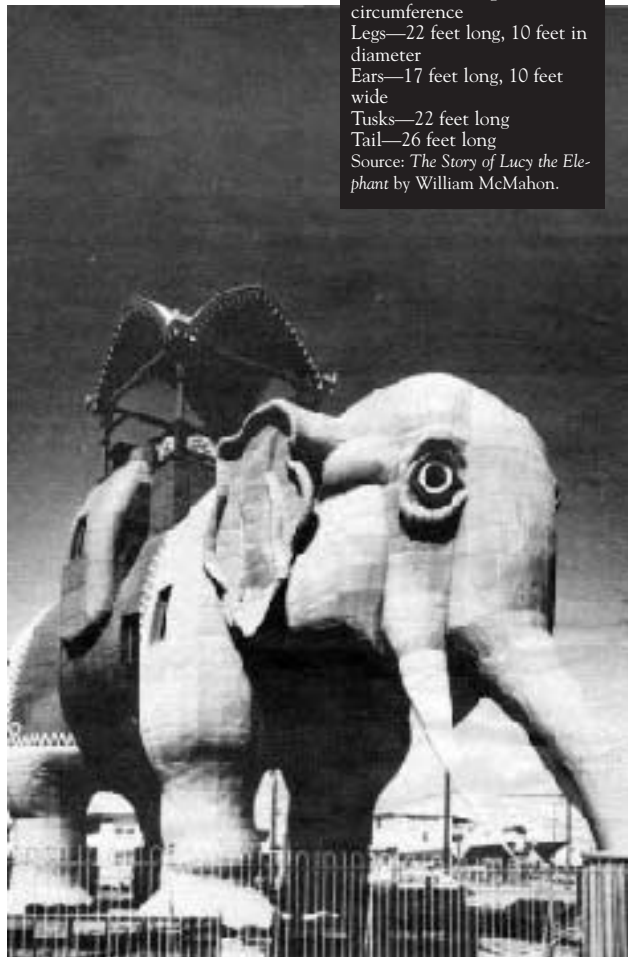
Lucy the Elephant stands tall and upright in a feeding position with her trunk touching the ground. Her bones are ordinary wood, her skin is tin, and her 18-inch eyes are made of glass.



This 90-ton, six-story-high, tin-skinned elephant, built in 1881 as a real estate promotion, awaits restoration by a local preservation committee.



Lucy the Elephant undergoes finishing touches on her "howdah" or observation deck. She was moved to this Margate, N.J. city park in 1970. No, she was not packed up in a trunk. Instead, she was cribbed and trucked on I-beam supports.



Finally restored to her original grandeur in 1976, Lucy the Elephant originally was built with 1,000,000 pieces of timber, 200 kegs of nails, 12,000 square feet of tin, and—among other items—two 18-inch glass eyes.

Spiral stairways are located in her hind legs—one for entry, one for exit. The stairs lead to a square 18-foot reception room from which the other rooms lead off. An ornate canopied "howdah" or observatory deck is on her back.

Lafferty's advertising idea was a failure, and Lucy was sold to John Gertzen, whose family built the Elephant Hotel nearby. The Gertzens operated Lucy as a tourist attraction until the city building inspectors declared her unsafe in the late 1960s. Lucy's home was sold out from under her and she had to be relocated or destroyed.

The Save Lucy Committee arranged for a house moving firm to move Lucy two blocks to a public park. It was not an easy task, because you cannot just pack an elephant up in a trunk. Wood cribbing was placed under the elephant's body. It was raised with special house jacks and fastened to huge I-beams placed on special dollies. Albert Ranalli, the director of the elephant move, told reporters, "The only

thing that could equal this move would be to move the Sphinx from the Valley of the Nile."

Restoring Lucy proved a challenge due to the general deterioration of the structure. Structural steel was used to replace the main trusses that had failed and the beams had to be threaded through a 12-inch hole in the Elephant's rump. This was not your typical remodeling job! After extensive work, Lucy now boasts of insulation, a sprinkler system, a new metal skin, and a fresh coat of paint. But just as an elephant never forgets, work on an elephant never ends. Plans for the interior rehabilitation include a museum of southern Jersey history and Lucy memorabilia.

Lucy the Elephant can be visited from April through October. She is located at 9200 Atlantic Ave., Margate, N.J., 609/823-6473. ■

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