

THE FIRST RHINOCEROS IN SWEDEN 1877-1878

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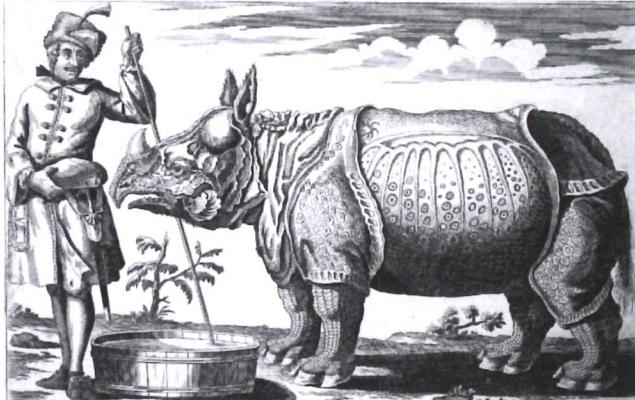
In the nineteenth century, travelling menageries, usually from continental Europe, gave the Swedish public the opportunity to see exotic animals that had never been shown in the country before. Our knowledge of these menageries is still fragmentary, but they deserve more attention. The German researchers Annelore Rieke-Müllern and Lothar Dittrich (1999) have provided an excellent overview of continental menageries before 1850. However, a few travelling menageries operating in Sweden have been the subject of research in recent years (Eisenfeldt, Nilsson-Eisfeldt & Brun 2014; Svanberg 2016; Mehlum 2024). As early as 1804, for example, the first Indian elephant was brought to Sweden by the famous menagerie owner Jean Baptiste Gauthier (1758–1823). The elephant caused a riot in the small town Skänninge. The elephant's visit has been described in detail by Hans Blomqvist and Carl Magnus Rosell (1975). Several elephants arrived with other menageries in the nineteenth century. But when did the first rhinoceros arrive in Sweden?

Rhinos in Europe

Since the sixteenth century, several rhinoceroses had arrived in Europe and some had travelled to be shown in several countries, but not in Sweden. Perhaps the most famous rhinoceros is Clara, who arrived in Rotterdam in 1741 and was exhibited in various places in Europe for 20 years. She was portrayed by several artists, as shown in a fine book by T. H. Clarke (1986), and her story is told in more detail in the monograph on Clara by Gijs van der Ham (2022), recently published by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. In the summer of 1755, Clara was exhibited in Copenhagen.

Van der Ham (2022: 120) also provides an explanation as to why Clara never visited Sweden. Captain Douwe Mout van der Meer, who was travelling with Clara, applied to the Swedish authorities on 6 April 1755 for permission to visit Sweden with the rhinoceros. However, the Swedish authorities refused. Clara died in Lambeth, England in April 1758 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Indian rhinoceros Clara in 1746.
Engraving by Elias Baeck.



Kleeberg's Menagerie

However, it was not until September 1877 that a rhino arrived in Sweden. Then F. Kleeberg's menagerie ('the largest in the world', as it said in the adverts) brought a specimen. The menagerie had previously been to Paris, London and Vienna and brought with it a considerable collection of animals (Kleeberg 1877). During the spring and early summer of 1877, Kleeberg's menagerie was stationed with the rhinoceros on Vesterbrogade by Tivoli in Copenhagen (*Dags-Telegraphen* 1 April 1877, *Kjøbenhavns Adressecomptoirs Efterretninger* 6 June 1877). In the autumn the menagerie continued by ship to Malmö. We can follow the movements of the menagerie with the rhinoceros in Sweden through the information in the newspapers.

We know from newspaper reports that the menagerie and its animals travelled by train from Malmö to Gothenburg in early September 1877 (*Marstrands Tidning* 15 Sept. 1877). *Dagens Nyheter* 27 September 1877 states that F. Kleeberg's menagerie had arrived in Gothenburg, bringing with it, among other things, a rhinoceros weighing 3,500 *skålpund* (= 1,488 kg).

According to the newspaper, the rhinoceros consumed 60 *skålpond* (ca 30 kg) of hay and 2 1/2 *lispund* (13 kg) of bran daily, in addition to potatoes, turnips and rye bran.

The menagerie owner's young daughter, Ottile Kleeberg, was a skilled animal trainer who performed daily with lions, tigers, leopards, hyenas and wolves, showing her 'mastery over the animals' (*Sköfde Tidning* 29 September 1877). The menagerie was housed in a large wooden building in the former Bergmanska trädgården in the centre of Gothenburg. The animals were said to be well-fed and in good condition (*Lördagsposten* 6 October 1877).

A newspaper article states that the rhinoceros weighed as much as 4,000 pounds (= 1,700 kg) and that it consumed large quantities of potatoes and other vegetables daily (*Sala Tidning* 29 Dec. 1877). In Stockholm, the menagerie was displayed in the old stables of the artillery barracks in Östermalm. In the collections of the Swedish Museum of Natural History there is a North American alligator, that die in Stockholm in June 1878 (NR 39000) in the menagerie. They were obviously still in Stockholm at the time. In the autumn the menagerie travelled on. Now they travelled north by train.

In August 1878, the menagerie was displayed at Holmen by the Central Station in Gävle, situated 171 kilometers north of Stockholm. In an advertisement for the last exhibition in the city on 11 August, Kleeberg took the opportunity to call for horses and rabbits for slaughter, presumably food for the predators (*Arbetarbladet* 8 August 1878). There is also a printed catalogue of the menagerie's animals from Gävle (Kleeberg 1878).

In the printed catalogue published in 1877 and 1878, the rhinoceros is mentioned as 'the first specimen to be exhibited in Scandinavia'. It states that it ate 70 pounds of hay (about 30 kg), 2 ½ litres of bran, a quarter of a barrel of potatoes and as many carrots every day. According to Björn Dal (1996: 274) that Kleeberg's daughter Ottilia later married the menagerie owner C. Paulsen, who later, according to Dal, took over the menagerie and ran it in his name. In Paulsen's catalogues from 1888 to 1895, however, there is no rhinoceros.

To Denmark via Norway

In the autumn, Kleeberg's menagerie travelled to Christiania in Norway, where, according to a surviving diary entry, it was observed by a young Edvard Munch on 25 September.



From there, the menagerie travelled by three steamers to Fredrikshavn in Denmark, and in the autumn it toured Jutland, including the rhinoceros, a zebra, several predators (lions, tigers, pumas, wolves) and an African elephant. However, a young male giraffe died in Christiania (*Illustrierte Tidenden* no. 13 p. 213) and is now stuffed in the Gothenburg Museum of Natural History (GNM Ma ex: 443). Did the menagerie have two giraffes? Or was the one that died in Stockholm replaced by a new one that soon died? Although Paulsen took over in Scandinavia, Kleeberg continued to run the menagerie on the continent.

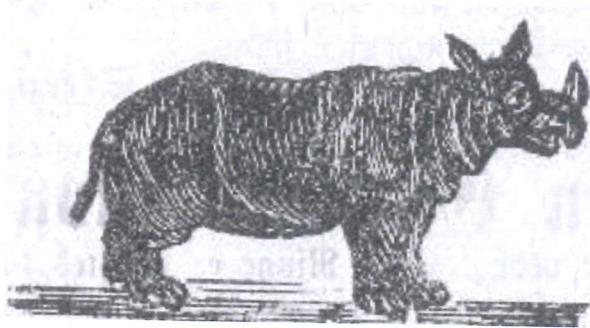
Left: Kleeberg's rhino in Hjørring 1878

We can follow the menagerie's activities on the continent in the 1880s in German newspapers, but that will have to wait for another time. In 1884, for example, the menagerie was in Graz in Austria (*Grazer Morgenpost* 19 July 1884). Even later, information about the menagerie appears in Swedish newspapers. In the summer of 1895 it was in the Russian town of Kaluga, southwest of Moscow, where a coachman, who had stuck his arm into the lion's cage, was badly mauled by the predator (*Södermanlands Nyheter* 22 July 1895). A few years later, an incident is reported in St Petersburg, when the menagerie's animal trainer Charles Petzoll

Patty, during a performance with a mixed group of predators, was attacked by a bear and seriously injured (*Härnösandsposten* 19 June 1899). There is no mention of a rhino in these later notices.

Which species?

What kind of rhinoceros did the menagerie bring to Sweden? A simple woodcut in an advertisement published in *Hjørring* in 1878 shows an Indian rhinoceros, *Rhinoceros unicornis* LINNAEUS, 1758 (see also *Dagens Nyheter* 2 February 1878). The model for the woodcut may have been taken from an unidentified printed publication, but the menagerie catalogues also



indicate that it is an Indian rhinoceros (Figure 2). However, I have not been able to find the rhinoceros in Kees Rookmaaker's very comprehensive catalogue of captive rhinoceroses (Rookmaaker 1998), which identifies and lists 2,439 rhinoceroses held in captivity since Roman times. There were several Indian rhinoceroses scattered in German menageries at the same time (Rookmaaker 2024).

Figure 2. F. Kleeberg's Indian rhinoceros, enlarged from the advertisement on the previous page, published in *Hjørring* 1878 (Vendsyssel Historical Museum)

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