

## Sarah's Childhood Pets

Sarah Van Hoosen Jones was a pet lover and kept scrapbooks of a variety of animals, such as parrots, dogs, and ponies, as pets throughout her life. The pictures in this exhibit are just a few examples of her beloved pets.

Her earliest pet was Polly, a double yellow head Mexican parrot. Joshua Van Hoosen had purchased Polly in Detroit in the early 1880s. On a trip to New Orleans, Sarah Taylor Van Hoosen had found a bird store and asked one of the workers how to teach a parrot to talk. She was told to “cover the cage with a heavy blanket and talk to the bird.” Joshua and Sarah tried the worker’s suggestion and soon they had taught Polly how to talk.<sup>1</sup>

Sarah Van Hoosen Jones’ earliest memories with Polly are ones of fascination, and Polly was equally fascinated with Sarah. As Sarah grew older, she enjoyed letting Polly ride on her shoulder while she was visiting the farm for the summer. The family could not bring Polly to Chicago with them for the winter due to the fact that traveling by train with a bird was difficult. Therefore, the family had to board out Polly for the months they were away from the farm.<sup>2</sup>

After Sarah received the deed to the farm from her grandmother and after the renovations of the farmhouse were completed in 1927, Polly moved into the farmhouse with Sarah for good. Sadly, Polly passed away a couple of years later, in 1929. Bertha gave Sarah another double yellow head parrot a few days before Sarah’s fiftieth birthday. Sarah decided to name the second bird Polly, in remembrance of the first Polly.<sup>3</sup>

As well as parrots, Sarah also kept many dogs throughout her life, particularly Pugs or French Bulls.<sup>4</sup> She received her first dog in 1899 from the Ludington family. The dog was an apricot, fawn-colored pug that Sarah named “Major McKinley Ludington Jones.” Major McKinley Ludington Jones was an aggressive dog, having had an eye clawed out by a cat during a fight. However, Sarah loved the dog and was proud to be his owner.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the pet that Sarah wanted most of all as a child was her own horse or pony. As a little girl, Sarah searched through the tool shed and was able to make herself four wooden sawhorses, dividing them into two teams of two horses, with the scraps of wood that she was able to find. She used stripped newspaper to make the manes and the tails of the horses, thus making the horses appear more “realistic.” She kept her wooden sawhorses in a stable she made herself as well.<sup>6</sup>

In 1903, Sarah received her first pony, which she named Ned Toodles. Toodles was not only a plaything, however. Sarah was able to learn how to work a farm, now that she had her own pony. Toodles allowed her to travel farther in the fields to raise her chickens; he allowed her the ability to haul dump carts of fruit and dirt along the farm; and he helped her cultivate the garden that she kept with her grandmother.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Van Hoosen Jones, *Chronicle of Van Hoosen Centenary Farm* (Self-Published, 1969), 62.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, *Centenary Farm*, 62-63.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, *Centenary Farm*, 63.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, *Centenary Farm*, 54.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, *Centenary Farm*, 41.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, *Centenary Farm*, 59.

<sup>7</sup> Jones, *Centenary Farm*, 59.

On the first Christmas after Sarah had received Ned Toodles, after the family had finished opening their gifts at the table, Bertha mentioned that she hit her foot on something that sounded like paper underneath the table. Alice and Sarah Taylor Van Hoosen suggested to little Sarah that she go underneath the table to see what Bertha had hit her foot on. Sarah saw a large, odd-shaped brown package underneath the table and was instructed by her mother, aunt, and grandmother to unwrap that package. She did so and was excited to discover that the package contained a brass-trimmed harness with a brass “S” on each blinder, for her pony, Ned Toodles.<sup>8</sup>

These early childhood memories not only conditioned Sarah to love and to care for animals throughout her life, but especially in the case of Ned Toodles, these memories and the skills these animals taught her as a child helped to set the stage for Sarah to become an award-winning farmer as an adult.



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<sup>8</sup> Jones, *Centenary Farm*, 64-65.



