

## PRETISS N. GRAY – Father of the Big Game Records

Early in the last century, there was concern that authentic details of the finest specimens of our vanishing big game should be recorded before it was too late. Little did conservationists realize the success that would later be achieved in restoring our big game herds to their current high levels.

In his foreword to the 1934 pamphlet *North American Big Game Official Measurement Records* published by Remington Arms Company, Prentiss Gray wrote:

*“In 1929, the Boone and Crockett Club, realizing that many of the best heads, killed only a generation ago, had already disappeared, instituted a search for the best remaining trophies. After three years work the results were published in 1932 in **Records of North American Big Game** wherein 900 trophies were listed.”*

Thus began the Boone and Crockett Club’s role in record keeping. Because the 1932 record book was limited to only 500 copies, Gray felt that the message needed to also reach the thousands of hunters who might have an interest in comparing their trophies with record heads. Accordingly in 1934 he collaborated with Derrydale Press and Remington Arms Company to produce a 48-page pamphlet which condensed material from the 1932 record book. It listed only the most popular big game species.

Prentiss Gray had intended that another major updated record book be published by the Boone and Crockett Club in 1935. That timetable was not met as a result of his tragic accidental death that same

year. Subsequently, the next publication of records was delayed by the Club until 1939.

Prentiss Gray was born in California in 1884. He was engaged in lumber, shipping and other business enterprises on the West Coast until 1916 when he became a member of the Commission for Relief in Belgium under Herbert Hoover. During America’s involvement in World War I, he was chief of the Marine Transport Division of the U.S. Food Administration, and later as director of the American Relief Administration in Europe. After the war he established a commodities business in New York as an exporter and importer, and then entered banking, becoming president of the J. Henry Schroder Banking Corporation.

Gray’s varied and highly successful business career did not detract from his vocation for the outdoors. Throughout his life, his love of remote places took him all over North America, and to Europe and Africa. He kept detailed journals that were supplemented by his great talent in photography. *From the Peace to the Fraser*, published by the Boone and Crockett Club in 1994, was based entirely on his original North American diaries of exploration, hunting and the acquisition of museum specimens during the period between 1900 and 1930.

In 1929, Gray embarked on an extensive expedition through Africa. In Kenya and Tanganyika he was guided by the famous professional hunter, Philip Percival. The later part of his trip took him to the Belgian Congo and on to Angola where he

collected specimens of the giant (royal) sable for the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. The diorama of giant sable still on exhibit in Philadelphia, resulted from his efforts. Gray’s African exploits were published in 1930 by *The Sportsman* magazine in a 32-page supplement under the title *African Game-Lands*. Portions of his African journals also appeared in the 1933 Boone and Crockett book *Hunting Trails on Three Continents*, and later in more complete form in the Boone and Crockett 1995 book *African Game-Lands*.

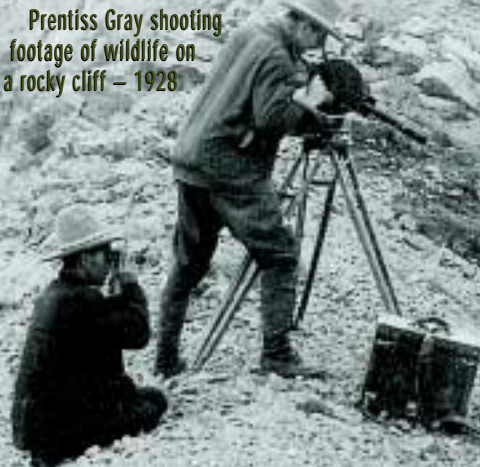
An extensive biography of Prentiss Gray’s life is contained in the introductory portion of *From the Peace to the Fraser*. It was written by Sherman Gray, his son, who is still an active member of the Boone and Crockett Club. Prentiss Gray’s life was cut short when he was only fifty years old. He had crammed a lot of activity and accomplishment into those years! ▲▲▲



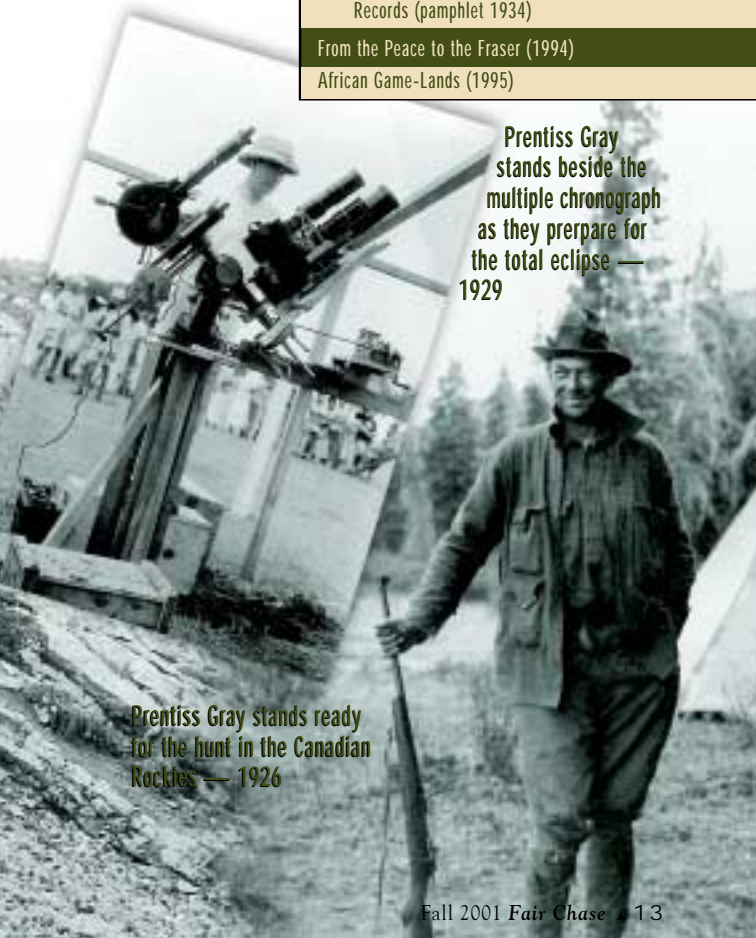
**Theodore J. Holsten, Jr.**  
Editor of Specialty Books and Limited Editions Communications, Publications, and Marketing Committee

BOOK BY PRETISS N. GRAY
Camera Adventures in New Brunswick (1925)
African Game-Lands (pamphlet 1930)
Records of North American Big Game (1932, editor)
Hunting Trails on Three Continents (1933, co-editor)
North American Big Game Official Measurement Records (pamphlet 1934)
From the Peace to the Fraser (1994)
African Game-Lands (1995)

**Prentiss Gray shooting footage of wildlife on a rocky cliff – 1928**



**Prentiss Gray stands ready for the hunt in the Canadian Rockies — 1926**



**Prentiss Gray stands beside the multiple chronograph as they prepare for the total eclipse — 1929**