

B&C BOOKS

HARRY WHITNEY – Hunting with the Eskimos



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Robert Peary embarked from Sydney, Nova Scotia, in July 1908, on his historic expedition to conquer the North Pole. Harry Whitney, an avid big game hunter, was his guest during the voyage north.

Whitney and two other American sportsmen were to have the opportunity to hunt while the Peary expedition assembled food, dogs, and other essentials at Etah, a famous embarkation point for polar expeditions. Etah is located in northwestern Greenland, one of the closest land locations to the Pole.

It was intended that the sportsmen should return home from Etah while Peary's group would continue on. Whitney

was disappointed with his hunting results. He persuaded Peary to leave him at Etah to continue his hunt until the following year when Peary would return. Two of Peary's men were also left at Etah to look after supplies. Thus began a sojourn of more than a year during which Harry Whitney endured the long arctic night mostly with only his Eskimo companions.

Whitney eventually obtained most of the trophies he sought – muskox, polar bear, narwhal, and walrus, and it took many exciting adventures to secure them. However, this is only part of the charm of his book. Success in his hunt demanded that he adopt the Eskimo way of life, share with them their privations and dangers. His story brings us close to the Highland Eskimos, the most northerly inhabitants of the earth during a time when they still followed their traditional way of life.

Whitney's book is filled with excitement and danger. During the long arctic night, with the people near starvation, they embarked on long hunts for game by moonlight over dangerous ice while subjected to violent storms in temperatures that some-

times exceeded 50 degrees below zero. Whitney's clothing and sleeping bag were made of furs and skins by the Eskimo women, and he indicated that being infested with lice was a way of life! He narrowly escaped death a number of times and when the months of darkness finally ended, he could not believe how sallow was his complexion with peeling skin from months without sunlight. Nor could he believe how easy it was to lose track of time.

Whitney vividly describes the terrain, the spectacular northern skies, the ice flows and violent storms, the dog teams on which the Eskimos depended, the millions of birds, little auks and eider ducks that returned with the light of spring. He makes us feel a part of the awesome surroundings.

When Peary returned from his historic journey to the North Pole in 1909, Whitney was picked up and he returned to civilization. He had spent 14 months in the arctic. His only book, *Hunting with the Eskimos*, was published the following year. Harry Whitney became a Boone and Crockett Club Member in 1929. He died in 1936. n

BOOK BY
HARRY WHITNEY

Hunting with the Eskimos (1910)



BACKGROUND IMAGE: The Erik in small ice. INSET CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Cover from Whitney's only book, *Hunting with the Eskimos*; Iceberg off the Labrador; Muskox trophies lashed on sled; and Eiseeyou and the author with baby muskox in his arms.

