

B&C BOOKS

HENRY L. STIMSON — Secretary of War, Outdoorsman



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During a long career of service under five presidents, Henry L. Stimson wrote much about government affairs. But, he was also an avid big game hunter, horseman, and mountaineer.

In 1949, a year before his death, at the urging of family and friends, he wrote the only book chronicling his outdoor activities. Privately printed and titled, *My Vacations*, it is an extremely scarce item. It reveals much about him that is little known by the general public.

Born in 1867, Stimson grew up during an age when the West was still largely a frontier. Game was abundant and unexplored country a challenge and an adventure. Still in his teens and a student

at Yale, he spent months hunting in Colorado and New Brunswick. Later, as the frontier narrowed, he transferred his interest to northern Montana. He explored the area that was later to become Glacier National Park with George Bird Grinnell, and made many subsequent trips there, often accompanied by close friend, Gifford Pinchot. He pursued many species of game, but his favorite was grizzly bear hunting. Influenced by Sir Samuel Baker, he acquired a twelve-pound single shot .577, later nicknamed "Old Rory." Loaded with 167 grains of black powder and a 600-grain bullet, it must have had a tremendous kick, but he says that he never lost a bear!

Stimson was an attorney in New York City off and on throughout his career. He was U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York under Theodore Roosevelt, ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1910, was appointed Secretary of War by President Taft in 1911, served as a colonel in World War I, was governor-general of the Philippines in 1927, and served as Secretary of State under Herbert Hoover. Although he was a lifelong Republican, President Franklin Roosevelt chose him to be Secretary of War in 1940, a position he held

throughout World War II. He was closely involved in the development of the atomic bomb. According to local legend, the decision to drop the bomb on Japan was made at Stimson's Long Island estate named "Highhold."

An early Boone and Crockett Club Member, Stimson's account of his first ascent of Chief Mountain in northern Montana in 1892 was published in the Boone and Crockett 1895 book, *Hunting in Many Lands*. He was a close friend of many prominent Boone and Crockett Members, and is one of a select group elected to be an Honorary Life Member of the Club.

During all his assignments in the United States and around the world, Henry Stimson always gravitated back to his beloved Long Island estate, Highhold, located eight miles from Oyster Bay. The house there was built for him in 1903 and at that time it had neither electricity nor running water. He and his wife loved its remoteness. Over the years he sponsored many neighborhood equestrian and family events and his guest list included Theodore Roosevelt. He died at Highhold in 1950. The Stimson house no longer stands and the property has become a county park, a tribute to his legacy. ■

BOOK BY
HENRY L. STIMSON

My Vacations (1949)

BACKGROUND: The Colorado Flat Tops. **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The Zinal Rothorn--approaching the summit; Stimson opening the Highhold Games; Finding a dead grizzly; and deep sea fishing from a launch from the "Apo."

