



NEW #3 IN THE WORLD

The nostalgia sings on.

Albert Friedrich was born June 7, 1864. In 1881 he worked as a bartender at the Southern Hotel and collected antlers and horns from many different animals. He had aspirations of opening up his own business someday and decorating it with all the paraphernalia he collected.

Sure enough, in 1887, Albert opened the swinging doors to his "Buckhorn Saloon" and offered beer and whiskey in trade for deer antlers. The location changed three times until his famous collection ended up on display at the Lone Star Brewery 70 years later. That was 1957.

"Belly up to the bar, boys, stash your six shooters and wallets in the lockers and make yourselves to home." Greetings like that helped make the Buckhorn Saloon a favorite place for the cowboys, trappers, businessmen, and cattlemen of the old west who came to San Antonio, Texas, in the late 1800's in search of thirst-quenching refreshment and good-natured conversation. The Buckhorn was the standard meeting place for townfolk's. Mail was sent to many trail ridin' cowboys in care of the Buckhorn Saloon.

Albert tolerated no nonsense within the walls of the Buckhorn. There were few chairs and the patron's guns were locked away. This way his customers were protected from the perils of anger and spontaneous gunplay and the dangers of being rolled in the fleshpots of the

sinful city. Six overhead "shooters mirrors" were used to watch customers standing at the bar when the bartender had to turn his back. There was never a record of a lifeless body dragged out by the heels through the Buckhorn's swinging doors.

As always, the center of attraction at the Buckhorn was the 78 point whitetail that hung over the bar itself. The oldest and most widely accepted story of how that buck was acquired originates on the Ford Ranch back in 1892. It seems an old cowboy rode into the town of Brady one day claiming he had shot a Goliath buck with a rack that looked like Yosemite Forest. The story was laughed at by everyone but Jeff Benson, the Foreman of the Ford Ranch from 1888 to 1894. Old timers around campfires had spoken of cowboys on the Ford Ranch catching fleeting glimpses of a buck on a certain hill, his antlers looking like a twisted mass of cedar roots. The old cowboy claims he wounded the buck and could not find the oddity. The 31 year old Benson traveled to the hill where tales of the monstrosity had originated. Sure enough, the antlers were found.

Jeff left them with Jim Wall, a feed store operator, who promised to sell the "horns" and split the funds with Jeff. Albert Friedrich made two trips to Brady and bought them for \$100.00 and Benson got his half.

According to Albert Friedrich's memoirs, he is quoted: "This white-tail deer was killed in McCulloch County, northwestern, Texas, in 1899. It has 78 prongs and I feel the greatest pride in its possession. It is mounted on a shield, forming a five-

point star on which is spelled the word Texas. Protruding therefrom is a neck and head of symmetrical proportions. Growing from the head is a unique cluster of horns, which wrap the beholder in astonishment and admiration. I traveled 674 miles, of which 106 were made in a buggy, to secure this one specimen."

Another multi-pointed buck nearly identical was later obtained when Albert purchased Bill Keilman's "Horn Palace" collection in 1922. This purchase doubled the Buckhorn's size.

Let's direct our attention to the "78" point buck. This is the famous "Benson" or "Brady" buck that would hold the World's Record title in Boone and Crockett for 26 years. Grancel Fitz officially measured this buck along with the other overly endowed twin buck on January 3, 1955. The so-called 78 pointer is actually recorded with 49 points an inch or longer and scores 286. The other buck boasts 47 measurable points and scores 284-3/8 non-typical. These two bucks were declared #1 and #2 at the 1957 B&C Awards.

The two heads were sent for remounting in late 1958. This is when it was discovered one was mounted with shed antlers. The #2 buck scoring 284-3/8 was dropped in the 1964 B&C book and the year 1892 and Jeff Benson were added to the previous "unknown" status of the 286.

Besides scoring for the Boone and Crockett Club, I am a director and measurer for the North American Shed Hunters Club. This record book documents and records trophy big game shed antlers. I began efforts to officially measure the Benson

By JOHN STEIN
B&C Official Measurer

ABOVE: TAKEN IN THE LATE 1800'S, THIS NEGLECTED BUCK IS FINALLY RECOGNIZED, REMOUNTED, AND RECORDED FOR ITS TRUE WORTH.

"Sheds" that Grancel Fitz had scored at 284-3/8. In mid March of 1996, I accomplished this task...I thought.

There were rumors the 286 with 78 points had loose antlers. This would not be too unusual since it had been 41 years since Grancel Fitz had measured it. I too noticed this when I handled them. I could not officially complete my sheds score chart unless I was convinced the 284-3/8 were sheds. I was not. What to do? I discussed the situation with Mr. Bill West and Mr. Jerry Retzloff at the Brewery. I offered to have the sheds remounted at my expense. They were still on the late 1950's mount. The answer was yes and the head was mine for six weeks.

I wasted no time in soaking the mount to prepare it for a historic find. I unveiled the secret of none other than a true skull plate and not the shed antlers reported to B&C before the 1964 B&C book! Just as I had expected....almost. The skull was broken and wired back together! I was not prepared for this.

I reported my findings to B&C so a just process could begin. This meant to me that the 286 at center stage in the Buckhorn Hall of Horns was the true shed antlers. Or were they? This is the most logical explanation of these "twin" bucks.

I wanted to be sure the 286 were the sheds. I first must satisfy my uncertainty with more than assumptions. There was no need for me to make the same offer to remount the 286 because it was already on a new mount from 1989. I spoke to that taxidermist but he could not verify one way or the other.

I decided to search for a way to X-ray the 286. Luckily I was led to Mr. Jack Brink at his "All American Maintenance, Inc.". With his commercial X-ray equipment, Jack and his crew, Mike Sloans and Kirk Coniver, did their thing after museum hours on April 3, 1996. Once I viewed the X-rays I could see for sure the 286 was mounted with shed antlers.

The true sheds have been measured for the NASHC. On June 20, 1996, I reported the facts to the B&C Records Committee at their meeting in New York where they

ruled the 284-3/8 would be accepted. The past World's Record scoring 286 would no longer be accepted.

All in all the loss of the 286 from the B&C archives will not really change the standings of other trophies with the 284-3/8 it's rightful replacement at #3 in the world. No other non-typical whitetail has been measured with a final score in between.

Another story appearing in THE HOUSTON PRESS newspaper on Thursday, Dec.10, 1959, has another quite contrary tale of two disfigured racks. It mentions three hunters in 1896 who all took turns shooting a buck with shotguns and rifles. It goes on to say the sheds were also found but one on each side of the Neches River and by two different parties. I must discount this tale and put my faith in Albert Friedrich's own memoirs.

The guiltless yet erroneous 78 point creature had served with distinction. As generations expire and new faces and owners appear, facts are inadvertently lost in the passage of time. When 19th century trophies are present and accepted many moons earlier than even the aspirations of recording them to rosters, we must bow our heads to blameless innocence when the whole truth and nothing but the truth is not confirmed.

The old mounts shown in the 1958 record book are acceptably turn of the century. The moving of the entire collection in 1956 to storage and again in 1957 by untrained handlers is more than likely the time damage was done to both trophies. The 286 itself sustained three broken points at that time. It is also quite likely the brittle, 60 year old 284-3/8 skull plate was cracked when the rusty nails or screws were removed during the remounting in late 1958.

When updating the 1964 record book, the discovery of sheds was but one find that would change the top trophies status. The other head was remounted at the same time. It was not dropped from B&C for a broken skull plate. Any other problems would have been addressed then also. A much graver iniquity

than what has historically occurred with the wrong trophy holding top honors for 26 years, would be the denial of an equally impressive and ardent set of antlers from a truly magnificent whitetail.

It is a shame the wrong trophy was removed in 1964. The rightful head would have reigned as the World's Record for 20 years and this story would not have been written.

If you have an opportunity to visit the Buckhorn Hall of Horns...do it. You will not be disappointed. Both



LEFT: John Stein displays both the erroneous and the newly discovered #3 non-typical whitetails in the world. The true sheds, which held the World's Record for 26 years, are shown mounted on the star panel.

PHOTO A: This x-ray of the 286 non-typical was taken April 3, 1996, to verify it does not rightly qualify for the B&C Records Book.

PHOTO B: The repaired skull plate of the new #3 buck.

PHOTO A



PHOTO B



the newly recorded shed antlers and the replacement #3 non-typical scoring 284-3/8 are on display for you to study and reflect upon. Sit back and study the twists and turns of the contorted oddities. Fantasize about the saloon era and how things could have been. Envision the many record book whitetails that hung within the nicotine clouds as a gunslinger draws at the flutter of a gambler's ace. You can still have a cold beer at the backbar that stood at the turn of the century. Rest your heels upon the same brass rail that Albert Friedrich and Billy Keilman did many moons before Lt. Col. Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders were there. The nostalgia lingers on.