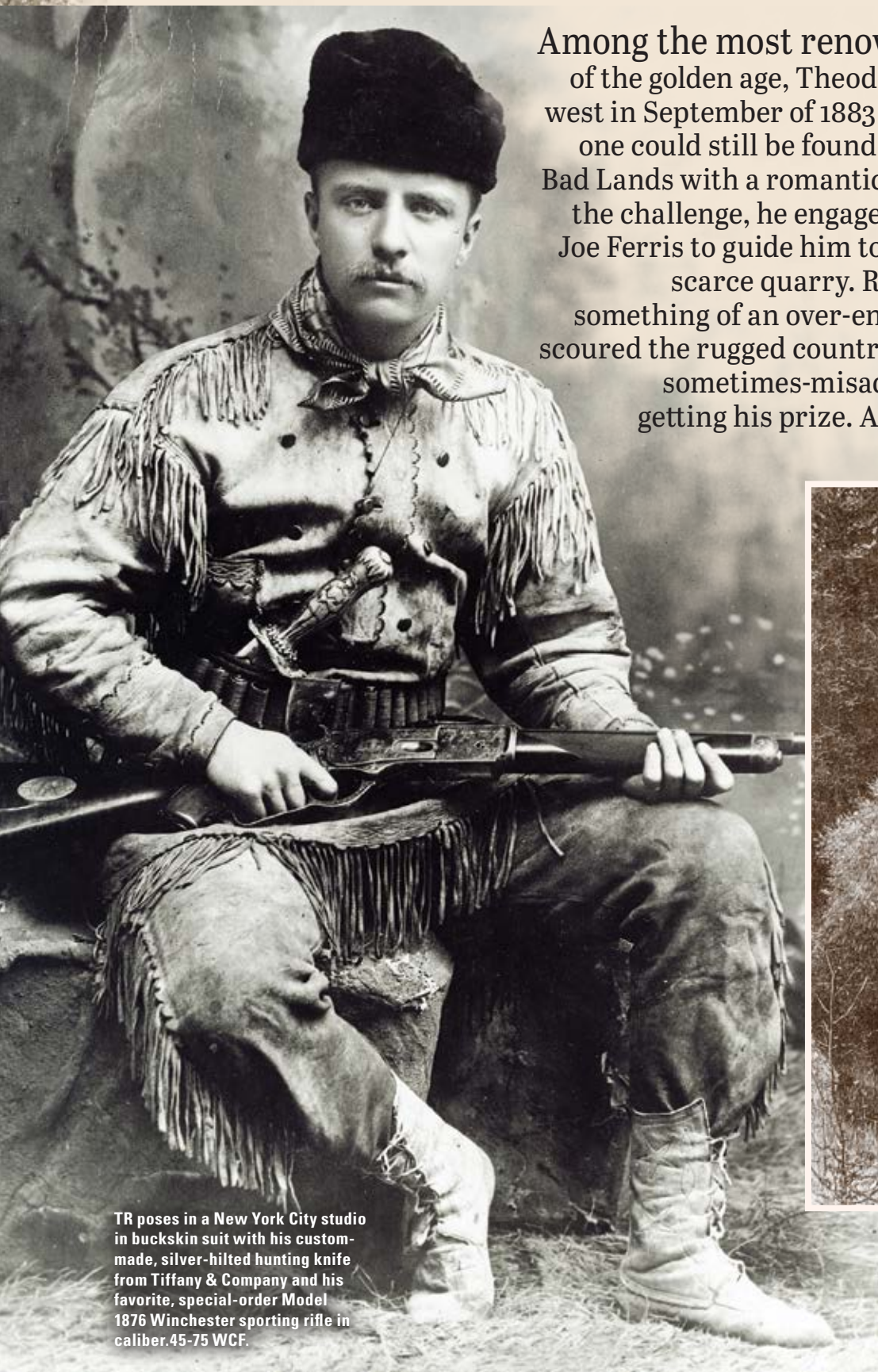


HUNTING THE AMER



TR poses in a New York City studio in buckskin suit with his custom-made, silver-hilted hunting knife from Tiffany & Company and his favorite, special-order Model 1876 Winchester sporting rifle in caliber .45-75 WCF.

Among the most renowned sport hunters of the golden age, Theodore Roosevelt first went west in September of 1883 to shoot a buffalo while one could still be found. Arriving in the Dakota Bad Lands with a romantic determination to meet the challenge, he engaged future-ranch-partner Joe Ferris to guide him to the by-then, extremely scarce quarry. Roosevelt—who still was something of an over-enthusiastic greenhorn—scoured the rugged country for an exhausting and sometimes-misadventurous week before getting his prize. As Ferris remembered it:



This tableau memorializes TR's first encounter with a grizzly in the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming Territory in 1884.

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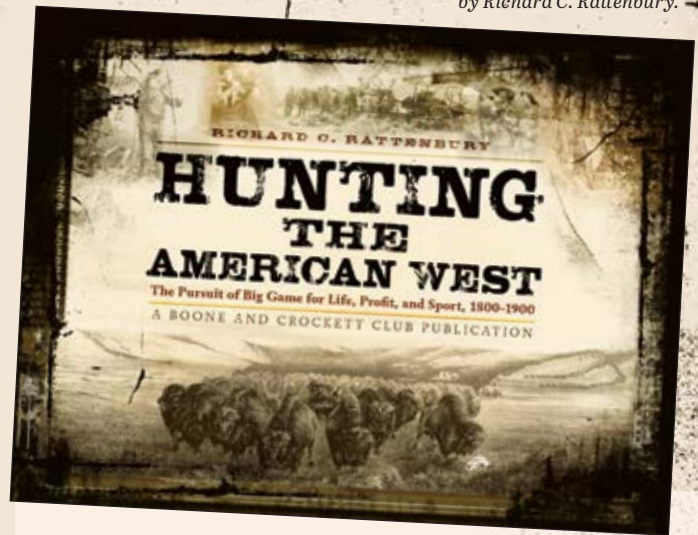
One morning we started up Little Cannon Ball Creek. We got, I guess two or three miles, when I spied a buffalo....It was from twenty-five to forty yards to the extreme outside we shot at the buffalo and he [Roosevelt] made a dandy shot. I told him to take aim at the yellow spot...back of the shoulder and he would hit it right through the heart. That buffalo came out of that creek bottom almost straight up twelve feet....At first I thought he had missed him. However he had taken only a few jumps and the blood squirted. I knew he had him....Roosevelt was like a boy just out of school and so was I....I was plumb tired out and he was so eager to shoot his first buffalo that it somehow got into my blood and I wanted to see him kill his first one as badly as he wanted to kill it.

TR was positively ecstatic over his hard-won success, performing an impromptu jig around his trophy and presenting Ferris with a bonus of \$100 on the spot. Yet, though he would always reveal genuine enthusiasm over fine trophies fairly won, Roosevelt also would demonstrate an increasing perception and thoughtfulness as he matured as a western hunter.

Having established two ranching operations near Little Missouri in the Dakota Territory, Roosevelt returned often to cowboy and hunt in the West. The region and its wildlife challenged his endurance and his abilities. In the summer of 1884 he wrote to his sister, Anna: "For the last week I have been fulfilling a boyhood ambition of mine—that is, I have been playing at frontier hunter in good earnest, having been off entirely alone, with my horse and rifle on the prairie. I wanted to see if I could do perfectly well without a guide, and I succeeded beyond my expectations. I shot a couple of antelope and a deer, and missed a great many more. I felt as absolutely free as a man could feel...and I enjoyed the trip to the utmost." Meeting the challenges of self-reliance and occasional danger that were part-and-parcel of western big-game hunting remained a central element of Roosevelt's experience. The latter challenge clearly was met during his month-long hunting trip into the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming Territory in August and September of 1884.

The enthusiastic hunter-naturalist set off to test his mettle against the vaunted grizzly bear, with guide Bill Merrifield and a camp attendant named Old Man Lebo as escorts. Attired in a new suit of fringed buckskin set off with silk neckerchief, sealskin chaps, and boots of alligator hide, TR carried a hunting battery consisting of a .40-90 Sharps Borchardt single-shot rifle, a .45-75 Model 1876 Winchester repeating rifle, a .50-150 Webley Express double rifle, and some 1,200 rounds of ammunition! Clearly, if surrounded

TR perused mountain goats atop the Bitterroot Mountain in the fall of 1896. He wears his characteristic buckskin outfit with Mills-pattern cartridge belt and carries what appears to be his favorite Model 1876 Winchester rifle.



Hunting the American West is a thoroughly illustrated, narrative history of big-game hunting in the nineteenth-century American West. The engaging narrative draws extensively on the writings of original participants and observers of the subject and—along with an abundance of pictorial material—affords unusual insight into the diverse methods and motives for hunting big game in the Old West. No other work on the subject conveys the feeling and character of the hunt in its various eras and styles, or its profound consequences, as convincingly.

This book covers subsistence, commerce, and sport hunting; the variety of methods used among different peoples in the harvest; the evolving weaponry involved; the artistic expression engendered by the western chase; and the rise of the hunter-conservation movement, which led to the founding of the Boone and Crockett Club.

- Hardcover with dust jacket
- 416 pages
- 12 x 8.75 inches

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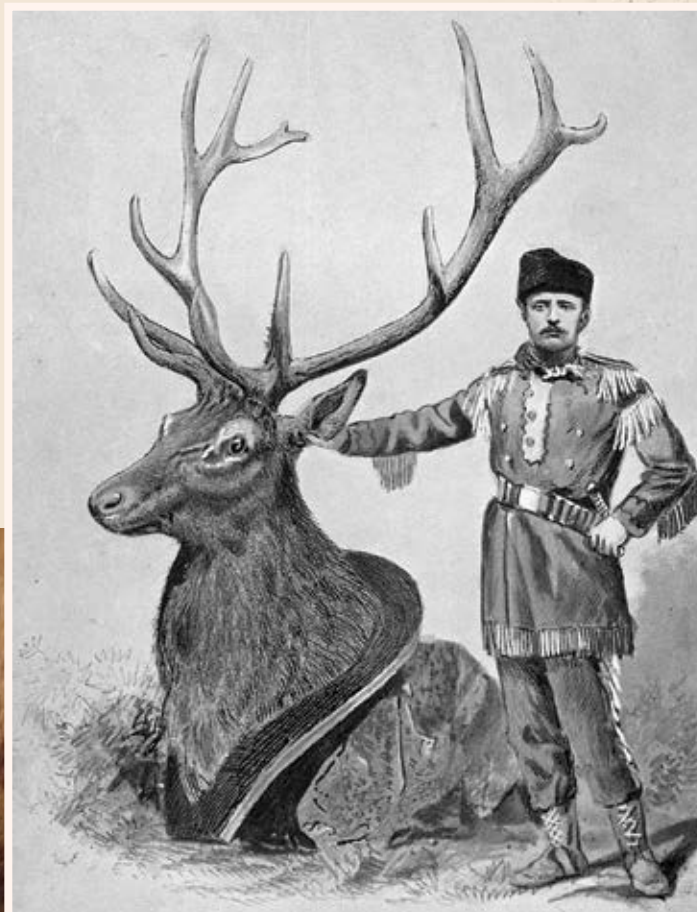
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by a battalion of bears, he could stand a protracted siege. "I shall feel able to face anything," he allowed in a letter to his sister. As it happened, the bears came up one at a time, and Roosevelt experienced a fruitful and satisfying hunt. Of his first grizzly, he recounted to Anna:

We had found where he had been feeding on the carcass of an elk; and followed his trail into a dense pine forest, fairly choked with fallen timber. While noiselessly and slowly threading our way through the thickest part of it I saw Merrifield, who was directly ahead of me, sink suddenly to his knees and turn half round, his face fairly ablaze with excitement. Cocking my rifle and stepping quickly forward, I found myself face to face with the great bear, who was less than twenty five feet off—not eight steps....At that distance and in such a place it was very necessary to kill or disable him at the first fire; doubtless my face was pretty white, but the blue barrel was as steady as a rock as I glanced along it until I could see the top of the bead fairly between his two sinister looking eyes; as I pulled the trigger I jumped aside out of the smoke, to be ready if he charged; but it was needless, for the great brute was struggling in the death agony, and, as you will see when I bring home his skin, the bullet hole in his skull was exactly between his eyes as if I had measured the distance with a carpenter's rule.

TR later reported his first grizzly as approaching nine feet in height and weighing more than 1,000 pounds! Obviously satisfied with his decorum and shooting, to say nothing of his trophy, he found grizzly hunting to his liking, and he took two more before departing the Bighorns. In all, his first western hunting expedition had proven a great success, not least in the experience of wilderness camping and meeting the challenge of the fair chase after dangerous game. ■



ABOVE: Proud of a fine trophy fairly won, a dignified-appearing TR poses with an oversized mount of the bull elk taken in the Shoshone Mountains of Wyoming in September of 1891. He found his quarry's "neck and throat...garnished with a mane of long hair; [while] the symmetry of the great horns set off the fine, delicate lines of the noble head."
LEFT: Theodore Roosevelt favored the Model 1876 Winchester rifle during his early big-game hunts in the West. His personal favorite (left) in caliber .45-75, killed his first grizzly bear on the Bighorn Mountains hunt of 1884. The other rifle, caliber .50-95 Express, was presented to guide Bill Merrifield in commemoration of the event. Always discriminating in his firearms, Roosevelt preferred custom-order guns, here with half-octagon barrels, half magazines, special sights, and deluxe checkered stocks with pistol grips and shotgun-pattern butts.

