

# Vanished Trophies, Legends Lost

STORIES BEHIND TROPHIES NEVER MEANT TO BE IN THE RECORDS

This chapter is featured in the Club's latest publication, *Records of North American Big Game*, 15th Edition.

Read more about the book and order your copy on page 38.

The portrait photograph of the H.M. Beck pronghorn is featured as the chapter photo in the book. The head was originally measured by Prentiss Gray on December 3, 1931.

The Boone and Crockett record book is a testament to the pursuit of exceptional trophy animals and wildlife conservation. The back stories secured from the heads and horns submitted to the record book are part of the largest and oldest scientific database ever compiled for North American big game. However, the fame and fortune of taking a world-class trophy often lead down mysterious, secretive, shadowy, and cryptic roads.

In most cases, once a head is measured and panel scored, such as invited trophies to the Club's three-year awards programs, it will stay in the record book forever. Sometimes, world-class trophies are never even measured, much less entered. Others are entered and accepted but later lost to fires, theft, and even vindictive ex-spouses. Occasionally, entries are disqualified later when new information pops up, leading to altered horns or antlers. Other accepted entries have been later found to have been taken under less than legal or Fair Chase standards and then dropped for those reasons. Others have been shuttered away by hunters who do not want the added scrutiny or publicity associated with taking a world-class head.

To chronicle every story would take an entire book. Still, several trophy stories stand out, from the most mundane to others worthy of a Hollywood screenplay. The largest one-time purge of record book entries was largely procedural, occurring when the current scoring system was adopted in 1950. The records committee mandated that all major trophies in every category be remeasured and scored under the new system, a Herculean task that Samuel B. Webb, the committee's chairman, and others accomplished in time for the publication of the 1952 records book. Many former top ten and even World's-record heads were dropped from the book simply because those heads were not available to be remeasured or they scored differently under the revised system, which now included symmetry as a primary consideration.

## DECEPTIVE PERFECTION

One trophy that maintained its number one spot under the new scoring system was a pronghorn antelope that had stood on top since the first record book was published in 1932. It eclipsed the number two head by more than ten points, and many believed the 101 6/8-point giant would remain the World's Record for eternity.

But was the giant actually a Cardiff version of a pronghorn antelope?

The head, belonging to Dr. H.M. Beck and shot by an unknown hunter in the Antelope Valley of Arizona in 1878, was on display at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia since the turn of the century and viewed by thousands of people every year.



**The trophies lost, stolen, disqualified, or never entered leave behind a void in the records and hunting history. We may discover one someday at a garage or estate sale, but until then, we still have the National Collection of Heads and Horns to keep us forever living these great hunts of the past.**

In 1979, it was loaned to the National Taxidermists Hall of Fame, where it was prepped for display by one of the staff taxidermists. In the process, the keen-eyed taxidermist discovered something that had gone unnoticed for nearly a century.

Someone very skillful and artistically talented had added more than two inches of length to either side of the horns using paper mâché and lamp black. Today, with modern resins and paints, pronghorn horns can be altered or duplicated so easily that they are truly undetectable without drilling into the horn material for comparison to the surrounding real horn. Only simple tools and methods were available back then, making this sleight of hand all the more incredible.

It is quite possible that even without the two extra inches of alteration, the head would have still measured in the mid-90s. As such, it may have remained the World's Record until Mike Gallo took the current top spot with an incredible 96 4/8-point New Mexico buck in August 2013. He graciously donated that buck to the Club's National Collection of Heads and Horns, which can be viewed seven days a week at Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium in Springfield, Missouri.

**RECORD BULL**

Another former World's Record no longer listed in the current record books is a bull moose collected on Alaska's Kenai River in 1899. Some accounts state the bull was found dead, possibly due to injuries suffered during the rut. Other accounts state that Andrew Anderson killed the

bull on the river in 1900. At the time of discovery, the bull had an incredible width of 81 inches and ruled the Alaska-Yukon moose category as the top contender for more than 40 years, even though the spread had shrunk to 76 4/8 inches when the moose was officially measured in 1924. The well-known and highly-respected taxidermist Carl Akeley had measured the bull at 78 4/8 points a few years prior, but the record books made no provision for natural shrinkage.

As mentioned before, all World's Records were required to be re-measured under the new scoring system to be eligible for the 1952 records book. For moose, the new scoring system included provisions for the greatest spread, number of points, base circumference, and width and length of the palms. It can only be speculated if that would have improved or lowered the head's standing in the records book, but the bull has 32 points,

nine-inch burrs, and palms that would be compatible with most other bull moose of world-class proportions.

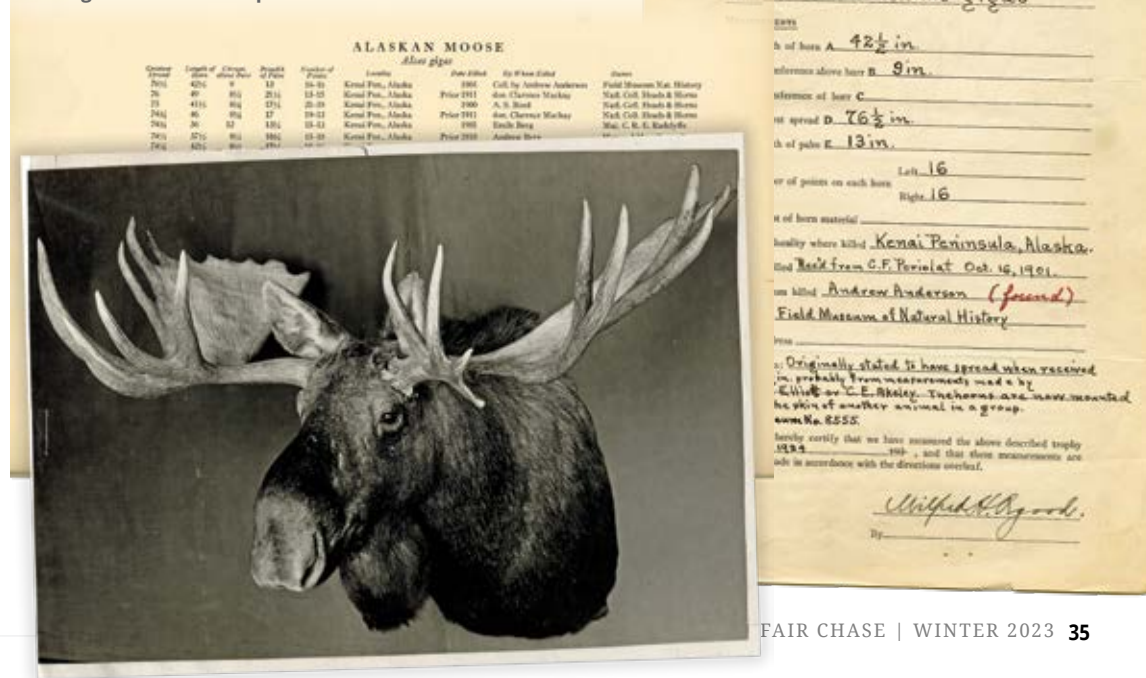
And even though this particular bull is awed over by thousands of people a week as they make their way through the wildlife displays of Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, its status as a one-time World's Record remains fairly obscure. For reasons lost to time, the museum elected not to have the bull rescored for the 1952 book, and the head was subsequently dropped from the records. The explanation most accepted is that the museum staff did not want to disassemble the diorama to score the majestic bull properly.

**COLLECTIONS ABLAZE**

The category of legends lost that is most tragic are those heads accepted for permanent listing but later lost in fires or thefts.

Johnny Caputo was an affable New York hunter, small in stature but big in personality, who spent hundreds of days exploring the sheep mountains of British Columbia and the Yukon during the 1950s and '60s. Ever energetic, Caputo racked up an amazing string of at least five all-time record-book Stone's sheep, including one ram scoring 183 points that won the top prize in the Club's 1968 Big Game Awards and a beautiful, perfectly symmetrical 42 6/8-inch Fannin that

**RIGHT: The front of the original score chart and the portrait of Anderson's moose along with the listing from *Records of North American Big Game, 1st Edition*, published in 1932 showing the bull at the top of the list.**



STONE SHEEP  
Record—196-6/8



STONE SHEEP—1st Award  
Score—183  
Length—(R) 44 (L) 44-6/8  
Basal Circumference—(R) 14-5/8 (L) 14-5/8  
Locality—Ketchikan Range, British Columbia  
—1966  
Hunter—John Caputo, Sr.  
Guide—John Tebitt



Caputo's 1966 Stone's sheep was recognized with a First Place Award at the Club's 13th Big Game Competition held at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The ram had a final score of 183 points.

won first prize in the 1954 competition—one the very few Fannin-colored Stone's sheep ever to do so. Caputo, the undisputed leader of the Stone's sheep pack, hunted primarily in British Columbia's Ketchikan Range and was outfitted by his great friend, the legendary outfitter Skook Davidson. Spending weeks at a time in the rugged mountains, Caputo, more often than not, took home record-book heads at the end of a hunt.

In addition to the Stone's sheep, Caputo's trophy room included all-time book specimens of elk, Dall's sheep, bighorns, and grizzly bears, along with several other sheep that easily met the minimum book requirements but were never scored.

Johnny lost his entire collection of more than 90 North American heads to a fire in 1968. Included in the collection were 32 North American rams, half of which were of all-time record book caliber. A huge part of Boone and Crockett's history went up in flames in just a few short minutes. John lived into his 90s and was a regular at hunting conventions well into his golden years, making friends wherever he went, but losing his trophy room stayed with him forever.

### THOSE UNMEASURED

The category most steeped in legend is the big game that were possible World's Record trophies taken under completely Fair Chase and

legitimate circumstances. Still, for reasons only known to those hunters, they remained unmeasured until they were lost forever.

The most iconic example of the never-entered World's Record was a bighorn sheep taken by A. Phimister Proctor in 1912. As one of the nation's all-time greatest sculptors, Proctor's bronze works usually featured horses, cowboys, Native Americans, and wildlife.

Proctor was a contemporary of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, another turn-of-the-century preeminent sculptor and designer behind the most famous coin in U.S. history, commonly known as the Saint-Gaudens Double Eagle Gold piece. Saint-Gaudens was commissioned to design and sculpt the William Tecumseh Sherman monument on a corner of New York's Central Park; however, Saint-Gaudens did not consider himself a first-rate animal sculptor and asked Proctor for his help on Sherman's horse. In the monument, the mounted Sherman is flanked by another bronze named "Victory" that portrays "Liberty," which became the obverse side of the coin.

Proctor's help assisting Saint-Gaudens on the Sherman monument plays heavily into the bighorn sheep story. As a thank you to Proctor, Saint-Gaudens presented him with a highly-engraved 8mm Mannlicher-Schoenauer carbine, complete with an adjustable

peep sight dovetailed into the rifle's cocking piece.

In the fall of 1912, Proctor took the train to Alberta with his newly gifted rifle, a bed roll, and not much else for a bighorn hunt with Bert Riggall, one of the pioneers of Alberta sheep outfitting. Riggall relayed an excellent account of the hunt in an *Outdoor Life* story called "A Record Lost Twice." Many consider the article the greatest sheep-hunting story ever written. The following is garnered from the original story but does not do justice to Riggall and Russell's enjoyable storytelling in the original article.

Although Proctor had grown up on a ranch in Colorado and had shot lever-action Winchester rifles extensively, he was not familiar with the then-new bolt actions. He admitted to Riggall that he had not had a chance to sight in the rifle, much less practice with it.

After having Proctor shoot at a coal oil can a few times, Riggall felt comfortable in Proctor's shooting ability. The 52-year-old sculptor and the young outfitter swung into the saddles leading their pack horses up a winding trail into the mouth of Yarrow Canyon. For Riggall, it was a familiar ride he had made many times before.

Riggall had plied his trade for several years in the limestone ranges of Alberta's great sheep country, where many of the all-time record book bighorns were taken in

the early 1900s. Riggall himself had taken a heavy-based ram in the same Yarrow Canyon in 1906 that scored 193 6/8 points. In 1924, he guided Martin Bovey to the World's Record bighorn, an incredible ram that scored 207 2/8 points with horns more than 45 inches long on both sides. The Bovey ram still ranks as the fifth largest hunter-killed bighorn 100 years after being killed. It was the basis for another famous *Outdoor Life* sheep story, "The Three Musketeers." The tough Alberta outfitter and rancher knew more about judging large bighorn sheep than anyone alive at the time.

After setting up camp under the summit leading to the Castle River, Riggall quickly located a heavy-based ram bedded not far from their glassing point. At a distance of only 150 yards, Riggall was afraid that Proctor would overshoot, so he told him to hold a little low. The shot struck the loose talus about six inches above the ram as the guide implored his excited hunter to hold low again. To his astonishment, the next shot smashed into the rocks three feet above the ram. After missing yet a third time, Riggall picked up the dejected sculptor's rifle and saw that instead of holding low as instructed, Proctor had cranked the peep sight as high as it would go.

Back at camp, Riggall had Proctor shoot at a stump where he put five shots into a nice group after screwing the sight down to its original setting.

The next morning, the pair found another big ram about 400 yards away. The ram was curious about the horses, so Riggall told Proctor to stalk within shooting range of the ram while he stayed with the horses to keep the ram's attention, a trick still used by north country sheep guides today.

As Proctor got within shooting range and took a

F. H. RIGGALL,  
PINCHER CREEK, ALBERTA.

Jan. 1st, 1909

Mrs Graciel Pitts Esq.,  
Boone and Crockett Club,  
5 Tudor City Place,  
NEW YORK 17, New York,  
U. S. A.

Dear Mrs. Pitts:

In reply to your letter of the 14th, of last month, I may say that under no circumstances will anything be published regarding Bovey's 1924 Sheep head, until he gives the "go ahead" signal.

Regarding A. Phimister Proctor's 1909 Sheep head, which he obtained while hunting with me, I may say that at that time, in America, the criterion was head circumference. It was not until American sportsmen had become familiar with the European practice of ranking by length on outer curve - as exemplified by Rowland Ward's "Records of Big Game" in many editions - that the earlier practice was discarded. The following is copied from a letter on my files from Mr. George D. Pratt (Pratt Institute) of 55 Union Sq. West, New York, Date Jan. 22nd, 1910: - "Dr. Hornaday has been good enough to let me read your letter of 14th inst., and I have had the pleasure



LEFT: Correspondence between Betty Fitz (B&C) and guide F. H. Riggall regarding A. Phimister Proctor's ram taken in 1909. It's unfortunate that this ram has been lost and never took its rightful spot in the records book. Proctor, is also the artist who created our current medallion logo, which is handed out at our awards programs as well.

rest, Riggall thought the deal was all but sealed and done. But he watched in dismay as the little Mauser-actioned rifle again roared three times with all the bullets going over the top of the ram. When Riggall caught up to his hunter, the dejected Proctor leaned his rifle against a tree and stared shamelessly at it. Riggall grabbed the rifle and, to his horror, saw the peep sight was again turned to its upper limit. Thinking that Proctor was adjusting the sight without even thinking, Riggall retrieved a coil of delicate brass wire back at camp and solidly wired it to the ornately engraved receiver.

With only two days of sheep season left, Riggall left Proctor in camp to calm down before trying for another ram. Riggall rode back down to check on his wife and new baby and then back up for the last day of the hunt.

In the third basin they glassed on the last day, Riggall saw something through his 8x binoculars that made him choke on his breakfast. High on the peak above them, he had located not one but three giant bighorn rams. Both guide and hunter were jubilant about the prospect that awaited them, but joy turned to fear as a long steep rock face blocked their way to the rams.

Using 70 feet of rope in

his rucksack, Riggall finally got his hunter across the danger zone and to within 50 yards of the magnificent rams. Instructing him to take the leader, Proctor put the biggest ram down with one shot from the wire-modified rifle.

With two rams legal on an Alberta license in those days, Riggall had him shoot the next largest ram. One shot rolled it down the hill next to the first ram.

Both rams were big, but the biggest was beyond belief. Riggall measured the bases at 18 7/8 and 18 6/8 inches, and both horns taped more than 41 inches over the massive curls. The horns terminated into heavily broom plow shears, but Riggall did not take any quarter measurements off either ram since records were determined using only base measurements. Packing the rams out almost cost Riggall his life when he slipped on a small rock. He lost his balance, the ram's head careened down the cliff, and even though badly hurt, Riggall found it intact and unblemished.

Proctor returned home with two sheep heads, but what became of their fate will likely never be known. The ram was on loan for a time, possibly to the Camp Fire Club or the American Museum of Natural History. It was heralded as the World's

Record, but no records or score charts exist. Riggall guided for 66 bighorn rams, all over 36 inches, several over 40 inches, and many of record-book class. He remembered the Proctor ram as the largest bighorn sheep he ever saw, even bigger than the World's Record Bovey ram. A quick back-of-the-envelope calculation using the 18 6/8-inch bases, 41-inch length, and, assuming the mass would be carried out the same as similar western Alberta rams, Proctor's ram might score over 215 points, possibly eclipsing the current Wild Horse Island World's Record. Unfortunately, we'll never know—or will we?

In a strange twist of irony, even though he never entered this particular ram, Proctor himself was tied to the Boone and Crockett Club in more ways than one, contributing to the design of the Club's medallions that are awarded for trophies of the highest achievement and also serve as the Club's logo.

The trophies lost, stolen, disqualified, or never entered leave behind a void in the records and hunting history. We may discover one someday at a garage or estate sale, but until then, we still have the National Collection of Heads and Horns to keep us forever living these great hunts of the past. ■

## FAREWELL TO THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS

For very close to three decades, the Boone and Crockett Club has had the good fortune to work with a publications powerhouse, Julie Tripp. While Julie is moving on in her professional career and leaving her post here as director of publications, her influence and contributions will remain.

Julie was hired by the Club in the fall of 1993 to help us launch *Fair Chase* magazine. Four years later, she was promoted to the director of publications in 1997, and that's when her expertise really took off.

Julie dove headfirst into producing dozens of books, including carrying on the *Records of North American Big Game* editions, often referred to as the "All-Time Book." Her attention to detail, innovation, and creative eye can be seen in every book she published.

This *Records of North American Big Game*, 15th edition, was the last publication under her direction and will stand in high regard along with previous editions. She will be greatly missed around headquarters.

