

REFERENCE CODE: AkAMH

REPOSITORY NAME:

Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center
Bob and Evangeline Atwood Alaska Resource Center
625 C Street
Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone: 907-929-9235
Fax: 907-929-9233
Email: resourcecenter@anchagemuseum.org

Guide prepared by: Sara Piasecki, Archivist

TITLE: McBride Collection

COLLECTION NUMBER: B1996.009

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Dates: circa 1905

Extent: 1 box; 1 linear foot

Language and Scripts: The collection is in English.

Name of creator(s): Suzanne Rognon Bernardi

Administrative/Biographical History:

Susan R. Bernardi was a teacher at Wales and Nome sometime between 1902 and 1910. She produced several photo albums with varying photographs telling the "Story of a Whale Hunt" which she gave to her friends.

Scope and Content Description:

This collection consists of one album measuring 11" x 7.25" containing 25 photographs. The title "Story of a Whale Hunt, S.R. Bernardi, photographer" is written on the first sheet. Original tissues are extant. Please see photo list for specific photograph information and the text of the narrative.

Arrangement: Not applicable

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS AND USE

Restrictions on Access: The collection is open for research use.

Physical Access: Original items in fair to good condition, some with severe fading.

Technical Access: No special equipment is needed to access the materials.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use:

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Preferred Citation:

S.R. Bernardi, McBride Collection; Anchorage Museum, B1996.009

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition and Appraisal Information

Donated by Alizebeth McBride in April 1996. McBride's father-in-law received the album from S.R. Bernardi.

RELATED MATERIALS

Burchett Collection, B1991.025

Wright Collection, B1997.019

Story of a Whale Hunt Album, B2019.005

SUBJECTS

Bernardi, Suzanne Rognon

Alexander (Steam bark)

Whaling—Alaska

Inupiat—Alaska

Reindeer herding—Alaska

Wales (Alaska)

Detailed Description of the Collection

.1a – At the base of Cape Prince of Wales, the most westerly point on the American continent, there is Kingegan, an Eskimo village. During the month of May, only, each year, the more daring of the male population chase the Bowhead whale through Bering Straits. [scenic of landscape]

.1b - The old walrus hide cover is removed from the frame of his boat. The lashings of thong are examined and new cover put on. [umiak frame on ice, cache in background]

.2 – His meat hook and new walrus hide rope is made ready. His harpoon points polished and sharpened. The new paddles are made in the Kozga or Dance House where he spends a week preceding the opening of whaling season. [two men with dogs standing underneath umiak on rack, harpoons on top of umiak]

.3 – His Luck Pieces and Charms are kept in a box on the cache. Perhaps a skull of a wolf or caribou or dried bird. [sled frame and kayak frame on cache]

.4 – Seal skins filled with air are used as rollers under the boat as it is taken over the rough ice hummocks to the open waters of Bering Straits. They are then made fast to the thong attached to harpoon point and used as buoys to the dead whale. [chunks of carcass on ice, harpoon and rope in foreground, seal floats and paddles resting against frame in background]

.5 – The captain of a boat opens the ceremonies by taking from his meat cellar pieces of the whale he last killed and while sitting in charmed state under his whole charmed whaling gear he serves his pieces to each caller. [man with labrets wearing fur parka and mukluks sitting on snow bench underneath frame holding chains and other items, small pot at left]

.6 – The men dance and feast and sweat and fast for days before their first hunt. The woman may only go to the entrance of the dance house to carry food or material for work. [bare-chested men dancing in qargi, men with drums in background]

.7 – Even the boys dance while their elders accompany them with drums & songs, telling of previous wonderfully successful whale hunts [two boys wearing fur parkas dancing in qargi, four others looking on]

.8 – As a precaution against evil influences likely to come from the sea the captain puts a pendant on his back made of the tip end of the tail of each whale killed by him. These are sewed in seal skin and will sustain life in case of fa[?] at sea. [man with back to camera preparing umiak]

.9 – A runner is sent to the homes of the crew and as he stands at the entrance on top of the innie or house he shouts his orders. [man standing on top of semi-subterranean dwelling, cache at right]

.10 – He bids his wife and babe “goodbye” and he and his crew roll the walrus skin covered oomiak out to open water their paths made certain and safe by— [portrait of Inupiat family, with woman and man holding infant]

.11a – an old woman who has [woman wearing fur parka with walrus tusk gussets]

.11b – taken the shavings made in the dance house from the whittling of new paddles, made a fire of them, then using the ashes to sprinkle over the path used by the crew and boat to add

luck to them and to fly into the nostrils of evil spirits and so retard them. [woman standing at cooking fire, boardwalks behind her, canvas floats on windbreak in background]

.12 – Before embarking – a piece of cooked whale skin is partaken of by each from a charm spoon and wooden pail after a fast of 24 hours. Then with a piece of native graphite the tribal mark is drawn on the forehead of each [men climbing into umiak on ice, harpoons lashed into tripod over umiak]

.13 – a black mark of graphite is put around the boat at the water's edge to keep out evil spirits of the sea. The boat is launched and takes its turn patrolling Bering Straits with 6 or 8 other crews. [men and women standing next to loaded umiak]

.14 – Not succeeding in their first cruise after 5 or 6 hours they return to edge of shore ice, make camp, eat, and sleep, and perhaps dream of [crew paddling umiak in open water]

.15 – the steam whaler Alexander that was wrecked in the ice in August 1906 and of her catch of a monster whale 70 feet long and whose [three-masted sailing ship with steam funnel anchored at ice edge]

.16 – crew wounded it in Bering Straits between the Diomedes and after making fast to it with the harpoon and bomb gun, was surprised when they cut it up to find [white whaling crew in five small boats between Diomedes Islands]

.17 – the tail was nearly as wide as the ship and whose [whale fluke on ship deck]

.18 – head contained 780 slabs of whale bone valued at about \$12,000 the longest slabs being 9 ft. long, but the poor Eskimo is very glad to [close-up of baleen]

.19 – catch even a 30 foot pup whale and loses no time in donning his water proof seal skin suit and gets right into the whales stomach, not through his throat, but through the hole he makes himself with his sharp knife. [man wearing gut suit standing chest-deep in whale, holding meat in mouth, women standing next to carcass]

.20 – He carves out the blubber, saves the blood and the old woman care for these. The most valuable part of course is [two men in gut suits leaning over carcass, woman sitting at right]

.21 – the head that contains the commercial whale bone worth from \$5 to \$6 a pound. This bone answers to our teeth and is suspended from the upper jaw only. The lower jaw having a muscular lip that covers the bone. [umiak tied next to whale jaw, man wearing gut suit standing on jaw, second man standing in umiak]

.22 – The bone inside the mouth is covered by a coarse fibre through which the water is forced, straining the food which is always only tiniest jellyfish. [large chunk of jaw with baleen on ice, rope in foreground, seal floats in background]

.23 – The women use the man’s hunting sled to haul the whale meat to the meat cellars in the village, usually a mile from the place where the whale is landed. [two people wearing fur or gut parkas with dog team pulling sled on ice]

Guide written: February 25, 2019