

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: Wright Collection

COLLECTION NUMBER: B1997.019

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 31 photographs. The title "Story of a Whale Hunt in Bering Straits, S.R. Bernardi, photographer, Nome, Alaska" is written on the first sheet. 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, Wright Collection; Anchorage Museum, B1997.019

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition and Appraisal Information

Donated by Ann Archer Wright in August 1997. Wright's father was co-proprietor of Archer-Ewing's General Merchandise in Nome from 1900-1909 and postmaster at Solomon between 1905 and 1910.

RELATED MATERIALS

Burchett Collection, B1991.025

McBride Collection, B1996.009

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

.1 – At the base of Cape Prince of Wales, Alaska, the most easterly point on the American Continent, there is an Eskimo village where the males chase the bowhead whales through Bering Straits during May each year. [scenic of landscape. Kodak No. 2 circular print]

.2 – The whale hunting season is opened formally by the Captain of the boat, taking from a box on the cache, his charms and hunting paraphernalia. [cache, man standing in right background]

.3 – he suspends them over his meat cellar. He puts labret in his mouth, acting host to the whole village who calls to be served with a piece of whale meat last caught by him. [man with labrets wearing fur parka and mukluks sitting on snow bench underneath frame holding chains and other items, small pot at left]

.4 – The crew feast and dance then sweat and fast in their Kozga or underground dance house, making paddles for their canoes for whaling – the women bringing their food bare-chested men dancing in qargi, men with drums in background]

.5 – to the hold (x) in the floor the only entrance. Even the boys dance to the accompaniment of drums and songs telling of great feats of daring and endurance by their forefathers. [two boys wearing fur parkas dancing in qargi, four others looking on. Entrance hole in floor marked with x at left]

.6 – The old walrus hide is removed from the canoe, a new one put on, the crew bid [umiak frame, cache in background]

.7 – their families “good bye” (Il lan-e mook) [portrait of Inupiat family, with woman and man holding infant]

.8 – The canoe is put on rollers of seal skins filled with air and taken to the open waters of Bering Straits, the path being made safe from evil influences by an old woman [woman wearing fur parka with walrus tusk gussets]

.9 – who makes a fire of the shavings, saved from the making of the canoe paddles, using the ashes to sprinkle over the path and also to throw into the sea to pacify the spirits of wind and waves. [woman standing at cooking fire, boardwalks behind her, canvas floats on windbreak in background]

.10 – Arriving at the edge of the open water, the boat is cached [men and women standing next to loaded umiak]

.11 – the skull of some animal suspended over it while the men dance around it, the captain marking the tribal mark on each forehead with a piece of native graphite, making also a [men climbing into umiak on ice, harpoons lashed into tripod over umiak]

.12 – a line of graphite around the skin boat as a protection against evil spirits. After patrolling Bering Straits with several other crews and seeing no whales they camp on the shore ice – sleep and [crew paddling umiak in open water]

- .13 – perhaps dream of a 70 foot whale caught by the crew of the *Alexander* between the Diomed Islands [white whaling crew of *Alexander* in five small boats between Diomed Islands]
- .14 – and whose tail was as wide as the ship [whale fluke on ship deck]
- .15 – and whose head contained 780 pieces of whale bone, the longest slab being 12 feet long, the bone being worth \$12,000 but the poor Eskimo is glad to catch even a [close-up of baleen]
- .16 – 30 foot pup whale and sends a runner through the village to carry the news, and the native [man standing on top of semi-subterranean dwelling, cache at right]
- .17 – herders leave their fawns to sleep and grow. [sleeping reindeer calf]
- .18 – The old women leave the tomcod in peace. [woman holding jigging poles, wearing striped parka cover over fur-lined parka, carrying infant on back, harpoon in ice at left, ice scoop next to pile of tomcod fish on ice at right]
- .19 – The boys forget to chase the ptarmigan, [boy wearing skin parka aiming bow and arrow on tundra]
- .20 – The captain puts on his pendant made of pieces of whale meat served in pieces of seal skin, the whole village hurries to the [man with back to camera preparing umiak]
- .21 – birds wrapped in seal fat and suspended over the carcass of the whale. [large group of men and women pulling rope on ice, dogs lying in foreground next to sled, other dogs eating off ice]
- .22 – The crew put on waterproof suits of seal skin, sharpen their knives, tie their whet [four men in gut suits butchering carcass]
- .23 – stones around their necks. One cuts a hole in the whales stomach gets in and cuts away enough blubber and meat so others may get in to help carve and throw the meat to the women. man wearing gut suit standing chest-deep in whale, holding meat in mouth, women standing next to carcass]
- .24 – The most valuable part of the whale is the head. The commercial bone is fitted in the upper jaw as our upper teeth [umiak tied next to whale jaw, man wearing gut suit standing on jaw, second man standing in umiak. “X” at left captioned “slabs of whale bone”]
- .25 – The inside of the bone is covered with a coarse fibre used to strain the food usually only the tiniest jelly fish. The spouting of the whale is only moisture from the lungs and [large chunk of jaw with baleen on ice, rope in foreground, seal floats in background]

.26 – not water as is generally supposed. The bow shaped bone in the centre of the photo is the bone from which the shale derives its name. [chunks of whale meat on ice, people standing in background. “X” in center captioned “bow shaped bone”]

.27 – After a good whale season everyone is happy. [portrait of woman wearing print parka cover and carrying infant on back, holding small can, wearing beaded bracelet and beaded necklace]

.28 – Little Johnny and [young boy wearing skin parka, gloves, and mukluks standing outdoors]

.29 – his aunts and [two women wearing reindeer fur parkas with geometric trim, one carrying infant on back]

.30 – grandmother [two people wearing fur or gut parkas with dog team pulling sled on ice]

.31 – even the dogs look satisfied [dog portrait. Kodak No. 2 circular print]

Guide written: February 25, 2019