



April, 2018

Mountain Man Monthly

The Authorized Publication of the
Colorado Springs Muzzle Loaders Inc.

The Colorado Springs Muzzle Loaders, Inc. was chartered in 1969 by a group of men and women interested in their heritage and dedicated to preserving and promoting the sport of muzzle loading and buckskinning. CSML is a family oriented club that holds a broad range of functions such as camp outs, potluck dinners, and black powder shoots. CSML is affiliated with the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association and the National Rifle Association.

Views and opinions contained within articles submitted to the Mountain Man Monthly are not necessarily those of the editor or CSML. The editor reserves the right not to publish any article submitted but encourages articles on any subject regarding shooting sports and subjects related to the fur trade era.

Regular Club Meeting

May 3; 7:00 p.m.

Come help make feathers

Pistol, Revolver, and Flint

Pistol Shoot - - May 5

Work Party Re-Scheduled

May 19; 10:00 a.m.

LaChance home in Penrose

May 26 - - 43rd Annual Shoot

**Need Range Officer for August
Grainger Shoot**

President
Joy Hicks
Vice President
Robert McCune
Treasurer
Gwen Blanchard
Secretary

Membership Chairman
Ted Beaupre

Range Officer
Ted Beaupre
Assistant Range Officer
Jock Harmon

Primitive Exec.
Doug "Moose Milk" Davis
Assistant Primitive Exec.
Tony "Tenderfeet" Hecker

Cannon Master
Richard "Singe" Stites

Mountain Man Monthly Editor
Doreen Webb

UPCOMING EVENTS: CSML & Statewide

WHAT	WHERE	WHEN	INFORMATION
NO CLUB SHOOT	IN MAY - - -	WORK ON THE	ANNUAL SHOOT.
Regular Club Meeting	American Legion	May 3, 7:00 p.m.	making feathers for prizes
Pistol, Revolver, & Flint Pistol Shoot	Ft. Lupton Muzzle loading Club	May 5 9 - 3	Info: (970) 692-4658 Ron Ring \$15 entry fee per aggregate
Annual Shoot Work Party	LaChance Home Penrose, CO	May 19 10:00 a.m.	preparation work followed by pot luck lunch; bring utensils
43 rd Annual Memorial Day Shoot	Florence Mountain Park	May 26-28	annual shoot and event; trader's row, potluck Saturday night
Club Paper Shoot	Ft. Melchert	June 3	pistols at noon; rifles at 1:00 pm
Regular Club Meeting	American Legion	June 7; 7:00 p.m.	Come see what happens!!!
MULEY Day Event	Rocky Mountain Roosters	June 9	contact Joy for times to be there; wear primitive clothing
NMLRA Territorial Matches	SPVHS Range Ft. Lupton	June 15-17	www.buckhornskinnners.com or (970) 692-4658
Club Primitive Shoot	Ft. Melchert	June 17	pistols at noon; rifles at 1:00 pm
Club Paper Shoot	Ft. Melchert	July 1	pistols at noon; rifles at 1:00 pm
Regular Club Meeting	CANCELLED FOR	JULY..... HAPPY	4TH OF JULY.....
High Country Hideaway Muzzle Loading Shotgun	Blue Valley Club near Kremmling, CO	July 11-15	Tom Hart (719) 289-1840 or tkhart25@gmail.com
Grainger Primitive Camp Out and Shoot	Grainger Ranch Victor, CO	July 14-15	chili cook-off, potluck Saturday night & Sunday morning
Rocky Mountain National Rendezvous	Soward Ranch near Creede, CO	July 14-21	info at www.RMNR.org or Facebook
Regular Club Meeting	American Legion	August 2; 7:00 p.m.	come and see.....
Club Primitive Shoot	Ft. Melchert	August 5	pistols at noon; rifles at 1:00 pm
Grainger Paper Camp Out and Shoot	Grainger Ranch Victor, CO	Aug. 18-19	paper target shooting, potluck Saturday night & Sunday morning; election of officers
CSMLA 2018 State Shoot	Ft. Lupton	August 31 - September 3	Camp fee \$20; www.csmla.net; patched round ball only

For CSML scheduled shoots; CALL SHOOT HOT LINE (719) 442-0150 after 9:00 a.m. on shoot day to be sure shoot is on!!!
Schedule is subject to change at any time and is based on information available at time of publication. On-line check csmlinc.org

PAST THINGS

Finally able to hold the white elephant gift exchange. Only took us three months, but it went off without a hitch.....finally in April. Now is the time to start looking for those elephants for 2019!!!!

Remember that there are no club shoots in May, only the Memorial Day event. However, there are lots of other shoots that you can go and participate in. Good way to support other shooting events.

ANNUAL WORK PARTY Preparation for the 43rd annual Memorial Day Shoot

Please note that the work party date has been changed. We will now hold the work party on **MAY 19th**. That's right, May 19th and it will still be at the home of Fred and Petra LaChance. We are still planning on having the potluck lunch after all the work is done. Bring your favorite dish of food to share and your eating and serving utensils and join us. This is always a good time for us.

A word from our President.....

We would like to welcome new members John Schutt, Jason Robinson, Jim Mendenhall, and Lisa Holstein. This great group of people are not only new members to CSML but they are also new NRA Muzzle Loading Shooting Instructors. We met at a class that was conducted by Doug Davis and Jack Durbin (another new member). They come to us because of their work with the Boy Scouts. They gave up two full weekends of their time to learn and practice what they learned.

We look forward to seeing them at some of our events and to possibly bring some of the youth they work with.

CORRECTION & NEW INFO

We mis-stated the name of Lon's dog. His companion was Coldwater. Our apologies to this wonderful canine friend.

Leon Mehle was born in Pueblo, Colorado to Joseph and Mary (Gregorich) Mehle on January 5, 1945. He is preceded in death by his parents and his infant son Joey Mehle. He is survived by his children, Greg Mehle and Lisa (Greg) Glab; and his grandsons Dustin Hankins, Joe and Nathan Glab.

Leon, Lon, or commonly known by his road handle "FOOTLOOSE", was truly a modern-day renaissance man. With his constant companion and best pal, Coldwater by his side, they were seldom home, always on the road seeking nature's path as well as any "good finds" along the way. His passions were an encyclopedia of their own, entirely too numerous to list in a single breath or common sentence. Just to name a few.....an accomplished photographer with the love of art captured on film from a high school hobbyist to a remarkable digital master in his 70's.

A true marksman with all types of firearms, from black powder to rare foreign calibers. The simple Ruger Mark 2 being on the top of his favorite's list. A story teller, poet, humorist, rock hound, fisherman, and educator, the list goes on.

Leon will truly be missed by those who knew and loved him and the earth will have a task in finding replacements for the two of them.

A memorial celebration for Lon was held on April 22 at the Gooseberry Patch restaurant in Penrose, Colorado. We understand that this event was well attended and all had a good time remembering our friend Lon.

March 31 Paper Pistol Match OR The Chase of the Wild Goose

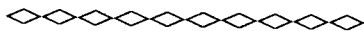
Al Bartok and I went up to Ft. Lupton on March 31 to join in the pistol match of the Ft. Lupton Muzzle Loading Club. Unfortunately, the match was the week before!

We did enjoy a tour of the reconstructed Ft. Lupton traders fort - - which has been well done! Their example of a flintlock rifle (modern made) was without a flint. The lock looked very similar to a small Siler pistol lock, so Al and I installed a pistol flint in it and were pleased to see it give a shower of sparks!

Not giving up easily, we went out to Isaac Walton's pistol range for a match after we got back to Colorado Springs. Braving icy gusts of wind and numb fingers, the scores were:

Al Bartok	94-2x
Ken West	88x

We will be joining the Ft., Lupton club for some of their matches in the future; preferably on those weekends when there is no gun show in Denver!



Primitive Pistol Match April 15

by: Ken West

The weather could not have been better! Six of us enjoyed it by shooting at the metal gongs. The scores were:

Meribeth Zaborowski	14 gongs
John Udovich	13 gongs
Al Bartok	11 gongs
Jay Rathman	11 gongs
Jim Murray	10 gongs
Ken West	9 gongs

I think that the unaccustomed good weather threw some of us off. Meribeth always ups the competition a notch!

Things Everyone Else Already Knew.....

I have discovered that, with a little bit of skill and a lot of hard work, you can make a piece of cow horn look as good as the cheapest piece of plastic you have ever seen!

The most time-consuming operation in casting round balls is getting the balls out of the mold. In addition to polishing the area around the sprue where aluminum molds normally crack, the balls will release easier if you knock the sprue off of the mold after you have cut it and before you open the mold.



PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Please remember that we really need to have scores, shoot information and things of interest submitted to publish for our membership.

Publication deadline is always the Thursday following the primitive shoot. You can e-mail me (c_dwebb@msn.com), snail mail me, or just call me and give me information to publish. I will take the info any way I can get it.

Please help us with information, book reports, things for sale, anything that would be of interest to our members. It will make the **Mountain Man Monthly** a better deal for all. Thank you for your help and support!!!!

The Arctic Adventures of Captain Comer

By: Fred Calabretta

(Continued from the March, 2018 newsletter.)

While the physical and mental demands of lengthy voyages, handling a ship, and the work required on whale ships tested the resolve of the men involved regardless of their location, one factor greatly compounded those challenges in Arctic waters. By far the greatest challenge confronting Comer and other Americans in North was the environment and the associated elements of wind, ice, snow, cold, and a lengthy winter period with little or no sunlight. Although the waters in the vicinity of Cape Fullerton - - where the Americans were most active - - lie just outside of the Arctic Circle, the region is generally referred to by whaling historians and others as the Arctic. Considering the treeless landscape and brutal weather conditions, it seems a fair designation.

During February and March 1904 Comer recorded temperatures reaching -40 degrees Fahrenheit below zero or lower on 19 different days. The coldest day of the season occurred on March 3 when the temperature plummeted to -53 degrees Fahrenheit. On one cold October night in 1893, three inches of ice formed around the ship; and this is salt water, much slower to freeze than fresh water. By winter's end the ice surrounding the ship could be more than six feet thick. In these conditions, work and any activity away from the safety of the ship proved extremely difficult and sometimes life-threatening. Comer's journals refer to instances of snow in August.

Wintering - - - including the important process of freezing a ship into the ice in a relatively protected harbor - - - carried with it special procedures and unique challenges. Comer and the other captains needed to place their ship in position for wintering in a harbor such as Cape Fullerton as soon as late September, or run the risk of the ship being trapped or crushed by ice in a dangerous position. Despite all the challenges, the Americans and the Inuit generally lived

in relative comfort, even in winter.

Whale hunting ceased once the pack ice began to form and the ship went into winter quarters. This enabled Comer to focus on another important business activity - - trading for furs and ivory. The furs came from a variety of Arctic mammals, although seals skins were not brought back in large quantity by the Americans; probably because they were needed by the Inuit and whalers for boots, clothing, and articles. The sources of ivory were walrus and occasionally narwhal tusks.

The Aivilingmiut, who generally established their camps near Comer's ship, were the most accessible and frequent trading partners. Comer described the wintering experience for a newspaper reporter: "We lived on board the ship all winter and the Eskimos had gathered around us, building their snow huts, and were contented in the knowledge that our help in case of illness or starvation was open to them. They were glad to exchange musk-ox furs and furs of bear, white foxes and other animals for our commodities. They are a good sort of people."

Inuit from other groups also brought furs to trade during the winter season, often traveling great distances, undaunted by all but the most extreme weather. During a two-day period in 1901 Comer noted that several Inuit had traveled to his ship to trade despite the temperature sinking to -35 degrees Fahrenheit on the first day and -38 degrees Fahrenheit the next.

Comer certainly recognized the commercial value of furs, having spent ten years on sealing voyages in the Southern Indian and South Atlantic Oceans. However, there was no trade involved during these voyages. The sealing ships visited extremely remote and uninhabited islands such as the aptly named Desolation Island. The men hunted the seals with rifles and killing lances and then did their own skinning.

Comer's earliest documented trading experience occurred in Hudson Bay in October 1875, during his first voyage. Then 17 years old, he noted in his journal that "the Esquimaux brought the suit of skins and I gave him the powder pouch and shot flask and a box of caps." A few years later while on a seal hunting voyage in the vicinity of Tierra del Fuego he "traded with the Indians for a few trifles." These

simple exchanges provided a foundation for extensive and profitable trading later in his career.

During the first 25 years or so of American whaling in Hudson Bay, trading with the Inuit could be considered more of a subsistence activity, with the Americans most interested in caribou meat to supplement their diet and caribou skins for winter clothing. Eventually, by the mid-1880s, American whalers had established an active commercial trade with the Inuit in Hudson Bay. This concerned Canadian officials, one of whom observed that "besides the legitimate pursuit of whales, each one of these ships is an unlicensed trader, competing with the Hudson's Bay Company for the trade with the natives." In actuality, the Hudson Bay Company had little interest in trading with the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic and didn't actively begin to do so until after 1900.

This lack of interest was likely partially due to the limited volume of available trade; there were relatively few Inuit in the region. In 1898, Comer, who collected accurate and reliable ethnographic information while in Hudson Bay, recorded populations of 102 among the Aivilingmiut and 146 among the Kenipetu7 just to the south of them, the only two tribes occupying the western coastal area of the Bay from Churchill all the way north to Repulse Bay. Comer reported that the Kenipetu generally brought their furs down to the shores of the Bay where they met and traded with a small vessel from Churchill. Although some members of more distant Inuit tribal groups did bring skins to Comer occasionally, the fact remained that the number of potential trading partners remained very small.

Comer sailed on his first voyage as a Captain on the schooner *Era* in 1895, and immediately began an active pattern of supplementing whaling profits by trading with the Inuit. Trade goods were provided to the Inuit for services rendered and also in direct exchange for furs. In the early history of the whalers; trade in Hudson Bay furs could be obtained in exchange for empty tin cans. As their dependency on manufactured goods increased, the Inuit required more sophisticated trade items in return.

Much of the trading activity took place in the deck house built onboard the ship. On each voyage Comer brought lumber to build this structure. It was

a relatively large, multifunction space. It served as a recreation hall and as Comer's workshop and photo studio. It also functioned as his trading station. From roughly late September to June Comer used the deck house as a place to conduct his trading.

Comer actively continued his anthropological and other scientific work throughout his career and as a result, the Inuit coming to trade often found the experience quite interesting and entertaining. On some occasions Comer might play music on his graphophone, which was an early machine for playing and recording sound on wax cylinders. He also used this device to record and play back Inuit songs and stories - - the earliest sound recordings ever made among the Hudson Bay native people.

When the trading had concluded, he might also make plaster casts of their faces or take their photographs, adding to the collections he was assembling for the American Museum of Natural History. References to this combined activity are not unusual in his journals, such as this entry: 1902 - "Had the graphophone out this evening for the benefit of the two natives who brought their trade here." In 1901, when Inuit he had not seen came in to trade he took advantage of the opportunity by making plaster casts of their faces - - - and sometimes hands - - - for the American Museum. Several hundred of these casts survive. A few of the women's hand casts show that they were wearing brass trade rings - - reminders and symbols of a profitable American fur trade in an isolated and frozen region.

The requirements of Arctic life brought with it a demand for specialized trade items, as well as new and specialized uses of traditional goods. The Inuit had long been masters of fabricating clothing, tools, and other objects they needed, using very limited natural resources. They lived in a country where even wood was non-existent unless brought on a ship or washed ashore following a shipwreck. Certain raw materials became important trade commodities. Iron rods were easily sharpened at one end, transforming them into effective seal spears. Wood was also prized in the treeless Arctic environment. For example, wooden planks obtained in trade functioned as Inuit sled runners. Large knives with a 10 or 11" blades worked well as snow knives for cutting blocks of snow when building igloos. Comer noted though that

non-tempered knives were preferred because they were less brittle than tempered knives in the freezing cold. Comer also used raw materials to produce additional trade items. Although matches were staples of his trading supplies, he made fire steels for trade and also screwdrivers.

Comer's extensive written journals and records provide an excellent record of the trade goods he brought north. Of particular interest are two essays written in 1907: "Trade for the Natives" and "Guns and Ammunition." Included in these are his firearms recommendations. He specifically suggests single shot, breech loading guns such as Springfield rifles, noting that a "Winchester is more likely to get out of order and become useless." Simple was often better in the North; the region's temperature and environmental extremes certainly influenced the selection of trade goods. Comer also noted that "the caliber should not be larger than 44 and perhaps not less than 38. Larger sizes take so much more lead in reloading and so much more powder, which is quite an item with the natives after they own guns. Cartridges should be loaded when about to be needed. Should advise carrying empty shells. If taken from home loaded they are likely to become corroded and will not stand reloading but a little." He thought little of the use of revolvers, except possibly heavy revolvers for musk ox hunting.

Comer apparently provided ongoing support or maintenance for at least some of the items he traded, especially firearms. For example, his journal entries during the winter of 1902-02 include multiple references to his work repairing Inuit guns, casting bullets, and reloading shells.

Other important trade items included fish hooks and lines, files, saws, hatchets, small telescopes for hunting, and square tin pans to use for melting snow or cooking, other tin containers, matches, and tobacco. He also notes that "small telescopes are very useful to the men when hunting and are prized very much."

For the Inuit women he brought large and small chopping knives, - - or what he referred to as saddlers knives - - - calico, buttons, needles, combs and scissors. He also noted that the "Squaws have a great passion for small glass beads of different colors." Inuit women took pride in their sewing skills and with good reason; a spit parka seam during a

winter hunting trip could bring death to her husband. Skillful sewing was a matter of life and death. The women completed much of their sewing and beadwork during the winter, working inside igloos with temperatures hovering just below freezing and lighting limited to what a seal oil lamp could provide. Their high level of sewing dexterity, even in adverse conditions, produced excellent beadwork. Trade beads were an important commodity and were a staple among the goods brought north by Comer.

It is no coincidence that Inuit beadwork flourished in the eastern Arctic during the years of American whaling there, from about 1860 to 1915. The Americans were certainly important suppliers of beads and Comer was a key provider during the years 1895-1912, when he sailed as captain. Not only did he provide trade beads but he then subsequently collected striking examples of finished beadwork such as ornately beaded parkas for several major museums. One of the most striking of these is a women's parka in the collections of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. The back of this parka is adorned with a beaded panel featuring an accurate depiction of Comer's ship the *Era*, which had made more than 20 eastern Arctic voyages, spent a number of winters in the region, and was very familiar to the Inuit.

Comer's notes and lists of the trade goods brought on several specific voyages show that even after 1900 many standard commodities remained constants in the North American fur trade. Rifles, knives, beads, tobacco, needles, calico, and other trade goods brought by Comer to Hudson Bay as late as 1910 would have been an equally good fit for a Rocky Mountain rendezvous in the 1830s. One fur trade commodity that was present in the Trans-Mississippi West was absent in Hudson Bay; there is no indication that Comer and other American whaler traders supplied liquor to the Inuit in exchange for furs.

From the Inuit perspective, the ultimate object of trade was a wooden whaleboat. These boats were of the classic New England design and had been a staple of the American whale fishery for decades. Usually 28' to 30' in length, they were strong and versatile. Designed to be rowed by five men, they also were equipped with sails which could be used if

conditions were favorable. Well-built and sturdy, they were double-ended making them quite maneuverable. They were appreciated for their strength and relative ease of operation, but also their capacity for people and goods, which proved very useful, especially when the Inuit relocated their camps.

The boats were provided to select Inuit, sometimes conditionally, in exchange for an understanding that they would be used to hunt whales for the Americans when such opportunities arose. At other times, their use for travel and transportation by the Inuit who acquired them was unrestricted. In 1894 Comer noted that the third mate's boat had been traded for "musk ox and other skins." In September 1901 Comer recorded another such transaction in his journal: "a native who sent word to us last winter wishing to trade some musk ox skins for a boat came today, having 27 for which I let him have an old boat for them."

Traps saw only limited use, especially on the part of Comer and his crew. In 1904 he made a rare reference to the trapping efforts of one of his ship's officers. Although this suggests the Americans at least occasionally dabbled in trapping, it is likely such efforts were very limited.

One of Comer's crew members caught a few foxes in traps and the Inuit had only slightly better success. During the winter of 1902-1902 Comer noted that he had given steel traps to some of the native boys but because they had no chains and couldn't stake the traps some trapped foxes walked away taking the trap along. As of January 24, 1902 the Inuit boys had taken only 8 foxes in traps that winter. The Inuit did bring in a substantial number of foxes, indicating that traditional stone traps must still have been in use.

The furs - - at least the larger furs such as polar bear and musk ox skins - - were staked out on the snow to dry. The crew of Comer's ship provided a ready-made work force for cleaning, processing, and packing the furs in casks, which is how they were transported back to the United States. Most work on the furs took place during the long winter months when there was no whaling activity. Comer did run into a problem associated with this use of the crews' labor to process furs. During Comer's voyage of 1895-1896 he and the *Era's* owner, Thomas Luce,

refrained from sharing fur trade profits with their crews. Several crew members took issue with this and took their case to court, noting that men on whaling voyages were traditionally paid on a lay or percentage system based on the quantities of whale oil and baleen taken, yet they received nothing for the furs taken on a recent voyage. On this voyage the shipping articles - - the agreement signed by each member of a whale ship's crew - - clearly stated they were not to profit from any furs taken during the voyage, however the men claimed they were never made aware of this clause.

Court records provide commentary on the case, noting that: "It appears in evidence that the trade with the natives was considered by the owners a considerable part of the venture; that the sum of \$1,351.37 was invested in articles for barter, which an owner testified was "quite a sum for trading" and that a portion only of the articles procured in trade sold for \$2,039.02." It is not clear if the "portion only" refers to furs or possibly walrus ivory, but trade for furs was certainly a key element of Comer's voyages beginning in the 1890s. The men claimed they "did considerable work upon the skins and other articles taken in trade, and were ordered to do so by the master [captain], and were subjected to hardships in consequence." The court decided in favor of the crew members and required the *Era's* owner to compensate them.

Not long after Comer returned from the *Era's* 1905 voyage, owner Thomas Luce decided to withdraw from an increasingly stagnant whaling industry. He sold the *Era* to a prominent fur wholesaler, F. N. Monjo of New York City. This transaction underscored the importance of fur trading during early 20th century voyages that were still officially designated as whaling voyages.

The Monjo firm could claim an impressive pedigree in the fur trade industry. Its founder, Nicholas F. Monjo, began his fur trade career in 1859, joining the firm of G. Franchere & Company. Franchere had been one of the original Astorians and his published account of his experiences is an important document in the history of the North American fur trade. Another partner in Franchere's firm was Jean Batiste Chemidlin, who had worked for Pierre Chouteau and Company. In 1869, several years after the death of Franchere, Chemidlin and Monjo

formed a firm known as J. B Chemidlin and Co. Finally, in 1874, Monjo established his own business. Nicholas Monjo retired in 1897, at which time he was succeeded by his son Ferdinand M. Monjo.

Comer and the now Monjo-owned *Era* sailed for Hudson Bay on July 21, 1906, but unfortunately, about a week later the *Era* was wrecked during bad weather at the French island of Miquelon, located near Newfoundland. Although Comer and his crew survived without harm, the *Era* was a total loss. Undeterred, Monjo acquired another schooner, the *A. T. Gifford*, and Comer made two additional Hudson Bay voyages in command of this vessel, from 1907-1909 and 1910-1912.

The ill-fated 1906 voyage of the *Era* and Comer's following two voyages to Hudson Bay in the *A. T. Gifford* are generally remembered as whaling voyages - - among the last of the once-thriving New England whaling industry. In actuality they were fur trading voyagers and the *Era* and the *Gifford* were likely the only New England "whaleships" owned by a fur company. Comer then, worked for a fur company for the final six years of what is remembered as his whaling career. Whale products, as well as walrus ivory obtained in trade, provided supplementary profits for Monjo.

The profits in furs were substantial in their right and certainly justified the owner's significant investment in trade goods. The recorded value of \$1,351 invested for trade goods in 1895 translates to an investment of more than \$36,000 in 2016 dollars; an impressive sum. Comer reported that his fur returns for his 1910-1912 voyage included 925 white fox, 145 bear, 145 musk ox, about 75 wolves, and 25 wolverines. He indicated this take was a little above average, which he attributed to more emphasis on trade due to declining prices for whale products and increased fur prices.

In terms of a breakdown by species of the total take of furs, the numbers above for the 1910-1912 voyage seem typical. Another example is found in a list of furs on hand in August of 1901, mid-way through a 27 months voyage: 190 white fox skins, followed by 157 musk ox skins, with limited numbers of polar bear and wolf skins. During the years of Comer's trading, white fox skins consistently dominated the take, followed by musk ox and polar bear skins. Lesser numbers of wolf skins were also obtained, along with a few wolverine and lynx furs.

Comer's trading brought good returns in furs, representing impressive profits for him and the ship's owners. The trading also of course benefitted the Inuit, whose lives were made easier with the acquisition of manufactured goods, tools, and especially firearms; a tremendous asset to a hunting people. Comer's very presence also had a positive impact on the Inuit. He cared

about them, doctored them when they were sick, fed them when they were hungry, and looked after their best interests. Also of great significance was his anthropological work and collecting, which captured and preserved a highly important record of traditional Inuit culture.

Still, the gradual increase in the presence of whalers, missionaries, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and other whites also brought negative changes to the Inuit and their world. Settlement patterns were disrupted, populations of whales and other wildlife decreased, illnesses were introduced, and elements of traditional Inuit culture were lost.

The fate of the natives of Southampton Island in northern Hudson Bay provides the best illustration of the negative impact of whites. Comer first encountered these people in 1896. At that time they were still hunting with bows and arrows and had little or no previous contact with whites. They numbered about 70 individuals. When he returned in 1902 only one elderly woman and 4 children survived. Over-hunting and introduced diseases - - the result of a Scottish whaling station on the Island - - had taken their toll.

Following service in the U. S. Navy during World War I, Comer made one final voyage. In 1919 he set sail for Hudson Bay on a converted yacht called the *Finback*. He accompanied Christian Leden, a Norwegian anthropologist, on a voyage of exploration and research. The venture ended abruptly when the *Finback* struck a reef and was wrecked at Cape Fullerton. All on board, including Comer, eventually made their way back to the United States. A Connecticut newspaper reporting on the mishap noted that the *Finback* carried a "large cargo of beads, tools, knives and toilet articles for trade with the Esquimaux." Comer had remained a trader until the very end of his long and distinguished seafaring career.

George Comer never returned to the sea and died in 1937. About a year later, a monument was dedicated to him near his home in East Haddam, Connecticut. Among the people in attendance were several notable individuals from the fields of science and exploration, and the daughter of Arctic explorer Robert Peary. The tributes to him that day recognized his accomplishments in the fields of whaling, anthropology, and exploration. Overlooked on this occasion was another major area of his productive life. While working and living in one of the earth's most hostile and challenging natural environments - - often for several years at a time - - he had also succeeded as George Comer, fur trader.

Colorado Springs Muzzle Loaders, Inc.

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Colorado Springs, CO 80918



April, 2018

MOUNTAIN MAN MONTHLY

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Primitive Chapter News

by: Doug "Moose Milk" Davis

Finally we had enough people show up to have a shoot in March. There were 6 shooters present; 8 men and one lady. The shoot had 7 targets on the primitive range and the 25 yard Squirrel Shoot target on the paper range. Scoring was a combination of the two.

Ladies: Dee Beaupre

Men: John Udovich Ted Beaupre Randy Ruyle Tony Hecker Tom Gabor

The April shoot was the Squirrel Shoot targets at 25 and 50 yards. To make it work, we posted all the 25 yard targets at once, shot them, and moved to 50 yards and posted the two 50 yard targets and then shot them. Shooters could post all the 25 yard or shoot three of their "favorites" out of the four. I didn't keep score so whom was exactly there, I forgot, but thank you for coming out and shooting.

Remember there are no club shoots in May. We're supposed to be getting ready for the Memorial Day shoot. Also remember the work party at the LaChance's; it will be in the upcoming events of the *Mountain Man Monthly*.

Thanks to all club members who volunteer.