

Emma DeWeese: A five-month honeymoon would be a dream for most women

by Emily Sunblade



Emma DeWeese, a native of Colorado, traveled to Alaska shortly after her wedding bells rang in 1899 and spent several months on the Kenai Peninsula hunting with her new husband, Dall. She was the first documented sportswoman to point her rifle at the abundant game that roamed freely on the Kenai Peninsula at the turn of the 20th century.

According to an 1899 *Field & Stream Magazine* article on her honeymoon hunting trip to the Kenai, Emma DeWeese shot her first ram, taking seven bullets to finish the task. It was a handsome specimen chosen from 52 snow white beauties.

DeWeese experienced innumerable challenges, most while traversing rugged terrain all the while wearing thick wool skirts and high collared blouses.

In the interview with *Field and Stream*, Emma was

asked to tell of the hardest part of the expedition. “Mosquitoes,” she said.

Field & Stream reported that while traveling to Lake Kasilof (present-day Tustumena Lake), the party hiked upcountry and camped along a beautiful lake that was named Lake Emma in Emma DeWeese’s honor.

The experienced guide who led Emma and Dall DeWeese into the Tustumena Lake country was big game guide Andrew Berg. Dall DeWeese sought out Berg after seeing a set of Berg’s spectacular moose antlers in a trophy dealer’s shop in Tacoma, Washington in 1897.

Andrew Berg, an immigrant from Finland, came to Alaska in 1888. He maintained his livelihood by big game guiding, mining, trapping, fishing, and working for salmon canneries. In the 1890s he found himself as one of the most sought after big game guides in all of Alaska and eventually when the Alaska territory began official licensing, he received its first big game guide license. He also went on to become a game warden on the Kenai Peninsula in 1920.

When Emma and Dall DeWeese returned to Colorado after their hunting honeymoon in Alaska, news spread quickly of their hunting success. Big game hunters increased in numbers on the Kenai Peninsula and hunting pressure on prime trophy game specimens skyrocketed.

The hunting boom that sprouted from the DeWeese couple’s fame had consequences neither they nor game guide Andrew Berg anticipated. By 1901 Dall DeWeese was petitioning President Theodore Roosevelt to establish hunting regulations on the Kenai Peninsula to decrease declining populations of moose and sheep.

Through the direct efforts of Dall and Emma and other big game hunters like them, laws to curtail overhunting were enacted and legislation was advanced to create specially designated conservation lands. The DeWeese’s concern for a sustainable supply of moose ultimately led to the creation of the Kenai National Moose Range in 1941, which became the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge with passage of the Alaska Na-

tional Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980.

The big game craze of Alaskan history has done much to influence the sustainable hunting legislation of today, and the documented experiences of people like Emma and Dall DeWeese and Andrew Berg give insight into a lifestyle forever memorable but now lost in time.

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