



Lost Bird of Wounded Knee: Spirit of the Lakota

Renee sansom Flood

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In December 1890 the U.S. Seventh Cavalry massacred a band of Lakota men, women, and children at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Miraculously, after a four-day blizzard, an infant was found alive under the frozen body of her dead mother. The dashing brigadier general (and future Assistant Attorney General of the United States) Leonard W. Colby kidnapped and then adopted the baby girl named Lost Bird (1890–1920) as a "living curio," and exploited her in order to attract prominent tribes as clients of his law practice. After the general's wife, the nationally known suffragist and newspaper editor Clara B. Colby, divorced her husband, she raised the Lakota child as a white girl in a well-meaning but disastrous attempt to provide a stable home. Lost Bird ran away to join Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and appeared in silent films and vaudeville. During her brief but unforgettable life she endured sexual abuse, violence, prostitution, and the rejection of her own tribe before dying at age twenty-nine on Valentine's Day. This remarkable biography examines the life of the woman who became a symbol of the warring cultures that entrapped her, and a heartbreaking microcosm of all those Native American children who lost their heritage through adoption, social injustice, and war.

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