



In Search of Princess White Deer: The Biography of Esther Deer

Patricia O. Galperin

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In this unique biography—complete with never-before-published photographs—Patricia O. Galperin rescues an undeservedly obscure and thoroughly unforgettable woman from history: the actress, activist, and genuine American original known as Princess White Deer. Esther Deer, known on the stage as Princess White Deer, was a beautiful and talented third-generation Mohawk entertainer and the granddaughter of Chief John Running Deer, a hereditary chief and last keeper of the Akwesasne Wolf Belt. She first performed with her family in original “border dramas” and rough riding exhibitions with some of the greatest Wild West Shows of the era, touring across Europe and as far away as South Africa. In the dawning 20th century, Deer’s career transcended the family Wild West Shows and she performed a solo act in Russia. Returning to the U.S. from Russia after a brief marriage that ended tragically, Deer burst upon the B.F. Keith vaudeville stage in *From Wigwam to White Lights*, soon becoming the most successful Mohawk entertainer of her generation. Considered one of the most beautiful women in the world, her name soon graced marquees across the country as she performed alongside Will Rogers, Eddie Cantor, George M. Cohan, Harry Houdini, W.C. Fields, and George Gershwin in Ziegfeld shows and four Broadway musicals. Never losing touch with her heritage, Deer was proud to dedicate the New Jersey lake community known as Lake Mohawk to the Mohawk people; a plaza there was named in her honor. Taking up where her father left off, she was an activist for Mohawk and Native causes until her death at age 100. Princess White Deer was a living paradox, embodying the culture and values of an ancient race while breaking new ground as a modern career woman. Her 100 years were barely enough to contain the many lives she led. *In Search of Princess White Deer*, the first biography of this remarkable woman, chronicles her life in vivid detail, providing a new and very personal perspective on a fascinating yet often overlooked aspect of our American heritage.

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