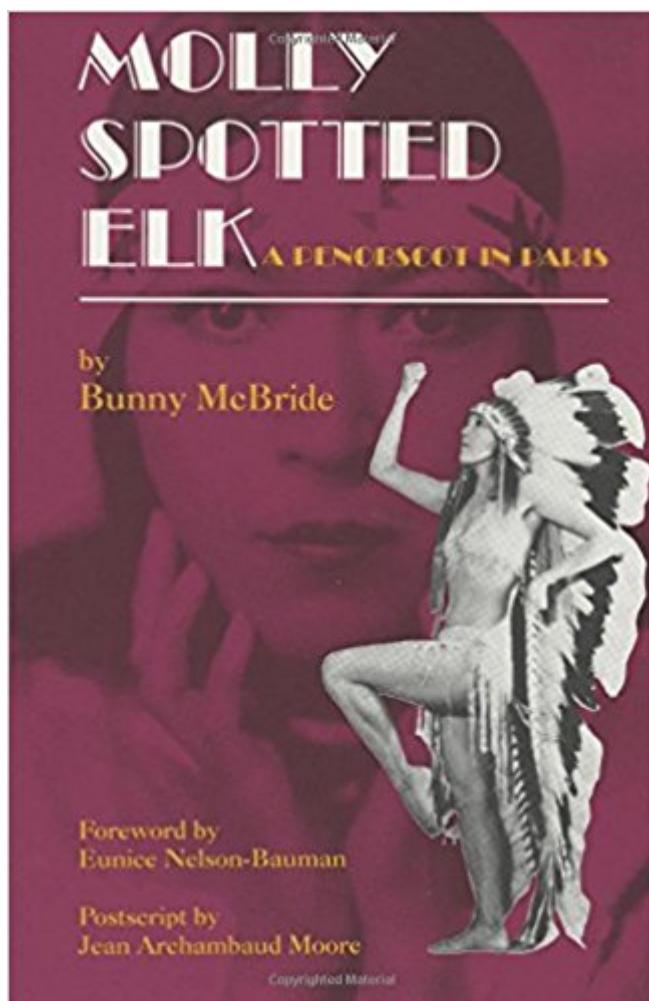


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Molly Spotted Elk: A Penobscot In Paris



Synopsis

Molly Spotted Elk: A Penobscot in Paris chronicles the extraordinary life of a twentieth-century American Indian performing artist. Born in 1903 on the Penobscot reservation in Maine, Molly ventured into show business at an early age—“performing vaudeville in New York, starring in the classic docudrama *The Silent Enemy*, then dancing for royalty and mingling with the literary elite in Europe. In Paris, Molly found an audience more appreciative of authentic Native dance than in the United States. There Molly married a French journalist, but she was forced to leave him and flee France with her daughter during the 1940 German occupation. Drawing extensively on diaries, letters, interviews, and other sources, Bunny McBride reconstructs Molly Spotted Elk’s story and sheds new light on the pressures Molly and her peers endured in acting out white stereotypes of the Indian. •

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Born on the Penobscot reservation in northern Maine, Molly Spotted Elk (1903-1976) was the oldest of eight children. Because her family was poor, she worked as a domestic helper from the age of 11 until her talent for dancing and singing earned her a place in an Indian performing troupe. Drawing on Molly’s diaries (numerous excerpts are printed here) and interviews with family members, McBride, a freelance writer who specializes in cultural survival, provides an engrossing account of Molly’s adventurous life. Although she was a successful vaudeville dancer and appeared in the silent film *The Silent Enemy* (1930), the discrimination she suffered because she was Native

American led her to pursue a dancing career in Paris, where she met Jean, a French journalist with whom she had a daughter and whom she eventually married. McBride documents Molly's escape from France during WWII and the suffering she endured after Jean's death. A moving life of a Native American. Photos. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From 1494 on, Native Americans have held a niche in show business while facing special trials. Here, journalist/ anthropologist McBride (Our Lives in Our Hands, Tilbury House, 1991) empathetically reconstructs the life of famed "Indian entertainer" Molly Spotted Elk, using the rare first-hand source of the dancer's own diaries. "Being appreciated on stage did not translate into being appreciated as a friend," writes McBride of the predicament facing Spotted Elk, an independent, ambitious artist whose life was filled with success, illness, and tragedy. Her biography reveals a woman who entered vaudeville at age 14, appeared on Colliers's cover (April 1927), and was a Texas Guinan dancer and docudrama star of The Silent Enemy (1929). (The discussion of this filming is a highlight.) She found her greatest happiness in Paris in the 1930s through acceptance of the authentic Native dances she preferred over vaudeville and in life with her journalist lover, a period that ended in 1940 with a harrowing forced exit from German-occupied France. An intriguing work on a subject that has received little attention; recommended for both lay readers and specialists. Margaret W. Norton, J. Sterling Morton H.S., Berwyn, Ill. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As a Maine for only 17 years this and as an appreciator of our Native American tribes, I found this book very appealing.

This book describes the life of a Penobscot Indian who chose music and dance to bridge the gap between the old tribal customs and the 20th Century. It is a very encouraging story as Molly met many obstacles and personal unhappiness along the way.

I needed this for class and I found it here cheapest. Took a while to come in the mail, but it's in excellent condition. Looks like it had a book sleeve at one point that was lost, though.

The first 30 years of Molly's life are a fascinating story, but this writer was not the one to tell it. The awkward and amateurish quality of the writing detracts from an inherently interesting tale. The prose

is particularly cringe-worthy when the writer attempts to summarize history or wax lyrical about complete strangers' guessed-at emotional states. The book needed a good copy editor, too - it has far too many errors. Molly deserved a biographer (and perhaps an editor to work with the writer) who could shape a well written account of her life.

This is a beautifully-written biography of a young Penobscot woman from Indian Island, Maine. She danced in vaudeville, Wild West shows, and even went topless in New York before dancing before royalty in Europe. She had a passionate but tragic love affair with a French journalist, and fled with her daughter from the Nazis. Molly suffered greatly in her lifetime but shone among her people as a strong matriarch with dazzling basketweaving skills and musical talents. She deserves to have her story told at last.

This is a wonderfully lyrical account of the life of a Penobscot woman who against great odds overcomes poverty and illness through her intelligence, love of beauty and dance and her connection to her Native American heritage. Her romance with a French Resistance-member journalist and her escape over the Alps with her infant daughter during World War II is spell-binding. I loved this book!

As a middle school librarian in a county with two tribes, I am always looking for books that will model excellence for our young men and women. This is a fascinating read about a native American young woman in the early days of Hollywood. We can't afford this book yet, but it is one of three that top my list for next year's order. We have 180 feet of empty shelves.

THIS WAS BOUGHT AS A PRESENT. I HAVE READ IS AS IT IS ABOUT MY MOTHER.
EVERYONE WHO READ IT HAS THOROUGHLY ENJOYED IT. JEAN A MOORE. MAINE

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