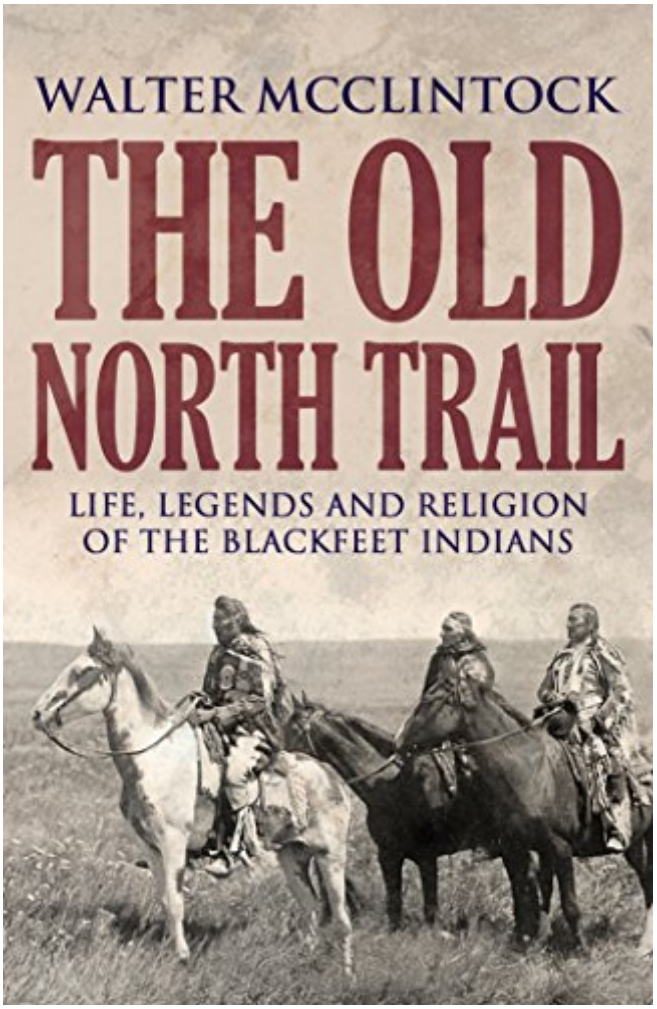
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The Old North Trail: Life, Legends, And Religion Of The Blackfeet Indians



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Synopsis

Ã¢â ¬Å“A valuable reference on Blackfeet customs and mythology.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â • Journal of the WestWhen Walter McClintock first became acquainted with the Blackfeet Native Americans in the late nineteenth century he realised that their way of life was under threat.The young were disinterested in preserving the old ways of life and he realised that without a written language of their own, the culture, religion and folk-lore of the Blackfeet would soon fall into oblivion.Ã¢â ¬Å“When I discovered that I could obtain the unbosoming of their secrets and that the door was open to me for study and investigation, I resolved that I would do my best to preserve all the knowledge available.Ã¢â ¬Â• The Old North Trail: Life, Legends, and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians is the fruit of that study and investigation.McClintock was able to gain unprecedented access to Blackfoot culture due to the fact that he became adopted by Chief Mad Dog, the high priest of the Sun Dance, and spent four years living on the Blackfoot Reservation.Ã¢â ¬Å“An intriguing . . . mixture of stories, legends, and descriptions of religious rituals, all woven into [McClintockÃ¢â ¬â„¢s] own personal account of his life with the Blackfeet. He tells of being inducted into the tribe, participating in family ceremonies, and living with his adoptive family. . . . Other times McClintock takes a serious anthropological approach as he describes the social customs of the tribe, including many of their songs, and catalogs the names, uses, and preparations of various herbs and medicinal plants. [The Old North Trail] has much more personal detail about Blackfoot daily life than can be found in any other sources from that period.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â • Natural HistoryWalter McClintock was born in Pittsburgh in 1879. He spent much of his life studying the Blackfeet Native Americans and wrote a number of anthropological books on his time with them as he grew to learn about their religion and culture. The Old North Trail is perhaps his most famous work, it was first published in 1910. McClintock eventually passed away in 1949.

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Customer Reviews

In 1891, Walter McClintock graduated from Yale, with plans to join his fatherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s prosperous carpet making business in smog-choked Pittsburgh. Luckily, he was spared from a dull job by getting very sick with typhoid fever. To recover, he took a trip to North Dakota, where he fell deeply in love with the west. He worked as a photographer for a forest survey project, and became friends with the teamÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Blackfoot scout, Siksikakoan. Later, Siksikakoan introduced him to the elderly chief Mad Wolf.Once Mad Wolf came to trust McClintock, he adopted the young lad as his son. Mad Wolf hoped that if his people had a white leader, they would receive better treatment from the incoming settlers, many of whom were not skilled at behaving with common decency. McClintock spent lots of time with a number of elders, listened to many stories, and several years later wrote The Old North Trail. He also took more than a thousand photographs, many of which illustrate the book. Today, a century later, lists his book as a best seller. ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s fascinating and easy to read.The Blackfeet lived on the plains east of the Rocky Mountains, from Montana up into Alberta. When the painter George Catlin met them in 1832, he said they were the happiest Indians or all. The Old North Trail was an ancient footpath that passed through their territory. In places, old ruts are still visible. Today, some suspect that it may have been 2,000 to 3,000 miles long, linking Canada and Mexico. Because many tribes used the trail, travel was dangerous. It was a common place for ambushes and tribal wars.In the old days, the Blackfeet used dogs as beasts of burden. Sometime before 1750, they acquired horses, triggering radical change. Horses greatly increased their ability to hunt, feed more people, wage war, haul trade goods, and zoom across the plains at superhuman velocity. Corn farmers became highly vulnerable to horse-mounted raids by neighboring tribes, forcing many to abandon their fields and

become nomadic. After 1780, the Blackfeet were hammered by wave after wave of deadly diseases. Their population dropped by maybe 90 percent.By 1883, white folks had succeeded in nearly exterminating the buffalo, and this made the traditional Blackfoot life impossible. The tribe was forced onto reservations, given ration tickets, treated like dogs, and were not allowed freedom of travel. Missionaries introduced them to sin, hell, damnation, guilt, and submission. Teachers taught youths the ABCÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s of civilization, using the English language.By the time McClintock arrived, many young Blackfeet were disoriented victims of cultural genocide, largely indifferent to their tribeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s customs, traditions, and religion. During important ceremonies, many would be drinking, gambling, or horseracing. Only the elders still remembered the traditional ways, and their days were numbered. McClintock wanted to record the story of these people, before their culture ceased to exist. The Blackfeet people fascinated McClintock, and he described them in a respectful manner.His book is a magical 500-page voyage into another time and place. Readers can soar away from the spooky nightmare world of automobiles and cell phone zombies, and imagine living in wildness and freedom. The Blackfeet elders shared fond memories of a way of life that was far more in balance with the circle of life. In the good old days, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“the mountain slopes abounded in beaver, wapiti, moose, mountain sheep, and grizzly bears, while immense herds of antelope and buffalo roamed over the plains.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•One night, McClintock awoke to discover a huge grizzly bear stepping over him to finish off his dinner leftovers. Grizzlies were still common. Wolves and coyotes often howled passionate serenades under the stars. Humans were not the dominant species; they were delicious two-legged meatballs. Modern folks, obsessed with glowing screens, would not have lasted long in a reality where man-eating carnivores were never far away. To survive, folks actually had to pay careful attention to reality, and behave in an intelligent manner. Imagine that!The people wore clothing of animal hides, and lived in tipis, in an ecosystem of scorching summers and long blast-freezer winters. Powerful storms could race across the plains at astonishing speed. On a pleasantly warm November day, McClintock noticed distant turbulent clouds that were rushing across the plains in his direction. Danger! The temperature sharply dropped, howling winds pounded him, and a whiteout blizzard commenced. He lost all sense of direction, and freezing to death was a strong possibility. He managed to return to camp. The storm lasted ten days.McClintock wrote, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Blackfeet subsisted mainly upon buffalo meat, when it could be secured. They also used sarvis berries, wild cherries, buffalo berries and vegetables such as camas, wild turnips, wild onions, wild potatoes, bitter root, and wild rhubarb. They secured wild ducks and geese by striking them over the head with long sticks. Beaver tails were considered a

great delicacy.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•A vegetarian would soon starve on the plains. The Blackfeet survived by killing and eating their animal relatives. When natives died, their corpses were returned to the circle of life. The dead were placed upon scaffolds built in trees, called death lodges. The Blackfeet did not arrogantly interrupt the circle dance of life with buried caskets or cremation.McClintock was amazed by how well the Blackfeet lived without thrashing their ecosystem. Whites did amazing things with science and industry, but the Blackfeet were superior in terms of their personal integrity. In no Blackfoot community could you find the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“depravity, misery, and consuming vice, which involve multitudes in the industrial centers of all the large cities of Christendom.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• By thriving in a lifestyle with few wants, they did not deteriorate into infantile consumers.The last chapter in the book has pissed off many reviewers. The preceding thirty-eight chapters did not provide, in any way, a flattering impression of settler society. In 1910, respect for savages was politically incorrect, and publishers were not fond of risky projects. The Blackfeet were hopelessly screwed. Whites were here to stay. Happy endings sold more books.So, the story concludes with a jarring shift. McClintock praised the integrity of the Blackfoot people, and was proud of their heroic advance toward Christian civilization. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The industrious are rapidly becoming self-supporting. Some of them live in well-made and comfortable houses, and own ranches, with large herds of cattle and horses. They wear white menÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s clothes, purchased from the trading stores, own high priced wagons and buggies and make use of modern farming implements.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Hooray!Anyway, the book provides readers with a wonderful peephole into a way of life that was not insane. Children were raised in a land that was wild, free, and thriving ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • grizzly bears, not teddy bears. The good power (Great Spirit) was everywhere, in everything ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • mountains, plains, winds, waters, trees, birds, and animals. Everyone was on the same cultural channel, free from the friction of diversity and wealth inequality. They grew up in coherent communities where it was rare to see a stranger.McClintockÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book described how a healthy culture disintegrated into incoherence over the course of just one generation. Beliefs got us into this mess, not genes. IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m very optimistic that the coming decades of resource depletion, climate change, and the collapse of our economic system will provide a miraculous cure for consumer fever. Survival will require paying careful attention to reality, and behaving in an intelligent manner. Radical change in one generation is not totally impossible when the time is ripe. Think positive!

The Old North Trail: Life, Legends and Religon of the Blackfeet Indians by Walter McClintock. I

know a few of my extended family will like this book.Walter McClintock took an interest in the Blackfeet around the turn of the 20th century. Through diligents and honesty he became aquainted with a tribe, that historically, had no love lost for the 'white man' since Lewis & Clarke. He eventually was adopted into one tribe of the Blackfoot Nation. Over time he gained enough goodwill from the leaders of various tribes to gain an in depth knowledge of their old life style, religion and culture. For me it was an interesting read about a people I've respected for a long time, the First Americans.Written around the turn of the century the author became fluent enough in their language to phonically use some of the tribal names. He mixes those, liberally, with English translations, so you may find it a bit perplexing to read. His discriptions of every day life are fascinating, as well as his discriptions of their Sun Dance and living quarters. (Having built and lived in a Flat Head lodge I found his descripitions accurate to what I have learned over the years.)Near the end of the book the narative becomes sad, for me. He describes how the old ones are no longer revered and their way of life disappearing, especially their religon. (for me, there are very telling parallels to what is happening today).As a person who started reading about our plains First Americans in the early 1970's I was hesitant to put the book aside. It increased my respect for those peoples of the Great Plains, before the 'White Man'. Their culture, if emulated, would have greatly enhanced our society. Alas, like much of today's society, the animostiy towards them overwhelmed the 'White Man's' heart and mind, creating a chasim which still exist today

Great book on Indian life by one who lived with them! If you like this book, you will want to read these 99-cent books by J.W. Schultz:1.Ã Â The War Trail Fort (1921) (Linked Table of Contents)2.Ã Â In the Great Apache Forest (1920)3Ã Â Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park (1916) (Linked Table Contents)4Ã Â My Life as an Indian: The Story of a Red Woman and a White Man in the Lodges of the Blackfeet (1907)5Ã Â The Quest of the Fish-Dog Skin (1913)6Ã Â Lone Bull's Mistake: A Lodge Pole Chief Story (1918)7Ã Â Apauk, Caller of Buffalo (1916)8Ã Â The Dreadful River Cave: Chief Black Elk's Story (1920)9Ã Â On the Warpath10Ã Â The Trail of the Spanish Horse (1922)

Chock full of interesting information, very informative as to the Blackfeet culture, highly descriptive of personalities, but not very exciting, so if that's your main criterion, you'll likely be disappointed. If, however, interesting, informative, culture-sensitve, well written description of beautiful scenery and fascinating characters appeals, you're gonna like it!

A must read for anyone interested in the history of this country, and the Native American culture.This book is so well-written and filled with first-hand stories and adventures that I was sorry to have completed reading it! The author lived with, and delved into the culture of his Indian brethren - fortunately for us. Nowhere else will you 'experience' the spiritual and everyday life of the great first Americans.

It was very interesting to learn about native american societies.How they interacted which various tribes with different languages with sign language was intriguing. Some of the descriptions of their ceremonies became a bit tedious, but I think the author was trying to be as precise as possible to describe all of the different dances and legends.

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