

A Face in the Rock

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The Tale of a Grand Island Chippewa



LOREN R. GRAHAM

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出版者:Univ of California Pr

出版时间:1998-8

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780520215672

Eight miles long and four miles wide, Grand Island lies off the south shore of Lake Superior. It was once home to a sizable community of Chippewa Indians who lived in harmony with the land and with each other. Their tragic demise began early in the nineteenth century when their fellow tribesmen from the mainland goaded them into waging war against rival Sioux. The war party was decimated; only one young brave, Powers of the Air, lived to tell the story that celebrated the heroism of his band and formed the basis of the legend that survives today. Distinguished historian Loren R. Graham has spent more than forty years researching and reconstructing the poignant tale of Powers of the Air and his people. "A Face in the Rock" is an artful melding of human history and natural history; it is a fascinating narrative of the intimate relation between place and people. Powers of the Air lived to witness the desecration of Grand Island by the fur and logging industries, the Christianization of the tribe, and the near total loss of the Chippewa language, history, and culture. Graham charts the plight of the Chippewa as white culture steadily encroaches, forcing the native people off the island and dispersing their community on the mainland. The story ends with happier events of the past two decades, including the protection of Grand Island within the National Forest system, and the resurgence of Chippewa culture.

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