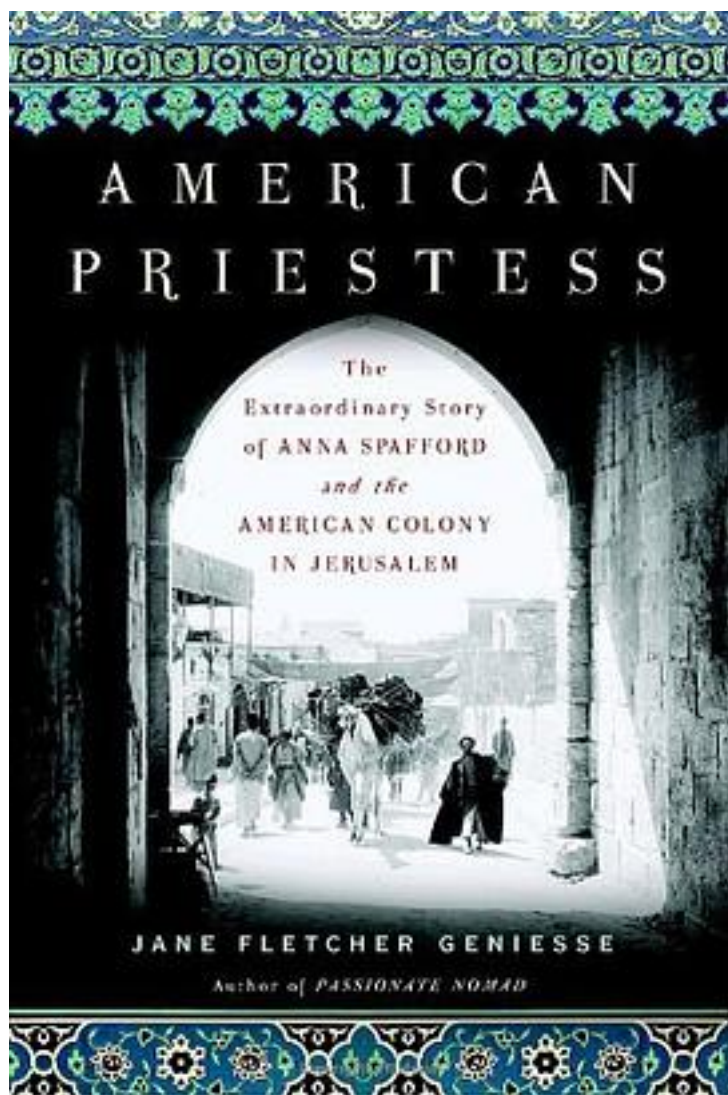


American Priestess



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For generations in Jerusalem, a fabled mansion has been the retreat for foreign correspondents, diplomats, pilgrims and spies—but until now, few have known the true story of the house that became the American Colony Hotel or its bizarre history of tragedy, religious extremism, emotional blackmail, and peculiar sexual practices.

During the boom years following the Civil War, in the country's heartland capital, Chicago, a prominent lawyer Horatio Spafford and his blue-eyed wife Anna rode the mighty wave of Protestant evangelicalism deluging the nation. When suddenly tragedy struck, the charismatic Spaffords, grieving, attracted followers eager to believe their prophecy that the Second Coming was at hand and in 1881 sailed with them to Jerusalem to see the Messiah alight on the Mount of Olives.

No sooner had they settled into the Holy City than the U. S. Consul and the established Christian missionaries declared them heretics and whispered of sexual deviance. Yet Muslims and Jews admired their unflagging care of the sick and the needy, and Jews were intrigued with their advocacy of a Jewish Return to Zion. When Horatio died, Anna assumed leadership, shocking even her adherents by abolishing marriage and established a dictatorship that was not always benevolent. Ever dogged by controversy, she and her credulous followers lived through and closely participated in the titanic upheavals that eventually formed the modern Middle East.

Written with flair and insight, *American Priestess* provides a fascinating exploration of the seductive power of evangelicalism and raises questions about the manipulation of religion to serve personal goals. A powerful narrative, the story sweeps through the dramatic collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the establishment of the British Mandate, and finally the founding of Israel where Anna's house in East Jerusalem, now the American Colony Hotel, stands as an exemplar of beauty and comfort, despite its turbulent history.

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