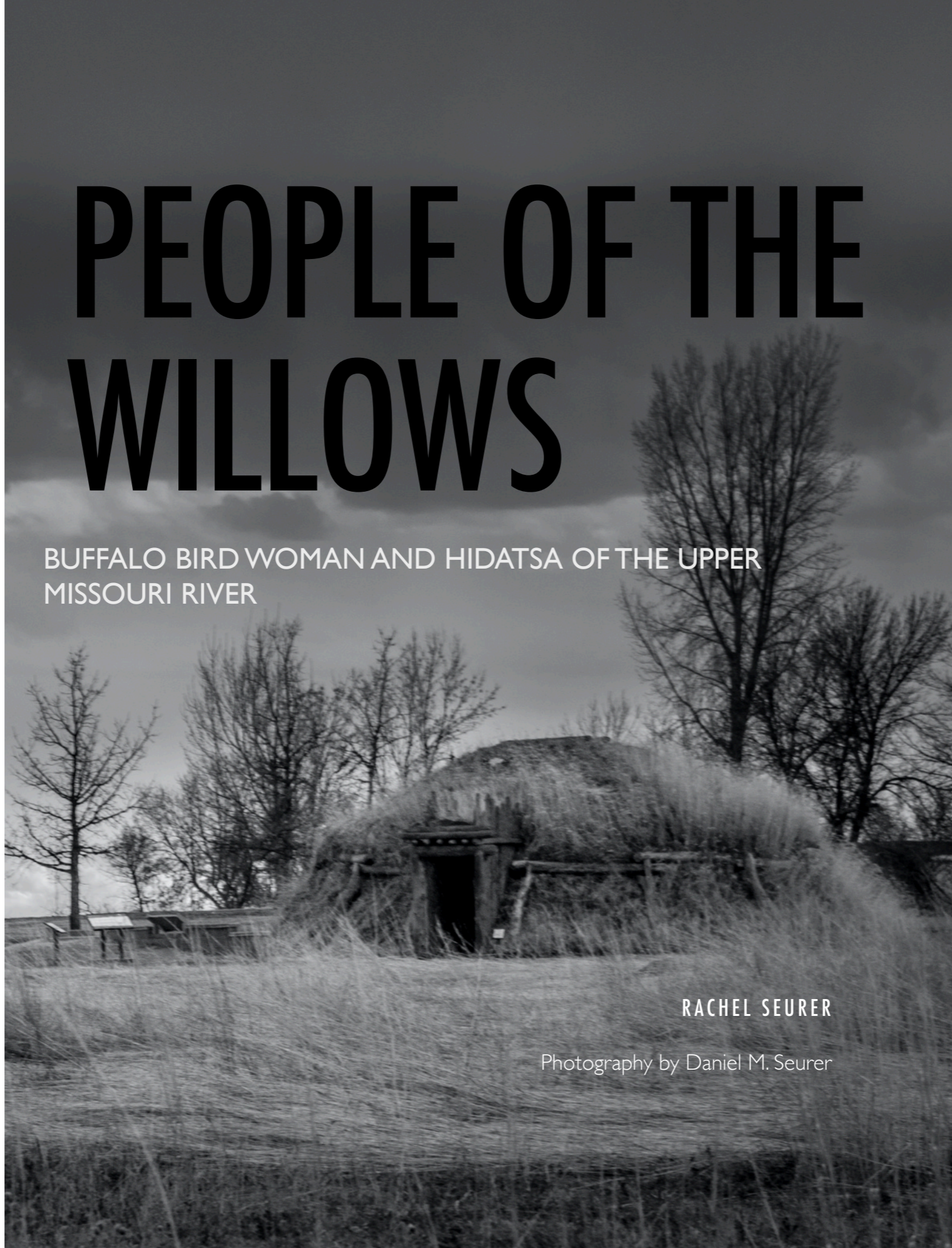


PEOPLE OF THE WILLOWS

BUFFALO BIRD WOMAN AND HIDATSA OF THE UPPER
MISSOURI RIVER

RACHEL SEURER

Photography by Daniel M. Seurer



PEOPLE OF THE WILLOWS

BUFFALO BIRD WOMAN AND HIDATSA OF THE UPPER MISSOURI RIVER



BUFFALO BIRD WOMAN



She would see her home for the last time in 1880, though she would never forget it.

Buffalo Bird Woman (ca 1839 - 1930) was a Hidatsa woman who lived out the early years of her life in traditional earth lodge villages along the Missouri River in North Dakota. She would later recount the history and practices of her people through a series of interviews conducted by ethnographer Gilbert Wilson along with her son, Edwin Goodbird, in 1908.

Interwoven into her narrative are her accounts of the agricultural practices that guided her ancestors for hundreds of years. Her words also stand as a testament to the collective scars of the Hidatsa people left from a history of intertribal warfare, smallpox epidemics, and, ultimately, the forced removal from their traditional homelands to Fort Bertrاند in the 1870's.

These images serve as stark reminders of the transmutability of all things. To contemplate them is to not only consider questions about the nature of what was and what will become, but to confront these questions through the eyes of the people whose stories shaped this land the most.



"Sometimes in evening I sit, looking out on the big Missouri. The sun sets, and dusk steals over the water. In the shadows I see again our Indian village, with smoke curling upward from the earthlodges; and in the river's roar I hear the yells of warriors, the laughter of little children as of old. It is but an old women's dream. Again I see but shadows and hear only the roar of the river." (Buffalo Bird Woman)



Earth Lodge Depressions along the Knife River. Awatixa Village, Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site



Reconstructed Earth Lodges along the Missouri River. On-a-Slant village, Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park.



"I am an old woman now. The buffaloes and black tail deer are gone, and our Indian ways are almost gone. Sometimes I find it hard to believe that I ever lived them". (Buffalo Bird Woman)



Medicine Lodge. On-a-Slant village, Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park.



Reconstructed Earth Lodges. On-a-Slant village, Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park.



Earth Lodge Entrance Detail. Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site



We no longer live in an earthlodge, but in a house with chimneys.... But for me I cannot forget our old ways". (Buffalo Bird Woman)



Cedar Post Ring in the plaza of the On-a-Slant village, Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park.



"It is but an old women's dream. Again I see but shadows and hear only the roar of the river, and tears come from my eyes." (Buffalo Bird Woman)."
Earth Lodge Depressions. Awatixa Village along the Knife River.

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