



Hidalgo and Other Stories

Frank T. Hopkins, David Dary, Basha O'Reilly, CuChullaine O'Reilly

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It started as a search for heroes. It became a hunt for the most elusive equestrian charlatan of all time. If Frank Hopkins is to be believed, he led one of the most exciting, challenging and colorful (albeit unrecorded) lives in the late nineteenth century. No one rode more miles, eluded more danger, or befriended more famous people than he did. During the 1930s and 40s the self-proclaimed legend told a naïve American public that he had won nearly five hundred endurance races, including an imaginary race across Arabia on a mythical mustang named "Hidalgo." Hopkins' remarkable career supposedly began when he became a dispatch rider for the US government on his twelfth birthday in 1877. According to his mythology, this Renaissance Man of the Old West went on to work as a buffalo hunter, Indian fighter, African explorer, endurance racer, trick rider, bounty hunter, Rough Rider, big game guide, secret agent, Pinkerton detective and star of the Wild West show. Experts beg to differ. This book contains an unprecedented study, undertaken by more than seventy experts in five countries, ranging from the Curator of the Buffalo Bill Museum to the former Sultan of Yemen. These academics investigated the historical improbability of Hopkins' claims and weighed him on his merit, not his myth. The resulting exhaustive study revealed that Hopkins had maintained a spirited disregard for the truth, plagiarized material from famous authors, slandered genuine American heroes and perpetrated a massive fraud for nearly one hundred years. Far from being the star of Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West show for 32 years, for example, the counterfeit cowboy was discovered working as a subway tunnel digger in Philadelphia and a horse-handler for Ringling Brothers Circus. It is his endurance racing pretensions, however, that have brought Hopkins his greatest notoriety and made him the hero of a Hollywood movie. Yet there is not even a documented photograph of Frank Hopkins in the saddle! Here then are all the known writings of Frank T. Hopkins, published in their entirety for the first time in history.

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