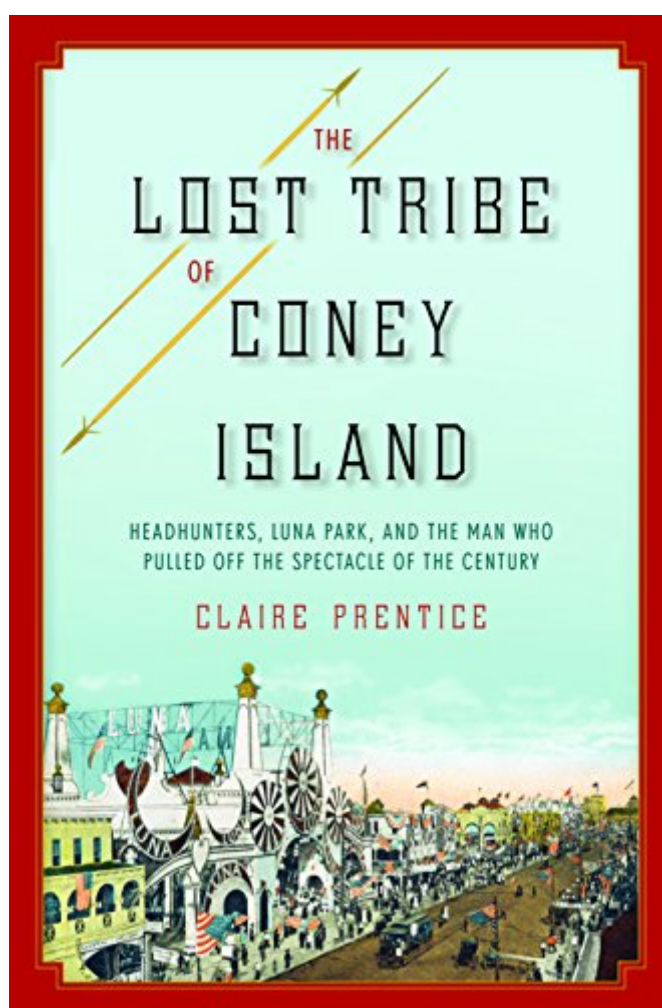


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# The Lost Tribe Of Coney Island: Headhunters, Luna Park, And The Man Who Pulled Off The Spectacle Of The Century



## Synopsis

Shortlisted for the 2015 Brooklyn Eagles Literary Prize Best Book of the Month, History • “October 2014 New York Post • “must read” • “October 2014 Coney Island, summer 1905: a new attraction opened at Luna Park. Within weeks it would be the talk of the nation. For the first time, The Lost Tribe of Coney Island unearths the incredible true story of the Igorrotes, a group of • “headhunting, dog eating” • tribespeople brought to America from the Philippines by the opportunistic showman Truman K. Hunt. At Luna Park, the g-string-clad Filipinos performed native dances and rituals before a wide-eyed public in a mocked-up tribal village. Millions of Americans flocked to see the tribespeople slaughter live dogs for their daily canine feasts and to hear thrilling tales of headhunting. The Igorrotes became a national sensation” they were written up in newspaper headlines, portrayed in cartoons, and even featured in advertising jingles, all fueled by Truman’s brilliant publicity stunts. By the end of the summer season, the Igorrote show had made Truman a rich man. But his genius had a dark side and soon he would be on the run across America with the tribe in tow, pursued by ex-wives, creditors, Pinkerton detectives, and the tireless agents of American justice. Award-winning journalist Claire Prentice brings this forgotten chapter in American history to life with vivid prose and rich historical detail. The book boasts a colorful cast of characters, including the mercurial Truman Hunt; his ambitious, young Filipino interpreter, Julio Balinag; Fomoaley Ponci, the tribe’s loquacious, self-important leader; Luna Park impresarios Fred Thompson and Elmer • “Skip” • Dundy; and Frederick Barker, the government man dead set on bringing Truman to justice. At its heart, The Lost Tribe of Coney Island is a tale of what happens when two cultures collide in the pursuit of money, adventure, and the American Dream. It is a story that makes us question who is civilized and who is savage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this day and age, when even The Greatest Show on Earth is promising to quit exhibiting elephants for fun and profit; it's difficult to get one's head around a time just a little more than a century ago when human zoos were the most popular attractions at carnivals, fairs and amusement parks. THE LOST TRIBE OF CONEY ISLAND: Headhunters, Luna Park, and the Man Who Pulled Off the Spectacle of the Century, by Claire Prentice is a poignant look at that era. The goodreads.com synopsis of this book says, in part, "Readers of Erik Larson will love this tale of sex, greed, and the American dream. I am a reader, and a fan, of Eric Larson, and, although the writing isn't really up to Larson's caliber, but for the overwhelming sadness of the cruel and ruthless victimization of the fifty-one, gullible and defenseless Bontoc Igorrotes Filipinos, whose story this is, I did quite enjoy the glimpses of history and culture of this tale. What I don't understand is why this tribe of headhunting, dog-eating savages didn't lop off the head of the perfidious, self-delusional, huckster Truman K. Hall. I might have cheered, if they had. Recommendation: It's a bit of a slog in places, but worth the effort. Kindle edition, 390 pages

Sometimes, it is amazing that there is something in the not-so-distant history of the United States that I know absolutely nothing about. This book details just such a bit of history: a period when a group of Filipino men and women were brought to the United States for the entertainment of Americans. The book itself is an easy read, and the story is fascinating: both the story of this bit of history, and that of the man who brought these men and women to the United States. The latter almost overshadows the former, which is amazing, considering how fascinating the story of the former is. I have one major problem with this book. Despite being a big fan of narrative non-fiction,

there is a point when an author takes far too much liberty with a story. In the case of *The Lost Tribe of Coney Island*, that point is definitely reached. Far more thoughts and actions are attributed to the characters in the book than I thought was appropriate. However, the subject and information from the book are so interesting, that I still gave it four stars and would recommend it as an easy read.

This book is simply incredible. The author has discovered a forgotten historical event, and turned it into an engaging, stranger than fiction, book. I was not only thoroughly entertained, but also feel like I learned a lot about the culture of the period. One gripe is that the author sometimes seems to be taking liberties in assuming what the "characters" in the book were thinking. This seemed a bit odd for a nonfiction book. It would have been inexcusable if the book were covering major historical figures or events. But since this book is almost like a novel (albeit a novel describing real events in a lost era), I got used to the slightly fictionalized style.

This book is a very easy read. Hard to put down. It takes you back in time to another America. It was an age of wonderment, the large amusement parks, traveling shows, exhibitions, etc. America was just becoming a world power and looking out on other cultures. This is a story about what happens when one society feels superior to another society. This story presents how the tribe was taken advantage of because of their trusting nature. The most outrageous customs, such as eating dogs on special occasions and head hunting were sensationalized and portrayed as every day occurrences to entice people to pay to see the tribe. It is also the story of how one man befriended the tribe, promised them money, and became greedy and swindled them. The story winds through the sordid details of the trip to America from the Philippines, the trek across America, the exhibitions of the tribe, with the conditions of each exhibition becoming more degrading, and the law process that eventually returned the tribe to the Philippines.

Interesting book about something I knew nothing about. The writing style is more of a historical novel than just a factual book, and as such it has a fairly fast pace and is engaging. In terms of the actual content of *The Lost Tribe*, it gets depressing what was going on later on, after their initial arrival in Luna Park. The book is fascinating for what you learn about America at the time. The places (think of Luna Park as being the Disneyland of its day), people and how the Igorrote held up under some very depressing situations.

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