



# Alone with the Past: The life and photographic art of Roland W. Reed

*Ernest R. Lawrence*

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ROLAND REED'S decision came at the last possible moment. By the dawn of the twentieth century, this country's Native Americans were living on reservations, their old ways of life unalterably changed. Royal W. (Roland) Reed, Jr. (1864-1934) was one of a small number of professional photographers now known as Pictorialists who set out to document this "vanishing" race. Employing new artistic techniques and often posing their subjects, the Pictorialists recreated the "noble savage" as they imagined them to have been in the past, not as they presently found them. Reed's better known contemporary, Edward Curtis, enjoyed broad backing and financial support for his work. Reed did not; his work was solitary, self-directed, and self-funded. Critics agree that Reed's photographs are equal, both technically and artistically, to those of Curtis, but his work has remained largely unknown and unpublished.

Reed lived with and photographed the Ojibwe in Minnesota; the Blackfeet, Piegan, Flathead, Cheyenne, and Blood in northern Montana and southern Canada; and the Navajo and Hopi in Arizona. He had begun work on the publication of his collection with the title Reed's Photographic Art Studies of the North American Indian at the time of his accidental death. This unfinished work is the genesis for ALONE WITH THE PAST, which realizes Roland Reed's dream.

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