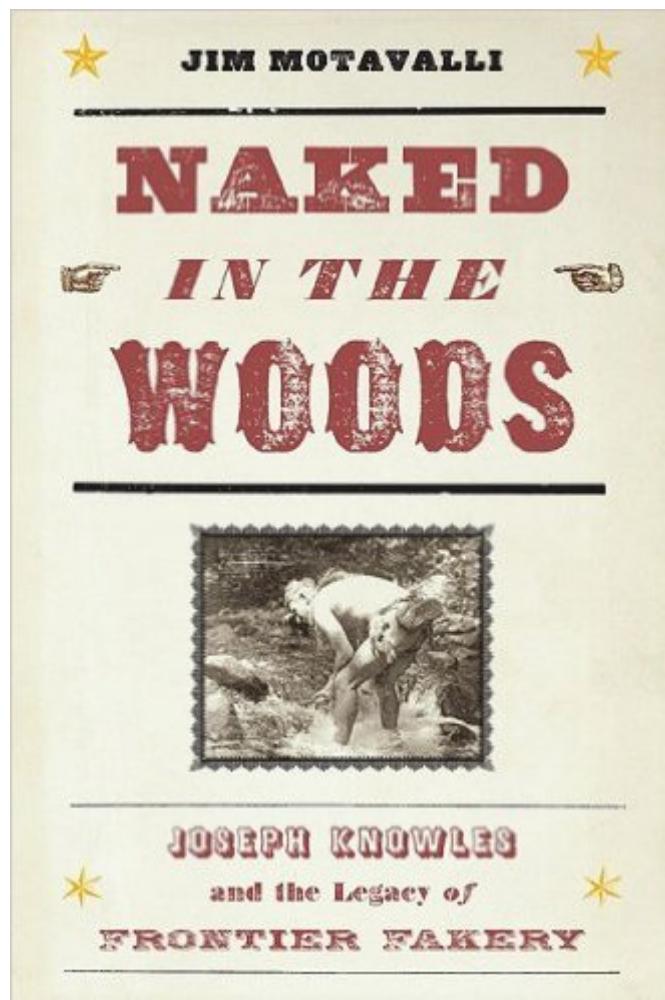


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Naked In The Woods: Joseph Knowles And The Legacy Of Frontier Fakery



Synopsis

Joseph Knowles was a forty-five-year-old part-time painter, ex-Navy man, friend of the Sioux, and onetime hunting guide who stepped-nearly naked-into the woods to live off the land and his own devices. From 1913 to 1916, Knowles' dispatches to the world-alternating accounts of bear clubbing and quiet contemplation, written in charcoal on pieces of birch bark-set off major newspaper wars, exploiting readers' fears of modernization. Did Knowles really survive for months at a time in the untamed wilderness without any aid, and why is the answer still so vital to the American psyche? Part adventure story, part cultural investigation, *Naked in the Woods* reveals a whole new dimension of our natural history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

We are often told that our nation, especially our menfolk, are getting soft, that we don't have the ruggedness of our forebears, that we spend too much time in our cities and not enough back to the land, and that as a result we are losing some moral anchor which used to hold us in good stead. The trouble is that we have been told this for at least a hundred years, probably further back than that, and the message has not changed much, although it is a message that is enthusiastically boosted by many. Our coddled and citified society went faddishly berserk in 1913 for a man who simply went into the woods of Maine, vowing to stay there for two months on his own, unassisted by any technology. Joseph Knowles was a sensation at the time, now forgotten. His astonishing story is the subject of *Naked in the Woods: Joseph Knowles and the Legacy of Frontier Fakery* (Da

Capo Press) by Jim Motavalli. The author, a journalist who writes on environmental themes, has picked from obscurity a wonderful subject, not just Knowles but also the anxiety we tend to have that we are out of touch with natural life. Knowles was all of 43 years old when he went into the woods. He had been a sailor, trapper, and scout, but what he wanted to be was an artist. He had some untutored skill in painting, and was making sketches and paintings in Boston for a decade when he got the idea (perhaps in a dream) to go support himself in the woods. The *_Boston Post_*, always ready for a circulation gimmick, was ready to back him. "Can Knowles Live Two Months as a Cave Man?" came the headlines, and though the paper hyped the event, people were sincerely interested in the man-against-the-wilderness theme.

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