

Carlota.

an artwork by Lewis deSoto

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reading by Emily Clarke

In 1909, the “Willie Boy Manhunt,” portrayed in news media of the time as the story of a drunken murder of a young girl’s father, a kidnapping, the abuse and murder of a young girl as well as attacks against a posse that tried to hunt the man down. The two young people evaded the posse by running on foot huge distances. The death of Carlota during the hunt was described as a wanton murder and sexual assault. It was reported that “Willie Boy” took his own life in the Ruby Mountains because he was surrounded by a posse.

Newspapers connected the man to the “Ghost Dance” phenomena which was described as an armed insurrection by Indians to start a holy war against whites. The so-called murder started in Banning, in Riverside County. At the time, President Howard Taft was to come visit the Mission Inn in Riverside. Media speculated that Indians may murder Taft or at least stage some violence.

“Willie Boy’s” legendary skills as a runner were well known. The role of Carlota was always described as being a victim. She was helpless and hapless. Some research has shown that Carlota and Will (as I call them) were in love and that the murder of the father was likely an accident. The death of Carlota is in fact attributed to a distant rifle shot by a posse member. I believe Will took his own life because of the announcement of the death of his beloved, not because he was trapped with nowhere to go. It was clear in the aftermath that he could have easily run from the posse.

I wrote the story from Carlota’s point of view. This version of the story is speculation, but to me, rings truer than the journalistic slant against Native Americans in the early 20th Century.

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A reading of this project is available on the internet at www.sandtostone.org/carlota