

The True Story Behind a Remarkable Painting
Harry Humphrey Moore and Charles Marcel Vaccari
Connecting the Masterpiece and the Apprentice's Copy

A Work of Art

At the store of J. Lenoir, on Fifth street, may be seen an oil painting which will well repay more than a casual inspection. It is a copy of the celebrated work of Humphrey Moore, entitled, "Alma, a Dream of the Alhambra," which was awarded the first prize at the Paris exposition of 1867, and was sold for \$5,000, being now owned in San Francisco. The copy is about twice the size of the original, being 5x8 feet, and was painted by C.M. Vaccari, of this city. The scene is an interior perspective view of the old Moorish palace of the Alhambra. In the foreground is the life size figure of a dancing girl, surrounded with all the barbaric splendor for which the Oriental invaders of Grenada were noted. Lovers of art are invited to take a look at the picture, as it is for sale, the price only \$350.

October 21, 1882

Weekly Epitaph

Tombstone, Arizona Territory

History obscures the authenticity of a painting hanging in one of the most celebrated buildings in Tombstone. The stories and legends abound regarding the identity of the scantily clad woman, with an obvious admirer lounged at her feet strumming an instrument while she beckons the viewer to step closer still and be captivated by her gaze and the details of her costume. The playful smile on her lips makes the viewer smile in return, the bracelets that dangle from her wrists leaves the viewer imagining the gentle chime they must make as she dances. The slight jut of her hip suggests she is in mid turn, ready to tease the viewer with well-practiced movements. The details of the tea service at her feet with a water pipe ready to be smoked standing nearby, and the intricate designs of the room where she dances allows the viewer a glimpse into her exotic world.

We have all viewed this larger-than-life painting, we have heard the story told day after day, but have we really looked at it? Have we truly listened to the story and not questioned its authenticity? Would you like to know the historical evidence, or are you content with the legend? If you are content, you must stop here and read no further.

If you desire more than the legendary thread, continue, beware, be warned, the truthful threads are much more fascinating than the legend has ever been, facts and truths will be woven into an incredibly beautiful history leaving you wanting to know more about your favorite wild west town.

A Dream of the Alhambra

A well-known painting hangs in the entryway of one of the most historic buildings in Tombstone. She is a striking woman attired in a traditional 'Almeh' costume with a musician at her feet. She has been called 'Little Egypt', 'Fatima', and 'Belly Dancer'. She is none of

these, but so much more. She has captivated millions of visitors to Tombstone since she was brought here in 1882. This is her story, the truth whispered through the threads of time, when you are done reading you will know that she is quite possibly one of the most treasured pieces of history to ever grace the walls of Tombstone.

The Painter

A world-renowned Artist of his time, Harry Humphrey Moore was deaf and mute. Harry and his brother, who was also deaf, were sent to David Bartlett's Private School for the Deaf as young boys. While young Harry studied Art, his brother studied Medicine, both brothers became foremost experts in their chosen fields and made history. Born in 1844 in New York, Harry displayed his talent for painting the human form with incredible life and character when he was 10 years old and painted a portrait of his grandfather. After finishing at private school, Harry went on to study art in Hartford, CT, New Haven, CT, New York, San Francisco and Philadelphia.

At the tender age of 21, Harry, moved to Munich, then Paris and eventually Rome where he became one of the most noted American Painters of his time. Harry's fame was attributed to his brilliant use of color, delicate brush work and a profound presence of depth and life. Harry moved to Spain with his mother and apprenticed there, for the sole purpose of painting the aspects of the Moorish life. Spain is also where he met and married his first wife, Isabel, the daughter of a Spanish Noblewoman and a Colonel. Moore studied and practiced Orientalism, as the style became known in the 1850's, which was the study of the characteristics of Asian and Arab life in the European world, specifically Spain. A particular location became popular with painters and artists all over the world, the Alhambra Palace at Granada Spain, built in 899 and renovated in 1333 the Alhambra embodied all the fascinating aspects of Moorish life. The architecture, painting, delicate balance of water and solid structure portrayed the beauty and influence of the Moorish invaders. Because of Moore's wife and the connection her family had to the Spanish throne and aristocrats, Moore gained privileged access to the Alhambra Palace and the people who lived and worked there.

It was at the Alhambra, in about 1865, that Moore painted what would become known as his masterpiece, *Almeh, a Dream of the Alhambra*. Moore chose to paint an Almeh, a woman entertainer, who would dance and sing to her audience in the manner of the Egyptian/Arabic dance, which we commonly refer to as Belly Dancing. Not only did Moore capture the Almeh's striking beauty, the fullness of her lips, the almond shape of her eyes outlined in kohl, but the intricate details of her costume were captured in rich glorious color. The stripes and lines of her skirt, the way her blouse slipped across her shoulders, and the glittering design of her earring and necklace were captured in true life detail by Moore's brush strokes. Moore painted his Almeh in the Hall of the Two Sisters, capturing the details of the check-tiled design in the walls behind her, the beauty of the curved columns, and the gently descent of the steps where the musician lay playing at her feet. The admiration on the musicians' face is most apparent, as he looks at her with affection in his eyes, he seems to be playing his instrument without thought only watching her dance to

his music. The delicate brush work brings Alméh to life, it creates a glimpse into the faraway world of the Moors for the viewer who may never travel to such an exotic place.

Moore revealed his 'Alméh' at the 1867 Paris Exposition, where the much loved painting received 1st Place Prize in the portrait category. The life sized painting, being 5 x 8 feet, received much praise and attention from many of the Expo attendees. Harry returned to Spain and painted 4 more 'Alméhs', and more paintings of life at the Alhambra. At the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Harry entered his Alméh A Dream of the Alhambra, where she was promptly turned away for being too risqué and inappropriate for the American Public. Harry packed up his Alméh's and travelled to San Francisco in 1877.

A Masterpiece Reborn

Charles Marcel Vaccari, born in French Algiers in 1837, he made his way to America to improve upon his landscape artist technique and live the immigrants dream of riches in the land of opportunity. In 1869 Vaccari was employed as a night watchman in the San Francisco Art District where he befriended local artist and masters and apprenticed under some of the most notable painters of the time. Vaccari worked hard to gain his citizenship and was a Naturalized American Citizen in 1874, and opened his own landscape painting business in San Francisco.

It was around 1880 that Vaccari met H. H. Moore and began an apprenticeship to learn the mastery of painting the human form.

Between 1880 and 1881 Vaccari learned artistic techniques and skills from Moore, and it was at this time that Vaccari copied, with permission, Moore's Alméh, a Dream of the Alhambra masterpiece. Mirroring the brush techniques of Moore, Vaccari captured the intricate details of the painting and presented it in vivid color and lifelike authenticity.

In 1881 Moore decided he needed to return to the Alhambra Palace in Granada and paint more of his favorite subject. Moore sold his beloved Alméh in San Francisco for \$5,000 to fund his trip. Moore took the rest of the paintings in his collection to Manhattan and put everything into storage at a warehouse location popular with art dealers and artists. Moore left for Spain in 1882 to continue his creative genius.

Vaccari packed up his copied Alméh and made his way to Tombstone, Arizona Territory where he took up residence in October of 1882. Vaccari attempted to first sell his copy of the Alméh for \$350.00 at J. Lenior's shop on Fifth Street. Having no luck, Vaccari decided to sell raffle tickets for the painting and a raffle was held on 10 November 1882 at the Crystal Palace Saloon at the corner of Fifth and Allen Streets. Interestingly enough the winner of raffle ticket number 6 and of Alméh, a Dream of the Alhambra by C. M. Vaccari was the owner of the Alhambra Saloon in Tombstone, Richard "Dick" Brinsley Clark who had been featuring a long running poker game in his saloon. The purpose of the poker game, in which he participated in regularly, was to raise funds to pay off the debt of rebuilding his saloon after the devastating June 1882 fire in the Tombstone Business District. What a fantastic painting to hang in Clarks' refurbished Alhambra Saloon.

Vaccari left Tombstone after the new year and returned to the San Francisco Art District where he worked as a landscape painter until his death 13 May 1897.

(Look in the Gallery for these Photos)

- *A Work of Art, from Weekly Tombstone Epitaph, 21 October 1882
- *Poker Game at Alhambra Saloon, from Arizona Weekly Citizen, 22 October 1882
- *Rebuilding Alhambra Saloon, from Tombstone Epitaph, 3 June 1882
- *Ticket No. 6 from Weekly Tombstone Epitaph, 11 November 1882
- *C.M. Vaccari Original Oil Painting Almeh, A Dream of the Alhambra, 1881, copy of H.H. Moore Masterpiece, same title, 1865

The Legends of 'Little Egypt' & 'Fatima'

The Almeh featured in Vaccari's copy of H. H. Moore's painting has been referred to as 'Little Egypt', 'Fatima', and 'Belly Dancer'. It has been claimed Fatima even danced in Tombstone in 1881. All of these stories are fascinating to hear, and believable at best. Those women really lived, and danced at various places, but regrettably none of them are the woman in the painting. The woman in the painting was an Almeh whom H. H. Moore forever captured in brilliant oils at the Hall of the Two Sisters in the Alhambra Palace in Granada Spain sometime between 1865 and 1867. C.M. Vaccari further brought her to life when he copied Moore's Almeh, A Dream of the Alhambra in San Francisco sometime between 1880 and 1882 and then he brought his copy to Tombstone.

Following are the stories of the women who danced their way into history, but had most likely never been at the Alhambra Palace in Granada, were too young to be the Almeh featured in the painting and most certainly never performed in Tombstone in 1881.

Little Egypt was the stage name for three popular 'Belly Dancers'; Fahreda Mazar Spyropoulos, (performed under the name 'Fatima'), Born in Syria c. 1871 died April 5, 1937 in Chicago. Fahreda appeared at the 'Streets of Cairo' on the Midway at the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. Ashea Wabe (born Catherine Devine), in 1871 in Montreal Canada, she danced at the Herbert Seeley Bachelor party in New York in 1896, someone reported she was dancing nude and the party was raided. Ashea died January 5, 1908 in New York, reportedly leaving an estate estimated at \$200,000. Fatima Djemille, born c. 1870, she also appeared at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Fatima is best known as being The Fatima who appears in two early films, Edison's *Coochee Coochee Dance* (1896) and *Fatima* (1897).

All three of the women were born after Moore's painting was completed. All three of them would have been about 10 years old when they allegedly danced in Tombstone. All three of the women have dark hair, while the woman in the painting appears to have light auburn or red colored hair peeking out from underneath her headscarf, of course we can lend probability that Moore may have changed the hair color, or even Vaccari when he copied the painting. However, it was well noted that Fahreda Mazar Spyropoulos was nicknamed 'Little Egypt' at the 1893 World's Fair because she was considered short and overweight,

and this was a slur towards her appearance. When she shimmied around for all to see, the sight was reportedly “erotic” to the gentlemen observers, causing their wives to lead them away with hands covering their husbands’ eyes. The Almeh in the painting appears to be taller, and her weight in proportion to her height, certainly not short and obese.

The story of a woman named Fatima dancing in Tombstone in 1881 is an entertaining one, although there is no corroborating evidence to support this tale. There are no billings or announcements for Fatima appearing in Tombstone in 1881 in any of the newspapers, or in Arizona Territory for that matter. Of the billings listed quite regularly in the Epitaph and Nugget, none of them feature a ‘Belly Dancer’, ‘Fatima’, or ‘Little Egypt’ performer. In fact, evidence shows that many of the female entertainers who graced the stages of Schieffelin Hall, Tivoli Hall, the Crystal Palace Theatre and Saloon, or the Bird Cage Theatre were indeed comedic actresses, character vocalists, and singers. The fact of the matter is that these women lived, they danced, they entertained and were notable, they just didn’t live, dance or entertain in Tombstone.

(Look in the Gallery for these Photos)

- *Fahreda as Fatima, nicknamed Little Egypt
- *Fahreda as Fatima, at 'Streets of Cairo' Cooney Island 1896
- *Miss Macaddo as Fatima, in Philadelphia
- *Ashea as Little Egypt, in New York
- *Advertisement for Bird Cage Theatre Players, from Tombstone Epitaph March 1882
- **A note: If you would like to view Edison’s film of Fatima Djemille, you may view various versions on You Tube, simply search for Fatima.

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