



# Annie Oakley

*Shirl Kasper*

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“Nothing more simple, I assure you. . . . But I’ll tell you what. You must have your mind, your nerve, and everything in harmony. Don’t look at your gun, simply follow the object with the end of it, as if the tip of the barrel was the point of your finger.”—Annie Oakley

Annie Oakley is a legend: America’s greatest female sharpshooter, a woman who triumphed in the masculine world of road shows and firearms. Despite her great fame, the popular image of Annie Oakley is far from true. She was neither a swaggering western gal nor a sweet “little girl.” Annie Oakley was a competitive and resolute woman who wanted to be the best and succeeded. In this comprehensive biography Shirl Kasper sets the record straight, giving us an accurate, honest, and compelling portrait of the woman known as “Little Sure Shot.”

Born Phoebe Ann Moses in Ohio in 1860, Annie took her first shot at age eight—“one of the best shots I ever made,” Annie later said. It was the start of her lifelong fascination with shooting. Early local acclaim led to a contest with Frank Butler, a professional sharpshooter. Annie won—and Frank fell in love with her. Annie and Frank (who eventually gave up his own act to be Annie’s manager) were wed not long after and remained married for forty-two years, until their deaths in 1926 just days apart.

Annie’s sharpshooting career began while on the road with Frank’s show, but she rose to fame in her seventeen years with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. Her speed, agility, uncanny precision, and charm soon made Annie world famous. Shooting was her passion; apart from her career with the Wild West, Annie hunted, shot trap, entered many shooting contests, performed for World War I troops, and, in her retirement years, taught thousands of women how to shoot.

*Annie Oakley* provides a vivid and unforgettable portrait of this American original: a prim and proper woman, conservative in her views, hardworking and frugal, whose greatest source of pride was to be accepted as “a lady.” Significant events are documented here for the first time: Annie’s decision to join the struggling Wild West show; her meeting with Sitting Bull; the nature of her feud with Lillian Smith, another Wild West markswoman; and the real reason that Annie’s hair suddenly turned white when she was only forty-one. Thoroughly researched, fully annotated, and entirely unsentimental, this volume is the most complete and accurate record of Annie Oakley’s life and achievements.

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