

Introduction

In 1922 a young woman living in the Dalldorf Asylum gave herself the name of “Miss Unknown”. Miss Unknown would not stay anonymous for long. After a short two years, she would give up her identity and become known to the world as the long-lost Romanov Grand Duchess, Anastasia; a woman who to the rest of the world was believed to have been brutally murdered with the rest of her family in 1918. Skeptics however, claimed that she was Anna Anderson, a Polish factory worker. The United States became obsessed with the possibility of a fairytale like story. Along with this excitement, however, many questions also arose. Questions such as, was this woman telling the truth, was there proof of her identity and was her survival even possible? The hope, joy, and borderline obsession the American people felt towards this story would result in one of the twentieth century’s biggest conspiracy theories.



1. The Romanov Family, Tsar Nicholas II, his wife Alexandra, and his four children, Olga, Maria, Tatiana, Alexei and Anastasia.

3. The Official movie poster for 1956 “Anastasia”



Fictional Accounts

Fictional accounts of Anderson’s claim made over the years

These include...

- American silent film “*The Clothes Make the Woman*” in 1928
- American film adaptation of the French play “*Anastasia*” in 1956
- Children’s animated film “*Anastasia*” in 1997
- Broadway musical “*Anastasia*” in 2016

Court Case Outcomes and DNA Findings

Anna Anderson would file a petition for the Revocation of the Certificate of Inheritance in 1938. Anderson wanted to be seen in the eyes of the law as the missing Grand Duchess Anastasia. This would become the longest running case in German legal history lasting more than thirty years. The trial was separated into two parts, in each part Anderson would end up losing. In the end the court decided there was not enough evidence to deem her as Anastasia but also not enough evidence to deem her not. Finally, in 2009, DNA used from the bones of the Romanov remains would prove that the real Anastasia had died with the rest of her family in Siberia in 1918. Proving Anderson to be a fraud and at this point Anderson had already passed away.



2. Picture of Anna Anderson

The Significance

So, the answer to how the conspiracy around Anna Anderson being Anastasia lasted so long and why it was so captivating is simple, there were no true answers for nearly an entire century. Throughout that century many fictional adaptations were made turning the conspiracy into a fairytale. During this time two court trials failed to prove whether Anderson was or wasn’t the long lost Grand Duchess, adding to the mystery. Then thanks to the development of DNA testing, there was scientific proof that Anderson was an imposter, finally putting the conspiracy to rest

References

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3. “Anastasia” 1956 movie poster
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