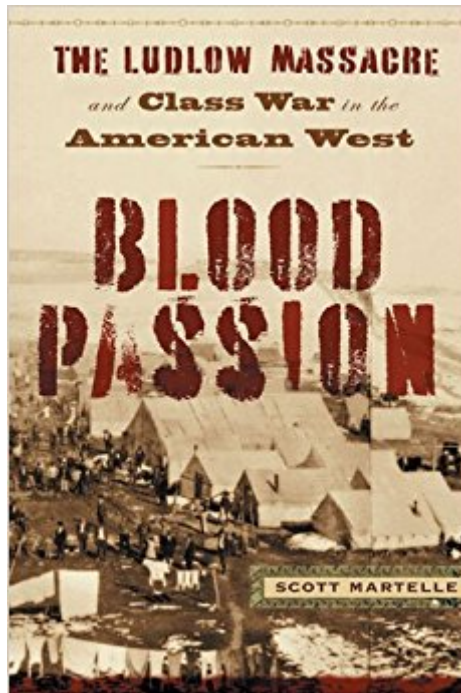


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Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre And Class War In The American West, First Paperback Edition



Synopsis

By early April 1914, Colorado Governor Elias Ammons thought the violence in his state's strike-bound southern coal district had eased enough that he could begin withdrawing the Colorado National Guard, deployed six months earlier as military occupiers. But Ammons misread the signals, and on April 20, 1914, a full-scale battle erupted between the remaining militiamen and armed strikers living in a tent colony at the small railroad town of Ludlow. Eight men were killed in the fighting, which culminated in the burning of the colony. The next day, the bodies of two women and eleven children were found suffocated in a below-ground shelter. The "Ludlow Massacre," as it quickly became known, launched a national call-to-arms for union supporters to join a ten-day guerrilla war along more than two hundred miles of the eastern Rockies. The convulsion of arson and violence killed more than thirty people and didn't end until President Woodrow Wilson sent in the U.S. Army. Overall at least seventy-five men, women, and children were killed in seven months, likely the nation's deadliest labor struggle. In *Blood Passion*, journalist Scott Martelle explores this little-noted tale of political corruption and repression and immigrants' struggles against dominant social codes of race, ethnicity, and class. More than a simple labor dispute, the events surrounding Ludlow embraced some of the most volatile social movements of the early twentieth century, pitting labor activists, socialists, and anarchists against the era's powerful business class, including John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and helped give rise to the modern twins of corporate public relations and political spin. But at its heart, *Blood Passion* is the dramatic story of small lives merging into a movement for change and of the human struggle for freedom and dignity.

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Customer Reviews

There is a lot to like about BLOOD PASSION: THE LUDLOW MASSACRE AND CLASS WARFARE IN THE AMERICAN WEST by Scott Martelle. Here you will find an intricate description of life in a "company" town. It's hard to imagine today, how less than a century ago, company towns were commonplace. These were towns founded around a single business entity, in this case, coal mining, whereby the company that owned the coal mines, in essence owned the town and its' inhabitants. We study a society where it was a firing offense for an employee to purchase from anywhere other than a company owned store, where prices were set by the employer. They lived in company owned housing, in this case, tents. Their entire existence depended almost entirely on the provisions made by their employer. It's not a far stretch to say, these people existed largely as indentured servants. Martelle gives an unbiased narrative of the events that spawned the Ludlow Massacre. There is plenty of blame to go around for the massacre that occurred in 1914, and Martelle spreads that blame rather evenly between the striking workers, the strikebreakers, the owners and the National Guardsmen that became embroiled in the southern Colorado mining labor problems. Perhaps there will always remain a slight wedge between employers and employees, but hopefully never again the deep chasm that existed in the early industrialization of America. The book is a very interesting read, though at times a bit dry and slow. Martelle is not the most colorful or flamboyant of writers, but does convey his message and story with a succinct style readers will appreciate. The book will appeal to varying audiences, from those studying labor problems in America to the study of the western states. You'll find a graphic description of life a century ago in an existence hardly imaginable today.

I knew nothing about the southern Colorado coal strikes and the Ludlow Massacre when I started Scott Martelle's new book, Blood Passion. By the time I finished it -- just two days after starting it -- I understood not only how, but why, the violent strike ended the way it did. Martelle's prose style is dense with facts, yet elegant and easy. The writing is beautifully done, and the story itself is so compelling that it's easy to understand why he became preoccupied with it. Each decision along the way, by owners and strikers, deepens the chasm between the two, until at last the line is not drawn but engraved in the sand and there can be no winners. Whatever your interest in the book -- through the lens of labor history, or western studies, or the social strata of the times -- you will find much

here that will resonate for a long time. Martelle, who weathered the nasty Detroit newspaper strike in the mid-90s and did not cross picket lines, gives neither strikers nor owners a bye in this book. (Full disclosure: I, too, weathered that strike by honoring the picket lines.)

I recall growing up in Colorado only 100-miles from Ludlow and never learning of the tragic events that unfolded there. My schooling was in the 1940's and 50's, so it wasn't too long afterwards. I guess those events of 1914 were part of the buried history of an area that many folks wanted to keep buried. Thanks Mr. Martelle for writing the history all Coloradoans and others should know about. The book is a highly detailed account of the armed struggle between unionizing coal miners and resisting mine operators. It's more like a battle account as we follow the shifting lines of union miners, on one side, and industry hirelings, on the other. Add the behind-the-scenes maneuverings of the various political factions, and it's a pretty crowded account. Fortunately, the author attaches a helpful appendix listing the key figures for handy reference. However, I think readers would have benefitted from an area map of southern Colorado and, if possible, a local map of the key struggle sites. In their absence, it's rather difficult to visualize the ebb and flow of the many military-like movements. Still, the text remains a riveting one as we follow events on the ground and how they were received by such major politicians and key industrialists as President Woodrow Wilson and John D. Rockefeller Jr., respectively. What's at stake is an epical one, that is, who will control conditions in the mines-- workers or profits. I don't know about recent years, but in my day that Hispanic southern part of the state was largely ignored by the Anglo northern half, and even today remains a long way from such touristy watering holes as Aspen and Telluride. Nonetheless, thanks to Martelle's excellent work, I now know a lot more about a subject and an area I should have learned about, lo, so many years ago.

This is an excellent book. The author provides a balanced view of the tragedy at Ludlow. His analysis of the different forces--miner owners and their employees, the Colorado National Guard, and the mine strikers. I especially enjoyed his discussion of LT Karl Linderfelt and the Colorado National Guard, of Louis Tikas and the Greek miners' role in the struggle, and of the Unite Mine Workers of America's role. Almost all other books on Ludlow place responsibility for the Ludlow deaths on the Colorado National Guard. Mr. Martelle also discusses the role of the miners and its union in the deaths of the camp and the ten day war which followed. There was lots of blame to go around!

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