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Massacre: The Tragedy At White River



Synopsis

Massacre is a highly readable and well-researched account of a violent outbreak of a party of White River Utes on the western slope of the Rockies during the autumn of 1879. . . . Written in an exciting narrative style which rivals that of a good novel."—Kliatt

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Exactly what I needed for my research.

(This is based on more than half of the book). This is a wonderfully written book (first published in 1957) that is much more than just the trouble with the Utes in 1879 and the brief hostilities that erupted in late September in Colorado on the Ute Reservation. Sprague, who was also a journalist, understood how to tell a story and traces the lives of several participants, both Native and white, until their lives intersect in 1879. The book contains endnotes, but they are not extensive and a lot of the book is not sourced. Obviously, that wasn't the kind of book that Sprague wanted to write, otherwise there would have been notes at the end of practically every paragraph. That's why I give it four stars. While it makes the book easier to read, it makes it harder to verify all of the details. I am not too well versed on this particular episode of Indian history so I can't say just how accurate the entire narrative is. Assuming it is, it's a helluva story (I definitely learned some new details about life in the 1800s that I didn't know previously) and well written. Recommended. Note: One of my few criticisms (thus far) was the fact that Sprague stated that Secretary of War Belknap was not impeached (which is correct), but doesn't go on to tell that he resigned in early March 1876, so the

reader is left thinking he still had his job. Just pointing it out for those interested. Overall, this is a great book. February 14, 2015: Finished this book today. Really, really good and my original statement of "Recommended" stands. I did have two questions though at the end. The author states that Ouray's wife Chipeta "shed every vestige of white ways" after the death of her husband in 1880. But then a few lines later he adds that she was a Methodist convert. However, he includes this detail while discussing the mythology that grew around her. Was this part of the myth or not? I found it unclear. Second, Sprague wrote: "This heartbreakingly beautiful land of great peaks and generous valleys used barely to support 3500 Utes under their inefficient hunting economy." I can't say for sure that I agree or disagree with this statement because I don't recall him addressing it in the book and so I'm not sure what he is talking about. So far as I know, the Utes hunted the local game animals, not to mention the buffalo on the plains. How was it inefficient? But these are minor points. This book was a joy to read and will be fondly remembered.

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