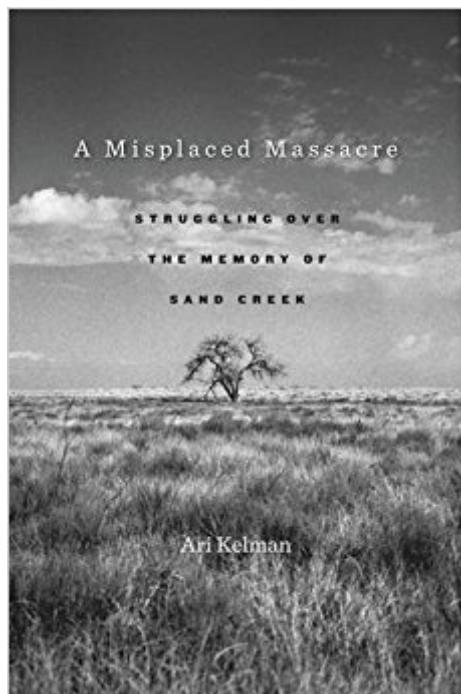


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A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over The Memory Of Sand Creek



Synopsis

On November 29, 1864, over 150 Native Americans, mostly women, children, and elderly, were slaughtered in one of the most infamous cases of state-sponsored violence in U.S. history. Kelman examines how generations of Americans have struggled with the question of whether the nation's crimes, as well as its achievements, should be memorialized.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ari Kelman's new book, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek*, is a complicated and beautiful narrative about narrative, a series of connected and interwoven stories about history and histories. It is also a damned fine read, one that I savored slowly over several weeks (though I think reviewers are supposed to knock things out quickly) and will continue thinking about for a long time. The book starts by recounting the story of the Sand Creek Massacre, although the massacre is not the actual subject of the book. Indeed, it becomes clear almost immediately that there is no such thing as "the" story of Sand Creek. Kelman introduces us to three characters--two perpetrators and one survivor of the massacre itself--through the primary documents, written by themselves, that describe what happened. And great characters they are. John Chivington, committed abolitionist, Union colonel, and inveterately racist Indian hater, led the attack and devoted himself to defending (and exaggerating) it in newspapers and official statements for years afterwards. Silas Soule, gold seeker, joshing mama's boy, and Captain, refused to participate in it or order his men to, and blew the whistle afterwards in letters home and to Colorado patriarch Edward

Wynkoop, leading to the investigation and condemnation of Chivington's actions.

Americans love to remember the Civil War: Thousands of books, articles and movies form an often romanticized memory of that conflict as far its events east of the Mississippi are concerned. But when it comes to what happened in the Far West, collective American memory grays out. Americans tend to not remember that hostilities began as vicious, terroristic fighting in Kansas well before Ft. Sumter. As the conflict became regularized east of the Mississippi, the war in the Far West evolved into gruesome guerrilla fighting that has never seemed to offer a redeeming story, and that's just as it relates to conflict between European-descended Americans in that region. As Ari Kelman relates in "A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek", the Civil War in the Far West degenerated into the Indian Wars, a running series of fights and massacres which took on the reality, and sometimes the stated purpose, of genocide by white Americans against the land's ancient, native inhabitants. The Indian Wars were rooted in the Civil War, an outgrowth of Federal policies; but they continued into the post-Civil War era and their repercussions are felt to this day. Arguably the darkest event in the Indian Wars, and possibly in all of American history, took place at the end of November 1863 when a specially raised Army militia attacked a large Indian encampment alongside Sand Creek in the southeastern Colorado Territory. Following a small-scale series of violently gripping incidents that included some killings of whites, the Indians in this particular camp had offered submission to local government authorities. There was no evidence that they had been involved in the earlier killings and they believed that they had placed themselves under governmental protection from reprisals.

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