



Documenting American Violence: A Sourcebook

Christopher Waldrep, Michael Bellesiles

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Violence forms a constant backdrop to American history, from the revolutionary overthrow of British rule, to the struggle for civil rights, to the present-day debates over the death penalty. It has served to challenge authority, defend privilege, advance causes, and throttle hopes.

In the first anthology of its kind to appear in over thirty years, *Documenting American Violence* brings together excerpts from a wide range of sources about incidents of violence in the United States. Each document is set into context, allowing readers to see the event through the viewpoint of contemporary participants and witnesses and to understand how these deeds have been excused, condemned, or vilified by society. Organized topically, this volume looks at such diverse topics as famous crimes, vigilantism, industrial violence, domestic abuse, and state-sanctioned violence. Among the events these primary sources describe are:

- Benjamin Franklin's account of the Conestoga massacre, when an entire village of American Indians was killed by the Paxton Boys, a group of frontier settlers
- militant abolitionist John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry
- Ida B. Wells' condemnation of lynchings in the South
- the massacre of General Custer's 7th Cavalry at Little Bighorn, as witnessed by Cheyenne war chief Two Moon
- Nat Turner's confession about the slave revolt he led in Southampton County, Virginia
- Oliver Wendell Holmes' diaries and letters as a young infantry officer in the Civil War
- a police officer's account of the Haymarket Trials
- Harry Thaw's murder of the Gilded Age's most prominent architect, Stanford White, through his own published version of the events
- the post-trial, public confessions of Ray Bryant and J.W. Milam for the murder of Emmett Till
- the Los Angeles Police Department's investigation into the causes of the 1992 riot

Taken as a whole, this anthology opens a new window on American history, revealing how violence has shaped America's past in every era.

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