



The Real Deadwood

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The Black Hills of the Dakota Territory – sacred grounds for the Lakota, and one of the richest sections of land the world has ever known. With "easy color" ripe for the taking, the population of the gold rush town of Deadwood jumped from about eight hundred to over ten thousand, as over a million dollars of gold was pulled from the ground between June and July of 1876. With no law, no order, and a volatile collection of inhabitants still recovering from the Civil War, there weren't enough pigs in Chinatown to dispose of all the bodies.

Not since the first signs of color have so many people flocked to Deadwood, only now they're tuning in to the acclaimed HBO series of the same name. With a cast of historically rich characters, *The Real Deadwood* explores the lives of "Wild Bill" Hickok, Al Swearngen, Calamity Jane, Sol Star, and a host of others. An historical crossroad of the American West, even Wyatt Earp came to Deadwood, only to bump heads with Seth Bullock. Other celebrated visitors over the years include Buffalo Bill Cody, the Sundance Kid, Bat Masterson, and Teddy Roosevelt. Looking at a world of primitive medicine, prostitution, and law from lawlessness, *The Real Deadwood* separates the facts from the fiction in its overview of a town violent enough to rival the likes of Tombstone, Dodge City, and Abilene.

"Poor man's diggings" is what they called it, how it was found, taken, and swindled away is the story of life on the frontier – when roughing it was truly rough. It's good versus evil and civilization versus anarchy. It's the real Deadwood.

The Real Deadwood Details

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From Reader Review The Real Deadwood for online ebook

Travis Heermann says

This one was a fun read. Too short for serious study, but full of fun little tidbits about the larger-than-life characters that inhabited Deadwood in the Gold Rush days. If you're a fan of HBO's Deadwood series like I am, you'll also appreciate the comparisons between the television version and the real history.

Bookista says

Offensively dumb short history of Deadwood. Complains Calamity Jane only died of inflamed bowels instead of something more exciting and suggests there were so many murders in Deadwood because everyone was bored. The author's primary interests appear to be prostitutes and Will Bill Hickock's moustache.

Katie says

I guess if you watched the television show, this book might be an interesting text to compare the characters you've been watching vs the actual people. As someone who just wanted to know more about the history and people of Deadwood this book was a let down. Especially with all of the author's asides and opinions about the actors/actresses playing particular roles. I don't give a damn that Mr. Ames thinks Timothy Olyphant is too handsome to play Seth Bullock.

Sarah Piper says

I'm starting this review with a disclaimer that I bought this as a souvenir on vacation to Deadwood. That being said ... I wasn't expecting a New York Times bestseller from a gift shop.

But I thought it was really good. I was hoping for more history and details. It was a little generic for me. I wanted more history of the actual "historical characters" of the lawless west. And I could have done without all of the references to the HBO show ... But I was pretty impressed for a souvenir gift shop book.

Unrelated: Might start making "souvenir book purchases about the places I visit" my new tradition when I go on trips. With special notes on the inside cover including what year it was purchased ...

Carpil says

Having read a lot of books on the history of the wild west (and old west), I was attracted to this book because its subtext sounded interesting.

I wasn't aware there was a tv drama series called Deadwood, and since the book instantly starts making references to it, I was initially very confused. The author doesn't give any introduction to the tv series, he just assumes you know about it (which I didn't) and also assumes you're interested in it (which I wasn't).

The references to the tv series continue consistently throughout the book, making constant references to the actors and how they might compare to the original people. I really didn't care if Ian McShane has a British accent but his historical counterpart, Al Swearengen, didn't.

After a while this really starts to grate, and does little but to dilute the already thinly spread factual content in the book.

It's not ALL bad though. There are some nice photos scattered around the book. I liked the ones of the old street scenes, or people standing outside a saloon. There's also quite a few photos of the people being discussed, which are also nice but quite widely available.

The author discusses the various characters such as Calamity Jane, Wild Bill Hickock, and touches briefly on a few other people. It didn't provide me with any interesting new facts about these people, that I hadn't picked up from other books I've read.

There is however an interesting 5 or 6 pages on medicine of the era, including some nice anecdotes about the patent medicine concoctions which were so prevalent at the time.

On the whole, It's half-heartedly researched and seems just an attempt to cash in on the (presumed) popularity of the tv series.

Marielle says

Brings alive all the great historical characters of Deadwood, South Dakota in the Black Hills — from Wild Bill Hickok to Sheriff Seth Bullock; Calamity Jane to Frontier Medicine.

Fast, easy read, and Ames uses the HBO series, Deadwood, as a frequent backdrop and reference point. According to Ames, HBO got its history and characterization dead on for Deadwood. A great guide book to visiting the Black Hills and to watching Deadwood!

Barbara says

I am a fan of the Deadwood series and wanted more information. I am particularly interested in Seth Bullock and his promoting the Black Hills.

Alison says

This was a quick read. I didn't like how the author kept referring to the HBO series throughout the book. It took away from the information. That being said, this was a good starter to the history of Deadwood & the variety of characters that roamed her streets, saloons, & brothels.

Elizabeth says

An absolute must to accompany watching the HBO series Deadwood - I so enjoy learning the history that inspired the tv show, but also how it distorted or veered from the facts. Plus - it covers many famous visitors and other Deadwood citizens like Mark Twain, America's first woman detective, Kate Warne, and Deadwood Dick (Nat Love) an African-American cowboy (1 in 4 cowboys were african-American). I enjoyed learning about the horrors of gold-prospecting, the hard facts on medicine, saloon-life, crime, the life of the Chinese there and the bleak realities of prostitution. Loved learning the histories of Seth Bullock (friend to Teddy Roosevelt and responsible for giving us Yellowstone Nat. Park), the real Swearengen, Wild Bill Hickok & Calamity Jane(in deadwood they neglect to show that she worked at the GEM Saloon, was not at an advanced stage of alcoholism at that time period, perhaps did a stint as a prostitute).

George says

So far, it's good stuff. Ames seems up to the challenge of looking close and clearly into an area of America's "fairylands".

At every turn of the page, I expected a foible, some stumble toward the fable of the frontier. So far, that expectation has been befuddled by clear explanations or a fair gleening of facts garnered through the media that was present.

If you are reading this, you should know that there are many references to the TV series "Deadwood". The author usually gives you a "head-up" on that.

Tony Bake says

This book is "gift shop gold." Bought it in South Dakota, love the show, the book was overpriced and light on information. Do i regret reading it? No. But not really worth buying.

Todd Haines says

Refers to the HBO series too much.

Nick Dupree says

I got the Kindle edition of this book on rental from the New York Public Library and enjoyed it thoroughly. It aims to serve as an entry point to the "Real Deadwood" and its history for those who have seen HBO's "Deadwood" and are interested in going deeper and introducing themselves to the real historical figures behind the characters. It does well at that. It's a quick read at 176 large-type/wide margined pages but in

those pages it covers a LOT, including every major and minor historical figure behind the show's characters and the various historical forces impacting the real Deadwood in the first few decades of its development. Its coverage of such influences as the state of medicine in the latter half of the 19th century and the politics of the early Dakotas was much more in-depth than I expected. This little book is an excellent primer and an easy read instead of another thick scholarly tome on the West. I'd recommend this as a great beginning-point for anyone who'd like to know more about Deadwood's real history.

HeavyReader says

This book claims to give the stories behind the characters of the TV series *Deadwood*. It is written in a style that seemed dumbed down to me, like maybe it was written for an adult who reads at a fourth grade reading level. I got it from BookMooch, so I'm ok with the fact that it wasn't such a great book, but I'm sure glad I didn't pay for it.

Heather says

Nice primer book about Deadwood for those who might just like a quick, thorough overview. This book does reference the tv show a lot, so it almost feels like it should be directly associated with it as like an official companion. If you want deep, new information I would suggest looking elsewhere. If you want something quick to get a general understanding of the city and the times, this is a good choice.
