
Preface

The stories that stay with us, often the simplest in their narrative line, can also be the most complex in their multiple meanings. I think of children's tales like *Hansel and Gretel* or *Where the Wild Things Are*, which tell us about persecution and triumph, order and disorder, cowardice and bravery, and the strongest of passions, including particularly those between parents and children.

In the story that follows, the protagonists are not renowned or heroic. The small town they lived in is rarely mentioned in history books. But the issues about which these people fought remain with us today, unresolved. And although their story is virtually unremembered outside the town itself, yet it is packed with timeless and placeless meaning. It offers simultaneously universal and local knowledge. Just as all politics is ultimately local, so all rich narratives take on their meanings from the way in which universal motives interact with local contexts. This century-old conflict, small by most measures of historical importance, possesses great powers of revelation.

The dramatic events occurring in an Arizona mining boomtown in the year 1904 focused my imagination like a crystal whose facets each reflect light differently. It sent me on research paths I could not have previously imagined. As this narrative is rigorously a work of non-fiction, I could not make it fuller or embellish it beyond the evidence I had. I interpreted the evidence to explore its many meanings, but invented nothing.

I used this tale of the wild west to illuminate many aspects of the

history of the U.S. southwest. The book spotlights Mexican-Anglo* relations at a moment when they intersected that most powerful of emotions, parental feeling for children. But to record that intersection fully, I had to focus my camera wide, to a panorama setting. To understand the participants' motivations it was necessary to show the expansive southwestern industrial frontier in which they lived: mining, company towns, Mexican immigration, class structure, labor conflict, racial conflict in the labor movement, and violence, particularly vigilantism. The narrative connects these typically male phenomena with the daily domestic and public lives of women, and by doing so shows how gender and family concerns contributed to racial boundaries.

This story contains a great deal that is saddening and infuriating, but it also contains some good news. It reveals how racial, ethnic, or nationalist fervor, furious as it may be, can also be transient and changeable.

*Throughout this book I use the term "Mexican" for people of Mexican ethnic origin, because that is what they were called in this place at the time, both in Spanish and in English. I use the terms "Anglo" and "white" interchangeably, for the same reason.