

Assault on the Deadwood Stage: Road Agents and Shotgun Messengers

Robert K. DeArment

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Assault on the Deadwood Stage: Road Agents and Shotgun Messengers Robert K. DeArment In the 1870s, Deadwood was a thriving—and largely lawless—boomtown. And as any fan of western history and films knows, stagecoach robberies were a regular feature of life in this fabled region of Dakota Territory. Now, for the first time, Robert K. DeArment tells the story of the "good guys and bad guys" behind these violent crimes: the road agents who wreaked havoc on Deadwood's roadways and the shotgun messengers who battled to protect stagecoach passengers and their valuable cargo.

DeArment shows in dramatic detail how for two years gangs of robbers ruled the road, perpetrating holdups and killings, until lawmen and stage-company and railroad agents finally brought an end to the mayhem. The characters populating this violent tale include such legendary figures as Wild Bill Hickok and the famous railroad detective James L. "Whispering" Smith, a formidable opponent of bandits. We also get to know the men who operated the stages, the lawmen and company men who ran and defended the coaches, and the outlaws who fought against them. DeArment tells where these men came from and what became of them after the outlawry ended. He ends his account in the 1880s with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show and its spectacular rendition of a shotgun robbery, featuring an actual Deadwood stagecoach. After nearly a century and a half, the Deadwood stage continues to command our attention.



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