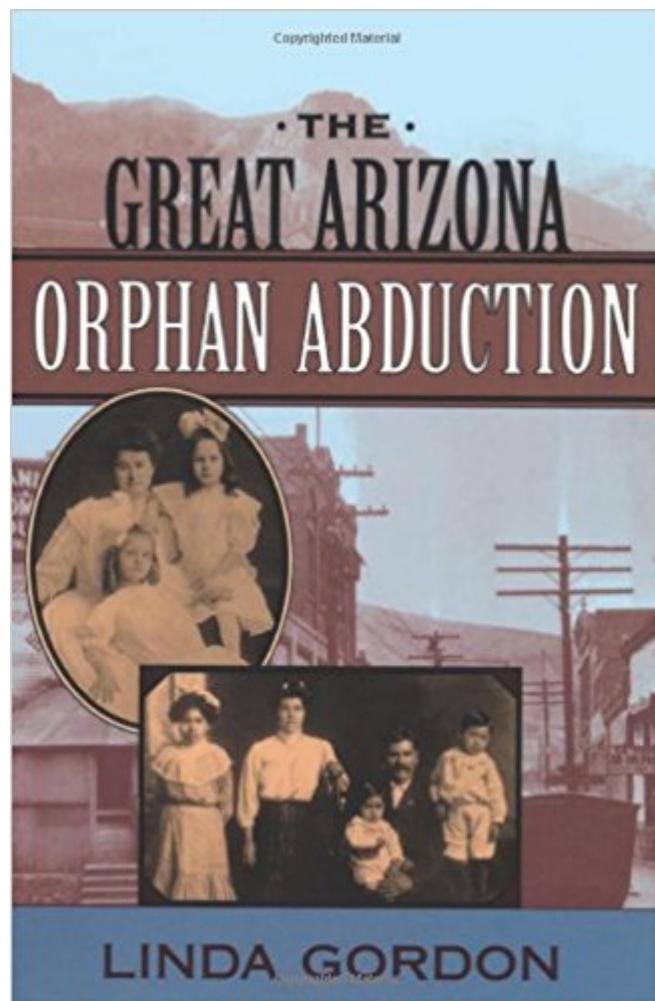


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# The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction



## **Synopsis**

In 1904, New York nuns brought forty Irish orphans to a remote Arizona mining camp, to be placed with Catholic families. The Catholic families were Mexican, as was the majority of the population. Soon the town's Anglos, furious at this "interracial" transgression, formed a vigilante squad that kidnapped the children and nearly lynched the nuns and the local priest. The Catholic Church sued to get its wards back, but all the courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, ruled in favor of the vigilantes. The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction tells this disturbing and dramatic tale to illuminate the creation of racial boundaries along the Mexican border. Clifton/Morenci, Arizona, was a "wild West" boomtown, where the mines and smelters pulled in thousands of Mexican immigrant workers. Racial walls hardened as the mines became big business and whiteness became a marker of superiority. These already volatile race and class relations produced passions that erupted in the "orphan incident." To the Anglos of Clifton/Morenci, placing a white child with a Mexican family was tantamount to child abuse, and they saw their kidnapping as a rescue. Women initiated both sides of this confrontation. Mexican women agreed to take in these orphans, both serving their church and asserting a maternal prerogative; Anglo women believed they had to "save" the orphans, and they organized a vigilante squad to do it. In retelling this nearly forgotten piece of American history, Linda Gordon brilliantly recreates and dissects the tangled intersection of family and racial values, in a gripping story that resonates with today's conflicts over the "best interests of the child."

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

In 1859, the New York Times termed urban orphans the "ulcers of society." By 1864, child welfare

crusaders were advocating their adoption by rural families and sending trains full of orphaned and abandoned children westward. As Gordon documents in this compelling account, they were often dumped at the end of the line, where they were taken in by whoever needed or wanted a child for any purpose. By the end of the 19th century, the Sisters of Charity's New York Foundling Hospital was cleaning up this well-established practice by carefully matching children with families selected by parish priests. Focusing on the delivery of 40 "white" orphans to Mexican Catholic adoptive families in the Arizona mining towns of Clifton and Morenci in 1904, Gordon vividly describes how the Anglo women of the town <sup>A</sup>ll of them Protestants <sup>Ab</sup>ecame enraged and instigated a mass abduction of the children, often carried out at gunpoint. A trial ensued, pitting the Foundling Hospital against the Anglo powers of Arizona, which ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court held that the abduction was legal, and that placing the children with Mexican families had been tantamount to child abuse. In delineating the racial and religious dynamics in turn-of-the-century Arizona (including frontier feminism, the evolution of racial and class structures and the history of copper mining, labor disputes and vigilantism), Gordon reveals a great deal about the origins of "family values" in America. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gordon (history, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison) builds her book around an incident in 1904, when a group of New York Irish orphans was sent to live with Catholic (and Mexican) families in Arizona. Outraged local Anglos then "rescued" the children at gunpoint. This account of the orphan abduction jostles for space amidst an encyclopedic re-creation of the world of Mexican miners in the American Southwest. The tale is so convoluted that the book even includes a list of characters, and the outcome is, predictably, unhappy. More compelling are the background sections that detail everything from how many pestles were in the miners' kitchens (two) to the racial basis for setting mine wages. Throughout, Gordon discusses the hardening racist system in the Southwest. These painstakingly researched chapters could well stand on their own as a powerful history of the miners' lives and a superior case study of emigrant labor at the turn of the century. Recommended for academic libraries. <sup>AD</sup>uncan Stewart, State Historical Society of Iowa Lib., Iowa City Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A great combination of history and a good historical event set in a small mining town in eastern Arizona around the turn of the century. The event is intersected with topics relevant to the history and people of the area at the time...ie Mexican women, Padres in the West, Mining towns, etc. A

great way to get the history wrapped around a true story. Not a light read, though.

I am so glad I read this book this was a piece of history that I never would've otherwise known it was well written and well researched and a significant part of United States history.

A wonderfully and thoroughly researched book on a little-known part of the Orphan Train events that transpired from pre-Civil War times to 1929. As an online professor of U.S. History, I have included this bit of history in one of my units and the students are fascinated and surprised to learn of the Orphan Train phenomenon and, particularly, this documented series of events in Arizona. Author Gordon intersperses her chronology of this sad affair with chapters outlining the period from the economic, social, and political atmosphere of early 20th century Arizona. Chapters that detail the copper mining industry, the Anglo and Mexican-American social structures, the 1903 Clifton-Morenci miners strike, the Catholic vs. Protestant attitudes, and Southwestern vigilantism add to the story-telling of this sad historical event.

Outstanding account of an astounding and very shameful event in American history.

I had read this and thought it was a great book and I got this for a friend, since we'd both lived in the area written about and this books had tied up loose ends.

Love the book!

Everyone should read this. Fast delivery

As stated.

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