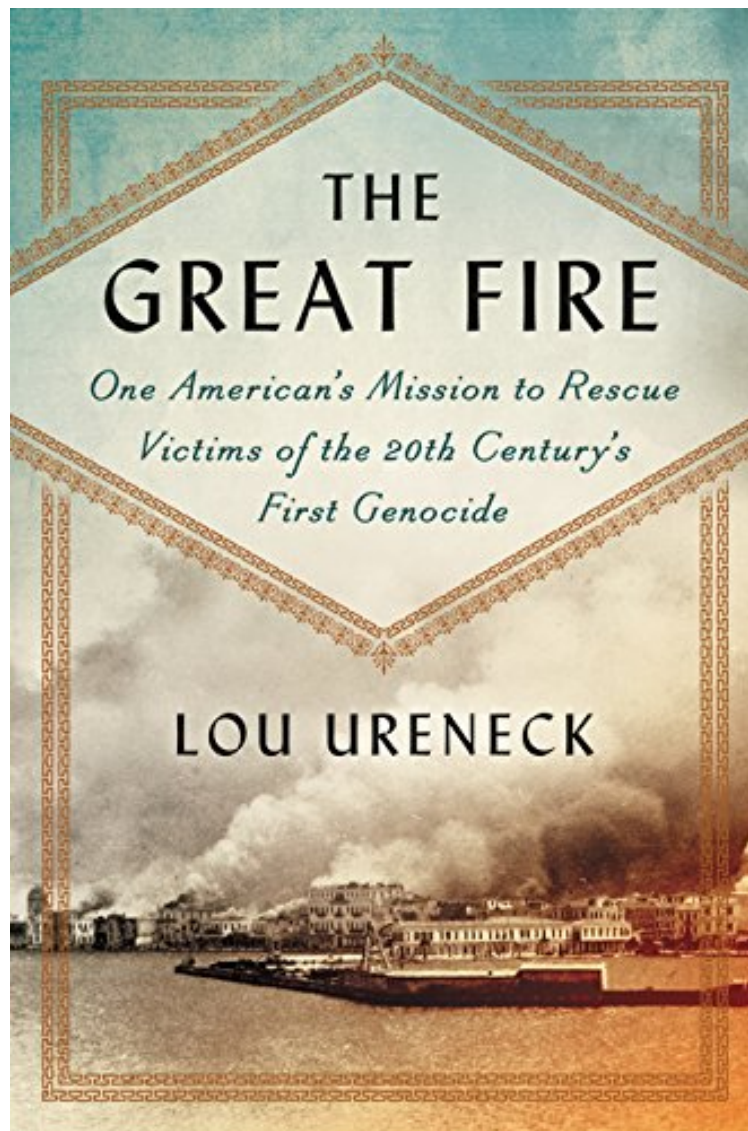


(Download pdf) The Great Fire: One American's Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20th Century's First Genocide

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Lou Ureneck

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#522856 in Books Lou Ureneck 2015-05-12 2015-05-12Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x 1.56 x 6.00l, 1.42 #File Name: 0062259881512 pagesThe Great Fire One American s Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20th Century s First Genocide | File size: 50.Mb

Lou Ureneck : The Great Fire: One American's Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20th Century's First Genocide before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Great Fire: One American's Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20th Century's First Genocide:

15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Good read. Historical, but suspenseful
By D. Kallas
I thoroughly enjoyed this book. While the book is rich in historical fact, it reads like a suspenseful novel. It is a riveting account of the tragic events that took place 100 years ago in Turkey after WWI. The Turkish Nationalists sought to violently rid Turkey of Greeks and Armenians, culminating in the burning and destruction of the city of Smyrna. The book focuses on the relief efforts of two individuals, a missionary and a US Naval commander, who worked against all odds to save almost a million refugees. As the Turkish Nationalist army approaches Smyrna and the two men frantically devise a plan, the suspense builds and it becomes harder and harder to put the book down. Ureneck constructs multidimensional portraits of the major figures involved in this catastrophe which help us to better understand their actions. He also includes personal stories of some of the survivors which add a unique human dimension. Researching the book, Ureneck visited the actual sites where these events occurred. This enabled him to paint vivid descriptions of the landscape and locales. Though there are both heroes and villains, in the end it is the story of the heroes that rose to the occasion using every available resource and against all odds saved many more lives than anyone could have thought possible. It is a true story of the triumph of the human spirit.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Seminal Work on The Great Fire of Smyrna, 1922
By Sevan Yarjan
A must read for anyone interested in learning more about turn of the 20th century Middle East history, the rise of the Turkish Republic, the massacres and persecution of Greeks at the hands of Turks and the Armenian Genocide carried out by sultan Abdulhamid during the last days of the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turk government followed by Mustafa Kemal and his cabal. Ureneck gives a factual account of the events that led to the conflagration that destroyed a once prized city and so many of its Christian citizens. He weaves a story drawn from well researched and fully documented facts that not only educates but fully engages the reader with personal accounts of tragedy, suffering, courage, heroism and great sacrifice. This is a compelling historical event that needed to be told that the author handled masterfully. Greeks, Armenians and anyone interested in genocide will not only learn a great deal but will be deeply moved by Ureneck's poignant account of the events of September, 1922. This book will not disappoint and may well leave a lingering mark on the psyche of the reader.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. What a real hero looks like: A sickly man with a bad back in a straw boater
By Michael F. Kennedy
My mother used to say to my brothers and me as we wolfed down dinner, "You all eat like a bunch of starving Armenians!" Why were they starving Armenians, and not, as in my youth, Biafrans, Ethiopians or Bangladeshis? Because, as I would learn, even though the events of this book take place before her birth, the plight of Anatolian Christians would concern Americans for the better part of a decade and become a part of the American consciousness at least until the Depression. Americans, in unions, clubs, parishes, schools and groups formed expressly for Armenian relief, would respond to successive waves of Turkey's oppression of its Christian minorities with a zeal that would establish America's reputation for generosity in the face of humanitarian crises. Two Americans, Asa Jennings -- a slight, hunchbacked, sickly missionary in a straw boater, largely ignored by a boss who wondered why he was burdened with such a subordinate -- and Halsey Powell -- a widowed Navy officer from Kentucky who subtly resisted pressure from his pro-Turkey admiral in Constantinople -- are the heroes of this narrative. Jennings, who gives shelter to Christians in the port city of Smyrna as the advancing Turkish army robs, rapes, beats and starves its Ottoman minorities while rounding up its military-age men for firing squads or death marches to concentration camps in the interior. Jennings, who on his 45th birthday decides that God had spared him when he was deathly ill years before for ... for what? For this. To save tens, eventually hundreds of thousands of Greeks and Armenians. He uses his powers of persuasion and organization to bend parts of the U.S. Navy and the Greek government to his will. Or His will, as Jennings no doubt saw it. Despite the resistance of some parts of the Navy and the State Department, the Americans end up doing the right thing, with help from the Greeks, the British, some of the other Allied powers, and even the occasional Turk. The individual American sailor comes off very well in this story, displaying courage and compassion in guarding safe houses and trying to mitigate the cruelties of the Turkish soldiers as refugees queue up to be loaded onto ships for resettlement. In the right hands, this could make a hell of a movie. One cannot help but think of the parallels to "Schindler's List." I found an occasional mistake, such as the date given for President McKinley's assassination. It's rather like bad note in the midst of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Yes, it's a clinker, but it's still a hell of a symphony. Lou Ureneck has given us a dandy narrative of a crisis of nearly a century ago and has shown us how Americans responded. The civil war in Syria is leading to the greatest refugee crisis since World War II. I'm not sure it's a stretch to say that this book begs the question: How should we respond today?

The harrowing story of a Methodist Minister and a principled American naval officer who helped rescue more than 250,000 refugees during the genocide of Armenian and Greek Christians a tale of bravery, morality, and politics, published to coincide with the genocides centennial. The year was 1922: World War I had just come to a close, the Ottoman Empire was in decline, and Asa Jennings, a YMCA worker from upstate New York, had just arrived in the quiet coastal city of Smyrna to teach sports to boys. Several hundred miles to the east in Turkey's interior, tensions between Greeks and Turks had boiled over into deadly violence. Mustapha Kemal, now known as Atatürk, and his Muslim army soon advanced into Smyrna, a Christian city, where a half a million terrified Greek and Armenian

refugees had fled in a desperate attempt to escape his troops. Turkish soldiers proceeded to burn the city and rape and kill countless Christian refugees. Unwilling to leave with the other American civilians and determined to get Armenians and Greeks out of the doomed city, Jennings worked tirelessly to feed and transport the thousands of people gathered at the city's Quay. With the help of the brilliant naval officer and Kentucky gentleman Halsey Powell, and a handful of others, Jennings commandeered a fleet of unoccupied Greek ships and was able to evacuate a quarter million innocent people, an amazing humanitarian act that has been lost to history, until now. Before the horrible events in Turkey were complete, Jennings had helped rescue a million people. By turns harrowing and inspiring, *The Great Fire* uses eyewitness accounts, documents, and survivor narratives to bring this episode extraordinary for its brutality as well as its heroism to life.

Ureneck's narrative is intense and vivid. (Philadelphia Inquirer) *The Great Fire* reads like a fast-paced thriller replete with vivid profiles of heroes, villains and ordinary people caught up in ethnic and religious violence. (Associated Press) This is a comprehensive yet intimate work of scholarship, reminding readers of a horrific moment in modern history now largely forgotten. (Weekly Standard) *The Great Fire* reads like a fast-paced thriller replete with vivid profiles of heroes, villains and ordinary people caught up in ethnic and religious violence. (ABC News) *The Great Fire* reads like a fast-paced thriller replete with vivid profiles of heroes, villains and ordinary people caught up in ethnic and religious violence. (The Post and Courier) [The Great Fire] is highly readable and paints a portrait of a pivotal period in world history. (The Register Herald) Praise for *Backcast*: This book is a rarity: humble in its beauty, elegant in its reflection. (Anchorage Daily News) From the Back Cover A bribe, a lie and an empty threat—these were the tools Reverend Asa K. Jennings used to rescue hundreds of thousands of helpless refugees following the 1922 burning of Smyrna, the richest and most cosmopolitan city of the Ottoman Empire. A minister from upstate New York, Jennings had arrived in Smyrna just as the final territorial dispute of World War I was being settled in a brutal war between the army of Greece and a force of Turkish rebels fighting as proxies for WWI's European victors who had been unable to impose a treaty on the defeated Ottoman Empire. Hundreds of thousands of terrified Greek and Armenian refugees fled to Smyrna as Mustapha Kemal (known today as Atatürk) and his Moslem army advanced on the mostly Christian city. The Turkish soldiers set fire to the city and raped and killed countless Christian refugees while French, British, Italian, and American warships, under strict orders to remain neutral, stood immobile in the harbor. *The Great Fire* tells the harrowing and inspiring story of Jennings and a strong-willed naval officer, Lt. Commander Halsey Powell, who together orchestrated one of the century's greatest humanitarian missions. Emboldened by his religious faith, Jennings worked tirelessly to feed and transport the thousands of desperate people while Powell, a war hero and Kentucky gentleman, skirted orders so that he could bring America's Navy to the rescue. By the time the horrible events in Turkey had ended, Jennings and Powell had helped rescue almost a million refugees. Drawing extensively from survivors' stories, fresh primary sources, and years of research, Ureneck has painted an unforgettable portrait of the fire at Smyrna—the symbolic end of five hundred years of Ottoman rule and the final act in a ten-year religious slaughter. This gripping narrative reveals forces that would define the rest of the century: virulent nationalism, trading oil for national principles, and conflict and misunderstanding between the Christian West and Moslem East. This is an astonishing look at a pivotal, but little known, moment in our history viewed through the lens of the hopeful story of two men who faced a savage crisis with an unshakeable decency. About the Author Lou Ureneck, a former Nieman fellow and editor-in-residence at Harvard University, is a professor of journalism at Boston University. Ureneck is the author of *Backcast*, which won the National Outdoor Book Award for literary merit, and *Cabin: Two Brothers, a Dream, and Five Acres in Maine*.