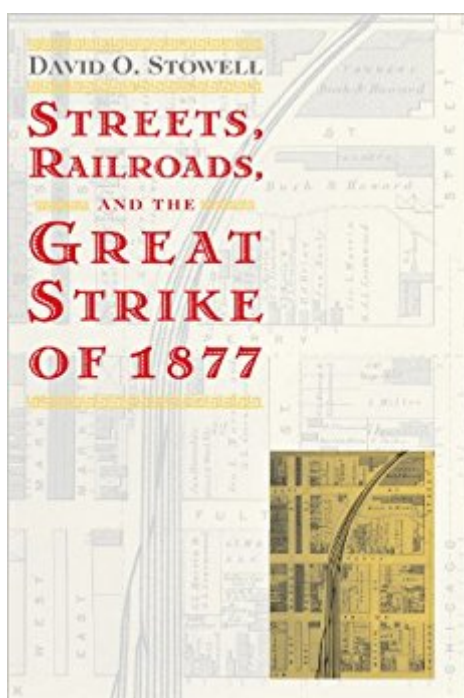


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# Streets, Railroads, And The Great Strike Of 1877 (Historical Studies Of Urban America)



## Synopsis

For one week in late July of 1877, America shook with anger and fear as a variety of urban residents, mostly working class, attacked railroad property in dozens of towns and cities. The Great Strike of 1877 was one of the largest and most violent urban uprisings in American history. Whereas most historians treat the event solely as a massive labor strike that targeted the railroads, David O. Stowell examines America's predicament more broadly to uncover the roots of this rebellion. He studies the urban origins of the Strike in three upstate New York cities—Buffalo, Albany, and Syracuse. He finds that locomotives rumbled through crowded urban spaces, sending panicked horses and their wagons careening through streets. Hundreds of people were killed and injured with appalling regularity. The trains also disrupted street traffic and obstructed certain forms of commerce. For these reasons, Stowell argues, The Great Strike was not simply an uprising fueled by disgruntled workers. Rather, it was a grave reflection of one of the most direct and damaging ways many people experienced the Industrial Revolution. "Through meticulously crafted case studies . . . the author advances the thesis that the strike had urban roots, that in substantial part it represented a community uprising. . . . A particular strength of the book is Stowell's description of the horrendous accidents, the toll in human life, and the continual disruption of craft, business, and ordinary movement engendered by building railroads into the heart of cities."—Charles N. Glaab, *American Historical Review*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For one week in late July of 1877, America shook with anger and fear as a variety of urban residents, mostly working class, attacked railroad property in dozens of towns and cities. The Great Strike of 1877 was one of the largest and most violent urban uprisings in American history. Whereas most historians treat the event solely as a massive labor strike that targeted the railroads, David O. Stowell examines America's predicament more broadly to uncover the roots of this rebellion. He finds that locomotives rumbled through crowded urban spaces, sending panicked horses and their wagons careening through streets. Hundreds of people were killed and injured with appalling regularity. The trains also disrupted street traffic and obstructed certain forms of commerce. For these reasons, Stowell argues, The Great Strike was not simply an uprising fueled by disgruntled workers. Rather, it was a grave reflection of one of the most direct and damaging ways many people experienced the Industrial Revolution. For other books in the Historical Studies of Urban America series, see Madelon Powers' "Faces along the Bar", John McGreevy's "Parish Boundaries", Gail Radford's "Modern Housing for America" and Karen Sawislak's "Smoldering City" among others.

This is an excellent book. Stowell provides clear and abundant evidence to forward his argument that the Great Strike was more just an uprising of discontented railroad workers. As a high school student, I found this book to be an invaluable resource in writing my American History term research paper. It is packed with useful information, but is also stylistically well done, so as to hold the reader's interest. By exploring the human passions at the core of the issue, Stowell provides a fresh perspective on a topic which may otherwise seem (I thought) rather dull.

Dr. David Stowell has written a page-turner while also managing to break fresh, new ground in the field of labor history. This exciting and insightful monograph should serve as an example to historians of all stripes on just how history should be written. Stowell's narrative and analysis mesh seamlessly as he masterfully recreates the tensions, forces, and personalities that ultimately clashed in the Great Strike of 1877. This is a must for any one interested in the late-19th century and labor. A wonderful display for labor history at its finest.

This is a wonderful book for the lay person and professional historian alike. It puts a new spin on understanding the Great Strike and brings the streets of 1877 back to life. I have given this book as a gift to friends as well as enjoyed it in college classes. I am already looking forward to the author's

next book.

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