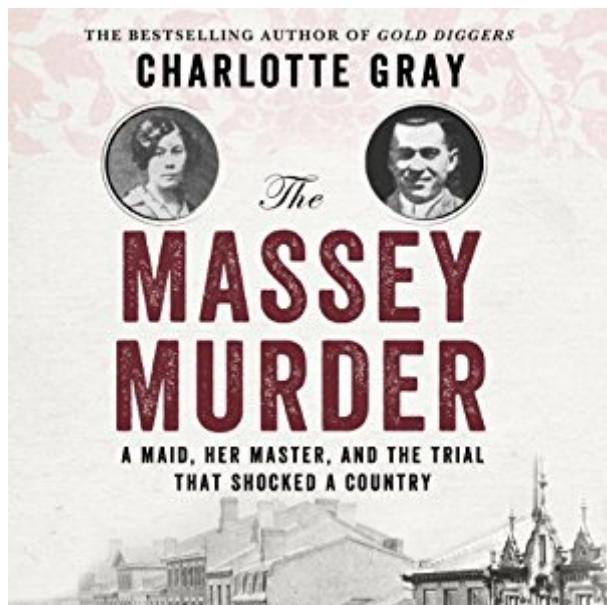


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The Massey Murder: A Maid, Her Master And The Trial That Shocked A Country



Synopsis

In February 1915, a member of one of Canada's wealthiest families was shot and killed on the front porch of his home in Toronto as he was returning from work. Carrie Davies, an 18-year-old domestic servant, quickly confessed. But who was the victim here? Charles "Bert" Massey, a scion of a famous family, or the frightened, perhaps mentally unstable Carrie, a penniless British immigrant? When the brilliant lawyer Hartley Dewart, QC, took on her case, his grudge against the powerful Masseys would fuel a dramatic trial that pitted the old order against the new, wealth and privilege against virtue and honest hard work. Set against a backdrop of the Great War in Europe and the changing face of a nation, this sensational crime is brought to vivid life for the first time. As in her previous best-selling book, *Gold Diggers* - now in production as a Discovery Television miniseries - multi-award-winning historian and biographer Charlotte Gray has created a captivating narrative rich in detail and brimming with larger-than-life personalities, as she shines a light on a central moment in our past.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Massey family is well-known (or should be) by older Canadian residents and even today the Massey name is part of the agricultural scene. To read this true account of one member of this illustrious family takes us back to a time when the mores, beliefs and customs of an era inform and entertain. There is a murder - a male victim and murderer. The victim is shown to be an ordinary man caught in circumstances beyond his control and the media, newspapers mainly, debate the possibility that he deserved what he got at the hands of a poor innocent girl who was most certainly

defenseless. Women, especially young single women, had to be blameless when up against male authority, especially if there is a question of morality such as it was in this case.

Gray creates an entertaining narrative based on extensive research. The result is a fascinating book about a crime that shook the social world of Toronto in 1915. The growing divide between the affluent upper class in the enclaves of the colonial establishment versus the working class struggling on the outskirts is portrayed with vigour. Gray introduces the energetic newspaper wars that served to heighten the lurid details of the victim and perpetrator along with the drama of Canada's participation in WWI; we meet the cast of influential figures clinging to the values of Victorian moralists as well as the leaders of emerging movements for social reform. It is a compelling read, especially for anyone interested in Toronto's history in particular.

I was quite disappointed in the book. I found it difficult to meld the two themes; that of the war and that of the murder. I felt it was a stretch for the author to relate these two events. I would have liked the murder plot to be more detailed. The war portion of the book seemed much larger than the story that the title of the book refers to. A disappointment for me. D. Leclerc.

This book was edifying on many levels as well as including an intriguing true story. The social, cultural, legal, manufacturing, political and military histories of Canada in the early 20th century are dealt with in a masterful way while paralleling the story of a little-known murder case. I leave this book knowing more about many aspects of my country's history. As holder of a Governor General's medal from 1956 with Vincent Massey's profile on it, I feel that knowing more about his family enriches that experience.

This book is a true history of Toronto during the first war. Each event plays off the other. The class differences, the prejudice, the birth of the women's movements, the struggles between the press and drama of a gifted lawyer. A good read. The only disappointment was a little more spark would have made it perfect.

Although the judicial process was flawed, I couldn't help but cheer for the maid. I liked the way the author presented the mindset of the period and also the news stories of the day that were presented at the beginning of each chapter, especially the progress of WWI.

I chose to read this book because it gave insight into one of the most affluent Canadian families. Charlotte Gray weaves a wonderful tale of murder while giving the reader a glimpse into life during World War 1 and the beginnings of the women's movement in Canada. A fabulous story.

An excellent read. An unique way of weaving several strands of stories into one to enrich the whole era in which the story takes place. A must read for history -lovers. Great Canadiana reading and learning.

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