Crime, History, and Hollywood
To
James F. Hilgenberg, Jr.,
who shares my love of history and has been a good mentor,
colleague, and friend.
and
Joyce Hilgenberg,
a beautiful lady and friend to the family,
*Requiescat in Pace.*
W.M.O.
CONTENTS

Acknowledgments xi

Introduction 3

Chapter 1 • Amistad and the Trial of the Amistads (1839) 15
Introduction 15
Amistad: The History 16
Amistad: The Film 22
Amistad: Hollywood’s Rendering 26
Conclusion 32
Further Reading 33
Endnotes 34

Chapter 2 • September Dawn and the Mountain Meadows Massacre (1857) 37
Introduction 37
September Dawn: The History 39
September Dawn: The Film 44
September Dawn: Hollywood’s Rendering 49
Conclusion 53
Further Reading 54
Endnotes 55

Chapter 3 • Tombstone and the Shootout at the O.K. Corral (1881) 57
Introduction 57
Tombstone: The History 59
Tombstone: The Film 63
Tombstone: Hollywood’s Rendering 68
Conclusion 74
Further Reading 74
Endnotes 75


Chapter 4 • *Eight Men Out* and the Fixing of the 1919 World Series (1919)  
Introduction 79  
*Eight Men Out*: The History 80  
*Eight Men Out*: The Film 84  
*Eight Men Out*: Hollywood’s Rendering 89  
Conclusion 93  
Further Reading 94  
Endnotes 95

Chapter 5 • *St. Valentine’s Day Massacre* and the American Gangster Al Capone (1929)  
Introduction 97  
*St. Valentine’s Day Massacre*: The History 99  
*The St. Valentine’s Day Massacre*: The Film 103  
*St. Valentine’s Day Massacre*: Hollywood’s Rendering 109  
Conclusion 113  
Further Reading 114  
Endnotes 114

Chapter 6 • *Public Enemies* and the Hunt for John Dillinger (1934)  
Introduction 117  
*Public Enemies*: The History 118  
*Public Enemies*: The Film 124  
*Public Enemies*: Hollywood’s Rendering 129  
Conclusion 133  
Further Reading 133  
Endnotes 134

Chapter 7 • *In Cold Blood* and the Clutter Family Murders (1959)  
Introduction 137  
*In Cold Blood*: The History 138  
*In Cold Blood*: The Film 145  
*In Cold Blood*: Hollywood’s Rendering 149  
Conclusion 152  
Further Reading 152  
Endnotes 153
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 8 • <em>Escape from Alcatraz</em> and the Alcatraz Prison (1962)</th>
<th>157</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Escape from Alcatraz</em> : The History</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Escape from Alcatraz</em> : The Film</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Escape from Alcatraz</em> : Hollywood’s Rendering</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Reading</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 9 • <em>Mississippi Burning</em> and the Murder of Three Civil Rights Workers (1964)</th>
<th>177</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mississippi Burning</em> : The History</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mississippi Burning</em> : The Film</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mississippi Burning</em> : Hollywood’s Rendering</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Reading</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 10 • <em>All the President’s Men</em> and the Watergate Scandal (1972)</th>
<th>197</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>All the President’s Men</em> : The History</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>All the President’s Men</em> : The Film</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>All the President’s Men</em> : Hollywood’s Rendering</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Reading</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Index                                                                  | 219 |
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 2003, one of the authors (Oliver) began teaching in the College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University, in Huntsville, Texas. One of the classes, which was part of the core curriculum, was the History of Criminal Justice. As I had previously authored a book on the subject (A History of Crime and Criminal Justice in America, 2nd Edition, with James Hilgenberg, Jr., Carolina Academic Press), I regularly taught the class for our criminal justice majors. With each passing semester, more and more students would challenge me on my presentation of history. They would tell me in some major motion picture they had watched, they saw something different than what I was conveying in my lectures. I told them the film was historically inaccurate and, expecting to move on, continued to lecture. Yet the students would usually stop me and ask me to explain in more detail why it was wrong. Thus, I found myself taking more and more time to teach the historical inaccuracies of Hollywood films than actually teaching criminal justice history.

I toyed with the idea of teaching one of my criminal justice history courses through the use of film, but decided that students would come away with a very sparse knowledge of criminal justice history overall. Still, students continued to challenge my read of history with their read of Hollywood films. Finally, in the summer of 2006, I was asked to teach a special topics course on whatever I liked. I decided to try teaching the concepts that are now found in this book, Crime, History, & Hollywood. By teaching students the real history, as well as the techniques that Hollywood uses to subvert real history which make films more simple and enjoyable to watch, I could teach them how to analyze a film for its accuracy. What happened next amazed me.

Students came to class fully prepared to discuss and criticize the historical accuracy of the films we watched in class. Either they had dog-eared a page in the book and drew upon that to point out a historical discrepancy in the film or they surfed the web for critical reviews of the films to see what others had to say. Many found historical websites or those maintained by historians that also reviewed our films in question, and from these, the students brought to class many observations, small and large, that I had overlooked in my own
analysis. Then, when these mistakes were brought up in class, the students often became engaged in debates as to whether the historical inaccuracies were mistakes or intentional on the part of the director. And sometimes at issue were debates over whether something was historically inaccurate or not. Further, students with specific interests brought into class observations based on their particular knowledge of such things as baseball, guns, and automobiles; observations that further led to the recognition of historical inaccuracies.

Thus, in the end, after having taught this same class multiple times, and with each film shown, learning new mistakes from my students, I would be remiss in not thanking them for making this book possible. Still further, I should acknowledge Sam Houston State University and the College of Criminal Justice for allowing me the opportunity to teach such a class in the first place.

The authors would also like to thank Beth Hall from Carolina Academic Press for her support of seeing this idea into a book and to Kelly Miller, also at Carolina Academic Press, for putting up with all my questions about photographs. And, as always, our thanks extend to our families.