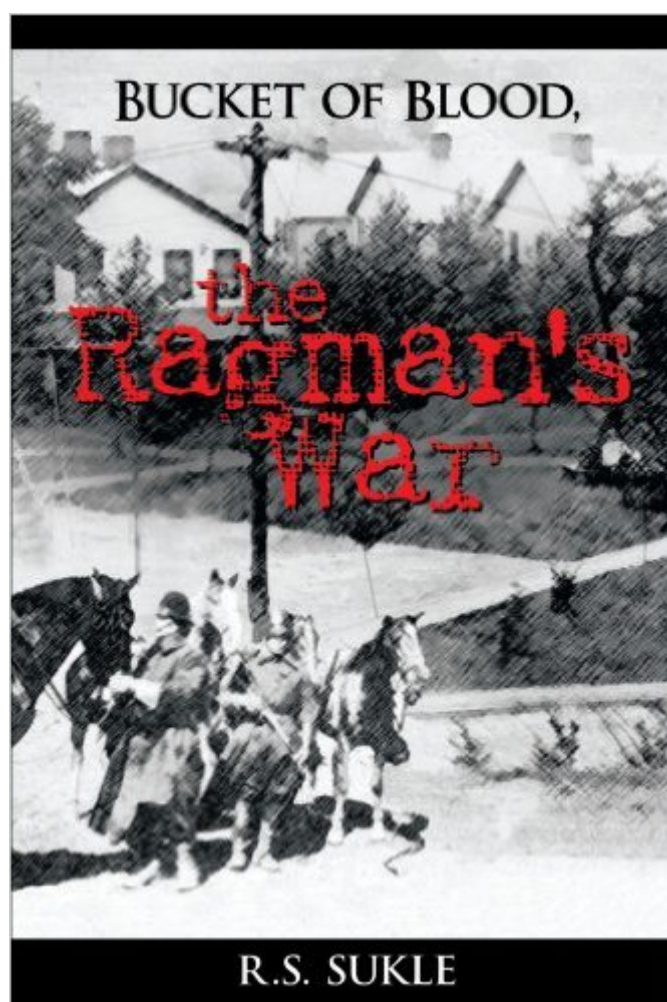


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# Bucket Of Blood, The Ragman's War



## Synopsis

Bucket of Blood is what a coal town was called when bloodshed occurred to establish a worker's union. During the 1927-1928 strike in the western Pennsylvania coalfields, Russellton became known as such a place. In an effort to break the strike, special Coal and Iron Police were brought into the area to evict the mine families from their company houses. These men imposed unconstitutional restrictions to harass the people and keep out relief workers and organizers. It was a time of brutal beatings, rape, and murder. Without union representation, the workers were constantly exploited. Because the company used many weapons to keep them enslaved, the miners' families were forced to live in abject poverty. The miner had only one weapon, the strike. Bucket of Blood: The Ragman's War chronicles the depravation and indignities suffered by the families in the Russellton camps during the strike. Author R. S. Suple explores the glimmers of hope appearing through relief efforts by the sons of a local farmer who become union activists. Ragman, a mine mechanic, walks out with the other men. Against his intentions, he is drawn into the struggle by his brothers, and the abuse that is heaped on his family by the Coal and Iron Police. The killing of a state Coal and Iron Policeman in Russellton is a local legend. The killer was never identified. This story has been passed down in certain families, each with their own version. Each claims the killer as a relative. Bucket of Blood is one of those stories.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

: Bucket of Blood: Ragman's War illustrates survival strategies in a family and in a desolate

coal-mining community hidden in the hills of Russellton, Pennsylvania, in 1927. Initiative saves lives as two brothers, sometimes four, link skills and ideas to keep strikers from freezing or starving when coal mine and railroad owners unite to evict them from their company houses and beat them as a method of control of the mines. S. R. Suple, in vivid dialogue, a dramatic story line and discerning description, has caught a time in the mines and on the surrounding farms which tested endurance. The hardiness of the immigrant valley denizens, family love, and the necessity for union organizing permeate the novel. Particularly touching is the German mother who rises first in the pre-dawn to heat the kitchen and brew the coffee before her sons set out each day to save their fellows. Both humorous and poignant is the father who bunks in the barn with the animals during a flu epidemic. Universe has published an insightful chronicle of an experience of our forefathers and mothers that we in our comfortable, 21st century lives, can scarcely imagine. Reading *Bucket of Blood: Ragman's War* will help us imagine the triumphing stock from which many Americans came.

I am amazed at how lucky we are to live in today's world. *Bucket of Blood* gave me an understanding of the hardships families had to face during the miner's strike in Pennsylvania. I could actually feel the cold and pain that the families felt and the anger expressed toward the Coal & Iron police. This was a part of history I now understand helped me realize how lucky I am to live in the world as it is today.

In *Bucket of Blood*, Suple has written a fast-paced story of the turmoil and violence surrounding a 1927-1928 Miner's strike in Western Pennsylvania. In a well-written and entertaining fashion the story illuminates an important and nearly forgotten struggle in American history for Fair Wages and Fair Working Conditions. More importantly, Suple illuminates the human heart and the strength of character shown by people in challenging conditions. The author's family history with the early union in the area gives this novel an authentic voice. I strongly recommend this book.

I originally bought the book out of curiosity since I am from the Russellton area and was curious about the history of the local coal mines that were part of our community. I remember well the sulfuric "bone dumps", the orange pollution in Deer Creek, the company store and housing (still standing and in use), and other reminders of the area history. I was delighted to find a captivating story as part of this historical fiction that was interesting in its own right, notwithstanding the connection I have to Russellton and coal mining. I have to thank the author and all others involved in documenting the conditions that the coal mining families lived through with great perseverance

and this book helped me better appreciate the sacrifices made by all of the coal mining families and their fight for unionization.

Not an easy read, but well researched and true to facts. Actual news accounts, interspersed with true to life fiction, make this a valuable book for anyone interested in the war between union coalminers and greedy owners.

Having grown up in Russellton, Pa. - the setting of this book, I can vouch for the accuracy of the details. Everything from the location of various landmarks referred to on numerous occasions, down to some of the family names she mentions, they are all very real. I was so moved by this book that I made it a point to go out of my way to visit some of these locations the next time I visited my home town. It sent chills up my spine to stand in the exact same spot as many of the characters did, now knowing their pain and suffering. This book should be required reading for local highschool students so that they could better understand the history of their community.

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