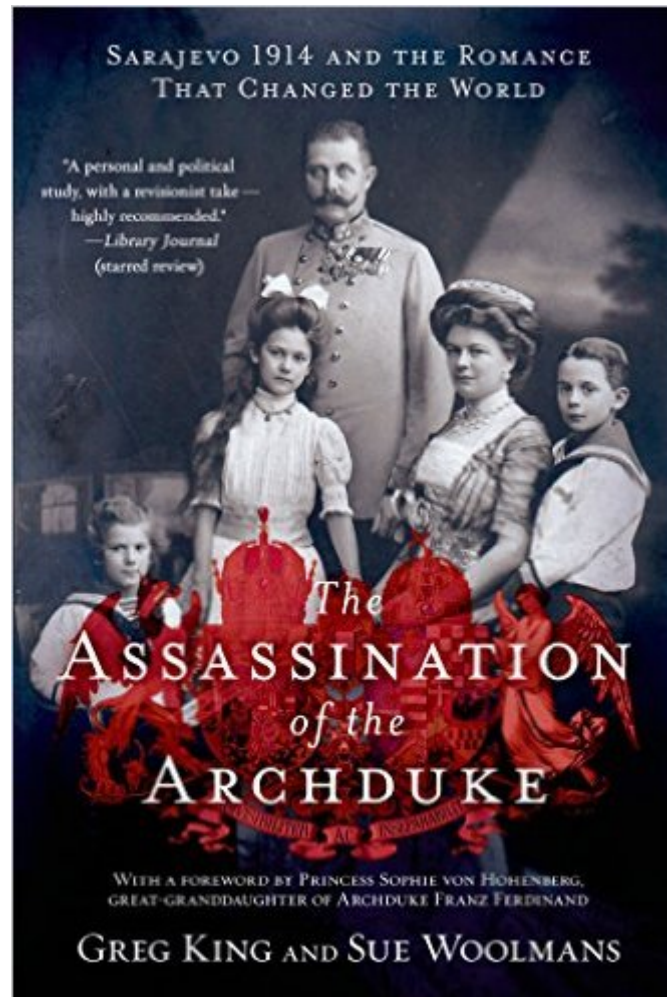


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The Assassination Of The Archduke: Sarajevo 1914 And The Romance That Changed The World



Synopsis

Drawing on unpublished letters and rare primary sources, King and Woolmans tell the true story behind the tragic romance and brutal assassination that sparked World War II in the summer of 1914, three great empires dominated Europe: Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Four years later all had vanished in the chaos of World War I. One event precipitated the conflict, and at its heart was a tragic love story. When Austrian heir Archduke Franz Ferdinand married for love against the wishes of the emperor, he and his wife Sophie were humiliated and shunned, yet they remained devoted to each other and to their children. The two bullets fired in Sarajevo not only ended their love story, but also led to war and a century of conflict. Set against a backdrop of glittering privilege, The Assassination of the Archduke combines royal history, touching romance, and political murder in a moving portrait of the end of an era. One hundred years after the event, it offers the startling truth behind the Sarajevo assassinations, including Serbian complicity and examines rumors of conspiracy and official negligence. Events in Sarajevo also doomed the couple's children to lives of loss, exile, and the horrors of Nazi concentration camps, their plight echoing the horrors unleashed by their parents' deaths. Challenging a century of myth, The Assassination of the Archduke resonates as a very human story of love destroyed by murder, revolution, and war.

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Customer Reviews

Most histories of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914 focus on the politics behind it and the catastrophic world war which resulted from it. Franz Ferdinand

himself is usually brushed off with a reference to his being heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and sometimes the fact that he had married morganatically (unequally) and that his wife Sophie was also killed that day is mentioned. But who were Franz Ferdinand and Sophie? Most of the time they are brushed aside, as if the only important thing about them is that they were assassinated. Greg King and Sue Woolmans have given us an excellent dual biography of the Austrian Archduke and his Bohemian wife that lets us see them as real people: a man and woman from different backgrounds who met, fell in love, got married despite enormous difficulties, and had a happy family life with their three children until they were murdered on their 14th wedding anniversary. Franz Ferdinand originally had very little chance of ever becoming famous. He was the nephew of Emperor Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary, one of several dozen Hapsburg Archdukes. He was sickly as a child and eventually developed tuberculosis. Intelligent but shy and distrustful of others, it was difficult for him to mix in society or form close friendships. When the Emperor's son Crown Prince Rudolf committed suicide in 1889 Franz Ferdinand was forced into a more prominent role, one which neither he nor his uncle cared for, and perforce found himself expected to marry and have children who would one day rule the Empire. While half heartedly going about the business of choosing one or another dreary Princess or Archduchess to be his wife Franz Ferdinand met Countess Sophie Chotek, a handsome woman with a quick mind and sparkling personality.

When we studied history, we were told that World War I started when Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo in 1914. Did you ever wonder who this Archduke was, and why his assassination precipitated the War? This biography tells the story of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, nephew of the Emperor of Austria. He became heir to the Austrian throne after the tragic death of the Emperor Franz Joseph's son, Rudolph, who killed himself and his mistress at Mayerling in 1889. The Emperor did not like his new heir, who he saw as liberal reformer. (Only in Austria could a militaristic, temperamental, rigid man who had occasionally expressed the opinion that some of the nations that Austria ruled might want some control over their own areas be seen as a liberal!) The tension between the two men was increased when Franz Ferdinand announced that he wanted to marry a woman who, though descended from many generations of nobility, did not have the lineage required to marry an Archduke. Eventually, the two were allowed to marry morganatically, which meant that Franz Ferdinand's wife had none of the titles or precedence of an Archduchess, and that their children would be excluded from inheriting the Austrian throne. The book does a good survey of Franz Ferdinand's life, but the focus is really on this aspect of his life - his marriage for love, his happy family life, and the hundreds of ways that the Austrian Court managed to insult and demean

his wife and family. Written with the cooperation of some of the great-grandchildren of the couple, this is an interesting story, though many of the details are missing because much of their personal correspondence was destroyed by earlier generations.

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