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In Crime and the Rise of Modern America, Kristofer Allerfeldt studies the crimes, criminals, and law enforcement that contributed to a uniquely American system of crime and punishment from the end of the Civil War to the eve of World War II to understand how the rapidly-changing technology of transportation, media, and incarceration affected the criminal underworld.

In ten thematic chapters, Crime and the Rise of Modern America turns to the outlaws of the iconic West and the illegal distilleries of Prohibition, the turn-of-the-century immigrants, and the conmen who preyed on the people of the Promised Land, to examine how crime and America both changed, defining each other.