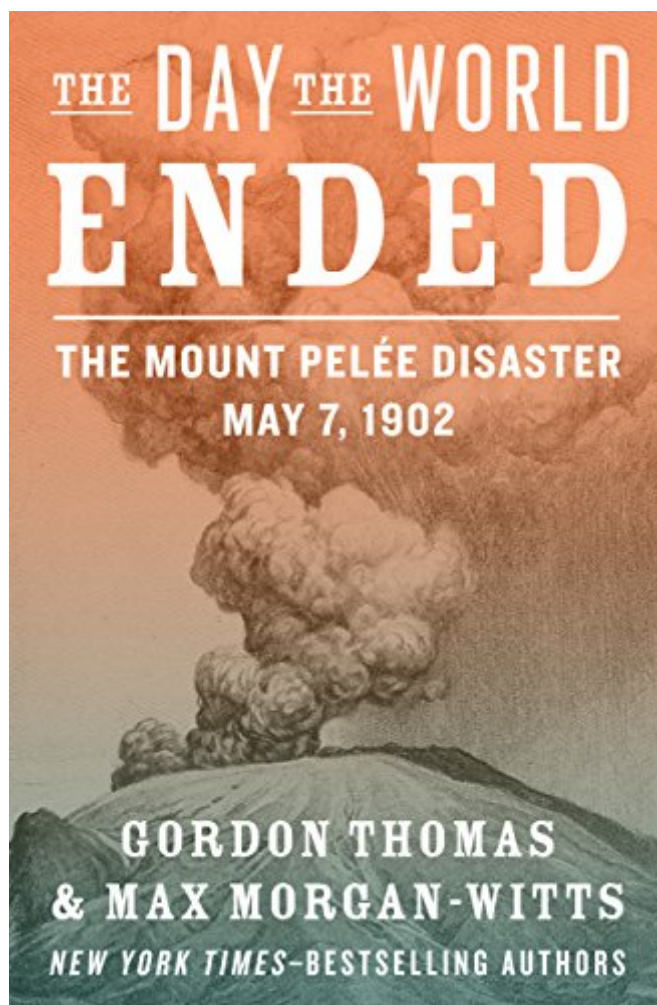


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# The Day The World Ended: The Mount Pelée Disaster: May 7, 1902



## Synopsis

The true story of a horrifying natural disasterâand the corruption that made it worseâby the New York Timesâbestselling authors of *Voyage of the Damned*. In late April 1902, Mount Pel  e, a volcano on the Caribbean island Martinique, began to wake up. It emitted clouds of ash and smoke for two weeks until violently erupting on May 8. Over 30,000 residents of St. Pierre were killed; they burned to death under rivers of hot lava and suffocated under pounds of hot ash. Only three people managed to survive: a prisoner trapped in a dungeon-like jail cell, a man on the outskirts of town, and a young girl found floating unconscious in a boat days later. Â So how did a town of thousands not heed the warnings of nature and local scientists, instead staying behind to perish in the onslaught of volcanic ash? Why did the newspapers publish articles assuring readers that the volcano was harmless? And why did the authorities refuse to allow the American Consul to contact Washington about the conditions? The answer lies in politics: With an election on the horizon, the political leaders of Martinique ignored the welfare of their people in order to consolidate the votes they needed to win. Â A gripping and informative book on the disastrous effects of a natural disaster coupled with corruption, *The Day the World Ended* reveals the story of a city engulfed in flames and the political leaders that chose to kill their people rather than give up their political power.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thomas and Witts give us the play by play account of Mount Pelee's devastating eruption on May 8th, 1902. They draw from existing eyewitness accounts, personal interviews, and surviving documents to recreate the horror of the tragedy, and create sympathetic portraits of the individuals caught up in the cataclysm of the devastated city of St. Pierre, once called the Paris of the West Indies. They take the standard position that Governor Louis Mouttet was suffering from some sort of mental instability, a narrative that was supported by survivor Edouard L'Heurre, the Governor's Secretary, that later authors such as Ernest Zebrowski refute by using scientific logic and deduction. Recreating the events of May, 1902 A thrilling, suspenseful real-life tragedy that claimed 30,000 lives, the eruption of Mount Pelee is a story that, like a sleeping volcano, refuses to lie dormant.

Considering that more than 30,000 people died, and that it happened in the 20th century, you'd think Mt. Pelee's eruption would be more famous. Anyway, this book, one of the very few I know of that is entirely about this incident, is a fascinating look into the lives of people on a peaceful Caribbean island and a horrifying account of Pelee's awakening and the catastrophe that gave its name to a whole class of volcanic eruptions. I literally could not stop reading until I finished it.

This book was fantastic!! Since it happened over 100 years ago I was only vaguely aware of the story! This book brought in the human element to the disaster!! Very well written and full of information!!

When I started reading this book I had no idea about the history of Martinique and its volcano, Pele'e. It is a fascinating glimpse into the French Colonial West Indies of 1902. I liked the author's day by day documentation of everyday life in St. Pierre, Martinique interspersed with the background stirrings of Pele'e. This is the story of the actual people - heroes and fools-who lived in this Caribbean Paradise until it turned into hell.

I read this book many years ago when it was first published. I liked it then and like it now. The book is an almost minute to minute cronical of a terrible event showing the human part of the suffering. It

also illuminates the stupidity of petty bureaucrats who because of politics sacrificed almost 40 thousand lives. Read the book.

For fast-paced excitement, you cannot beat *The Day the World Ended*, which is a day-by-day account of the 1902 volcano, starting on the 2nd of May 1902 and ending on the 8th, that weaves into this time several strong human interest stories. It was written in 1969, 67 years after the eruption, when the authors could still find a few people close to those times to interview. I get the feeling it was based very much on interviews, which gives it an immediacy not as apparent in the other two books: *The Last Days of St. Pierre* by Ernest Zebrowski and *La Catastrophe* by Alwyn Scarth. If you can only read one book, make it this one. It reads like a novel. The cost of this approach is that we cannot be sure all the stories the authors heard were accurate, so we will never know if some of the stories told here, like the placing of troops to stop people leaving the town are true. But for a feeling of impending doom, this book creates the atmosphere perfectly.

The writing is brilliant. It touched on a bit of history I knew nothing about. Far more, the author touched my mind and soul. There are many lessons to be learned here. As an aside. I am awed by the detail of his research. I'll read more of his books.

Really enjoyed this book! It was factual, and told the story in an interesting format. Some of the events surrounding the destruction of the town and the loss of life in the eruption were unbelievable! Great read.

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