



Captain Jack and the Dalton Gang: The Life and Times of a Railroad Detective

John J. Kinney

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Early evening, July 14, 1892: a train carrying a heavily armed posse chugs slowly into the small town of Adair in the Indian Territory. Seven or eight rough-looking men—the notorious Dalton Gang—have already taken over the depot. Peering at a watch just stolen from the station agent, they are reassured that the train is on time and nothing is amiss. But only moments later, hundreds of gunshots shatter the air, an innocent bystander is killed, and at least three of the posse are wounded, before the Daltons break into the train's express car and rob the safe.

Harking back to an era of desperados and lawmen, during the heyday of train robberies, this book chronicles the tale of Captain John Kinney—chief detective for the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas ("Katy") Railroad—and his confrontation with the Dalton gang. Contemporary accounts of the forty-minute battle at Adair vary widely, some praising the posse's courage, others accusing them of cowardice. Historians, however, all agree that this was the first time the Daltons encountered any organized armed resistance.

John J. Kinney, Jr., great-grandson of Captain Jack, grew up with tales of Captain Jack and the Daltons and set out to uncover the truth. Searching old journals and newspaper accounts for details of Captain Jack's life and facts about the Daltons, he has pieced together a totally captivating story of outlaws, lawmen, and the search for ancestral roots. Captain Jack's exploits were by no means confined to that one day in July. He was also the chief detective for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, a Texas Ranger, and a U.S. deputy marshal affiliated with "Hanging Judge" Isaac Parker's court.

Kinney fleshes out all of Jack's exploits with engaging and insightful detail. He tells the life story of this unsung hero, breathes life back into a bygone and colorful era, and offers a unique perspective on America's westward growth. Along the way, he peeks into such curious topics as the significance of Crandall hammers in American history, the unexpected connection between Ben Franklin and the Daltons, and the giant spiders of Hermosillo, Mexico.

While some figures like the Daltons flash through history like comets, others seem to be lost in their light. This book rescues one such figure and secures for Captain Jack Kinney his rightful place in the annals of the American West.

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