



The Black Donnellys

Thomas P. Kelley

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"When that Donnelly glares at you, you hear the sound of shovels digging your grave."

-- Donnellys first victim How could one family -- mom, dad, and seven sons -- terrorize an entire Canadian community for 33 years? **The Black Donnellys** is the classic account of how James, Johannah and their sons used brute force to brawl, steal, burn, and murder their way into the dark side of Canadian history.

A popular bestseller since 1954, this gripping book covers the family's horrific crimes in unflinching detail through to their decimation at the hands of a murderous vigilante mob.

The Black Donnellys Details

Date : Published March 1st 1994 by Firefly Books (first published August 1st 1955)

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Author : Thomas P. Kelley

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From Reader Review The Black Donnellys for online ebook

Jenny LeBlanc says

It was interesting facts about how one family could have such a hold on a community.

Thomas Ryerson says

Pure entertainment only, this story has no bearing to the true story. For the real truth, read The Donnelly Murders and both books by Orlo Miller. The Donnelly Volume by Ray Fazakas is also very very detailed.

Lori says

While the Story itself was really interesting, I felt like I was reading a test book. I found it very choppy heading back and forth in time and the dates in almost every 3rd line(it felt) was distracting. I still gave it a 3 though keeping in mind that it was written in 1954. Writing styles were different then.

John says

This is a great book based on some Canadian History, if you like History then this is a book for you!!!

R.L. Anderson says

Excellent! A real eye opener about a fascinating historical event that happened just 100 miles due north of where I live, right across Lake Erie in neighboring Ontario, Canada. This book really got me into Donnelly lore and on a trip to Canada, I was eager to visit the area where this feud took place.

Juanita says

I read this book in my grade 10 class. I did not like this book at all. I found it very boring. I failed the unit because I barely paid any attention to it :) Although I did pass my English Class with a good mark. Also this unit was on our exam. I did not answer anything for this unit yet I got a higher mark on my exam than my friend. Its so funny cause he's still uppity about it. He he. My friend and I also did a "News Paper Project" on this book and we totally flunked it like majorly, because we turned ours into a comedy. It was hilarious.

T.R. Wallace says

WOW, a riveting historical, based on a immigrant Irish family and a 30 year feud with their community. I would because of content not recommend for preteen readers, {extreme violence} A relevant history of 19th century Canada. At 179 pages a good short read.

Cindy says

This makes the Hatfield and McCoy's look like child's play.

Nicole says

I really enjoyed this book. I came across it by chance. It was a recommendation for my kobo. I found it to be a well written and well told story. I had never heard of the Black Donnelly's (sadly), but it proved to be an interesting historical story on a family that lived outside of the London, Ontario area. I would recommend this book.

Jules Delorme says

The Black Donnellys

I first read Thomas P. Kelly's The Black Donnellys when I was young. Very young. I was still living in Cornwall Ontario at the time, still going to East Front Public School, and I can remember that I first found Kelly's book Run Indian Run, about Simon Gunanoot's pursuit by the law in British Columbia in the school's tiny library. The story spoke to my own aboriginal blood and I fell madly in love with it. You could order Kelly's books through Scholastic then and, while I certainly didn't have the money to buy a book, I could trade other kids for them, which led me to The Mad Trapper and The Black Donnellys. The Black Donnellys in particular haunted me. Perhaps because the story was so much closer to my own home, and even closer to my later home in Toronto. I was talking to a friend recently about the Donnelly story and it turned out that her husband still had the book in his collection. I wasn't sure how it would read to me today. As I said, I first read the book as a young boy. And I had found out that Kelly did not stick all too closely to the actual facts in his storytelling. But it remains true that I first found the story through his book, as I suspect did many Canadians. So I thought I'd give it a try again. I was quite surprised at how well it still read to me as an adult. It is a pretty small and simple book and Kelly has a flair for the melodramatic. But he also still stands up as a pretty decent storyteller. What surprised me most was the humour of his storytelling. Surprising perhaps because of what I still remember as a pretty horrific story. For those of you who don't know the Donnelly story, it is the tale of a criminally violent family, the Donnellys, being slaughtered late one February night in the town of Lucan in the 1880s, near what is now the city of London Ontario, by a group of vigilantes. What added to the fascination of the story is that all of the men who did the killings got off scot free, 6 of the leaders being found not guilty by a jury. The Donnellys were a violent lawless bunch without question, but to the best of anyone's knowledge they were only responsible for a single death. The father Jim went to jail for beating another man to death with a railroad spike. They did terrorize the town, particularly once Jim got out of prison and his seven sons grew into strong very violent young men, but the thought that five of them, including a young niece who had only just come to the country should be so

brutally slaughtered, and that the men who did it got away with it in a place like Canada, where we generally pride ourselves on being a peaceful and civilized nation, still galvanizes the emotions. Kelly's book is not the only book ever written about the Donnellys. It is certainly not the best. But, to the best of my knowledge it was the first to draw attention to the dark and bloody stain on Canada's local history. It's an easy read. Perhaps an overly simplistic read. But it was almost as fun to read as an adult as I found it to be as a child. The Black Donnellys isn't literature. It's not even very good history. But Kelly knows how to tell a story. And how to leave you haunted by one too. If you are Canadian, I'd recommend that you do read something about the Black Donnellys. I'd recommend that you start with Kelly's book. Even if you're not Canadian I think you might find the story more than worth reading. It may haunt you a bit. Which seems apropos. Since the people of that area still claim that they can hear the Donnelly's riding through the darkness late at night. That too may not be true. But it makes for a pretty damn good story.

Amanda says

this book was a true story that took place in lucan london ontario. it starts off boring but when you start reading it you cant stop because you want to know whats going to keep happening

Kim says

According to one review, "Canada's only exciting family". Clearly, they've never been to a Quinn family reunion...

Kate says

read this in grade 8 and figured I'd give it a go again. So interesting that such a bloody, violent, historical massacre occurred so close to where I live now. Fascinating piece of Canadian history

Dennis Lester says

I read this book in school and had to buy it for my collection. I can sum it up pretty easy. This is the most fucked up family I have ever heard of in my life. They are a prime example of neighbors you don't want to have. I was blown away with the shit they got away with and for the amount of time they got away with it and I was shocked that it took as long as it did for everyone to grow a set and put them out of their misery once and for all. If you like a book about murder, theft, thugs, vandalism, destruction, fighting and the "Typical Irish Immigrant" then this is one you won't be able to put down. It left me wanting to go home to Ontario from my current home in Michigan so that i can see the places and search for more info of the Notorious family from Lucan ON.

Barb says

A creepy part of Canadian history. Classic family feud story, that ends in senseless death.
