



Murder on Rouse Hill

Alan Terry Wright

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Around noon, November 22, 1915, everyone in Stoutland, Missouri, who could walk or ride rushed to view the mortal remains of one of the area's most prosperous farmers and leading citizens. Hidden in a brush pile on nearby Rouse Hill, the victim's body displayed the marks of a determined and vicious killer. Six years later, a dozen lawyers, four doctors, one hundred witnesses, four jury trials, a Missouri Supreme Court decision, and the only eyewitness a Missouri fox-trotter horse named "Sam" had not resolved the brutal murder of Jasper Jacob "Jap" Francis. Alan Terry Wright's suspenseful tale of greed, fraud, political influence, and cold-blooded murder will keep you riveted. His descriptions of the predawn killing, carried out in pitch darkness on a public road, and the agony of Sam, Francis's prized horse, tied by the killer and left to starve, are both frightening and moving. The accused killer, Charlie Blackburn, nearly lynched by townsfolk, died in his bed in a California nursing home in 1964 at the advanced age of 91. The victim, Jasper Francis, had been dead for 49 years. Wright's account of a young girl's unwitting visit to the murder scene in 1928 is chilling. Her return there as a feisty 84-year-old accompanies events so bizarre and puzzling they verge on the paranormal. Recent interviews with the accused killer's family, the opinion of a renowned medical examiner, and the report of a handwriting expert shed important new light on this nearly forgotten case. Wright's skillful weaving of the story line with gently humorous vignettes of backwoods living sets this book apart from typical "true crime" stories. His love for the history and lore of Missouri helps craft a tale that rings with authenticity.

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