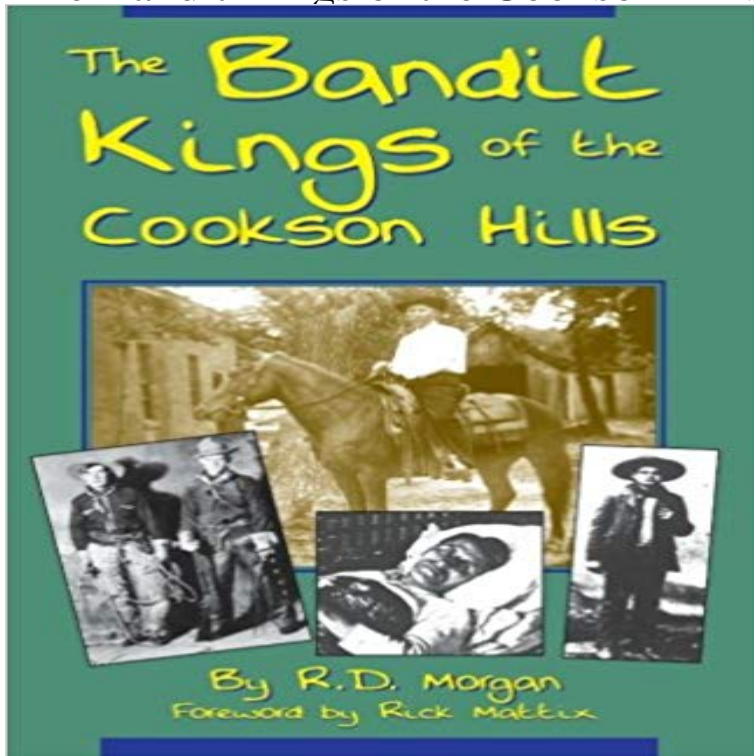


The Bandit Kings of the Cookson Hills



This book chronicles the true adventures of a loose-knit confederation of daring bank bandits originating from the infamous Cookson Hills of Eastern Oklahoma who terrorized the Arkansas-Oklahoma borderlands for more than a half decade following the close of the First World War. The original leader of the group was Henry Starr, the Cherokee bandit, who claimed to have robbed more banks than any man. Upon his death, a middle-age storekeeper along with an audacious young war hero named Ed Lockhart took over the helm. In a time when most Americans were captivated by the Teapot Dome scandal, the death of President Harding, and the gridiron adventures of Notre Dames Four Horsemen, folks living in the Ozark Mountains watched with fear and fascination as the outlaw band committed their bold depravations. Although the gangs take rarely amounted to over \$2,000, it must be remembered the average yearly income for a family of five in 1922 amounted to \$2,100. A gallon of gas cost eleven-cents and a loaf of bread fetched only nine pennies. The outlaw horde eventually met their match when they collided with such notable lawmen as Mont Grady, the Choctaw Indian manhunter with nerves of steel, and Cherokee County Deputies Jay Fellows and Jerry Powell, who rode horseback forty-eight hours in blizzard conditions without the benefit of food or rest in a dogged pursuit of the lawbreakers. Although members of the bandit gang received a great deal of notoriety from their illicit adventures, it was these officers and the ordinary citizens of towns such as Eureka Springs, Arkansas and Stroud, Oklahoma who took up arms and fought the outlaws to a standstill, who proved to be the real heroes of the story. This account, which takes place in the Roaring 20s, is meant to serve as a prelude to the authors first book, *The Bad Boys of the Cookson Hills*, which chronicled the

activities of another band of outlaws who launched a prolific series of attacks on nearly two-dozen banks in Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Arkansas during the 1930s depression era. This second Cookson Hills Gang was headquartered in the same geographic area as the earlier version noted in this narrative and some of the characters involved with the original outfit were active members of the latter group.

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