

book. While this volume promises new insights on the Lincoln assassination, there is nothing new here for the specialist or informed Lincoln enthusiast. A general reader interested in this topic might find some value in this book, but would probably enjoy one of James Swanson's books on the assassination more.

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The Brilliant Bandit of the Wabash
The Life of the Notorious Outlaw Frank Rande
 By Mark Dugan with Anna Vasconelles

(DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010. Pp. [xiii], 207. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.95.)

Mark Dugan has produced a slim and eminently readable biography of Charles Scott, alias Frank Rande, a self-styled desperado whose sordid career won him an equally squalid celebrity.

At his trial for murder, Rande's family described him as a promising young man. He was a good student and occasional preacher whose career as a teacher and talents as a blacksmith were ruined by twin tragedies: first, a carriage accident which allegedly led to major changes in his personality; second, the loss of his young wife to illness, which triggered what Dugan calls a dormant mental illness. Consequently, Rande became an aggressive drifter whose demeanor and actions frightened his family and former associates.

Dugan claims that an arrest for suspicion of larceny at age thirty-one led Rande to declare that he would

make himself a "terror in the land" (p. 16). Over the next several years, Rande was involved in a string of burglaries, assaults, and finally murders (including among his victims several police officers) throughout the midwestern states. His capture in Missouri made him a regional celebrity. He played the part beautifully, and was clearly obsessed with maintaining his public image as a violent bandit in order to reap the monetary rewards he anticipated from the sale of his memoirs and photographs of himself. Even though his many crimes were open-and-shut cases, a jury bizarrely decided to sentence him to life imprisonment instead of execution. (As Dugan notes, upon hearing that one member of the jury had initially held out for a not-guilty verdict, Rande exclaimed, "That man is crazier than I" [p.146]). In prison, he developed a hatred for one of his

keepers, whom he nearly killed in a savage assault. Placed in solitary confinement after the assault, he was soon found dead from an apparent suicide.

Drawn largely from newspaper accounts and trial testimony, the book is a wholly competent narrative of the trail of pointless and devastating carnage that Rande blazed in the 1870s through Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. Dugan and his research assistant have plainly labored hard to reconstruct the chronology of Rande (whose aliases, he once claimed, numbered in the hundreds), and their determination to stick to a documentary account of his career is plain. The book represents in that sense a clearly impressive amount of sleuthing. In this context, though, Dugan's refusal to follow more closely the question of whether Rande's hanging was a suicide or a murder carried out by his captors seems all the more puzzling. Evidence matters, but reasoned deduction can be equally valid.

It is unfortunate that Dugan's otherwise admirable devotion to detail obscures the much more promising line of inquiry that he lays out in his foreword and introduction. The most interesting aspect of Rande's career is that a man so apparently crazed could nonetheless play the role of media celebrity so well. Even

allowing for journalistic license in the reporting and embellishing of his words and deeds, Rande obviously played to the crowd, and knew enough of the dime-store novel genre to recast himself as an outlaw icon along the lines of Jesse James. Such self-aware performance—and an examination of what it reveals about the role of media in creating and sustaining popular notions about socially deviant behavior—makes for far more interesting and noteworthy reading than literal, blow-by-blow reconstructions of each of Rande's encounters with the law.

More important, if, as Dugan says, banditry's popularity derived from class resentment against the excesses of the Gilded Age, then Dugan might have analyzed Rande's presentation of self and the public acceptance of his portrayal along class lines. Like Jonathan Spence's *The Death of Woman Wang* (1998), *The Brilliant Bandit of the Wabash* could have combined an intensive study of court records with a broader analysis of the culture in which both the law and its consequences were situated. That, perhaps, is a subject for Dugan's next book.

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