

The Black Donnellys

by Don Miller

In addition to the two songs I have enclosed on the Black Donnelly fued there is a long play album dominion LPs 21013 "Tales of the Donnelly Feud" by Earl Heywood as well as a song folio by him which contains the following songs and tells the complete story of the Donnellys:

The Donnelly Circle
Three Candles in the Window
They're Gonna Hang Jim Donnelly
Sweet Maggie Thompson
The Fighting Feuding Donnelly's
The Wedding of Club Foot Bill
Who Stole Thompson's Cow
Granny Bell (The Fortune Teller)
Two Big Brothers-Mike and Jim
The Ballad of Big Jim Carroll
The Night They Shot John Donnelly
John O'Connor (The Trial)
Legend of the Old, Roman Line
One More on Satan's Side

In addition I have, also the following books on the Donnelly's.

The Black Donnelly's by Thomas P. Kelley Vengeance of the Black Donnelly's by Thomas P Kelley The Donnelly's Must Die by Orlo Miller The Donnelly Murders by William Crichton The Donnelly Album by Ray Fazakas - This is the best one on the feud as it contains all the happenings, court cases etc., letters and photos. It is a large book and contains 300 pages.

I was up in that country in the seventies and went down over the roman line although it was a paved highway now and saw the old foundation of the Donnelly House. I was in the hotel where the Donnelly's used to go and where they sold beef to the owners of the hotel until they found out the beef was stolen and the Donnelly set it on fire but didn't do much damage. It was beginning to tell its age and we went in and ordered pie and coffee just more or less to say we ate where the Donnelly used to reside. Although it was just twelve o'clock we could not get any pie as it was all gone but we did have coffee. I was with my wife, brother and sister in law. We went back to the washroom which wasn't none too clean

when I looked up on the wall over the wash basin and in large writing was the following: "Over the hill came a hell of a noise, who do you think it was, those black Donnelly boys."

On the road (roman line) we passed an empty house but didn't know until later that it was the home of Club Foot Bill. So I went back a couple of years later and by golly the house was gone so we went to a house directly opposite to where it stood and inquired about it but it, was like butting your head against a stone wall. They wouldn't give a bit of information out on it. Apparently there must have been a lot of inquiries about it so they either tore it down or burnt it up in that two year period.

We were in the cemetery where the Donnelly's were placed to rest and also in the same graveyard were many of the vigilante gang that killed them. Of course the original headstone was gone - it contained the word murdered five times placed beneath the names of those killed. It was taken up when word got around it was going to be stolen. The new monument contains the names of those killed, - James, Johannah, John, Thomas and Bridget but the word murdered is deleted.

Massacre of the Black Donnelly's

Words and Music by Stompin' Tom Connors
BOOT LP BOS7134 "ON TRAGEDY TRAIL"

Cho: The Black Donnelly's ride, their killers by their side
Down the Roman Line to the end of time.

Rec: Back in eighteen hundred and forty some
To Lucan Ontario a man did come
A man who pushed his weight around
And his wife Johanna could slap the devil down.

With seven sons who fought as well
They opened up wide the gates of hell
And they fired up the land for miles around
The Black Donnelly's from Lucan town.

With every glance that a Donnelly gave
Came the sound of shovels diggin' their grave
And many a club there came a crashing down
Upon the heads of the men around Lucan town.

Down the old Roman Line the further you went
The folks got tougher and meaner bent
And the, for the Black Donnellys, for their abode
They lived away down at the end of the road.

Now old Jim Donnelly killed a man one day
And everybody thought that old Jim had run away.

But Jim was, home and quite concealed
In Johannah's old dress where he still plowed the field.

But he served his time, so the story goes
He then came back again to cheat his foes
With seven sons he robbed and burned
Till the whole town knew that old Jim had returned.

He started up a coach line from Lucan down
With daily trips on in to London town
And to destroy their competitor's route
They cut the tongues of all his horses out.

Then eighteen men with their clubs in their arms
They marched on over to the Donnelly's barn
But a Donnelly boy could fight like ten
And they sure put a licking on those eighteen men.

They poisoned cattle now by the score
They burned down buildings more and more
They horse whipped men to make them say
That they wouldn't appear in court next day.

And every sheriff that the town could find
They met the Black Donnellys and then resigned
For thirty five years with clubs in hand
The Black Donnellys ruled the land.

Then there came one man into Lucan town
He was hired to cut all the Donnellys down
A fearless man of a mighty frame
And James Carroll was that man's name.

They made him the Sheriff and they followed through
And formed his secret vigilante's crew;
In the old swamp school house in wintertime
They planned their fatal night of crime

In eighteen eighty on that February night
As "Old Granny" had foretold, it was a terrible sight
Old Jim and Johanna and Tom, their son
And Bridget were slaughtered, they axed every one.

Then the thirty drunks left with the house aflame
Hent bell for more Black Donnelly game
And from out of the fire and into the cold
Run that young Connor boy, just eleven years old.

Then the gun shots ran and they ripped into John
And another Black Donnelly brother was gone
And so the grim reaper had collected his pay,
And the other three Donnelly's wandered away

Now the vigilants, they got away free
From the law, but they all died mysteriously.
So one word of caution to all who would hate
At the end of your road the Black Donnelly's wait



There is another song by S.T.C in his song book on the Black Donnelly's called JENNY DONNELLY. This is the story of the only daughter. She had left home before the murders and if you want it I can type out same for you should it add anything to the story of the Donnellys.

The Donnelly Family Tragedy

Words and music by Earl Heywood

Back in the Eighteen Hundreds here in Ontario,
Twas near a town called Lucan, a town you folks might
know
James Donnelly and Johanna his pretty Irish bride
Came out from Tipperary near Lucan to reside.

The trouble soon developed all squatter's rights
When Donnelly and his neighbor started having fights.
It happened at a threshing when Donnelly lost his head
He struck his neighbor Farrell a blow that killed him dead.

James Donnelly went in hiding, his neighbors shielded
him
Police they searched the country but found no trace of
Jim.

Disguised just like a woman he worked in his own field
Till at last the time did come his life he could not shield.

There is a disagreement about the Donnelly plea
Some argue that he gave up believing he'd go free
Others have a different tale who knew the Donnelly home
Some will state betrayed by friends the truth was never
known.

And when the trial was over it was for good or bad
For he escaped the gallows this lucky Donnelly lad
The jury read the verdict this sentence you must serve
Seven years a prisoner for longer you deserve.

James Donnelly served his sentence behind the prison
bars
And there was peace in Lucan beneath the moon and stars
All others of the family, James, William, Patrick, John,
Bob, Michael, Thomas, Jessie, They all grew big and
strong.

'Twas in eighteen seventy a new age ushered in
Of lawlessness and murder twas fought through thick and
thin.

The Donnelly's they decided to buck the Flannigan's
Who ran a stage coach business to serve the travelling
man.

The residents of Lucan were cowered was a scare
Donnelly's fought the Flannigan's and terror filled the
air.

They fought with clubs and bullets upon the village main
The Lucan skies were glowing as barns and coached
flared.

The Flannigan's and Donnelly's accused each other wrong
Of sneaking in their stalls and slitting horses tongues.
Then a village mob was formed of Biddulph residents
Which numbered more than forty to end this lawlessness.

They marched upon the Donnelly's one February night
The year of eighteen eighty, wiped trouble out of sight
James Donnelly and his lovin' wife, niece Bridget and
their son
Were killed with spades and axes set the house on fire and
run.

They swept to the nearby home of William Donnelly
Ringleaders knocked upon the door and quickly stepped
away
Then when the door creaked open John Donnelly met his
fate
He met a haul of bullets which seemed to be his mate.

The mob dispersed quite quickly they thought they had
them all
But beneath the Donnelly bed a lad saw Donnelly fall.
His name was James O'Conner a boy of 'leven years
He told police his story his eyes were filled with tears.

Identified by Johnny six men were brought to trial
All charged with crime and murder for Donnelly's murder
trial
A new trial it was ordered with the Jury disagreed
There six men heard their verdict "NOT GUILTY" they
were freed.

The Donnelly case was over all that the law concerned
But for young Patrick Donnelly surviving it was learned
He went to all their fun'rals each killer as he died.
And each time were his statements one more on Satan's
side.

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