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The Kidnapping and Murder of Little Skeegie Cash: J. Edgar Hoover and Florida's Lindbergh Case

Robert Alvin Waters, Zack C. Waters

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Informed by thousands of pages of newly released FBI files, *The Kidnapping and Murder of Little Skeegie Cash* tells the gripping story of the only crime investigated by J. Edgar Hoover himself, the sensational 1938 murder of a five-year-old boy from the Florida Everglades.

In his long and storied career, J. Edgar Hoover investigated only one case personally, the 1938 kidnapping and murder of five-year-old Floridian James “Skeegie” Cash. What prompted the director himself to fly from Washington, DC, to a rain-drenched hamlet on the edge of the Everglades? Congress had slashed FBI funding, forcing Hoover to lay off half his agents. The combative Hoover believed if he could bring Skeegie’s killer to justice, the halo of positive publicity would revive the fortunes of the embattled FBI.

In *The Kidnapping and Murder of Little Skeegie Cash*, Robert A. Waters and Zack C. Waters bring to life the drama of the abduction, the payment of a $10,000 ransom, the heartbreaking manhunt for Skeegie and his kidnapper, the arrest and confession of Franklin Pierce McCall, and the killer’s trial and execution. Hordes of reporters swarmed into the little village south of Miami, and for thirteen days until McCall confessed, the case dominated national headlines. The authors capture the drama and the detail as well as the desperate and sometimes extralegal lengths to which Hoover went to crack the case.

Using the Freedom of Information Act, the authors obtained more than four thousand pages of FBI files and court documents to reconstruct this important but forgotten case. The tragedy that played out in the swamps of Dade County constituted the backdrop for a political struggle that would involve J. Edgar Hoover, the United States Congress, and even president Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Hoover and the president prevailed, and within two years the FBI grew from 680 employees to more than 14,000. No books and few articles have been published about this historic case.

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