



## The Long Winding Road of Harry Raymond: A Detective's Journey Down the Mean Streets Of Pre-War Los Angeles

**Patrick Jenning**

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*The Long Winding Road of Harry Raymond vivifies and contextualizes a pivotal turn-of-the-century crime.*

Patrick Jenning's riveting *The Long Winding Road of Harry Raymond* is a combination regional history, true crime, and biography centered around an early twentieth-century detective's ambiguous career.

The book begins in the moments preceding the 1938 car bombing that made Raymond, who survived, famous for exposing corruption and collusion among police and public leaders. It then circles back to cover Raymond's origins, as well as Los Angeles's underworld.

Indeed, Los Angeles, a gritty, once isolated city, is captured in painstaking detail, including its turn-of-the-century con men, the Tenderloin District, the rise of vice leaders, and criminal cases, including the attempted kidnapping of actress Mary Pickford. There are murders and shootouts, and the book glances at Prohibition, too. Its reportage is straightforward and factual, absent reflections on the crimes' wider social implications, and its intense collation of incidents, names, and dates is informative, if less dynamic than the immersive opening.

Subtle details about period police work, including the use of telegrams to forestall getaways, and surveillance involving stenographers, emerge, while black-and-white photographs depicting the convicted and their victims contribute to the book's hard-boiled atmosphere. Raymond is a peripheral feature in such moments. Still, the book covers his frequent career shifts: he worked as an independent private eye and for the LAPD in sometimes unofficial capacities. These forays are delineated in topical chapters, revealing Raymond's broad connections and the fact that he didn't hesitate to use them. He comes to seem talented, if sometimes unscrupulous, and he was questioned by the press accordingly.

The best of the book's work is gradually paced, contained in chapters with foci on single cases. One about the kidnapping, murder, and dismemberment of a child includes chilling facsimiles of ransom notes and crisp descriptions; it is adroit, measuring its savage details well. The murderer's evasion and capture, and the public's response during his long extradition and transport by rail, underscores the unusual heinousness of era crime. But in later chapters, background details about secondary figures, from political bosses to district attorneys, crowd the narrative. The focus sharpens when the text returns to the attempt on Raymond's life, its trial, and its aftermath. But the book's finale is anticlimactic, summing up what became of key players.

Accompanied by a niche history of Los Angeles's turn-of-the-century vice syndicates, detectives, and related ephemera, *The Long Winding Road of Harry Raymond* vivifies and contextualizes a pivotal crime.

KAREN RIGBY (June 28, 2021)

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