

Clinton County Historical Society

Oral History

James Church

September 12, 2018

Wayne: 00:00 I'm Wayne Summers and I'm interviewing James Church on September 12th, 2018 at the DeWitt District Library. James would you maybe start out by telling us a little bit about where you were born, where you grew up at?

James: 00:13 I was born in Saint Lawrence Hospital in Lansing and my parents lived in DeWitt. They had an apartment on Wilson Street and the year I was born they built a new house on the corner of Wilson and Madison. It still stands today, much remodeled. Uh, just before I started kindergarten we moved to Chadwick Road and I enrolled in Brown school. Was there for six years. We moved to the stone house that's currently 407 East Main Street in 1950. And I finished my schooling here. Graduated from DeWitt High School 1957. Uh, had the opportunity to meet a young lady at a funeral when we were 16 years old.

James: 01:06 And uh, this coming 20th next week we will be celebrating 60 years of marriage. She is a seventh generation resident of Bath. My grandchildren are ninth generation residents and fifth generation graduates of the high school. And uh, we live in Bath on what was originally her grandparents' 40 acre farm.

Wayne: 01:31 I believe she was part of the Rose family.

James: 01:34 She was. She's a descendant of Silas Rose and he was the third settler in the township, um, when the townships were, Clinton County became a county in 1839, DeWitt Township was the only township covered the entire county. And as each township gained a population and political wherewithal to

create their own unit of government, a joint township was created out of five north and six north and one west, and it was called Ossowa. And Silas Rose was the first supervisor of Ossowa Township. In less than two years, it split.

James: 02:21 And the north one became Victor and the south one became Bath. At the insistence of Silas Rose, who was the first clerk and wanted to name it after his hometown of Bath, New York.

Wayne: 02:35 **So how did you first become interested in the Bath school disaster?**

James: 02:41 My wife's parents were freshmen when it happened. I first learned of it as about a 10 year old when my mother came home to our Chadwick Road address from a shopping trip in DeWitt and announced that, uh, a gentleman who had been a victim of the disaster was now working part-time in Bob Norris's barbershop and piqued my interest and I said what happened? And my father explained what had happened and, uh, I assumed the worst and he explained to me that, uh, that there were many survivors as grievous as the situation was, there were many survivors, including a gentleman. He said the name was Roderick Schoals. Well, I knew the last name because my dad's sister had married a Schoals. So I automatically assumed it must be one of my uncle's relatives. Turned out it was. Today or he's deceased now, but he was my father-in-law for many years.

James: 03:51 So that was my first interest in it, uh, just, just as a school boy who didn't live there. But, uh, I got more interested in it. The school maintains the museum and there's a committee that operates it and hosts a golden alumni luncheon every year. On the Saturday nearest the anniversary date, the 18th of May of the explosion and my wife and I have been on that committee for nearly 40 years.

Wayne: 04:22 **Would you give us kind of a, an account of the Bath school disaster from what you've learned?**

James: 04:30 I think you have to start way before of the idea of understanding how Andrew Kehoe was living in Bath.

Um, there was a, a gentleman named Lawrence Price who was an Irish immigrant who arrived in America just in time to fight for the Union in the Civil War. And he came through the war unscathed and settled in Lansing and became an entrepreneur, a highly successful entrepreneur.

James: 05:05 In fact, he was a, among his many activities. He was a founding stockholder in REO with R. E. Olds. He died in a, let me backup shortly. He, uh, was very well to do. And he had a brother who was widowed with a number of a school-aged children. He set that brother up on a farm as a, basically a tenant farmer to provide some family welfare, so to speak. And the farm was in Bath. I don't know if he had already owned a farm and just set the brother up there, uh, when the timing was right or whether he went out and bought it purposely to set the brother up. But the brother had a daughter, the oldest daughter of the children and her name was Nellie Price. And eventually she married Andrew Kehoe and Andrew Kehoe lived in the Tecumseh area. He had a farm of his own and he had inherited a piece of his father's. So he was pretty well set a, at least if he wanted to stay there.

James: 06:23 Uncle Lawrence Price died in 1917. In addition to leaving his nieces and nephews, uh, an inheritance, basically a trust fund which they drew money from every year. So Nellie had this small income of her own. In addition he left \$100,000 to any Catholic order that would build a hospital in Lansing. And in 1922 St Lawrence Hospital opened its doors. And uh, we know it's still standing even though it's not serving all the functions it used to. The ah, anyway, Nellie says, Andrew, I have fond memories of the old farm and it's for sale by the estate. Why don't we buy it and they did. So in 1919 they moved bag and baggage to the farm on Clark Road, just west of Bath. He got involved in local politics. The township clerk was a lady who passed away very young and very unexpectedly, and he was appointed to fill her vacancy.

James: 07:47 He managed to make enough political enemies that he was not even renominated when the term ended. He did get himself elected to the school board mostly

as an opposition candidate because the school consolidated in 1922 and it would have been a major controversy during his very early years there. Bath was really a pioneer of the idea of consolidating all the one-room country schools in the area and upgrading the large school in town from a K-10 curriculum to a K-12. For example, they did it in 1922. DeWitt didn't have K-12 offered until 1939. And so it was very progressive school and it was by necessity expensive. They were busing kids from all over the township to, uh, into this central school. And uh, so anyway, taxes did go up, this was the fear of those who were in opposition to the consolidation and Kehoe was a leader of that group. He did get elected to the Board and he served as treasurer. So that's what got him there. And creates a situation where he began to be unhappy and reached, of course, the catastrophic point of unhappiness.

Wayne: 09:21 **So what were the steps that he went to, through? I mean, what was his, what was his motivation? Did he intend to kill all those school children, or was that just more accidental? Was he mostly trying to blow up the building?**

James: 09:36 I think it was, it was absolutely intentional because he had a time charge. The, uh, the New York Times story that I'm referring to from that book implied, he was sitting there at the curb with a gleeful look in his eyes. He pressed the button and it was hardwired to the charges as well. Not so. He had placed the charges over a significant period of time. He not only was on the school board, he was a pretty passable electrician and he did electrical maintenance work at the school and obviously had a key being a board member and he would do it that work at his convenience, which was quite often after hours. He was a farmer and sunlight is precious to farmers, especially in the twenties. So he, uh, had access to the school and we can't say exactly how long, but it was at least weeks, if not months that he was planting charges in the school.

James: 10:41 A question also comes up about where did he get the stuff for munitions. He was actually dealing in it. He had a source of supply in Jackson that he patronized

and he bought an excess of his personal needs for blowing stumps, which was probably the most common use of dynamite on a farm and he would sell it to fellow farmers. In addition, this source was offering pyrotol, which is a World War I surplus bag powder used in artillery guns and naval guns. He would simply open the breach of the gun, put the projectile in place, put this gunny sack of powder in behind it, close the breach, and on closing the breach, the mechanism tore the bag open sufficiently, that the spark could ignite it. So pyrotol was cheap, a lot of bang for the buck, but he couldn't set it off by itself. So perhaps break a stick of dynamite in half put it in one or maybe more bags of pyrotol and get a huge bang out of a very small amount of expensive dynamite and inexpensive pyrotol.

Wayne: 12:04 **Now, I assume they didn't have any children.**

James: 12:07 They did not. They married late in life. I may not have made that clear. Um, there was rumors that they met at Michigan State and there's also a legend that he worked for a power company in St Louis, Missouri at one time prior to his marriage, but they, they did not marry young and they did not have children. I'm assuming they're approximately the same age and would have been about 55 at the time of the disaster.

Wayne: 12:42 **So can you talk about the day of the disaster? Maybe how it started. Kind of take us through uh, the day.**

James: 12:52 There was a, a maintenance issue at the school and Kehoe was in the school with the janitor and I believe another board member discussing a water pump or something that was uh acting up and needed some maintenance and Kehoe, uh, began to look at his watch and act a little nervous and says he had an appointment. And he left and he went to the railway express office there in Bath and shipped off a, uh, unknown object in a dynamite box. Actually a wooden dynamite box that he said he had stenciled an address on, and it was, it was shipped away. He returned home and at the time, precise time of this school explosion, he detonated incendiary devices all through his farm and burned the whole place to the

ground simultaneous to the school exploding. And later people wondered where his wife was. He had brought her home from the hospital the day before. She had some very chronic issues among them headaches and other things. And had spent a lot of time in St Lawrence Hospital. But he brought her home the day before and, uh, had left word with her family that she was visiting other relatives in Jackson

James: 14:37 to explain her absence in advance. He obviously killed her probably the night before. Left her body on a wheel barrel type device in the hog house. And the body was not discovered until the day after onlookers had walked by it and didn't even recognize it as human remains it was so badly burned. But, uh, anyway, there were neighbors and even a Consumer's Power crew who was wiring up Bath itself for electricity. And, uh, it was Consumers policy perhaps even to this day that if a one of their traveling crews came on a fire, they were to assist in putting it out on the clock. It was a good public relations move. And, uh, and in those days you had to get your help wherever you could. There was a Consumer's crew that stopped realizing the house was lost and thought they'd attempt to salvage some furniture and they walked in the front door and took some kind of a dresser out and they had to tip it to work the way through the door and a drawer came open and there were several sticks of dynamite in the dresser drawer.

James: 16:01 They decided to abort the mission right then. There were neighbors who would approach to assist and uh Kehoe left, drove away and said, uh, basically, uh, your friends of mine, I don't want you to get hurt trying to put it out. Let it burn. And he basically disappeared for a short period of time. He drove up to the school site. This is my personal estimate. About 30 minutes later there was already a state police officer on the scene who had responded to a first alarm and had driven out from the Harrison Road facility, that's no longer with us. Uh, so he had time to come out on a motorcycle at top speed and he was in the building when the truck blew up. So Kehoe drives up to the scene, discovers that not only is it not a pile of toothpicks, it's half still standing.

James: 17:12 And his arch political enemy, the superintendent, is alive and well directing the rescue operation. They had words at the curb and he triggered a charge in the back of his pickup. He had a 1926 Model T roadster bodied pickup. [You're] probably familiar with how most of these roadsters had kind of a turtle deck on the back. Well this had a pickup box, came from a factory that way. The pickup was full of not only explosives, but was covered with nuts and bolts and drag teeth and anything metal that would make it a grenade, was there. Triggered that charge, which killed Kehoe, the superintendent, the postmaster, the postmaster's father-in-law and one more student and injured another score of people. The uh postmaster and his father-in-law were up there assisting and the postmaster got nauseous from all the carnage, decided he needed a breath of air and it was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

James: 18:27 And, uh, so that's basically the bang up to the point of the second explosion, which really makes it unique and nobody, nobody's ever looking for a second explosion. In fact, the cause of the first one wasn't really determined in anybody's mind until the second one happened. Then they, uh, in the course of removing the injured and dead bodies, it was discovered that there was unexploded explosives in the part of the building that hadn't blown off. And a uh high school dropout who was a, would've been 18 years old at the time. His name was Chester Sweet and his family is deeply involved in this, uh, but he wasn't there. He came from some distance to assist and it was discovered there was these other explosives and he was quite wiry built and extremely strong and he climbed down through a small hole into the crawl space under the unexploded ordinance area and brought out more than the 500 pounds of unexploded pyrotol and dynamite and handed it through the hole to the police officers. And needless to say, the rescue operation was suspended until that was out of there. And when they were sure, the danger was past and they went back in and resumed the removal of dead and injured.

Wayne: 20:22 **Did they ever discover what he put in that dynamite box that he sent?**

James: 20:28 Yes.

James: 20:31 It turned out he sent it to an attorney and the state police picked it up and unopened, took it out in a safe place and opened it up and discovered it was all his books, uh official books as treasurer of the school board. And he sent a letter with it thanking this attorney for providing his surety bond and explaining that, uh, his books were accurate and the clerk's were slightly in error by a few cents, just a last little jab at the pettiness. And so want to be much ado about nothing, but you can imagine the consternation there'd be if all of a sudden the railroad shipping agent says, "Hey, he shipped a case of dynamite out of here." So that, uh, that did solve that problem.

Wayne: 21:39 **So they, uh, I assume they then had to...well you had funerals first of all, and that would have been a community in mourning. And then you'd have to start clearing out the area and rebuilding it. Can you explain how that went.**

James: 21:53 Let me back up just a little. Um, my wife's grandmother was on the scene. In fact, her parents were, uh, my wife's parents were both freshmen finishing their freshman year. My father-in-law had made the honor roll and did not have to write final exams. This was the last working day of the school year for high school age people. And they were on the second floor in the south wing, the wing that did not explode, which would explain why there were so few casualties among the high school age people. Elementary age people, second, third, fourth grade, fifth were decimated. Third grade was almost wiped out.

James: 22:46 My mother-in-law was in the building writing final exams and it blew the inner stairwell out and those people had to be evacuated by the ladder. But in the, in the course of this happening, uh, my wife's grandmother, her father's mother was at the scene. She was about 33 years old at the time. She was standing beside a woman named Fern Johns who was her own age and a good friend. And they both live nearby within, uh, our family lived a couple blocks away and the John's family lived about three blocks

away. And her eight year old daughter Doris was hanging over a windowsill on the second floor, highly recognizable, and obviously dead hanging there with no floor, no way to access her at all. And there she was. And there they were, but no ability to do anything. Finally, Mrs. Johns said, "I can't take this anymore. I'm going home." And later a man came along with a ladder and went up and recovered the body, brought it down, momentarily, didn't really know what to do with it because they hadn't organized where bodies would be laid at that point in time. And uh grandma said, I'll take her home. She carried her those three blocks and handed her over to her mother at the front door. So that, that is the biggest heartbreak story that is this close to the family. And uh, now as to funerals, there was actually a cadre formed of young men, high school age men who were not directly touched by it, didn't have any of their own siblings killed. And uh, I couldn't tell you how many, but I'm guessing minimum half a dozen and they acted as pallbearers for a significant number of funerals over the next few days, just volunteered so no close relatives would wind up doing it. But there were funerals over the preceding and following days.

James:

25:19

Governor Green appeared on the scene the afternoon it happened and sized up the situation and immediately went back to his office. This was not a photo op or anything like we see nowadays after school shootings, nobody out to score points and dance in people's blood. He went back and his first stop was to Capital National Bank where he met with the president and opened an account where donations would be accepted to pay for funerals. And it was a very successful situation. Uh, I'd never heard any stories of any family being in want to pay for their child's funeral. So that's, that's what the governor did right up front. Um, it happened on Wednesday. Lindbergh took off for Paris Friday and it was anticipated that there would be a huge traffic jam on Sunday, of course Sunday being the only day people didn't work. And the state police created a one way traffic system and announced it publicly that you would meet on the corner of Lake Lansing Road and Massachusetts Avenue and there, east, would be a one way street system where would get you to Bath

and would get you back by a different route and drop you off in Lansing.

James: 27:01 Of course you could depart the route anywhere you wanted, but people weren't going to jam into it. That's where he worked to start. And a legend has it that it turned out to be the biggest traffic control day in the history of the Michigan State police, that they dealt with more automobiles for a single event and anything. It wasn't even exceeded apparently by the Super Bowl being at Pontiac Silverdome from later years. So that's a part of it and the vast majority of people were very well behaved. But there were a few who decided to have picnic lawn lunches on people's lawns and wanted to look in windows funerals because a lot of funerals were happening in homes in those days.

James: 28:02 So they got it done. But it was about a three or four day process getting everything wrapped up.

Wayne: 28:11 **Now as far as memorials afterward. When did they, when did people start thinking, we need to memorialize this in some way?**

James: 28:22 Uh, I don't know who actually started and made it happen, but there was a commission for a memorial statue and it depicts a girl holding a cat and it's purposely a girl that would be approximately a third grade age seven, eight, nine years old. Carlton Angel who was a staff sculptor at the University of Michigan, got the commission and it is a bronze and it was financed by pennies given by schoolchildren all over the state and perhaps even a wider area that was solicited. Bring your money your pennies to school to help pay for this statute. It started a false legend that the statue was made of melted pennies.

James: 29:17 You wouldn't believe how many people believed it for a long, long time, but not true. It just was the financial means to pay for it. Um, it is still in the museum, in the Atrium of the auditorium of the Bath Middle School. It's had a number of sites. I first saw it in 1956 when I was just starting to date my wife, and by the way, a Thursday, the 20th, we'll be married 60 years. Uh, we walked in the door, the first time I had ever been in a

building, we were going to a high school dance and right there at the entryway was a little alcove built into the wall with this statue. And I had never heard of it before. I had never seen it before, but I instantly knew what it represented and I was very uncomfortable for a short period of time.

James: 30:20 I thought, gee, this is like going to a dance in the cemetery. Is this a sacrilege to have fun in this building? And I soon got over the fear of that because people who had been victims were there having a good time. So it became a nonissue, but it bothered me for a few minutes.

Wayne: 30:40 **So it's always been inside.**

James: 30:41 It's always been inside. Um, some years ago we were approached by a niece of the sculptor and she donated to the museum plaster casts of the miniature and the miniature itself, but it was a, [cough] excuse me, was made prior to the life size one. So we have a case with, with all that special memorabilia that easily could have been lost over the years.

Wayne: 31:19 **So what was the process of rebuilding the school?**

James: 31:25 There was a real predicament because, in the beginning, the, uh, there was an explosion without a fire and the fire insurance company stiffed them saying that it wasn't a fire, we're not going to pay off. So they're sitting on, I'm forgetting the figure now but it was, in today's money, it was insignificant, but they were sitting on a bonded debt that had only been paid on for five years and probably had 10 or 15 more to go and had half their building completely wiped out. And the other half probably needing at least minor repairs at the least. And James Couzens was a sitting U S senator at the time and had made a personal fortune as an original stockholder in Ford Motor Company. In fact, he was secretary, financial secretary of Ford Motor Company from its founding until 1915 when he left in a dispute with Henry Ford. And then in 1919, all the outstanding stockholders were bought out and he became a millionaire, a multimillionaire overnight. And uh, [cough] excuse me,

he became mayor of Detroit. And then, uh, and I believe in 1924, he was elected to the U S Senate.

James: 33:04 He donated \$75,000 of his personal fortune to rebuild, on the condition that it be used only to rebuild and not to retire bonded debt. He said, "You're still collecting taxes and can pay that debt off on schedule. This is rebuild money, period." And of course they weren't unhappy with the conditions. Um, they did such a good job on the rebuilding in terms of getting good value for their money that they rebuilt as it was and added a combination auditorium-gymnasium to the north end of the building, all of the same money. And it was completed in a year. They spent a year operating in various public buildings, churches, lodge halls, store buildings that were happen to be vacant, and that's how they housed the student body for the next year. They had a new superintendent with no physical plant for an entire year and yet he added a six man football and vocal music to the curriculum. So I guess they had a very can-do attitude there. I am convinced personally, just to throw in a personal opinion, that if there hadn't been the money from Couzens, they would have rebuilt anyway. Probably taken them two to three times as long, but they would've done it because, uh, people were tough back then. They really were. And uh, they would have made it work. As it turned out, it was much easier. But, uh, they got it done.

Wayne: 34:59 **I know you said you've been with the Bath School Museum for some time. Could you tell us how that got started? A little history of that?**

James: 35:09 Yes. There was a gentleman named Jim Hixson who still serves on the committee to this day. He was a for a time, was the principal of the elementary school and went on to become an interim superintendent for I think a one year period or so while they were looking for a permanent one and is in his eighties now and long retired. His wife also was a high school teacher and uh, he caught a janitor about to throw some memorabilia in the trash and asked him what he was doing and on whose say so. And the janitor in his own defense says someone higher up and told him to do it

and Mr Hixson says put it back, I'll deal with the person who told you.

James: 36:09 And that was the start. That was the catalyst to make that happen. And they started collecting memorabilia, started soliciting memorabilia. And there were a number of people who have passed on now who, who made it start. In fact, all of these founding members of the committee are memorialized with a portrait in the museum itself, a number of them, two or three husband wife combinations. And, uh, so it's, uh, it's just something that happened and it grew. In fact, the biggest problem was housing it, it was beginning to get bigger and its had two or three locations within the school property. And uh, we're hoping this one will be permanent in the Atrium of the auditorium.

Wayne: 37:02 **I think I've only seen it when it was there. I think I, didn't I hear that at one time you were thinking about buying or maybe you did buy an old one room school to move there?**

James: 37:13 I've never heard that. I wouldn't, I couldn't testify to the veracity of it, but I've never heard that. The vast majority of the one room schools that were part of the original district are gone and turned into residences or um, but, uh, anyway, uh, of course Gunnisonville did a great job with that. They preserved their brick school in Lansing school district is, has had the wisdom to keep it in good repair.

Wayne: 37:56 **There are a few around, but you're right, there aren't too many of the old one room schools at least recognizable anymore. If someone were to go to the Bath School Museum, what, what does the collection include?**

James: 38:13 A lot of memorabilia the from explosion obviously, but they've also attempted to have graduation pictures from the beginning. The uh, there was a wooden structure right in Bath itself, but I couldn't tell you how far that dates back, but it was replaced by a two story brick building on a full basement in 1873 and that's when they offered a first K-10 curriculum. Everything had been K-8 prior to that, including obviously the one room country operations. It took them 18 years to get

a graduate, was 1891 before they had their first graduate. Ray Robeson was his name. He went on to become a postmaster there and they had a celebration in 1941 to celebrate his 50th anniversary as a graduate. And years ago I heard about the celebration, uh, from people who were there who have since passed on. We have a copy of the program for that. My wife's father was part of the program representing the class of 1930, but, uh, when they consolidated they used that building as the core, keep reminding, it was on a full basement and they added a wing to the north and south built on crawlspace and Kehoe went into the basement and opened access doors to the crawlspace to plant his dynamite charges. There was a janitor in the basement when it blew, who was thrown to the floor and was unable to hear for a couple of days and otherwise uninjured, because he was below, he was below the charges. This, this raises the question, if it had all gone off, how much collateral damage might there have been? Um, there really wasn't that much considering half of it blew. It blew all the windows out of, out of a, my father-in-law's house that was two blocks away, out of that end. But the Methodist church right next door, on the end that didn't blow suffered some serious damage, uh, which was quickly repaired. In fact, a Methodist pastor lost a daughter in the explosion.

Wayne: 41:17 **Is there anything else that I haven't asked yet? Any other stories?**

James: 41:26 There was speculation about what Kehoe was doing as he was supposedly driving around that half hour prior to arriving at school. There was speculation that he was looking for one of the bus drivers, uh, perhaps to shoot him. It was this bus driver, his name was Ward Kyes. In fact he was the DeWitt Township clerk for 40 years. And uh, his father was a board member and uh, so not only was there probably some nepotism involved in his school bus contract. These buses were, apparently the school owned a bus body and you put your own Model T pickup chassis under it. And so when you bid the job, it wasn't just a case of labor, it was, it was the vehicle, the maintenance and all the associated costs. Uh, but anyway, uh, Mel

Kyes was the father who was on the board and he was the clerk and he's the one that Kehoe made a little dig at when he mailed the books to the lawyer, says mine are on the money to the penny and his are off. So there was some animosity between two families. Um, that's just a legend that nobody could prove or disprove. But obviously he was a, he was waiting for something. The, uh, I mentioned that there was a state police officer on the scene. In fact he had discovered this teacher's body and I'm forgetting her name. Anyway, she was mortally injured with a dead child in each arm, was in the middle of the classroom and he basically took the children and laid them down and she died almost instantly after that right where she sat.

James: 43:56 And I've met her niece last May, uh, her grandniece, a lady who lives in Columbus, Ohio and came up for the, uh, the candlelight service on the evening of the 18th and, uh, and then the next day attended the, uh, golden alumni luncheon. That luncheon is open to graduates who have been out at least 50 years. And we had 175 people there last year, of course, including spouses, some of whom are alumni, some are not. But it has been growing over the years, of course, as a school group, would now, instead of having classes of 10 people now we got maybe 50 or 100 or something like that. So a potential to grow is definitely there. They...I want to say something here. And I'm losing my memory. I'm old enough to have a bonafide senior moment. The uh, oh, George Carpenter was the name of that state trooper and Miss Weatherby. Miss Weatherby's grand niece sent me something that she'd taken off the Internet. Uh, obviously this gentleman is deceased now, but many years ago he had moved to California and he gave an interview about his experience of being the first police officer on the scene like maybe 50, 60 years after the fact. And uh, it was quite interesting reading.

James: 45:59 Yeah.

James: 46:01 In fact, the sheriff and the prosecutor came together. Arrived together after a significant period of time, like maybe as much as an hour later that day arrived and um, a lady recognized the sheriff and accosted him

and said that before you go, here is something I have to show over here. And she led him across the street to a vacant lot and showed him Kehoe's body. What was left of it. It was pretty much intact from the waist up. His face was recognizable. He was wearing a shirt with a bank book in a shirt pocket. that wasn't damaged. So, uh, but everything below was gone. He was buried in an unmarked grave in St John's, his wife was buried in the Price family plot that a Mount Hope cemetery in Lansing.

James:

47:19

To put a little side story, um, as far as motivation. For some reason, Kehoe had been a farmer all his life. He couldn't seem to cut it after he moved to Bath, at least not for any length of time. He, uh, he liked to wear a white shirt all the time. He had to change shirts a couple times a day and um, wasn't keeping up with the mortgage payments. He paid \$12,000 for the farm, was \$6,000 mortgage for the balance. And of course like most farm mortgages, there was one annual payment and he'd missed a couple and the attorney for the estate, um, took it upon himself to take the annual payment from the wife's trust fund I told you about earlier, an inheritance from uncle Lawrence and applied it to the mortgage. And Kehoe took him to court. And the judge says, "Her inheritance and that mortgage, are two separate items and you have remedies to deal with the mortgage in arrears. You can foreclose. Don't, don't mess with her money, either live with his deficiency or foreclose." And they, uh, there's a legend that he filed foreclosure papers had made them out and mailed them to the Clinton County Sheriff. Dropped them in a postal dropbox in downtown Lansing. And moments later accidentally came in contact with her sister on the street and told her what he had done. And the sister says, oh, she's in a hospital now. Don't aggravate the situation, postpone it. So he goes to a Western Union office and sends a telegram to the sheriff, saying, hold the mortgage for the foreclosure notice. Well apparently he didn't send a full rate telegram. He sent a night letter.

James:

49:52

And the mail, which was not snail mail back then, wound up being picked up moments later in that dropbox taken to the main post office, put in a bag to

be sent to Owosso by train, where it was transferred at the Owosso post office and put on another train to St John's and back then, if you had a postal box, you got two deliveries a day. There was a rural route ran once, but if you walk into the post office to pick up your mail out of a box, you could pick it up after it was sorted in the morning and after an afternoon delivery was sorted later and the sheriff walked into the post office that evening, opens it up, sees this lawyer letter, opens it up and hands it to a deputy and says, why don't you serve this on your way home?

- James: 50:53 And then the next morning they get the telegram saying, don't do it. So Kehoe gets a notice, which, how much more salt did it rub in the wound, you know, there's all these little things that would add up to the breaking point. And obviously nobody's trying to excuse anything, but even nut cases do get provoked in their own minds. So, uh,
- Wayne: 51:22 I think it's trying to understand.**
- James: 51:23 Yes. Right. And that's, that's more questions raised by these later books, trying to pick his mind. And a first book doesn't attempt to do that at all.
- Wayne: 51:41 Okay. Well thank you James for sharing your knowledge and experiences with us.**
- James: 51:46 My pleasure.