



Episode 912, Story 2 – Ince Ledger

Eduardo: This case investigates the connection between a movie mogul, a fading accounts ledger, and the once fearsome Lakota Sioux. In the first decades of the twentieth century the nation was being fast transformed by new industries, new immigrants and a way of life that was ever more frenetic and modern. For many of these urban residents, Native Americans, glimpsed in photos and movies, were a window on a world that was exotic and vanishing forever.

But the movie portrayals of Native Culture were often simplistic and full of stereotypes. So how did one producer reach into the past and change movie making forever?

Now, two teen sisters from Castaic, California have come across an accounting ledger which may be linked to a turning point in movie history.

Ada: We found this in our great grandfather's attic and our Dad tried to throw it away.

Eduardo: I'm meeting Ada and Maya Rauch to learn more about their ledger. Well I'm eager to see what you have for me.

Maya: It's this ledger we found in our great-grandfather's attic.

Ada: On the first page it says, Indian Ledger, and NYMP Corp. And the date is November 6, 1915.

Eduardo: Do you know what NYMP stands for?



Maya: Our Mom told us it was New York Motion Picture Corporation.

Eduardo: She told them the movie company had operated in New York and California in the early years of the twentieth century. Do you know what your great-grandfather did for them?

Ada: Well, all we know is that he was in the film industry. But besides that, we don't know anything more.

Eduardo: Their great grandfather's name was James Rauch.

Maya: A lot of the names in here were really interesting like, Big Charger and wife. And also, Big Owl and wife. And we also wanted to know why it said "Pay Barten" on a lot of the pages.

Eduardo: I've never heard of Barton, but many of the names certainly appear to be Native American. Okay. What questions can I answer for you then?

Ada: We just want to know a little bit more about our great-grandfather as a person and what were they being paid for? And were they treated fairly?

Eduardo: Okay. All right. I have an idea. Why don't you guys help me out with this investigation?

Ada: Yeah, we would love that.

Maya: Sure.



Eduardo: Why don't you start off with the census and see if you can find out what your great-grandfather did.

Ada: Okay.

Maya: Okay.

Ada: Sounds good.

Eduardo: The New York Motion Picture Company, later changed to corporation, operated around 1909 through about 1917. Its principal appears to have been a larger than life producer named Thomas Ince who specialized in producing westerns.

I can't find any records, but it looks like the company was absorbed by Triangle Films. Here's a December, 1915 publication called "The Triangle." It reads: Spectacular Indian Productions Coming. Ince planning a thrilling historical drama using hundreds of famous Sioux tribe.

And here's mention of "An imposing Indian named Two Lance." And I remember that name from the ledger. But I'm still not clear what this has to do with the accounts ledger and Maya and Ada's great-grandfather?

Ada: Okay, so let's type in James Lee Rauch in the census.

Maya: So here's the 1910 census records.

Ada: Yeah, so let's go to that.



Ada: It says that he was twenty-six in 1910 and he was an electrician for Salt Lake Railroad.

Maya: Let's see what else we can find.

Ada: So we have his World War I draft card.

Maya: The date on this draft card is 1918.

Ada: It says he was an electrician for Triangle Films. I think that's what we were looking for.

Eduardo: Ada and Maya let me know their great-grandfather James Rauch had worked for triangle films 1918 – the same company I found in my internet search.

Did he work with the Indians mentioned in the ledger?

Silent film historian Andrew Brodie Smith asks me to meet him at a theatre in Los Angeles.

I'm very eager to show this to you. Have you ever seen something like this before?

Andrew Brodie Smith: No, I haven't seen anything quite like this before.

Eduardo: He's never heard of Ada and Maya's great-grandfather, James Rauch. Do you have any idea who these names are?



Andrew: I don't recognize any of the names in particular. But undoubtedly the folks were used in the production of motion pictures and probably westerns.

Eduardo: Well what can you tell me about the New York Motion Picture Company?

Andrew: They were known for the production of epic westerns. Westerns were always popular because they could be exported around the world and they were cheap to make. You could make them outdoors. So a lot of people were making them.

Eduardo: But that became a problem, Andrew explains. By the nineteen teens, westerns saturated the market. Critics declared them violent, cheap and destructive.

Andrew: And so the New York Motion Picture Company around 1911, 1912 responded by making westerns that were more epic and historical in nature. They hired a guy named Thomas Ince.

Eduardo: Andrew explains how Ince was a Hollywood pioneer dividing each production task among separate teams – the Henry Ford of movie making. Ince hired the legendary Miller Brothers Wild West show to bring greater authenticity to his movies. The Miller Brothers Show had thrilled audiences across the United States, and toured Europe with a full stable of horses, stagecoaches and real life Indians.

Andrew: There were always a smattering of genuine Native Americans in motion pictures. But by and large the Indian characters would be portrayed by white



actors in makeup. So to the degree that which New York Motion Picture Company was hiring Native Americans was pretty much unprecedented.

Eduardo: To house their actors, the New York motion picture company leased 18,000 acres in California's Santa Ynez Canyon. This massive outdoor studio became known as "Inceville." How were the Indians incorporated into the films?

Andrew: I have a clip from one of these films that I can show you. It's called "Custer's Last Fight" from 1912.

Eduardo: What's your opinion on how audiences perceived the depiction of Indians on screen?

Andrew: Well at the time it was thought that this was a realistic depiction. But it gives you an idea of the grandeur.

Eduardo: Custer's last fight was made less than forty years after the battle of Little Big Horn and it's possible that some of the Native Americans in the battle actually appeared in Ince's film.

But the Indian actors were largely unaccredited. Andrew says that's what makes the ledger so extraordinary.

There's a name that appears over and over again in this ledger. It's the name of Barten. Does that ring any bells for you?



Andrew: I know Barten was an employee of the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West Show but I'm not sure exactly what his relationship was with New York Motion Picture.

Eduardo: I fill Ada and Maya in on what I've learned so far and ask them to come with me to talk to Professor L.G. Moses. He's written a book on Indian performers and wants to meet us at Topanga State Park.

Prof. L.G. Moses: We're here because this is land reminiscent of Inceville. The filming of western movies and movies that had Indian actors would have been terrain very much like this.

Eduardo: You know I'm dying for you to take a look at this ledger. Do you recognize any of the names that you see here?

L.G.: Quite a few. Quite a few. It's like a "who's who" of the show Indians.

Eduardo: Really? He says the men are Lakota Sioux from the Oglala Tribe at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

L.G.: Two Lance traveled many years with the Wild West shows and also he did some work at Inceville. Barten, I recognize that name as well.

Eduardo: Who was Barten?

L.G.: George Barten started as a teacher at Pine Ridge Day School and then after only a brief time in that role he went to Gordon, Nebraska and opened a store.



Eduardo: L.G. Moses explains that Barten spun his relationship with the Indians into a lucrative business.

L.G.: It's twenty-five years after Wounded Knee.

Eduardo: The massacre of at least hundred and fifty Sioux men, women and children in December 1890 was the final chapter in the centuries' long war between the U.S. government and plains Indians.

L.G.: Many of the governmental programs were directed at eradicating all aspects of native culture from clothing to hair styles to the spoken word. The one thing of value that many of these people have, the one thing that they could trade of value, other than their labor, was some of the material aspects from breastplates to robes, bows and arrow.

Eduardo: L.G. Moses says Barten took these artifacts in trade at his store for credit. He then rented or sold the material to outfit Wild West shows and movie westerns. Why couldn't they use their own traditional clothing?

L.G.: Ironically they don't have it. Some of the technique has disappeared as a skill among the people in the tribe and so in that sense the only place where you could go was from someone who kept it as a collection.

Eduardo: This ledger indicates "pay Barten" and Barten contract. Was that for their wardrobe?

L.G.: And here is another page that deals more specifically with certain aspects of this contract. Column A, Weekly Wages. Column B, Due Barten each week.



And then Amount of Debt due Barten in total. So here is one instance where Lone Bear. He's to be paid \$8.00 a week. Due Barten each week, \$7.00 of that. So in effect he is working for \$1.00 a week.

Ada: Was Barten a bad guy?

L.G.: He representative of his time and place. He would have thought of himself as an expert. .

Maya: So why would they keep coming back under these circumstances?

Eduardo: L.G. suggests we ask a descendant of one of the performers. I leave the girls and call around at Pine Ridge. I'm eventually put in touch with a Milo Yellow Hair, a grandson of one of the individuals in the ledger.

Take a look at the name right there.

Milo: Two Lance and wife. This is my grandfather and my grandma.

Eduardo: Did you know that your grandfather was a performer in the movies?

Milo: No I don't. I knew that he was a performer in a Wild West show, the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show.

Eduardo: Did he ever talk about performing?



Milo: Not much really. But I know that my grandma did. My grandma always said, you know yeah he's Chicago money, you know he's out playing Indian somewhere you know and he'd be gone for a couple of days you know like that.

Eduardo: What do you remember about your grandfather?

Milo: When I got to know him and asked him about the name Two Lance he says, this is a warrior in two worlds, he said. One world is where the white man lives and the other world is where the Indian lives or the Lakota lives. And he said you have an obligation to be the best that you can in both.

Eduardo: Milo shows me a picture of Two Lance in his Lakota regalia. He was a handsome man.

Milo: Oh yeah. I'm sorry it didn't run in the family.

Eduardo: If you'll take a look at this ledger here. The debits on one side and there are credits on another side. They have every appearance of being exploited. Why do you think Two Lance and some of the other Indians would have participated under these circumstances?

I want to share what Milo tells me with Maya and Ada.

Well I want to thank you for inviting me to be part of this investigation. It's been a very engrossing mystery.



I tell the girls that their research confirms their great-grandfather was part of the pioneering movie making of Thomas Ince. And he probably picked up the ledger as a memento of his time at the company.

Now one question you had asked is why performers, such as Two Lance, would get involved in this kind of situation. And I've got something I want to share with you.

Milo: My grandfather did this in order to keep his families fed because in order to get a little bit of money they had to do something.

Eduardo: But Milo thinks Two Lance, the warrior in two worlds, had another reason.

Milo: Deep down he probably knew why he was doing it. The great big benefit is that it is a way for him to pass on his historical ideas to the future. And that's the best way he knew how, under the circumstances, is that it's the way to preserve our way of life. Hopefully by his participation in films somehow or another a little bit about who we are and what we are and the history that we come from transposes itself into the future generations. And this is what I believe is the biggest contribution that Two Lance and his wife made to us. And it's valuable.

Ada: That's a pleasant surprise.

Eduardo: And there's one other piece to this investigation. I have someone I want you to meet. Come have a seat over here. This is Milo Yellow Hair. He is the grandson of Two Lance. Milo, have a seat please. This is Maya and this is Ada.



Maya: Hi.

Milo: Hello, how are you today? Nice to meet you all.

Maya: Nice to meet you.

Milo: Yeah, I'm very happy to meet you. It's been a long road. Especially for my grandfather by participating in such things like the movies and going out and seeing things, that type of thing allowed him to preserve those things that make us who we are as Lakota people. And that's what I brought a little example of that and I to give it to you girls. And I hope that you have your ears pierced. If you don't you might have to wait a little bit. These are porcupine quilled earrings.

Ada: I just think it's really important because like you said, it preserved tradition. I mean I still don't like the fact that they were cheated out of money probably. But I think it's really good that they were able to preserve some tradition.

Eduardo: James Rauch continued to work in film throughout the 1920s, rising to the position of electrical superintendent for Joseph P. Kennedy's F.B.O. studios. Two Lance continued to perform in Wild West shows up until World War I. He eventually returned to farm at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, where he lived to the age of 100, dying on December 25th, 1969.