



Episode 3, 2012: Rogue Book

Clint Black: *[singing]*

I'm a country singer from Houston, Texas, songwriter. About 15 years ago my wife found this book in an antique store and presented to me for my birthday. And inside there are hundreds of wanted notices from all over the U.S.

So what I really want to know is: What is this book, what was it used for? And whose book was this?

Elyse Luray: Clint Black's known for his platinum albums and his #1 hits, but I'm in Nashville to learn about another part of his life: collector.

Clint: I collect old cognacs dating back to 1800. 1848 Flintlock pistols

Elyse: Dueling pistols.

Clint: Yeah.

Elyse: Oh, these are nice too. This is great stuff.

Clint tells me he has a special fascination with stories from the west, and its larger than life lawmen.

Clint: I think we've all lived fantasies, the cowboy movies, Roy Rogers chasing after the bad guys. Here's the item you're most interested in.

Elyse: Wow.

Clint: So what's inside are snap shots of crime and law enforcement, uh, early 1900s, from all over the U.S.

Elyse: There's just so much. It's a menacing collection of wanted notices and mug shots.

Clint: There's an attitude for you.

Elyse: "Wanted for murder."

Clint: Big as it gets.

Elyse: Clint has some information about the book, but not much. He wants to know exactly what it is- and who created it.

Clint: Well, I was told it belonged to the Sherriff of Leavenworth, Kansas. I know it was newly-settled, newly-found peace in the area after all the fighting with the Indians.

Elyse: To me it looks like a scrapbook. Did you ever find any documentation on it?

Clint: I've looked for that, there's really nothing.

Elyse: This is going to be fun. It's going to be tough, but it's going to be fun.

Clint: Good luck.

Elyse: Thanks.

Whatever it is, the book is incredible, but it's also extremely fragile. Paper conservator Christine Young is going to authenticate the book's date and help me search for clues about its owner.

Christine Young: My first impression is that this is an older book with lignified paper, which has made it really brittle.

Elyse: Uh huh. The cover of the book has a date 1909. The various papers, inks, and formats are consistent with that time period.

Christine: This very browned ink, looking like a light iron gall ink, which would be at its very late stages at the time period.

Elyse: Whoever made this, he was organized, and maybe even a little obsessive. There are hundreds of notices, all placed with razor precision.

Oh, well look over here, May 22nd 1909. This one says 1908. You've got prostitution, you've got a lot of stealing.

The criminals run the gamut from counterfeiters to deserters.

Hey, look at this one! He's all the way from New York City.

"Pinkerton's National Detective Agency." And it's a thousand-dollar reward. That means they were all over the country.

Oh, wait, now this is interesting, because this says, "To the Chief of Police." And look, I'm noticing stamps that say, "Chief of Police." And, you know, I keep finding more and more letters to the chief of police.

Christine: Right.

Elyse: Clint thinks this book belonged to an old west sheriff. But a Police Chief is usually a city job.

I sent images of Clint's book to criminology professor Alex Gerould. He asks to meet me at Leavenworth Police Headquarters.

What do you think?

Alex Gerould: Uh, I think this is amazing. It's a, It's a real artifact of a lost age.

Elyse: You know my first instinct was, "Oh, this is just someone's old scrapbook."

Elyse: He says it is a scrapbook, but with a purpose.

Ales: This book would probably most accurately be called a "wanted scrapbook".

Elyse: Alex says it was based on what was called the “Rogues Gallery”, a criminal identification tool popularized by New York Police at the turn of the century.

Alex: This is a gallery or a collection of villains. It's an early kind of database. And these were people that would already have criminal records – people that were in the system.

Elyse: Alex explains by the 1900s, advances in transportation meant a criminal could commit a crime in Boston, then jump a train and be hundreds of miles away just a day later.

Alex: It's after the period of the Wild West, we're in the modern world now.

Elyse: The “wanted scrapbook” was created to consolidate the notices from around the country. Alex doesn't know who our chief of police was, but he thinks whoever put this book together, was no novice lawman.

Alex: I think what's interesting on these is the depth of the information that we're starting to see, what's called biometric data.

Elyse: Shows you where his tooth is, his wrist is broken, tattoos – so just – it's a good description. As an appraiser, I'd say it's good cataloguing. You know, right?

Alex: Right, right.

Elyse: But then I keep seeing this, it says Bertillon, seventy-one, sixty-seven... what are those numbers?

Alex: A French policeman named Alphonse Bertillon came up with eleven different ways of measuring.

Elyse: Alex explains that the system measured parts of the body that rarely change in an adult.

Alex: The length of your head, the length of your foot, index finger, and your ear...

Elyse: What about fingerprints? Where do they come into play?

Alex: Okay, fingerprints, you would start to see the usage of these in America after the year 1900. And so on some of these, you'll see right here, fingerprint classification.

Elyse: Fingerprints were the next wave of technology, soon to overtake Bertillon measurements.

Alex: The real legacy of books like this is the modern kind of CSI movement and the national database.

Elyse: So that means that this Police Chief was really into the cutting edge of technology at the time.

Alex: It, it certainly seems that way.

Elyse: So who was this scientific police chief? Kenneth Lamaster, a local law enforcement historian, meets me at the Leavenworth First City Museum.

Kenneth Lamaster: Take a look at this document.

Elyse: So this is a payroll from 1909.

Ken: Yes, ma'am.

Elyse: That's the same time as our book. And this says, "Lieutenant, Captain, Chief." That's J.T. Taylor.

Ken: Yes ma'am.

Elyse: OK, so J.T. Taylor has to be the guy. Right?

Ken: Yes ma'am. J.T. Taylor was the first person to be actually appointed to the role of Chief of Police. There was a want and a need to move away from the old west style of policing.

Elyse: And Leavenworth was far from a newly settled frontier town. With over 20,000 citizens and multiple train lines coming through, the city had a large population with new faces arriving all the time.

Ken: I mean it just only makes sense that they would send a lot of wanted posters to Leavenworth, Kansas. This was the gateway to the west, as we would know it at that point in time.

Elyse: Kenneth says this why there are so many notices from states far from Kansas, like New York.

Ken: Frank Muller was an actual hit man.

Elyse: Oh wow. "American Hebrew...age 27...is a pickpocket, sneak thief and a free user of firearms..."

Ken: Back in the day, he was actually hired to kill a gangster in New York. There was a large Jewish base here in Leavenworth, Kansas. So, he could have easily hid out among the group of individuals that lived in this town for a short period of time, and still got away, farther west.

That was the reason for these books, and the reason for the wanted posters. The beauty of a wanted posters are is when a guy is on the run, he can run to the ends of the earth, but he's never going to escape his wanted poster. So these guys could be on the lookout and identify these people immediately, and send them back to where they needed to be.

Elyse: Looking at our book, Kenneth thinks Chief Taylor was a special kind of lawman.

Ken: This is the largest book I've ever seen of this type. That's part of becoming more organized from what used to be the old Wild West type of lawmen to a sophisticated police department. This book would tie into that extremely well. It would show how he wanted his organization ran, right down to the letter.

Elyse: I think I have my answer for Clint. But then Kenneth mentions something that surprises me. Taylor was not only the first Police Chief in Leavenworth, but also the longest serving of the era.

Everybody else it looks like worked two years or three years.

Taylor appears to have had no previous experience as a policeman when he was appointed chief by the mayor. So who exactly was Taylor, and what had he done to win this position?

Kenneth suggests that I check in with Mary Ann Brown at the Leavenworth County Historical Society.

Mary Anne Brown: This is the history of Leavenworth County, and we have a biography about Taylor.

Elyse: Seems that J.T. Taylor was no ordinary policeman or citizen.

Mary Anne: John T. Taylor was the son of William H.H. and Anna Tuttle Harrison, the youngest daughter of President William Henry Harrison.

Elyse: Wow, he was the grandson of a President.

Mary Ann also reveals Taylor was the great grandson of Benjamin Harrison.

Mary Anne: ... who was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Elyse: Oh my God, so he had some serious roots in our country.

Mary Anne: Yes, yes. This is his obituary. He was 85 years old when he died.

Elyse: Captain Taylor died last night ... Soldeirs' home, last surviving officer on the wartime staff of General William T. Sherman. And a hero of bloody battle of Shiloh! Loyal Legion Officer. He was also a Civil war hero?

Mary Ann: Yes.

Elyse: This is like nothing that I ever expected out of this book.

Mary Ann takes me to the cemetery where JT Taylor, police chief and honored civil war veteran is buried. She shares an astonishing letter to Taylor that Clint needs to hear.

This book is really rare, it's a wonderful archive and I think it's probably the finest in our country.

I tell Clint the book was an important criminal identification tool. But the real surprise had been learning about the police chief and his extraordinary ancestors.

John T. Taylor, mother was Anna Harrison, daughter of President William Henry Harrison...

Clint: His mother??!

Elyse: Which makes him the grandchild of our 9th President, he was also the great grandchild of Benjamin Harrison, one of the signers of the Declaration of the Independence. So you're chief of police...

Clint: Was a very well connected... Very connected.

Elyse: So, this is what he looks like...

Clint: Wow. This was an important person in our history.

Elyse: But I tell Clint, Mary Ann had revealed something else.

It's a letter written to Taylor, from a great admirer, a recollection of their time together in the Civil War.

"Dear Taylor, At the very crisis at the Battle of Shiloh, my horse was shot dead under me and you promptly dismounted and gave me your own horse, trusting to chance for remount.

Clint: "You were then very young, not yet twenty, active, intelligent and most patriotic. I then esteemed you highly and now that twenty-seven years have passed, my feelings toward you have never changed. I wish you and yours all the prosperity and happiness possible on this earth, Affectionately, William Tecumseh Sherman." Wow. Wow. Makes me so emotional, I guess I feel a connection.

There's a reason I love your show! I'm floored! I feel like one of those people on your show who just doesn't know what to say.

Elyse: We surprised you, right?

Clint: Yeah, very much, I just am amazed, really amazed.

Elyse: Thank you.

Clint: Thank you very much.

Elyse: You're welcome.

Clint: What a, uh, legacy, what a book!

[Clint singing "The Code of the West"]