

Common Mystics Podcast
Season 1 Episode 3
Secrets in Hillsdale, MI

00:00:09 On this episode of Common Mystics, we find ourselves in the town of Hillsdale, Michigan, once the home to the largest family run flour mill East of the Mississippi. So what secrets still lurk amongst the ruins? Why are these secrets still being guarded today? We are so excited to talk to you about the story today. Let's get right into it. It was a hot and steamy July 4th that we were heading South. I assumed we would be going to Ohio, felt like we had to go to Ohio via the back roads of Michigan. And I had, in my mind, I'm leaving our house where we were going to go. Right. And the reason that we wanted to go to Ohio is because our first episode took place in Michigan, Nashville, Michigan. That's right. And our second episode took place in Coal City, Illinois. So we were really looking for another state to explore. So we made the intention as we were headed south on 69. And in the intention, we asked our mom for help. If you listen to our bonus episode on her, our mother Stella, she passed away some years ago but she's still very much a part of our lives and she helps us on our adventures. O we asked our mother to lead us to a verifiable story that would give voice to the voiceless. Also you mentioned that "We might never know why." It's funny because we were using the cameras so we were able to go back and look at the footage And never before when giving an intention have I said "We might never know the reason why." For this one, I said it and I remember being mad at myself for saying it because I thought, why didn't you say that? That was a stupid thing to say and the camera's running and now it's documented. But you know what? It was more than okay. It was fruitful and that's going to come up again. Yeah. So we did head towards Hillsdale, right? We were on 69 South. We exited 69 onto Rte 12 in Cold Water and we were heading East. And at this moment. I am looking for, as I always do, direction from Jen. I'm like, turn on your "spideys." I know we're supposed to be going to Hillsdale, but you know, tell me what you're feeling.

00:03:40 The reason that you look to me is because you drive a lot for your job, you always know where you are, you have a tremendous sense of direction. And I don't. So I sit in the navigator's seat and I try to get impressions and I'm thinking about mom. So I start getting impressions of our mother holding a flower basket. Now I'm thinking, a flower basket is not going to be a helpful sign right now. It's July. There are flower baskets hanging everywhere. On every other house. On every other place of business. They are everywhere. So she's holding on to this flower basket. I can see her in my mind's eye. And after a while I start hearing "p," "p," "p." The P sound. And then what starts running through my head is "purple petunias, purple petunias." At that point, I look a little closer at the image in my mind's eye. And sure enough, mom is holding a flower basket that has purple petunias, only purple petunias. That's it. So anyway, that that's what I was getting as we were driving. And so you had that in your mind as we had arrived in Hillsdale and we're passing through town. That's right. That's right. But we both see the sign for Mrs. Stock's Park and you and I both were like, Oh my gosh, we are SO going there. As soon as you and I saw that sign. We're like, that's where we're going. Exactly. So you turn the car around, (Rrrrr, u-turn) we turn on Bacon Road and we see this huge, beautiful park. Stunning. It's got ponds, bridges, flowers everywhere. We pull into the parking

lot. And it wasn't until then that I realized that all of the hanging baskets all over town, all over town on the entire main street on every lamppost were hanging these big purple petunia, flower baskets, not mixed flowers, not even petunias of mixed colors.

00:05:00 They were all purple petunias. And that's when I think we both knew we were in the right place. We knew our story was here. And we were thinking that as we were approaching the park and the grounds. That's right. So we're in the park. And like I said, it's huge. And we see in the distance, one of those kiosks, you've seen them all over Jill. You know, it reminded me as if we, if we were on a trail and it was almost as if it was going to be a map of the grounds to help us navigate through the area. Right now, this one was, um, a kind of a triangular shape. If I recall, I would agree. Uh, there were no doors on it. It was just, you know, it was covered, but it was covered. It had a roof, right? Yeah. So, uh, so you make a beeline for it right away. I learned my lesson from Coal City. Read the historical markers. Exactly. Actually, um, instead of being a map, what it actually had was historical information.

00:05:58 Photos and articles about the stock family and the origin story of the park. So we approach it. How are you feeling as we realize what it was on the outside of the kiosk? Yeah. Well, on the outside of the kiosk was information about Mrs. Stock and Mr. FW stock. And I, after reading this information, was thinking this is the beginning of our story. Is that how you felt? I felt, honestly, I felt compelled to go in, to go in, to go past what was on the surface on the outside. So we did, we walked into the kiosk. And what did you feel immediately? I was overwhelmed with creepiness. It felt like as if you were approaching a dark damp basement, you didn't feel comfortable and you didn't want to stay there. You know what Jill? I was, I agree. And I was so overcome by negative energy that if you recall, we were like, we have got to get out of this space.

00:07:03 We literally just took a step back and we're like, Oh, okay. So we're not going in there. And we started exploring the buildings that were nearby on the grounds. That's right. As I was using the camera to document what I was seeing and feeling, it felt necessary to me to get on the other side of those buildings. I remember that. So I climbed down and I said, Jen, we have to go around. We have to go up. Right. So we left the park and walked down the street. Down Bacon Street. Right. So that we could see the totality of those buildings. And we climbed a slight incline behind them. And immediately it became clear that not only were these working buildings for a once enterprise or a mill, but also it felt as if they lived there. And I was getting this feeling.

00:07:56 And, please bear with me here. My circle of reference for this, um, energy of a character I was feeling was Kathy Bates' character in Season 3 of American Horror Story where Kathy Bates portrayed Madam LaLaurie, who was a Madam of the house who was in charge of the servants, the workers, and really had her way, to put it bluntly, with the people that were of her employment. So you were getting this impression of this character for which you had a circle of reference. It's a character that you understood and for whatever reason you were getting that impression. So easy for spirit to give you an impression of something you already know. And so it, it conveys the totality of the energy. Nice. Nice. Well put. Thank you. So at that point, you're, you're reading a little bit from the buildings and getting this Kathy Bates feeling. At this time, you suggested what?

00:08:56 I suggested that we go back into the kiosk, but I wanted to do it separately because, here's why, I wanted to see if my impressions when I'm by myself would be at all in sync with the impressions that you would get if you were in there by yourself. Right? So we separated and you went down to the other side of the park, right? With the Bug, with Bug, the beagle. And I went into the kiosk. And, um, what I felt in there was extremely uncomfortable. That was the first sensation that came over me, discomfort. I felt like someone wanted to bring me down. There was a power dynamic and I was on the wrong end of it. I felt fear and oppression and sadistic sort of tendencies. And I also felt that acts occurred that were not discussed in polite society. And so those were the types of feelings that I got.

00:10:05 Jill, when you went in there by yourself, what did you get? So I'm facing two pictures and the energy that's coming from me from the left is that there were deeds done that were justified by, it was a means to an end, something done as a means to an end. And when I say something, I mean, almost cruelty. And the impression I got from the right side was that it was more enjoyable. It was more out of enjoyment than it was as for a means to an end. When you were by yourself, did you use the word sadistic as well? As I did, I did use the word sadistic. I felt, um, it felt laughable. Like I was being condescended. Like this is laughable that I was trying to read these people and who was I? Who was I to stand there and almost, um, even approach?

00:11:10 It was intimidating, like, like spirit was trying to intimidate us. Exactly. So, um, I, I met you back with Bug and then we had a conversation in the car about it. Yeah. What were, what were your impressions? I had the distinct impression that whatever we felt would be very difficult to find information on, very difficult to validate with documentation. Right. Did you think that we had a podcast at that point, at that point? No, because our podcast has a lot to do with verifying what our impressions are. And I didn't think that we were going to find enough to even discuss. What about you? I did. And I knew it was going to be hard.

00:11:54 I reaffirmed that. I knew this was going to be hard. It was going to be a long shot. It was going to be a long shot, but I did feel like I was going to find something, intuitively. Yeah. So Jen, can you look at the research we actually did find and describe for us the, the story behind FW Stock and his family?

00:12:13 Absolutely. So I have some information from the Hillsdale County Community Center history index. So this is about Frederick Wilhelm Stock who arrived in Hillsdale in 1869. FW Stock was born in Reinch, Prussia in 1825. He left Germany to first settle in Ohio and engage in the flour milling business. But believing that the mill in Hillsdale offered a promising business venture, Stock moved to Hillsdale and purchased the original grist mill, which by the 1850s was producing 8,000 barrels of flour yearly. Stock made many improvements in the mill, deepening the mill race and completely replacing the old milling machinery with the newest available. He also acquired a new patent process, whereby flour could be milled, pure white and wholesome. Even though the family sustained the loss of two young sons and two daughters, the remaining three sons were sent to Minnesota and Virginia to expand the company. The mill became the largest family owned plant East of the Mississippi. FW Stock and his wife Wilhelmina were active in civic affairs in the community.

00:13:26 For some time, his power plant furnished electricity for the city. He was head of the Oak Grove Cemetery Association. Wilhelmina established an extensive park in the lowland area in back of their new home built in 1902 facing Broad Street. Hundreds of trees and plants

were placed in Willow Park, later dubbed Mrs. Stock's Park, with its two artificial ponds stocked with goldfish. It became the preeminent garden and park and South Michigan. Mrs. Stock was also head of the Benevolence Society for many years. The family was well known for providing those in need in the community. Thus FW Stock and his descendants have contributed greatly to the financial and civic wellbeing of the city.

00:14:14 Wow. Jen, that certainly paints a very vivid portrait of FW Stock's legacy. It does. Can you tell me a little bit more about Mrs. Stock and her park? So Mrs. Stock lost three adult children and she was so devastated in 1897 she threw herself into a huge project and that involved renovating the swampland that lay behind the Stock family house into the park. She was really involved in this project. She, the superintendent on the site. In fact, it took 12 years of intense labor to replace what was deemed the worst eyesore in the city into this beautiful park. Even the workers who worked the mill would work in the park on their downtime to help that renovation process. But in 2003, the park was deeded to the city of Hillsdale. And it was at that time that a committee was formed to restore the park. And that's why it's the beautiful gem that it is today. So the three adult children that survived, um, they were named Alexander, Louise, and can you help me with this one? Adolphus. And it was Alexander's picture that was on the inside of the kiosk, along with his son's Harold's. That's right. That's right. So, so we have all this information that describes an upstanding family, pillars of the community, who greatly contributed to the prosperity of the town for nearly a hundred years.

00:15:56 Examples of that improving... expanding the mill continuously, turning the mill business into a global corporation, right. Expanding the railroad so that it could help export the flour. Um, they sold power to the city, they literally powered the city for a time. Um, and don't forget, Mrs. Stock's charitable works. She was the head of the Benevolent Society. And let's not forget the park. Of course. So Jill, did you discover anything that might account for the very strong negative impressions that we picked up at Mrs. Stock's park? Well, I did find something when I was researching on ancestry.com. Do tell. Yeah. Um, it was in the 1910 census and it stuck out for a few reasons. Of course this census was listing Alexander and of course his family that lived on his property on Broad Street, but there's also eight other names listed to be in Alexander's care.

00:17:00 Interesting. Yeah. So I clicked on the first name, the name was Nelson Chappel. He was listed as a border living on Howell Street in relation to Alexander. Then the next seven names, um, were Frank [Fred] Miller, single white male, 22, from Michigan; Tom Mulraney, 50, single white male from Ireland; Frank Jackson, 38, single white male from Michigan; Jim McConnell, 41, single white male from Michigan; John Lewis, 33, single white male from Michigan; Frank James, 41, single white male from Michigan; Jim Ryan, 36, single white male from Ohio. All seven of these gentlemen were listed as prisoners of Alexander Stock living on Bacon Street, the same street the mill was on. Prisoners. Prisoners. So that struck me as odd, well... That would do it. That would explain any negative feelings. Absolutely. Wow. So Jill, armed with that tidbit, where did you go next in your research? So I emailed the Historical Society of Hillsdale County and the Mitchell Research society and the Mitchell Research society researched the genealogy and the families from the area.

00:18:41 So I sent a group email out to these organizations and I got a very prompt response saying that they apologize. Um, they are not available to meet me in person to ask about or to

relay any information about the Stock family because of the pandemic. However, they will put me in touch with a local historian who is associated with both organizations. And again, very promptly, I had gotten an email back from this woman whose family had been associated with the Stock family, specifically Harold Stock, at the mill. Okay. Yeah. So I was really excited. And so I emailed and something told me again, intuitively, to be very coy. To play it, to play it cool. And so I said, well, thank you so much for reaching out to me. I would really be interested to learn everything you can tell me about the Stock family personally.

00:19:34 Um, any personal anecdotes that you can relay would be much appreciated. And the woman emailed me back. Absolutely. She attached some files, the information she attached was already information that I had had, but I thanked her. And I said, you know, I was looking for a little bit more and if we can set up a call where I can ask specific questions about the family, and hopefully she can relay more information to me about them personally, and any personal anecdotes that she may have. And she emailed me back... specifically, what do you need to know? So she was asking you, specifically, what information you were seeking. Now, I just want to stop you just right there, because I want you to understand that I've been doing research into family history, our family history, for like six years now. And I am not a stranger to calling historical societies or librarians in local areas.

00:20:31 And to ask questions about a person from a certain time. And usually how it goes is that this person is so excited to tell me about their expertise in the local area that I feel like I'm breaking their heart. And I, and I immediately say, I'm so sorry. That sounds so interesting, but I really don't have a lot of time. I just need this person at this time. And so to get that response from her made me feel a little suspicious. And as we were communicating, I was doing research on the side about these prisoners and seeing what archival information I can come up with to not only support their identities, but to see what type of criminality they were involved in to be imprisoned, assumingly at the mill. Right. And so again, I responded, Hey, I really just would like to pick your brain about the family.

00:21:27 And so at any time, if you were gracious with your time, that would be great. Please let me know when would be a great time. And she emailed me back and she said, no, specifically what you need? So at this point, I'm like, okay, Karen, I am looking at the 1910 census. And I am looking at Alexander Stock lists seven men as prisoners and one man as a boarder. And I'm curious as to how and why this would happen. Was it typical at the time for a business owner to be in the care of prisoners? What crimes did they commit? How long were they in prison? What was the sentence? And additionally, one of the men, Fred Miller, who I looked up from my research suggests that he was a vulnerable youth at the time. His mother died young and his father left the area to move to Jackson, Michigan, where he remarried.

00:22:20 So Fred Miller was just a vulnerable youth. And after being imprisoned in the mill, he became a WWI veteran and returned to the area where he lived out his life as an upstanding citizen. So my question, Karen, is how does that happen? Did it happen a lot and for how many years? And then that was it. Then you just got crickets. Yeah, I was what we call ghosted. And I have not heard back. Is that what the kids are calling it? It's what the kids are calling it nowadays.

00:22:57 Wow. So Jill, given this response, did you happen to reach out to any other local organizations for some answers to these specific questions surrounding the prisoners listed in

the 1910 census? Well, you know, I did. I know that was a set up. Just go with it. The Michigan Genweb Links is a project where, um, genealogy is shared online throughout Michigan and it's broken down by County. So I emailed the Hillsdale County Administrator. And again, I was, I was ghosted. Okay. Anything else? I did reach out also to the Hillsdale College librarian or library archivist. Apparently that person wrote a book on the subject of the Stock family and the history of Hillsdale County. And I had not gotten a response. Really. A bunch of Karen's. Exactly, exactly right. Okay. So where did you go from there? So I was looking through newspapers, um, looking for evidence of criminality because a lot of times in the newspaper they'll publish like gossipy stuff.

00:24:08 Like this person did this and I noticed that the Sheriff's name stuck out at me. So I was like, I need to call the courthouse. The courthouse will have records of who was imprisoned or was arrested at the time. Great idea. So I called the courthouse and I spoke to a young lady there who's from the area. And I told her what I was getting into. And she was shocked. She didn't hear anything about this. All she knew of the Stocks were what we had outlined in the beginning, just upstanding citizens. And they have a park and it's great. Right. And they shared the park. And so she and I went down every list, every name on the list. And she looked at two different databases to confirm whether or not they had any records in the database. And they didn't. Nothing. Now to be fair, she said, you know, it may not go back that far. For the hard copies you should really contact the County sheriff.

00:25:00 Okay. So did you contact the deputy at the Sheriff's department? Yes, that was my next call. I called the sheriff's department and a deputy answered the phone and I explained to him what it was that I was looking for. And he said, well, they don't have information that goes back that far. But what's funny about that is two of his friends that are also deputies also looked into the Stocks. Get outta here! And? They didn't come up with anything. And this is like their day job, like investigating. Yeah. Yeah. And they, they came up really short. He said that there wasn't anything there, there, but he suggested that I contact the archivist at the college because that person wrote a book about the history of Hillsdale County. Okay. So at this point I am, I'm really frustrated and I want to ring bells on, on the streets of Hillsdale saying, "I know something's wrong here!" But instead of doing that, Jennifer made a suggestion.

00:26:04 So what I thought is, it's probably a good idea to research the practice at the time of business owners taking custody of prisoners in work environments. Is that a thing? Well, I didn't know, but yes, it actually is a thing and it's called convict leasing. Okay. Okay. So this is what I learned about convict leasing. Okay. Convict leasing is providing prison labor to private parties like mill owners, plantation owners, and other corporations. It's a system of labor that was really largely in place in the Southern States after the Civil War. This sounds dirty. It is.

00:26:44 The 13th amendment. It abolished slavery, but it had a loophole. It said that you could enslave people who are criminals. And so you can't imagine how awful it was in the South where it became kind of an institution. However, it was also happening in the North. It was happening on a smaller scale, but it had been happening, according to my research, as long as there were penitentiaries in the North. Okay. So prison labor was actually big business for those involved in particular industries like plantations, mills, factories, railroads..., the system, though immoral, and even deemed immoral and questionable at best at the time, like at the, wow, this was like dirty. Well, yeah, sounds dirty. Absolutely. It was never like fully accepted. So did it end,

or I should say, how did it end if it ended? Yeah. Well the States, it was up to the States to end it.

00:27:51 And there were two reasons that it actually fizzled out and laws were, uh, you know, over the years abolished it. Um, one of them was economic. Because the unions gained a lot of strength in the first half of the 1900s. And for the unions, of course they wouldn't want prisoners working, you know, in these corporations because they would take the jobs away from the union members. So a big part of it was economic. But another part was because a spotlight was put on the practice due to a situation of a young man named Martin Tabert. Let me tell you about Martin Tabert. This is from Wikipedia. Martin Tabert died in January of 1922. He was a 22 year old man from North Dakota. He was arrested in December of 1921 on a charge of vagrancy for being on a train without a ticket in the state of Florida. Now Tabert was convicted and fined \$25. It turns out that the sheriff James Robert Jones at the time earned \$20 for every prisoner he leased out. And he leased out Tabert to work at a lumber company in Florida. And Tabor was whipped to death with a leather strap by his supervisor while being leased. Oh my God. At that lumber company.

00:29:23 So that was another reason that light was shed on this practice. Now, admittedly, this story has nothing to do with the Stocks and it has nothing to do with Hillsdale or Michigan. But... And to be clear, we want to talk about the Stock. We would love to have the facts to be able to have a conversation about the Stocks. But unfortunately, right, we had to do our own research because that conversation wasn't to be had. Exactly, you know, Jill, you were able to locate a very important resource online. It's true. And this resource was called or is called 150 Years in the Hills and Dales: A Bicentennial History of the Hillsdale County, Michigan, Volume One. Let me tell you a little something about this book. I Googled it online. I found a reference to it and it gave me little snippets in Google books. It wouldn't give me full pages. So I was able to read a little bit at a time. And I knew, like, there was something in his book I need to get this book. So I researched where this book was located, what libraries in the area, the historical society, being coauthors of the book, had a copy but they're not helping.

00:30:45 So I was calling different libraries and whether they were closed because of COVID, or a librarian answered, the book was unavailable to me. The librarys listed as having a copy said that their copy was not available. And so I felt like it was a dead end. But from the snippets on Google books, I knew I had to keep going at it, even though it seemed like I was hitting a wall. And I ended up finding a scanned copy of this book in its entirety. Amazing. So because of the Google book snippets, I knew exactly what pages the Stocks are on. So I went straight there. Wow. So what happened when you were trying to get some information out of this book? So just a little background, you know, how we work, I get the, I get research and then I upload it into a shared file where you can access it in Illinois.

00:31:42 That's right. So, because this was a scanned document I had to, to highlight the verbiage that I needed, and it would be transcribed into a "notebook," if you will, to the left hand side of the page. Now that verbiage at that point, I could control C and copy it all and put it into a Word document. I apologize. I know this is wordy. So as I was doing that, I was making sure that I had all the information because there are pictures on the page. I wanted to make sure that the, that the information between the pictures, on either side of the pictures, were being captured as well. And I also wanted to take out any captions that would mess up the flow of the

body of the paragraph. So I was looking at these pages pretty intently to make sure that I got them right, to share them with you. And, and... the funniest thing. There was about four pages in all. And on the third page, I noticed that about six paragraphs to the right, the last six paragraphs of the page, weren't transcribing into the "notebook" box for me to copy and paste. So let me make sure I understand this. Please. You would select all the text, correct? Transcribe it, go to transcribe it. Yes. And text would pop up without six paragraphs. Correct. So Jill, what was in those six paragraphs that were inaccessible in that way? It was a really unflattering portrayal of Mrs. Stock. You don't say. For real. Can you and I just stop for a minute because this is crazy. Really. Thi is so nuts. This is so nuts. The time it took to figure out that, like, that someone was like, no, they can't copy these six paragraphs... unbelievable. Well, we don't have all six paragraphs, but we do have certain portions. The highlights.

00:33:43 Can you please read from the highlight reel? So the first part said: Mrs. Wilhelmina Stock, an energetic woman by nature, worked hard and expected others around her to do the same. Punctuality was and neatness were a part of her life and being. The mill grounds were kept in perfect order. One grounds employee said in despair, "By golly, Mr. Stock, if I can only pump water right it would be such a happiness." So that was one section that we found. Another section that we found said the following: All was not necessarily serene in Mrs. Stock's park. A small grandson's fishing career was abruptly interrupted when the earth trembled behind him as Madam Stock commanded, "Harold, pull up that line." On it was a foot long glistening goldfish. So let's talk about these two sections here. It leaves me with the impression that she was throwing her weight around. A bit of a bully.

00:34:52 Mm mm. It sounds in the first section that at least one grounds employee was despairing how he could never do anything right. How can you pump water wrong? She could never be satisfied is what I'm getting from this. And the second one, her grandson fishing in her pond. You know, it doesn't sound like she is, um, a very kind hearted person. No, it doesn't. It doesn't. Can you read from the last little bit Jen? You know I can. Please. This is the bit that we find most disturbing of all. It says: Respected, loved, and feared she was known to bring to heel any member of the mill family who she considered to be morally straying from the line of duty. Okay. So I just wanted to tell you that when I was copying and pasting in these lines, they didn't come up and I had to type it, I stopped typing these lines and sent a text to you.

00:36:08 You did, and said what in the actual F does this mean? Wow, exactly. So let's, let's break this down. So she was respected, loved and feared. I mean, I see it. Like, that checks out. But to put that in a book. Oh, okay. Go on. Uh, she was known to "bring to heel"... What does that mean? Well, I was not so familiar with that expression. Okay. So I looked it up on, on, online on the freedictionary.com. To bring to heel means to force someone to obey one's wishes or commands. To make someone act in accordance with one's authority. So, wow. Exactly. It's kind of chilling. It really is. Kathy Bates, much? Uh, sorry, I just had to go there. Okay. So she brought to heel any member of the mill family... the mill, the mill family. What does that mean? What does that mean?

00:37:13 Does that mean people...? Does that mean people working at the mill or prisoners working at the mill? Maybe it means the mill workers who so generously gave up their free time to renovate her park. Oh, wow. Hm. I wonder. Um, so in the last bit... morally straying from the line of duty, brought to heel any member of the mill family who she considered to be morally

straying from the line of duty. Who is she to tell the people of the mill family how, what morally straying is? Exactly. This sentence, it, first of all, it just hurts to read and to contemplate, but this author really crafted this sentence well, to give us a lot of information. She certainly did. She is telling us a lot in a very subtle way, but not subtle enough. Because somebody did not want this information accessible. It's true. This information was uncomfortable for somebody so much so that they made it unduplicatable or you get what I mean. I get what you mean. In summary... Jill?

00:38:31 Oh Jesus. We were, we were going to drive through Hillsdale on our way to Ohio and there's hundreds of other ways to get to Ohio, not a direct route, but when mom showed me those hanging baskets of purple petunias, we knew, we knew that our story was in Stocks park. It's true. And there we learned about a prominent local family, the Stocks. They were a pillar of society and there is an abundance of readily available information about them that paints a very positive picture and that supports a very specific narrative about their contributions to the town. And you know what, we're not, we're not saying that didn't happen. They're not mutually exclusive. We are not disputing that. I'm sure they did wonderful things. However our strong impressions at the time said otherwise. Well, it said that there was also things that they did probably equally as significant for hundreds of years.

00:39:35 So it was those impressions that compelled us to research beyond the fluff to get to what it was that we were feeling there that was so obvious to us. And as a result of being driven by forces outside ourselves, we were able to obtain one documentation that Alexander leased prisoners or had prisoners in his mill and some rather unflattering and somewhat disturbing descriptions of Mrs. Stock who created that park in Hillsdale. It's true. And not only was that information harder to come by, but it was manipulated to make it nearly impossible. Technologically. It was technologically manipulated. So Jen, I'm going to ask you again, do you think we have a story here? Jill, we absolutely have a story, but we don't have an ending. It's true. This is just the tip of the iceberg. And there are so many questions left.

00:40:39 What were the crimes these men were charged with? What were their sentences? How was it that all of the prisoners listed were all single white men who didn't have wives and children at home waiting for them. What happened to the other prisoners? All we have is documentation on Fred Miller, the youngest prisoner at 22, who doesn't seem very much like a, a criminal by the way. Absolutely no evidence of criminality other than he being listed on the 1910 census as a prisoner to Alex Stock. And for how many years did the Stocks engage in the practice of convict leasing? How many lives were wasted working in their mill? It, you know, honestly, I just want to say this out loud. We are making an assumption. We are drawing conclusions that what he was doing was legal and on the up and up, and even that best case scenario is still appalling. Absolutely convict leasing would be the best case scenario in this situation. But Jill, one can certainly imagine other scenarios. If anyone has any information that can help us solve this mystery, please, please contact us. You can find us at commonmistakes.net or on Facebook at Common Mystics. Finally, if you liked this episode, please leave us a positive review on Apple Podcasts so others can find us. Thank you so much. Thank you. And good night.