

Common Mystics Podcast

Season 2 Episode 11: The Butchers, the Witches, the Dead in the Ditches in Labette Co., KS

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00:00:35 On this episode of Common Mystics, we find ourselves confronting a gruesome crime spree from the early 1870s, but our psychic sense is that the truth is even more disturbing. I'm Jennifer James. I'm Jill Stanley. We're psychics. We're sisters. We are Common Mystics. We find extraordinary stories in ordinary places, and we have a story for you out of Labette County, Kansas.

00:01:03 Before we get into this crazy tale, we have some housekeeping. Ooh. Jennifer, start. Okay. So, we recently found out that we are number 64 in Apple's category of Spirituality and Religion in the country of India. Yay! Thank you, India. Oh my gosh. It's such an honor.

00:01:38 It really is. I'm not even kidding. There's a lot of spirituality in India. I know. It makes me feel like they recognize us as being spiritual, too. I know. Thank you so much, you guys. I'm surprised we ranked anywhere, for anything.

00:01:53 Do you think we're taking this too seriously? Probably, but for real. It's an honor. It is. It really is. So, thank you, India.

00:02:01 And you other countries... Tell your friends about us!

00:02:04 I know. Come on, USA! Really?! Go ahead. I mean, come on. Give us some kind of ranking. Um, So, the second thing is our friend Carrie's Facebook page and her business. Yes. Juniper Moon Holistic Healing. She's a tarot card reader, but she also is able to get in touch with your guides and angels that help you along your spiritual path in this life. And I'm really interested, Jen, in doing the readings we told her we were going to do, because honestly I can't do that for myself. Yeah. I'm always just talking to my grandma. That sounds amazing. I definitely am going to book a reading with her.

00:02:44 I know. How do we contact her? Find her on Facebook, Juniper Moon Holistic Healing. All right. Her name's Carrie and she's wonderful. And I hope you guys enjoy her as much as we do. Oh my gosh, I can't wait. So, should we get right into it? Jennifer?

00:03:00 What? This is bonkers. This is bonkers. Okay. We were on our Common Mystics road trip, first time ever. We were going to Topeka. We were in Wichita, when we set our intention and we were getting some full-on evil, serial killer, crazy ass vibes. And Jennifer was like, hell to the no. We are not doing that because there's a famous, nasty, serial killer from Wichita that I don't even want to say his name. I don't even want to say his acronym, his nasty name, but I'm just saying that is literally what I was picking up, and I didn't know it, until Jennifer did a quick search after her date with James Beckwourth.

00:03:35 And she, like completely, was like, no, we're not doing that story. So, take it from there. We set the intention. [Right. So, after my hot date--] Tell us what we were feeling in the car.

00:03:48 We set the intention to ask the spirits, to lead us to a verifiable story that we knew nothing about, but most importantly, to give voice to the voiceless. That's right.

00:04:00 So, the hits that I was picking up on, like I said, were like, evil, bodies being discarded in a well, serial killer stabbing, throat slitting. Like, it was like intense. And Jen, every

time I was like, telling her what I was thinking, she was like, in a smile, off in her own world, playing with her hair.

00:04:19 And I'm like, hey, can you tell James-- [I was like Jill, can't you see that I'm in the middle of something right now?] I was like, just get his digits and let's move on. I'm totally working this right now. I was like, you'll meditate on that later. Let's move on. No, seriously. I was getting the feeling like I wanted to go east. I wanted to go east. And you know, I'm usually the navigator and you were like, no, Jen, we're not going east. And I was like, but--

00:04:44 Yeah. So you were feeling okay, in all fairness, let's be honest. We had to be in Topeka that evening. And we stopped in Wichita, and we were supposed to be working. And instead, we went shopping for swimsuit coverups.

00:04:57 Well, we were supposed to be working on the podcast. We weren't, like, on our day jobs. [No, no, but I consider this work] Absolutely. And we were going to meet our family. And we knew that we forgot our bathing suit cover ups. There was going to be hotel pools, and we needed it.

00:05:14 And a whole lot of thighs. Thighs. Butt hanging out. Hotel pools, and a whole lot of thighs. We needed. Pizza Hut. We've been eating Pizza Hut for a week. And Taco Bell.

00:05:23 Yeah, you did a whole riff on their double meat. So, here you go. This is the consequence of double meat. So yes, it was a priority to go to Marshall's, TJ Maxx and look for some big ass cover ups, so that we would be presentable to family that we like, see once every five years.

00:05:45 Yeah. And who are brutally honest and we weren't feeling that. Just saying. Anyway, so, go ahead. So, you actually, you were telling me you were feeling a cult feeling. That's true. And you were getting pulled to the east. Do you remember that?

00:05:59 And also, I was, for some reason, really, really focused on the Osage trail. Now, I know we did a whole podcast on the Osage murders, right? But this is before we did any real research on what we were picking up on. No, totally. So you- [It was the trail.] So, your association-- Right. [It was the trail.] So, you were thinking, Yes. The great Osage nation. You were thinking that this could be from the other story, but you're like, but this trail we need to go on. And again, we ran out of time. Yeah. It was a hard stop, and we had to go to Topeka.. So, there was absolutely no way I could follow your trail east, and do that. We just didn't have the time. Right. Exactly. And then, like I said, we discussed the nasty serial killer from Wichita, which is not going to be brought up again. But you were, you totally shut me down. Even though I was getting strong serial killer vibes.

00:06:46 Right. I knew that was not our story. I was not going to talk about that. I just instinctively knew that we're not, that's not our story. Right. So, what did we find? Well, we did a little bit of research on Labette County, Kansas. Is that where-- were we in Labette County when we were driving through Jill, or no?

00:07:05 We were near it. We were driving around it. We were literally driving like, almost like, a half circle around it. Okay.

00:07:13 So, after the Civil War, the U S government moved the Osage people from their lands in eastern Kansas to another place. Which turned out to be Osage County in Oklahoma. Exactly. Now, according to "Legends of America ", which is a website, right Jill? That's correct. In 1870, there were five families of quote unquote spiritualists, who settled in Western Labette County, along the great Osage trail. The great Osage trail was actually a trail that was used to

herd buffalo. And as the country expanded out west, white settlers began to use the trail to commute between Kansas City and Fort Smith, Kansas. So they moved the Osage people, but they still continue to use their trail. Right. And so, right along this trail, there were five families of spiritualists, and one of these families is known as The Benders. They were creepy, Jill.. They're creepy.

00:08:19 Jennifer, I don't understand why you went right there with it. We don't know them yet. Tell me a little bit about them. [I think I know them] And let me be the judge. I think I know them and they remind me of, should I, should I say it here? Yeah. Do you know? Yeah. They remind me of the Sawyer family of "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" movie. Okay. Okay. I think you're being a little harsh. I- I- I- Let the-

00:08:38 Let the listeners decide. Let the listeners decide. Okay. So, the Benders and who were the Benders? Well, there was John Bender Sr; his wife, Elmira; son, John Jr.; and daughter Kate. Those were the Benders. Now, the family lived on 160 acres. They built a one-room framed cabin, a barn, a corral, and they dug a well. Now, inside their wooden cabin, the area was partitioned with a large canvas, large sheet of canvas that they hung from the ceiling.

00:09:20 And the canva-- the canvas, just to give you a visual, like if you can think of like the old west wagons, that canvas is like the white top of the wagons with what the wagons are covered with. Yeah. Yeah. Cool.

00:09:33 So, this is kind of, um, inventive. They're making- This is before Ikea, you know, they can't just buy a divider. So I mean- [To be fair, today we can't just buy a divider. We have to buy the divider parts, with the divider hardware.] That's right. I do love Ikea, though. Oh, it's the best. Ikea's the best.

00:09:56 Okay. So inside they par- they partitioned it off with this large canvas and created different living quarters. So they would live in the back behind this big canvas and there was an inn and a store in the front. So they lived in the back and then they had the travelers stay for the night and they would sell items in the front of their store. Right? And so there was this crude sign that hung above their front door that said "groceries." And so they're on this major trail, Jill. So this would attract people who needed, who are travelers, who needed a place to stay, or who need provisions.

00:10:37 Location is everything. Location, location, location. Right. So they had a thriving little inn and business going on, Jill. Mm hmm. They sold liquor, groceries, tobacky, meats. All kinds of things. They sold meals. So they were kind of like a restaurant, too. Mm hmm. But the main thing was, and this was, this was major. They provided a quote unquote "safe place" for people to spend the night. Well, sure,

00:11:04 Sure. So why do we know about them? What's the deal? There's five families. We know. Hold on, hold on. I just looked down on the outline and I see that you said they provided entertainment for travelers. So I just- let's just stop here. That's true. Jennifer, stop it.

00:11:19 What sort of entertainment are you referencing here, Jill? Okay. So, Kate- daughter Kate-- and we're going to get into this later in the outline, but Jennifer's jumping ahead.

00:11:31 Oh, I'm sorry. Sorry. Daughter Kate. And, um, Ma are spiritualists and they communicate with the dead, whether it be, um, on one-on-one mediumships or in a seance setting. And so they would provide that kind of entertainment, whether it be hypnotizing, or

going into a trance to connect with people on the other side. So, they're not just a grocer, an inn, and no, they are also-[They're also a one-stop medium shop.] .

00:12:04 That's right. That's right. Okay. Yeah. Interesting, Interesting. Very entrepreneurial. So, here's why we're talking about it, Jill. Yeah. Why do we know about it?

00:12:17 About it? Right. Right. So, during 1871 and 1872, in addition to the normal settler traffic, there were multiple parties that traveled the great Osage trail, making inquiries about missing people, people who were missing, who had just been through that area. Ahhhh. .

00:12:45 So, traffic picked up because people were looking for other people that never made it to their destination, is what you're saying? It appeared so, yes. Okay. But that-- okay. Just hear me out again. It's not unusual for travelers along these trails, even well-documented travelers to have some unfortunate event happen upon them that may cause their arrival time to be delayed or even possible deaths. That's true. Have you ever played the Oregon Trail in school? No, but I know you did. I have never used it. Tell me about it. Oh, it's so, oh my God, Jen.. It's... it's designed to make you die, whether it be from like, syphilis or like your ox is drowning, and like you never make it to Oregon. The whole point of it is that life sucks on the trail and you're never going to make it, and you're going to die of some horrible disease if your ox doesn't drown you. Okay. Okay. For sure.

00:13:37 But there was like a cluster here. There's a cluster of disappearances right around this inn, this, this part of the trail right there. People are missing. So it's not just like- [Okay, so what are you saying?] I am saying that this is messed up. Like this family is messed up [and you're saying--?] and there's some shit going down. So let's get into it.

00:14:02 And you already compared them to the Sawyer family. So tell me why you feel that way about them because I kind of feel like you're being a little bigoted. Are you serious? I feel you're kind of Judgy McJudgerson. Tell me why you feel this way.

00:14:15 Okay. So like I said, there were four of them, right? Ma, Pa, John Jr. and Kate [Mm hmm]. Apparently they were German immigrants. Paw was said to be- his first name was said to be John or Yohanas. He is described as being about 60 years old, about six feet tall. So he was a big man, like six feet tall is tall. Jill in 1870-- [Jennifer, why are you so rude today.] I know you are 6 feet tall. [Why are you judging everybody?] Jill is a 6 foot tall {woman}

00:14:46 But this is like the 2000s. In the 1870s, if you were six feet tall, you were a big guy, All right?. No offense, Jill, but you are a big man for 1870. Okay? It was said, he was described as a giant. No offense. Don't look at me like that. It's just getting meaner and meaner.

00:15:17 With cold, piercing eyes and bushy facial hair that covered his reddish complexion. People said he looked wild. Yeah. Okay. Are you getting that Texas Chainsaw feel? I don't like that--well,,

00:15:29 let's keep going. Let's keep going. You couldn't tell any of the Sawyers' complexion because they were other people's skin. So you don't know what you're talking about.

00:15:37 Okay. So, Ma, Ma Bender was a heavy set woman. Ooh... that's my girl. Talk to me. She was close to her husband's age.

00:15:47 And here's the thing, neighbors who knew her were unsettled by her presence. They felt chilled by her and they nicknamed her... uh... a "she devil." Now, it was rumored that Ma was a psychic medium, who is talented in connecting with the dead, but also did herbs and root magic and made spells and charms. Hmm.

00:16:21 I don't see anything wrong with this so far. I don't see anything wrong

with that description. However, there's more. Are you ready for John Jr? Tell.

I don't think I'm ever going to be ready for John Jr. Yes. Jennifer.

00:16:39 Tell me about John Jr. John Jr. left another kind of unsettling impression on people. He was tall and slender. He spoke broken English. Oh. By the way, his parents were generally known to not speak English. So they were like grunt and speak another language. John Jr. apparently could speak English better than his parents, but his communication was marked by incessant, aimless laughter. Uh huh. Uh huh. That is so legit creepy.

00:17:20 And so he would just be walking around, laughing to himself. Oh God. People believed that he was a quote unquote, "halfwit" other people thought he was like, crazed, and were like, afraid of him. Yeah. I think both of those are probably fair. All right.

00:17:36 A little bit of both. Texas Chainsaw? There wasn't a laughter in the Sawyer family. Jill. There wasn't. Jill. There wasn't a laughter.

00:17:47 Were they crazed halfwits? That's fair. Okay. That's fair. Lastly, let's talk about Kate. She too was notable in the area, Jill, for her abilities, abilities as a medium and herbalist, just like Ma. Apparently Jill, she was beautiful and alluring. She was petite with Auburn hair. Bitch. This is important. She was the most socially well adjusted. So like people didn't look at her and run. [That's such a low bar.]

00:18:23 Right. They didn't find her like, unsettling or, or scary and like crazy. Um, but she was, she used her charismatic charms to give lectures on topics, such as free love and spiritualism. And she conducted seances to connect people with their loved ones who had been dearly departed. However, not everybody, not everybody liked her or was charmed by her, despite her magnetism and, and, and charms. Um, there were people in the town. Well, I call it town. It really wasn't a town. There were people in the settlement who said that she was demonic and, and who said that she should not be trusted.

00:19:14 Well, these people sound like a hoot and holler. I gotta tell you. Oh, my God. Honestly. Okay. Just stop. I have a question. Yeah.

00:19:25 Yeah. I really mean this. So tell me, like, be, you know, be objective. Throughout history, there have been explicit biases towards spiritualists and mediumships and psychics and all that, right? Mediums. Yeah. Mediums, like for sure. Right? It's true. So, we ourselves are kind of in the closet too. Like our professionals and our colleagues that we have to deal with, right? That's true. What if these people were just being a bunch of dicks, not the Benders, but like the people of the settlement. What if they were being, like, just rude to the Benders because they were different, like more eccentric, right? Like the way people treated the Munsters on the TV show in the sixties? Think about it.

00:20:12 The Munsters looked like freaks, but they were really just nice normal people. Right. But they weren't murderers, But we don't know that these people murdered anybody yet. We just have people missing. Is it the laughing boy? I think it's the evidence. I think it's the stuff they found on their land.

00:20:29 So can we get there, Jill? Jennifer, we're bringing people along. All right. So to say that, uh, John Jr. having aimless fits of laughter is odd, is an understatement.

Okay. For real, I would address it with Kate. I would be like, Hey, what about your brother, bro? Like, why, why is that happening? That's true.

00:20:58 Like for sure. I wouldn't sit next to him in class. No, no, no. But honestly, before you found any of the bodies on the land, wouldn't you be like, you know what I mean? Like, yeah.

let's not even go there cause there's, I mean, there's evidence, Jill. There's evidence. I don't want to tiptoe around this. Okay. So let's get to the bodies that you speak of. Let's get to the missing people.

00:21:23 These people. They're crazy. Okay. So let's get to the bodies that you speak of... the missing people. Tell me about them because fuck this outline cause we're not using it. Just cut to the chase, man. Okay. Okay. Who's missing?

00:21:43 This is actually really sad. This, this part makes me really sad. So Murderpedia, Murderpedia explains that it was the winter of 1872 and a man named George Longcor was, was traveling with his infant daughter, Mary Ann. She was just a baby. They left Independence, Kansas to resettle in Iowa, and they were never seen again. They were on this trail, Jill. They were on this trail. In the spring of 1873, Longcor's former neighbor, Dr. York, went looking for them, and he questioned different homesteaders along the trail, trying to find what happened to George Longcor and little Mary Ann. That's a really good friend. Totally. So, Dr. York goes and he starts, he, he starts following the trail and asking the different homesteaders if they had seen George Longcor and his infant daughter, but he never returned home.

00:22:50 Now, Dr. York happened to have two brothers and one of them was a Senator in the state of Kansas. He knew his brother's travel plans, and when he failed to return home, he began an all-out search for his brother, Dr. York. That's really sweet. Mm Hmm. Now it, and it was totally organized. I mean, this guy had money. He had means. It was like an organized search. So they had some 50 men questioning travelers along the trail and visiting all of these homesteads along the way. Mm hmm. Apparently on March 28th, 1873 Colonel York, the brother of Dr. York, who's, who's led this search for him, Colonel York arrived at the Benders inn with another man, Mr. Johnson. And he talked to them and he said, Hey, I'm looking for my brother. His name is Dr. York. He went missing and he asked the Benders if they had seen him, and the Benders admitted that Dr. York did stay with them and then said, oh, maybe he ran into some trouble with the Indians.

00:24:02 Can you just stop for a second? I know that a lot of Quentin Tarantino's film work doesn't hold up under today's scrutiny, but this scene with Colonel York going to the Bender Inn and like, having laughing John Jr. and like the whole scene needs to be done.

00:24:19 Yes. I feel like it would be the funniest dialogue, like, Like, um, hey, what's wrong with him? Like Quentin Tarantino really needs to look at this as like an option, at least for the scene, just for my amusement.

00:24:37 You should send an email to his people. Right. Strongly worded. So they were like, oh yeah, maybe the Indians got him. I know. And Colonel York agreed. He's like, yeah, maybe. And he stayed for dinner. Wow. Yeah. So he keeps going on his investigation with his 50 men. He's talking to people in the area. Well, he finds out through talking to, to the neighbors that, um, someone saw a woman fleeing from the inn, after being threatened with knives by Ma.

00:25:14 So in case you were able just to like explain John Jr away, um, maybe have a second look at them because Ma chases people with knives.

00:25:24 Yeah. There you go. There you go. So Colonel York goes back to the inn, confronts Ma and Ma like loses her shit. Like she goes into this rage and accuses the woman, the one who ran, the one whom she chased with knives out of her house, accuses this woman of being a witch, a witch who cursed her coffee no less. And then honestly though,

00:25:54 This man comes into her inn accusing her of, he just didn't know her at all. That is just the word on the street.

00:26:01 Again. If we're going to accuse them, we need some evidence. We can't just be like, they look crazy. The kid won't stop laughing. We need evidence. I find it more than a little troubling that in this story you're identifying with the Benders. Just saying. They are... we have a lot in common. Oh.

00:26:21 Both me and Pa are very tall. You and Ma are meaty. You are so fucked up. And there's the laughing. [This is so mean.] And there's the laughing. Okay. All right.

00:26:42 So then she, she orders York and his men out of her house, you know, she's like, get the hell out. Sure. Now what does Kate do? I like this part.

00:26:55 This is my girl right here. Kate, what'd you do? Honestly, Jill, before York leaves, [it's funny.] Kate's like, Hey, [Gimme that James Beckwourth voice] after mom cools down a bit. You should come back on Friday night and I'll use my clairvoyant abilities to help you find your brother. Ooh, my, my, young Kate. . So she makes that proposition, but they, they don't ever go back. He doesn't meet her on Friday night to experience her quote unquote "clairvoyant abilities."

00:27:35 He should have dropped her a note though, just explaining that it wasn't going to work out. Maybe he did, but the point is, after this encounter, he knew that the Benders had something to do with his brother's, his brother's disappearance. He knew after, after all this because they weren't really subtle.

00:27:52 But honestly he's still on my side because he's like, instead of all, gung-ho like burning them at the stake. He's like, we need evidence. True. That is very true. Right.

00:28:02 Right. He insisted, in fact, that evidence be found, but he was on it. Okay. Now around this time, neighboring communities began to make accusations that the Osage people, the Osage, were responsible for the disappearances. I mean, honestly. Do you believe this? Oh, Jesus. To add insult to injury, they move them off their land, and now they're like, oh, they're the one's responsible. Okay. There is actually a meeting. There was like a town meeting, and they, they met at Osage Township in the Harmony Grove Schoolhouse, and 75 local people, including Colonel York and John Bender Sr., and John Bender. Jr. So, Pa and Laughity Laugh are both there accusing the Osage of these disappearances.

00:28:54 I just had a flash of me sitting next to dad at church, and if I were to start laughing, I would get my ass beat. I don't understand why John, Pa, would bring Laughity Laugh to the town meeting, like he's gonna, like honestly. Wow. They had a meeting. They accused the Osage, but people were like, all right, we are going to search every homestead in this area, which would include the Bender's homestead. Exactly good. Okay. So three days later...

00:29:23 There's a lot of properties that need to be searched. And the properties are large. The properties are large, they need to be searched, and there's, there was bad weather to be honest.

00:29:34 Okay. So, there's a hold up there. Yeah, exactly. Well, they should have started with the Bender property because three days later, [Everyone is not like you] three days later, [Judgy McJudgerson.]

00:29:49 This guy, Billy Tole... [McJudge a lot] Tole is driving his cattle passed the Bender property. And he notices, Hey, nobody's home at the inn. It's abandoned. And not only is it

abandoned and this is, I think the worst crime of all, their farm animals were unfed. That's not right.

00:30:12 She really does believe that. She really does believe that. She like, told me she was like, reading horrible things that happened to people, and then she's like, but the animals.

00:30:21 So Billy Tole reported that... he reported this to the local governance and here's where the inclement weather comes in because the weather was bad, it was like several days before people could get out there and like, investigate and see, all right so where are they? What's going on? Jill, here's your evidence. They start probing the ground around the cabin. They find disturbed soil and the vegetable garden and the orchard. And there they find Dr. York's body. He was buried face down with his feet, barely below the surface.

00:31:02 See, now I feel it's appropriate for you to talk shit. Like all before. I think like, you might have gotten a feeling, but you didn't have any evidence, and I think like, now it's appropriate. Like yeah, now they're murderers. I get it. That laughing wasn't right. That laughing wasn't right. Go on. Thank you, Jill. . I'm feeling you now. I'm feeling you. All right.

00:31:20 They continued searching until after midnight and they found another nine suspected grave sites. Another eight bodies were found in seven of the nine suspected graves. And there was a body found in the well, along with a number of body parts. Oh my God. All of the bodies found had had their heads bashed in with a hammer and their throats cut. And it was reported in the newspapers that all had been quote unquote "indecently mutilated," which makes me wonder, what would have been like a decent mutilation? I don't know. It's just a question. Do you really want me to answer that? No. The part of the anatomy. Yeah. That's what they mean, Jen. I don't want to go there.

00:32:18 Well, you were there. I was just, I'm just sitting here reading the outline. The body of a young girl was found with no injuries sufficient to cause death. And it was speculated that she had been strangled or buried alive. That was a little Mary Ann, maybe.

00:32:38 So, here's the list of victims. And I only bring it up and I know this is boring cause we're basically just reading a list of names, but in reality, this story really is about them because that's a horrible way to die and we didn't even get into the details. So I'm just going to name off the names of the people we know were found to be murdered and, and buried on that property. Right. There was a Benjamin M. Brown. There was a John Boyle.

00:33:08 Jack Boilie. Alfonzo Sconce. G. W. Loncher and his daughter, his young daughter, Mary Loncher, W.F. McGrotty. H.F. McKenzie. And then a man just known to be "small man," which again, I find very offensive because if I were found, they would be like "large woman, big feet, bad knees." Unidentified woman, and a man named Jones that apparently they identified as someone from Howard County, but they couldn't say for sure,

00:33:48 But these, Yeah. So these people aren't like the Munsters at all. They are more like the Sawyers. Jen, you're absolutely right. Yeah. Although you jumped the gun on it. I know, but I just can't play along like that. Like these people are bad news. I couldn't even pretend they weren't.

00:34:04 Yeah, well, you know what? I just hope that people, I like that in the time because they were spiritualist and kind of like, not integrated, like, like they were like eccentrics in society that it wasn't just because they were weird or did things that other people didn't find like, normal, you know what I mean? They give mediums and spiritualists a bad name. I agree with that. And honestly, they probably weren't... . they just use that as a guise to be a part of this community or

this settlement to be along the trail, is really what they did. I don't think they had any special power. I think they used that to gain notoriety, to get people interested in their inn, along the trail, and so I'm just hoping that people don't judge mediums and spiritualists like that. That's all I'm saying. That's all I'm saying.

00:34:56 I think they said that they were mediums and spiritualists and were into witchcraft to keep people away, to keep people afraid of them because [Really?] yes, because if you have a reputation for being a witch, you're not going to cross that person. If you believe that that old lady is really a witch, then I think you're gonna like, give her, give her her space and not mess with her.

00:35:24 I think both things are true because I think, although a lot of people were afraid of Ma, Kate was putting ads in the newspaper. [That's true.] Trying to get people to come to the Inn. That is definitely true. So I think both things can be true.

00:35:37 Point taken. I agree. Okay. So, how did they get away with this? How did they do it? Well, I think this, this is really the question. So as you pointed out many times, these people are weird, not just because of the mediumship and the spiritualism. These people are like, legitimately weird.

00:35:53 We have "laughy guy". We have scary, wild Pa. We have crazy ass Ma, who's just freaking people out with her gaze. Right? Why would people stop there? How did people actually stay there? Can you explain how they did it? Like what the hell? Cause I'm telling you right now, as soon as I see John Jr. I'm leaving.

00:36:13 No kidding. No kidding. [Right now] Here's the thing, not everybody did stay. Some people did run and they escaped. And that's how the authorities at the time were able to put the pieces together and learn how the Benders were killing people. And here's what they did. There's a Mental Floss article that describes it. And it says it's called, "Bloody Benders: America's First Serial Killers," which I don't know if that's true, but that's the title of it, so we're just going to go with it. Exactly. It says investigators, investigators later pieced together the group's modus operandi. It's believed that guests at the inn were urged to sit against the separating curtain. Remember that canvas that I was talking to you about? Right. So guests were urged to sit there by that curtain. And while they were dining, they would be hit on the head with a hammer from behind the curtain. And then their body was dropped into a trap door, beneath them into the cellar where one of the Bender's slit their throat before stripping the body of its valuables. Yeah. Oh my God. That's how they did it.

00:37:29 So, according to another source Justice Story, "The Bloody Benders, The Family Who Kills Together, Stays Together," authorities believed that the Benders had created an assembly line of murder. Well, that's organized. And that really appeals to my sense of [efficiency?] structure. Yes, exactly. Authorities believed that they created an assembly line of murder. Kate would beguile the victims, coaxing them to close their eyes so that she could hypnotize them, and then old man Bender, Pa would crush their skulls with a sledge hammer. Jesus. And then they toss them in the cellar and then wait for the right time to bury them in the garden. Probably at night, right? There was a survivor. His name was Mr. Wetzell.

00:38:25 God bless you, Mr. Wetzell, cause my God, I would have shit my pants so bad. Mr. Wetzell recalled a time when he had been at the inn, and he was like, I don't want to sit by the curtain.

00:38:38 And by the way, the curtain had bloodstains on it. Oh wow. Oh wow. Way to be perceptive, Mr. Wetzell. PSA. Jen, do the PSA. Here is the PSA: If someone is urging you to sit next to a bloody curtain, you say no, and you run

00:38:56 Honestly, for real, like all joking aside. We are still animals and mammals and the best metaphor I can give you or analogy to this situation is that a squirrel in the woods hears a noise, feels uneasy and just books out of there. It doesn't say sorry. It doesn't say, oh, I hope I'm not offending you. It just gets the hell out. If you're in a situation, whether there's a bloodstain curtain or not, and you feel uneasy, just get the hell out. Don't apologize. Don't be like, oh, this is rude to me. Just get the hell out. Be the squirrel. Be the squirrel. Save your life.

00:39:31 That's an excellent point. You need to follow your gut for sure. And we're going to do a bonus on your experience with the Westside Rapist. Shut up. Oh my God, Jennifer, no we're not. Oh, that's exciting!

00:39:43 So bonus. Okay. Back to the story. Okay. So Mr. Wetzell refused. Okay. Oh, by the way, spoiler alert. I am not the Westside Rapist. Please continue. That ain't me. I'm glad you cleared that up. When he refused to sit by the bloodstained canvas, Ma got angry and she yelled abusively. She like, lost her shit basically. And, and then, and then just as she's losing her shit, one of the male Benders, we don't know if it was Pa or Laughing John, jumped out from behind the curtain and Mr. Wetzell just ran out of there. Uh, uh. Yeah. And there was another man called William Pickering who told almost an identical story. So you have two of these witnesses, independent of each other, talking about how they did it. And so that's how the authorities found out

00:40:35 That is worst case scenario. Think about it. Traumatizing, for sure. Oh my God. Oh no, because where are they running to? You're like on a settlement. You're at a 165 acre homestead. You are running through like, open fields. You're getting me scared. I know, it's frickin frightening.

00:40:59 If they wanted to, if they were, I don't know if they were like, physically inclined to, they could've, like, run after you. Anyway. Anyway, another PSA. Cardio, cardio. Do your cardio! In case you have to run from Laughy Guy or murderous Ma and Pa. Oh, okay. So Jennifer, what did the investigators say was the motive to these murders? Like what is going on? Why were they doing that?

00:41:28 Honestly, they believed that they wanted the money and the goods off of these people, the family was stealing stuff. They were stealing money, livestock, and any valuables from these victims. Oh my gosh. So, so you said, said that their farm was abandoned. Yeah. What happens to them? Um, oh my gosh. Where are the Benders?

00:41:54 This is the most upsetting part of all. Okay. So there was a huge effort to find them. Like when you say huge effort, you mean like all kinds of people were being suspected, questioned, detained. The authorities found a guy that was said to be friends with like John Bender and they would hang him until he passed out. Take him down, question him when he wouldn't answer questions, they would hang them again. They did that like three times. [Yeah, that's not...] They basically were torturing people. They absolutely were. That's not right. I'm going to go on the record and say that that's not right. You should not torture people.

00:42:31 You took a sensible turn in this episode. Finally. Right. The governor issued a \$2,000 reward. No one was ever found, Jill. Not a one. No one was ever found. Were there any leads? Well, detectives followed wagon tracks and discovered that Bender's wagon. It was abandoned

with a starving team of horses. No. Oh God. I know, that's the saddest thing. Poor babies. Okay. And they found the wagon, um, outside of Thayer, Kansas, about 12 miles north of the inn, and it was confirmed that in Thayer, the family bought tickets, bought railroad tickets, uh, for Humboldt, Kansas. And then apparently they think at Chanute, Kansas is where John Jr. and Kate left the train and caught another train to Texas. Wow. So they're basically taking the trains to different parts and they separated at some point. Yeah. And then from there, it's believed that they traveled and by they, we don't really know, but it's possible that the entire pack or the entire band met up in the border region between Texas and New Mexico. but it was a really unsafe place to go, and so law men who followed outlaws into that area often never returned. And so once they could get to this kind of no man's land, it was just too dangerous for the lawmen to chase them there.

00:44:10 Wow. Were there any other notable means in which the Benders were said to have escaped? You mean theories? Yes. Give me some notable theories out there. Some thought that they fled to Mexico. I can see that. Is this--- You wrote this outline. I don't believe this one. This is so-- I'm not kidding. That they escaped like the Wizard of Oz in a hot air balloon? You're an asshole. I put that in. They escaped Oz style, like the Wizard of Oz in a hot air balloon. That is a real theory. I'm not kidding you. When were hot air balloons invented? Okay. I'm looking right now. I'll bet you- [I'm not betting you] because [No, I believe you] I believe you already owe me like \$5,000 for bets like this. Whatever.

00:44:54 Okay. When were hot air balloons invented? Okay. You're right. 1783 was the earliest hot air balloon. That's when it was invented. Still though, that shit wasn't safe. That couldn't have been safe. It's not safe now. I know, right?

00:45:12 And there were still other theories that they had been shot while in pursuit, but if that's true, then someone would have claimed the reward and nobody ever did. Hell to the yeah. \$2,000 today I'd be claiming that reward. Right? Yeah. I mean, Nobody knows what happened to them, and there are all these stories and legends that have come out of this incredible, incredible story.

00:45:34 Okay, so Indulge me for a minute. Let's talk about our psychic impressions about the legend itself. Mm.

00:45:40 I want to be honest, you really did most of the research and I know you have some really strong psychic impressions and I think they jive with me, but I want you to talk about it, cause this is really, this is really you. I don't think these people were related at all. Are you serious? I swear to God, I don't think-- [You think these freaks just happened to find each other?]

00:46:00 I think that they were involved in a larger community, like a syndicate of crime, because even if these people were just killing and getting rid of them, there would have to be other criminals taking the goods that they got, that they stole from these victims. Right? If some of these victims had horses, mules, wagons, they would have to get rid of them. Right. Who it's not going to be the other four families, um, like in the spiritualist communities and how plausible is it that they all were able to escape unless there was a larger group that they were able to absorb into and kind of act like a chameleon. Right? So that's why I think. That they weren't related, that they're a part of a larger ring of crime, whether officially or not, like, I'm not saying they were like, you know, organized, like it wasn't like a mafia.

00:46:53 You get what I'm saying? Interesting. Yeah. But definitely I also feel like they also enjoyed this work. They were evil. I feel they'll be getting off on it. I feel that, too. It wasn't just about the money. They were enjoying scaring people. Kate was enjoying bringing them in, getting them fooled. Ma was enjoying throwing her weight around. John was happy, just laughing. Let's be honest, John Jr.? He, he was all in with the laughter, but Pa? He was bashing brains and slitting throats and he liked it. It's really upsetting. And to be honest, I, that they kept John Jr around just for the muscle, cause he was like, lean, young and he can move a body. He can dig a ditch. Like, let's be honest. I also think that they were doing this for years in different ways. Right. I think they came together with this assembly line of murder plan that they were able to band together to get it done, but I think they might've done this alone or in different ways with different other people or parties. So that's what I think.

00:47:59 And what do you think happened to them? Where, where do you think... what'd you think about their whereabouts after the fact? Where did they go?

00:48:06 I think they split up and I think that they were able to, like I say, um, to kind of get lost in different areas of the country and be absorbed into different communities and different scams, to be honest cause they were just scammers. It must've been so easy back then just to like, change your identity, take a new name, show up somewhere new. People were traveling all, all, all the time for legit reasons, you know? Traveling out west for a new life. Right. Interesting. Jill, I like your theory. I think it does ring true to me, [thanks] but tell me who do you think? Okay. So who is the voiceless? Do you think it's the obvious answer that it's the victims of this, this Bender group?

00:48:50 Honestly, I think it's more than that. The victims like, legitimately died in the most horrible, frightening way possible. And I don't want to downplay that, but when the officials got

00:49:05 To the Bender farm and they were going through the abandoned property on the farm, they had found a old German Bible that belonged to-- said to have belonged to-- John Jr or John Sr, based on the inscription in the Bible. But it was John Jr. who is often seen in possession of the Bible. And people actually call John Jr., "The Bible Reader." Right? Interesting. So the inscription in the Bible, really when they translated it to English, was just like: "John Bender born 1848, yada yada yada..." Different names of family members that I was able not to track down. But what I think the Bible really is, is I think it's a trophy from a murder, probably committed by John Jr. because he was the one that held the Bible close to him. And I think John Sr just was a better fit for the age range given in the Bible. And that's how the family adopted the name, the Bender family. So John Sr took the identity of the owner of the Bible who was probably killed by John Jr. and presumably his family as well.

00:50:22 So what you're saying is that John Bender, the man whose name is inscribed in this Bible, was a victim of these people. That's what I really truly believe. And their name isn't Bender at all.

00:50:38 No. They're not related. Their name isn't Bender. Wow. They have this Bible that is a trophy. You know how serial killers have trophies?

00:50:47 Yeah, no, I totally get it. So then who's the, who's the voiceless. It would be the real John Bender.

00:50:55 His name is all, is like a legend to be associated with these people that killed him and not in the right way. He's not looked at as the victor or the victim. He's looked at as the, the murderous monster.

00:51:07 Wow. And all of those, every website, The Bloody Benders, the articles from the time and even modern day. Yes. And tell me, oh, even though the current land. Yes. Tell me about that. Tell me about the current land.

00:51:24 So, where the property, which is now destroyed, there is a historical marker there naming the Bender family as the murderers. And still, on the land today, there are mounds similar to Native American burial mounds that were unclaimed victims of the so-called Bender family... still.

00:51:43 Oh my gosh. So the Bender mounds, were we there, Jill, when we were driving? You're going to absolutely kill me. So, funny story. You wanted me to go east and we just, I couldn't because we were really running out of time [and we needed swim coverups.] Right. And you were like, I feel called and I feel it over here and I'm like, oh, that's so cool. Let's go to TJ's. Okay.

00:52:13 So, no, we didn't actually make it there cause we had to get to Topeka. So but it was east? It was east. If I would have followed your directions, we would've been there. And of course I was picking up on the Osage Trail, [Yes] which this family and I, I use the word family now loosely because we don't believe that they were true family, but this group of people who assume the name Benders lived there, their inn was on the great Osage Trail. And they, they took advantage of the travelers along that trail to commit their murderous deeds. Oh my God. Right. Your hits?

00:52:51 Oh ,my hits? I mean they're so self explanatory. The body in the well. Evil in Kansas Serial killer. The stabbing. The slitting the throat. Multiple people missing. Yeah. I mean, I'm convinced.

00:53:05 This was a strong one, and I totally agree with you now in hindsight, that yes, I should have went east and, it was not the serial killer from modern day Wichita. I'm with you on that. You were right.

00:53:17 Thank you. And I, but I am glad we had swimsuit coverups. Yeah, for sure. For sure. All right. You'll tell the people where can find us well,

00:53:26 Find us on our website CommonMystics.net. Check us out on our Facebook and Insta page. Common Mystics podcast. Listen in on Audible. Yeah. Amazon, Tuned in, Stitcher, Spotify, Google Podcasts and Apple Podcasts where you can leave us a positive review, so other people can find us. Goodnight. Goodnight. And thank you, India.