

**Murder, Revenge and the Occult in 1890's St. Louis**

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# *A Season of Revenge*

**The Mound City Serial Murder File**

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## About the Author

Growing up in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and especially in Kings Mountain, enhanced an interest in the American Revolution that was birthed at an early age with a visit to the Kings Mountain National Military Park. Yearly family reunions at nearby Lake Crawford, in the South Carolina portion of the park, gave easy access to visits to the National Park Museum, walks along the trails, and never missing a close up view of the gravesite of Major Patrick Ferguson and an opportunity to throw another rock onto the rock pile signifying the grave and a climb to the top of the rock pile to declare, "I am King of this Mountain." A lifelong dream of authoring a book based on my actual ancestors, came to reality. Living near the Kings Mountain National Park and also, a short distance from the Cowpens National Park only serves to fuel my imagination, and desire to share even more stories based on the history of the United States.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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My wife Nancy, first of all. She is my main rock. Tracy Dunn-Wyatt, Stan Wyatt, Jamie and Kim Dunn, Jason and Jennifer Dunn, Jim and Joy Kimsey, Belinda Evans, Pam Champion, and Charlene Shepard. These are the remaining rocks that make up the foundation.

PJ DUNN

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## **CHAPTER 1    The Murder of Inez Baker**

Mac O'Hara and his wife, Ella, sat on the veranda of their home looking out over the mighty Mississippi River. O'Hara reminisced about the last few years. He had retired from the St. Louis Police, married his love, Ella, and they had bought their dream home. O'Hara thought about how fortunate he had been, and how he had been in the right place at the right time. He and his partners had built a club, the High Cotton Club that had become the premier attraction of the St. Louis nightlife.

“Ella, honey,” O'Hara began. “I was asked yesterday, if I would like to buy a riverboat. What do you think?”

“Mac, I think it's a wonderful idea if you want to do it.” Ella said. O'Hara was quiet for a few moments.

“I guess that's something I'll have to think about.” O'Hara replied.

There was a knock on the door, and Ella got up to answer it. When she opened the door, a surprised smile adorned her face.

“Wallace! Wallace Jarrett. Well what a pleasant surprise this is. It's so good to see you. I haven't seen you since Mac retired from the police department.”

“Yes, Ma’am, Ms. Ella. It has been a while. Is the Sarge at home?” Jarrett asked referring to O’Hara.

“Yes he is. He is out on the veranda. Come along and I’ll take you to him.” Ella said, as she took Jarrett by the arm.

Approaching the door, Ella called out to O’Hara, “Mac, look who is here.” O’Hara turned to see Jarrett come through the door.

“Wallace Butts,” O’Hara yelled and laughed heartily. Jarrett also laughed, as Ella looked puzzled.

Still laughing, O’Hara looked at Ella and began to explain the joke. When O’Hara, Jarrett, and Pitts, captured the arsonist who set fire to the High Cotton Club, killing Ollie, there was a gunfight, and Jarrett was shot through the buttocks, both cheeks. It had been a standard joke at the department since that time to refer to Wallace as ‘Butts’.

“Good to see you, Wally. Have a seat pal, if you don’t have too much trouble sitting.” They laughed heartily again. “Ella, would you get Wally something to drink? What brings you to see the old Sarge?” O’Hara asked.

“Sarge, I need some help. I need some help with a case.”

“But I’m retired now, Wally.” O’Hara injected.



“I know Sarge, but this is a real strange situation that has all of us baffled. All of us at the precinct agreed, if anybody would have an insight into this one, it would be Sergeant Mac O’Hara.”

“Okay, Wally. Let’s hear it, and don’t mind Ella, she knows all my secrets.” O’Hara leaned back.

“You remember Doc Baker don’t you? Doc’s wife Inez disappeared about a week and a half ago and we have been searching hard, wondering if she had just left home or if there was foul play. Well, we found her body yesterday. The body was wrapped in burlap, like what is used on a cotton bale, and dumped in a ditch behind the old feed mill down next to the river.” Jarrett sat on the edge of his seat, appearing very nervous and sweating profusely. O’Hara and Ella could tell whatever he was about to say really bothered him. “Sarge,” he began, but had to clear his throat.

“Sarge, it’s hard to talk about. Sarge, she had been hanged, both hands and both feet amputated. Her tongue had been cut out and Sarge, she was eviscerated. All of her internal organs were missing.” There was deadly silence.

Finally O’Hara spoke, “Wally, what kind of evidence do you have?”

Wally shook his head. "Next to nothing Sarge." O'Hara stood up, walked over to the rock wall edging the veranda, and looked out toward the river. He watched as a paddleboat appeared from the North traveling to the South. A barge was moored on the West side across the river from the cabin unloading bales of cotton.

Without turning around O'Hara spoke, "do you know where the murder took place?"

Again shaking his head, Wally replied, "no Sarge. The body was dumped at the scene where it was found. No blood trail, no footprints, no horse or wagon tracks were found. It's as if the body was dropped from mid-air into the ditch. The feed mill was searched from top to bottom and all the other abandoned buildings in the area also. Persons who live or work in the area were all interviewed, but no leads."

Ella had been very quiet while Wally described the crime. "What about occupied buildings in the area?" She asked. "Homes, barns and out buildings, were these searched?" Wally hesitated.

"Well, Wally, were they searched?" O'Hara pressed for an answer.

"Most were." Wally replied.

“Most?” O’Hara said.

“The residences on the north side of the track, well, that’s influential people, mayor, councilmen and such and the Chief said not to bother searching there.”

“Does the Chief want to solve this crime or not? We need to take a trip over to the old feed mill, Wally. Ella, come along if you like.”

“Does that mean you are going to help us, Sarge?” Wally asked.

“I guess it does.” O’Hara said.

Ella spoke up, “me too.”

It was about a twenty-minute trip over to the old mill. Two officers were guarding the scene to keep anyone from disturbing anything. O’Hara stopped and stood in the street for several minutes, looking at the old mill. It was a wooden structure in need of some paint. Most of the windows were broken and there was a hole in the roof, as well as a hole in one of the outside walls. The front had a double door entrance. One door was missing and the other hanging by one hinge. The porch, which doubled as a loading dock was about twelve feet wide and extended from one corner of

the front of the sixty-foot wide building to the other. The porch itself was in decent shape. No boards were missing or broken. O'Hara walked up on the porch, followed by Ella and Wally. The porch was quite sturdy, but the roof over the porch was drooping down on one end where it was missing a support post. O'Hara walked slowly, looking at all details.

## **CHAPTER 2 The Crawlspace and the Hobos**

Entering the front door O'Hara could see tracks in the dust on the floor, where investigators had already walked through. There were two desks to the right side of the approximately ten by fifteen room, which obviously was a former office. One of the desks was missing a leg and the other had remnants of a ladder back chair lying on the floor behind it. There was an old dolly or hand truck that was missing one wheel leaned up in the opposite corner from the desks. An old calendar was hanging on the wall behind the desks. The calendar was from the year 1881 and was turned to the month of June. The date of June 16 on the Calendar had an X drawn through it. O'Hara stopped and looked at the calendar.

“That’s strange.” O'Hara commented. “June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1881, has an X over it. Today is June 17, 1889. Wally, was Inez Baker killed a couple of days ago?”

“The Coroner said he thought so.” Wally answered. “Hmmm, strange.” O'Hara mumbled. “That X was recently drawn over the 16.”

The three continued to walk slowly through the office, and passed through a door opening into what appeared to be another office. The dust and cobwebs did not appear to have been disturbed. While Ella and Wally watched, O'Hara took a quick look around and backed out of the office. Moving to his right, another door opened into a smaller room. Papers were scattered all over the eight by ten room. Invoices, ledger pages, old calendars, payroll papers completely covered the floor, except for an area about 3 feet by 3 feet where the papers appeared to have been recently scattered. Mac used his foot to pull back the papers and exposed the wooden floor. The room was dark, so Wally stepped back into the large office and got a coal oil lamp and lit it to provide at least some visibility in the small room. O'Hara and Wally knelt in the corner, and O'Hara began to look closely at the floorboards. Grasping one board with the tips of his fingers, he pulled and it came up. He then pulled the remaining boards up. Taking the lamp, he leaned over and looked inside the floor opening. Suddenly there was movement in the opening, startling O'Hara. A large wharf rat emerged from the opening, causing Wally to jump and cringe, and

Ella to squeal with fear. The rat disappeared into the other rooms. O'Hara leaned over and again peered into the opening.

"Holy crap." O'Hara exclaimed. Wally and Ella leaned over also where they could see in the opening. There they saw a human skull, some bones and clothing. The skeleton was small, like a child, and the clothing appeared to be that of a young girl's dress.

O'Hara placed the boards back over the opening and he, Wallace and Ella moved out of the room, closing the door to keep it secure.

O'Hara addressed Wally, "go back to the station, get whatever equipment you think we may need and bring some help. We'll investigate this floor compartment better. Ella and I are just going to snoop around and see what else we might find. Also, send one of the officers in here to guard this room."

O'Hara's mind was racing. Could these remains be associated with the murder of Inez Baker? They still hadn't found the murder scene, an important part of Inez Baker's murder investigation.

O'Hara and Ella looked at each other without speaking. They slowly walked toward a door that led out into the production area of

the old mill. Most of the production machinery was still in the building, as if someone had just turned it off and walked away. The equipment was powered by water flow from the river being diverted into a channel, called a 'race', short for raceway. The diverted water turned a large water wheel, which in turn provided power to operate the milling machinery through a series of belts, pulleys and gears. It was not a very complicated arrangement. O'Hara and Ella looked at each piece of machinery for anything unusual or out of place. As they neared the rear door, Ella stopped. "Look at this Mac" she said. She was looking at a pedal powered grinding wheel. There were footprints in the dust from the grinding wheel leading back over about six feet to the tracks left by the previous investigators.

"Those could be footprints from someone checking out the grinder." O'Hara said.

Ella spoke as looked at the grinder, "the dust has been disturbed and there are fresh metal filings on the grinder and on the floor."

"Hmmm," Mac looked closely. "It looks like someone has been grinding something."



“Like maybe sharpening a knife?” Ella said.

“Yeah, like someone sharpening a knife.” O’Hara said then pulled his notepad from his pocket and scribbled a note.

The two then walked out on to the rear dock. There was lots of trash and old boards on the dock. There were several old half-empty bags of grain stacked against the wall. The grain left in the bags had soured, fermented, and then rotted producing a very pungent odor. Ella covered her mouth and nose with a handkerchief, but it really didn’t help. O’Hara laughed and poked fun at her. As they passed the rotted bags of grain, O’Hara saw an old portable scale, used to weigh the sacks of grain. Ella squealed as another wharf rat ran across the dock. O’Hara stood there on the dock looking out toward the back lot and the ditch where Inez’s body was found.

The lot was leveled out for about fifty feet from the dock, and then dropped off sharply into a ditch that was about eighteen to twenty feet deep. The other side of the ditch also rose sharply up about twelve feet to the beginnings of a railroad bed and then rose another eight feet. The railroad tracks were old and used very little.

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