
CRIME STORIES OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Kent State University Press, which publishes two journals as well as 20–30 books each year, is known for a variety of fields including history, literature and regional studies—and a series of current books about true crime history for both a general and scholarly audience.

The spark for developing the True Crime History Series was Albert Borowitz's *Blood and Ink: An International Guide to Fact-Based Crime Literature*, which The Kent State University Press published in 2002. His 586-page annotated bibliography provides a broad selection of true crime accounts from the 17th through 20th centuries, as well as literary works based on true crime incidents. It includes books from his extensive personal library, which he and his wife, Helen Osterman Borowitz, began donating to Kent State in 1989.

In 2003, the Press engaged Albert Borowitz as its true crime history editor, and the first books in the series were published in 2005.

Susan Wadsworth-Booth, director of The Kent State University Press, says the Press has a reputation for publishing books that are highly researched and well documented, including those devoted to true crime. That reputation and a surge in the general public's interest have raised the publisher's profile among fans of the genre.

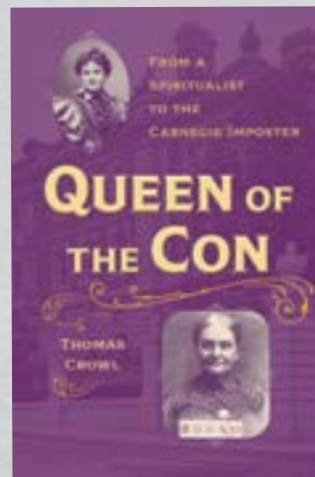
Books in the True Crime History Series often are featured on the popular literary website CrimeReads. They also have been featured on true crime podcasts, and a few have been licensed for film or TV rights. One of the series' authors, James Badal, has appeared on Court TV to discuss cases in his books.

Wadsworth-Booth says the Press has become known among writers for publishing books on intriguing and thought-provoking crime cases. That has resulted in an increase in book proposals, not all of which meet the publisher's standards. "We don't want to publish books that are just sensational or 'ripped from the headlines,'" she says. "We are committed to true crime stories that are genuinely significant in historical terms—those that have important context in cultural, psychological, sociological, political or legal areas.

"I believe that these stories, in part, show us both the best and worst of human nature, and we can all identify with that in some way," she adds. "I also think we all want to understand mystery. What are the cultural and sociological factors that fed into this act of violence, or what factors led to someone being accused or prosecuted? What can we learn about our systems of justice, of checks and balances, that can help explain our current culture? And, of course, are there people in these stories with whom we sympathize? That's the part that most captures my imagination."

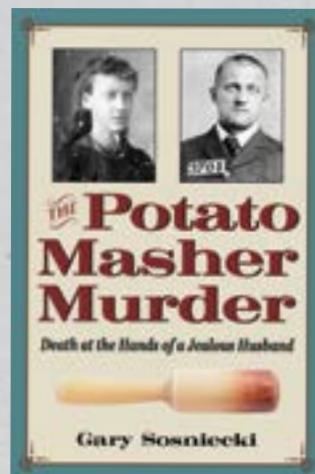
—Candace Goforth DeSantis, BS '94

Two recent publications from the True Crime History Series:



Queen of the Con: From a Spiritualist to the Carnegie Imposter by Thomas Crowl (The Kent State University Press, Oct. 26, 2021) tells the true story of Cassie Chadwick, a successful swindler and “one of the top 10 imposters of all time,” according to *Time* magazine. Posing as the illegitimate daughter of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, she borrowed \$2 million (approximately \$50 million today) throughout

northern Ohio, Pittsburgh, New York and Boston. When the fraud scheme collapsed in 1904, it was a nationwide sensation. The book leads readers to consider aspects of gender stereotypes, social and economic class structures, and the ways in which we humans can so often be fooled.



The Potato Masher Murder: Death at the Hands of a Jealous Husband by Gary Sosniecki (The Kent State University Press, June 30, 2020) is the true story of a murder that took place in 1906 and was front-page news throughout northern Indiana for much of a year—but was never spoken of by the family for several generations. It was written by the murdered wife's great-grandson, an award-winning journalist

who uncovered the family's dark secret. As he discovered, wife beating was commonplace in the early 20th century, and his book unearths the full story of two immigrant families united by love and torn apart by domestic violence. ⚡