

Blue Island, IL Back in the Day ...

### [The Murder Of Laura Buccholz](#)

From The Keyboard Of Joe Gatrell

January 23 was the 85th anniversary of one of the four most sensational murders in Blue Island history. On that cold, dark night during 1929, Laura Buccholz was murdered as she walked from the 123rd Street stop of the Rock Island Line to her family home on Hansen Street. What made this crime so sensational was the way Ms. Buchholz was murdered and that the killer, whose identity was known to all, was not brought to justice.

**Sandra O'Connor - Why not?**

JG ~ Ms. Buccholz and four other passengers exited the train just after 8 p.m. The others walked faster than she did and soon were ahead of her. When Laura Buccholz was all alone in front of the home at 2262 W. 123rd Street, someone emerged from the darkness and bludgeoned her with a solid object.

**Candy Schmidt - who did it**

JG ~ The offender at first carried and then dragged Ms. Buccholz into tall weeds near Paul Revere School. This much is known about the assault because a teacher named Rose Hanley, who was a border in the home at 2262 saw the offender remove his prey from the scene of the crime.

**Candy Schmidt was it the owner of the home?**

**Sandra O'Connor Again why was he not brought to justice?**

JG ~ Before this fiend could perpetrate anything more heinous, someone at the home on 123rd Street telephoned the police. It is believed that the sound of the siren approaching in the night scared off the killer. When Officer Frank St. Aubin and driver Earl Clow of the Blue Island Police Department arrived, they found only Ms. Buccholz, who was barely breathing. Laura Buccholz was transported to St. Francis Hospital, where she died shortly after arrival and before ever regaining consciousness.

**Nadine DeRango Frale I don't like stories with unhappy endings. (arms folded & pouting)**

**Beth Burdette Woessner Why was she killed?**

**Nadine DeRango Frale And who dun it?**

JG ~ Mayor Paul T. Klenk was so alarmed by this crime that the next evening, with the approval of the city council, he assigned members of American Legion Post 50 as an armed militia. With the Police Department, the men of Post 50 were to keep Blue Island safe from the killer who was on the loose in the community. Men stood guard at the local train stations. Taxi drivers were asked to report suspicious characters. The entire community was put on alert. A \$5,000 reward was offered to anyone who could help solve this terrible crime of which there were virtually no clues.

**Jennifer Bennett Finish the story everyone's sitting on the edge to here it all**

**Barbara Rice who was it?**

**Sandra O'Connor Yes please, I'm curious but it's too slow paced for me. Sorry no patience.**

**Nadine DeRango Frale Joe, at least show a commercial in between.**

**Barbara Rice ha ha ha laughing here by myself**

JG ~ There were clues, of course, and they emerged in the days afterward. People who had been in the vicinity at the time of the murder saw two men whose behaviors ranged from unusual to very strange. Passengers who rode the train with Laura Buccholz told investigators that a flagman for the railroad was on that train. Usually that would not be cause for suspicion except that the flagman, Leonard Mitchell, left his post. There was no reason for him to be on that train. Also, the manager of the 123rd Street railroad coal chute, George Morton, told police that a man with blood on his hands and sleeve entered the chute (building). He was so desperate to wash off the stains that, unable to find any water, he soaked his handkerchief in coffee and began to wipe them

**Jennifer Bennett Come on details can't wait**

**Kurt Wagner Hey Joe! All these impatient ladies want you to type faster!**

JG ~ The visitor to the coal chute was quite nervous. He asked George Morton if there was any possibility that he might be picked up by railroad police. Told that arrest was a strong possibility, the man fled into the night.

**Barbara Rice what**

**Jennifer Bennett Holy cow Batman !!!!!**

**Barbara Rice flagman**

JG ~ During the first week of the investigation, the two prime suspects were Leonard Mitchell and Ted Cramer. Mr. Cramer was a farmer from Orland Park. His suspicious activities included passing bad checks in Blue Island and purchasing a baseball bat. Police had not recovered the blunt instrument used to kill Laura Buccholz. Why would anyone purchase a baseball bat during January?

JG ~ Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Cramer were not strong suspects. There just wasn't anything except their unusual behaviors to go on. Then Chief of Police George Fiedler received a telephone call from Sheriff McDonald of LaPorte, Indiana. Sheriff McDonald had been contacted by a resident who wanted his help. Her son recently had returned home from Blue Island, where he lived and worked, and he was acting quite strangely.

**Cx Yo Mama-c Oh the suspense...!**

JG ~ The strange behaviors of Howard Coleman were much different than those of the other suspects. Mr. Coleman acted very nervous and he talked to himself. Among his ramblings were that he had murdered someone one. The details that he mentioned indicated that it might have been Laura Buccholz.

JG ~ The mother of Howard Coleman was quite worried about her son. She did not want him arrested and charged with murder. Before Chief Fielder could arrive to question Howard Coleman, his mother had him committed to the asylum at Logansport.

**Barbara Rice wow so that's why nobody got arrested**

**Jennifer Bennett How smart of her but wrong**

JG ~ This did not stop Chief Fielder. He went to the asylum at Logansport, and he brought George Morton with him. While Howard Coleman did not say anything to incriminate himself, Mr. Morton did identify him as the man with the bloody hands and sleeve who visited the coal chute on the night of the murder.

**Jacqueline Libby And???**

**Barbara Rice omg tears Jackie you crack me up**

JG ~ Perhaps because Howard Coleman was a patient at Logansport, the Blue Island Police Department did not attempt to extradite him. The Cook County Coroner did convene a jury in Blue

Island. The inquest was held at Hallinan Funeral Home. Blue Island residents served on the jury. Without any solid evidence, and most important without Howard Coleman, the jury found that Laura Buccholz had been murdered "by persons unknown." To this day, it is considered an open investigation.

**Sandra O'Connor Is Howard still alive?**

**Beth Burdette Woessner The end.... thanks Joe.**

**Kurt Wagner How about the other three?**

JG ~ An excellent question, Sandra! While Howard Coleman probably is not alive - he'd be over 100 - it would be good to know what became of him. I recently began just that investigation. When I learn the answer, I will pass it along.

**Kurt Wagner Joe, when can we buy your books?**

JG ~ I apologize to all for that sad tale and for prolonging it. The story is fascinating, and I do enjoy details.

JG ~ My history book should be available by February 7. I will make an announcement. Perhaps I will rent a blimp.

JG ~ By the way, does anyone out there have a blimp pilot's license?  
Jennifer Bennett Hurry up investigate we need answers

**Kurt Wagner Amazon? I hope.**

**Maria Alvarado Truschka wow just wow we never learn about this in school it would have made history a little more interesting and they have never put in the historical museum down in the library**

JG ~ Yes, the book will be available locally, through me, from Amazon and Barnes & Noble, and as an e-book.

**Sandra O'Connor Thank you Joe really enjoyed it.**

JG ~ Actually, Maria, some of the information is available at the library and in THE Blue Island History book, THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS.

JG ~ It was great visiting with everyone and spending time with you!

**Kurt Wagner Keep us posted Joe. I want an autographed copy.**

**Cx Yo Mama-c I like the paragraph by paragraph storytelling just fine, Joey. Captive audience. Mystery. Suspense. It's like story hour at the library. Narrated by JG ~ .**

**Sandra O'Connor Your so right Cx Yo MaMa-c!**

**Jennifer Bennett Better sign mine or I'll cry**

**Barbara Rice THANKS JOE GREAT STORY**

**Sharon Kleina-Gurgel Thanks for another great story, can't wait for your book to be out, please let us know!**

**Jennifer Bennett A new one every Saturday sounds good keeps us**

**Jennifer Bennett wanting more**

**Sherry Kooyenga Cordes Interesting story,**

**Sandee Craig Ok how was she killed and who was the killer?**

**Michael Mech No one tells it like you, JG ~ !**

**Jerry Palomo Where is Hansen Street?**

**Candy Schmidt Wow. All I can say. Wow**

**Nadine DeRango Frale This would be great for "Cold Case". With technology today? Who knows? Hmmm.....**

**Cindi Heffernan I came in late but loved the story and everyone's comments! I do enjoy your stories!**

**David Steinhart Great post Joe**

**Pat Wolf-Bennett Love your info, Joe!**

**Lin Pojeta Captivating storytelling. I enjoyed it.**

**Jacqueline Park I jumped in late on this, but it looks like a commuter named Laura got done in by a Loueyville Slugger baseball bat. How old was this Laura Buccolz anyway?**

**Nino Mares Great Story Joe!**

**Brian Fritz if I'm correct about the search I just performed, it is a very sad thing that Ms. Buchholz' father, Charles Buchholz passed away on Apr. 7th, 1929, not more than 3 months after she had died.**

**Brian Fritz Jacqueline Park, I am pretty sure she was 26 or 29 years old. I know that she was in her twenties.**

**Brian Fritz this is all new to me also. I just recently started searching the Internet myself on this subject matter, since I saw what Joe had written**

JG ~ Very good, Brian and Jaqueline. You would make good investigators. Laura Buccholz was 27 when she was killed. Her father died not long afterward. The Buccholz family was upset by the way law enforcement handled the case. One sibling said this precipitated the premature death of Charles Buccholz.

JG ~ Hansen Street was renamed Artesian. The Buccholz family lived one block west of Western and approximately one-half block north of 123rd Street. At that time, the area did not have many houses and businesses. There was a great deal of open space. Few street lights. No one outside except those commuters. You can imagine how dark it was walking up the hill at 123rd Street and how easy it was for someone to appear, perpetrate a crime, and then disappear.

JG ~ We'll never know why this sick man was in the area. He lived on DesPlaines Street, on the other side of town. Was he stalking Laura Buccholz? Was he in the area seeking a victim?

**Nadine DeRango Frale How old was he?**

JG ~ As for the blunt instrument used on Laura Buccholz, it was believed to be a two-by-four. There was no mention that the murder weapon ever was recovered. That was one reason Mr. Cramer quickly became a suspect. People were mad at him because he'd passed bad checks. The community was anxious/on edge about the murder. Every stranger was a suspect. Suddenly someone remembered that Mr. Cramer purchased a baseball bat. Investigators thought it might have been the instrument of death.

JG ~ There was no mention of the age of Howard Coleman. It is believed that he was approximately 25, but that is only a guess. My efforts to get information have been rejected by authorities in Indiana.

**Barbara Rice** Some day they might have to let some one look in to that

JG ~ Law enforcement and the family of Mr. Coleman can access the records.

**Barbara Rice** I figured law enforcement,

Brian Fritz maybe a petition in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act would help.

**Barbara Rice** Huh

JG ~ I submitted a FOIA. They sent me a letter with forms. Said I had to be a relative. I don't think they care anything about releasing information, just don't want to be sued.

**Nadine DeRango Frale** Since when do you need to be a relative to obtain info under the Freedom of Information Act that's of public record?

**Cx Yo Mama-c Joe**, is one of the barriers medical records? Logansport asylum was a medical facility. Medical privacy laws limit access of records to family and law enforcement.

JG ~ Yes, Cx. That is exactly it. Nadine, I did request a death record from LaPorte County, but I have not received a response on that one. Not giving up, of course!