



“Cassie Chadwick”

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

“Cassie Chadwick” is one of the many aliases of Elizabeth Bigley, who was born in Eastwood, Ontario, and would ultimately become a big-time con artist. Bigley started her life of crime at the age of 14 with check forgery. Though she was arrested twice, she avoided prison and eventually moved to Cleveland, Ohio, to live with her sister and brother-in-law. She started her criminal activity again while in Cleveland and was arrested for forgery, a crime for which she served three years in the Ohio State Penitentiary. After her release, she assumed the name “Cassie Hoover” and established a brothel where she met her third husband, Dr. Leroy Chadwick. In 1897, she embarked on the crime that would make her infamous: claiming to be the illegitimate daughter of Andrew Carnegie. Cleveland banks loaned her between \$10 and \$20 million dollars and never bothered to ask Carnegie if this woman was who she claimed to be for fear of embarrassing him. In 1904, the con caught up with the “Queen of Ohio,” and she was convicted on seven counts of conspiracy and forgery, and sentenced to 14 years in the Ohio Penitentiary. Chadwick died in 1907 after suffering a nervous breakdown. She is buried in her hometown of Eastwood, Ontario.

Important Dates

- 1889: Bigley is sentenced to 9 years in a Toledo prison for forgery.
- 1891: Governor William McKinley paroles Bigley. She assumes the name “Cassie Hoover” and starts a brothel.
- 1897: “Cassie” marries Dr. Leroy Chadwick and starts her “Carnegie Con.”
- 1904: “Chadwick” is exposed as a fraud when H.B. Newton sued to recover money he loaned.
- 1907: “Chadwick” dies in the Ohio Penitentiary.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in combination (as an “all” word search), proximity or as phrases: Cassie Chadwick, bank, Carnegie, forgery, conspiracy, Ohio Penitentiary, Madame Lydia Devere.
- Limit your search to the years 1897-1907 when searching for “Cassie Chadwick.”
- Search newspapers in all states, not just Ohio.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- [“Carnegie Must Testify...”](#) *Spokane Press* (Spokane, WA), December 12, 1904, Image 1, col. 1-3.
- [“Mrs. Chadwick Hooted”](#) *New-York Tribune* (New York, NY), December 15, 1904, Image 1-2, col. 6, 1-3.
- [“Career of Mrs. Chadwick”](#) *Barbour County Index* (Medicine Lodge, KS), January 4, 1905, Image 7, col. 1-4.
- [“The Jury Says Guilty”](#) *Ohio Democrat* (Logan, OH), March 16, 1905, Image 1, col. 5-6.
- [“Mrs. Chadwick as a Tailoress”](#) *East Oregonian: E.O.* (Pendleton, OR), March 30, 1905, Image 1, col. 5.
- [“Mrs. Chadwick Must Do Time”](#) *San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, CA), January 12, 1906, Image 3, col. 4.
- [“Queen of High Finance Dies...”](#) *Marion Daily Mirror* (Marion, OH), October 11, 1907, Image 1, col. 1-3.