

**Career in law, and a history of Sandwich, Illinois**  
*an Oral History*

Latham Castle, Interviewee  
Of Sandwich, Illinois

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Q: This is Helen Hayner of the Starved Rock Library System. Today is March 3, 1976. I'm interviewing Judge Latham Castle of Sandwich, Illinois. Judge Castle is now a Senior Member of the United States Court of Appeals in Chicago and he will tell us of his long and varied and interesting life. Judge Castle, may we start out in this manner, could you tell me when and where you were born?

A: I was born in Sandwich, Illinois February 27, 1900.

Q: And could you give us some family background?

A: Well, my grandfather was Miles B. Castle who was State Senator from this area and he founded the Sandwich State Bank, a lumber yard, and the newspaper in Sandwich. Then my father, John B. Castle, later carried on, he was also a member of the Legislature in 1905.

Q: And your mother?

A: My mother was Molly L. Castle, she was very active in the Sandwich Public Library and one of those instrumental in getting it started.

Q: May I ask if the "L" in your mother's name is for the Latham in yours?

A: That's Latham, that's right.

Q: That is your name now?

A: That's my name.

Q: I think you said there was an interesting story about how you were named Latham?

A: Well they said they expected a girl and then I came along, so they just gave me her maiden name.

Q: Then they hadn't planned on a boy then exactly?

A: No.

Q: So you were a surprise to them?

A: Yes.

Q: Now where was your early education, Judge Castle?

A: Sandwich Public Schools.

Q: Then you attended high school in Sandwich?

A: Yes, I attended high school in Sandwich.

Q: Then on to where?

A: Then I went to Northwestern University School of Liberal Arts and then from there I went to the Law School. I got a combined degree, LL.B degree from Northwestern University.

Q: Now, then you began your career in working. What was your first job?

A: Well, I worked for the firm of Campbell and Fisher in Chicago, law firm, for about two years.

Q: And then where?

A: Then I came back to Sandwich and sort of ran the bank and practiced law. My father became very ill, that's the reason I came back actually. Then while I was here I was appointed City Attorney and later the Young Republicans wanted me to run for State's Attorney, I did and happened to be elected. So I've been here ever since.

Q: Now this was State's Attorney of DeKalb County?

A: That's right.

Q: And that office would be in Sycamore, Illinois?

A: The county seat, yes.

Q: Were there, how long did you hold that office of State's Attorney

Q: in DeKalb County?

A: For twelve years.

Q: That would be from what dates?

A: From 1928 to 1940.

Q: Were there any particularly interesting cases that you had to handle in that capacity?

A: Well, during that time I tried five murder cases, one of them was murder by abortion. They were all very interesting.

Q: In a twelve year time span that sounds like quite a lot.

A: Yes.

Q: Had there been many murders in DeKalb County previous to that time?

A: I don't think there had been a murder in DeKalb County for 50 years until I was elected State's Attorney.

Q: They were giving you lots of work to do then.

A: Yes.

Q: I think you had mentioned a man by the name of John Heuer?

A: Yes, he was in partnership with me in the practice of law.

Q: And where had he been previous to that?

A: Before that he was an assistant to Harland Warren in Ottawa, assistant state's attorney there, I believe.

Q: Yes, that's the connection that I was looking for.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, now in 1940 what did you do?

A: Well, in 1940 I became an assistant attorney general.

Q: For the state?

A: Yes, for the state of Illinois. Then I was elected County Judge in DeKalb County and continued that office until I was elected Attorney

General for the State of Illinois in 1952.

Q: You mentioned a comment that your wife had made about your running for that particular office.

A: Yes, my wife didn't want me to run for Attorney General, but of course she finally said it was up to me to do whatever I wanted to and so I ran and was elected.

Q: Was that a little difficult for your wife to manage households back and forth?

A: Well, yes at that time. Of course after I was elected we had an apartment in Springfield and our home in Sandwich and an apartment in Chicago. The reason for that is that the Chicago office is a very large office and of course the Springfield office is very large also and also a lot of work. Of course for my wife to keep three homes going, it was a little difficult. But she managed to do it all right.

Q: I imagine it kept her hopping?

A: Yes.

Q: Could you tell us who your wife is?

A: Well, my wife, her maiden name was Georgiana Whitcomb.

Q: Now is she from Sandwich?

A: She's from Chicago, in fact she had never been in Sandwich until after we were married.

Q: Was she a little surprised with Sandwich?

A: Not at all. No, I sort of explained it to her and we eloped and got married.

Q: Oh! Well, that's different. We don't hear too much about that these days. Judge Castle, do you have any children?

A: Yes, I have a son, John Castle. He was born in 1933, we were married in 1931. He went through eighth grade in Sandwich and then to Phillips

A: Academy, Andover, Massachusetts. From there he went to Princeton University, graduated in 1955, served two years in the Army, then he was graduated from the University of Chicago Law School and now he's a practicing lawyer in DeKalb, Illinois.

Q: That's very fine. Now could you give us some kind of an explanation of the various duties of the Attorney General of the State of Illinois? That's an important position to fill and I'm sure varied duties.

A: Well, the Attorney-General of Illinois is a constitutional and common law officer. He is elected to a four-year term and he is the chief law officer of the state. He is legal advisor to the Governor, all state officials and all boards, commissions and department of the state government. He advises the Governor as to constitutionality and form of all bills submitted by General Assembly to the Governor for his signature. He represents the People of Illinois in the State Supreme Court in all cases in which the People are interested, including criminal cases. He defends all state officers in any proceedings or actions against them. Upon request, he furnishes written opinions to all State Officers, all State's Attorneys or to either branch of the General Assembly or to any of its committees. He is the consultant and advisor of the State's Attorneys of Illinois' 102 counties and aids in criminal prosecution when the interests of the People require such action. He administers the Inheritance Tax Act and in addition, performs numerous common law duties, including quo warranto proceedings and the preservation of charitable trusts. He is a member of the State Electoral Board, Inter-Government Co-Operative Commission, and State Records Commission and is Legal Advisor to the Illinois Municipal Retirement

A: Fund and Illinois Medical Center Commission.

Q: That is a lot of duties.

A: It sure is.

Q: Have they a staff for this?

A: Yes, we have a large staff to help administer that.

Q: I would hope they would have that.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you feel that with more government as we seem to be having, the duties of that office have increased?

A: Well, I think the duties have doubled since I was Attorney General. Just from what accounts I read in the newspapers, of course they have all the pollution and a lot of other things now.

Q: Then these things would come under that jurisdiction?

A: That would come under that, yes.

Q: Judge Castle, could you tell me who the other elected government officials of the state were at the time that you were Attorney General?

A: William G. Stratton, Governor. Charles Carpentier, Secretary of State. John William Chapman, Lt. Governor. Orville Hodge, State Auditor. Elmer Hoffman, State Treasurer. And that that time the Treasurer's Office was a two-year term. Also while I was there Warren Wright was State Treasurer.

Q: And how about the Clerk of the Court?

A: Clerk of the Supreme Court was Earle Searcy part of the time I was there, then the rest of the time his wife, Fae Searcy was Clerk.

Q: And who was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court at that time?

A: I think Justice Fulton from Sycamore, Justice William Fulton.

Q: Now of these individuals some of them are deceased, is that correct?

A: Yes, Justice Fulton is deceased. Carpentier also, Carpentier is deceased.

Q: And the Searcys, how about them?

A: Both Searcys are dead.

Q: And Warren Wright?

A: Warren Wright is dead.

Q: So that doesn't leave too many from that particular administration.

A: No it doesn't. It's Warren Wright, did I give the correct name?

A: Yes, Warren Wright. You mentioned Orville Hodge, that brings to mind a rather interesting-facet of Illinois politics, could you tell us about that?

A: Yes. A bank examiner came to see me in Springfield one morning and said that he'd had a conference with Orville Hodge the night before and Hodge told him he was in trouble. "Well," I said, "what do you mean, trouble?" Well, Hodge told him that he had embezzled some of the state funds, and he didn't know just how much. So after that conference I called the Governor and told him and then we had a conference and at that time Governor Stratton appointed a committee which was headed by Bert Jenner from Chicago, a very prominent attorney. As soon as we discovered that he had, Orville Hodge allegedly had embezzled the money, I filed a law suit and we tied up all his assets so he couldn't dispose of anything.

Q: Would these be his personal assets?

A: His personal assets, yes, and anything that we could trace from the state that he had taken and put in his personal assets. He allegedly embezzled \$1,571,000.00. We actually recovered all of that money from his personal assets, assets that he had allegedly taken from

A: the government. If I hadn't tied everything up right away, and I remember so well we worked all night to get the law suit in shape -- if we hadn't tied up the assets, he might have dissipated them. Then we had a problem, he also had been nominated for State Auditor for the 1956 campaign, and we had a problem as to how we were going to get him off the ticket and how we were going to get him out of office. The Governor called me and we started checking and discovered that there was a certain section under the Bond Act that if the Governor requested any state official to put up a larger bond -- and the irony of it was his bond was only \$50,000.

Q: For handling all of the funds?

A: For handling all the funds of the State Auditor's office. This act said that if within ten days, I think it was, he didn't put up the security demanded by the Governor, the Governor could then declare the office vacant. So the Governor asked me if I was sure of that and I said yes. He said, "Will you prepare the papers?" So I prepared the notices and everything and we served them on Hodge. The thing we were afraid was that he'd take money from the state and bring it along and put up an additional bond with that money.

Q: Oh, goodness!

A: Then we debated what we would do. But he didn't do that. He couldn't get any surety company to sign his bond so then he asked for a meeting with me and the Governor. We had the meeting at the Mansion and he said he would resign and he would withdraw as a candidate in the 1956 election. I said, "Well, I think you'd better call your lawyer before you do that." So he did and I think his lawyer told him not to do it, but anyway he did and I had all the papers there.

A: He resigned as the State Auditor and also withdrew as the Republican candidate for State Auditor in the 1956 election.

Q: Would you know where Orville Hodge is, or what he is doing now?

A: Well, I think first we ought to say that he was convicted and sent to the penitentiary and three of his cohorts were also sent to the penitentiary.

Q: Would you know who those people were?

A: No, I can't. No, I can't remember their names. They were sent to the penitentiary and now Orville is living in Granite City and I believe he's either selling real estate or automobiles, I don't know which.

Q: All the way up and all the way down, it sounds like.

A: That's right.

Q: Do you have any idea what would ever motivate someone to do something like that?

A: Well, I think he had delusions of grandeur.

Q: Judge Castle, right after the beginning of your second term as Attorney General, or as you took office of your second term in 1957, what then occurred?

A: Well, then in 1959 President Eisenhower appointed me as Judge of the United State Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

Q: Now what does that circuit encompass?

A: Well, that circuit encompasses Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin and we hear all appeals from the District Courts in those respective states. When we hear cases we hear them in panels of three. The Chief Judge of the Court appoints or designates the ones that are to sit on the panels to hear the cases. I was Chief Judge from 1968 to 1970.

Q: And what is your capacity in the Court now?

A: I'm now Senior, what they call Senior Status, I work about half time.

Q: But you are still active?

A: I'm still active, yes.

Q: Were there any particularly interesting cases or cases of national note that you had heard?

A: We had one case which was of national note, Jimmy Hoffa case where he was accused of taking money, siphoning money off from the Pension Fund, Labor Pension Fund. He was convicted in the District Court and his case was appealed to our court and our court affirmed his conviction.

Q: And now we wonder where he is?

A: That's right.

Q: That was about what year, do you recall?

A: No, I don't recall.

Q: Judge Castle, back to Sandwich, Illinois itself. Could you give us some interesting little facts about the city of Sandwich itself, some of the industries and so forth?

A: The principal industry when I was young was the Sandwich Manufacturing Company. At that time they employed between three and four hundred men. They manufactured hay loaders, hay presses, corn shellers, gasoline engines, side delivery rakes, and lawn mowers. Later they sold, in 1930 to the New Idea Company of Coldwater, Ohio. Now it's a part of Avco. They no longer manufacture in Sandwich but this is the Midwest distributing point for their products.

Q: Now what Avco products are you speaking of?

A: Well, I don't know all the products Avco manufactures, but all of the New Idea products are sold from here. It is the Midwest distributing point.

Q: For that company?

A: Yes.

Q: What other interesting companies were there?

A: Well, there was the Enterprise Company which I think manufactured windmills, that's no longer in existence.

Q: That is still my favorite company. (laughs)

A: Yes.

Q: What other companies would there be?

A: Then the Pole Changer which manufactured telephone equipment, and that's no longer here.

Q: Now we have the CTS Knights, is that correct?

A: That was started I think about 1940 and was first called the James Knights Company. They in turn sold to the CTS Company. They manufacture crystals and electronic equipment.

Q: And this is quite an industry here now?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: Would that be one of the main industries now?

A: Yes, I would think so.

Q: Over a period of years there have been new industries coming into Sandwich, is that correct or would Knights be -- what kind of an industry?

A: Of course, Knights started here, they didn't come here, they started here. James Knights was a local man and so was Faber, Leon Faber. They went into partnership and started the James Knights Company, so it's strictly a local company.

Q: That's continued here ever since. Could you tell us something about the Sandwich bank?

A: Yes, the Sandwich State Bank was founded in 1856 by my grandfather, and then when my father came along, he was president of the bank, and I was president of the bank for several years, ten years. My son, John Castle, who is an attorney in DeKalb is a member of the Sandwich State Bank and is chairman of the board. My wife, Georgiana Castle, is also a member of the board of directors of the Sandwich State Bank. In the early days my grandfather brought his nephew here from the East and they formed a partnership which was called Moser and Castle. They also had a lumber yard and that was a part of Moser and Castle. Then my grandfather had the newspaper, the Sandwich Argus, which was published from 1878 until 1913.

Q: Are those the copies in the cabinet here?

A: The copies, the volumes are in the Sandwich Public Library.

Q: Those were donated to the library by your family?

A: Those were donated, yes, by myself and my wife.

Q: That is a very good addition to the library, I'm sure.

A: They're interesting, really it's fun to look at them sometimes.

Q: Yes, Joanne Johnson had mentioned that she's been going through them and they're absolutely fascinating. What happened then to the Sandwich Argus?

A: They sold to the Sandwich Free Press in 1913 and I think the Sandwich Free Press has been sold to, I don't know what they call it, I guess they call it the Home Publishing Company.

Q: But they still do publish?

A: They still publish a paper, yes.

Q: Could you tell us how the Sandwich Bank survived the Depression when many other banks were obviously having difficulties?

A: Yes, we finally got the depositors to waive fifty percent of their deposits. They signed a waiver, what they called a waiver agreement, in which the bank agreed, when they got to making money, that they would pay off this fifty percent. That's what happened, when the bank got on its feet and was making money, they paid back all the money that the depositors had waived so that there wasn't any depositor who lost any money in the bank. I prepared the first bank waiver for the State of Illinois and that was sort of used as a sample throughout Illinois and many banks opened under the same plan. They didn't all waive fifty percent, but they waived varying degrees.

Q: Which allowed them to keep going?

A: Which allowed them to reopen, yes.

Q: Were there any other banks in Sandwich at that time?

A: Well, at one time there was the Farmer's State Bank, but they had closed before the Bank Moratorium, and they never reopened.

Q: Was the downfall of that bank the Depression per se?

A: Yes.

Q: What's the disposition of the Moser and Castle Lumber Company that you had mentioned?

A: That now belongs to the Philip S. Lindner Company.

Q: And that is still where?

A: That's still in Sandwich.

Q: Still is operating?

A: That's right.

Q: We recall a Davis Lake.

A: Yes.

Q: Could you tell us about that?

A: When we were kids we used to skate there, they were first, second and third lake and then there was a group of men in Sandwich that called themselves the Sandwich Gun Club and they used to hunt down there and shoot ducks. In the fall it was always plentiful with ducks. I remember very well skating there, we used to like to jump over the muskrat houses, a lot of muskrat houses.

Q: Is that lake still here?

A: No, that's been drained and it's now cultivated.

Q: Back to the bank, if I may, you mentioned a bank robbery, I imagine that was excitement in Sandwich?

A: Yes, there were either four or five men that robbed the bank and a funny thing happened -- one of the robbers came out of the bank and he was peppering shots on the pavement and they'd bounce up and a Mr. Sibley was sweeping a walk across the street and he ducked behind a tree. I couldn't blame him. They got away. Of course they bank was insured and recovered all the money that was taken.

Q: Very fortunately.

A: Yes.

Q: Otto Machine Shop -- does that recall anything?

A: Yes, that's more of a recent thing. But yes, Augie Otto had his machine shop and he's really a genius. He has built the small engine which is used on the train at the Sandwich Fair. This engine is built as I understand it, to exact specifications from a Burlington engine. The Burlington were very helpful to him I understand in building it.

Q: I would say that would be a work of love, to make something like that.

A: It certainly would be.

Q: What's been your family's association with the Sandwich Public Library over the years?

A: Well, my mother was one of the original people that started the library. And Mrs. Long, of course, became very active. She was one of the prime movers in getting the tax passed so that they could support a library, and that's what enabled them to build this one.

Q: Where was the original library located, do you recall?

A: Well, as I recall it was just south of Art's Store in a little stone building, stone blocks. Then from there they moved down to the old livery barn, and that burned down and then they built this and moved over here. I don't know how much they lost in that fire.

Q: That could be a dreadful thing, but seemingly your collection here is in good fettle. I've come across the name of a Dr. Rufus von KleinSmid, could you tell us who he was?

A: Yes, Rufus von KleinSmid's father as I understand it ran a hardware store in Sandwich. He built a house on Center Street which is sort of a landmark in Sandwich. Rufus was always very loyal to Sandwich and one time he was president of DePauw College, or is it a university?

Q: I believe that's an university.

A: DePauw University at Greencastle, Indiana and then later he was at the University of Arizona and finally was president of the University of Southern California. In later years he said he had many honors but there was one he never had and that was to be honored in Sandwich. So he came back and Sandwich had a big day for him and had many of the -- all of the universities in this area were represented at that day. Then they had a banquet in the school at night and of course he spoke. The president of the University of Southern California was also here and he spoke and I think everyone enjoyed it very much.

Q: I would assume that everyone would. Judge Castle, throughout the years you have been associated with a number of organizations, would you give us a little rundown?

A: Most of the organizations were along with my work. I was president of the DeKalb County Bar Association. When I was State's Attorney I was vice-president of the State's Attorney's Association. Then when I became Attorney General of Illinois I was president of the National Association of Attorney's General. I guess that's about it.

Q: Various bar associations I assume?

A: Yes, I belonged to the Chicago Bar Association, the Illinois Bar Association and the American College of Trial Lawyers.

Q: Through all of your various experiences in government work you have always maintained your home in Sandwich?

A: Yes, most of the time.

Q: For any particular reason?

A: Yes, a very good reason. I like the people here and they were always very good to me. Every time I ran for office I always carried Sandwich by a good majority. That's the reason for it.

Q: Would you say that would be a good campaign gimmick, say, "I'm from Sandwich"?

A: Yes, as a matter of fact it was a great asset when I was campaigning throughout the state. They'd say, "Oh yes, that's the fellow from Sandwich", they'd remember the name.

Q: And then you'd have to tell them where Sandwich was?

A: That's right, yes, that's right.

Q: I would assume that Sandwich is very proud to have you living here as a citizen of the city?

A: I don't know about that,

Q: Well, they haven't thrown you out yet, I don't think.

A: Not yet.

Q: And you still pay your taxes.

A: That's right.

Q: Well, thank you very much Judge Castle for your time that you've given us for this interview and I'm sure that we're going to get a lot of knowledge or yourself and of Sandwich as a result.

A: You are entirely welcome, it was a pleasure.

Q: Thank you very much.

END OF TAPE

I hereby release all right, title, or interest in and to all or any part of my tape-recorded memoirs to Starved Rock Library System, subject to the following stipulations:

PLACE Sandwich, Ill

DATE Feb 2, 1976

Latham Carle  
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