



# Heartland Serial Killers: Belle Gunness, Johann Hoch, and Murder for Profit in Gaslight Era Chicago

*Richard C. Lindberg*

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Lindberg, an accomplished local historian and true crime writer, presents a fascinating story of two contemporaneous serial killers, both weaving marriage and murder in and around Chicago during the 1890s and 1900s. Johann Hoch was a debonair bigamist and wife killer who boasted of having perfected a “scientific technique” to romance and seduction. Belle Gunness was a nesting “Black Widow” whose sprawling farm in Northwest Indiana was a fatal lure for lonely bachelors seeking the comforts of middle-age security by answering matrimonial advertisements placed by Gunness.

Notorious in his own day, Hoch had faded into the dark background of Chicago crime history. But, in *Heartland Serial Killers*, Lindberg brings back vividly the horrors of one of Chicago’s first celebrity criminals and uncovers new evidence of a close connection between Hoch and H.H. Holmes, the “Devil in the White City.”

Unlike Hoch, Belle Gunness, likely the most prolific and infamous female serial killer of the 20th century, has remained fascinating to the public. Here, Lindberg presents the most comprehensive and compelling study of the Gunness case to date, including new information regarding ongoing DNA testing of remains found at the site of Gunness’s farm in LaPorte, Indiana, which may serve to resolve once and for all the mystery surrounding Gunness’s death.

Told in alternating chapters and rapidly paced, this book is true crime at its best—gripping, pulpy, and full of sharp historical tidbits. True crime fans, history buffs, and those interested in local lore will delight in this chilling tale of two ruthless killers.

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