

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,000

A national landmark with a hidden secret.

2

00:00:04,000 --> 00:00:08,000

No one was practicing what they've reached.

3

00:00:08,000 --> 00:00:12,000

A desperate fight to survive.

4

00:00:12,000 --> 00:00:17,000

His thought was, I need to amputate my names.

5

00:00:17,000 --> 00:00:22,000

And an explosive invention that stunned the city.

6

00:00:22,000 --> 00:00:26,000

The schooner explodes in this massive fireball.

7

00:00:26,000 --> 00:00:31,000

Sometimes the greatest secrets lie in plain sight.

8

00:00:31,000 --> 00:00:35,000

These are the mysteries of the monument.

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00:00:42,000 --> 00:00:44,000

London, England.

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00:00:44,000 --> 00:00:48,000

Along the banks of the River Thames, in the shadow of London Bridge,

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00:00:48,000 --> 00:00:51,000

is the epicenter of the country's banking industry.

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00:00:51,000 --> 00:00:53,000

Covering just one square mile,

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00:00:53,000 --> 00:00:57,000

the financial district features glittering modern architecture.

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00:01:00,000 --> 00:01:03,000

But at its heart is a neoclassical column

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00:01:03,000 --> 00:01:06,000

that commemorates a fiery chapter in the city's history.

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00:01:06,000 --> 00:01:10,000

The top has a beautiful copper drum with flames burning out of it.

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00:01:10,000 --> 00:01:15,000

And the 202 feet, it is the largest freestanding column in the world.

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00:01:15,000 --> 00:01:20,000

You can actually climb the 331 steps to get a fantastic view of London from the top.

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00:01:21,000 --> 00:01:24,000

This elegant pillar pays tribute to a catastrophe

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00:01:24,000 --> 00:01:28,000

that laid waste to these streets more than 300 years ago.

21

00:01:28,000 --> 00:01:32,000

This story is about a race against time, an invisible killer,

22

00:01:32,000 --> 00:01:35,000

and a disaster that became a blessing in disguise.

23

00:01:39,000 --> 00:01:42,000

1664, London.

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00:01:42,000 --> 00:01:46,000

King Charles II sits on the English throne.

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00:01:47,000 --> 00:01:49,000

After 30 years of political turmoil,

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00:01:49,000 --> 00:01:54,000

he is determined to bring peace and prosperity to his troubled nation.

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00:01:54,000 --> 00:01:57,000

Charles II had been on the throne a very, very short time.

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00:01:57,000 --> 00:02:02,000

He was building the country back up again after a very, very difficult civil war.

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00:02:03,000 --> 00:02:07,000

But the King's mission is about to be dealt a devastating setback.

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00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:13,000

On Christmas Eve, a local coroner is called to a house where a young woman has died.

31

00:02:14,000 --> 00:02:16,000

There he makes a chilling discovery.

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00:02:16,000 --> 00:02:20,000

They saw the telltale signs of the red blotches on the body.

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00:02:20,000 --> 00:02:24,000

To the coroner, the grisly sores can mean only one thing.

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00:02:25,000 --> 00:02:27,000

The woman died from the plague.

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00:02:30,000 --> 00:02:34,000

People could recognize the disease because you would have these ugly red mounds on your neck,

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00:02:34,000 --> 00:02:40,000

the armpits, the groin, and death usually followed within a week.

37

00:02:41,000 --> 00:02:48,000

The plague, also known as the Black Death, has no cure, and it can wipe out entire villages.

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00:02:48,000 --> 00:02:54,000

Everybody in England is absolutely terrified that it could land on their doorstep.

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00:02:55,000 --> 00:02:57,000

King Charles must act swiftly.

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00:02:57,000 --> 00:03:01,000

If the Black Death is allowed to spread, thousands will die.

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00:03:02,000 --> 00:03:08,000

In hopes of containing the disease, he orders that all infected citizens be quarantined.

42

00:03:09,000 --> 00:03:13,000

Anyone who has the signs of the plague are locked in their house for 40 days.

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00:03:13,000 --> 00:03:17,000

A red cross is put on the door and there's a guard outside to stop anybody escaping.

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00:03:19,000 --> 00:03:20,000

But it's all for naught.

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00:03:21,000 --> 00:03:27,000

Despite these drastic measures, within weeks, hundreds of Londoners fall prey to the disease.

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00:03:27,000 --> 00:03:31,000

So the King gropes for another strategy to stem the tide.

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00:03:31,000 --> 00:03:34,000

Attack the presumed source of the plague.

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00:03:35,000 --> 00:03:40,000

There is a rumor that the disease has been spread by domestic animals.

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00:03:41,000 --> 00:03:46,000

When this idea sets in, they decide the only way to stop the plague is to kill the cats and dogs.

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00:03:47,000 --> 00:03:52,000

A royal command is sent forth to kill all the dogs and cats in the city.

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00:03:53,000 --> 00:03:58,000

But despite the slaughter, the disease spreads quicker than ever.

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00:03:58,000 --> 00:04:02,000

And the death rate rockets to over 7,000 a week.

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00:04:05,000 --> 00:04:07,000

King Charles is at a loss.

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00:04:08,000 --> 00:04:10,000

People are fleeing London as quickly as they can.

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00:04:10,000 --> 00:04:14,000

All that's left in London are the citizens who are dying.

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00:04:16,000 --> 00:04:25,000

Then, on September 2, 1666, just when Charles thinks his problems can't get any worse, disaster strikes again.

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00:04:26,000 --> 00:04:29,000

The King is told a fire has started in the Royal Bakery.

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00:04:30,000 --> 00:04:35,000

Fires are very common, but this one, he's told, has got out of hand.

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00:04:37,000 --> 00:04:41,000

London streets are lined with tightly packed houses made of wood.

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00:04:41,000 --> 00:04:43,000

The perfect tender for the flames.

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00:04:44,000 --> 00:04:46,000

Charles is absolutely distraught.

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00:04:46,000 --> 00:04:49,000

He cannot believe that he's gone through another disaster.

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00:04:49,000 --> 00:04:51,000

London seems to be cursed.

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00:04:52,000 --> 00:04:59,000

To stop the fire from spreading, Charles orders that buildings in the path of the flames be torn down.

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00:05:00,000 --> 00:05:11,000

King Charles realises the only way to move faster than the fire is to use gunpowder to blow up houses to create the firebreak.

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00:05:12,000 --> 00:05:16,000

And the dedicated King plunges into the fray to help save his city.

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00:05:17,000 --> 00:05:20,000

The King is there himself, actually helping to pull these buildings down.

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00:05:25,000 --> 00:05:30,000

The fire fighting continues for three days before the flames finally die down.

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00:05:31,000 --> 00:05:33,000

But the city lies in ruins.

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00:05:35,000 --> 00:05:41,000

London's Great Fire has destroyed 13,000 homes, but the disaster has a silver lining.

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00:05:42,000 --> 00:05:47,000

After the fire, people soon realise that the plague seems to have disappeared.

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00:05:50,000 --> 00:05:53,000

Londoners cautiously begin the process of rebuilding.

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00:05:55,000 --> 00:05:59,000

But the question remains, why did the plague vanish so suddenly?

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00:06:02,000 --> 00:06:07,000

After centuries of study, scientists believe they finally solved the mystery.

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00:06:07,000 --> 00:06:11,000

It was found that the plague was something so common it was basically ignored.

76

00:06:13,000 --> 00:06:14,000

Rats.

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00:06:16,000 --> 00:06:21,000

The rats were carriers of the bacteria that caused what is known today as bubonic plague.

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00:06:22,000 --> 00:06:29,000

And it seems the very precautions King Charles took to save his people may actually have helped spread the disease.

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00:06:30,000 --> 00:06:36,000

When King Charles ordered the cats and dogs to be killed, he was stopping one of the largest deterrents for the ratpop.

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00:06:37,000 --> 00:06:41,000

And that's why the plague moved faster through the city.

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00:06:42,000 --> 00:06:49,000

With their natural predators removed, the ratpopulation skyrocketed and with it the number of plague cases soared.

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00:06:51,000 --> 00:06:59,000

But it is believed as the fire consumed everything in its path, it destroyed the rats and the dreaded plague they carried.

83

00:07:01,000 --> 00:07:05,000

Undoubtedly the Great Fire of London was a dreadful, dreadful disaster.

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00:07:05,000 --> 00:07:08,000

But ironically it actually saved London.

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00:07:08,000 --> 00:07:10,000

It's cleansing by fire.

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00:07:12,000 --> 00:07:16,000

King Charles appoints commissioners to plan the rebuilding of the city.

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00:07:16,000 --> 00:07:21,000

And out of the ashes of the Great Fire of London, a modern metropolis arises.

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00:07:24,000 --> 00:07:33,000

Today this monument to the Great Fire of London endures as a tribute to the rebirth of a city and a reminder of the darkness it left behind.

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00:07:36,000 --> 00:07:41,000

Washington DC. Once a small boarding house community for congressmen.

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00:07:41,000 --> 00:07:47,000

The neighborhood of Capitol Hill has become the city's most densely populated residential enclave.

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00:07:51,000 --> 00:07:57,000

But overshadowing the quaint brick townhouses is the area's centerpiece and namesake.

92

00:07:58,000 --> 00:08:04,000

This monument is made of white sandstone and marble and covers more than 1.5 million square feet.

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00:08:04,000 --> 00:08:10,000

Story majestically over its columns is an 8.9 million pound cast iron dome.

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00:08:10,000 --> 00:08:12,000

This is one of America's cherished landmarks.

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00:08:13,000 --> 00:08:19,000

This is the US Capitol building, the quintessential symbol of American democracy.

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00:08:21,000 --> 00:08:30,000

But as historian Garrett Peck can attest, these walls once bore witness to a shocking tale of double dealing and hypocrisy.

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00:08:30,000 --> 00:08:33,000

No one was practicing what they preached.

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00:08:35,000 --> 00:08:47,000

1920, Washington DC. Just a year after American soldiers returned from World War I, many former servicemen are facing a battle on the home front.

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00:08:47,000 --> 00:08:53,000

Unemployment. Among them is 28-year-old veteran George Cassidy.

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00:08:53,000 --> 00:08:59,000

George Cassidy came back from the war and couldn't get his old job working on the railroad and needed to find a job.

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00:09:00,000 --> 00:09:06,000

Desperate to find work, Cassidy turns to a politically connected friend for help.

102

00:09:07,000 --> 00:09:11,000

But what his friend proposes is not what the ex-soldier had expected.

103

00:09:11,000 --> 00:09:14,000

He says, would you be willing to bootleg?

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00:09:16,000 --> 00:09:23,000

Following the newly enacted prohibition laws, the illegal sale of alcohol has become highly profitable.

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00:09:23,000 --> 00:09:27,000

Especially for a bootlegger with contacts in high places.

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00:09:27,000 --> 00:09:32,000

And Cassidy's friend has some very special customers in mind.

107

00:09:32,000 --> 00:09:38,000

His friend said, you're not going to be supplying liquor to ordinary citizens, but rather to members of Congress.

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00:09:38,000 --> 00:09:41,000

Cassidy eagerly accepts the position.

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00:09:41,000 --> 00:09:48,000

Two days later, he dons his best suit and an emerald green fedora to meet his very first customers.

110

00:09:48,000 --> 00:09:56,000

These congressmen were ostensibly dry Southern congressmen. They had voted for the prohibition amendment, but under the table they were still drinking.

111

00:09:57,000 --> 00:10:03,000

The politicians are impressed with the impeccably dressed bootlegger and the quality of his hooch.

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00:10:03,000 --> 00:10:05,000

And it is the top notch.

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00:10:05,000 --> 00:10:10,000

George Cassidy was a very gregarious kind of person. He had tremendous interpersonal skills.

114

00:10:15,000 --> 00:10:22,000

Before long, Cassidy is so popular, he is able to set up shop inside the house office building.

115

00:10:22,000 --> 00:10:28,000

And in short order, he is selling liquor to almost 80% of the house and the Senate.

116

00:10:29,000 --> 00:10:31,000

All the congressmen love this guy.

117

00:10:31,000 --> 00:10:35,000

Everyone in the law enforcement community, of course, really knows who George Cassidy is.

118

00:10:35,000 --> 00:10:40,000

But because of who his customers were, he had a lot of political protection.

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00:10:40,000 --> 00:10:45,000

And because of his colorful headgear, Cassidy soon acquires a distinctive nickname.

120

00:10:45,000 --> 00:10:48,000

It became known then as the man on the green hat.

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00:10:53,000 --> 00:10:57,000

For nearly a decade, business booms for the bootlegger.

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00:10:57,000 --> 00:11:00,000

But all that is about to change.

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00:11:00,000 --> 00:11:08,000

In February of 1930, Cassidy is getting ready to deliver bottles of gin to the Senate when he is suddenly arrested.

124

00:11:08,000 --> 00:11:11,000

By order of the White House.

125

00:11:11,000 --> 00:11:15,000

We have reason to believe you've been selling alcohol to congressmen. Can you please open this case?

126

00:11:15,000 --> 00:11:16,000

I can explain all this.

127

00:11:16,000 --> 00:11:17,000

It's me.

128

00:11:17,000 --> 00:11:18,000

This is a pen of mistake.

129

00:11:18,000 --> 00:11:24,000

As it turns out, President Herbert Hoover is cracking down on illegal alcohol sales.

130

00:11:24,000 --> 00:11:27,000

And he's starting at the very top.

131

00:11:27,000 --> 00:11:32,000

President Hoover wants to make an example of someone, and George Cassidy is right in this line of sights.

132

00:11:34,000 --> 00:11:41,000

Cassidy is swiftly convicted of possessing and transporting liquor and sentenced to 18 months in jail.

133

00:11:41,000 --> 00:11:45,000

But that's not the last the public will hear of him.

134

00:11:46,000 --> 00:11:53,000

Furious about taking the fall while his customers in Congress get off scot-free, Cassidy is plotting his revenge.

135

00:11:59,000 --> 00:12:01,000

It's 1930 in Washington, D.C.

136

00:12:01,000 --> 00:12:08,000

A man named George Cassidy has just been arrested for running a bootlegging enterprise out of the U.S. Capitol building.

137

00:12:08,000 --> 00:12:17,000

But Cassidy claims that the nation's top politicians had been aware of his illicit booze business for nearly a decade, and many of them were his customers.

138

00:12:17,000 --> 00:12:21,000

So how will the bootlegger get his revenge?

139

00:12:23,000 --> 00:12:30,000

After his sentencing, Cassidy is determined to lift the lid on his days as Congress' chief bootlegger.

140

00:12:30,000 --> 00:12:33,000

So he takes his story to the press.

141

00:12:33,000 --> 00:12:40,000

He senses this is such a great opportunity, not to expose Congress, but really to spill the beans on prohibition itself.

142

00:12:42,000 --> 00:12:50,000

In a series of front-page articles in The Washington Post, Cassidy delivers a stunning exposé of his rum-running career on Capitol Hill.

143

00:12:50,000 --> 00:12:56,000

What he was saying was, if I'm a hypocrite for selling alcohol, then you're also a hypocrite for buying it from me.

144

00:12:57,000 --> 00:13:03,000

The sensational reports leave Cassidy's congressional clients humiliated and disgraced.

145

00:13:03,000 --> 00:13:09,000

With the midterm elections just a few weeks away, the timing of the stories couldn't be worse.

146

00:13:09,000 --> 00:13:15,000

The great response that the public has is to have a wholesale change in Congress.

147

00:13:15,000 --> 00:13:22,000

And one of the first things the new legislators do after they are elected is call for an end to prohibition.

148

00:13:23,000 --> 00:13:29,000

Millions of Americans also believe the decade-long social experiment has failed.

149

00:13:29,000 --> 00:13:36,000

And three years after Cassidy's arrest, the national ban on alcohol is finally repealed.

150

00:13:36,000 --> 00:13:40,000

Cassidy becomes one of the lynchpins that helps undermine prohibition.

151

00:13:40,000 --> 00:13:47,000

As for Cassidy himself, after serving his time, he goes straight and finds work in a shoe factory.

152

00:13:47,000 --> 00:13:53,000

But the story of the man in the green hat remains embedded in Washington folklore.

153

00:13:54,000 --> 00:14:03,000

And this magnificent monument in the center of our nation's capital looms as a symbol of democratic wisdom and inebriated hypocrisy.

154

00:14:07,000 --> 00:14:12,000

25 miles east of Lake Tahoe is Nevada's oldest settlement, Genoa.

155

00:14:12,000 --> 00:14:24,000

Founded as a trading post in 1851, this western town features Nevada's oldest thirst parlor and Wally's hot springs, which catered to the area's earliest settlers.

156

00:14:26,000 --> 00:14:31,000

And on the outskirts is a bronze effigy of its most famous resident.

157

00:14:31,000 --> 00:14:41,000

The monument is eight feet tall. It is the statue of a man. He's wearing a floppy hat and he's holding a balancing pole.

158

00:14:42,000 --> 00:14:49,000

According to historian Sue Knight, the figure depicted here was a forgotten trailblazer of the American frontier.

159

00:14:49,000 --> 00:14:56,000

This is a story of a man who quite literally transformed the region.

160

00:14:58,000 --> 00:15:04,000

Who was this man? And what popular winter pastime did he introduce to the American West?

161

00:15:05,000 --> 00:15:20,000

December 1856, Carson Valley, Nevada. The slopes of the surrounding Sierras are covered with snow, making it almost impossible for residents to travel in or out of the region.

162

00:15:20,000 --> 00:15:26,000

During the winter months, the Carson Valley was cut off from the rest of the world.

163

00:15:26,000 --> 00:15:34,000

To get through the long hard winter, settlers depend on goods that are trekked over the mountains from California.

164

00:15:34,000 --> 00:15:39,000

Among those who make this difficult journey is trader James Sisson.

165

00:15:41,000 --> 00:15:48,000

One day, while bringing supplies to Carson Valley, the frontiersman is blindsided by a winter storm.

166

00:15:48,000 --> 00:15:54,000

As he was trudging through the snow, a blizzard came down upon him.

167

00:15:55,000 --> 00:16:00,000

Desperate for shelter, Sisson takes refuge in an abandoned trapper's cabin.

168

00:16:00,000 --> 00:16:04,000

And just in time too, he can barely make it inside.

169

00:16:06,000 --> 00:16:14,000

There, the shivering traveler finds matches and starts a small fire. Only to realize he has another problem.

170

00:16:14,000 --> 00:16:19,000

Sisson could not remove his boots. They were frozen to his feet.

171

00:16:19,000 --> 00:16:27,000

Sisson attempts to thaw out his boots near the fire. But when he takes them off, his stomach turns.

172

00:16:29,000 --> 00:16:36,000

He was suffering from severe frostbite. He could not move his feet, let alone stand on them.

173

00:16:36,000 --> 00:16:45,000

If untreated, Sisson knows his frostbitten feet will develop gangrene. But he can't walk on them to seek help.

174

00:16:46,000 --> 00:16:53,000

The only hope is that by some miracle, some traveler out in the storm might see the light of the cabin.

175

00:16:53,000 --> 00:17:00,000

For an amazing 12 days, he survives only on a sack of raw flour and melted snow.

176

00:17:00,000 --> 00:17:04,000

Imagine the feeling, thinking that help would never come.

177

00:17:04,000 --> 00:17:12,000

As every day passed, it must have gone through his mind. I can't be here much longer. I'm going to die.

178

00:17:16,000 --> 00:17:23,000

After nearly two weeks stranded alone, with his feet hideously infected, Sisson makes a grim decision.

179

00:17:23,000 --> 00:17:31,000

He became quite desperate. His thought was, I need to amputate my legs.

180

00:17:33,000 --> 00:17:37,000

He had a small axe, part of his hunting equipment.

181

00:17:37,000 --> 00:17:43,000

He hopes this drastic act will buy him time, in case help finally arrives.

182

00:17:43,000 --> 00:17:49,000

He might not survive the crude surgery, but if he does nothing, the gangrene will do him in.

183

00:17:51,000 --> 00:17:56,000

Sisson gathers what courage he has left and raises the axe.

184

00:17:58,000 --> 00:18:01,000

When he hears a pounding on the door.

185

00:18:02,000 --> 00:18:12,000

Appearing in the cabin door was this looming figure, with a floppy hat and what appeared to be two planks of wood.

186

00:18:12,000 --> 00:18:14,000

He was cradling in his arms.

187

00:18:16,000 --> 00:18:23,000

The rescuer builds Sisson a fire and then tells the injured man he will go fetch assistance.

188

00:18:23,000 --> 00:18:28,000

There was no way that he could take this man out of the mountains on his own.

189

00:18:29,000 --> 00:18:34,000

But Sisson can't believe this man will get anywhere through all the deep snow.

190

00:18:34,000 --> 00:18:37,000

How could he possibly bring help in time?

191

00:18:38,000 --> 00:18:44,000

It's 1856 in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

192

00:18:44,000 --> 00:18:52,000

Snowed in for 12 days in a deserted cabin, Frontiersman James Sisson has severe frostbite in both his feet.

193

00:18:52,000 --> 00:18:58,000

A mysterious stranger has just arrived out of nowhere and offers to go for assistance.

194

00:18:58,000 --> 00:19:03,000

But with all this snow, how can the rescuer fetch aid and return in time?

195

00:19:07,000 --> 00:19:12,000

With his condition rapidly deteriorating, to Sisson the situation seems hopeless.

196

00:19:12,000 --> 00:19:18,000

James Sisson probably thought, okay he's going to get help.

197

00:19:18,000 --> 00:19:24,000

I'm probably going to be here a few more days. I wonder if I'm going to make it.

198

00:19:27,000 --> 00:19:35,000

But incredibly, just a few hours later, the stranger returns, bringing with him a sled and other rescuers

199

00:19:35,000 --> 00:19:40,000

who take the injured man to the nearby town of Genoa, Nevada.

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00:19:40,000 --> 00:19:46,000

There a local doctor amputates the trader's rotting feet and saves his life.

201

00:19:48,000 --> 00:19:54,000

But who was the stranger who found Sisson and how did he affect the rescue so quickly?

202

00:19:54,000 --> 00:20:02,000

Sisson was told by his friends that his rescuer was the legendary Snow Shoe Thompson.

203

00:20:05,000 --> 00:20:10,000

John Snow Shoe Thompson is a 28 year old Norwegian immigrant.

204

00:20:10,000 --> 00:20:16,000

After settling in the region, he had responded to an urgent appeal from the US Postal Service.

205

00:20:16,000 --> 00:20:25,000

Someone was needed to carry the mail and supplies over the Sierra Nevada during the winter months to the Carson Valley.

206

00:20:26,000 --> 00:20:34,000

But there was a problem. During the winter, almost no one could get through the snowed-in valleys of the Sierra Nevadas.

207

00:20:34,000 --> 00:20:41,000

So Thompson showed postal supervisors something they'd never before seen. His skis.

208

00:20:41,000 --> 00:20:51,000

Thompson was from a little place in Norway, so he grew up probably spending as much time on skis as

he did walking.

209

00:20:52,000 --> 00:20:56,000

At the time, skis were unknown in the American West.

210

00:20:56,000 --> 00:21:03,000

But with them, Thompson secured the job and became a local legend for doing what few others could.

211

00:21:03,000 --> 00:21:07,000

He made regular mail deliveries across the high Sierras.

212

00:21:08,000 --> 00:21:15,000

Now after rescuing James Sisson with the help of his skis, Thompson is lauded as a hero.

213

00:21:15,000 --> 00:21:19,000

The rescue of James Sisson made him an icon.

214

00:21:19,000 --> 00:21:23,000

And his life-saving contraptions are adopted throughout the region.

215

00:21:23,000 --> 00:21:32,000

But skis soon become more than just a way of traveling through the backcountry, when locals eventually take up skiing as a sport.

216

00:21:33,000 --> 00:21:39,000

We like to think that Snowshoe Thompson was a pioneer of skiing in the West.

217

00:21:41,000 --> 00:21:49,000

And in 2001, this statue was dedicated in Genoa, Nevada to recognize the heroic efforts of Snowshoe Thompson,

218

00:21:49,000 --> 00:21:54,000

who braved the elements to deliver the mail and save a man's life.

219

00:21:58,000 --> 00:21:59,000

New Orleans.

220

00:21:59,000 --> 00:22:07,000

This low-lying metropolis has over 170 miles of canals, more than all of the channels in Venice, Italy.

221

00:22:09,000 --> 00:22:14,000

And along the banks of Abayu is a structure that was built to protect the Gulf Coast City.

222

00:22:15,000 --> 00:22:20,000

It's made of brick. Some of the walls are five feet high, some of the walls are two feet high.

223

00:22:20,000 --> 00:22:27,000

But so faded, it's gray. And you can see several different sections, that hinge that it used to be, a very large building.

224

00:22:28,000 --> 00:22:31,000

These are the ruins of the old Spanish fort.

225

00:22:32,000 --> 00:22:40,000

And according to tour guide Mark Linahan, this one-time garrison was the setting for a mysterious military experiment.

226

00:22:41,000 --> 00:22:48,000

Nobody had ever seen anything like this before. They were convinced it would usher in a new era of warfare.

227

00:22:48,000 --> 00:22:52,000

What explosive event occurred on the shores?

228

00:22:52,000 --> 00:22:57,000

1876. New Orleans.

229

00:22:58,000 --> 00:23:04,000

In the wake of a civil war, local Navy officials are eager to rebuild America's fleet.

230

00:23:05,000 --> 00:23:10,000

And there's one man who says he has an invention that's just what the Navy needs.

231

00:23:11,000 --> 00:23:13,000

His name? James C. Wingard.

232

00:23:15,000 --> 00:23:20,000

James C. Wingard is one of these jacks of all trades, and is a rather mysterious figure.

233

00:23:20,000 --> 00:23:25,000

He works as an inventor, he works as a medium, he works as a riverboat pilot.

234

00:23:27,000 --> 00:23:33,000

Wingard claims to have designed a powerful weapon that will restore New Orleans maritime dominance.

235

00:23:34,000 --> 00:23:38,000

He calls this intriguing creation, the Nameless Force.

236

00:23:39,000 --> 00:23:42,000

The name itself is mysterious, so that's generating a lot of buzz.

237

00:23:43,000 --> 00:23:49,000

But what's more important is that Wingard is promising a brand new weapon that will change the future of naval warfare.

238

00:23:50,000 --> 00:23:53,000

No other country has this type of weaponry.

239

00:23:54,000 --> 00:23:56,000

But Wingard's invention is still being developed.

240

00:23:57,000 --> 00:24:04,000

To attract potential investors, he announces he will demonstrate a prototype on the lake in front of the old Spanish fort.

241

00:24:05,000 --> 00:24:11,000

The city is a buzz with excitement. People cannot wait to see this futuristic weapon in action.

242

00:24:13,000 --> 00:24:23,000

On June 8th, a group of Navy officials and members of New Orleans Elite gather at the Spanish Fort to witness Wingard's high-tech firearm in action.

243

00:24:26,000 --> 00:24:34,000

Standing beside his concealed creation, the enigmatic inventor is keen to explain the groundbreaking science behind it.

244

00:24:35,000 --> 00:24:44,000

Wingard claims that he is able to harness electricity into this nameless force, and with that, he can obliterate any ship within five miles.

245

00:24:45,000 --> 00:24:47,000

His assertion wows the crowd.

246

00:24:48,000 --> 00:24:56,000

Electricity at this point in time is still fairly new. You know that it exists, but you don't know what it's capable of.

247

00:24:57,000 --> 00:25:02,000

Gearing up for his demonstration, Wingard aims his weapon at a schooner in the distance.

248

00:25:03,000 --> 00:25:07,000

In just a moment, that schooner will entirely vanish.

249

00:25:10,000 --> 00:25:12,000

Then he activates his device.

250

00:25:19,000 --> 00:25:22,000

The schooner explodes in this massive fireball.

251

00:25:25,000 --> 00:25:27,000

The crowd goes wild.

252

00:25:28,000 --> 00:25:30,000

The demonstration is a complete success.

253

00:25:33,000 --> 00:25:39,000

The next day, newspapers are filled with praise for Wingard's weapon.

254

00:25:40,000 --> 00:25:45,000

The Navy is very excited that there's a new toy for them to potentially put on their own ships.

255

00:25:46,000 --> 00:25:49,000

What's the secret behind this mysterious invention?

256

00:25:50,000 --> 00:26:05,000

It's the 1870s in New Orleans. When inventor James Wingard comes forward with a mysterious new weapon, he calls the Nameless Force.

257

00:26:07,000 --> 00:26:15,000

The U.S. Navy is convinced it will change the course of warfare, but is his explosive invention too good to be true?

258

00:26:16,000 --> 00:26:26,000

Claiming he needs more funding to develop his weapon, Wingard arranges a second demonstration for potential investors in Boston.

259

00:26:27,000 --> 00:26:29,000

A weapon with untold naval capabilities.

260

00:26:30,000 --> 00:26:37,000

The investors were willing to commit their money to it, but they also want to make sure that they're putting their money into something that is reliable and works.

261

00:26:38,000 --> 00:26:43,000

As before, Wingard stations a ship about a mile away in the water.

262

00:26:44,000 --> 00:26:48,000

But before he can fire the weapon, something bizarre happens.

263

00:26:51,000 --> 00:26:56,000

Suddenly there's an explosion about halfway between the shore and the ship.

264

00:26:58,000 --> 00:27:02,000

Turning to Wingard in disbelief, the crowd demands answers.

265

00:27:03,000 --> 00:27:04,000

What have you done?

266

00:27:04,000 --> 00:27:10,000

Here's a massive explosion that happens before he fired the weapon and is in the wrong place.

267

00:27:12,000 --> 00:27:17,000

Wingard has turned white as a sheet and he offers no explanation as to what has just happened.

268

00:27:19,000 --> 00:27:23,000

Wingard makes a hasty exit, leaving spectators stunned.

269

00:27:24,000 --> 00:27:31,000

But the city's shock and confusion only escalates when something even more troubling washes ashore.

270

00:27:31,000 --> 00:27:36,000

They find two very mangled bodies. It looks like something went horribly wrong.

271

00:27:38,000 --> 00:27:43,000

Over the next few days, police launch an investigation into the bodies and the explosion.

272

00:27:44,000 --> 00:27:49,000

Under pressure to provide answers, Wingard finally makes a startling confession.

273

00:27:50,000 --> 00:27:57,000

He admits that the whole thing has been an elaborate hoax. The two bodies were actually his co-conspirators.

274

00:27:58,000 --> 00:28:06,000

He explains that his partners had packed a rowboat with dynamite and were supposed to row out and load it onto the target ship.

275

00:28:07,000 --> 00:28:12,000

Then the two co-conspirators would row away. There would be a fuse running back underwater to Wingard.

276

00:28:13,000 --> 00:28:16,000

Wingard would merely set off the dynamite and the ship would explode.

277

00:28:17,000 --> 00:28:21,000

Yet on this occasion, Wingard's collaborators had made a fatal mistake.

278

00:28:22,000 --> 00:28:24,000

They mishandled the explosives they were working with.

279

00:28:27,000 --> 00:28:31,000

And they exploded prematurely before they had reached their target and made their escape.

280

00:28:35,000 --> 00:28:41,000

After making his confession, the exposed swindler skips town and is never heard from again.

281

00:28:43,000 --> 00:28:49,000

And today, the old Spanish fort, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places,

282

00:28:49,000 --> 00:28:58,000

endures as a testament to the city's storied maritime past and an incredible invention that was too good to be true.

283

00:29:02,000 --> 00:29:06,000

Brooklyn, New York was an independent city until 1898.

284

00:29:07,000 --> 00:29:14,000

Today, it is home to over two and a half million residents, making it the most populous of New York's five boroughs.

285

00:29:14,000 --> 00:29:18,000

And at its western edge is the magnificent Williamsburg Bridge.

286

00:29:23,000 --> 00:29:32,000

Proudly commanding the approach to this crossing is a monument to a legendary leader without whom the United States might never have existed.

287

00:29:33,000 --> 00:29:37,000

It is 31 feet high, made out of bronze and sits on a granite base.

288

00:29:38,000 --> 00:29:41,000

It shows a man in the middle of wintertime sitting violently upon a horse.

289

00:29:42,000 --> 00:29:47,000

This is a statue of America's first commander-in-chief, George Washington.

290

00:29:48,000 --> 00:29:54,000

The founding father is portrayed as cold and weary during the most brutal campaign of the Revolutionary War.

291

00:29:55,000 --> 00:30:03,000

But as historian Bruce Chadwick can attest, Washington might never have become president had it not been for one unlikely hero.

292

00:30:04,000 --> 00:30:10,000

This is a little-known story about a common criminal who has saved the future president and the future of our country.

293

00:30:15,000 --> 00:30:21,000

May 1776, New York. The Revolutionary War is in full swing.

294

00:30:22,000 --> 00:30:28,000

General George Washington and his forces are preparing to defend New York against an invasion by the British Army.

295

00:30:29,000 --> 00:30:35,000

But one New Yorker is more concerned about his own neck than the imminent battle.

296

00:30:36,000 --> 00:30:45,000

Prisoner Isaac Ketchum is cooling his heels in the city jail, awaiting sentencing on charges of conspiring to counterfeit paper money.

297

00:30:46,000 --> 00:30:51,000

He was very apprehensive because counterfeiting was a capital offense at that time. He could be hanged.

298

00:30:52,000 --> 00:30:59,000

As a widower and father of six, Ketchum is desperate to save his skin, and he's about to get his chance.

299

00:31:00,000 --> 00:31:06,000

One day, he overhears other prisoners whispering about a secret plot of some kind.

300

00:31:07,000 --> 00:31:13,000

Prisons around New York City were full of loyalists and Tories, people who were a real danger to the American cause.

301

00:31:14,000 --> 00:31:26,000

Eavesdropping, Ketchum realizes the inmates he is spying on are Americans loyal to the British monarchy, and they're discussing a plan to sabotage General Washington himself.

302

00:31:28,000 --> 00:31:33,000

Ketchum realizes their treacherous plot could be his ticket out of prison.

303

00:31:34,000 --> 00:31:42,000

He quietly slips a letter to his jailers, addressed to the provincial Congress, the Revolutionary Government of Colonial New York.

304

00:31:43,000 --> 00:31:47,000

It's a veiled letter that suggests he knows something very important.

305

00:31:48,000 --> 00:31:57,000

The secretive tone of Ketchum's letter peaks the interest of the Congress, and he's called in for questioning by the congressional speaker himself.

306

00:31:59,000 --> 00:32:05,000

The speaker was intrigued by what Ketchum had to say because with possible British invasion, this was important.

307

00:32:06,000 --> 00:32:10,000

Ketchum tells the speaker about the secret plans against General Washington.

308

00:32:10,000 --> 00:32:14,000

They're very serious. They seem very serious and intent on making it happen.

309

00:32:14,000 --> 00:32:21,000

The speaker finds the prisoner's tale plausible, but he needs to know the details of the scheme and the names of the plotters.

310

00:32:22,000 --> 00:32:27,000

He sends Ketchum back to jail, but this time as a spy.

311

00:32:28,000 --> 00:32:34,000

What better person than a criminal than a scoundrel to act as a stool pigeon, spy?

312

00:32:34,000 --> 00:32:39,000

Ketchum knows that if discovered, he will be killed by the very men he's spying on.

313

00:32:40,000 --> 00:32:44,000

Nevertheless, with the promise of freedom in the offing, he agrees.

314

00:32:45,000 --> 00:32:53,000

What Ketchum uncovers is a plot so insidious it could undermine the Revolution in all hopes for American liberty.

315

00:32:53,000 --> 00:33:10,000

It's 1776 in New York City. Prisoner Isaac Ketchum has overheard his fellow inmates discussing a secret plan against General George Washington.

316

00:33:11,000 --> 00:33:17,000

When he writes a letter to revolutionary leaders, warning them of the rumors, they immediately enlist him as a patriot spy.

317

00:33:18,000 --> 00:33:20,000

So can Ketchum stop this treacherous plot?

318

00:33:24,000 --> 00:33:32,000

Back in jail, Isaac Ketchum is assigned a new cellmate, a private in Washington's army named Thomas Hickey.

319

00:33:33,000 --> 00:33:40,000

Hickey is a member of George Washington's security guard. These are the guys who protect the

general 24 hours a day.

320

00:33:41,000 --> 00:33:47,000

Hickey is in prison for forgery, but he's about to confess to an even more grievous crime.

321

00:33:47,000 --> 00:33:51,000

All prisoners in jail talk. Thomas Hickey talks too much.

322

00:33:54,000 --> 00:34:04,000

Hickey reveals that although he had once been a member of Washington's guard, he is now part of a group that is secretly scheming with the British against Washington.

323

00:34:05,000 --> 00:34:09,000

To keep Hickey talking, Ketchum pretends he's on the same side.

324

00:34:11,000 --> 00:34:19,000

Hickey tells Ketchum of a plot that he's involved in to kidnap George Washington and crush the Revolution.

325

00:34:20,000 --> 00:34:31,000

The British would like to sail him back to London and they were going to hang up to show the whole

world here's what happens to somebody who leads a rebellion against the Crown.

326

00:34:33,000 --> 00:34:39,000

After hearing this astonishing plan, Ketchum swiftly reports back to the provincial Congress.

327

00:34:40,000 --> 00:34:48,000

And on June 26th, Thomas Hickey is arrested. Under interrogation, he spills the names of his accomplices.

328

00:34:49,000 --> 00:34:59,000

They are all rounded up. The next day, Hickey is found guilty of mutiny, sedition and treachery and is sentenced to death by hanging.

329

00:35:01,000 --> 00:35:06,000

He becomes the first person in American history to be executed for treason.

330

00:35:07,000 --> 00:35:12,000

The hanging of Hickey was the perfect example to all the people of America, not to threaten the Commander-in-Chief.

331

00:35:13,000 --> 00:35:18,000

As for Ketchum, just as he had hoped, he is finally reunited with his family.

332

00:35:18,000 --> 00:35:22,000

Ketchum was pardoned and released quietly two months later. Nothing was ever heard from him again.

333

00:35:25,000 --> 00:35:34,000

And this commanding statue in Brooklyn, New York, stands here today as a reminder of one scoundrel who committed a crime and saved a president.

334

00:35:35,000 --> 00:35:50,000

With three active volcanoes, 2,600 square miles of tropical rainforest and over 400 beaches, it's no surprise nearly 8 million tourists a year flock to Hawaii.

335

00:35:53,000 --> 00:35:58,000

But on the southern tip of Oahu, is a tranquil oasis often overlooked.

336

00:35:59,000 --> 00:36:07,000

It's a long, white sand beach, it has a fringe reef, and while it might have all the natural beauty that Hawaii has to offer, this location is entirely man-made.

337

00:36:09,000 --> 00:36:21,000

This is Magic Island. But as Mariner Nalehu Anthony knows, this picture-perfect shore once witnessed a treacherous voyage that left 15 lives hanging in the balance.

338

00:36:22,000 --> 00:36:25,000

The voyage was seen as something that was just on the edge of impossible.

339

00:36:29,000 --> 00:36:32,000

Hawaii, 1976.

340

00:36:33,000 --> 00:36:37,000

43-year-old Maverick anthropologist Ben Finney is on a mission.

341

00:36:38,000 --> 00:36:46,000

He intends to solve the greatest Hawaiian mystery of all time. How exactly this isolated island chain was first populated.

342

00:36:47,000 --> 00:36:54,000

Ben Finney is an interesting guy. He's really obsessed with these anthropological debates about how Hawaii happened to get populated.

343

00:36:54,000 --> 00:37:04,000

For decades, anthropologists have believed that Hawaii was settled by ancient Polynesian fishermen, who happened upon these far-flung islands by accident.

344

00:37:05,000 --> 00:37:11,000

Anthropologists thought that there was this one Polynesian canoe that was blown off course and they happened to land in Hawaii.

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00:37:12,000 --> 00:37:21,000

The root of this theory lies in the belief that the ancient Polynesians didn't have the know-how required to navigate across the vast Pacific Ocean.

346

00:37:22,000 --> 00:37:33,000

People thought at the time that Polynesians didn't possess the skill set to build a canoe and sail it purposefully up into the wind for several thousand miles.

347

00:37:34,000 --> 00:37:42,000

But Finney disagrees. To prove his theory, he is building a replica of an ancient Polynesian sailing canoe.

348

00:37:42,000 --> 00:37:50,000

It's a very difficult task to try to build a voyage canoe that would mirror what would have been seen many thousands of years ago.

349

00:37:51,000 --> 00:37:53,000

But he was just obsessed with this idea of figuring it out.

350

00:37:55,000 --> 00:38:06,000

Teaming up with native Hawaiian historians, sailors and boat builders, Finney constructs a wind-powered vessel that replicates an ancient Polynesian craft in every way.

351

00:38:07,000 --> 00:38:18,000

It was a 62-foot double-haul canoe that I had two masts and could carry crew of about 13 individuals. The attention to detail was phenomenal.

352

00:38:19,000 --> 00:38:23,000

The vessel is dubbed Hokalea, meaning Star of Gladness in Hawaiian.

353

00:38:25,000 --> 00:38:30,000

The Hokalea will make a round-trip voyage of some 5,000 miles to Tahiti and back.

354

00:38:31,000 --> 00:38:40,000

Finney and his team will navigate by the stars to demonstrate how the ancients did it without maps, compasses or GPS.

355

00:38:41,000 --> 00:38:52,000

The idea was to use what clues you have in your natural realm, tell us your body's moving, the moon, the sun, waves, wind and other clues that you could use to find land.

356

00:38:53,000 --> 00:39:02,000

May 1, 1976, Maui. To much celebration, the Hokalea starts its historic journey to Tahiti.

357

00:39:03,000 --> 00:39:10,000

With the aid of strong winds, the sleep craft makes excellent time on what is expected to be a 20-day crossing.

358

00:39:11,000 --> 00:39:21,000

But the good times soon take a dark turn. After 20 days at sea, Finney and his men still see no land on the horizon.

359

00:39:22,000 --> 00:39:25,000

The crew started to think there's no way they're going to find land.

360

00:39:26,000 --> 00:39:34,000

The hard work, cramped quarters and empty ocean, hundreds of miles from nowhere, drive the crew to frustration and anger.

361

00:39:35,000 --> 00:39:36,000

Where's the land?

362

00:39:36,000 --> 00:39:41,000

As tensions mount, Finney fears his daring experiment could end in failure.

363

00:39:42,000 --> 00:39:48,000

It's 1976. A group of mariners has set sail from Maui aboard the Hokalea, a traditional Polynesian-style canoe.

364

00:39:49,000 --> 00:39:58,000

In an attempt to show how ancient Polynesians may have journeyed to Hawaii, they're traveling some 5,000 miles to Tahiti and back using only the stars to navigate.

365

00:39:58,000 --> 00:40:05,000

But after sailing for 20 days, there is still no land in sight. So will the canoe complete its epic voyage?

366

00:40:09,000 --> 00:40:12,000

Some of the sailors thought there's no way they're going to find land.

367

00:40:13,000 --> 00:40:16,000

The desperate crew push on for another two weeks.

368

00:40:17,000 --> 00:40:23,000

And finally, after 13 days of sailing, the crew is ready to sail.

369

00:40:23,000 --> 00:40:26,000

The desperate crew push on for another two weeks.

370

00:40:27,000 --> 00:40:31,000

And finally, after 34 days at sea, they spot a speck on the horizon.

371

00:40:35,000 --> 00:40:39,000

On June 3rd, history is made. The Hokalea reaches Tahiti.

372

00:40:40,000 --> 00:40:45,000

The arrival was spectacular. 17,000 people showed up to celebrate.

373

00:40:46,000 --> 00:40:50,000

A pared-down crew charts the journey home.

374

00:40:51,000 --> 00:40:59,000

And on July 26th, after making the return trip in just 22 days, they are greeted by a crowd of thousands at Magic Island.

375

00:41:00,000 --> 00:41:05,000

When they came back home, they received as heroes, those crew members are still legendary to this day.

376

00:41:06,000 --> 00:41:14,000

The successful journey proves that ancient Polynesians were capable of sailing across the vast Pacific to inhabit Hawaii.

377

00:41:15,000 --> 00:41:20,000

It's not just like all the anthropologists were wrong, but actually we were really smart.

378

00:41:21,000 --> 00:41:24,000

And we really had the ability to do some amazing things.

379

00:41:25,000 --> 00:41:31,000

Today, visitors to Magic Island can bask in the sun while being reminded of a scientific quest that rekindled an ancient tradition.

380

00:41:32,000 --> 00:41:39,000

From an epic inferno to a bootleggers' revenge, a courageous courier to a patriotic mission.

381

00:41:40,000 --> 00:41:43,000

I'm Don Wildman and these are the Mysteries.

382

00:41:54,000 --> 00:41:57,000

The Mysteries at the Monument