

John Joseph Price (1836-1905)

John Joseph Price was born on October 16, 1835, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Not much is known about his early life, including the names of his parents. In 1858, he married Elizabeth Bowen, and they lived in Hamilton County, Ohio, where they had five children: Joseph I, Glenn, Clara, Elizabeth, and Ella.

During the U.S. Civil War, John joined the 138th Regiment of Ohio Volunteers. He enlisted as a corporal on May 2, 1864, and his unit served for 100 days, mainly doing guard duty. They protected prisoners, guarded telegraph lines, and intercepted Confederate mail and blockade runners in Washington, D.C., and Virginia. After the war ended, John and his family moved to Bloomington, where he started a farm. However, due to his severe asthma, he could no longer work the farm himself and had to rent it out.

In 1874, John ran for McLean County Sheriff but did not win. Before this, he had worked as a bailiff in McLean County Court and the Eighth Judicial Circuit Court and even served as acting sheriff. Although he had the respect of many, he wasn't successful in his campaign. In the early 1880s, John began working as a conductor on a Pullman sleeper car for the Chicago and Alton Railroad. His job was to sell tickets and keep passengers calm during emergencies. John became part of history in 1881 when he was involved in a train robbery by the notorious Jesse James and his gang.

Jesse James, an outlaw from Missouri, and his gang robbed banks, trains, and stagecoaches across the United States. James had a deep hatred for the Union after the Civil War, and he and his brother Frank turned to a life of crime, targeting Northern industries. In 1881, Jesse James and his gang decided to rob a train that John was working on.

On September 7, 1881, John was on his usual train route from St. Louis to Kansas City when the train was stopped by a red lantern and rocks and wooden boards blocking the tracks. As the train stopped, masked robbers boarded, and passengers quickly hid their valuables. John heard the warning, and soon the robbers were inside his Pullman car, demanding money and jewelry. John, who had hidden his valuables, was eventually robbed of his gold watch and money.

After robbing everyone, the gang left, and John and the crew were forced to help clear the tracks. The gang made off with around \$5,500 in money and valuables. The robbery made headlines, and John's account of the event was published in the newspapers. Despite this frightening experience, he continued working as a conductor until 1885.

Later, John returned to farming, living a quiet life until his death on August 29, 1905, at his home in Bloomington. He had been in poor health for several years before his passing. His obituary described him as an esteemed, upright citizen, and he was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington.