

THE VOICE OF ETHICS

A Publication of the Ohio Ethics Commission

2025 Quarter 3



Unionville Tavern
Unionville, Ohio
Built 1798

Introducing Our New *TRUE CRIME* Podcast!



Taking a Sound Bite Out of Ethics Crime

The Ohio Ethics Commission is excited to announce the launch of **The Voice of Ethics**, our brand-new podcast where we spill the tea on the good, the bad, and the unethical. Join “the Ethics Lady” Susan Willeke as she shares her favorite real-world stories of ethics violations from Ohio and around the nation.



True Crime

Bite-sized stories, brazen and bewildering



Interviews

With investigators and experts



Hot Goss

News and analysis on criminal trends



Pro Tips

For staying on the right side of the law

Here Comes the Bribe

OK so bribes aren't our deal but the pun was too good to pass up when introducing our kickoff episode: “Happily Ever Ethical: The Ohio Ethics Law & Weddings!”

For better or for worse, for self enrichment or for poor judgement...we hope you don't get cold feet but, well, there's no fairy tale ending here. Broken vows, forsaken oaths, disgraced mayors - *don't miss it!*



Listen Now

Visit ethics.ohio.gov/ethicslaw/podcast.html, or find The Voice of Ethics on [Spotify](#), [YouTube Music](#), [Amazon Music](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), or wherever you listen.

Take care, be ethical!

Ohio Ethics Law Training at Your Disposal!



Did you know that July 2nd was the exact halfway point of 2025? That means we are officially closer to the year 2050 than we are to 2000. **Yikes!**

The good news is that there are still several months left this year to complete your training on the Ohio Ethics Law! If you are required by Executive Order, internal policies, licensing obligations, etc., to participate in a training on the Ohio Ethics Law, we've got you covered!

On-Demand E-course

The Ohio Ethics Commission provides numerous training options that are convenient and efficient. If you need training that meets your scheduling needs, check out our annual on-demand e-course, [The Ohio Ethics Law: Searching for Ethics](#).

Interactive Webinars

For those who prefer a live interactive experience, one of our webinars might just fit the bill. Dates and registration information on both introductory and advanced [webinars](#) await you!

Continuing Legal Education

Special note for attorneys: our e-course and webinars are approved for one hour of general CLE. For the required [2.5 attorney conduct CLE hours](#), register for either our in-person CLE on October 15 or our virtual option on November 19.

In-Person Training

Could your office gather at least 60 or more learners for an in-person session? If so, email susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov for more information.

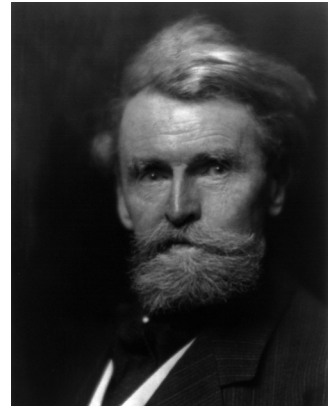
Don't miss your Ethics Law training this year so your life won't reflect this quote from famed author Victor Hugo: "I'm not totally useless. I can be used as a bad example." Kidding, everyone! See you at training soon!

Book Review: Empty Mansions

Book Review by the Ohio Ethics Commission's Susan Willeke: "Empty Mansions" by Bill Dedman & Paul Clark Newell Jr.

I'm a voracious reader. Joyfully I partake in fiction and non-fiction alike. A special treat, however, is stumbling across a work of non-fiction that reads like a page-turning novel. "Empty Mansions: The Mysterious Life of Huguette Clark and the Spending of a Great American Fortune" by Bill Dedman & Paul Clark Newell Jr., is just such a treat. I devoured this biography of Huguette Clark, the reclusive copper heiress and daughter of W.A. Clark, the so-called "Copper King" and later disgraced United States senator.

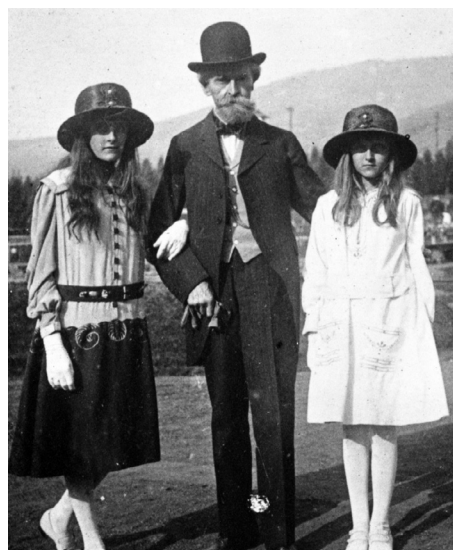
William Andrew Clark made his fortune in copper mines, railway construction, and real estate. He sold small plots of land in the Nevada desert which eventually became Las Vegas. Not content with being one of the richest men in America (when he died in 1925, his estate was valued at nearly \$3.5 billion by today's standards), Clark dreamed of becoming a U.S. senator. The book closely examines the scandal of 1899 which included charges that Clark had bribed members of the Montana State Legislature for their votes (state legislatures chose U.S. senators at the time). The U.S. Senate refused to seat Clark due to the allegations, though he was eventually appointed to the seat for a single term. The scandal resulted in the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment as well as the infamous quote often attributed to Clark: "I never bought a man who wasn't for sale."



I never bought a man
who wasn't for sale.

- William A. Clark

The majority of "Empty Mansions," however, explores the life of Clark's daughter, Huguette, a painter and philanthropist who inherited much of her father's fortune yet chose to live her final twenty years not in one of her many estates, but rather in a New York City hospital, despite having no physical maladies. While she grew more reclusive and distrustful during her self-imposed exile, she could be quite generous to people and causes she deemed worthy (she willed \$5 million to her private nurse). She also spent dizzying amounts of money on children's collectibles such as dolls, dollhouses, and Flintstone figurines.



Clark with his daughters Andrée (left) and Huguette (right)

While the authors assert that Huguette Clark "lived a surprisingly rich life," her story carries an air of melancholy from what may have been undiagnosed mental illness, as well as attempts by those around her to take financial advantage of her by medical staff, solicitors, and her own family members. Upon her death, relatives who had never met her instigated an extended lawsuit to garner a piece of her fortune.

Could this book have been a bit a shorter? Yes. Could some specific accounts have been more concise? Sure. But overall, I found Dedman and Newell's telling of the lives of W.A. and Huguette Clark delightful. (Elaborate descriptions of ornate NYC penthouses and coastal chalets in Santa Barbara can be particularly appetizing to those whose primary views are of Ohio farmlands!)

What could be a heavy lift in the hands of lesser authors is instead a tale that has it all: intrigue, history, opulence, and ethics. A delicious read.

Frequent Flyer Miles & Reward Points Advisory Opinion

At its meeting on August 4, 2025, the Ohio Ethics Commission approved [Formal Advisory Opinion 2025-02](#) which allows public officials or employees to use frequent flyer miles that were earned during official travel for personal travel.

Although the Commission had previously restricted the use of frequent flyer miles accrued during official travel for personal use, this advisory opinion states that public officials and employees may use frequent flyer miles that were earned during official travel for personal travel if they earn the miles under the same conditions as the public and at no additional cost to their public agencies. While this Advisory Opinion primarily references frequent flyer miles, the analysis also applies to other reward points programs.

“Frequent flyer account numbers are so often used by airlines as personal identifiers that it’s difficult for travelers to opt out of these programs,” said Executive Director Paul Nick. “The Commission believed it was appropriate to revise its guidance on official travel and align it with how the federal government treats them.”

The opinion notes that public official and employees are prohibited from choosing an airline, vendor, or service based solely on whether it provides frequent flyer miles or other rewards points.

Additionally, a planner who books a group trip for multiple travelers and could therefore earn a substantial number of frequent flyer miles or reward points from one event is prohibited from personally using rewards earned in connection to booking the group travel.



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