

The Bath School Massacre: The Worst School Attack in U.S. History

On the morning of May 18, 1927, a school board treasurer named Andrew Kehoe blew up a schoolhouse in Bath Township, Mich., killing 44 people (38 children and 6 adults). Another 58 people were injured.

Eyewitnesses [later said](#) they could hear the explosion more than a mile away.

The bombing would have been much worse if one timing device had not failed to trigger another 500 pounds of dynamite in the basement of another wing of the schoolhouse.

Kehoe, who murdered his wife shortly before the bomb went off and also firebombed his farm, had lost an election for town clerk and was facing foreclosure. It's believed he plotted the attack as a sort of revenge killing against the town.

*Not so fun fact- The worst school massacre in US History was in Bath,MI in 1927.Andrew Kehoe was angry about a public political defeat and his farm going into foreclosure.Used dynamite and gunfire to kill 38 kids and 6 adults.Tried to kill more but 500 lbs of dynamite never blew.
pic.twitter.com/UDuTOHztt7*

– Doc Jones, M.D. (@DDocJJones) [March 9, 2018](#)

Few Americans know about the Kehoe Bombing (also known as the Bath School Disaster or the Bath School Massacre), and it's

[often omitted](#) in lists of terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. There are a few reasons for this.

For one, the attack generated surprisingly little national news. “The story made national headlines immediately, but quickly disappeared,” *Time* magazine writer Katrina Gulliver [noted](#) in 2016. “It did not prompt a broader conversation about explosives, or school safety, or mental health, as such an attack today would. Everyone outside Bath Township seemed to forget about it altogether.”

This is perhaps because a couple days after the attack, American aviator Charles Lindbergh set out on his famous [Trans-Atlantic crossing](#). Or perhaps it’s because there was less appetite in the 1920s for grisly accounts of this kind. Whatever the case, the Bath School Massacre was quickly forgotten by almost everyone outside of Michigan.

Another reason few people know of the attack is that it was in some ways, beyond the tragedy itself, forgettable. It was the not the beginning of a trend, which might give it greater historic significance. Nor was it political (unless one counts provincial matters). If Kehoe had been a socialist, anarchist, or religious fanatic instead of a deranged farmer, the attack likely would have had more permanence in our collective memory.

A third reason could be that the Kehoe Bombing doesn’t fit neatly into our modern narrative on mass killings. There is a powerful [current of belief](#) that implies our children will be safe if we only get certain tools out of some people’s hands. But the Bath School Disaster, which suggests a determined killer can find all sorts of ways to commit an evil act, runs counter to this narrative.

A final reason could be that the bombing happened a really long time ago and, sadly, most Americans [don’t really know](#) or care much about history.

Whatever the case, Kehoe's act of violence is historically significant, one we'd do well to not ignore.

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