

## Chapter Two

# *The Cumberland County Mystery*

### **Day One - Saturday, November 24, 1934**

In the Saturday, November 24th edition of *The Evening Sentinel* it was reported that two employees of the Cameron Estate were cutting and gathering wood in the area along current State Route 233 in Penn Township, Cumberland County, on the northern slope of South Mountain. The Cameron Estate was located several miles away on the top of South Mountain at King's Gap in Dickinson Township. The mansion had been built as a summer home and weekend retreat by James McCormick Cameron, a wealthy businessman from Harrisburg. His grandfather was Simon Cameron who served as Secretary of State during the Lincoln Administration.<sup>1</sup> The estate today is the King's Gap Environmental Education Center.

The Cameron Estate employees were John E. Clark and his nephew, Clark Jardine. As they gathered wood, at approximately 9 o'clock in the morning, they noticed a blanket covering something in the underbrush. At first they assumed the blanket was being used to cover an illegal deer kill, but when they approached and lifted the corner of the blanket they realized that a body of a young girl was under it. Accounts vary regarding whether they looked further at this point. Some accounts indicate that they realized there were actually three bodies under the blanket. They immediately went to the home of Mrs. Thomas LeDane in Huntsdale, a small village north of the site. In 1934 not every home had a telephone. Although there were houses closer to the site where the bodies were found, this home was apparently the closest one that John Clark knew would have access to a telephone.

Clark and Jardine contacted police in Carlisle and waited for them to arrive before returning with the police to the site of the bodies. Early newspaper reports identified the location as near Pine Grove Furnace State Park, two miles away. However, the closest settlement to the location of the bodies was the village of

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<sup>1</sup> En.m.wikipedia.org, "Kings Gap Environmental Education and Training Center, accessed: January 12, 2015.

## Day Three - Monday, November 26, 1934

Much of the front page of the Monday, November 26, 1934 issue of the *Evening Sentinel* was devoted to the tragedy. The leading headline read, "Solution Nearer in Girls' Death." Additional smaller-print headlines preceding the article read:

Second Partial Identification Made as Police Link  
Carlisle, Altoona Tragedies; Girls' Clothing Traced  
to Manufacturer; Discard Carbon Monoxide Gas Theory

Bus Driver Believes  
Slain Woman and 3  
Children were Fares

New York Firm Volunteers to Trace Sales to  
Determine Where Girls' Coats were Purchased -  
Toxicologist [sic] Continues Search

Accompanying the article was a photograph of the three bodies as they were found on the mountain after the top blanket was removed. The article began with a story about a bus driver from Boston who believed, after viewing the photographs of the girls, that he had driven them from Boston to New York the previous Wednesday. Another bus driver from Harrisburg believed he had driven the young woman found near Altoona with the three girls from New York to Harrisburg on November 21. A Camp Hill man thought he saw the girls on the Market Street Bridge on Thursday. These all proved to be false leads but illustrates the confusion generated by the case during the initial investigation.

The article continued with information about the coats the girls were wearing which were traced to the H. & J. Block Company, New York. The NRA Eagle labels found in the coats indicated they had been made by that company. Jesse Block, a partner in the company, indicated that he could possibly determine where the



coats had been sold if the coats were sent to him. Although most of their goods were sold in the New York City area, they did sell coats nation-wide.

The article next addressed information about the autopsies. It indicated that Dr. George R. Moffitt, who

was assisting Dr. Haegele with the autopsies, had determined that his analysis of their blood indicated that carbon monoxide poisoning had not been the cause of the deaths. He also indicated that there was no evidence of asphyxiation or criminal assault. His analysis was to continue in hopes of determining the cause of death and should be completed in 24 hours. Another investigator, Dr. Eddy<sup>5</sup>, was conducting hair analysis to determine what chemicals the girls may have ingested.

Another lead was proving to be more hopeful. Police were trying to determine where the souvenir puzzle books may have been obtained. They were published by the Standard Oil Company so a search of those gas stations was pursued. A station proprietor, John George, at Mt. Holly Springs, Pennsylvania (located about 10 miles east of the site of the girls' bodies), reported that he had sold gas to a man and three girls on Wednesday, the 21st. They were traveling in a 1928 Essex. The man bought candy for the girls and then proceeded on toward Pine Grove Furnace.

Information about the bag had been published the previous day in the *New York Times* and likely in other newspapers in the country that published Sunday editions. Additional information in the article was about the Gladstone bag; three belts found in the bag matched the clothing the girls were wearing. One belt belonged with the coat worn by one of the girls and the other two belts matched the dresses worn by two of the girls. This article also identified the hunter who had found the bag as John Naugle. He had found the bag on Thursday morning, but did not turn it in to police until after the girls' bodies were found on Saturday. He realized there may be a connection between the bag he found and the deaths on the mountain nearby.

If these leads regarding the gas station and the traveling bag proved to be connected to the case of the three girls, it would mean the girls died on Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> or early on Thursday, the 22<sup>nd</sup>. They were likely placed on the mountain immediately after their deaths. Although it has never been determined where they died, the Mt. Holly story would indicate that they likely died not far from where they were found.

On page two of the newspaper, the article mentioned the possible connection to an unidentified man and woman found near Altoona. Investigators said this was the most baffling case they had dealt with since the abduction and murder of the Lindbergh baby.<sup>6</sup> The article provides information about the bus driver reports and other similar ones that later proved not to be connected to this case.

Coroner Edward A. Haegele and assisting Carlisle physicians, Dr. W. Baird Stuart and Dr. Vance M. Rothrock, reported that the bodies would be kept for at least five days before burial if they had not been identified prior to that time. The autopsies, which began at 5:25 pm on Saturday November 24<sup>th</sup>, took two hours to

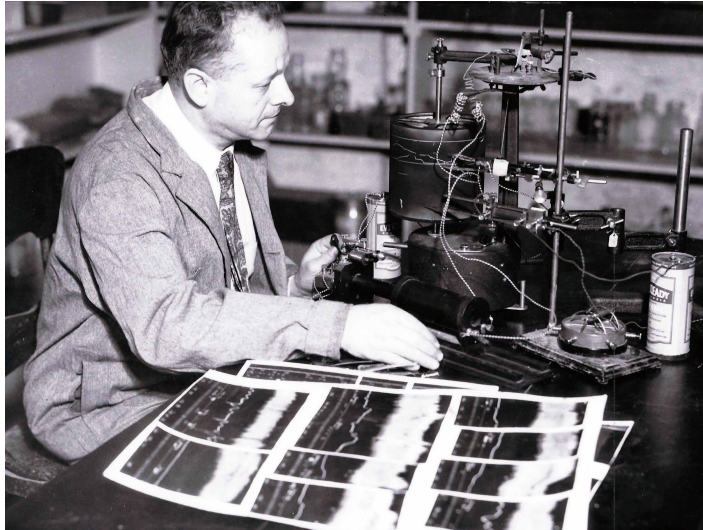
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<sup>5</sup> Dr. Milton Walter Eddy was on the staff at Dickinson College and was an expert in hair classification.

<sup>6</sup> The infant child of Charles A. Lindbergh, the first pilot to fly solo across the Atlantic, had been kidnapped on March 1, 1932. The mystery surrounding this case aroused national attention for years. The initial investigation of the kidnapping came to an unfortunate end on May 12, 1932 when the baby's body was found. The killer was not found until September 19, 1934, just weeks before the bodies of the Babes in the Woods were discovered.

complete but failed to reveal the causes of death. The girls had not eaten for at least 18 hours prior to their deaths. Earlier reports of bruising and cuts were deemed to have happened days prior to the deaths. The article reiterates that the girls had been dead for from 12 to 72 hours before being placed on the mountainside between 8:30 and midnight on Friday evening.

The article mentioned that Carlisle reporters had arrived at the scene prior to police or government officials. This also included the coroner, who arrived at 11:00 am. Police officers on the scene included Sgt. Eugene Woods, local police, State Trooper William Kaspervitch and State Trooper William Broderick. Official photographs were taken before the bodies were taken to the Ewing Funeral Parlor in Carlisle. They were then moved to the Carlisle Hospital for autopsies. After the autopsies the bodies were returned to the funeral home.



Dr. Milton Eddy, expert in hair classification.  
CCHS Photo Archives

The State Board of Education was asked to make contact with all schools in the state in an attempt to locate missing children. An appeal for funds to pay for funerals was made to the community so that if the girls were not identified, they would not have to be buried in a potter's field.

Other articles on the page provided details of the events including:

Woodsman Tells of Finding Bodies  
10,000 View Babes Found  
Dead in Mountain But  
None Can Identify Them

Man, Woman Found Dead Near Altoona

Description of 3 Girls  
May Help Identify Them