

# **GEPHART MURDER CASE**

**West Lafayette, OHIO**

**January, 1966**

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# The Coshocton Tribune

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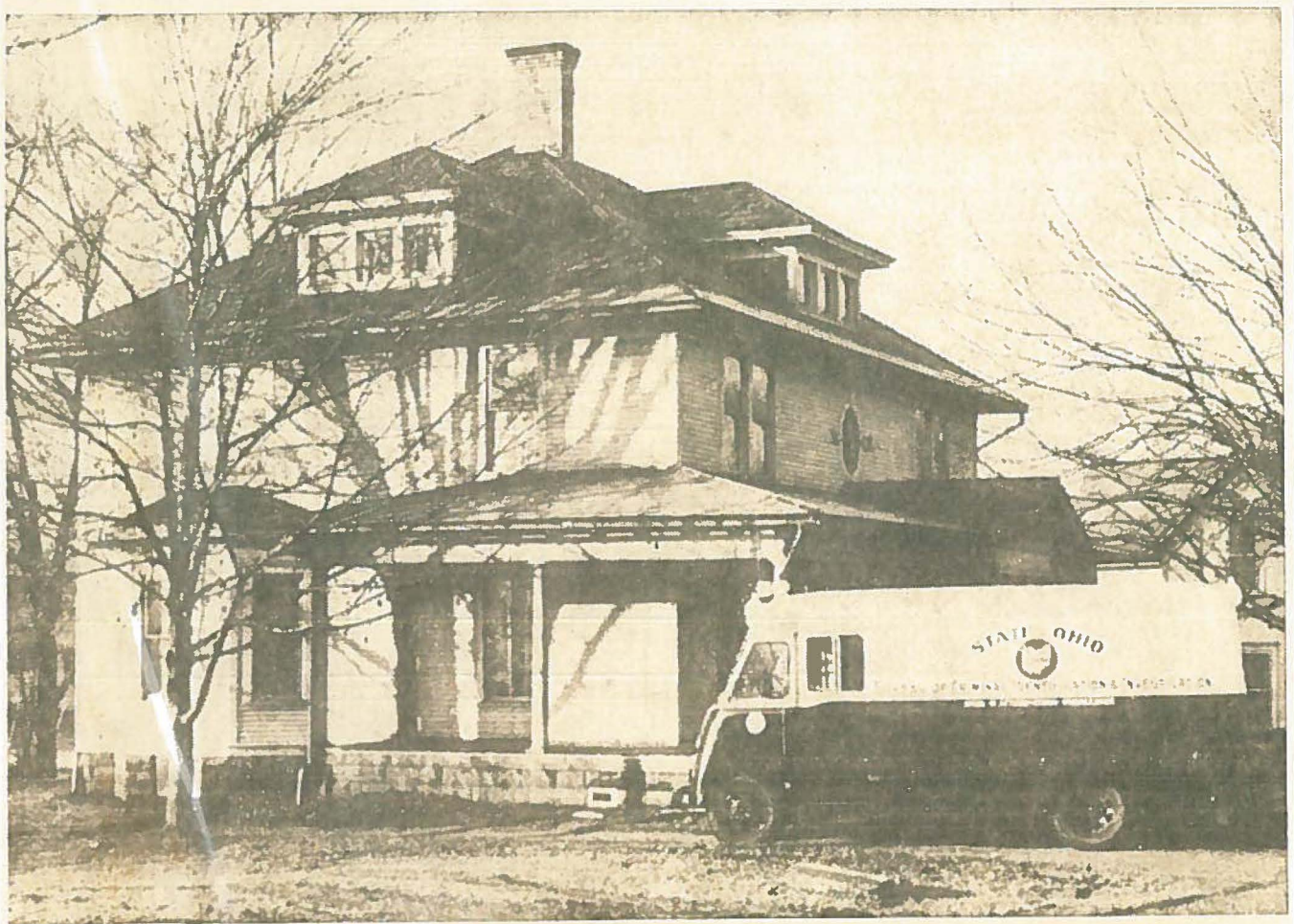
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## Lewis and Francis Gephart Are Murdered in Home at West Lafay





**SCENE OF CRIME**—This was the home of Lewis and Francis Gephart at the east edge of West Lafayette where they were brutally murdered. The Gep-

harts had lived in what was known as the "Davis property" for only a few months, moving there from Coshocton.



# Suspect in Slayings Is Hunted



Lewis Gephart

A suspect was being sought today for questioning in connection with the slaying of an 84-year-old man and his 35-year-old son, whose bodies were found in their Lafayette Township home around 7 p.m. Monday.

The victims were Lewis Gephart Sr., and his son, Francis Eugene Gephart, who resided in a two-story frame house just beyond the east corporate limits of West Lafayette.

The suspect being sought is believed to be a young man befriended by the double homicide victims during the holiday season.

The two bodies were removed at 3 a.m. today to a pathologist's laboratory at Ohio State University, Columbus, where an autopsy was to be conducted to determine the exact cause of death.

An autopsy conducted this morning by a pathologist in a laboratory at Ohio State University, Columbus, revealed to Sheriff Hoop the exact cause of death of the father and son.

The pathologist said that Francis suffered a broken nose, fractures of both jaws and multiple fractures of the face. He was also rendered unconscious and death resulted from strangulation and suffocation from his own blood.

The autopsy also revealed that Mr. Gephart received a severe blow on the left rear side of his head; the right jaw was fractured at the upper lip and he suffered a severe fracture across the base of his skull, causing his death.

Although he had not received a report from the autopsy, Coroner J. C. Briner, West Lafayette, said today that it was his opinion that blows on the head, presumably from a lamp wielded by the slayer, caused the death of both men.

The coroner said a bottle was found broken on the floor and that a metal letter opener was also found bent in one of the bedrooms. Either one of these items, he added, could have been used by the murderer.

If this man the sheriff's department and other law enforcement officers in the state are seeking is the killer, then he has been identified as being between 22 and 25 years of age, white, five feet, eight inches tall, weighing 145 pounds and wearing a checkered sports shirt

A statewide bulletin issued by the State Patrol at the request of Sheriff William Hoop described the suspect as having a flat-top haircut, with sideburns sweeping up in what are called "wings" or "ducktails."

There is a possibility that the man law enforcement officers are seeking has nothing to do with the crimes.

The two men apparently were

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# Suspect Hunted in Double Murder Case

(Continued from Page 1)

bludgeoned to death by a lamp, a base of a mirror or a bottle found near the bodies. Each body, partially clothed, was found sprawled on the floor in separate bedrooms in the second story of the Gephart home.

There was evidence in each bedroom of a struggle and that each man had been beaten or stabbed.

The double homicide was discovered by two Coshocton women who told Sheriff Hoop they had walked to West Lafayette last evening to visit the Gepharts.

The women, identified as Mrs. Jean Fye and Rhea Falflin, who reside at 647 Orange st., said they were friends of the Gephart family.

The elderly Gephart was known to be alive around 7 p.m. Sunday, because one of the women said she had talked with him over the telephone.

Blood in the area of the two men had partially dried, indicating the pair had been dead some time before being found last night.

When the two women arrived at the Gephart home last evening they found the doors locked. They immediately went to the home of neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Dodd, who reside next door, and asked about Lewis Gephart.

The Dodds, who formerly owned the house before the Gepharts moved in, gave them a key to the house. When the women went upstairs in the Gephart home to look for the father or son, they discovered the body of the elderly man.

They immediately notified Mrs. Dodd, who in turn, summoned the sheriff. The sheriff then asked Marshal Ernest Bartholow of West Lafayette to go to the Gephart home and investigate. When he went upstairs he discovered both bodies. Sheriff Hoop and Deputy Robert Wilson rushed to the scene. Shortly after his arrival, the sheriff sealed off the area around the Gephart home to the public and began his investigation.

Later the sheriff called Prosecutor James E. Freeman to the scene of the double murder. He also notified three representatives of the Bureau of Crimi-

nal Identification and Investigation of the crime. Arriving at the scene were Joe Martina, Howard Seith and Ed Hopkins, all experts on criminal identification.

In one room at the Gephart home a table was overturned and a lamp and a base of a mirror were lying on the floor. In the other room lying on the floor was a broken bottle. It was theorized that any one of the objects could have been used to subdue the victims.

Mrs. Fye and Rhea Falflin, who discovered the bodies, were interrogated on matters pertaining to the crimes by deputy sheriffs and criminal identification experts from London until shortly before 5 a.m. today. They were then taken home.

The person who committed the twin-murders is believed to have escaped from the scene in Francis' two-door, hardtop, Impala Chevrolet. The car is missing from the Gephart home.

Francis reportedly befriended the suspect when the latter's 1950 Plymouth broke down on Routes 16-36 near the intersection of Ohio 93, north of West Lafayette, a few days ago. The stranger was reportedly enroute to Washington, Pa., when his car was stranded on the highway.

Francis, in his car, shoved the stalled car to in front of his home and the stranger spent the night and part of the next day in the Gephart residence.

The following day, the stranger's car was put into running order and he told the Gepharts he was continuing his trip to Pennsylvania. He reportedly went to Pennsylvania, but showed up the following day back at the Gephart home without his car.

He told Lewis Gephart and his son that he hitch-hiked his way back to West Lafayette. What explanation, if any, he gave to the Gepharts as to why he returned to their home is not known by the sheriff's department.

The two Coshocton women reportedly saw the stranger in the Gephart home on one of their visits there a few days ago. One was reported as saying that she did "not like the actions of the man," and went to the sheriff's

office to register a complaint against him. She conferred with a deputy sheriff as to what steps if any, could be taken to induce him to leave the Gephart home.

The women told Sheriff Hoop that the man's name was "Gene Mascued."

The sheriff's department would like to know the whereabouts of this man so he can be questioned in an effort to determine whether or not he is involved in the crimes.

Lewis Gephart Sr., a retired superintendent of the former Hunt-Crawford Paper Co., was born June 4, 1883, in Fresno, and was married May 7, 1906, to Minnie Baker, who died four years ago.

Before leaving the Hunt-Crawford plant, where he worked for 51 years, he served as the company's superintendent for 24 years, retiring July 1, 1954.

Mr. Gephart graduated from Fresno High School in 1901. Following his graduation he worked on a farm for four years before he came to Coshocton.

When he first came to this city he worked as a carpenter for two years.

Mr. Gephart was a member of the Followers of Jesus Church.

Surviving are three sons, Lewis Gephart Jr., who resides at the family home near West Lafayette, Harold Gephart of Route 5 and Jesse Gephart of Route 2.

Francis Eugene Gephart was born in Coshocton and graduated from Coshocton High School.

For the past three years he was employed at the Holophane Co., Newark, which manufactures fixtures for street lights.

For several years he worked in the office at the old American Art Works here.

Francis was a member of Sacred Heart Church.

Surviving are three brothers, Lewis Gephart Jr., Jesse Gephart and Harold Gephart.

His brother, Lewis Jr., was on vacation in Pennsylvania at the time of the double murder.

Funeral arrangements for the father and son, in charge of the Dawson Funeral Home, are incomplete.





Gephart family, 1956

Left to right

Front: Harold Gephart

Back row: Francis E. Gephart, Jesse Gephart, unknown, Mildred Gephart (wife of Jesse), Lewis Gephart Jr.



Francis Eugene Gephart, 1956

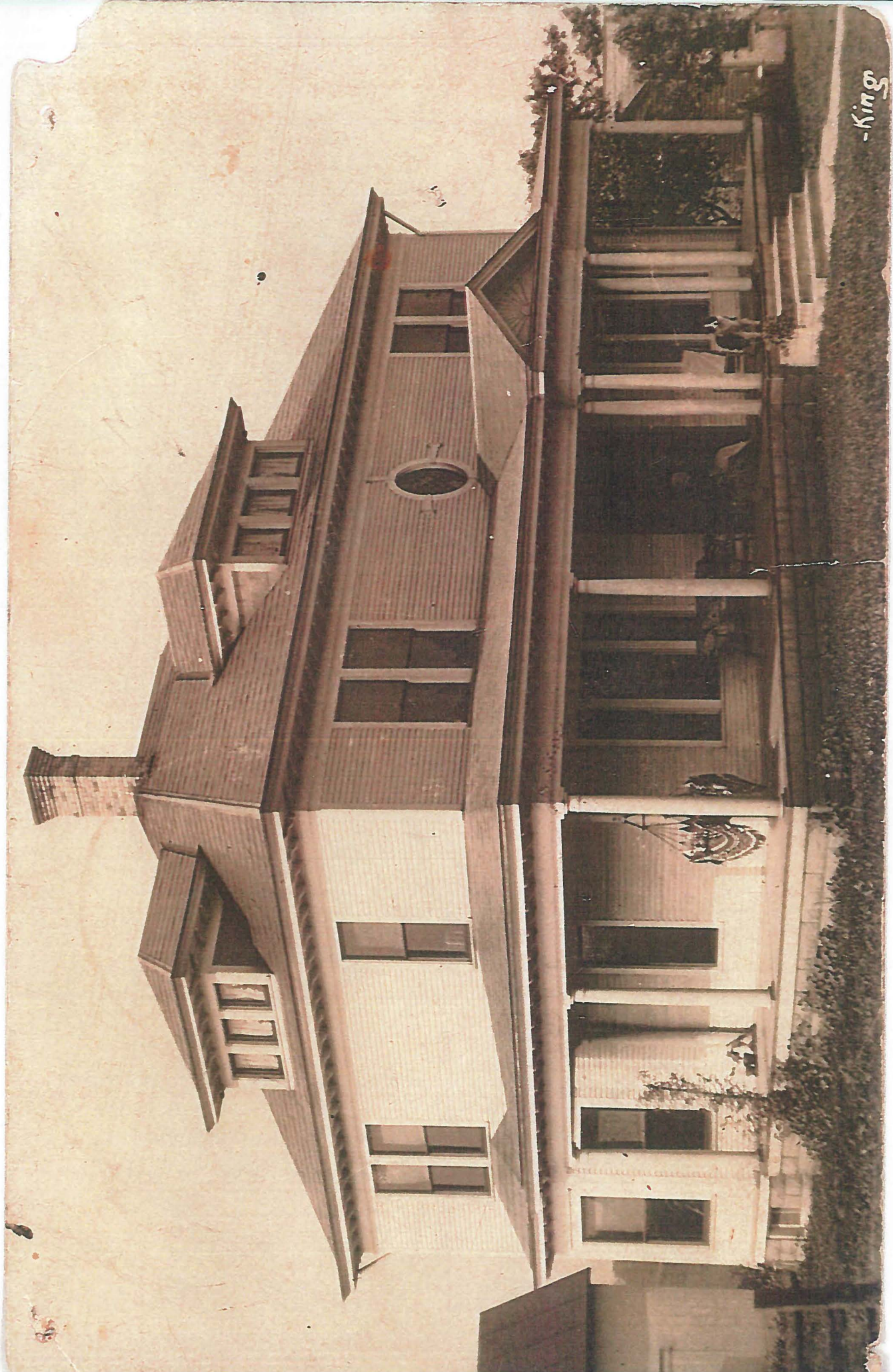


**Lewis & Minnie (Baker) Gephart, 1956  
50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary**



**Eddie Gephart (son of Harold), Lewis & Minnie Gephart, Harold Gephart (son of Lewis & Minnie), circa 1953**





-Kings





### AREA HOME DAMAGED

The three story wood frame home of the Jerry Southers family, old Rt. 16 at the east edge of West Lafayette, was heavily damaged last Tuesday evening by fire. Firemen from West Lafayette, Newcomerstown and Coshocton responded to the call. None of the family was injured, but Nolan Wilson, of the West Lafayette fire department, received a cut on the nose from flying glass which required eight stitches. Chief Gaylord Hill said origin of the fire was not immediately determined although he said it apparently began on the third story. Two of the Southers children were home at the time and Mrs. Southers was in the hospital for surgery when the fire was discovered.



**CLUE HUNTERS** — BCI agents Jack Loudon, left, and David Nibert leave the residence of Lewis Gephart Sr. and his son, Francis, after completing nearly

20 hours of searching the home for clues to the murder of the two men Monday night.—(Dispatch Photo)

## West Lafayette Slayings Suspect Identified; Also Wanted in Maine

By **DAVE MATHEWS**  
Of The Dispatch Staff

**COSHOCKTON, Ohio** — Authorities here have identified the suspect in the murder of a West Lafayette father and son as Richard Edward Steeves, about 25, who has a criminal record in Manchester, N.H.

Investigators are searching for the man who used an assumed name of Eugene L. Michaud while he was living for nearly a week with Lewis Gephart Sr., 85, and his son, Francis, 35, who were brutally murdered in their home on the east edge of the Coshockton County village early Monday.

**THE SHERIFF'S** office reported that the suspect also is wanted regarding a double murder in Maine.

Sheriff W. Hoop Jr. said authorities were looking for Richard Steves alias Richard Timothy Dennis alias Gene L. Michaud alias Richard Gene Michaud.

The sheriff said he couldn't provide details of the Maine killings but that Steeves-Dennis-Michaud previously had incurred charges at Manchester, N.H., of larceny, burglary and carrying dangerous weapons.

**THE TWO VICTIMS** appeared to have been stabbed when their bodies were discovered at 7:20 p.m. by Mrs. Jean Fye and Miss Reha Laf-

lin of 647 Orange St., Coshockton.

The girls were friends of Francis Gephart and had visited him while Steeves, a stranger, was staying with the Gepharts, who had befriended him.

A second son, Lewis Jr. shared the home with his father and brother but left Sunday for a vacation in Pennsylvania.

**THE BROTHER** had not been located late Tuesday afternoon but was due to return home Wednesday morning.

Sheriff William Hoop, deputies, and agents of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification searched nearly 20 hours after arriving on the scene Monday night for clues to the crime.

Early results of an autopsy showed that the victims had not been stabbed but that they were cut many times. The father died of a fractured skull and his son suffocated in blood from his many head wounds.

**FRANCIS BEFRIENDED**

Steeves when the man's car stalled on Rt. 16 west of East Lafayette Dec. 28. He pushed the auto to start it and then took Steeves to the Gephart home where he slept that night.

The next morning, Francis paid for gasoline to fill the gas tank of Steeves car and the suspect left for Washington, Pa.

He returned the next day without his auto which he said he had sold, Sheriff Hoop said. After staying with the Gepharts and visiting with friends of Francis, Steeves has not been seen since Sunday, authorities believe.

**FRANCIS' AUTO**, a 1965 white-over-evening orchid Chevrolet, is also missing. The Ohio license plates are R-871-U but investigators say Steeves has in his possession New Mexico plates, 14-14880.

The suspect is described as being five-foot, eight-to-nine inches tall with dark hair. He wears glasses and squints badly when he is not wearing them.

Joe Martina, assistant supervisor of the BCI, said much evidence was found at the scene but declined to reveal what the evidence was.

He credited Sheriff Hoop and West Lafayette Police Chief Ernest Barthalow with quick action in roping off the house and lawn to preserve the evidence.

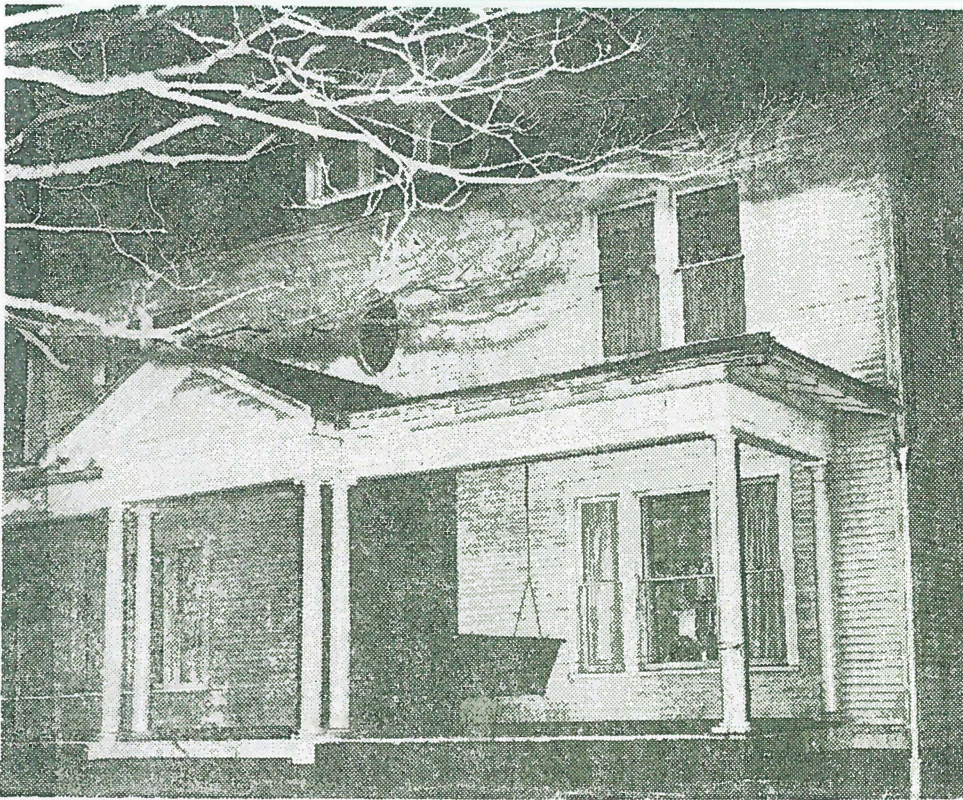
TUES. JAN. 4, 1966

Columbus Dispatch

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# Father, Son Found Murdered at Home





(Dispatch Photo)

**DEATH SCENE** — Deputies roped off the area around this home where the murders occurred.. A young man be-

lieved to have been staying with the victims is being sought by police.

# Man Aided By Victim Is Sought

By JAY GIBIAN  
Of The Dispatch Staff

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ohio —A 35-year-old man and his 84-year-old father were beaten and stabbed to death Monday in their rural home just east of here, possibly by a motorist the younger man had befriended, sheriff's deputies said.

Dead are Francis Gephart, and his father, Louis Gephart Sr. Their bodies were discovered at 7:30 p.m. Monday in their bedrooms.

WEST LAFAYETTE is seven miles east of Coshocton in Coshocton County.

William Hoop, Coshocton County sheriff, issued an all-points bulletin for the arrest of Gene Mascued, about 25, of Washington, Pa., wanted for questioning in connection with the double murder.

Francis Gephart reportedly offered Mascued assistance when the Pennsylvania man's car ran out of gasoline between West Lafayette and Coshocton last Tuesday. Mascued had been seen at the Gephart home within the past several days helping with chores, deputies said.

HOOP SAID, "Francis had given Mascued gas and oil to allow him to continue his trip to Pennsylvania. Mascued reportedly returned to the Gephart home late Wednesday and said his car had broken down and he sold it."

Francis, Hoop said, had allowed Mascued to help with odd jobs about the Gephart home, in return for food and shelter.

The Gepharts' bodies were discovered by Mrs. Jean Fye and Miss Reha Laflin, both of 647 Orange St., Coshocton, when they walked eight miles to the Gephart home for a visit.

THE WOMEN said they entered the home after knocking on the front door and receiving no answer. They dis-

## MURDERS

Continued from Page 1

covered the bodies in upstairs bedrooms.

Dr. Clifford Briner, Coshocton County coroner, said both victims were lying on the floor in they underwear when found. Briner said they apparently had been murdered during the early morning hours.

Briner said, "Young Gephart had apparently struggled with his assailant. Furniture was knocked over and a lamp had been smashed."

DEPUTIES SAID Francis Gephart was an amateur female impersonator and had worked in several clubs in the Coshocton area.

Hoop said both men had been beaten about the head and "had wounds on their

bodies that probably had been made with a knife."

Neighbors told deputies a violent argument had occurred at the Gephart home early Saturday. No one, deputies said, reported any disturbance at the time the killings are thought to have taken place.

HOOP SAID the killer may have used Francis' 1965 orchid colored Chevrolet in his escape. Hoop, however, refused to comment on evidence found at the death scene.

He said, "This is a strange case. We're starting on the perimeter and working to the center. Until we have everything in place I'm not going to say anything."

Francis was unemployed. His father was a retired supervisor at the now defunct Hunt-Crawford Paper Co. of Coshocton.



LOUIS GEPHART SR.



DELL  
0-370-884

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APRIL 35c

# DETECTIVE

IDAHO

Barbara Jean Dixon's Death

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WHO ENROLLED  
IN MURDER**

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# Inside Detective

APRIL, 1966

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Cover by Robert Scott

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*He was a guest one night, an uninvited stranger the next.*

## BEWARE WHEN MONEY TALKS

ROCHESTER, N.H., JANUARY 12, 1966

■ Somebody didn't like the old man—maybe that was it. Or maybe it was somebody who couldn't look at any old man without thinking about all the money he must have saved up to tide him over the profitless years. For almost every old fellow who lives by himself there's a rumor that he's got a tin can full of money under the floorboards or a little something stuffed away in his mattress. These are the old men who never go to a bank; the old men you see in the store, pinching dimes out of ancient change purses as wrinkled as their own skins. They live in single rooms or in shacks, someplace where they can sleep and nibble their lonely meals, someplace where they go to fill up their little purses. The poorer

they look, you may think, the bigger the bulge under the floorboards. Their displays of poverty are only clever dodges, a ruse to throw off the greedy. In truth, some people believe, these shoddy old men have caches of untold wealth hidden away in their mean little homes. Someone must have felt that way about old man Staples.

Every town has its story about the hermit who lived beyond his time and when he finally popped the twig it was discovered he was rich—unsuspected hoards of cash and blue chips were stashed away behind the walls of his crumbling house that hadn't had a coat of paint in the memory of anyone still alive.

There's always one person who never

forgets that story. It weighs on his mind. He dreams of helpless old men and floorboards and mattresses. Maybe that was the kind who killed Harry Staples. Staples *wasn't* a rich man but he *was* old—82. He lived alone in a house outside of North Berwick, Me., a little community in the southern part of the state a few miles from the New Hampshire border.

When Harry walked he leaned heavily on his cane and it was hard for him to go up a flight of stairs or get into an automobile. From Harry's house all one could see was woods and a stretch of unused meadow. Harry could cook his own meals and hobble out to the garden but he seldom went to town except on a rare occasion to visit the dentist or have a physical checkup. He had two grown sons who lived in North Berwick and who visited him regularly, supplying him with newspapers, food and other necessities. He also had a few friends who came by in good weather to spend an afternoon sitting on the porch talking politics. Life was slow for Harry Staples but it was not unkind—that is not until that fatal Saturday in June.

Harry's two sons drove out to visit him that Saturday afternoon, June 13. It was warm and sunny and they thought they'd find Harry fussing around in his garden. It was about 2 P.M. when they arrived but Harry wasn't in the garden and the front door was closed. Flies buzzed around a half filled soft drink bottle on the front porch. The bottle itself alerted the two men. Harry had never developed a taste for soft drinks and he did have a sense of order that would not permit clutter around the place.

They went through the house to the bedroom at the rear before they found him. It was awful to come on him like that. He lay on the floor, battered and bruised, his thin lips swollen, his eyes puffed and blacked. His cane, obviously used as the weapon, had snapped in two. There were bloodstains on the walls and bedding and a big chair had been overturned. The condition of the room was evidence enough that old Mr. Staples had put up a fight.

**H**E was still alive, but his eyes were closed and he gave no sign that he heard when his name was called.

It didn't seem possible that anyone could bring himself to snatch a cane from an 82-year-old man and beat him senseless, but that was what had happened. And both the doctor and police, when they arrived, concurred that in



**The aging recluse who lives in partial isolation often becomes the victim of rumors, wild stories of hidden wealth. Unfortunately there are some who believe these stories**

**by JAY WILLIAMS**

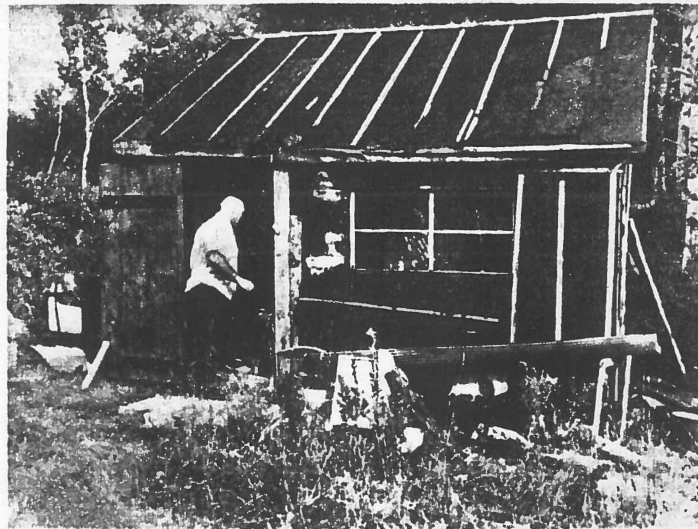
*The Gepharts offered a room here to a youth down on his luck.*

considering a possible motive, Staple's age was something to think about.

The house showed some evidence that it had been searched but if any valuables were taken, the police kept it quiet at the time, although try as they could, no one could imagine an attacker having any other reason to kill the man except that he wanted to rob him. If someone had been out for revenge he would have taken it out years ago. Any offense Harry could have given anyone during his lifetime would by this time be stale. The old house was examined for fingerprints and police poked through his correspondence and personal papers, but nothing was found to change their minds. Someone had wanted something from Harry and that thing probably was money. It seemed doubtful that the crime could have been committed by a stranger to the area. It must have been someone fairly familiar with names, faces and local history, someone who had listened to a lot of wild talk and had decided that Harry Staples had something worth taking.

Staples still was unconscious when they got him to the hospital at North Berwick and the doctors who examined him in the emergency room could find nothing to be optimistic about. The blows around the head were bad enough to put away a far younger man. But Harry Staples was accustomed to survival. He somehow managed to cling to life for 12 more hours, but whether or not he knew his murderer was information that died with him. He never regained consciousness.

*continued on next page*



*Only a vivid imagination would expect money from here.*

*The first assault left this shambles in its wake.*





**BEWARE WHEN MONEY TALKS** continued



*He and his son became virtual prisoners of man they befriended.*

Inquiry into the murder was conducted by York County officials working with North Berwick police. They started by questioning men with criminal records of burglary and assault and later appealed to the general public for information. But six days went by without any break in the case and when a possible break did come it was not so much an offer of help as it was a plea for cooperation from the police in Rochester, N.H., only a few miles south of North Berwick.

Not so many years back, Ralph Mace had run a profitable business raising setters in Rochester. He lived on Samson Road in a house set well back from the road. In the rear were kennels and an exercise yard for his dogs. It was a profitable business and Ralph added to it with a good-paying position in a woolen mill. Between the job and the kennels he had plenty of money, or so it was said. And if anyone doubted it, there was always the thick wad of bills Mace carried to back it up.

When Mace retired from the woolen

mill he continued to raise dogs, and to show them at shows in Boston and other eastern cities. There was a special bookcase in his living room where he kept his ribbons and trophies.

Dogs weren't just a business with Mace. He loved them, but when he got too old to raise setters professionally, he did the sensible thing and sold them all off. He couldn't sell that soft place in his heart for dogs, however. He found he missed the constant yelp and whine that had been a part of his life over the years. One day he picked up a hungry-looking black and brown mutt whose value on the market was less than nothing but whose value to Ralph Mace was inestimable. Before long he discovered that the countryside was full of homeless dogs and puppies and dogs with homes but bad masters and dogs with careless masters who never gave them enough to eat. Each time he encountered such a dog Ralph adopted it, and added it to the comfortable kennels behind his house. Within a few years he had a dozen dogs and



*Officers Leach (L) and Chicoine started hunt for a car, found it and driver.*



at one point he had more than 30 dogs.

On June 19, 1965, he was down to 20 dogs and up to 70 years of age, but healthy and contented with few expenses beyond dog meal, dried milk and old beef bones. His only difficulty was his eyesight which had deteriorated in the past two years. He still could see but he hadn't learned to slow down or to take the precautions of a man who can't trust his eyes. A neighbor who lived down the road was aware that Ralph could stumble and fall and no one would be around to help, so he made it a practice to visit Ralph's place every few days to see if he could do anything for him, make some purchases, drive him to town. As a rule when he arrived, he found Ralph back by the kennels or sitting on the steps groping for tics in the coat of one of the dogs. The dogs always set up a racket when the neighbor drove into the yard and Ralph would give him a cheerful hello.

Early in the morning on June 19, the neighbor paid a routine call. Mace's old panel truck which he hadn't been able to drive for several months was parked in its usual place by the house and the dogs set up their expected din. Two of Mace's favorites who usually slept in the house were running loose in the yard and they made a real fuss when he walked up to the house, but when he knocked, then pushed open the door, they didn't stop him.

He found Ralph Mace lying on the floor. His head and the old flannel shirt he wore were covered with blood. Kneeling beside him to see if he were still alive, the neighbor noticed tiny marks all over Mace's head and little holes in his shirt. His first thought was the impossible one, that the dogs had attacked old Mace, but he quickly rejected this. Mace was alive although his breath came in weak, shallow gasps and his face when he was rolled over, was as gray as his hair.

**TWENTY** minutes later, Mace was being lifted into an ambulance while two Rochester police officers questioned the neighbor to find out what had happened.

The two loose dogs were herded into the kennels and the neighbor fed them some meal the way he'd seen Mace do it. As he watched the dogs wolf down the food, he realized they hadn't been fed for quite a while. This was the first evidence anyone had that Mace had been lying alone and near death for as long as 12 hours.

At the (Continued on page 54)



Rochester's Lt. Zuromskis (L) and Chief Levesque (R) flank Ohio's Investigator Seith, DA Freeman and Sheriff Hoop (L. to R.).



Wanted in three different states, suspect (C) was led into district court in Rochester to hear first charge against him.

(Continued from page 52)

knew that he had a lot to ask James DeVito about and he gave orders to pick up the youth at the first opportunity.

The officers knew just where to find DeVito. For the past few days he had been working for a local automobile dealer, cleaning used cars. At 2:30 P.M. on January 5, two officers arrested him there and brought him to the state police barracks. DeVito was quiet when, shortly before 3 P.M., the interrogation by Isseks, Major Dunlea and Assistant District Attorney Angelo Ingrassia began.

The session didn't last so very long, considering what was accomplished. Less than 30 minutes later, two state troopers left the barracks and drove over to the bar on Wickham Street where DeVito had been drinking Saturday afternoon and evening. They talked with the bartender, who nodded, then they went into a back room where a piano stood against the wall. They moved the piano and one of the troopers stooped to pick up a lady's wristwatch.

A little over two hours went by before reporters were called into a room where officers were fingerprinting James DeVito. The reporters knew instinctively that it was all over. And they were right. The announcement was made that DeVito was being charged with the murder of Mrs. June Barnes. There were few details to be revealed just then, but a statement of charges said that Mrs. Barnes had been murdered about 6:30 P.M. December 4. The officials however, seemed interested in DeVito's treatment in their hands.

"You've been treated right?" Ingrassia asked DeVito for the reporters' benefit.

"Yes," DeVito murmured.

"They gave you coffee, right?"

"Yes."

"What's that bandage on your chin?"

"I cut myself shaving," DeVito said.

"You wanted to get it off your chest?" Isseks asked him.

"That's right," DeVito said, glancing at the reporters.

The youth then was taken to a police car and driven to the town of Wallkill, where the murder was said to have been committed, and brought before Justice of the Peace Harold Hulse and charged with first degree murder.

DeVito waived his rights to counsel and a preliminary examination and Hulse ordered him committed to the Orange County jail in Goshen to await action by the grand jury. That night, friends of DeVito prevailed on a Middletown attorney to talk to the prisoner. He visited DeVito in jail and agreed to represent him without fee until he was relieved by court order.

James DeVito apparently has good friends who believe in his innocence. They believe he just isn't the murdering type. One of them recalled that DeVito sometimes got a "little wild" when he'd been drinking, but that he'd never been known to hit a girl. They had known DeVito for the five years he'd been living in Silverlake. Most of them didn't know much about his past or even that he grew up in New York. "We never thought to ask where he came from," one of them said. They agreed DeVito never had much money and had a hard time holding down jobs. And most of his jobs were menial and at low pay, they said.

He had been fired from one job only two days before the murder because he couldn't manage to show up for work on Mondays, it was learned.

The following day, a local newspaper published a front page story which was alleged to be an account of what had happened when the police and district attorney questioned DeVito. Although the information was not divulged by anyone present at the interrogation, it was alleged that DeVito had given them a full confession to the murder. In the alleged confession, DeVito followed Mrs.

Barnes to the parking lot and, just as she started the engine, he opened the door on her side and pushed her to the other side and punched her in the nose.

Reportedly June Barnes began screaming and struggling, but DeVito drove away with one hand, periodically punching Mrs. Barnes with the other. He stopped once, at Wickham and Prince, where he allegedly was seen. During the struggle Mrs. Barnes repeatedly offered him her cash, valuables and car if he would release her, according to the newspaper account of his statement. She also begged him to drive her home, swearing that no one was there.

When they were still a mile from her house, however, the youth allegedly said he drove off the road and began to punch her. When she lost consciousness, he dragged her from the car, opened the trunk and took out the jack handle and beat her in the head and chest.

The investigators reportedly were ready to believe that version of the murder because it contained information that had been withheld from the public and that only the murderer could know. The recovery of the victim's watch from behind the piano, where DeVito allegedly told police they would find it, was cited as the most important item of all in the story of the alleged solving of the crime. In addition, the suspect's purported statement contained the previously undisclosed information that there were 40 or 50 bloody tissues on the front seat, that he had covered the body with a blanket and that he had struck her in the chest during the struggle that she had put up.

At this writing, the reported version of what DeVito told his questioners has not been officially confirmed or denied, nor is it known that it is the substance of what the Orange County grand jury will hear when it is asked to decide if James DeVito must stand trial for the murder of Mrs. Barnes. ■

## BEWARE WHEN MONEY TALKS continued from page 25

hospital, the doctors were unable to say exactly what had happened to Mace. There were several puncture wounds in his head and back, but these could only be identified as having been made by something sharp and probably heavy.

By this time more police officers were on hand, including Lieutenant Inspector Joseph Zuromskis, but a search of the house and grounds had failed to turn up the weapon or any signs that Mace had entertained a visitor, although there were indications that the house had been thoroughly searched.

Some of the officers had heard the rumor that old Mace was well off and was known to flash a roll of bills around but there was no way to tell whether the crime had been profitable for Mace's assailant. Mace might have been able to tell them had he regained consciousness, but the sad fact was that he didn't. At a little past 3 P.M. he was dead.

Zuromskis now turned his attention to everyone who had known Mace, confirming, as he suspected, that the man was universally known to be gentle and considerate, a man with no known enemies. It was this, plus the physical aspects of the case, that reminded Zuromskis of the old man in North Berwick who had been killed the previous week. He got in touch with the North Berwick police.

The method of killing the two victims was different, but there were certainly startling similarities in the victims' lives. Both were old defenseless men who lived in remote areas, and both were known to have been the subject of rumors and speculation that they were secretly wealthy. The houses of both men had been searched and Zuromskis' conclusion was that robbery had been the motive. He also concluded that he and the North Berwick police were looking for the same man—or monster.

Police of both towns agreed to cooperate closely, to exchange leads and compare notes at every step of the way. On the following day, Zuromskis came across what was considered a good piece of information. The day before Mace's body was found, he had been seen in the company of a young man, a stranger to the witness. The young man was seen driving into Mace's yard and when he left Mace was sitting in the front seat beside him.

The witness described the young man as about 25 years old, 5 feet, 8 inches tall, weighing about 160 pounds. He was wearing dark trousers and a white T-shirt. The witness didn't notice what kind of car the youth drove except that it was well along in years. This information was passed along to the

North Berwick police and a short while later, Zuromskis drove to North Berwick to confer with a detective there who, as a result of the description, wanted to discuss a hunch he had about the two cases.

For some time, the detective explained, he'd been keeping his eye on a group of young fellows who lived in South Maine. They weren't a gang in the sense that they planned and carried out crimes as a group but they did pal around together. The detective had seen them riding around in each other's cars and drinking together in roadhouses. They were often rowdy and sometimes rough, the detective told the lieutenant.

Some, but not all, had one or two lesser crimes on their records—burglary, assault and the like. Given a little time, the detective figured some of them would settle down and turn out all right. The others he wasn't so sure about.

A few days after Harry Staples was found dead, he began questioning members of this gang. He learned that some of them had known Staples, and after the murder of Ralph Mace, he questioned them again and found some of them admitted knowing Mace as well. He had talked to all the members of the gang—except one, a youth named Richard Steeves, who had disappeared from the area. The thing that interested the detective in Zuromskis' information was that the description of the



young man seen in a car with Mace fitted that of the missing Steeves, who lived in Waterville, Me., only a few miles from North Berwick.

There was, admittedly, nothing except a hunch to connect Steeves to the two murders, except the fact that he had friends who knew both the victims. This certainly wasn't enough evidence to issue a warrant for Steeves' arrest, but it was enough to prompt the officers to keep an eye out for the youth and to pass the word along to police departments in other small towns in southern Maine and New Hampshire.

The information that the murderer might have been befriended by Mace before he killed him added a possible new dimension to what the murderer was like. He was not above making up to a friendless old man before beating the life out of him and robbing him.

Two months later, on August 14, it was thought that still another feature was known about the murderer—he was highly imaginative. Only a highly imaginative murderer would think that Loranzo Troyer had anything worth stealing. Loranzo was 73 years old and lived on Mud Hill Road four miles from Augusta, Me. in a dilapidated tar paper shack set in a plot of weeds and bare brown earth. There were such thick woods around Troyer's little shack that anyone visiting him would have to know exactly where it was. But Troyer had few visitors. Kids called him a hermit and grownups called him a recluse. The inside of the shack was mostly taken up by a bed, a bridge table and an iron stove. There were a few scraps of furniture and several cardboard cartons.

On the day the police officers saw it, the cartons had been smashed open and all the junk of Troyer's lifetime was scattered around the room. A window was smashed and the few scraps of furniture were in splinters. Loranzo Troyer lay, barely alive, on the floor, his head bloody and battered open. There were also several deep cuts on his right hand. The weapon was there, too. It might have been a very old iron or jack handle—at any rate it was heavy.

The victim had been found by one of the few people who occasionally called on Loranzo. He had arrived at the shack at 2:30 that afternoon and discovered him like that.

**W**HEN the ambulance arrived, Loranzo was taken to the hospital in Augusta and detectives began a thorough examination of the place. Among the junk on the floor that spilled out from the cardboard cartons, the officers found two \$1 bills, wadded up until they were little bigger than an acorn, and freshly stained with blood.

At the hospital, meanwhile, the doctors made a discovery that eventually explained those bloody \$1 bills. The wounds on the right hand were deep cuts that had severed the tendons. The theory was that Troyer had been clutching the bills when he lost consciousness, possibly there had been more of them. In order to loosen his grasp, someone had hacked away at the hand until it had relaxed.

Troyer had lost a great deal of blood from the wounds in the hand and also had several brain concussions. The combination was too much for an old man of 73. He lived until the next day and then the Augusta police had a

case of murder on its hands even more vicious than the similar cases in southern Maine. The \$1 bills spelled out the motive. Again it was robbery.

Augusta police searched the house and talked to everyone who lived in the vicinity but any evidence that was uncovered was kept a carefully guarded secret.

The police conferred with the North Berwick and Rochester police. Three murders in three months, possibly by the same man, was an alarming situation and officials in both states were sufficiently uneasy to keep a close watch on murders reported from all eastern states. If the killer struck again, they wanted to know about it.

The months began to drag by with no substantial progress on any of the cases, and by December all of the good angles had been pretty well worked over.

It was shortly after Christmas that Francis Gephart looked out of the window of his big frame house near West Lafayette, Ohio, and saw a man peering at the motor of a stalled automobile. A little later there was a knock on the door and Francis answered it to find the stranded motorist, a young man who was a stranger to Francis, standing on the porch.

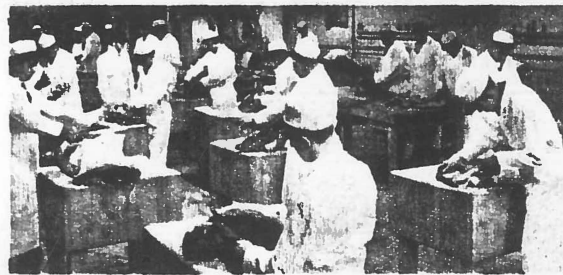
"What seems to be the trouble?" Francis asked him.

The man said his car had broken down and he wondered if there was anyone who could help him move it off the highway. "I can fix it myself," he said.

Francis Gephart sized up the situation. The man probably didn't want to go to the expense of having the car hauled in and repaired at a garage.

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"I can give you a push with my car," Francis offered.

The young man said he would appreciate it and Francis put on his overcoat and went out to back his car out to the road. The stranger's car was 15 years old with dents in all the fenders and it obviously hadn't been washed in a long time. Francis's car, on the other hand, was a spanking new orchid-colored sedan.

"Where do you think would be the best place to put it?" the stranger asked. "I guess it'll take a whole day to get it running again."

"You can put it in our yard," Gephart offered.

Gephart pushed the old car up in front of the house and told the owner to feel free to ask if he needed any further help.

Francis Gephart was 35 years old, a native of Coshocton and West Lafayette and presently employed by a small concern that produced fixtures for street lamps. He shared the house with his father, Lewis, who was 84 years old.

When he explained to his father that he'd let the stranger use the front yard to fix his car, both men began thinking about what the young man would do for dinner and a place to sleep. He didn't look as if he had much money in his pocket and it was too cold to sleep in the car.

"Maybe we ought to let him stay the night," Francis said.

The house was big with plenty of spare rooms, and the older man agreed.

Francis went outside. "We could put you up for the night," he said.

"Do you mean that?" the stranger asked.

"You're welcome to stay," Francis repeated.

"That would suit me, too," the stranger said.

When it got too dark to work, the young man came in and peeled off his coat. "Where do I wash up?" he asked.

Francis cooked dinner as he always did, pleased to see that the stranger had a healthy appetite.

The youth told them his name was Gene Mascued and he was on his way to Washington, Penn., but other than that he had little to say, just sat there in his ducktail haircut, cracking his knuckles and thanking the Gepharts over and over for dinner and for letting him stay the night.

The next morning he was outside working on his car when the Gepharts got up. When they called him in for breakfast, he told them he was nearly finished with his repair job, and expected to be on his way soon, but he was still there when it was time for lunch.

**A**BOUT an hour later, the Gepharts heard the explosive roar of an old motor whose muffler had gone bad. After a few minutes the noise quieted down and Gene Mascued came in to tell his benefactors that he was finished. He thanked them again and said he hoped to see them some day. Then he got in his car and drove away.

Later that afternoon, two ladies from Coshocton, old family friends of the Gepharts, dropped by to pay a visit on the men. They sat in the parlor and listened to the older Gephart's story about the young man they'd befriended. The ladies both acknowledged that it was very hospitable of the Gepharts but announced they felt it was risky inasmuch as the young man was a total stranger.

"Maybe so," Francis said. "But it turned out all right."

Four days later, the two ladies returned for another visit. This time they did not find the Gepharts alone. A young man was there and the Gepharts looked considerably glummer than usual. When he had a chance, Francis explained in undertones to the two women that this was the young stranger they had mentioned before. He'd returned the day after he left, the younger Gephart said, and explained that his car had broken down again, this time for good. He'd sold it for a couple of bucks and he didn't have any place to go. He'd hitchhiked all the way back to Ohio and the Gepharts had taken him in again. Francis didn't look very happy about the arrangement.

The ladies asked why they didn't ask him to leave if he were a nuisance and Francis said something about the guest doing some odd jobs around the place, an explanation the ladies thought surprisingly lame. The women were, in fact, horrified by the arrangement and horrified with the young man himself.

**T**HEY left earlier than they'd planned and after they'd compared impressions, they agreed to speak to the sheriff about it. As they explained to a deputy in the sheriff's office, it wasn't that the stranger wore his hair long or that he had rough manners, it was the way he spoke to the Gepharts. He was downright rude. He lounged around the living room in dirty socks and unshaven. He acted as if it were his house, not the Gepharts' place. They suspected that he ordered them around and the women thought they detected some fear in the Gepharts.

The deputy explained that the complaint should properly come from the Gepharts but that he would keep his eye on the place. If the Gepharts would sign a complaint, then of course he could run the young man off the place in short order.

The ladies returned to Coshocton a little disappointed they hadn't rid the Gepharts of a guest they instinctively felt was unwanted. They became more and more convinced that the Gepharts should take a firm stand and should sign the complaint. With this in mind, they made a return trip to the Gephart home on the following Monday, January 3, to tell their friends how they felt.

They arrived at the West Lafayette address at 7 P.M. They knocked on the door and when no one answered they immediately became suspicious. Francis Gephart was almost always back from work by this hour and Lewis never stepped out of the house in cold weather.

They went around to peek in the garage. Francis' car was gone. The doors of the home were locked, but the two women knew that the nearest neighbor had a key, so they called there and explained the reason for their concern.

The neighbor agreed to look through the house with them. They entered the dark house and went through the first floor, their apprehension growing with every step. On the second floor they found Francis and Lewis Gephart, each in his own bedroom, partially dressed as if they had been surprised as they were going to bed or getting up—and both of them were dead.

Sheriff William Hoop and several deputies were on the scene within a few minutes. The ladies' fear for the Gepharts' safety had been justified. Both Francis and his father had been murdered and appeared to have been dead for several hours. Both had been badly

beaten around the face and Francis had been clubbed over the head, possibly with a heavy desk lamp that lay on the floor. Lewis had been stabbed and there was a brass letter opener on the floor. There was blood all over the bedrooms.

Gene Mascued, of course, emerged as a prime suspect. After a brief consultation with the two Coshocton ladies, Sheriff Hoop issued a wanted flyer for Mascued to all states with a description of Mascued and of the missing car.

It was on Tuesday afternoon that Sheriff Hoop got the first response to his bulletin. It came from New Hampshire. Gene Mascued was one of the names sometimes used by a man wanted for questioning for murders in Maine and New Hampshire. He also used the name Gene Mischaud and Richard Dennis but his real name was Richard E. Steeves, of Waterville, Me.

New Hampshire authorities also asked for details of the Ohio murders and when they learned that one of the victims was 84 years old and the apparent motive was robbery they knew that they were right in their hunch that Richard Steeves was a strong suspect in two and perhaps three murders in Maine and New Hampshire. They had pictures of Steeves which they forwarded to Ohio authorities, but they had a hunch that Steeves, if he were the man, might be heading back east. He probably had no idea that the police had connected him with the three murders and since Ohio was pretty hot he might try to come home again.

**B**Y Tuesday evening, Manchester Police Sergeant Ed Murphy and Officer Louis Durette had compiled all the available information on Steeves' habits and customary hangouts and posted them on the police bulletin board.

At 11:30 P.M. on Wednesday, January 5, Patrolman Omer Chicoine was standing in front of City Hall where Patrolman Glenn Leach came up on his motorcycle. They exchanged notes and agreed that everything was very quiet.

"Anything on Steeves?" Chicoine asked the other officer.

A murderer doesn't come Manchester's way very often, and his possibility had attracted more than passing notice. "The notice is still on the bulletin board," Leach said.

"Let's go look for him," Chicoine suggested.

Leach agreed. They decided the best way to go about it was to look for the orchid-colored Chevy with Ohio license plates. Since Leach had the motorcycle, it was determined that he should do the scouting. If he spotted the car, he would come back and tell Chicoine and they would make the pinch together. That was exactly how it happened.

Leach, more surprised than anything else, actually *did* see the new Chevy with Ohio plates. It was parked in front of a downtown restaurant. He raced back to find Chicoine and together they went over to the restaurant and took a look at the handful of customers. At the far end of the counter they saw a man answering Steeves' description, talking to the owner. The officers sat down at the counter and when the owner came over to take their orders, Chicoine asked him who the young fellow at the end of the counter was. "I don't know," the owner told him, "but he said he just came out from Ohio."

So far they'd had fantastic luck. They were sure it was Steeves and they didn't want to scare him off by tipping their hand too soon. After a minute or so, Leach got up and walked



past the man into a doorway leading to another room. Then Chicoine loosened his gun in his holster and walked over to the young man at the end of the counter. Leach moved quickly behind him. "What's your name, fella?" Chicoine asked.

"Mascued," was the answer—the right answer.

"You're under arrest," Chicoine said.

That was all there was to it. In less than 15 minutes after Chicoine had suggested they go look for Richard Steeves, not knowing if he were in Manchester or Alaska, they had him. Steeves made no effort to resist. He didn't even protest. Chicoine snapped him in handcuffs and Patrolman Leach phoned headquarters to make his triumphant announcement.

By the time Steeves arrived at police headquarters, teletype messages of his capture were on the way to Rochester, N.H., North Berwick and Augusta, Me., and to West Lafayette, Ohio.

It was New Hampshire, however, and Rochester in particular that had first crack at the suspect and that evening he was taken to police headquarters there for a face to face confrontation with Lieutenant Zuromskis, Strafford County Attorney Robert Carignan and Attorney General William Maynard. Maine authorities also were on hand but had to wait their turn.

The interrogation lasted for several hours but at its completion Zuromskis wore a look of satisfaction, though he had little comment. What he did have to say, however, was bad news for Steeves. Zuromskis was charging him with the murder of Ralph Mace, Rochester's elderly dog lover.

At 10 A.M. the following day, Steeves was taken to District Court in Rochester and formally charged with murder. For the occasion, Steeves wore a new checked shirt purchased for him by Carignan, narrow trousers and pointed shoes. He listened quietly as his court-appointed attorney waived formal reading of the complaint and entered a plea of innocent. Judge Leonard Hardwick ordered Steeves bound over to Superior Court. Later, Hardwick and Carignan agreed to have Steeves sent to the State Hospital in Concord, New Hampshire for mental examination.

Meanwhile, Sheriff William Hoop arrived from Ohio and questioned Steeves. Afterwards, he was questioned by Augusta Police Chief Bernard Sparrowk. The Ohio authorities left a few days later, taking Francis Gephart's car with them. They announced that the evidence in the case will be presented before a Coshoc-ton County, Ohio, grand jury in January.

ON Saturday, Sparrowk said Steeves was to be charged with the murder of Loranzo Troyer and a warrant was issued which will hold Steeves in the event he should be released by New Hampshire.

As it now stands, Richard Steeves faces murder charges in three states which should be enough to keep him busy for a long time to come. In addition, authorities in New Mexico, where Steeves is known to have spent some time, say they want to talk to him about unsolved cases there. It will remain for a jury to decide the guilt or innocence of the youth from New England, but no matter what the decision is, the deaths of the many victims should serve as dramatic evidence that the talk of buried money or secret caches or hidden wealth is frequently no more than that—just talk, of a deadly nature.

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# OFFICIAL DETECTIVE

Combined with Actual Detective STORIES

Vol. 35, No. 5

May, 1966

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In the wake of five savage killings scattered over New Hampshire, Maine and Ohio, a clear pattern emerged and police knew they were looking for a

## SLAYER WITH A SPECIALTY

by HEDRICK CORBAN

Special Investigator for OFFICIAL DETECTIVE STORIES

**O**NE WAS too much—one murder is always too much—but there was a second and a third, a fourth and a fifth and if a couple of men hadn't happened to walk into a restaurant at the right moment, there's no way of knowing how many more there might have been.

The first of them was Harry Staples, who was so old that he needed a cane to help him get around and about all he had the strength to harm was a fly,

though he probably wouldn't have. At 82, Harry Staples, who had been a widower for some time and lived alone, was entitled to expect that he would die peacefully, preferably in his old homestead, a farmhouse off Turkey Street in the little town of North Berwick in the southwestern section of Maine. There are more Americans in France any day of the week than there are residents in North Berwick. The last time noses

were counted in North Berwick there weren't much more than 1,300 of them and hardly any of them were poking into somebody else's business.

Staples had two sons, living in North Berwick, and in view of their father's age they were understandably apprehensive that on one of their daily visits to him they'd find him dead in bed or in his rocker or on the floor.

The vital statistics for the State of

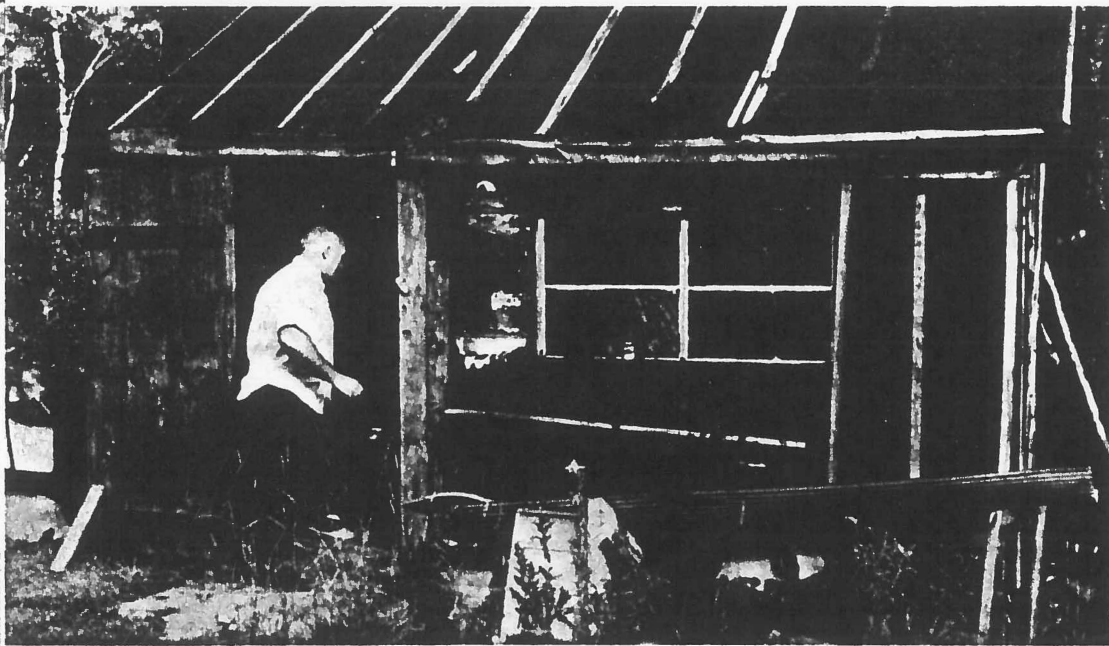
Maine show that Harry Staples died on the afternoon of June 13, 1965—but not in bed or in his rocker or on the floor, although that's where his sons found him that morning. Actually, the old man passed away in the Maine Medical Center in Portland, some 45 miles from his home, and the end was peaceful—in the sense that he slipped from unconsciousness into death. That was merciful, but it would have been helpful if he had been able to say just a few words before he died, if he had been able to answer a few questions or, at least, if he had been able to nod or shake his head.

What had happened in his farmhouse was clear enough to need no explanation from him. In his bedroom, where his sons found him on the floor, a chair was overturned. The walls, the floor and the chair, too, were spattered with blood—his blood—and the instrument that had shed it, ironically, was his own cane. It lay near him, and the blood and strands of hair on it were unmistakable evidence that, in the hands of a killer, it had been transformed from a prop for failing legs into a blunt weapon used to crush the victim's head.

All of that was apparent enough to North Berwick Police Chief Harold F. Eldridge, who had hurried to the farmhouse in response to a call from the old man's sons. He arrived there before an ambulance came to take Harry Staples to the hospital.

As far as the chief knew—and he knew all he had to know about the people in North Berwick—the old man had no enemies. His sons said they knew of none, either. Harry Staples had never made much trouble for anybody and he surely hadn't looked for any.

"Then the only thing anybody would want from him," the chief said, "would be money." Somebody might have thought the old man had a sizable sum of cash in the house, the sons said, but, in fact, they added, he kept little of it around, so little that it was almost negligible.



One of five victims, Loranzo Troyer, was viciously beaten, left to die in his isolated Maine shack



But a stranger bent on robbery wouldn't know that, the chief theorized. Furthermore, he conjectured, the intruder in the farmhouse might have thought the old man was fibbing about the small amount of money he had and might have tried to beat the victim into disclosing where he supposedly had more tucked away.

"That, at least, is the way it looks to me," the chief said. And, later, when Maine State Police Detective Sherwood Baston, who came to the farmhouse at the chief's request, had familiarized himself with all the details of the case, that's the way it looked to him, too.

"I can't think of any other motive," the detective said, "except, of course, that there may have been no motive at all. It's possible that whoever did it to the old man simply went berserk."

The sons of Harry Staples trailed behind the ambulance that swept him to the hospital in Portland. Inside the farmhouse and all around it, as well, Chief Eldridge and Detective Baston searched for some clue to the identity of the murderous marauder, but they found none. They made copious and accurate notes of the scene in the bedroom; they scraped blood samples from the stains on the walls, on the floor and on the chair; and they took away the cane, carefully wrapped in a cloth so that they would not smudge any fingerprints thereon with their own. The blood samples and the cane were delivered to the State Police laboratory at headquarters in Augusta.

In the hospital, every effort was

made to save the life of Harry Staples, even to rouse him from his coma so that a State Police officer, who had been dispatched to his bedside at Detective Baston's behest, might be able to put a few questions to him. But the old man's condition slowly worsened and by midafternoon he was gone.

"Without regaining consciousness," the State Police officer reported.

To Chief Eldridge and Detective Baston, that report was disappointing. They had hoped that the old man might come out of his coma long enough to identify his killer or to give some description of him, or, at least, to say when the slayer had attacked him. His sons had found him early in the morning of that day and had seen him, also, on the morning of the previous day—but neither they nor anyone else could fix the time of the crime with any greater precision. It was possible that the attack had occurred shortly after the younger Staples had visited their father on the previous day.

"In that case," the chief said, "the killer has more than a 24-hour start on us and he could be pretty far away from here by now."

Together, he and Detective Baston methodically questioned all the folks living anywhere near the murder victim and most of the shopkeepers and a good many of the workers in the heart of the town. What the chief and the detective wanted to find out, specifically, was whether anyone had seen a stranger around the Staples farmhouse or had seen Staples himself with a stranger. In each case, the answer to both questions was nega-

tive, and a disappointment.

Doggedly, though they had almost nothing to work with, the chief and the detective pursued their investigation on the 13th, the 14th, the 15th, the 16th, the 17th, the 18th of June.

On the 19th, there was sudden, startling evidence that the killer was—or had been—only 12 miles away in Rochester, New Hampshire, which is appreciably larger than North Berwick and lies due west of it. From Rochester that day came a police teletype message that a 70-year-old man named Ralph Mace had been found so brutally beaten and stabbed that he was not expected to live.

North Berwick Police Chief Eldridge contacted Detective Baston and read the message to him.

"Another old man," the detective said.

"That's just what I was thinking," the chief responded.

His relations with Police Chief Ernest J. Levesque of Rochester were so cordial that he telephoned headquarters there and explained that he was anxious to get as much information as possible about the Mace case because of its similarity, on the surface, at least, to the murder of Harry Staples.

"There's a great deal of similarity between them," said Chief Levesque, who was thoroughly familiar with the Staples case, and he proceeded to outline the elements that were common to both.

For one thing, Chief Levesque pointed out, Mace, like Staples, had been living alone and, again like Staples, his modest home on Sampson

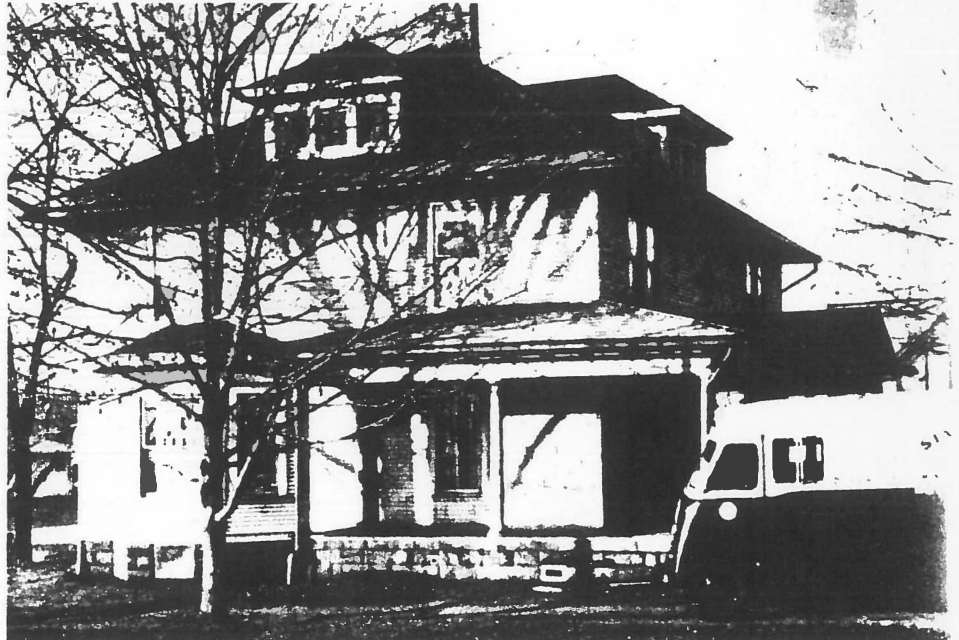
Road, Rochester, was in a sparsely inhabited section of the city.

For another thing, the chief went on, Mace had no known enemies, had lived in Rochester all his life and had caused no trouble.

"So, as in the Staples case," he continued, "the only motive would appear to be robbery. And yet, also as in the Staples case, Mace, as far as we can determine, didn't keep much money in his home. It's possible, therefore, that the man after Mace's money attacked him with the intent of forcing him to hand over more—if, of course, he had any more. And you people in North Berwick figure that's what probably happened in the Staples case."

For a third thing, the chief added, neither a gun nor a knife was apparently used in the Mace case, not even to terrorize him—and that, too, was similar to the circumstances in the Staples case. Mace, the chief said, had suffered severe blows on the back of his head. That area, along with the back of his neck and the upper part of his back itself, had also been gouged with some kind of weapon that had a puncturing device on it. No such weapon had been found in the Mace house, the chief said, so it was reasonable to assume that the man who wielded it had taken it with him.

There were other details about Ralph Mace—that, for instance, he had worked most of his life at a Rochester wool mill, that he had retired several years earlier, that at one time he had carried large sums of money on him but had stopped doing that quite some time ago.



Five months later, in Ohio, Lewis Gephart, 84, and son, Frank, 35, were bludgeoned to death in this house. Another son fortunately was on vacation



Murder trail shifted to New Hampshire, where Manchester officers Glen Leach, left, and Omer Chicoine picked up key suspect in restaurant

That last bit of information would make it seem, Chief Levesque said, that the man who attacked Mace could have been only a stranger, because anyone who knew him would also have known that he didn't carry much money in his pocket or keep much of it in his home.

And yet, the chief said, there was one bit of indirect evidence that made it appear as if Mace might have known his attacker. Mace, the chief explained, was very fond of dogs and the strays had apparently learned of

it, because there were at least 20 of them around his home. Now, the chief reasoned, the dogs were obviously as fond of Mace as he was of them and if they had seen a stranger around the place or had seen him attacking their benefactor, they'd have probably gone after the intruder or, at least, have set up a howl. But the nearest of Mace's neighbors had heard no concentrated or prolonged barking and there was nothing to indicate that the dogs had gone to his defense.

That, the chief said, left two possi-

bilities—either Mace and the dogs knew the man who attacked him and let him into the house or the assailant was a stranger and had stolen into the dwelling while Mace and the dogs were off somewhere. Then, if Mace left the dogs outside on their return home, he was an easy prey for the attacker.

In one other respect there was a striking parallel between the Mace and Staples cases. Like Staples, Mace had also been found unconscious early in the morning—not by sons, but

by a truly old friend who dropped in regularly to see how he was getting along and find out whether he needed anything. The friend had telephoned Rochester police headquarters and his call had brought Chief Levesque, Lieutenant Inspector Joseph G. Zur-omskis and other officers to the Mace house.

The chief ordered an ambulance to take Mace to the Frisbie Memorial Hospital in Rochester—and there another similarity with the Staples case developed. It wasn't only that the





Suspect, center, was questioned in Rochester, N.H., by Lieutenants Wheeler, left, and Zuromskis as police net began to close

best efforts of the hospital staff failed to save Mace—he died, as Staples had before him, without regaining consciousness and with a police officer standing by his bed in the hope that he'd come to long enough to help the hunt for his attacker.

One more thing—unknown in the Mace case, as in the Staples case, was the approximate time he had been murderously assaulted. No one had seen anybody entering or leaving the Mace house within a reasonable time of the attack on him.

But one of Chief Levesque's theories was substantiated within 24 hours after Mace had been found dying by his faithful friend. Among those Rochester residents questioned by police officers for any pertinent information they might have there was one man who had seen something important to the case.

A day or two before the fatal assault, the man said, he had definitely seen Mace being driven around town by a young, dark-haired man who appeared to be about 25 years old, of

medium height, perhaps 5 feet 8 inches tall, and weighing approximately 150 pounds. As for the car, the informant said, he could remember only that it was not a current model.

"So," Chief Levesque said, "if the man driving that car is the man who killed Mace, he was not a complete stranger and that could account for him getting into the house without arousing the suspicion of the dogs." The information was relayed to Chief Eldridge in North Berwick and he and Maine State Police Detective

Baston began working in complete collaboration with the Rochester lawmen.

The murder of Mace had also drawn into the investigation Attorney General William Maynard of New Hampshire and Attorney Robert A. Carignan, prosecutor for Strafford County in which Rochester lies. New Hampshire requires the attorney general and the county attorney to prosecute all cases of murder. So, there were four law enforcement agencies—the

(Continued on page 68)

## The Scientific Dope Pusher (from page 33)

etc. Pete would package the orders and then stash them at drops around the neighborhood.

Then, police said, Pete would go to a telephone pay station and call his customers. He would tell the customer to meet him at a certain place at a certain time with the money for the buy. But by the time Pete had contacted his customers, he no longer had any heroin in his car or on his person. It was all stashed at the various drops in the area.

It would be futile for one of the customers to inform on him and tell the police where and when he would meet the dope peddler. If the customer showed up at the appointed place on time and fingered Pete, the police would find nothing. Pete would be clean, since the buy the customer was ready to make was already stashed and only Pete knew where.

Pete could meet his customer, take his money, and then tell him, "Your stuff is in the phone booth across the street or in that clump of weeds in the vacant lot." The police had to find Pete's stash pad before they could have any hope of arresting him and making a charge against him stick.

The police might find the stash but they could never legally connect Natividad to it. It was a nice tidy operation that challenged the police for months.

Figuring that Pete was depending heavily on radio transmissions, Captain Trembley and his men began

monitoring his broadcasts. But this was no easy task. He could communicate with Anna Lee at any time and he had the annoying habit of changing frequencies. This meant that the police monitor would have to constantly swing up and down the band trying to locate "The Man."

While it is true that monitoring the broadcasts told the police little, it gave them their one chance to locate Natividad's stash pad where most of Pete's broadcasts originated, although some were made from his car.

The police department contacted three ham radio operators in areas adjacent to that where Natividad was believed to be operating. When the police picked up one of Pete's transmissions, they would notify the hams who in turn would attempt to triangulate Natividad's transmitter with radio direction finders and locate it for the police.

The big drawback was that the amateur radio operators' bases were fixed and could not be moved in like mobile units to more accurately pinpoint their quarry and the Los Angeles Police Department did not have such mobile units available for the job.

But Captain Trembley and state narcotics agents who were working with him figured they could come close enough to cover the area with stakeouts that were kept highly secret.

Before they could spring the trap

on Natividad, the police had to convince the courts that a search warrant should be issued to shake down the suspect's pads when he was arrested. To get this warrant they had to convince the court beyond a reasonable doubt that Natividad was, in fact a dope peddler.

They monitored his broadcasts, questioned his customers, were given information by informers, located stashes, and finally had a pretty good idea of the location of the stash pad. They watched Pete deal with his customers in his car and then watched the junkies pick up their stashes from points designated by Natividad.

Actually, the police had all but to build a complete case against Natividad before they could even obtain a search warrant from the court. But finally, on December 28, 1965, the law was ready to make its move.

Practically outside the stash pad at 1343 Elysian Park Drive, Natividad was collared and taken into custody. Armed with the warrant, the officers went to the pad and after an extensive search found 10 ounces of uncut Mexican heroin hidden behind a wall panel.

When Natividad was arrested, police said, he was carrying \$2,500 in cash and a list of 18 customers. In the apartment officers confiscated an Army type .30-30 semi-automatic carbine, several walkie-talkie units, and an extensive amount of radio and electronics equipment.

But the surprises didn't end there.

In their search of the apartment, the officers under Lieutenant Tom Sena of the Los Angeles Police De-

partment, and Jim Barry, field supervisor for the State Narcotics Bureau, found 18 manuals on master locks, keys, and safe combinations distributed secretly by manufacturers.

Captain Trembley said Natividad appeared to have a complete set of master keys, keys that could fit any lock made. By checking the number of a safe he could look in one of the manuals and obtain the safe's combination.

Said a police officer, "With the keys and manuals, lock picks and shims we found in that apartment, I don't believe there was a safe or lock in Los Angeles that he couldn't open. He had everything he needed."

But unlike the time in 1964 when he blabbed about his dope-peddling operations — although the charge against him was later dismissed on a technicality — Natividad kept his mouth shut. If he had any long-range plans calling for the use of his highly specialized burglar equipment, he didn't let the police in on his secret.

At this writing, Natividad and his wife are free on bail awaiting a preliminary hearing in municipal court. Despite the allegations of the police, despite the evidence found legally with the search warrant, the burden of proof still remains with the state.

Despite Natividad's past record and the charges filed against him by the district attorney, he must still be presumed innocent until he is proved guilty. And that will rest with either a judge or with a jury of Pete Natividad's peers. ★ ★ ★

## Slayer With a Specialty (from page 17)

Maine State Police, the North Berwick police, the New Hampshire Attorney General's office and the Rochester police—directly involved in the investigation of the Mace and Staples murders.

Out of their combined efforts came the discovery that although Ralph Mace and Harry Staples did not know each other, a small group of young men in the Rochester-North Berwick sector—only 12 miles apart, after all—had some acquaintance with both. The lawmen then proceeded on the reasonable and logical assumption that one of the young men, knowing that Mace and Staples lived alone, had decided to rob them and had murdered both in the attempts.

But that turn of the investigation led nowhere. Questioning of all but one member of the small group of potential suspects revealed only that each of them had thoroughly satisfactory alibis. The one man who wasn't questioned couldn't be found and a note was made to interrogate him if and when he was located.

Slowly, the active hunt for the killer bogged down for lack of leads, but he remained at the top of the "wanted" list at police headquarters in Rochester and North Berwick, in the offices of the New Hampshire Attorney General and the county prosecutor, and at the Augusta nerve center of the Maine State Police.

The search was, in truth, at a frustrated standstill until 2:33 p.m., August 14, 1965—and then the situation took a turn for the worse. At that minute, the officer on duty at the desk in the headquarters of the Augusta

city police received a telephone call from a man who identified himself fully and said that he was calling for a friend, a 74-year-old man who lived on Togos Road.

The elderly man, the caller said, had gone to pay one of his social visits to his friend, Loranzo Troyer, on Mud Hills Road, and had found him "in a bad way."

"What does that mean?" the desk officer asked.

"Well, he doesn't know whether Troyer is dead, dying or just very sick," the caller said.

"All right," the officer said. "We'll check."

Two officers in a police cruiser dispatched to Mud Hills Road found Loranzo Troyer lying half under a table. He wasn't sick, in the ordinary sense of the word, and he wasn't dead—but he was dead to the world, unconscious. The officers called for an ambulance to take him to the Augusta General Hospital. And to have a look at the condition of the premises occupied by Troyer, the officers suggested that, perhaps, a couple of their superiors ought to come to the scene.

Augusta Police Captain Bernard Sparrowk and Sergeant Robert Welsh, whipping to Mud Hills Road as fast as they could safely get there, arrived seconds ahead of the ambulance and were thus able to observe Troyer before he was sped to the hospital.

Then the captain and the sergeant looked around the premises, which consisted of a simple one-room tapper shack. Its windows were shattered and the only article of furniture

that seemed to be standing as it should was the small table under which Troyer had been found. The circumstances admitted of only two possibilities—either Troyer had turned his shack into a shambles in a fit of sudden madness and had then been felled by a cerebral stroke, or he had been brutally attacked by someone.

Unfortunately, Troyer, who hadn't gone berserk at all, could not provide the police with any information. He lingered alive in the hospital for approximately 24 hours and then died—without regaining consciousness.

And that was only the first of several similarities to the murders of Ralph Mace and Harry Staples.

Among the other parallels to those two cases were these: that Troyer, a veteran of World War I, was 73 years old, that he lived alone, that his shack stood off an unpaved road running through heavy woodlands in a really isolated section of Augusta, even though less than five miles from the center of the city.

And when the findings of the autopsy performed on Troyer's body were reported to police, there was another similarity. Troyer, the medical examiner determined, had suffered a basal skull fracture from a blow so heavy that it had shattered the bone into fragments. The weapon, the medical examiner suggested, was a blunt instrument, possibly a tire iron, but neither that nor anything else that might have been used in the attack on Troyer was found in his wrecked shack.

What was found in the shack, however, on the floor near where Troyer had lain, was a couple of dollar bills, and to Captain Sparrowk and Sergeant Welsh, they indicated that the motive for the murder was robbery and that

the killer had fled, for some reason, without stopping to pick up the money. It was the opinion of the captain and the sergeant, too, that Troyer had probably lain there for 24 to 36 hours before he was discovered in his dying condition by his old friend.

"It's possible," the captain said, "that the killer pried Troyer's hand open with a sharp instrument to get whatever money he was clutching. There was a fresh cut on the palm of Troyer's hand."

Augusta lies in Kennebec County and the prosecutor for that district is Attorney Bernard L. Cratty. "Troyer," the prosecutor said, "was badly beaten and was left to die. He was apparently partly conscious for a short time after the attack because a trail of blood seems to indicate that he managed to drag himself from a point on the floor to where he was found. It was a very brutal murder."

In any case, Loranzo Troyer was obviously the third old man murdered within a period of two months by the same violent hands—and the killer seemed to be operating within the boundaries of Maine and New Hampshire. Augusta lies approximately 85 miles in a straight line from North Berwick, a few miles farther from Rochester.

The word in Maine and New Hampshire—in North Berwick, in Augusta, in Rochester—was, "Get him before he kills again." And every effort was made to track him down. Police files were studied for possible suspects, some young men answering the description of the unidentified man seen with Ralph Mace a day or two before he was murdered were kept under surveillance, others were closely questioned. Unsuccessful attempts were also made to find the one missing



member of the group of young men who were known to be acquainted with Mace and Harry Staples.

And, again, after every avenue of investigation had been followed to a disheartening deadend, the manhunt ground to a frustrating standstill. To lawmen engaged in the search for the killer, the situation was desperate because they believed—and they had a firm basis for their belief—that he was still roaming around Maine and New Hampshire and that he wouldn't hesitate to murder again, if he felt so inclined. With three victims already attributed to him, he had nothing more to lose, anyway, in the event he were captured.

Actually, however, the killer had finally moved out of Maine and New Hampshire, or, so, at least, the police of those two states were convinced by an incident that occurred in West Lafayette, Ohio, five miles from Coshocton, the seat of Coshocton County.

Now Coshocton, which lies about 85 miles south of Cleveland, isn't really a bustling metropolis, but to the villagers of West Lafayette—and there aren't but 1,000 or so of them—it must look like "the big city." The population of Coshocton is nearly 14,000, which is only a couple of thousand less than the number in Rochester.

There's little "action" in Coshocton and practically none at all in West Lafayette—but a few minutes after 7 p.m., January 3, 1966, both communities were galvanized.

Minutes before then, two women, making one of their frequent evening calls on their neighbor and long-time friend, 84-year-old Lewis Gephart, Sr., knocked on the locked front door of his old-fashioned, two-and-a-half story frame house.

Gephart had two sons, Lewis, Junior, and Francis Eugene, living with him, and two more residing nearby. The old man, a native of Fresno, California, had left there four years after he was graduated from high school and had settled in Coshocton, where he married, reared his children and worked for a paper company until he retired as a superintendent in 1954. His wife had died in 1961 and Lewis, Junior, and Francis Eugene, called Frank, had kept up the home with him.

Toward the end of 1965, they had moved from Coshocton to the "Davis property," as it was called, in West Lafayette. Actually, the property had been sold to the Gepharts by the most recent owners, who lived next door and still had a key to the "Davis" place. The Gepharts wanted the neighbors to have a key so that if an emergency arose, they'd be able to get into the house.

Just such an emergency arose the evening of January 3rd. When their knocks at the door went unanswered, the two women intending to visit the elder Gephart became anxious, the more so because there were a couple of lights on in the house, Frank's car was gone, which meant he was out somewhere, and they knew that Lewis, Junior, was vacationing in Pennsylvania. What they feared was that the old man had been taken so ill, suddenly, that he either didn't hear them knocking or, if he did hear, he couldn't come to the door to open it for them. There was little likelihood that he had gone with Frank, because he never went out in the evening unless it was absolutely necessary.

The more the women considered

the possibility that the old man had been stricken—perhaps fatally, though they didn't voice that thought to each other—the more disturbed they became. And, at last, driven by their fear, they hurried to the neighbors' house, explained their apprehension and asked for the key, which was given to them.

The elder Gephart was at home, as the women had felt he would be, and he hadn't been able to hear their knocks, as they surmised, but the reason for that was not because he had been stricken by a sudden severe illness that rendered him unconscious.

Lewis Gephart, Senior, in a state of partial undress, lay on the floor of his disordered bedroom—and the women instinctively understood first, that he was dead and, second, that he had probably been murdered.

Controlling themselves admirably, they hurried down from the second-floor bedroom and telephoned Coshocton County Sheriff William Hoop, Junior. He listened intently to their story, then called his marshal, Ernest Bartholow, in West Lafayette, and that done, he started for the Gephart home five miles away.

In the house, before the sheriff got there, the marshal spent a long minute gazing at the body of the elder Gephart and at the wild disorder of the bedroom. Then he decided to take a look around the house, a tour that the two women hadn't even considered making.

If they had done so, they'd have found what the marshal did—the body of 35-year-old Frank Gephart, also partially undressed, also on the floor of his bedroom, and also unquestionably murdered. Near him lay what seemed to be the motive for the murders—his empty wallet. Somebody had wanted money badly enough to kill not once, but twice.

A murder in West Lafayette, Ohio, is about as frequent as a tennis match atop Mt. Everest. Two at once there strains credibility.

In quick succession, after his arrival, the sheriff summoned Deputy Sheriff Robert Nelson to the scene, notified Coshocton County Prosecutor James W. Freeman of the double murder, and contacted the State Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation at its branch in London, Ohio. In due time, three bureau agents and the prosecutor arrived, photos of the bodies and the bedrooms were snapped, measurements were taken, samples of blood spattered all over both chambers were scraped up and dustings were made for fingerprints.

From the two bedrooms the bureau agents took with them the pieces of a broken bottle, a lamp base, part of an old-style shaving mirror and a metal letter-opener which had been bent as if from the force of a blow administered with it. One or all of them were possible murder weapons.

The bodies of the two slain men were sent to Ohio State University in Columbus for autopsy.

It was from the two women that the sheriff first learned that Frank Gephart's 1965 two-door orchid hardtop Impala Chevrolet was gone, and it was from them, too, that he heard a story that turned the direction of the hunt for the killer—toward Maine.

As the women related the story, it seemed that on his way home on December 28, 1965, from Newark, Ohio, where he worked for the Holophone Company, which manufactures street-

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lighting equipment, Frank Gephart had come across a stalled 1950 Plymouth sedan bearing New Mexico registration plates and had stopped to see whether he could help the stranded driver. In the end, Frank had pushed the driver in his car all the way to the Gephart home. Then, learning that the wayfarer was in dire financial straits, had invited him to stay overnight, at least.

The following day, after the stranger's car had been repaired, the women went on, he drove off. But the day after that, he was back again, having sold his car in Pennsylvania for a few dollars and having hitchhiked back, feeling presumably, that the Gepharts would again extend their hospitality—and they did. And, as far as they knew, the women said, the stranger was still with the Gepharts 24 hours before they had found the body of the old man.

They described the "house guest" at the Gephart home as dark-haired, squinty-eyed, 22 to 25 years old, 5 feet 8 inches tall, weighing about 145 pounds. All this was detailed enough, but the only item of his apparel they could recall was his checkered shirt.

"Do you remember hearing his name?" the sheriff asked them.

"Gene was definitely his first name," one of the women replied. "His second name sounded like Michaud and I remember him saying something about Maine."

Once he had all the information he could draw from the women, the sheriff ordered a police bulletin transmitted to all points in the eastern half of the country. The bulletin included a brief account of the murders, a description of Gene Michaud and the Gephart car he was assumed to be driving—and asked that he be apprehended for questioning.

In North Berwick, in Augusta and in Rochester, the bulletin immediately kindled intense interest. The description of the wanted man fitted that of the young man who was seen driving Ralph Mace around Rochester.

"And the man who was driving Mace around town," Rochester Police Chief Levesque said with slow emphasis, "is also the one man we couldn't find when we learned of a group of men who had some knowledge of both Mace and Harry Staples."

By one of those quirks that sometimes plague a mechanical device such as a teletype machine, the name of the wanted man came clicking out in the bulletin as "Gene Mascued."

Tuesday morning, January 4, 1966, in police headquarters in Manchester, New Hampshire, Sergeant Edward Murphy and Patrolman Louis Durette mulled the contents of the bulletin from Sheriff Hoop and agreed that the description of "Gene Mascued" struck a responsive chord in their memories, but the name didn't. On the possibility that it had suffered some error in the transmission, the sergeant sent a message to the sheriff asking that the name be either confirmed or corrected as soon as possible.

In the time between the dispatch of the request and the receipt of the reply, the findings of the autopsies performed on the elder Gephart and his son were made public. The mortal injuries inflicted on the father consisted of a heavy blow to the left side of his head, a fracture of the right jaw and a severe fracture of the base of the skull—all too reminiscent of the injuries which had caused the deaths of Ralph Mace, Harry Staples and Lorenzo Troyer. Young Gephart had suffered fractures of the nose, both sides of the jaw and of the face—but he had also been at least partially strangled and had suffocated in his own blood.

In Manchester, the reply from Sheriff Hoop confirmed not the name "Mascued," but the sergeant's notion that it was a misspelling. The correct last name, the sheriff said, was believed to be Michaud.

And then the responsive chords in the memories of the sergeant and the patrolman sounded in unison. In the files they found a record of a Gene Michaud—which was an alias—who also used the name Richard Timothy Dennis—and that was also an alias. In Manchester, "Gene Michaud-Richard Timothy Dennis" had a record for petty larceny and a motor vehicle violation. A mug photo of him and his fingerprints were also on file.

Copies of the photo were distributed to the members of the Manchester, New Hampshire, police force—and, with them, the correct name of the wanted man, Richard Edward Steeves, who was 23 years old, a native of Oakland, Maine, who had

lived at one time or another in Bath and Waterville in that state.

Wednesday morning, January 5th, Manchester Patrolmen Omer Chicoine and Glen Leach sauntered into a restaurant on Stark Street, around the corner from city hall, just to look around. It was an off-hour, so the restaurant was quiet and orderly, business was slow and only a few patrons were at the tables.

The most interesting person in the place was a young man talking very softly but earnestly into a public wall-phone. His conversation was of no special concern to Patrolmen Chicoine and Leach—but his appearance arrested their attention. As soon as he finished his call and hung up, the two police officers approached him.

"You look like somebody I know," Patrolman Chicoine said casually. "What's your name?"

"Gene Michaud," the man said.

After that, everything was routine. Michaud—who was really Richard Edward Steeves—permitted himself to be taken to Manchester police headquarters without protest. From there, word was flashed to the police in Rochester; Augusta, Maine, and Coshocton, Ohio. A report that Steeves was in custody was flashed to the Maine State Police, to Kennebec County Prosecutor Cratty, to Stratford County Prosecutor Carignan and to the New Hampshire Attorney General. As rapidly as they could, all but the Rochester authorities started for Manchester. Rochester lawmen remained in that town, however, because they were informed that Steeves would be brought there in a matter of hours. Sheriff Hoop, Prosecutor Freeman and one of the agents of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation flew to Manchester.

Before questioning of Steeves had gone very far, young Gephart's orchid two-door hardtop was found parked on Amherst Street in Manchester. A Manchester police officer said Steeves related he had been in town only an hour when the two patrolmen picked him up in the restaurant. He was telephoning a friend in the hope of borrowing money, he said.

Steeves was interrogated at Rochester as well as in Manchester. In Rochester, Thursday morning, January 6th, with court-appointed counsel at

his side, Steeves was arraigned before District Judge Leonard Hardwick on a charge of murdering Ralph Mace. Defense Attorney Glenn Davis, waiving a reading of the complaint, entered a plea of innocent for Steeves.

Then Attorney General William Maynard of New Hampshire handed up to the judge a court document ordering Steeves to be sent to the State Hospital in Concord for a period of mental observation. The document had been obtained by the attorney general an hour earlier from a Superior Court judge. Steeves was duly committed to the hospital, but before he left the courtroom, warrants charging him with the murder of Harry Staples in North Berwick, Lorenzo Troyer of Augusta, Maine, and the two Gepharts in West Lafayette, Ohio, were filed with the clerk of the court.

Back in Augusta after his session with Steeves, Police Captain Sparrow said the suspect had "made an admission" concerning the murder of Troyer. According to the captain, Steeves told him that he and Troyer had become involved in an argument about religion. That's all the captain cared to say then. Lawmen of Rochester, North Berwick and Coshocton, Ohio, declined to reveal what they had learned from their questioning of Steeves, but said the murder warrants they had lodged with the court clerk spoke for them.

In Ohio, less than two weeks later, Steeves was indicted by the Coshocton County grand jury on charges of murdering Lewis Gephart, Senior, and his son, Francis Eugene.

The immediate prospects of Richard Steeves are not exactly pleasant. If he is tried for the murder of Ralph Mace and is found guilty, he faces the ultimate New Hampshire penalty—hanging. If he should be tried for the murders of the Gepharts and be convicted of them, the court in Ohio could sentence him to be electrocuted. In Maine, the heaviest punishment for murder is life imprisonment.

Thus far, however, Steeves has merely been accused of five murders and is, therefore, presumed to be innocent of all of them—no matter how strong a case against him the police may believe they have. \*\*\*

