

THE DEAN MURDER MYSTERY

First, let's set the scene. Let's go back to Jaffrey in 1918. The population was about 2,000. There were more horses and wagons on the roads than automobiles. Even those who had an automobile, had a horse and wagon as well. There weren't many sidewalks. Roads were sometimes sprinkled to hold down the dust. Mud season was messy.

Women were busy in the home, baking bread, preparing big meals, sewing, cleaning, doing laundry...there were no washing machines or driers. There were no vacuum cleaners. Rugs were swept and occasionally beaten. Refrigerators were literally ice boxes, and ice was delivered by horse and wagon.

Heavy snows were rolled in the winter and horses pulled sleds instead of wheeled wagons. When there was a lot of snow, automobiles were put up for the winter. The youngsters skied, but their skis were improvised, and they walked back up the hills. You walked to school - there were no school busses. If you had perfect attendance your name was listed in the annual Town Report.

There wasn't any television. There wasn't any radio. There were a few telephones in town, party lines. One telephone switchboard handled all the

calls, and there was one telephone operator on duty at a time.

In the summertime the population swelled as summer homes were opened. There were several summer camps. Country inns were the height of fashion. Shattuck Inn and The Ark had thriving businesses. Guests would come by train, with their trunks, and spend the summer. Among such guests was Willa Cather.

What would have been familiar landmarks in Jaffrey then? Well, the library was there in 1918, looking just about as it does today, with the monument in front. The library had been built in 1896, and the monument was dedicated in 1900.

There wasn't any Town Office. The Selectmen met on the second floor of the library and that's where town business was carried on.

Some places are gone. Goodnow's Store, for instance. That was back of the bank and across from the library. Goodnow's had a variety of merchandise on the first floor. They sold groceries downstairs. Archie Letourneau, now well in his 80's, was 17 years old in 1918 and worked in Goodnow's Store. He told me he saw Dr. Dean that ill-starred night.

The Monadnock Bank was there, right in that same place, but the old building, before remodelling.

Right next to the bank was a livery stable, a very active place. Horses need to be shod, wagons

repaired. Next to that was a building with a restaurant on the first floor. Archie Letourneau remembers having his lunch there when he worked at Goodnow's. Upstairs there was a barbershop, and the office of Dr. Wilkins, the dentist.

Then next to that was the remains of the old Granite State Hotel. It had been practically destroyed by fire, but there was a store and the telephone switchboard on the street floor, and people lived upstairs.

That Granite State Hotel land was eventually given to the town and the present Town Office was built in 1955.

The bandstand was there, in the very place it is now. On a summer evening like this, families would gather round for the lively band concerts.

Another familiar landmark in 1918 would be the old red brick mill, re-built in the 1880's by the White Brothers. It would have looked just about as it does today.

The Grade School was on School Street. Not the building we see now, but two small buildings were used, and I understand from Cynthia Hamilton that one was for the A students and the other for the B students.

The high school was on Stratton Road, where it is now, but just the single original building facing

the road. It was very new, having been built in 1917 at a cost of \$40,044.71. The Building Committee was George Duncan, Albert Annett, Delcie Bean, Robert Hamill, and Fr. Hennon.

Where the Jaffrey Post Office is now you would have seen the Baptist Church. Rev. Enslin was the minister. Mrs. Dean lived with the Enslins for the last months of her life.

The Universalist Church on Main Street, across from the library, was another familiar landmark in 1918. It had been built in 1845, and Rev. Myron Cutler was the pastor in 1918. Mr. Rich was the choir director. It's now the Cutler Memorial Building.

The United Church of Jaffrey was in the same place, but in 1918 it was the East Congregational Church and Rev. Charles Johnson was the minister. The church had been built in 1850.

St. Patrick School was not there...that came much later. But we would have seen the Stone House, a beautiful private residence. That had been built in 1830 by Jonas Melville, for whom Melville Academy is named.

Looking across the street from the Stone House we would have seen a brand new St. Patrick Church. It had just been built and dedicated in 1917 under Fr. Herbert A. Hennon, who was there from 1912 to 1921.

And here in Jaffrey Center, of course, was this historic Meeting House, built in 1773. The First Church Congregational was right across the road, and Melville Academy was around the corner.

Jaffrey Center had been the center of the original settlement. It was only with industrial expansion, and the railroad, that the east part of town became the population center and Jaffrey Center took on the character it has today.

But it was not until the 1940's that the Post Office Department dropped the East and the town became Jaffrey.

Let's go back to 1918. Where did people work in Jaffrey? Well, businesses were operating. There was the Annett Box Company, manufacturers of a great variety of wood items, baskets, boxes, etc., "from log to finished product." That was down on Squantum Road where Brian Rohdy runs Monadnock Forest Products now.

The White Brothers were operating a thriving textile mill in the red brick mill on Main Street, and another textile operation in the Cheshire Mill. Today the Cheshire Mill is the match factory.

Bean & Symonds, box shoo makers and suppliers of ash wood to Diamond Match Co., was between Peterborough Road and the railroad tracks.

The tack factory was an important industry in

town. In 1918 it was run by Wilbur Webster, whose father founded the company. Mr. Webster was one of Jaffrey's prominent citizens in 1918. The tack factory was bought by United Shoe in 1920 and is still a major industry in town.

And, of course, there was the livery stable. And Goodnow's Department Store. And a Mr. Elie Belletete had a small general store on North Street. There was Vanni's, a fruit store where Roy's Bike Shop is now. George Duncan had a drugstore on the corner. A Mrs. LaBonte had a millinery store. Charles Deschenes ran a butcher shop. There was a bakery, and there were other small businesses.

Civic and social organizations were very important in 1918 for diversion and recreation. The Masonic Lodge was perhaps the most elite group in town. Its members were business and professional men. It was an exclusively Protestant group because in 1918 the Catholic Church didn't allow its members to join a secret society. The Masons met upstairs in the bank building.

The Grange had the largest number of members, and was perhaps the most popular and friendly society in 1918. Almost everyone did a little farming, and had a horse and a cow. The Grange was famous for its chicken suppers, social gatherings and entertainments.

Then there were the Odd Fellows and the

Rebekahs. And the women had a Reading Group that met once a week. That became the Jaffrey Woman's Club in 1921. There were the Ladies Aid Societies in the churches, and young people's church groups.

Here in Jaffrey Center the Village Improvement Society was very active restoring Melville Academy and the Meeting House. Mrs. B. L. Robinson was the president. She was a summer resident whose husband was a professor at Harvard. A good friend of Dr. Dean's, she testified in the Inquest.

There were church suppers, band concerts, and amateur performances, both social and for fundraising. There was an East Jaffrey Band for summer concerts. And there was the Chautauqua, travelling groups, bringing lectures, concerts, recitals, and shows, much anticipated in small towns.

Saturday afternoon silent movies were very popular. They were shown in what was known as Coolidge Hall, upstairs in a building on Main Street. That hall was used for social events as well.

In the Annual Town Report for 1918 we see familiar names. There were the Belletetes, the Shattucks, the Bacons, the Letourneaus, and Eaves. There were Cutters, and Pooles, Boyntons, Butlers, Dillons, Deschenes, Jewells, Evans, Devlins, Bingham, Griswolds, Howards, Duvals, LaFortunes, Townsends, Henschmans, Chouinards, Wellingtons, and others.

There was a Charlie Bean, a male nurse, who became rather a town character. He was not related to Jack's family. Charlie Bean is one who testifies in the Grand Jury Inquest.

And the Sawyer family was here in 1918, farming and running the horse ranch. Alfred, the patriarch, was 87, and president of the bank. He retired in his 99th year and died shortly afterwards.

Jack's father was an up-and-coming young businessman in his early 30's with four young children and in partnership with another young businessman, Merrill Symonds. The Symonds didn't have children.

The railroad came in 1870 but still had the fascination of faraway places. It opened up the world. Boston and Maine freight trains came through. One could take a train to Worcester, or Boston, or even to New York and beyond.

In the larger world, in 1918, Woodrow Wilson was president. He had been elected in 1912. In August 1914 the outbreak of war in Europe alarmed everyone. Americans wanted no part of foreign entanglements and there was strong feeling that we should stay out of it. Pres. Wilson said, "We must be neutral in thought as well as in action."

Then on May 7, 1915 a German submarine sank a British passenger liner, the Lusitania, killing 128 Americans. There was deep concern, but Pres. Wilson

remained calm. He devoted all his effort to stopping the war in Europe.

In 1916 Wilson was re-elected. His platform? He would keep America out of the war.

But in February 1917 the Germans began unlimited submarine warfare against all merchant shipping, including American ships. The American people were outraged.

Our Town History reports that at the Annual Meeting in March 1917 the citizens of Jaffrey adopted a Resolution that said, in effect...The citizens of Jaffrey....declare their approval of the president in all his efforts to prevent the United States being involved in war and their hope is that such efforts may continue to be successful...but in unwarranted aggression they pledge the chief executive and Congress their hearty support.

In April, Pres. Wilson decided the United States could no longer remain neutral. On April 2, 1917 he spoke before a joint session of Congress, his face tense, his voice heavy with feeling. He said that actions by Germany were "in fact nothing less than war against the government and people of the United States." He asked Congress to declare war against Germany, and added that "the world must be made safe for democracy." Congress gave unanimous support.

And so began World War I - the war to end

wars. The American people put their doubts and indecision behind them.

Jaffrey became part of the war effort. Over 120 of our young men enlisted. Twenty-five served overseas. Young John Humiston was killed. Humiston Park was named for him. Three others died of sickness. Charlonne Street, Ellison Street, and Stratton Road have been named for them.

Two doctors, Dr. Sweeney and Dr. Hatch, both went to France to serve in the Medical Corps. It was the diary that Dr. Sweeney kept on the troop ship going to France that Willa Cather used in her Pulitzer Prize book, "One of Ours." The diary is in the Civic Center.

Jaffrey industry was involved. The tack factory made hob nails for soldiers' shoes. White Bros. Mill made denim for soldiers' uniforms. Bean & Symonds made wooden cases for shipping war material.

Jaffrey citizens bought Liberty Bonds. The women prepared bandages, and knitted sweaters, socks, and mittens. People had victory gardens, the slogan, "Food will win the war," and did without to help the war effort.

Of course, anything German was despised. I remember Jack saying "there was so much anti-German feeling that even little German Dachshund dogs would be kicked." Anyone with a German name was looked on with

suspicion. It was wartime.

Now in Jaffrey, in 1918, there were other deepseated, perhaps even unconscious, reasons for antagonisms. The industrial expansion had brought many French Canadians to the United States to work in mills. Many came to Jaffrey. Bright, energetic, ambitious people, but with a language barrier to be overcome.

Mostly of Roman Catholic faith, they found the church a familiar place, a place where they felt they belonged. It was a large flock that Fr. Hennon and the other priests sheperded. The power of the church was strong.

A picture of Fr. Hennon in the St. Patrick Church Anniversary booklet shows him to be a fine looking man. In 1918 he had already been in Jaffrey for six years, and in part because of the language difficulty, he was a leader for his people in the community.

At that time there was strong prejudice between Catholics and Protestants, not just in Jaffrey but in the country as a whole. Some of you might remember such feelings. It was Pope John, the 23rd, in 1962, who changed that. But the prejudice was very real in 1918, and in a small town, where everyone knew everyone else's religious background, even children were caught up in it.

There was economic tension, too. Mr. Rich,

Cashier of the bank, and others who seemed to have economic security, could very well have been resented by those who were struggling to make ends meet.

The Masons, to those outside, seemed a very exclusive group. It pointed up the prejudice between Catholics and Protestants, and between those who were economically well-off and those who were not. In a way, the Masonic Lodge became a sore point for many.

By August 1918 we had been at war for almost a year and a half. Families were disrupted while young men served their country. There was deep anxiety. Would their soldiers come back crippled or blinded? Would they come back at all?

There was talk about signal lights. After all, Mt. Monadnock was visible for great distances. Some people said it was the first point of land a ship would see coming into Boston harbor. What about German submarines? And there were other mountain ranges to receive signals. Camp Devons was right there in nearby Massachusetts. Wouldn't troop movements be important information to relay?

And everyone knew that before the war distinguished Germans like Count Johann Heinrich von Bernsdorff, the German Ambassador, and Captain Franz van Papen, military attache at the Embassy, had been houseguests in neighboring towns.

And what about this Mr. Colfelt who had come

to Jaffrey in 1917 and rented the Baldwin place, a big house not too far from the Dean farm. He and his wife, and a daughter. He didn't work so he must have money. But he didn't mix in the town very well. Just knew the people who did things for them, like Stratton at the livery stable. Then the Colfelts went away. But they came back. They came in October and stayed through the winter. That was strange. Lots of people came in the summer, but who would stay through a New Hampshire winter?

Nobody knew much about him, really. He was rather a dashing figure, riding his horse around town. And he drove a big car, too. A Marmon. A battleship gray Marmon.

When they came back, the Colfelts rented Dr. Dean's house on the hill. Beautiful view of the mountains. Good place to send signals from. People talked. What was in the mysterious big box that was in the Colfelt cellar? Had it really held a phonograph, or was it wireless apparatus? They even asked Dr. Dean if he thought Mr. Colfelt was a German spy, but Dr. Dean said of course not.

But when the Colfelts left the Dean house so suddenly in June 1918 and moved to Temple, N.H., there were rumors that Dr. Dean had given him 24 hours notice to get out. Had he learned something in the meantime?

Everybody liked Dr. Dean. His father, the

Rev. William Dean, was one of the first American missionaries to China. In 1860 he moved to Siam with his family and became acquainted with the King of Siam. His son, our William Dean, became a playmate of the Prince of Siam.

As a young man William Dean came back to the United States and lived with his uncle, Dr. Henry Dean of Rochester, New York. He went to Hamilton College, and then studied medicine under his uncle. He fell in love with and married his cousin, Mary.

Dr. Dean did well in medicine, but because of his health, he and Mrs. Dean decided they should move to New Hampshire and live in the country. In Jaffrey, although he never practiced, he was known as Dr. Dean. The Deans didn't have children.

The Deans bought an old farm. Quite far out on the Old Peterborough Road. And then, after a few years, they built a big house on the hilltop of their land and lived there.

They had lots of friends. The Jaffrey summer people, as well as local people. Mr. Rich and Dr. Dean were the best of friends. They used to play golf together, and billiards. Mr. Colfelt used to play with them sometimes.

Mr. Rich was Cashier of the bank. He built his house on a hill just across from Goodnow's and the bank. A grey house. You can see it from the drive-in

window of the bank. It was an ideal location. He could walk to work and be home for all his meals. He was Town Moderator, too. And a judge. An influential citizen of the town.

Mr. Rich had been born in Vermont, a graduate of M.I.T., he married a Vermont girl and taught school for awhile in Peterborough, N.H. Then he was offered a job in Monadnock Bank, and eventually became Cashier.

Another good friend of the Deans was Miss Mary Ware from Rindge. She was very wealthy, had a beautiful home which is still there, and a big farm with a working foreman, a Mr. William Cleaves, who was the uncle of Clara Cleaves Seymour of Rindge. Mr. Cleaves had trained at Harvard College to be the foreman of an estate. He graduated in 1903 in the same class with Franklin Roosevelt.

Miss Ware and her mother gave the famous glass flowers to Harvard College as a memorial to Dr. Charles Eliot Ware, class of 1834, who was Miss Ware's father.

Miss Ware was a "gentlelady" farmer and would talk farm talk with Dr. Dean. Dr. Dean was very gentlemanly and scholarly. He had a good sense of humor, and was always friendly and pleasant. He enjoyed the company of women, and was rather a "ladies' man".

As the war went on, Dr. Dean found his

finances becoming tight and he decided to move back into the smaller house and rent his big house. He'd met Mr. Colfelt when Colfelt was staying at the Baldwin house, and he mentioned it to him. There seemed to be some interest in it, and sure enough, Mr. Colfelt rented it, moved in in October 1917 and stayed until June of 1918.

For more than a year now, in August 1918, there had been talk about seeing signal lights on the mountain. And on Temple Mt. Miss Ware was sure she saw them. Federal agents came up to investigate. There was talk they were investigating Mr. Colfelt as well. Some people thought they saw lights coming from the Dean farm when Colfelt was there. But often the lights turned out to be car lights.

Lots of responsible people were sure they saw signal lights, but there were others who wouldn't take them seriously.

As always, war cast a shadow over people's lives. People wanted things to get back to normal. They were tired of worrying. They were tired of the war, of heatless Mondays, sugarless coffee, and dark-colored bread.

THAT WAS THE TOWN OF JAFFREY IN AUGUST 1918

It was a hot day, that fateful Tuesday, the 12th of August 1918. In the late afternoon Dr. Dean had jogged to town in his horse and cart to do a little marketing. People who saw him testify to that in the Grand Jury Inquest.

Priscilla Lynch and her sister, Georgia, were in Duncan's Drugstore at the time and they said he met Georgiana Hodgkins, Mrs. Rich's sister, there, and Miss Hodgkins says he went back with her to the Rich house for a little visit. Miss Hodgkins was visiting from New York.

Nobody knows for sure if Dr. Dean did visit with the Riches, or just when Dr. Dean arrived back at his own home that night. Ordinarily, Mrs. Dean would have been the right person to have verified this. But Mrs. Dean had been failing the last several years. She seemed a bit childish, seemed not to remember very well. Some people called it softening of the brain. So she couldn't be a reliable witness.

Dr. Dean did get home, and after a bite to eat (this showed up in forensic tests) went out to milk his cow. He was a gentleman farmer, milked late at night so he could sleep in the morning. Mrs. Dean waited for him, but he never came back to the house. Finally, at daylight, she went out to find him. She couldn't find him, and she telephoned for help. It is testified that she said, "Billy is in deep water."

Men came and searched.

And then, after hours of searching, they found him in the cistern, a victim of brutal cold-blooded murder. He had been hit, and strangled. The rope was still around his neck. His hands were tied together behind his back. His feet were tied. Over his head there was a burlap bag, with a heavy stone in it, and under that was a blanket pushed against his head to soak up the blood.

Everyone was horrified! Who could have done it?

Next major development...

The following morning, Wednesday, August 13th, Mr. Rich was seen downtown with a black eye. A very black eye. He said his horse kicked, when he went in to feed her, and knocked his pipe, or whatever, into his face.

Unbelievably, Mr. Rich became a prime suspect. Mr. Rich, Cashier of the bank, a judge, Moderator of Town Meeting and School Meeting, long-standing member of the Universalist Church and the choir director.

Mr. Rich seemed stunned. Some people felt he acted out of character. Ordinarily he was almost arrogant, and now he seemed to want to be more friendly. That added to people's suspicions. Always a reserved and taciturn man, there were very few

people, if any, who felt close to him.

Even with his incriminating black eye, he would have been cleared completely if someone could have testified that he'd gotten the black eye early in the evening. But, ironically, only his wife and sister-in-law, and Dr. Dean, would have known that his eye had been injured before Dr. Dean came by to visit, as Mr. Rich claimed.

His wife and sister-in-law, it was assumed, would be loyal to him and so they had no credibility. And Dr. Dean was dead. There was no one else to witness for him. No one to say for sure that Dr. Dean had stopped at his house and seen him bathing his injured eye.

Was it a tragic and untimely accident? Or had Mr. Rich been involved in some kind of midnight death struggle?

The Boston American newspaper sent reporters up to cover the case. People waited for the train each afternoon to bring the latest edition. The reporter most involved wrote a book about it, which some of you might have seen.

And so, incredibly, this little New Hampshire town was involved in a violent murder mystery. And, incredibly, the town polarized over Mr Rich. Those who thought he was guilty, and those who thought he was not.

Of course, there were other theories.

1. That Mrs. Dean had done it in an irrational rage of jealousy. Why had she said that Billy was in deep water?
2. That hoodlums had been caught in the barn and accidentally killed him.
3. That he found out Mr. Colfelt was a German spy and Colfelt arranged for him to be killed.

But, in part because of the black eye, and perhaps for reasons too complex to explain, or even understand, Mr. Rich became the key figure. Even those who suspected Mr. Colfelt, felt that Mr. Rich was somehow involved.

Investigations were being carried on, but seemed to go nowhere. Federal agents had been there about the lights. Mr. Colfelt was still under suspicion. There was a lot of talk, but nothing concrete developed.

Emotions in town were at a high pitch. Catholics and Protestants became even more prejudiced and distrustful of each other. Friendships were strained. There was particular antagonism to the Masons. Mr. Rich was a Mason, and any defense of him by other Masons, was completely discredited. Accusations were made, not only against Mr. Rich, but against anyone who defended him.

Next major development!

An unexpected, and almost fictional turn of events, was the arrival, with Dr. Dean's brother, Frederick, of a Dr. DeKerlor, alias Kent, a criminal psychologist, whose methods caused some people to scoff, and others to be spellbound. Did he really see faces in the photograph of a blood spot taken at the barn where Dr. Dean had been killed?

Dr. Dean's brother repudiated Dr. DeKerlor and returned to New York. But another tense situation developed when the selectmen asked Dr. DeKerlor to stay on as investigator for the Town of Jaffrey.

They were paying only his expenses, they claimed. But the Town Report for 1919 shows those expenses to have been exorbitant.

It infuriated some citizens who felt the selectmen should be voted out of office. This added fuel to the fire.

And then Dr. DeKerlor's methods, and his psychological deductions about Mr. Rich's involvement, brought more confusion and distrust. Even the State authorities were accused of not proceeding as they should because they were protecting Mr. Rich.

With all the strain, with all the emotion, we know that Jaffrey became for awhile a bitter and a very unhappy place. I remember Jack's father saying that it had set the town back many years. Plans to build a golf course and recreation center, already in progress,

were abandoned because the citizens were unable to work together.

Adding to the trauma was the tragic flu epidemic of September 1918. Our Town History says, "What was this pestilence which swept over the country like a dreadful pall?.....Efforts finally curbed the progress of the disease, but not until the Angel of Death had touched twenty-six persons in town in a space of twenty-seven days."

The unsolved Dean murder hung over all.

Some frustrated citizens finally presented a petition to the governor for a Grand Jury Inquest. Their request was granted.

The Inquest was held in April 1919, eight months after the murder. It lasted for eight days, and the Attorney General of New Hampshire conducted most of it.

In the Grand Jury Inquest Mrs. Morison of Peterborough testified that she had visited with Dr. Dean that Tuesday morning, August 12th, soliciting contributions to the hospital fair. Mrs. Morison's husband was with the government in Washington, D.C., and she had important connections. She said Dr. Dean had asked if she were going to Boston would she have them send up a man from the Department of Justice because he had something to tell them. He would not tell her what it was.

She did go to Boston the next day and informed the Department of Justice and they agreed to send a man up.

She did not know Dr. Dean had been killed sometime about midnight the night before. A touch from a Gothic mystery - the calendar in the kitchen showed that "Billie died" on August 13th.

Others who testify at the Grand Jury Inquest are Selectmen Coolidge and Boynton. Mrs. Robinson and Miss Ware testify, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Rich and Miss Hodgkins. The mysterious Colfelts, and their daughter, Natalye, testify. Dr. DeKerlor had many pages of testimony. A Federal agent, Robert Valkenburgh, took the stand and gave testimony.

The verdict was:

"Murder by person or persons unknown."

Sometime later Mr. Rich brought a case against the Boston American for libel. He won the case and was awarded the token one dollar. However, it did not exonerate him in the minds of many people. He lived out his life here in Jaffrey, always under the terrible shadow of suspicion. I remember Jack saying that children would taunt him and call him "murderer".

There were even those who thought there might be a deathbed confession. There was not. Did he have something to confess? There is no knowing.

When a Grand Jury Inquest does not result in

an indictment against any one person so that a trial can be held, the court does not go to the expense of having the reporter transcribe the notes. The twenty notebooks were wrapped in brown paper by Lena Marsh, the Court Reporter, and put on a shelf.

Some years ago Dr. Sweeney's son thought he might write a book about the Dean Murder. He'd heard his father talk about it, and since he was now an English professor, he thought he might write a novel based on it. He came to Jaffrey and had several talks with Jack. He went to the Boston library for old copies of the Boston American, and he went to the Keene Court House for anything they might have.

As a result of his visit to Keene, some time later he received a letter saying that in renovating the Court House, they had come across the Court Reporter's notes, in Pitman shorthand, covering the Grand Jury Inquest. Bud Sweeney was back in California, so he sent the letter to Jack and me with the notation, "Any ideas?"

Next interesting development - this is how I became involved!

I had studied Pitman shorthand, even though Gregg shorthand was already becoming more popular. But my instructor preferred Pitman as being more accurate and detailed. I even took an advanced course in it, which was actually a Court Reporting Course. I

didn't intend to be a Court Reporter, but just wanted to be proficient at shorthand.

We were required to transcribe each other's notes. That's basic in Court Reporting. So the idea of transcribing the notes of the Court Reporter for the Grand Jury Inquest was an exciting challenge.

After a telephone call to Bud, I asked the Keene Court for permission. It took a little time but permission was granted, with the stipulation that the notebooks were to be taken two at a time, and that the Court be given a transcription.

The notebooks are all back in the Court House, with a transcription.

In February 1981 I picked up the first two notebooks and began the work. It was like handwork, fitted into a busy schedule, but it was fascinating and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was the double thrill, of deciphering a code...and as it was deciphered, hearing the very words spoken by the people at the time. Not the words some author thought they might have said, but their very own words.

And, of course, sharing it with Jack. I would read it to him as I went along and loved hearing his comments. I remember one time reading some testimony and his comment was, "That! I wouldn't believe a word he said!"

Then came a major setback. I was told I couldn't have any more of the books. This was due to a Supreme Court decision regarding a recent Grand Jury Inquest. The Inquest notes had been used unfairly, so the court made it a law that no Grand Jury Inquest notes were to be transcribed unless it was for a specific trial. And this was to be retroactive.

It took many months, almost a year, before I was finally given an exception by the N.H. Supreme Court and could again have more notebooks. Fortunately, I had several books at home and could continue my work.

The shorthand notes were rather a challenge at first, as I ran into a few unfamiliar signs. Sometimes I would think about a challenging outline before going to sleep at night. And then, just as I was falling asleep it would come in a flash. It was a little like doing a crossword puzzle. A definition would elude you and suddenly you had it!

Another important development.....by a stroke of good fortune, I met a Jamaican, Mr. Samuel Fitz-Henley, who is a Pitman shorthand expert. He has been president of the International Shorthand Reporters organization. I read about him in the newspaper. It told about his having transcribed notes for a murder trial in Florida from some years before. The notes were crucial and determined the verdict.

Mr. Fitz-Henley was kind enough to see me and

his advice and help were invaluable. He read some of the notes and said Lena Marsh, the Court Reporter, was an excellent reporter, but would have studied from earlier books than I had studied from, and it would help me to have the out-of-print earlier books to refer to. He showed me copies of them and I was able to get secondhand copies through a bookseller.

In time I could read her shorthand probably better than my own, since I haven't been using mine. And I did spend more than six years working with them.

It was a thrill to know that this transcription had made it possible to go back in time, back to 1919, and hear the very people who had lived through it, tell about the Dean murder in their own words. It was a thrill, too, to realize that their words had been locked up in the notebooks all these years, and might have been locked up forever.

I'm glad Jaffrey will have this record of the Dean murder.

The Grand Jury Inquest transcript is filled with all the details, including another Gothic touch that on Wednesday, the day after the murder, there was the worst thunderstorm of the summer and it washed away tracks and footprints. There is always a thunder storm in a Gothic mystery!

The witnesses reflect a rich variety of human nature. Dr. DeKerlor, almost out of a mystery novel.

Mr. Rich, under extreme stress. Mrs. Robinson, Miss Ware, Mrs. Morison, from their upper class backgrounds. The mysterious Mr. and Mrs. Colfelt, whose testimony seems to put them above suspicion. The visiting nurse, Mrs. Bryant, who took care of Mrs. Dean. The Federal Agent who is almost arrogant in his sense of importance. The Medical Examiner from Boston who does a second autopsy.

There are nearly forty persons who testify, most of them those whose lives were indelibly touched by the violent murder of their neighbor.

Under the Right to Information Act, I have gotten copies of the government file on the Dean murder. They will go to the library.

I read the whole file and find nothing there of importance that is not brought out in the Grand Jury Inquest. This is both reassuring and disappointing, because I had hoped to find the answer...that it had been espionage, or counter-espionage, or that there had been enough evidence against Lawrence Colfelt, or some guilty person, and the government had resolved the case. But, no!

One day when I went to the Court House to get the notebooks, Mr. Stillman Rogers, Clerk of the Superior Court, had a free moment and asked if I would like to see something that had to do with the Inquest. Of course, I would!

He brought out a box and in it were the sneakers and black socks Dr. Dean was wearing when he was murdered, the ropes he was strangled and tied up with, the blanket still showing the blood stains, and the burlap bag that had been over his head. A morbid thrill! There are pictures of them in the book.

I wonder if one of you, if you read the transcript, might pick up a clue others missed and find the answer, because somebody killed Dr. Dean!

-oOo-

Margaret Bean

Amos Fortune Forum

July 14, 1989