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# Who Murdered "Dr." Dean?

by SUMNER KEAN

**F**ORTY YEARS AGO THIS MONTH A European-born, self-styled psychologist, William De Kerloff, stood on the platform of the East Jaffrey, New Hampshire, town hall. With a straight face and apparent sincerity, he told of photographing blood spots, which, upon magnification, revealed the murderers of William Kendrick Dean.

His talk followed an address by the then county solicitor, Roy M. Pickard of Keene. In his sane dissertation, the tall prosecutor attempted to explain to the overflow gathering the difference between evidence worth consideration by a grand jury and the imagination-embellished rumors which were then, and to some extent ever since have been, pervading the town. Dispassionately, despite their antagonistic tenor, Mr. Pickard answered questions. Only when the questioners became so aggressive that it would seem the solicitor himself were the guilty party did the presiding officer call a halt.

Neither of the talks aided in the solution of the case which had torn the town asunder, nor did the voluntary offers of clairvoyants contribute anything. So sharp was the line of demarcation which separated adherents of one theory from another that households were riven, religion was pitted against religion, and even politics was unwittingly drawn into the furious controversy. Members resigned from lodges and a tiny country club died aborning. Staunch defenders of one or an-

other unpopular theory either left town or were forced out of business.

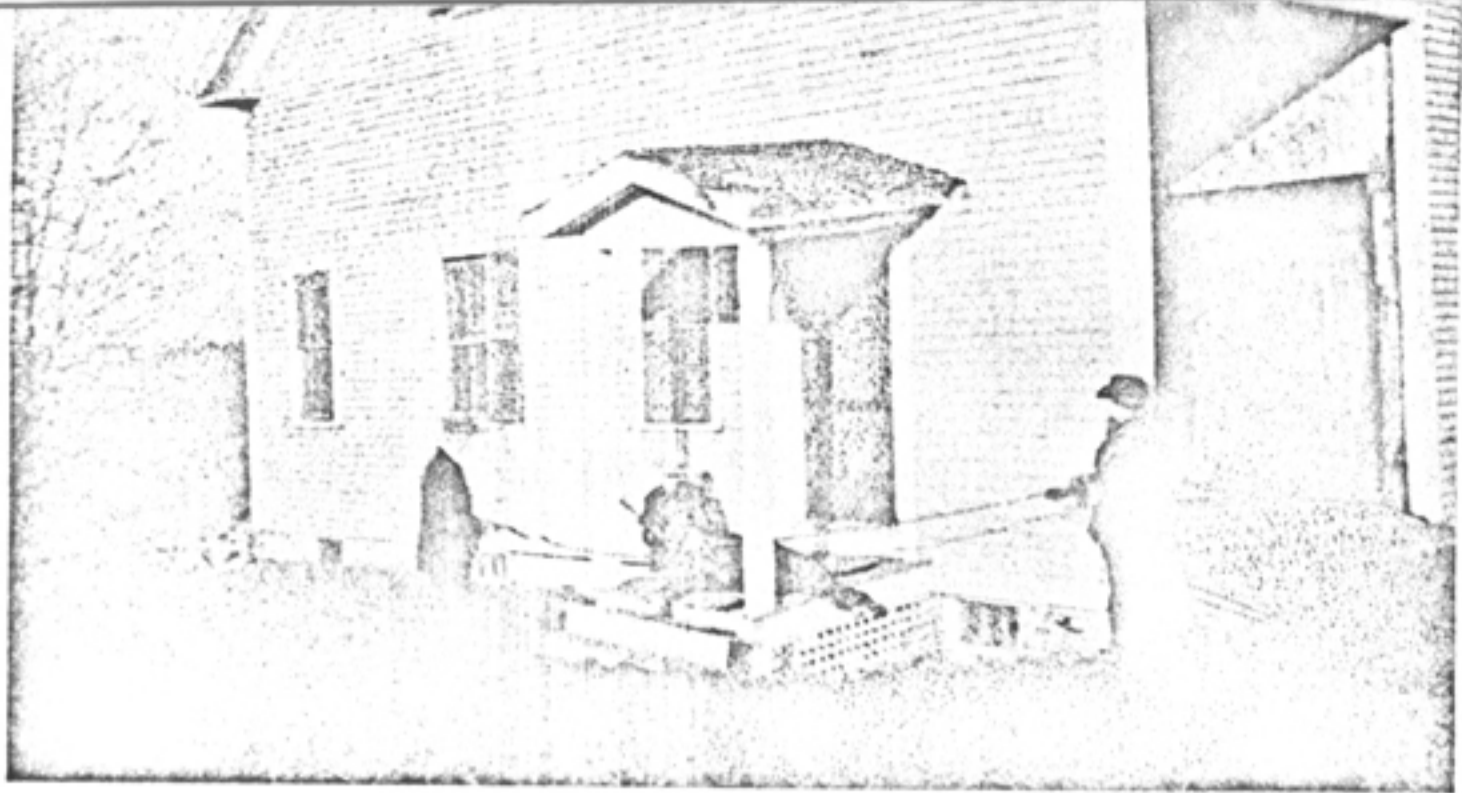
Today all the principals are dead—Dean, his infirm widow who outlived him but thirteen months, the selectmen, police, most of the witnesses—all, in fact, save Attorney Pickard. Dead too is Bert Ford, Boston newspaperman and former war correspondent. His columns covering the case were compiled and privately printed by Dean family relatives despite the fact that a Jaffrey banker, at the urging of friends, sued Ford's paper, *The Boston American*, for libel. It is alleged in Jaffrey that he collected \$5,000 in an out-of-court settlement.

Attorney Roy Pickard, today a white-haired, courtly gentleman, whose broad shoulders are still unstooped despite his 81 years, says frankly that he considers the case one of New Hampshire's few unsolved mysteries. Just as he did in 1918 he doubts some of the theories advanced. Chief among these were:

That Jaffrey was the center of a German spy ring which used Mount Monadnock's commanding height as a beacon point to flash signals to the Kaiser's submarines lurking off Boston harbor.

That the banker, Charles L. Rich, was involved because he suffered a black eye and bruised cheek the night Dean was killed.

That Dean's aging wife, his first cousin, Mary, killed him because of jealousy. Attorney Pickard says that Federal



*A re-enactment of the crime, showing the rope, blanket and weeder used on "Dr." Dean.*

agents, despite lengthy shadowings and interrogations, were unable to pin the crime on anyone with avowed German sympathies. He further contends that the lights seen to flash from Monadnock's 3186-foot summit were not signals connected with a spy system. He says Mr. Rich's explanation of his injury, that he had been kicked by his fractious mare, was plausible and not open to doubt. He points out that Mrs. Dean was so infirm physically that she could not have committed the crime.

The afternoon of August 13, 1918, Mrs. Horace Morison of Boston and Peterborough, a summer resident, called with two other women soliciting contributions for a benefit sale. At that time Dean and Mrs. Morison conversed in private about the lights on the mountain. She told him she planned a trip to Boston the next day and he asked her to stop at the office of the Secret Service there and ask that they send their best man up to see him as he had important information to impart. He could not go himself, he explained, because he could not leave his ailing wife for such a long period. Although pressed by Mrs. Morison, he refused to divulge the information. He contended that its possession might jeopardize her. She complied with his request the next day, only to read later in a Boston paper of his murder.

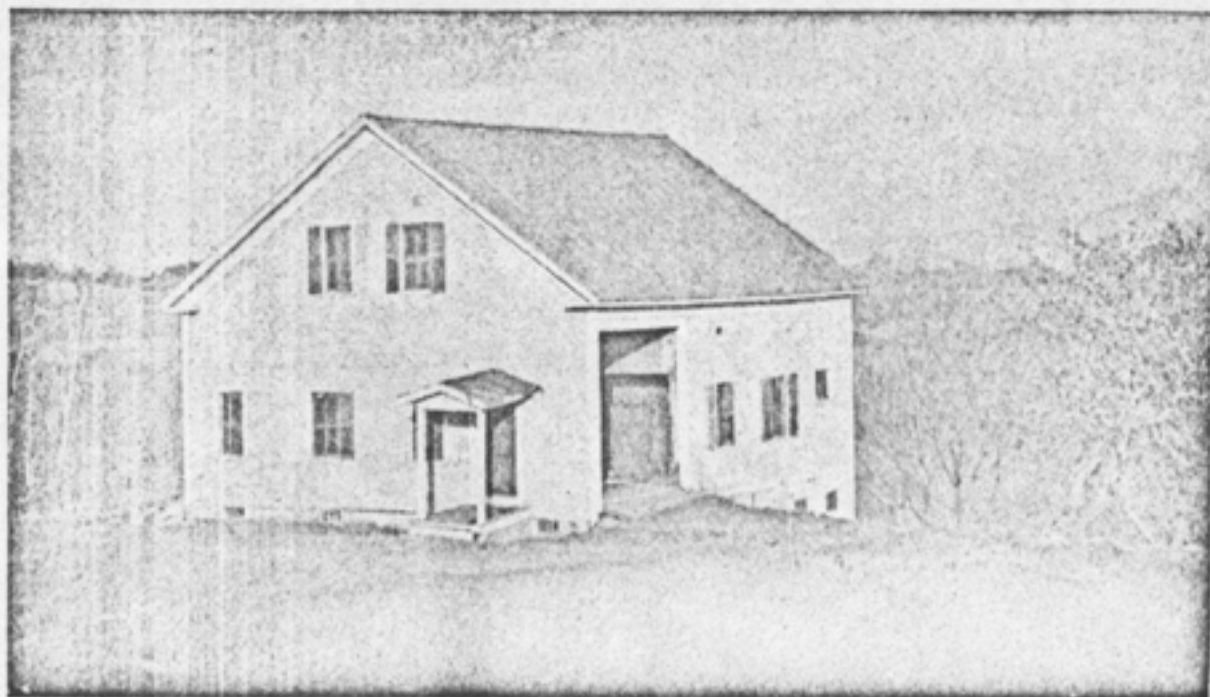
That evening, a Tuesday, when the East Jaffrey stores were open until nine

o'clock, Dean drove to town for supplies. There was conflicting evidence about the exact time of his arrival and departure. He did some shopping at Goodnow's store and at Duncan's drug store, chatted with a few acquaintances. He drove home in his rubber-tired buggy, the jog of his sluggish horse getting him there about 10:30.

City born and bred, Dean had never attuned himself to country habits. He liked to stay up all night, then sleep during the day. His farm animals were trained to accommodate such habits. He milked his Jersey cow at noon and again at midnight. When he arrived home that evening, he drank some milk and ate some currant buns he had bought in town. Then he smoked a hand-rolled cigarette, changed into an old coat, caught up a lantern and milk pail. Then, telling his wife he would be back about midnight, he left for the barn about 500 feet away.

Investigators, reconstructing the crime, believe he was attacked fifteen minutes later. A blow on the head rendered him unconscious and fractured his skull. A light horse blanket was wound around his head. He was garrotted with a hitching rope. He was tied at ankles, knees and wrists, and a grain sack containing a twenty-seven pound rock was pulled over his head and shoulders. This was fastened to the belt loops of his pants. He was then tossed into a well about twelve feet deep. The heavy stone kept his body

*The barn where Dean was murdered, trussed and wrapped in a blanket.*



submerged in the six feet of water remaining in the well.

William Kendrick Dean, son of missionary parents, was as a boy a familiar figure in the royal household of Siam (Thailand). He attended Columbia University Medical School for two years. Prior to these medical studies he had graduated from the University of Rochester. Although he never obtained a medical degree or license, throughout his life he used the unearned title of "Doctor." From the age of fifteen he made his home with a wealthy physician, his uncle. He fell in love with the latter's daughter. Cutting short his medical career, he married her in 1878. They made their home in Boston. Here he was employed by a publishing firm but soon after, because of his health, left for the country. They finally settled in East Jaffrey in 1889, on the hillside farm on the old Jaffrey-Peterborough road near where he was to meet his death.

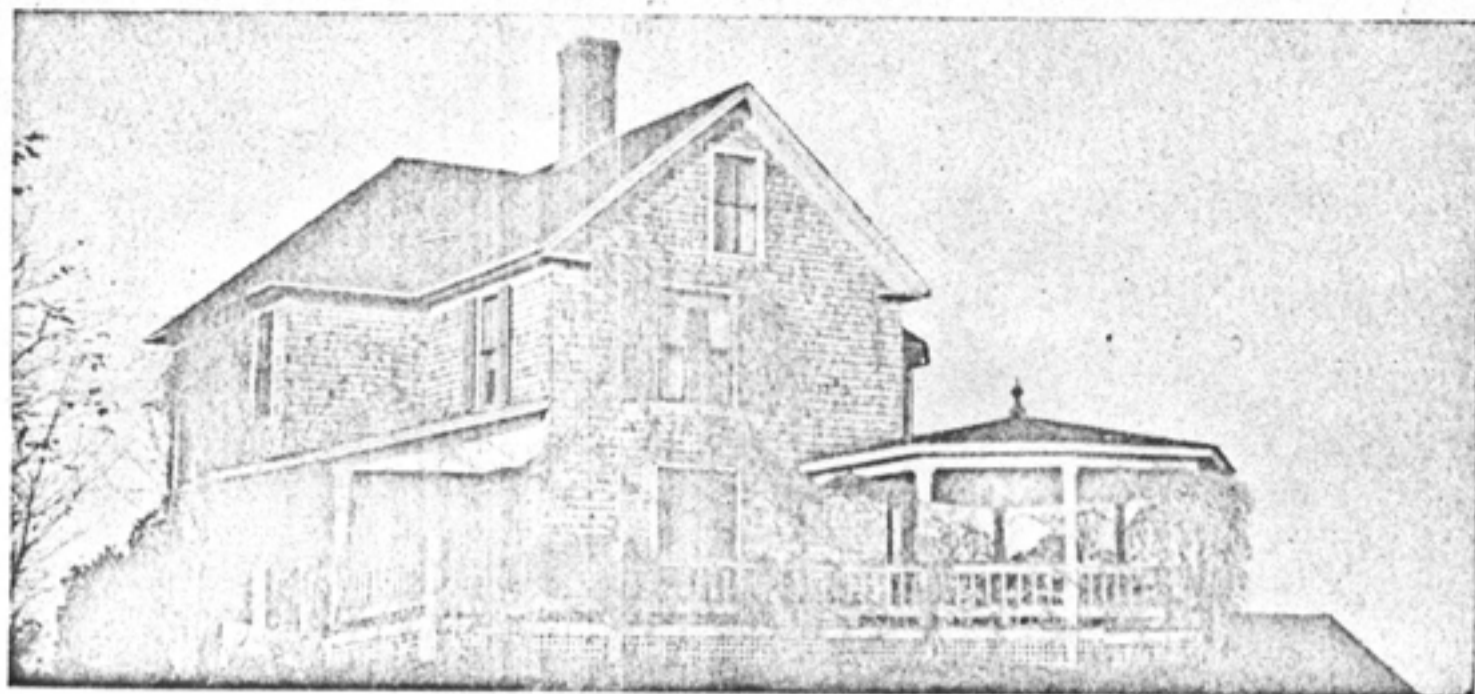
He built a pretentious hilltop home. There they lived for many years, quietly but comfortably, on the income from his wife's inherited money. Dean was well read, had a large library, and was a brilliant conversationalist. This, coupled with the fact that his wife was an accomplished pianist, made their home a center for the intellectuals, particularly summer residents. A register kept by Mrs. Dean showed 600 signatures in a single sum-

mer. No one, however, stayed the night and only rarely did anyone stay for meals.

Dean was a small man, five feet six and 135 pounds. Physical development was a fetish with him. He exercised with heavy dumbbells and went in for other strenuous exercise. His dress was considered flashy for the time and place. When he drove to town that evening before he was murdered, he wore knee-length khaki pants (40-year-old forerunner of Bermuda shorts), white shirt, high starched collar, bright pink tie and a dark coat. He appeared much younger than his sixty-three years. His wife was three years his elder. However, her infirmities made her seem more aged than her actual years.

Some say that Dean was a "ladies' man;" others disagree. Regardless, there was never anything to indicate that he was anything but faithful to his ill and fast-aging wife. He cared for her, did the housework and, during the last years of her life, prepared all the meals with little or no outside help. His name for her was Polly. She called him Billy and, perhaps because of his diminutive stature, "my baby."

On the night he was killed, against his return from the barn at midnight she readied some hot soup. When he did not return at the usual time, she waited, huddled in her chair, afraid to brave the dark and search for him; poor feeble Mrs.



Dean, a night of anguish for her with darkened mind unable to cope with the real and fancied horrors of night.

When daylight came she searched for him. The only clue was an extinguished lantern on the stable floor, its reservoir still half full of oil. Piteously she called again and again for her Billy. There was no response. Then she called neighbors. They, the selectmen, and the police chief, Perley Enos, eventually found her husband's body in the well. Mr. Pickard and Dr. Densmore, the county medical referee, were called.

Dean's trussed body was hauled from the well. Even to untrained investigators it was patently a case of murder. Ignorance on the part of those present destroyed some valuable clues: a bloody imprint on the barn door handle and a bloody footprint. There were no trained state police detectives who could be consulted. The only undestroyed clue was a hand weeder, a three-pronged claw with a one-foot handle, found by a searcher tucked into a nearby stone wall. This appeared to be the weapon used to fell the small gentleman farmer. No autopsy was conducted until several months later. At that time the body was exhumed. Examination disclosed that the victim had a paper-thin skull. The blow had fractured it, but apparently failed to kill him.

In the absence of modern police methods the case (Continued on page 76)

*Above: The Deans' pretentious hilltop home where they lived for many years. The Deans entertained widely and 600 guests signed the register in one year. Below: Attorney Roy Pickard, right, about the time of the murder. Companion is unknown.*



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## Who Murdered Dr. Dean?

(Continued from page 35)

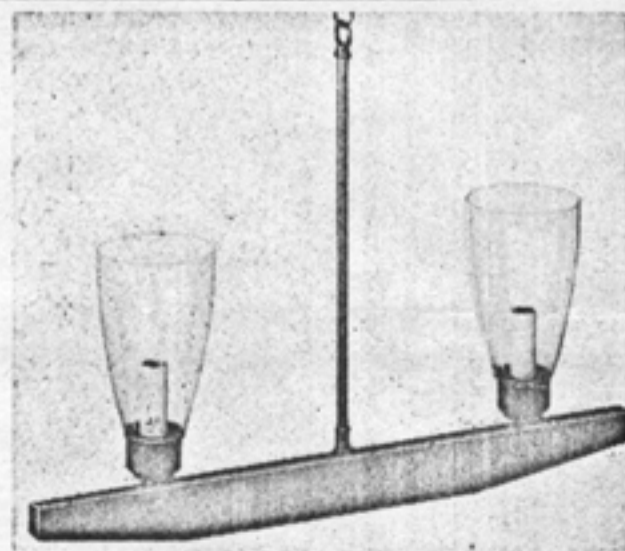
immediately degenerated into a bizarre "whodunit" with suspicion, not concrete evidence, the principal factor.

First, because Mrs. Dean had told somebody, before the body was found, that "Billy is dead in the deep water," she was a suspect. Many, including the then State Attorney General, the late Judge Oscar Young, held to that belief. As a result, she was not informed that her husband had been murdered or his body found until weeks later.

Next in the line of suspects was the Deans' close friend, Mr. Rich, cashier of the local bank, judge of the municipal court, a former state senator and a man of spotless reputation. Suspicion's horrible pointed finger was directed at him for the sole reason that he had suffered an injury to his face similar to that suffered by Dean when he was felled with the weeder.

But far beyond these two, in ever-widening circles, suspicion was directed at German agents.

Prescott Duncan, Jaffrey businessman, was then a student at Cushing Academy. Home on vacation, he was on the scene when Dean's trussed body was pulled from the well. He phoned in the story to *The Boston American*. The slaying had all the elements of mystery so dear to sensational Hearst journalism. The managing editor assigned a top feature writer, Bert Ford, to



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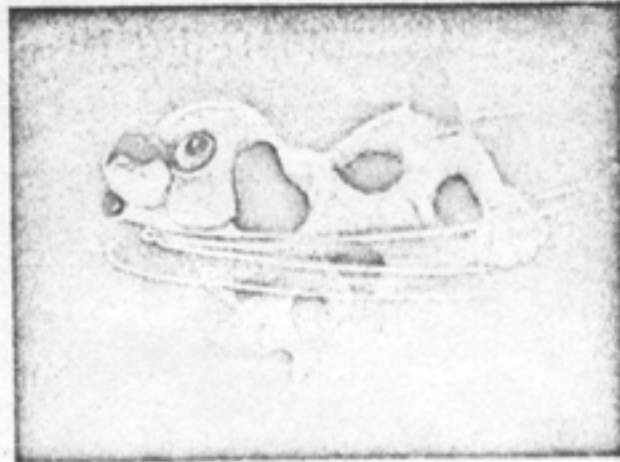
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the case. Ford, recently returned war correspondent with a book to his credit, "The Fighting Yankees Overseas," a combat history of the 26th Division, knew his business. Daily for a month he dug up details. He interviewed witnesses and eventually broadcast his theory that Dean was a victim of German spies—a hero killed in combat back of the lines.

The entire Monadnock region was pictured as the operating area for a ring of spies. Its proximity to Fort Devens and the fact that the mountain's bald top is one of the first high points of land visible to incoming mariners were cited to bolster this belief. There were reports of ridings at night, in cars and on horseback, and it was not long before Jaffrey residents were looking for spies beneath their beds and casting a suspicious eye at anyone of German origin or sympathies. Actually it was merely localization of national war hysteria—hysteria which reached its apogee when a comic strip, the Katzenjammer Kids, appeared under a whitewashed name, the Captain and the Kids.

State and county authorities did their best. They hired Pinkerton detectives. The Secret Service sent agents to run down spy rumors. In addition, relatives of the Dean family hired De Kerloff, the psychologist-detective. They all worked hard, perhaps none of them harder than De Kerloff, searching, shadowing, interrogating. If the latter had stuck to sleuthing, Jaffrey might have had faith in him, but the detection of a murderer through photographs of blood spots was too much to swallow. Another thing which made many gag was a



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bit of charlatanism. When Dean's body was exhumed for autopsy seven months after his death, De Kerloff made a drawing of the peculiar three-pronged wound on his skull. Then, at a public meeting he slapped the paper over the wound on Judge Rich's face in an effort to show resemblance. De Kerloff eventually sued the town for \$4,000 for his expenses and services. It is little wonder he failed to collect from either town or court.

There was a popular radio serial going at the time, The Green Hornet. One of the cars frequently seen on back roads was a gray Marmon, and this was promptly dubbed the Gray Hornet.

There was a Hooded Terror which gazed in windows or peered in factory skylights at night-shift workers.

All added to the general terror which gripped the town.

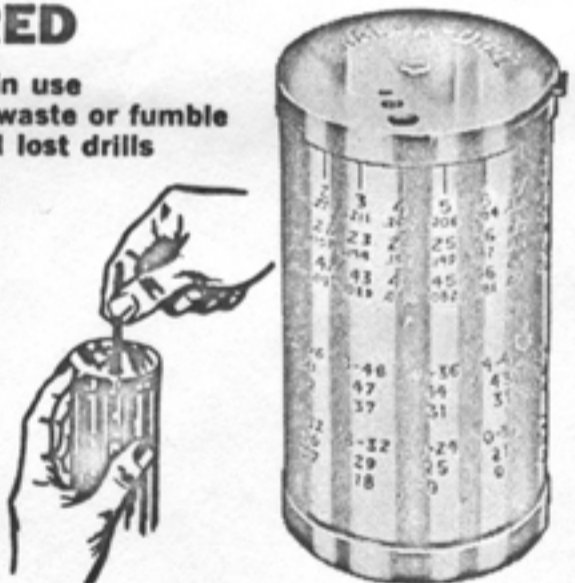
Hysteria died down a bit when the Marmon's owner convinced Federal investigators that his actions were not against the best interest of the nation, and faded away when the Hooded Terror turned out to be nothing more than a disgruntled policeman who, because the town had refused to pay him, had adopted this disguise to strike back at a community which did not appreciate his services.

At the demands of prominent citizens, a grand jury was impanelled to hear all the

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evidence. It heard everybody but indicted no one.

Today, four decades after the crime, authorities still mark it "unsolved." Certain conservative elder residents, however, hold to what they call a "hoss sense" solution:

There existed in the town and its environs a group of young toughs below draft age. They and their girl friends were in the habit of cavorting in empty houses. The Deans, because of financial reverses, had rented their big house and moved to an old cottage about 300 yards away. The big house tenant, because of suspected German sympathies, had but lately, at Dean's insistence, moved to a nearby farm. A circuitous road passed near the big house. This showed tire marks the day after the murder. It is believed that two or more persons, one perhaps a woman, were in the big house when they saw the light of Dean's lantern. The theory is that they investigated, were recognized by Dean, then struck him down with the weeder, the first weapon that came to hand. Panicking when he dropped with the blow, they tied him up, weighted the bundle so it would stay down, and dumped him in the handiest spot—the well.

Prosaic solution of the 40-year-old mystery, perhaps, but again perhaps the only one which will ever come out of this explosive World War I mystery.



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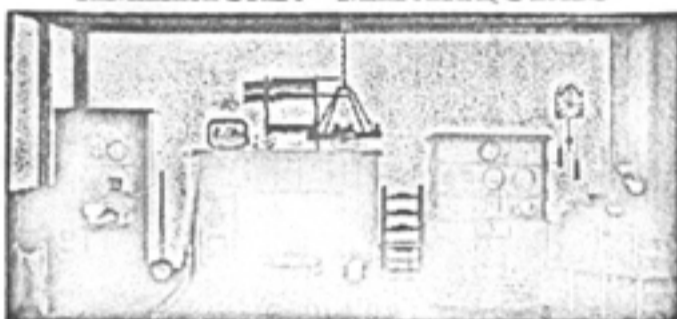
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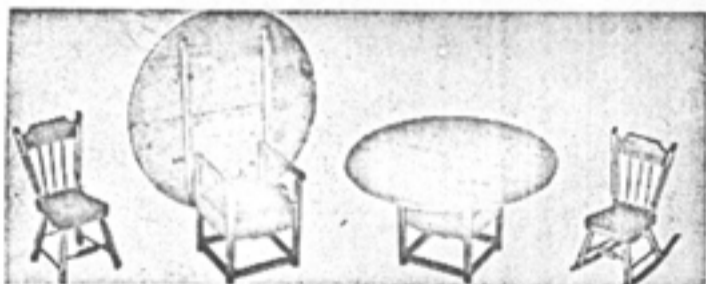
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