

Murder on the *Long Island*

by Bill Jensen

Still a Mystery to Relatives, 116 Years Later



Thomas Carpenter, was murdered on his boat the *Long Island*.



Thomas Carpenter did not lead the most charmed existence, even by 19th century standards. "We will just say he had some behavioral problems associated with sailing-vessel life," says second-great-grand-nephew John L. Carpenter.

The sea captain, born in Glen Cove, was discharged from the Union army with a bum kidney and rheumatism. When he came back to the Island, he married, and he and his wife had a child. Both died within a year. He married another woman, discovered her cheating on him,

and got a divorce. At 28, he married a 16-year-old, and moved in with her parents. They separated in 1884. Alone, Carpenter then focused on work and lived on a two-masted schooner owned by his uncle James Carpenter. A schooner called the *Long Island*.

He would die on that schooner by the hands of a killer who has never been caught.

116 years later, John L. Carpenter, 57, is still on the hunt for his second-great-grand-uncle's killer.

On the morning of November 21, 1886, Glen Cove local C.L. Perkins spotted a boat, all sails set, at the mouth of Hempstead Harbor, close to where Garvies Point Preserve sits today. Upon boarding the ship, authorities found it empty. A boat could not have found its way into the rocky harbor near Glen Cove landing without direction. It had to have been steered there. Bloodstains found on the rudder spots and the wheel, as well as evidence that a fire had been put out in the kitchen, pointed authorities in the direction of foul play.

Attention immediately focused on the boatman of the ship, Henry Francke. Police staked out his mother's house in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, where they caught up with Francke.

"I shipped with Capt. Carpenter two months ago," Francke said in his statement. "I had a disagreement with Capt. Carpenter about my pay when we left Glen Cove for New York City on Thursday last. I told him that I would leave him unless I get more pay. I received my month's wages after we arrived in New York City, then I left the schooner. On Saturday, I went to Jay Street Pier where the schooner was lying to see if the captain would give me more pay. He wouldn't, so I went away. He then

took the schooner out alone. I went off to my sister's house and slept the Saturday night there and to my mother's on Sunday. I know nothing of what has come of Captain Carpenter."

Queens County disapproved of the transfer of Francke to Glen Cove. And with claims of bogus confessions drawn out by intimidation during the handling of the recent Maybee murders, the *Brooklyn Eagle* wrote that, "The public mind is suspicious of the course of justice in Oyster Bay." That, coupled with the lack of witnesses, evidence, and the fact that Glen Cove could not prove jurisdiction to the case, and had no trained detectives to investigate, Francke was released.

Authorities were then forced to look at the only other conclusion. Pirates boarded the *Long Island*, ransacked and robbed its contents, and killed Carpenter before throwing him overboard into the Sound.

Seven months later, Thomas Carpenter's corpse washed ashore near Matinecock Point. Seven bullet holes littered the body, and there was evidence that it had been anchored down by his killer. One arm and one leg were missing, presumably eaten by the fish patrolling the Sound.

John Carpenter moved to New Hampshire from Long Island 31 years ago, but he still has a keen interest in the case. "I was convinced the murder had been solved by the confession of Mr. Francke on his deathbed," says Carpenter of the supposed last words of Francke. On that bed, Francke also told relatives that he had been haunted by the ghost of Thomas Carpenter all his life. ■

"THE PHANTOM HAS STRUCK AGAIN"

She was 16 years old. Brown hair. Dark-green hooded jacket. Dungarees. Moccasins. Bobbysocks. She liked to burglarize gas stations. She was damn good at it.

In the fall of '54, gas stations on the North Shore of Nassau were being hit at a rapid clip. Police were baffled at the late night break-ins. They had no leads. They had no suspects. They had nothing.

Then one night — a late night — 3 a.m., a Sixth Precinct cop was patrolling Glen Cove Road when he saw a young girl hitchhiking.

She said she was going home. He asked her about the cuts on her hands and ankles. She brushed them off. She showed them the \$19.41 in her jeans pocket. She said where it came from. Told the truth. The detectives didn't believe her. She told them to go back to each station and read the notes she had left. The notes that read: "The Phantom has struck again." They booked her on a third-degree burglary charge. She fingered an accomplice, but admitted she was the driving force behind the operation.

The sassy Suzanne Paul, 16, of Mineola, would bust a window, climb through (hence the cuts) and jimmy the registers with a screwdriver, a technique at which she was very adept. At one particularly tough job, she left another note next to her calling card: "I hope you have a good time fixing this cash register." ■



UNSOLVED CASE

Wanted For Robbing 19 Banks



THIS IS A ROBBERY
PLACE ALL \$ 100 & \$ 50 BILLS
IN THIS BAG WITH THIS NOTE
DO IT FAST DO IT QUIETLY
DO IT NOW

Bobby "One-Eye" Wilcoxson. Willie "The Actor" Sutton. George "Baby Face" Nelson. Charles Arthur "Pretty Boy" Floyd. They are the legends of robbing banks.

Long Island's now got our own bank robber. He's knocked over 19 money mansions within a span of 14 months. Unfortunately, he's never gonna rank with his infamous bank robbing brothers without your help. He carries no gun, gets away with small loots, and dresses in a sweatsuit. But perhaps most importantly, he doesn't have a name. That's where you come in.

His M.O. is the same at every bank: He enters, patiently waits on line, often reading a copy of *Newsday*. When he approaches the teller's station, he hands the teller a note, printed on computer paper, reading "This is a robbery. Place all \$100 & \$50 bills in this bag with this note. Do it fast. Do it quietly. Do it now." He then leaves the bank.

He doesn't use a gun and he has yet to hurt anyone (though he has threatened to shoot two tellers). But he is quick to punch the abort button at the slightest sign of trouble. On six occasions, he has walked out of the banks with nothing. But that still leaves 13 successful hits.

There have been no robberies with the same M.O. since January. He's probably off the Island, but someone has to remember this thin, medium-height white guy. He's in his mid-20s to late-30s and often has some scruff. His bank-robbing uniform is a baseball cap and sunglasses, complimented by a nylon-type jogging suit with a white stripe down the legs and sneakers. He probably doesn't wear the cap while he's out in public, so picture him without it. At a bar. At the mall. At Comp USA buying computer paper to print his robbery notes.

Let's give this bank robber his due. Let's give him a name. _____ "The Nervous Notepasser" _____
Now you fill in the blanks. ■

Call Suffolk Crimestoppers at 1.800.220. Tips or contact LIconfidential@islandear.com