

# 1901: 'A murder of the most brutal kind'

MAY 28, 1987

Chelmsford has been the scene of relatively little violent crime so it is understandable that the residents were startled — perhaps horrified — when they picked up the Lowell Daily Courier on Monday, June 10, 1901. Emblazoned across three columns on the front page was a story whose headline read: "Headless Body of Young Woman Found in the Woods Two Miles from Chelmsford Centre." The sub-heading was a masterpiece of understatement: "Evidence points to a murder of the most brutal kind."

The facts, as established on that day, were as follows: Elmer Hildreth, superintendent of the town farm, and William Baker, a local farmer, were driving a wagon in search of a stray calf that had been pastured in a field off Mill Road.

Traveling along a winding wood road through the recently cleared woodlot, the two men came upon the partially clad, headless body of a woman beneath a thin pile of brush.

## The way It was

By George A.  
Parkhurst



Mrs. Margaret Blondin, wife of J. Wilfred Blondin, a native of Canada who had worked locally as a carpenter and wood-chopper.

Blondin was named as the prime suspect but it was soon discovered that he had vanished from his Boston home shortly before the body was found. In connection with the international search (since it included parts of the Province of Quebec), the police learned that Wilfred Blondin, or Fred as he was known locally, had emigrated to Massachusetts in search of employment in the 1890's.

It was further brought to light that he was on bail from a Canadian court, convicted of

board and even in California. A posse scoured hundreds of acres in the Gaspé peninsula in eastern Quebec for more than three weeks only to find a case of mistaken identity. It was not until February, 1902 that Blondin was arrested in New York City when he walked into a police trap.

In the past, he had worked as a steam engineer, so when a job was offered in this field, he applied for an engineer's license at the New York licensing office under an assumed name, not noting his picture on a "wanted" poster on the wall. On the pretext of needing more time, Blondin was told to pick up his license in a day or two. The Boston authorities were waiting for him when he returned. Although admitting his true identity under interrogation, he denied having committed the murder, claiming that he left Boston to avoid the persecution he anticipated as a logical suspect. He was arraigned on March 26 but it was several months before the trial opened.

Evidence was presented that Blondin, in a  
Hanson said she felt the class of  
to do with alcohol." Mrs.  
memorabilia that has anything  
they should receive any type of  
But, she said, "I don't think  
hot-free time."  
to provide a "good, safe, also-  
breakfast had been established  
business and that the after-prom  
ages for students riding in lim-  
legal to provide alcoholic bever-  
parents stressing that it was il-  
"mixed signal" by the gift of  
vessels customarily used for  
drinking alcoholic beverages.  
Member Carl Olsson agreed,  
saying that there were many  
other moments to choose from  
for students.  
Committee members agreed  
unanimously to send a message  
to future classes, suggesting  
that they not select items that  
have any association, with also-

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