

## Woman in the well may solve family's mystery

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A Regina woman hopes her family is the missing link in a decades-old Saskatoon murder mystery.

Jo Ann Manton believes the remains of a woman found last summer in an abandoned well in the Sutherland area are those of her great-grandmother, Harriet (Dyson) Calvert.

"It all fits. When we started talking over the family history and what we knew of it, it really fits," Manton said in an interview.

One of Manton's aunts has researched the family history for many years, and, in particular, Calvert's disappearance in the early 1900s. Manton was visiting her aunt in Calgary last summer when the discovery of human remains became national news.

"It just sent shivers up both of our spines," said Manton.

"It was a very intuitive feeling. That's fairly strong in our family."

With the help of historians and archeologists, Saskatoon police have developed a profile of the deceased woman. She was between 25 and 35 years old at the time of her death. She was healthy, Caucasian and at least middle class. She wore an 18-carat gold chain, indicating not only her financial status but also that she may have come from Europe or Eastern Canada, where such a chain would have been crafted.

Based on analyses of fragments of the woman's clothing, as well as glass bottles and a wooden barrel found in the well, investigators have narrowed the time of the woman's death to between 1920 and 1924. They believe she was murdered.

Manton sees many similarities between the woman found in the well and the mysterious disappearance of her great-grandmother.

In 1902, Harriet Dyson married George Calvert in England. Their descendants have been under the impression that George Calvert immigrated to Canada in 1910, followed in 1912 by Harriet Calvert and their two young children, Marion and Leslie. However, all four were living in Saskatchewan in 1911, according to



CREDIT: Bryan Schlosser, Regina Leader-Post

Jo Ann Manton believes a women's body discovered last year at the bottom of an abandoned well in Sutherland may be that of her great-grandmother

the census that year.

Manton recalls a story that's been passed down through the generations.

"(Great) grandma Harriet played the baby grand piano on the boat and my grandmother sang and entertained everybody that was on the boat as they came over," she said.

The story continues that when George Calvert came to meet his family, he was unrecognizable, as he had grown a beard and long hair.

"He came with a horse and buggy to pick them up, and all of her (Harriet's) prized possessions got left (at) the railway station because there was no room on this buggy, and that included the baby grand piano.

"They came not from wealth, but from a comfortable life in England, to a sod shack, to a man that had become a hermit."

In less than 10 years, the Calvert family moved to three different areas of the province, trying to establish themselves. But Calvert was not a farmer; he was a stone mason and success on the land eluded him, says Manton. The family lived in the Nutana area of Saskatoon during the winter of 1912 as George did masonry work on the original buildings at the University of Saskatchewan.

#### DNA SAMPLE PROVIDED

Manton says during the early years on the farm, Harriet took the children and left for Saskatoon, only to be found by George and brought back to the homestead. Then she disappeared.

"My grandmother could never understand not so much that (her mother) left but that she never tried to contact them," said Manton.

"Grandmother never ever thought of her mother as dead, but that she had just disappeared."

On homestead documents from 1914, George Calvert stated he was moving his family from Medstead to Turtleford because he wife was deceased.

Calvert eventually moved to Washington state to take a job as a caretaker in a private girls' school. Marion, who was married by that time, remained in Saskatchewan, while Leslie moved with his father.

How her great-grandmother ended up dead in a well in Sutherland, which was a town in its own right on a main Canadian Pacific Railway line, would be pure speculation, says Manton.

Earlier this week, Manton's aunt provided Saskatoon police with a blood sample to determine if her DNA matches that of the deceased woman.

Sgt. Russ Friesen of the Saskatoon police major crimes unit would not comment on the specifics of three leads that he is investigating, but believes all are good possibilities.

"In all cases, a relative was there one day and gone the next and never heard from again," said Friesen, who has scoured provincial Vital Statistics records for

death dates of the individuals but found none.

"For a person to leave like that and never have contact with family again, especially their children, is unusual."

Some of the families have their own suspicions that will be investigated. There's no statute of limitations on a homicide, but this case is not about laying charges or determining guilt, he says.

"The chances of finding a witness or the person responsible and bringing them to justice is slim," said Friesen.

Manton isn't looking for justice, either.

"If that is her, we can give her a proper burial and a proper send-off and let her spirits be at rest. Her spirits have never been sent to any peaceful place."

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Forensic specialist reconstructs face, A3

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