

The Alice Crispell Mystery

Introduction

By F. Charles Petrillo

In the early morning of Monday, July 7, 1913, the body of 18 year old Alice Crispell was discovered floating in the lake near the Weckesser boat house - near Sunset. She had been missing since July 4 after meeting a young Wilkes-Barre miner, Herbert Johns, and sharing drinks with him at the Oneonta Hotel.

Johns was arrested for Alice's murder - but claimed Alice had left him at 11:30 p.m. and was going to walk home. Her family was not immediately alarmed since Alice often spent days visiting an aunt in Wilkes-Barre.

There was immediate speculation that Johns was innocent. His lawyer Frank McGuigan, a lawyer later famed for criminal defense work, declared Johns innocent before even meeting "Bert" Johns.

There was no apparent motive for her death. There was speculation about a lover's rival, Harrison Cann, but Cann denied it and he, too, believed Johns was innocent. Alice had a medical history of "fits." Was her death accidental? The newspaper raised the question of suicide but her temperament and friends argued against this theory. 100 love letters from Johns to Alice were uncovered - but did not suggest any motive to kill Alice - although Johns feared Alice's father would have shot him earlier because of his involvement with her.

A coroner's jury found that Alice died as a result of a criminal act - but exonerated Johns for lack of evidence against him. Despite the coroner's jury the District Attorney held Johns without bail in jail on criminal charges of first degree murder.

After a dramatic hearing in Wilkes-Barre, and the release of autopsy reports which found Alice definitely had drowned, John's lawyer claimed murder could not be proved and Johns could not be connected to Alice's death. A grand jury hearing the case was directed by Judge Fuller to release Johns.

Alice's death was never solved - although a mysterious postcard was received by the Crispell family a couple of weeks later from "A.N." claiming guilt for her murder.

What follows is the full account of Alice Crispell's death and the court hearings from the newspapers of the time.

Alice Crispell: 1913, Murder or Suicide?

Girl's Body in Lake; Foul Play Suspected

Victim Missing Since the Fourth of July. Herbert Johns of This City Held Without Bail on Murder Charge --Case Puzzles Authorities

Herbert Johns, aged 28, of 130 Wyoming Street, is in jail, charged with murder, and Coroner Marley, the county detectives and the State police are at work on an exceedingly mysterious case, as the result of the finding of the badly decomposed body of pretty Alice Crispell, aged 18, near the Weckesser boat house, Harvey's Lake, early yesterday morning. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Crispell of the Outlet, Harvey's Lake. Johns was seen with her at 11:30 on Friday night, and admits having been with her at that time.

A baggageman, George Casterline, who was driving around the lake, found the body floating near the shore yesterday morning at 7:30. The sheriff and the coroner were notified. Dr. P. J. Higgins performed

an autopsy. The body showed every sign of having been in the water several days. Dr. Higgins remarked last night that if death was by drowning and occurred last Friday night at 11:30 that the body floated early, for usually a body doesn't float until the end of seventy-two hours, while in the instance only fifty-six hours has elapsed.

Marks on the Body

Several marks were found on the body, one over the left temple, which might have been caused by a fall, and scratches on the hand, which Dr. Higgins said look like teeth marks. The possibility of these marks on the back of one hand having been caused by teeth is the only indication of a possible struggle.

A thorough post mortem examination was made of the body, but there was nothing other than the marks noted to cause suspicion.

The girl's clothing was intact, except that her hat was missing. This had been found on Saturday morning by E. G. Kemmerer of the city only a few feet away from where the body was found yesterday, but at the time nobody knew whose hat it was. Yesterday it was identified as the girl's by her father.

Screams Heard

Some importance is being attached by the authorities to the report that screams were heard by several cottagers late on Friday night, which, although not attracting much attention at the time, have been regarded with much significance since the lake's mysterious Fourth of July tragedy has been revealed.

The girl and Johns were seen by at least four persons, Stella Oney, aged 17, Susie Oney, aged 13, and Jesse Oney, aged 10, and William Walter, a young boy, all neighbors of the Crispell family,

between 11 and 11:30 o'clock. Fourth of July night, seated on the wall near the Weckesser boat landing.

John's Story Tallies

Johns admits that he was with Alice Crispell and his story as far as it has been told seems to coincide with what other witnesses have had to say. He had been with her nearly all day and until late in the evening they were members of a party which was at the Oneonta Hotel. He says he left the Crispell girl after the Oney girl had passed them on the way home. According to Johns, the Oney girl and her companions had passed by ten minutes before he left Alice Crispell and she started for home.

Left Girl to Lonely Walk

He said he expected her to catch up with the Oney girl. From the spot where he says he left the girl it is nearly an hour's walk to her home over the lonely lake road and then over the still more lonely country roads back along the outlet. He explained he was willing to let the girl travel this lonely road so late at night with her only chance for

protection the prospect of catching up with the party of young people ahead, because he felt ill and was anxious to get home, although she invited him to go to the home of one of her relatives, where she said he could spend the night.

Girl Was Not Missed

At first it seems strange that the Crispell girl should not have been missed from home and an alarm raised before the body was found yesterday. This is explained by her mother as being due to the fact that she went to visit her sister, Mrs. Holcomb, in the city, last Wednesday, and her failure to return was not considered remarkable, the members of the family thinking that she was extending her visit. On the other hand her sister, Mrs. Holcomb, who accompanied her to go to the lake on the Fourth of July, thought that she had gone home after leaving her at the Oneonta Hotel.

Circumstantial evidence is responsible for the arrest of Johns. He is charged with the crime of murder in the first degree chiefly because he was the last person to be seen with the victim late on

Thursday night. No motive has been fixed by the authorities, although a lover's quarrel or jealousy have entered into the theorizing of the officers.

It would be a very simple matter for the Crispell girl to have been pushed off the Weckesser landing to her death. The water here is said to be twelve feet deep. There is easy access across to the landing in front of the boat house proper by means of a platform running along the side of the boat house to the shore.

Cries for Help

Mr. and Mrs. S. T. Nicholson, who were near the lake front late on Friday night, when told on Saturday morning that a girl's hat had been found in the water, recalled that they had heard what might have been a scream for help the night before. They said that last night so many cries are heard at odd times coming from the lake at night that not much attention was paid to it at the time.

It is also recalled among the servants at the Weckesser cottage that a girl called out "Oh Charlie" in what seemed a frightened voice,

but they are not certain that this was on Friday night. The authorities, however have been looking about for a possible "Charles" somebody who might prove to be a jealous rival of the Johns young man.

It was stated at the Johns home yesterday that Herbert Johns wrote a letter to the Crispell girl only last Sunday after he had been with her at the lake on the Fourth of July. This in itself unless considered as an effort to dissimulate would indicate that he knew nothing of the drowning at the time.

Inquest to Be Held Soon

County Detective James Holman, State Trooper Freeman and other authorities were at work on several new cities last night, which, however, had developed nothing up to the hour of going to press. Coroner Marley will conduct an inquest at Harvey's Lake either today or tomorrow, it is expected, and there is every prospect that a large number of witnesses will be summoned, several prominent summer cottagers probably among them.

State Trooper Arrests Johns

Herbert Johns, the young man last seen on the Fourth of July night in the company of Alice Crispell, was arrested yesterday afternoon at 5 Street, this city, after he had returned from work, by Corporal G. W. Freeman, of the State constabulary.

Johns evidently made no attempt to avoid the police for he had known since early afternoon that the body of Miss Crispell had been recovered from the lake. Newspaper interviewers had sought him out at his work at No. 5 mine, Delaware & Hudson Coal Co. colliery. When placed under arrest by the State trooper Johns seemed mute, downcast, but stoutly denied that he was guilty of any wrongdoing.

He was cautioned, as is the custom, not to say anything that might be used against him at the time of trial. But he volunteered his story.

Had Dinner in This City

He said that on July 4 Alice Crispell was at his home in this city for dinner. In the afternoon they went to the lake, accompanied by her sister, Mrs. Martha Holcomb, of 499 South Franklin Street, this

city, by his sister, Clara, a friend by the name of Elcher, a baker living on Madison Street, and a man named Henry Williams, of this city.

They were at the Oneonta until 10 o'clock that night, when all left for home except Johns and Alice Crispell. They went down the road from the Oneonta toward the outlet, stopping near the Weckesser boat house to talk. While they were still there Stella Oney and several others came along and spoke with them. This was about 11:30, according to Johns.

Johns said that after Stella Oney had passed about ten minutes he left Alice to go home, expecting her to catch up with Stella, who was a close friend of the girl who was drowned. He traveled in the opposite direction toward the hotel and the trolley car for home.

He said he passed a man and woman on the road. He said that he wore a gray suit and a Panama hat.

To Jail Without Bail

Johns was arrested yesterday at the instance of Coroner Marley. He was taken to Squire Brown's office, where after a short

preliminary hearing he was held without bail for a further hearing on Friday evening at 7 o'clock or sooner.

Assistant District Attorney Charles Lenahan, appearing as prosecutor said that he considered the fact that the young man was the last see in the company of the young women on the night she drowned sufficient to hold him for further investigation was made of the body, but there was nothing other than the marks noted to cause suspicion.

The girl's clothing was intact, except that her hat was missing. This had been found on Saturday morning by E. G. Kemmerer of this city only a few feet away from where the body was found yesterday, but at the time nobody knew whose hat it was. Yesterday it was identified as the girl's by her father.

Stella Oney and Alice Crispell were neighbors and bosom friends. It is Miss Oney, who according to such evidence as has been brought to light, was the last to see Johns and the Crispell girl together last Friday night.

Miss Oney told a Record reporter yesterday: "I was coming home along the road near the Weckesser cottage about 11:30 on the Fourth of July night with my younger sister Susie and brother Jesse and his friend, William Walter, when he saw Alice and her friend sitting on the wall on the lake front near the Weckesser boat house.

"I didn't notice anything unusual. I saw Alice several times during the day. She did not seem unhappy or troubled. I stopped to talk with her a minute and asked her if she was coming home and she said 'not right away' and I went on.

"I did not think anything of it when she did not come home for several days. I thought she had gone back with her sister. I was as much surprised as anybody when someone told me this morning that her body had been found in the lake."

Susie and Jesse Oney were nearby when their sister made this statement and the corroborated everything she said.

Girl's Mother Interviewed

Mrs. William Crispell, the drowned girl's mother, said that her daughter had been keeping company with Johns for a year or so.

"I didn't think it was strange when Alice failed to return home for so many days. I thought she was at the home of her sister, Mrs. Holcomb, in Wilkes-Barre. She left here on Wednesday with her. She often visited her for several days at a time."

Alice Crispell is survived by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Crispell, and these brothers and sisters: Mrs. Martha Holcomb, 499 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre; Mrs. Adelaide Ross, Sweet Valley; Howard Crispell, Texas; Esther, Harry, Willard, Clifford, Delbert and Florence, at home.

The funeral arrangements had not been made last evening.

Clara Johns told the following story concerning her brother's movements on last Friday night, the time the Crispell girl is supposed to have met her death, her mother occasionally adding statements of a few facts in the narrative that she was aware of:

“Bert and Alice Crispell were here for dinner at noon on the Fourth. They left to go out to the Lake and I said I would see them later as I intended to go out with a party of friends. When our crowd went into the Oneonta for supper about 7 o’clock the upper dining room was crowded and went to the lower café. At first we couldn’t get seats but I spied Bert and Alice and they made places for us at their table. We had supper and then decided to remain in the café as it was cool, an orchestra was playing and the crowd was lively. In our party besides myself and William Alcher, of Madison Street, were Alice Crispell, my brother Bert and her sister, Martha Crispell, Henry Williams, of Wilkes-Barre, and some others whom I was introduced to but don’t remember.”

“The happiest one in the party was Alice and all evening there wasn’t as much as a single cross word passed they had a quarrel at any time. Bert knew her for a year. Anyone in the party can say there was

nothing took place all evening that would show Bert was thinking of quarrelling.

“We all left the café at 11 o’clock or a few minutes later and went out to the lake road. As we walked down toward the road turning up to the car station I Alice asked Bert to go over her house or her grandmother’s but he said he wasn’t feeling well and just then added. ‘There goes Stella and her fellow, you will have them over with you for company.’ Just then we turned up alongside the hotel to the car station and as I shouted a farewell to Alice and Bert they answered cheerfully and we left them.

“Bert must have come to town on the same car as the rest of us for we got to Bennett’s corners at the time he said he did, a few minutes after midnight. I took my time walking home from the Square but Bert was in bed when I arrived.

“I do not understand how Bert could do such a thing as harm Alice, for he wrote a letter to her yesterday. He was home all day Sunday and went out in the evening I believe to mail the letter. It isn’t

likely that he would write to her if he knew that anything had happened or if he had committed any crime like they say he has.”

At the time this conversation was going on the mother and daughter were not aware that the son had been placed under arrest. “He went out at 5 o’clock with a man to learn something about the cane,” the mother said, and then added as if to show that the news when she did learn it would prove shock, “He’ll be back soon, won’t you wait for him?”

Herbert Johns, accused of the murder of Alice Crispell, is a few months past twenty-eight years of age, tall and broad shouldered. He has black hair, prominent dark eye brows, a Roman nose set over a well shaped mouth and determined chin.

For the last year he had been employed as the tender at the foot of No.5 shaft of Delaware & Hudson Coal Co., near Parsons, and several years ago with his parents lived at Kingston. His father is also

employed at the No. 5 colliery and besides his sister, Clara, he has another brother, James John, residing at 71 Lincoln Street.

Neighbors of the family were surprised that he was implicated in the Harvey’s Lake tragedy. The family has resided on Wyoming Street for about a year.

Johns' Attorney Speaks

Declares He is So Sure of Client's Innocence He Has Not Even Consulted Him

"I haven't had the time as yet to go into details of this case nor have I consulted with my client, but on the face of it, evidence of the tragedy so far, tends to show that Johns is innocent of a charge of murder." This was the statement of Attorney Frank McGuigan last night, when asked for an expression on the plight of Herbert Johns, who is in the county jail, awaiting a hearing Friday night, for being implicated in the death of Alice Crispell.

Mr. McGuigan added: "I cannot conceive, nor can anyone I believe, consider Johns guilty of a crime after his letter to the Crispell girl has become public. On its face it is a missive denoting ignorance on the part of the writer of the whereabouts or condition of the one to whom it was sent. The history of the crime proves that a guilty conscience will not dictate an expression of innocence. Johns could

not possibly have written such a letter had he been aware that anything had happened to the girl.

"It is the custom of our practice for an attorney to await the presentation of the State's case before outlining a manner of defense. So confident am I that circumstantial evidence will clear Johns, that I have not consulted with him regarding the case, nor has he expressed a desire to talk to me. Shortly after he was placed under arrest or before being committed on Monday evening, he told me his story just as the newspapers have secured it and just as evidence in the case proves it to ring true.

"I have learned that the Crispell girl was subject to fainting spells, that she was not entirely ignorant of night life in local cafes and that she had been drinking at the Oneonta Hotel on the night she is supposed to have met her death. This light thrown on the case, permits

of speculation that further removes suspicion from Johns. Who knows but that after leaving her to catch up to her friends on the lake road Friday night, Johns is the victim of a circumstance that led the girl to fall into the lake while in a fit.”

Regarding a defense for his client when arraigned before Alderman Brown Friday night. Mr. Guigan said that only Johns story

to date will be repeated as he believes it will stand as it has stood since Monday, without refutation. There is going to be some surprising information offered, he said regarding the girl. Information gleaned last night from former associates of the girl in side rooms about the city are taken as a basis for the statement that she was frequently subject to fainting spells and fits.

Inquest Tonight

Coroner to Start Official Probe of Harvey's Lake Tragedy

Large Number of Witnesses to Be Subpoenaed and Several Sessions May Be Required to Hear All the Testimony
--State and County to Be Represented

The coroner's inquest in the Crispell girl case will start this evening at 7 o'clock at the Hotel Oneonta. It is possible that more than one session will be required as a large number of witnesses, several of them prominent summer cottages at the lake, will be called.

It is probable that among those who will be called on to testify are Mr. and Mrs. S. T. Nicholson and all those who are in their cottage which is near where the girl's body was found. The Nicholsons are to be summoned on the strength of the report that they heard cries from the lake shore on the night of the Fourth. But from what Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson told a Record representative over the telephone they will not be able to make very positive assertions.

Stella, Susie and Jesse Oney who saw the couple on the lake front near the scene of the accident or crime a few minutes before it is supposed to have occurred and Bert Wilcox, a young man who, when asked Saturday by a friend, Ollie Davis, a telephone operator, "Where is Alice Crispell?" is alleged to have said, "It is none of your business," are to be summoned, it is understood, as is also Miss Davis. The postmaster at Outlet will also likely be called.

It is expected that several relatives of the dead girl and several relative of Herbert Johns, who is accused of the murder of Alice Crispell, as well as friends who were in the Fourth of July party at the lake, are among those to be subpoenaed.

Harrison Cann, who at one time loomed up as a possible rival of Johns, but whose explanations have evidently satisfied the authorities that he is not seriously implicated in the case, may also be summoned, although at this time there is no indication that he will figure prominently in the case.

Among the most interesting of the witnesses will be Seph. Reese, an automobile dealer of Plymouth, who yesterday volunteered the information that he had seen a couple together on the lake road, near the scene of the tragedy, just a few minutes before it is supposed to have happened.

The inquest will be conducted by Coroner James Marley of this city. Corporal G. W. Freeman of the Wyoming barracks, State constabulary, who has been working on the case and has gathered much of the evidence, which it is expected will be used by the prosecution when Johns is given a hearing before Alderman Brown in this city Friday evening will represent the State troopers at the hearing. The district attorney's office will probably be represented by assistant

district attorney Charles Lenahan, county detectives Holman and Squire McKelvey of Hazleton, of the district attorney force. Mr. McKelvey has been working on the case only since yesterday but he has gathered what is considerable some of the most valuable of the evidence secured thus far.

The State troopers and the county authorities who have gathered most of the evidence, may not testify at the coroner's inquest but may wait until Friday evening to offer at John's hearing such evidence as they may have gathered.

Herbert Johns Held For the Grand Jury

Alderman Decides Accused Lover Must Answer for the Murder of Alice Crispell---Sordid Tragedy is Rehearsed Once More

Herbert Johns, accused of having murdered his sweetheart, Alice Crispell at Harvey's Lake on the night of July Fourth, was remanded to jail without bail last night by Alderman Frank B. Brown, when formally arraigned on a charge of murder in the first degree, growing out of the mysterious death of the girl. The sordid tragedy in all its shocking details was rehearsed even more minutely in the magistrate's court than it had been at the lake twenty-four hours previously, when a coroner's inquest passing on the case declared it a crime with Johns free from complicity.

The aspect of the case as now presented makes it one of the most mysterious ever to baffle Luzerne County authorities. Johns went to jail Thursday night, smiling and confident that the coroner's jury had heard evidence that cleared him. His parents and friends, too, were confident that testimony at the inquest exonerated him. Last night he went to jail sobbing and broken in spirit and his friends and parents left the hearing at the magistrate's feeling that a phase has developed in the case that will require considerable time and effort to clear up.

Magistrate's Statement

"Under the laws of this Commonwealth, a party accused of a crime is to have a preliminary hearing before a

magistrate. This preliminary hearing and examining the prosecutor and his witnesses, and in this manner he ascertains the time, place and circumstances of the crime charged against him, and is thus enabled, if he is an innocent man, to prepare a defense, a thing of the hardest practicability if a preliminary hearing is not afforded him."

"After hearing the testimony of the witnesses for the Commonwealth, it is the duty of the magistrate to determine if a prima facie case has been made out. The true inquiry of a preliminary hearing is not to determine the actual guilt of innocence of the defendant but to find whether reasonable or probable cause exists to believe the defendant guilty of the offense charged. The magistrate's first duty is to see that the offense charged is a crime contrary to the statute or common law; and, next, that the facts present a case made out by proof furnishing good reason to believe that the crime alleged has been committed by the party charged."

"After hearing the testimony of the various witnesses for the Commonwealth I am of the opinion that a prima facie case has been made out against the accused, and therefore hold him without bail to await the action of the next grand jury."

The foregoing statement by Alderman Brown was the concluding chapter last night in the Outlet tragedy. The hearing was attended with incidents unlike any ever witnessed here.

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Beginning on last Monday when the body of Alice Crispell was found floating in Harvey's Lake, near the exact spot on the lake road to her home, where she was last seen with Johns, her suitor, after leaving a drinking party at the Oneonta Hotel café last Friday night, developments in the case tended to make it one of the most spectacular and puzzling ever to be dealt with by county authorities.

The controversy raised on Thursday night by the coroner's inquest conducted at the lake, was taken up by District Attorney Bigelow, and the county detectives in the magistrate's court last night and a decisive rebuke was administered the coroner's staff and an answer given that made a prima facie case based on strong circumstantial evidence.

Whether or not Johns is guilty of murdering his sweetheart is a question answered in the affirmative for the time being and held in abeyance for final answer until the court passes on the case.

Crowd in Court Room

The magistrate's office must have held close to 200 when the hearing began at 7:20 o'clock. The first witness called was William Alcher, baker, of 17 Madison Street, city, who was in a party at the Oneonta café on the night of the Fourth with Alice Crispell and Johns. He told in effect his previous story, that all the members of the party had refreshments and tarried in café until about 11 o'clock, when the party broke up and its several members went home, he and Clara Johns coming to town with Harry Williams and Martha

Holcomb, and Herbert and Alice going around to the outlet, where he said eh understood Johns was going for the night.

Girl Drank Beer

Dealing with the first witness District Attorney Bigelow made it plain that the magistrate hearing was to be no joke. He snapped off question after question concerning Alcher's observances and recollections of the evening, and secured a new admission that it was understood by members of the party that Johns did not intend to return to town during the evening. He secured an admission from Alcher that the Crispell girl had partaken of beer during the evening and at one time had become so sick as to leave the table.

Mrs. Martha Holcomb, sister of Alice Crispell, was called after Alcher, and verified the testimony she gave the coroner's jury. She, too, told of her sister drinking beer and leaving to go with Johns on the presumption that Johns was to remain at the Outlet.

No Thought of Suicide

That Alice had no thought of committing suicide when she left the party was emphasized by Mrs. Holcomb, when she told of Alice remarking to her something about not forgetting to write. Mrs. Holcomb said she gave the girl her address, 499 South Franklin Street, because she had forgotten a previous one. Alice said she would write to her in the course of a few days, the witness declared.

Identifies Victim's Clothing

The bedraggled garments of the victim were offered to the sister for identification, the dress a one piece suit of blue satin with small white dots and lace trimming, and the hat a black straw with red velvet and flower trimmings. The garments were also offered to Seph. Reese, the Plymouth autoist, for identification.

Prosecution's Plan

With the first two witnesses the district attorney's force seemed to have established the line of prosecution they wish to follow in the case. First, that Alice and Johns left their companions of the fatal night with the intention of going to the Crispell home, or the home of the girl's grandmother which is in the same vicinity. Second that the couple did not quarrel up to the time of being seen together by their friends for the last time, and third that there was no apparent intention of suicide any more than there was motive for crime.

Driver Called

From this point on the case moved with rapidity. George Casterline, the expressman who found the body, testified after Mrs. Holcomb, nothing additional developing in his testimony. Then Dr. Higgins was called for a thorough examination as to testimony that the girl met her death by

drowning with marks observed in the autopsy that might have been caused before the body entered the water, presumable in a scuffle. Emphasis was placed on marks having been apparent in the flesh under the right arm, marks on the left wrist and slight abrasions over the left eye and temple. On cross examination by Attorney McGuigan, Dr. Higgins stated that the condition of the girl's body did not indicate a possible motive for crime, that she was a victim of drowning and that no one could say positively whether the marks on her body were inflicted before or after death.

Scream Was Heard

S.T. Nicholson, cottager who heard cries on the lake in the vicinity of the Weckesser landing, was led by questioning of the district attorney to declare that he could not say positively whether the sound he remembered was that of a woman in distress close to shore or out on the lake where he sometimes heard cries from persons in row boats. The man he met on the road while on his way past the Weckesser landing, Mr. Nicholson stated, was walking at a regular pace and did not act in a suspicious manner. He was certain the man wore a straw hat he said and was passed after the cry was heard.

William Shows Up

Other witnesses after the cottager included Harry Williams of 302 McLean street, city, who up to this point in the case has failed to appear on subpoena. His testimony was

similar to that of Alcher in substance, being a member of the party at the café, he failing to observe anything that throws additional light on the case. Clara Johns, the accuser's sister, was called to repeat her story, but nothing developed from it.

Last to See Alice

Stella Oney, the country girl companion of the victim, declared that she spoke to Alice near Weckesser landing and also to Johns but failed to secure recognition from him. She said she was sure Alice's companion was Johns because she approached close enough to the couple to whisper in Alice's ear, something of a personal nature.

The last witness was Seph. Reese, the Plymouth auto driver, who gave testimony concerning his noticing a couple on a road at 11:30 o'clock whom he was almost certain was Johns and the girl. He told again of the girl appearing to walk as though intoxicated and was almost certain of his identification of the girl's garments when were shown to him by the district attorney.

Johns Remains Mute

The Commonwealth here rested its case. Attorney McGuigan asked for the discharge of Johns on the grounds that a prima facie case had not been made out. Johns was not asked to testify during the evening nor did he volunteer any information. He sat in one position during the hearing, only occasionally glancing about. He did not appear at all interested

in the testimony but broke down completely after disposition had been made of the case and as his mother, sister, father, brother, and friends flocked about him after consolation. He was taken back to jail at 9 o'clock.

Aggressive Prosecution

The testimony against Johns last night was not unlike that offered at the inquest only it was drawn out in a more spectacular and convincing manner by District Attorney Bigelow, who was aided by Assistant District Attorneys Kuschke and Lenahan, and County Detective Dan McKeivey.

The case of the Commonwealth hinged on the witnesses whom the coroner's officials declared "fell down" in their testimony at the inquest and the fact that they didn't "fall down" last night best evidenced in the summing up of the case by the committing magistrate.

Three Witnesses Figure

The witnesses upon whom rests the chain of circumstantial evidence offered against the prisoner are: Seph. Reese, the Plymouth autoist, who avers he saw a couple, presumably Johns and Alice Crispell, on the lake road in the vicinity of where the crime is alleged to have been committed, the girl and friend of the victim, who is positive she saw and spoke to Alice and Johns, at the same place and Dr. P. J. Higgins, physician who performed the autopsy on the body that showed death was by drowning and marks on the body that

were apparently not self-inflicted nor inflicted after the body reached the water.

Testimony of other witnesses further tend to make the girl's death a mystery, the testimony of her sister and companions on the fatal night that she was in a happy mood, that she left the hotel café to go to either her own home or her grandmother's below the Outlet, and that Johns left the party to accompany her and was the last one seen with her as she went to her fate.

Move to Release Johns

So much then for the facts of the case that were sufficient in the opinion of Alderman Brown to hold Johns for action by the court. Speculation will be indulged in as to what will become of the accused. Attorney Frank McGuigan stated at the termination of the hearing that he will petition the court next week move for Johns release on a habeas corpus proceeding and he expressed himself as satisfied that his petition will be granted inasmuch as only circumstantial evidence is offered by the Commonwealth. Johns returned to jail buoyed by this hope.

Dramatic Hearing

The scene presented in Alderman Brown's court after 7 o'clock was dramatic. The excitement created at Harvey's Lake Thursday night by the coroner's inquest was as nothing compared to it. The magistrate's office on the second floor of a

building on East Market street close to State street became the mecca of a throng before dusk and when Johns was led out to a waiting cab by Constable Michael Mulvey at 9 o'clock to be taken back to jail, the crowd had grown to such proportions as to interrupt traffic of roadway and sidewalk.

Men and boys and not a few women, too, clambered up adjacent store fronts and telegraph pole to secure a glimpse of the prisoner as he stepped across the narrow sidewalk to the cab. All any of them saw, however, was a well-built young man with Panama hat drawn closely down over heavy lidded eyes wet with tears shed at parting with mother, sister and friends in the magistrate's private office aloft.

Exchange Compliments Controversy Follows Investigation of Crispell Case

The difference of opinion created by the Harvey's Lake tragedy, involving Alice Crispell, victim, and Herbert Johns, accused suitor, between coroner's officials of the county and the district attorney's staff was intact up to the conclusion of Johns' hearing before Alderman Brown last night.

According to coroner officials the district attorney's staff is "a pack of boobs," and returning the compliment the latter apply this humorous designation to the coroner's department of the legal machinery:

“The coroner’s department bears the same relation to the legal body of Luzerne County that the appendix does to the human system. And it is just about as important.”

While they didn’t say it in so many words, members of the district attorney’s office last night characterized the body over which Coroner James M. Marley holds away in the foregoing manner.

The return of compliments comes about through the action of the coroner’s jury at Harvey’s Lake Thursday night superseding the duties of a magistrate in exonerating Johns from complicity in the murder.

Yesterday in published interviews Coroner Marley spoke slightly of Detective McKelvey and Hollman because of criticism offered at the failure of the coroner’s inquest to determine the manner of death in the lake tragedy. Among other things, according to one interview, the coroner said:

“The investigation, (meaning the inquest) has developed into a force because of the blundering work of the county detectives. I believe Johns is innocent but I am sure murder was committed. The men of the district attorney’s office have failed to find any clue.”

Last night when asked for an opinion Deputy Coroner W. J. Butler told a reporter that his views of the controversy coincided with those of his chief.

“You care to be quoted as saying that?” the reporter asked.

“Sure,” snapped Mr. Bulter, “and if you’ve got time, I’ll tell you more.”

The reporter didn’t have time but he did manage to locate District Attorney Bigelow and Detective McKelvey, “smiling Dan” of Hazelton, who has worked night and day on the lake tragedy since last Monday - both of whom would fill considerable space is all the things they might have said about the coroner’s officials were printed.

“Johns is held for court isn’t he?” stated Mr. McKelvey as a wind-up to an interview. “Isn’t that a sufficient answer to the blunder of the inquest? And still the coroner’s jury hasn’t told us how the Crispell girl died. Good night. I’m busy and have to hurry along.”

Father Questioned Explanation is That He Had Hit Trail and Prayed For Daughters

William Crispell, father of the girl, was closely questioned yesterday by detectives working on the mystery caused by the finding of his daughter Alice’s body in Harvey’s Lake on Monday. This was the result of Mr. Crispell’s testimony, that he had seen his daughters near the Hotel Oneonta on the night of the tragedy and that he had gone home disgusted, coupled with his admission that some time ago he had pointed a gun at Alice.

It is understood that Mr. Crispell explains that he was one of the “trail hitters” in the recent Billy Sunday campaign and that after going home on the night of the Fourth he said his wife prayed for their daughters before they went to bed.

Cann Not A Rival

And His Given Name Is Harrison Not “Charlie,” He Says

East Ends Young Man, Implicated By Johns’ Love Letter in Crispell Girl Case, Courts Interview--Says the Victim of Harvey’s Lake Tragedy Was Subject to Fits
--Believes Johns is Innocent

Harrison Cann, or “Canney,” is a one-armed young man and lives at 293 Scott street. He is employed at No. 5 colliery of the D. & H. Coal Co. in East End, the same place where Johns worked. He was located by a Record reporter on his return home from work yesterday afternoon, and when informed that his name had appeared in John’s letter to Miss Crispell, and that he was being mentioned as having had some connection with the crime, declared with a smile that he was quite ready to be interviewed and to tell all that he knew regarding the dead girl and her accused sweetheart, especially anything that “would help Bart.”

He was asked first as to what opinion he held of the drowning. He declared that he believed the girl was overcome by one of the fits

or fainting spells to which, he said, she was accustomed and fell over the wall and into the water. He knew of several other occasions when she was affected in the same way.

When questioned as to whether he had seen the two on the Fourth of July, he said that he had, three times. The first time was at John’s home, when he went there to borrow a bathing suit. He saw then again at about 5 o’clock in the afternoon walking along the road near the Lehigh Valley Railroad picnic ground. He, too, saw them in the Oneonta, some time between 10 and 11 o’clock, he was not sure of the time. He was with a crowd of young men, and did not know what became of the Johns and the girl. He did not join them and left before

they did. He declared he knew nothing of the murder until Johns was called out of the shaft on Monday.

Asked what Johns meant in the letter where he stated that "If Canney swam the lake. I didn't see him since," the young man in question stated that he together with a crowd of fellow workmen from the colliery had planned to swim across the lake, but that the water had proved too rough. He supposes that the two must have been talking about him trying the feat with only one arm. He says, too, that he did not work on Saturday and therefore did not see Johns from the time he first talked with him at the lake until the letter was written on Sunday, thus bearing out what Johns said to Alice.

"What do you think of the relations between Bert and Alice? Did they quarrel?" Cann was asked. "Gee, no; he was 'stuck' on her," he said. He also believes that Johns intended to marry the girl.

"What about them when you saw them on the Fourth?" Did they look as though they had quarreled then?"

"No," he replied. "When I saw them over at the picnic grounds she was on his arm, and they were talking and laughing."

He stated that he could see nothing wrong with them when he saw them at the Oneonta that night.

He declared that he knew of no rival of Johns for the affections of the girl. He could think of no one whom he knew named Charlie who was at the lake on the Fourth.

Asked to tell what he knew about the fainting spells which he said had visited the girl frequently, he admitted that he had never seen her in the fit himself, but added that there were numerous young men at the colliery who had been present in the Wilkes-Barre, Windsor and Germania Hotels when she had been afflicted. It seems that the occasions usually followed liquor drinking. The fact that the girl was drinking on Saturday night would bear out the theory that she had suffered a similar attack at the lake. He said that he did not know where either Johns or Miss Crispell spent the night before the Fourth.

Cann was told that he had been suggested as a possible rival of Johns, but he laughed at the idea, and when told that the authorities would in all probability call upon him to make him tell what he knew,

he smiled and said, "Let them come. I will be right here."

He reiterated his belief in John's innocence, and in the theory that the girl had fallen into the lake while sick.

Fit May Have Led To The Crispell Girl's Death

Accidental Theory Springs to the Front Murder Hypothesis Not Strengthened By Investigations--"Jealous Rival" is a Myth Thus Far

Alice Crispell was subject to fits, a number of her friends say. This fact, brought to attention yesterday for the first time since the girl was found in Harvey's Lake on Monday morning, gives weight to the theory of accidental death, a theory which up to this time has been scarcely advanced at all, much less given any credence by the authorities at work on the case.

Friends of the young man urge as a possibility that the girl on parting from her companion of Fourth of July night, Herbert Johns of 130 Wyoming street, this city, who is now in the Luzerne County jail awaiting an arraignment on the charge of murder in the first degree, might have been seized with one of the fits to which she was subject. They point out how easy it might have been for her to have fallen into the lake while in the paroxysm.

Four theories have been advanced: First- That the girl and her companion had a quarrel and that he pushed her off the Weckesser

landing into the water. No motive has been shown for this, although Johns is being held on the possibility that it happened.

Second- That somebody possibly a jealous rival, attacked the girl just after she parted from Johns. But who is the jealous rival? The man named Canns, drawn into the case by a letter written by Johns to the girl, laughs at the idea of his having been a rival, and says he left the lake at 10:30 on the Fourth of July night, an hour before the Crispell girl and Johns were last seen together.

Third- That the girl committed suicide. But all her friends say she seemed happy enough on the Fourth of July, and they can assign no reason for her killing herself. The autopsy reveals no motive for suicide.

Fourth- That death was accidental, either due to her walking off the road and into the lake because of the darkness, and if evidence of members of the party at the Hotel Oneonta is to be believed, she had

been drinking with the others, and this suggests the possibility of intoxication, or else she was seized with a fit and unwillingly threw herself into the lake.

A Few Cold Facts

Some of the incidents in connection with the case which have been made much of fall flat under investigation. Mrs. S. T. Nicholson is not certain about having heard cries on the night of the Fourth. As stated in yesterday's issue, it was only after a hat was found in the lake that she had a faint impression of having heard somebody call out the night before. Not much importance can be attached to this, as it is a matter of common occurrence for young people to be out on the lake, the sounds of their voices traveling far over the water. Mrs. F. J. Weckester stated yesterday that it is two weeks since she heard to cry, "Oh Charlie, O Charlie," in a girl's voice. So much for the "Charlie" theory. Then someone had it that there was a Charlie Cann in the case. But unfortunately for the theorists his given name is Harrison.

Johns has not explained to the utmost satisfaction why he left the girl as he did on a lonely road, far from home. He says he declined an invitation to go to her grandmother's for the night, pleading illness. It must be remembered that Alice Crispell lived in the country and that the prospect of a lonely walk would probably not be so appealing to her as it would be to a city girl. The murder theory is not by any means floored, but the accidental death theory, in the cold light of all the circumstances brought out by the investigations thus far is just as probable.

Interesting Development

One of the interesting developments yesterday was the procuring by the authorities of a letter which was written last Sunday by Johns to the Crispell girl, and which was mentioned in yesterday morning's story in the Record. It is the opinion of all who have studied the letter and have expressed an opinion concerning it that it is either the handiwork of an innocent man or of the most accomplished of criminals. It has a natural tone. It says the things knowing nothing of

the girl's death and having the relations that he had had with her, would be expected to say. If Johns is guilty of having had any part in the girl's death it is a most remarkable letter. The text of the letter is found elsewhere in this issue.

State Trooper Freeman and one of the county detectives spent yesterday in the country about Harvey's Lake scouring it for witnesses to be summoned to the inquest to be held at 7 o'clock tomorrow evening at the lake and to be conducted personally by Coroner Jas Marley. It is understood that a large number of witnesses will be summoned. An exhaustive probe of all the circumstances is promised.

The authorities have by some means abandoned the murder theories and are running down several clues which seem promising.

Mrs. Holcomb, of this city, a sister of Alice Crispell, is quoted as saying that her sister Alice did not stay at her home on Thursday night, before the Fourth.

A report was received that she had stayed at the Germania hotel in this city on that night. This was neither denied nor affirmed by

a clerk interviewed at the hotel last night. The proprietor declined to see a reporter when requested for an interview.

An inquest will be conducted into the death of Alice Crispell by Deputy Coroner, William J. Butler Thursday evening at 7 o'clock, the hearing probably taking place in the Oneonta Hotel, Harvey's Lake, owing to the convenience it will prove to cottagers and others who will be summoned to testify. Mr. Butler stated last night that it will not be possible to have all the witnesses subpoenaed before tomorrow evening owing to the number to be called. Mr. Butler will conduct the inquest it was announced by Coroner Marley last night.

Eight witnesses have been subpoenaed by Alderman Frank B. Brown to testify at the hearing in his office Friday evening at 7:30 o'clock when Herbert Johns will be arraigned on the charge of murder in the first degree. While the accused young man is only being held to follow a formal mandate of the law his attorney and friends are confident that much of the evidence to be adduced will go a long way toward removing suspicion which now rests upon him.

Witnesses subpoenaed by Alderman Brown are the following:

S. T. Nicholson, a cottager at the lake; Dr. P. J. Higgins, who performed the autopsy which led to the statement that the girl was murdered; E. G. Kemmerer, another cottager; Martha Crispell, a sister of the victim; Clara Johns, a sister of the accused and William Alcher, of Madison street, who were in the party at Oneonta Hotel with Herbert Johns and Alice Crispell on Fourth of July last; Stella Oney, resident of the Outlet who was one of the last to see the accused and the victim together and George Casterline, the express wagon driver who found the body on Monday morning.

**LETTER WRITTEN TO ALICE CRISPELL AS SHE LAY DEAD
IN THE LAKE, BY HERBERT, JOHNS, HER LOVER**

Wilkes-Barre, Pa., July 6, 1913, 1 a.m.

Dearest Alice: I will now take the pleasure in writing you a few lines hoping it will find you in as good health as it leaves me. Well, how did you feel Saturday and Sunday? Gee, I felt on the bum. Who the devil said it was cool over at the lake? Why it was much cooler in town than it was over there. Well, I suppose you won't be in town for some time. Are you going back to Trucksville to work again? If so, let me know in time so I won't get fooled over to the lake.

Did you get to see Martha or Harry yet? I did not see them but may see them tonight. I am going down town to-night and I wish you were along.

The sister and her fellow said they were glad to see us on the Fourth. They said they had a pleasant time. Sister nearly fainted going over on the car. Did she tell you about it?

Oh, yes, did you catch up to Stella Friday night? Where did she go, out to Lehman? I suppose someone walked along about five miles. Goodnight on that walk. What do you think?

Did your sister get her picture taken to send to Howard? If Canney swam the lake I didn't see him since. Holy Gee, here it is Sunday again and all alone. I wish I was over there with you. Gee, I am lonesome as the devil, but I suppose it will not be long until we meet again.

Say, did the folks say anything, or were they mad because I didn't go to the house? Did you get the firecrackers for the kids? I forgot to tell you about them. I suppose they were disappointed.

Well, darling. I will bring this letter to a close hoping to hear from you soon. From a fellow who will never forget you but the girl has forgotten me. Well, be good now and I will be the same. Best regards from

HERBERT JOHNS,

130 Wyoming Street, Wilkes-Barre.

P. S. -- Answer soon, darling.

Suicide Theory

Many Believe That Alice Crispell Took Her Own Life

Note of Despondency Frequently Sounded in Her Letters to Johns Gave Evidence That She Was Tiring of the Life She Had Been Leading
--Johns Angered Because Cann Had Picture

Despite the strength of all the other theories which have been advanced to explain the drowning of Alice Crispell there is a part of the public, and no small part at that that is convinced that the girl committed suicide. Numerous arguments that appear plausible are advanced in support of this theory.

First there is the note of despondency seen quite frequently in the letters written by Alice. Her allusions to an unhappy condition would indicate periods of melancholia. Quite often she made remarks such as "going away where you will never hear from me again." This might be taken to mean another world.

On several occasions the letters make it apparent that she had reason to feel that Johns was tiring her. This can be seen in question, quoted below. "Who said I told Martha to --- with you?" It is also apparent that on numerous occasions he has not answered satisfactorily her questions about getting married. If this were the case again on the night of the Fourth it would be nothing more than natural for her to become depressed in spirit.

Her father had seen her at the Oneonta after she had been drinking. She had felt his displeasure before, and on this occasion it is possible she saw the look of disgust with which he regarded her and her companions. If not actually fill her

with fear, this incident would tend to increase whatever deposition she may have felt.

From the letters it is evident, too, that the girl sometimes voiced a note of regret that the life she was leading was not the one which appealed to her highest ideals. It is rather pathetic where she refers in one of the letters to Johns going "out with a bunch to have a good time," and then says, "But, Herbert dear,. That kind of a time doesn't last, does it? We know that." It would seem that her constant desire was to marry Herbert and to leave the old life. But this desire was continually failing of gratification. If she had failed in her plea again on the night of the Fourth it would have been entirely probable that she should have been overcome by a "fit of the blues."

The fact, too, that she had been drinking heavily would have contributed to that condition of her mind. It is a known fact that fits of depression follow alcoholic excesses. All of these facts would indicate a mental state in every way open to suicidal suggestion.

The evidence brought out that there were no marks to indicate a struggle, the utter absence of motive on the part of Johns, or any one else as far as that is concerned all aid in strengthening a theory of suicide.

Cause of Death is Revealed By Autopsy

Alice Crispell is Found to be the Victim of Drowning--Her Accused Suitor Makes Statement --Detectives Searching for New Evidence

For the first time since the summer of 1876 an exhumed body was made the subject of a post mortem examination at the hands of expert autopsyists in this city yesterday afternoon, resulting for the time being at least in the tragic fate of Alice Crispell at Harvey's Lake on the night of July Fourth remains a mystery. Without a precedent for startling circumstances in the annals of Luzerne County crime the mystery of the drowning of the Outlet farmer's daughter rests for the present where it began a week ago yesterday.

Alice Crispell came to her death by drowning. Herbert Johns, her sweetheart, is held to answer a charge of murder in the first degree for complicity in her death. Thus does the tragedy involving the couple stand and thus is it reported on by the authorities.

Tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock the court will pass upon whether Johns should be held without bail in a habeas corpus proceeding instituted on his behalf by Attorney Frank McGuigan. At the county jail, where he has been since Friday night, Johns last night had this to say:

"I know nothing of Alice's death. I have told all I know about it. I left her on Fourth of July night to go home and did not see or hear from her until her body was found. If she was drowned, as it is now positively stated she was, I do not know

how it could of happened. I have nothing more to say about the case and only I hope I get out of jail soon."

The unusual developments in the case which failed to show that Alice Crispell was the victim of murder any more than she was the victim of accidental or suicidal drowning, led to this statement being made by District Attorney Bigelow, the chief prosecutor of Johns for the crime:

The fate of the prisoner will depend upon the weight given the testimony by the court at the habeas corpus hearing. We will not of our own initiative ask for a discharge but will place the responsibility with the court, where it belongs. The whole atmosphere of this case has not been cleared as yet. Johns has to explain much of the circumstantial evidence against him, I will not say he is entirely guiltless but prefer to have the court pass upon his innocence. I do not feel like stating a conclusion in the case because it is difficult to sanction any of the three theories advanced: That Alice Crispell came to her death by drowning, either with suicidal intent, accidentally, or at the hands of another person who meant her violence. A motive for one is as easily advanced as a motive for another. The case as it stands is mysterious and you can make as much or as little of it as you choose."

Published in the Wilkes-Barre Record, Tuesday, July 15, 1913.

Autopsy at Mooney's

Four physicians, two of them expert autopsyists from New York City, conducted the second post-mortem examination of the body at Mooney's morgue on South Washington street. Despite the fact that it had been embalmed in the same place a week ago yesterday, interred in Lehman cemetery on Thursday, and exhumed late Saturday afternoon, the body was declared by the examiners to be in a fairly good state of preservation.

The examination was directed by Dr. T. D. Lehain, physician for the coroner of Manhattan borough. He was assisted by Dr. John H. Larkin, consulting physician for the latter; Dr. P.J. Higgins, of this city, who performed the first autopsy and Dr. S.M. Wolfe, of 133 Academy street. The result of the examination was made known in a statement issued by District Attorney Bigelow, which was as follows:

Statement on Examination

"The autopsy performed by Drs. Lehain, Larkin, Wolfe, and Higgins today has resulted in conclusive proof that Alice Crispell met her death from drowning. An examination of the organs of the deceased show them to have been normal and healthy. The lungs contain much water, indicating that the cells have been so filled during life and in the course of respiration.

"No external marks of violence have been found and apparently no struggle of any kind preceded death. Neither was

there any cerebral hemorrhage or proof of any physical condition which might constitute motive for suicide."

"The conclusion announced by the experts preclude the theory that the body was cast into the lake after death."

"But there are three theories fully consistent with their findings:

- (1) - That death resulted from either an accidental falling into the lake; or
- (2) - From voluntary taking of life; or
- (3) - From being thrust into the water as the result of a controversy near the landing whereby slight force only was necessary.

"The fate of the prisoner, Herbert Johns, will depend upon the weight of the testimony by the court at the habeas corpus hearing. We will not of our own initiative ask for the discharge but will place the responsibility where it belongs."

"I am pleased at the thorough nature of the autopsy and the definite character of the results."

Organs Taken Away

The stomach and lungs were taken from the body and were encased for shipment to New York City, where the experts will make more exhaustive examination of them for traces of poison, which could not be definitely decided upon yesterday. It was stated last night, however, that the district attorney's office would not look for further report on the organs as the second autopsy proved entirely satisfactory and conclusive.

Father At Morgue

William Crispell, father of the girl, loitered about the morgue while the dissection of the remains was going on, but the doctors would not permit him to enter the room where the gruesome task was being performed. The odor was bad and the examiners had to come into the open air frequently in order to get through with their research.

When asked why he was anxious to view the dissection of his daughter's body the father replied: "I want to be in on this thing because I wish to prove to the satisfaction of the authorities that I had no connection with Alice's death and I also want to see that her remains go back to the grave at Lehman without being mutilated."

The father's statement regarding suspicion resting upon him for the murder was made in reply to rumors, which were current last week that the county detectives suspected a close relative of the girl with having a hand in her murder. The remains of the girl will be interred to-day in the country cemetery.

Two New Features

Only two new features in the case were reported by county detectives yesterday. These were the discovery of a couple who were in the vicinity of the Weckesser boat house on the night of July Fourth, the couple, F.D. Van Buskirk and Miss C.M.Casterline, of Forty Fort, being located and the

report of four unknown men landing from a row boat at the place at the same time.

Van Buskirk and Miss Casterline do not throw any additional light on the mystery by their story. The former stated that he saw Johns and his sweetheart on the Outlet road near the Weckesser landing as other witnesses have testified. The unidentified men who landed from a row boat, Van Buskirk said, walked down the road ahead of Johns and Miss Crispell, and about five minutes after the latter couple passed him on the road two of the men returned.

County Detective Holman and Trooper Freeman of the State Constabulary are making an effort to locate the four men spoken of, in offer to determine if they can throw additional light on the mystery.

"Man on the Logs"

County Detective McKelvey returned yesterday from Springville, Susquehanna county, where he went to locate the mysterious "man on the logs" who figured in the case. The detective located Howard Culver, Forty Fort, who is working up country as a wood chopper. He admitted being at Harvey's Lake on the night of the Fourth, that he imbibed too freely, went to sleep on a stack of lumber along the lake road and awoke at 4 o'clock Saturday morning to catch a car for his home.

Mr. McKelvey said he was satisfied that Culver told the truth of his slight connection with the case. This puts to flight several theories advanced that the unknown might have

attacked the girl after she left Johns. Mr. McKelvey today will join in the hunt for the five men spoken of by Van Buskirk.

The Wilkes-Barre Record, Tuesday, July 15, 1913.

Fisherman's Story

Of Finding Crispell Girl's Body in Harvey's Lake

A story to the effect that George Casterline, express man at Harvey's Lake, was not the first person to discover the body of Alice Crispell in Harvey's Lake a week ago yesterday, was told on the West Side last night and was reported by Deputy Coroner P. J. Lavin, of Luzerne.

According to Mr. Lavin the body was hauled out of the water at the end of fishing line in the hands of a Courtdale man and that another man who was passing along the lake road on a lumber wagon was hailed for assistance in bringing it ashore at the Weckesser landing. It might be if this story is true that the body was washed out into the lake again after being taken in and was then observed by Casterline.

Mr. Lavin's new story of the finding is to the effect that yesterday morning he met Mattel Yorn, a Courtdale miner, who was going to work in the Raub colliery at Luzerne and that Yorn gave him the new version of the finding as outlined herewith. Yorn told the coroner's official that he was fishing at the lake early a week ago yesterday and discovered the body

about 7 o'clock. He says he didn't hear anything about the case until Sunday when he heard neighbors speaking of it.

Evidently he hadn't been reading the newspapers last week or it might be. Mr. Lavin said, that this only another fishing story. Yorn was positive, though, Mr. Lavin said, that he hauled the body of the girl up on his line 150 feet out from the Weckesser landing and about fifty feet up the lake toward the Oneonta Hotel. The miner said his fish hook caught in the girl's clothing.

ALICE CRISPELL DROWNED SECOND AUTOPSY SHOWS

Following the second post mortem examination of the body of Alice Crispell, exhumed for the purpose on Saturday, made yesterday at Mooney's morgue, District Attorney Bigelow on receiving a report from the doctors made public this statement:

"The autopsy performed by Drs. Lehain, Larkin, Wolfe, and Higgins today has resulted in conclusive proof that Alice Crispell met her death from drowning. An examination of the organs of the deceased show them to have been normal and healthy. The lungs contain much water, indicating that the cells have been so filled during life and in the course of respiration.

"No external marks of violence have been found and apparently no struggle of any kind preceded death. Neither was there any cerebral hemorrhage or proof of any physical condition which might constitute motive for suicide."

"The conclusion announced by the experts preclude the theory that the body was cast into the lake after death."

"But there are three theories fully consistent with their findings:

- (1) - That death resulted from either an accidental falling into the lake; or
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the landing whereby slight force only was necessary.

"The fate of the prisoner, Herbert Johns, will depend upon the weight of the testimony by the court at the habeas corpus hearing. We will not of our own initiative ask for the discharge but will place the responsibility where it belongs."

"I am pleased at the thorough nature of the autopsy and the definite character of the results."

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Holds To His Story

Johns Tells Mother He is Not Guilty. “He Thought World of the Girl,” She Says

Johns spent a wakeful night in the Luzerne County jail and was up shortly after daylight yesterday. His mother, father, brother and sister visited him in the morning. He refused to discuss the drowning with the newspaper men. To his mother he told the story as it has been published in the Record. He assured her that he was innocent, and that he would undoubtedly be proven not guilty. His mother went again to see him yesterday afternoon, taking with her a basket of dainties for him to eat. She stayed only a moment or so. A reporter waited for her to come out. When she appeared he walked down the street with her, while she poured out her heart to him.

“Oh, my poor boy,” she said. “Isn’t it awful, that he should be taken up for something he didn’t do. He never in the world did that. He’s a good boy. Why he thought the world of the girl. She was a nice girl. He’s been going with her over a year, and he loved her I know.

He never did it. Won’t it be awful if he had to go under for something he didn’t do.”

Her lip quivered, and the reporter spoke encouragingly assuring her that everything would come out all right. Then she spoke up again.

“Do you know that the girl had fits? ‘Canney’ was down at the house last night and he told us about it, and he said that he could prove that she had them in hotels right here in Wilkes-Barre. He said that there were other fellows that knew her that could prove that they had to carry her out of a room in the Hotel Wilkes-Barre.”

“Don’t you think,” she continued, “that she might have gotten sick and fainted and fallen into the lake from the stone wall?”

Later when asked about the letter which her son had written on Sunday, she declared that she had seen him writing it, and asked him:

“Who are you writing to Bert?”

“To sweetie,” he said, and she explained to the reporter that Bert always called Alice by that name. Why, he wouldn’t be writing to her that way if he did it, would he?” she questioned.

She told again about the party coming to the house for dinner. She said that she did not hear Miss Crispell and where she had spent that night before the Fourth. She declared that she was sure the two

young people were perfectly happy.

The reporter pointed out the line in the letter which spoke of “Canney” swimming in the lake, and was asked what that meant. She stated that Harrison Cann had come to the house on the Fourth to borrow Bert’s bathing suit, intending to take a swim, and if possible to cross the lake.”

Father Threatened To Shoot Crispell Girl

Confesses to Detectives--100 Love Letters Being Perused for Crime Motive--Accused Suitor Weakens a Point or Two

The introduction yesterday of a big batch of love letters many on them of sordid character, which passed between Alice Crispell who was found dead in Harvey's Lake on Monday morning, and her suitor, Herbert Johns, who is in the Luzerne County jail, may throw some new light on the mystery which has been baffling the State and county authorities for several days. The letters, especially those written by Johns, are so vile in the language used that the Record prints only extracts from them.

Daniel McKelvey of Hazelton, of the county detective force, who secured the letters, was busy reading them and had not perused half of them at 3 o'clock this morning. His search is for something which might suggest a motive either for the girl's committing suicide or something to support a murder theory.

Another important development of the day was a statement made by the father to two detectives working on the case, in which he says that he threatened to shoot his daughter Alice about two months ago because of the persistent refusal to obey him on the question of staying out nights. He confessed that he pointed the revolver at her. In answer to questions he said that he was in bed at 9 o'clock on the night of the Fourth of July, when the girl is supposed to have been drowned.

He says he saw his two daughters in front of the Hotel Oneonta about 5 o'clock on the afternoon of the Fourth, but that he did not talk to either and that he left in disgust, going to his home and eating his supper.

The girl in one of her letters to Johns states that her father blackened her eyes, but this he denies.

In one of his letters Johns says:

"I am afraid to go near your house for fear the old man will shoot me. So many things are troubling me that I feel like jumping in the lake."

In another letter he declares:

"I had a notion to jump in the lake and end all my troubles. Why darling I had so many I did not know what to do with them."

In one of her letter the girl threatened to leave home on account of abuse. In another she says she is going to Sunbury adding "I guess you'll be glad to hear that I'm going".

In a letter Johns says:

"I'm glad you got home safe the other night. You know the woods are a bad place at night. You know they're full of mountain lions."

In still another: "I'm temperance--between drinks, and so are you." And in another "Dearest we won't have to wait

much longer for the Fourth of July. Then we'll have a devil of a time."

In his latest statement made yesterday to McKelvey of the county force Johns reiterates most of his previous statements but weakens on one or two points of considerable importance. He first said that it was ten minutes after the Oney girls passed him and Alice Crispell on the lake road on the night of the tragedy before he and Alice parted. Now he states that he and his companions started down the road after the Oney girls about a minute after they passed and he walked a quarter of a mile with he before he said: "Alice, I'm sick. You'd better try to catch up with Stella. I had better go home." He admits that he stayed with Alice Crispell at the Germania Hotel on the nights of July 2 and 3, and that they registered as Herbert Jones and wife.

100 Letters in Evidence

When Squire McKelvey of Hazleton, a member of the district attorney's staff of detectives, returned last evening from Harvey's Lake after an all day search for new evidence, he carried in his pockets 100 letters, sixty written by Herbert Johns to Alice Crispell and forty written by the girl to Johns. It is proposed to go over each one carefully as quickly as possible with the idea of gaining, if possible, information which will help in fixing a motive for Alice Crispell's death, whether it was by accident, suicide or murder.

The letters were obtained at the Johns home in this city and at the Crispell home at Outlet. It is understood that there

was some disposition not to give them up, but the authorities saw in them the possibility of important new evidence and an opportunity to get a better understanding of the relations of the Crispell girl and Johns, and persisted until they got them. The letters are some of them dated early part of 1912. Others are of quite recent date.

Signed statements were also obtained yesterday by the district attorney's office from Dr. P. J. Higgins, who made the autopsy, and other important witnesses who have been drawn into the case. Johns has talked freely to the authorities, reiterating in most essential details the story he has told from the first and placing emphasis on the claim that he was sick on the Fourth of July night.

Important New Witness

It is believed that Seph. Reese of Plymouth, who has told the authorities that he saw a couple passing along near the Weckesser boat house at 11:25 on the Fourth of July night, will prove an important witness. He declares that the girl was being supported by her companion and that his impression at the time was that she was either drugged or intoxicated.

Reese Furnishes New Clues

Reese declared that he was in his car, which stood near the steamboat landing near the Oneonta, when he saw a group of young people standing at the lower end of the path which leads from the hotel down to the lake front. That was about 11

o'clock. Soon afterwards he left with a party of people whom he took to Lehman. He was gone approximately half an hour. He reached Weckesser's cottage at 11:25. He remembers glancing down at the automobile clock at that time.

By the light of his auto lamps he saw a man and a girl coming down the road. His entire attention was directed to the girl. She appeared to be either drunk or drugged, according to Mr. Reese. The man had her arm hooked within his own, and seemed to be trying to support her. Her feet dragged. Mr. Reese is positive that the two were among the crowd whom he had seen standing near the foot of the path leading from the hotel to the lake, and he believes now that it was Johns, and Miss Crispell, whom he saw.

The light from the automobile was thrown directly upon the couple. The man ducked his head and did not look up as the machine passed. The girl continued on his arm.

Reese brought to light another important clue when he declared that while on his way to Lehman with his party he had seen a man lying on a pile of logs which were located along the road neat the Weckesser cottage. The logs were located between the road and the lake, not far from where the incident or crime is supposed to have occurred. The man was still there when Mr. Reese returned.

It is this man that State police are now trying to find. The only thing Mr. Reese can tell about him is that he wore a dark suit.

Supposed Teeth Marks of Little Value

A suggested plan of comparing the supposed marks of teeth which were found on the girl's arm and forehead with a cast of the front teeth of Herbert Johns, the supposed murderer, is regarded by dentists as being entirely impractical. In the first place, they declare, the marks made by the four front teeth of one person with a perfect or nearly perfect alignment could not be distinguished from those of any of a dozen other persons. This would be especially true if the marks were made in such an elastic substance as flesh. It would only be in cases where the teeth were very irregular that the use of such a method might prove of value. In this case, the authorities are not even sure that the marks were made by teeth; and if they are they are of a kind that could be made by a score of even a hundred different people.

JOHNS IS EXONERATED BY CORONER'S JURY

Mistake Made in Passing on Guilt of Accused, County Detectives Declares. But Motive for Crime is Still Unrevealed.

Jury Decides That Johns Had No Part in the Death of Girl, But That She Was Not Liable to Take Her Own Life and That "a Crime Has Been Committed"--Testimony Develops No Fresh Clues of Importance and Eager Crowd of Several Hundred is Disappointed--Johns' Attorney Declines to Let Him Testify--Hearing to Be Held Tonight.

A verdict declaring that Alice Crispell, whose body was found in Harvey's Lake on Monday, probably did not commit suicide and exonerating Herbert Johns, her accused lover from blame for her death was returned last night shortly after 10 o'clock by a coroner's jury. But the jury offered the opinion that "a crime has been committed."

Johns is still in jail awaiting a hearing to-night at Squire Brown's office, this city. The action of the coroner's jury has no legal bearing on the case against Johns.

Fourteen witnesses testified at the inquest, but if the several hundred people who crowded the ball room, where the coroner held court, expected fresh sensations and exceptionally spicy testimony, they were disappointed.

Johns was present, but he did not testify. His attorney, Frank McGuigan, explained that his client wanted to testify, but that he was following his (McGuigan's) advice in standing

on his constitutional rights by not taking the stand at this time while being held for a hearing on a murder charge.

The story of screams heard along the shore near the spot where the Crispell girl is supposed to have fallen or been pushed in the water had its significance lessened at the inquest, as was stated in the Record yesterday it would have. Mr. and Mrs. S.T. Nicholson both said that while they heard something that might have been a women's voice on the night in question, about 11:15 or 11:30, they were not sure that it was a women's voice, and that it sounded a long distance away.

"It was a variable sound," said Mr. Nicholson. They heard the sound just before a man passed them, but it was so dark the only thing they could tell about the man is that he had on what appeared to be a light hat. He made no effort, so far as they could tell, to avoid recognition.

The verdict, while quite satisfactory to Johns, did not meet with the approval of representatives of the district attorney's office, as evidence by a strong statement made by Squire McKelvey of Hazleton, one of the detectives on the case, shortly after the verdict was announced. McKelvey severely scores the jury for failing to do what he said it should have done, make a greater effort to determine the manner of death rather than to pass on Johns' guilt or innocence.

“I am grievously disappointed in the verdict returned by the coroner’s jury. By some of the officers who have worked on this case with me it is regarded as a joke. I do not care to be quoted as terming the evening’s developments in that light, but please consider the case from my standpoint?”

“In the first place the inquest did not determine the manner of death. The jury empanelled to reach a conclusion in the manner in which the girl died. This the verdict fails to do. I have read over the jury’s report and fail to find where the exact manner of death is stated, as one would suppose it would be from the evidence of so many witnesses--the evidence at least of the physician who performed the autopsy. The supposition is taken, however, that the girl was the victim of a crime, but just what kind of crime isn’t stated. Emphasis is placed, however, on the belief of the jury in the innocence of Herbert Johns, the suspect.

“The district attorney’s office working on this case ought to be in a better position to judge of the innocence of persons suspected than a coroner’s jury. Why, from the testimony of three witnesses at the inquest alone, the Commonwealth has made out a prima facie case against Johns--from the evidence against Johns--from the evidence of the automobilist Pugh, who testified that he saw, recognized and spoke to Herbert Johns in company with the girl, near the place where she is supposed to have met her death; from the evidence of Seph. Reese, who testified to having seen a couple, evidently Johns and the girl, under circumstances more suspicious than others observed, and from the testimony of Mr.

and Mrs. Nicholson, cottagers, who aver they heard cries on the water in the vicinity of the Weckesser landing.”

“There is no doubt of the fact that the Crispell girl is dead. How did she die? At whose hands? The jury says she was the victim of a crime and in the same breath declares that the one suspected, and toward whom suspicion points, is innocent.”

“The coroner’s jury should not have attempted to pass upon the guilt or innocence of Johns. It was the purpose of the inquest to determine the exact manner by which Alice Crispell came to her death--whether by drowning, accidental or premeditated, or whether by violence at the hands of a party or parties unknown to the jury.”

Inquest Begun

The hearing got under way at 7:30 o’clock, when the officers entered in advance of the crowd of witnesses and principals. Johns was led in manacles by Keeper Charles Baugher, and after taking a seat inside an inclosure facing Coroner Marley, his sister Clara, who was to be a witness, ran to him, and throwing her arms about his neck kissed him repeatedly.

“Keep up your nerve, Bert,” she said in a whisper not meant to be audible, but which was heard by several. “Everybody knows you are innocent: keep your nerve and everything will come out all right.”

The jury was called: William J. Butler, P.J. Lavin, John J. Maher, Joseph F. Forestal, Thomas Williams of Harvey’s

Lake and John Boyle of Wilkes-Barre. The first three are deputy coroners.

Johns sat at the right of Coroner Marley, the target of several hundred eyes trained curiously upon him. Nonchalantly he returned the gaze of many individuals and calmly chewed a wad of gum.

First Witness

The first witness called was George Casterline, baggage man, who found the girl's body near the Weckesser landing Monday morning at 8:15 o'clock. He said he called on Sheriff Kniffen after detecting the body bobbing on the surface of the water, and with assistance towed the body to the shore behind a row boat. He said he recognized the girl as Alice Crispell on reaching shore, and having known the girl, it was not difficult for him to identify her.

Asked if he could identify the clothing found on the body he said he could, and Assistant District Attorney Kuschke here showed him several garments, which he said were Alice's.

Deputy Coroner Butler then cross-examined the driver, but did not secure any further evidence. When questioned by Johns' attorney, Frank McGuigan, he held to his first version of the finding.

Dr. Higgins Called

Dr. P. J. Higgins, who performed the autopsy on the girl's body in Wilkes-Barre after it had been taken to Mooney's

morgue, was next called and told of his findings. He said that his examination showed the girl came to her death by drowning, and in answer to a question said she had not been pregnant. Asked if there were marks on the body, he said there were several on the left wrist that might or might not have been caused by human teeth. There were no other marks, he said, that would indicate the girl had been in a struggle.

Dr. Higgins declared that he did not make an examination of the girl's stomach, when asked by Attorney McGuigan, and further that there was nothing to indicate that death had not been met by drowning.

Cross-examination by Mr. Kuschke, who set out to ascertain if the doctor did not believe the girl was murdered, did not avail anything. Dr. Higgins insisted that the evidence of the body he secured by his examination showed death was by drowning. He was asked to repeat testimony regarding a wound on the girl's eye that was found, and also to produce a tracing of the teeth marks on her arm.

The tracing or diagram of the teeth marks were reluctantly offered by the witness but were given to Mr. Kuschke on the coroner's instruction, and then handed to the jurors for examination.

Alcher Called

While the jurors were examining proofs of the teeth marks William Alcher, of 17 Madison Street, Wilkes-Barre, was called.

Being sworn he told of his connection with the party that spent Fourth of July night in the Oneonta café, in which were Johns and his girl.

He repeated the story Clara Johns, offered to the Record on Monday, to the effect that the party entered the café and saw Johns and Alice at a table, which they occupied together until 11 o'clock, when Alice and Herbert started down the lake road and the others went to the car station and thence to town.

Alcher declared that Johns and Alice did not have the semblance of a quarrel all evening and left for home in a happy mood. He said members of the party had several rounds of drinks-beer only-but none become intoxicated. Coroner Marley had him tell of the clothing worn by Johns which he said was a light suit and Panama hat.

Sister Called

John's sister, Clara a young woman of 28 or 30 years, was the next witness. She told a straight forward story similar to that of her companion, Alcher, of the fatal night's doings.

A new line of testimony was secured from her by cross examination by Mr. McGuigan, regarding the Crispell girl keeping her hand gloved in the café all evening, because, the witness said, the girl spoke of having her hand blood poisoned.

Asked by Mr. Kuschke if she left her brother to go straight home and later found him home first, she said she carried on the way home from town, after leaving the Harvey's Lake car and time was afforded Herbert to arrive home first.

She said she advised her brother not to go around to the outlet with Alice, because he wasn't looking well and in reply to a question from Mr. McGuigan, she said "Bert was undecided about going with Alice," when she left him.

Cann Visits Johns

Harrison Cann, the "Canney" mentioned frequently in Johns' letters, and perhaps the closest of his male friends visited him at the county prison yesterday afternoon. He was performed before he went in that he must not talk about the case. He went in and shook hands and gave his friend a pack of cigarettes. He talked for a moment or two and then the guard signaled him that time was up.

Friends Stand By Accused

The Harvey's Lake tragedy formed the main topic of conversation at No. 5 colliery of the Delaware & Hudson Co. yesterday afternoon when the men gathered at the pay car. Johns, who was employed there as a footman, is apparently a favorite among the younger men, and there is not one among his associates that believes him guilty. "Why he wouldn't kill a thing in the world," said one of them, and another remarked indignantly, "Him murder that girl?" Say, that fellow would step out of the road to keep from treading on a bug. You can't tell me he had anything about being ill-treated at home, or weather he knew of her being abused. "Only what Johns told

me about what she said in a letter,” he said. He stated that he never heard her or Johns say anything about suicide.

Holcomb Girl’s Story

Martha Holcomb, of 439 South Franklin Street, this city, a sister of the victim was the next witness. She preferred not to tell her story and asked Coroner Marley to question her. The latter’s questions drew a story similar to those of Clara Johns and Alcher. As the witness was a member of the party in the Oneonta café on the night of the holiday, Harry Williams, who said she was her companion and who failed to respond when called for as the third witness, she declared would have no additional information to offer.

The Holcomb girl told Mr. Kuschke and Mr. McGuigan in reply to questions that her sister spoke to her several times during the fatal evening of not feeling well. She said it was not unusual for Alice to walk home from the Oneonta alone and that it was not improbable for Johns to have left her at the last minute.

Alice Was Sick

Mrs. Holcomb was adverse to drawing the domestic relations of her parents into the testimony when Deputy Coroner Butler questioned her concerning Alice’s home life. Mr. Butler insisted, however on hearing from her regarding this but the line of testimony did not develop new features further

than a contradiction of evidence of the attorney’s office that the father several times threatened Alice.

Oney Girl Called

Stella Oney, a girl in her teens, upon being called, told of having met Alice and Johns several times on the Fourth, the last time at a culvert along the lake road near the Outlet, where she bade them good night. She said Bert and Alice were apparently in a happy mood. She was confused, though, regarding the time she left the unfortunate couple and was unable to fix the hour past eleven o’clock.

Questioned by Mr. Kuschke and Mr. McGuigan she emphasized the fact that Alice’s body was found a considerable distance below the point where she left her.

Jesse Oney’s Story

Jesse Oney, a brother of the preceding witness a lad also in his teens who last saw Alice and Johns together, when questioned by the coroner only repeated his sister’s story, adding additional information though that the Oney party got home after midnight showing that it must have been 11:30 when the couple were passed on the road.

Father Called

William Crispell, an intelligent looking neatly dressed farmer, when questioned replied in a dreary tone of voice had to be urged to more distant expression.

The father denied that the victim's home life was made unhappy by him, but Attorney McGuigan secured an admission that at one time not long ago he threatened Alice with a pistol because she was staying away from home nights.

At this point Attorney McGuigan led the questioning around to secure an admission that the father did hold a grudge against the girl for her way-ward life that he suspected she was leading.

“I'll Kill You”

County Detective David McKeivey who had been leading some of the questions of the father up to this here secured an admission from the father that he at one time threatened Alice by taking down a gun with the statement “I'll kill you!” The girl's mother was here called but she was not present in the crowd and then Cann was called.

“Canny's” Story

Harrison Cann, the one-armed young man, companion of Johns, who resides at 293 Scott street, East End, told in effect the story he gave a Record reporter on Tuesday afternoon when his name came into the case through the

publication of the letter alleged to be written to the victim on Sunday.

Cann was the most aggressive and amusing of all the witnesses, and seemed anxious to tell his story, which he expressed as confident of clearing himself of any suspicion as well as “letting Bert out.” He gave the names of his companions at the lake on the night of the Fourth and said all left for Wilkes-Barre on the 12:05 car, midnight, which he said was the last to town.

Cann denied ever having intimate relations with the victim.

Harrison Cann admitted while on the stand that while he often met the Crispell girl, he never called on her, and that while he received post cards from her and sent some in return, letters never passed between them.

“Did you have her picture?” he was asked.

“Yes, and Johns knew it. I showed it to him.”

“Did he like it?”

“Well, I don't know whether he did or not. He just looked at it and I put it back in my pocket.”

Mr. Nicholson Called

S.T. Nicholson, of 187 Hanover street, Wilkes-Barre, a member of the Vulcan Iron Works, a cottager at the lake, when called said that he and Mrs. Nicholson at 11:15 or 11:20 o'clock went down the Outlet road on the way to their summer home, a thousand feet from the Weckesser landing, and passed one man whom they didn't particularly notice, at the time. A

few minutes later he said they heard cries possibly of a feminine voice but the sound might have come from far out on the water, as he often heard cries from that portion of the lake at night. He said he wasn't sure they were cries for help and furthermore there was nothing in the action of the man they passed on the road to arouse suspicion.

Mother's Story

At this time Mrs. William Crispell, the victim's mother, appeared to testify. She was attired in mourning. She spoke slowly in an even tone of voice; told of her daughter's manner of living and her relations with Johns as she understood them and in effect had only an anguished version of a mother's love and grief of recite. Mrs. Crispell was only detained a few minutes.

Mrs. Nicholson Called

Mrs. S.T. Nicholson, wife of the cottager previously called, was not overly anxious to tell her story, but when led by questions of the coroner she repeated a story similar to her husband's.

The cry of the voice heard in the darkness along the lake road she said was that of a groan or a moan.

She described the man she passed on the road of having been vaguely seen and said he passed them after the cry heard on the water. The unknown, she said, passed them in a natural manner and made no effort to conceal himself.

Garage Man Called

Joseph Pugh of Kingston, garage owner, testified that on his last trip of several he made around the lake on the night of the Fourth, he passed Johns and Alice at the Weckesser landing. He said he recognized Johns in the glare of the car lights as he passed said "Hello, Bert." Mr. Pugh said that he knew Johns but did not know the girl. He passed them, he said, at 11:15 o'clock.

Reese Called

Seph. Reese, auto dealer of Plymouth, testified that he drove along the road by the Oneonta hotel at 11:15 o'clock or thereabouts and passed a group of young people, none of whom he recognized.

He noted, however, one couple, presumably Johns and Alice, he said, whom he saw fifteen minutes later near the Weckesser landing in the glare of his auto, which he was driving back from the country below the Outlet.

Reese testified that the girl was supported by the man as though she were intoxicated and needed assistance in walking. When asked by Attorney McGuigan if he saw a man in a light suit and Panama hat in the road he said no, but sprang a surprise by saying that he did observe a man in a dark suit laying on a pile of lumber along the road near the Weckesser landing. The man was there he said as he went down and returned.

Scene of Inquest

The inquest hearing was conducted in the ball room of the hotel. Crowds of anxious folks began to gather as early as 6 o'clock and by the time the hearing got under way the room was crowded and the overflow ran over onto the spacious veranda on the east side of the building.

Manager Poland provided every facility required to add to the convenience of the Coroner and county officials. Tables and chairs were placed for the principals and witnesses and in the very centre of the hearing tables were placed for the newspaper men.

Attracts Widespread Attention

The Harvey's Lake mystery case has attracted countrywide attention within the last few days, an evidence of this being apparent in the number of newspaper men present at the hearing.

Special out of town assignment reporters with well developed faculties for adding "color" to such human interest stories as the Crispell girl and her lover figure in, are making a great play of the features of the case, real and imaginative, that have developed to date.

Out-of-town newspapers represented at the inquest were: New York City--Herald, G.S. Wheat; American, W.A. Davenport; Evening Journal, J.T.N. Hawthorn, who is a son of Julian Hawthorn the novelist; Philadelphia--Stanley Rushton, Evening Telegraph; Albert V. Fisher, Evening Bulletin;

Evening Times, Jack Coombe. The local newspapers were also represented.

CORONER'S VERDICT IN THE ALICE CRISPELL CASE

The evidence in this case fails to show any motive for crime on the part of Herbert Johns, and we feel certain that he had no part in the death of Alice Crispell; but we feel certain, when we consider the evidence which showed the deceased to have always had a cheerful nature, and, therefore, not subject to morose spells, and, therefore, not liable to take her own life, that a crime has been committed.

However, we feel that this, as other crimes of its kind, will never be discovered, or some stronger evidence of guilt may subsequently be brought to light, resulting in just punishment for the culprit.

William J. Butler,	Thomas G. Williams,
John F. Boyle,	P.J. Lavin,
Joseph F. Forestal,	John J. Maher,
	Jurors.

Mystery Deeper Than Ever

If Jury is Right in Conclusion That Crime Was Committed, Who is the Criminal?

Members of the district attorney's staff when interviewed after the verdict of the jury had become known were not reticent about expressing themselves on the finding.

According to County Detective Dan McKelvey, the lake tragedy is now shrouded in greater mystery than ever. If Johns is to be left out of the case, he said, what is to become of the evidence worked up from the several witnesses, all of which tends to place Johns in more suspicious light than any

one else? If, as the jury report points out, a crime was committed, who is to be suspected of being the criminal?

This phase of the case raises a question involving the identity of the unknown man observed on the stack of lumber by the autoist, Seph. Reese, Who was this unknown? What was he doing so near the unfortunate couple at the time when one of them is supposed to have gone to a tragic death? The stranger has disappeared and no trace of his identity can be secured.

According to Mr. McKelvey, Johns made a mistake when he accepted the advice of counsel and refused to take the stand at the inquest. If he were entirely innocent of complicity in the death of the girl, the detective said, why was he not more than willing to tell all he knew. Attorney Frank McGuigan, on behalf of Johns, stated at the termination of the hearing that his client was to have his hearing in the regular channels of the law in Alderman Brown's court tomorrow night, and that inasmuch as the evidence offered at the inquest did not fasten a crime on him, it was unnecessary for him to testify. There are those who will be inclined to look upon Johns' refusal to speak at the inquest as indication that his story will not hang together when placed under fire, at least this was the expression of Trooper Freeman and the county officers.

Parents Hear Verdict

Johns' Mother Says "I'm Glad For Myself, But I Pity Alice's Mother"

The parents of Herbert Johns left the lake before the verdict of the jury had been reached and were not aware of its decision until they read the bulletin in front of the Record office at 11 o'clock on their arrival in this city. The father stood close up to the board and read the verdict to the mother at his side. A reporter present asked the mother when she had heard it all, whether she felt better.

"Yes I do," she answered slowly, a wan smile illuminating the face, lined and creased during the past few days. "Everything spoken over there to-night seemed to be favorable to our Herbert. But I feel sorry for Mrs. Crispell. She looked so bad to-night at the inquest. I am glad for myself but I pity Alice's mother."

As they turned from the board to go on up Main Street the mother said to the reporter, "Well only one more night to worry. Herbert will be home with us tomorrow night."

Johns Is Discharged; Crispell Case Ends

Lack of Evidence Against Man Held on Harvey's Lake Murder Charge Leads Court to Release Him --Final Hearing Interesting

Inability of the Commonwealth to make out a case strong enough to hold the defendant for the grand jury caused Judge Fuller yesterday to discharge from custody Herbert Johns, who had been confined in the county jail for nine days charged with the murder of Alice Crispell, whose body was found in Harvey's Lake on the morning of July 7.

Although the district attorney and his detectives followed every clue and called every witness that knew anything about the case, including the members who composed the party at the lake on the evening of July 4, no new evidence was presented at the hearing yesterday and the accused was given his liberty on motion of his attorney, F. A. McGuigan, who held that in the first instance a murder had not been proven, and in the second instance the defendant had not been connected as principal or accomplice in her death.

Two of the physicians who assisted at the second autopsy stated that death was due to drowning and that they found nothing that would indicate foul play. So the case against Johns fell, leaving the causes which led Alice Crispell, into the lake, whether by accident, design, or force, as much a mystery as ever. Whether the mystery will ever be cleared is uncertain, although the district attorney admitted the investigation would be continued if promising clues were found.

Court House Crowded

When the hearing began Judge Fuller's court room was crowded to the doors with witnesses and curious men and women. There were detectives, State police, physicians, a surveyor, and a score of witnesses subpoenaed by the Commonwealth, also a number of attorneys, photographers, deputy coroners and local and metropolitan newspaper men who occupied seats within the bar enclosure.

A thrill of expectancy held the crowd tense and eager as if they were waiting the crisis in some tragedy, or for the rise of the curtain on the last of an absorbing drama. The hearing lasted for two hours and a half during which the interest seemed to subside for lack of sensations and at the end everybody expected the release of the defendant.

Johns Pale and Nervous

Herbert Johns, the defendant, was brought down from the jail by Keeper Green Mulherrin shortly before the hearing opened and given a seat at the defendant's table. He wore a dark suit and dark necktie with white polka dots. He appeared pale and nervous, and beads of perspiration stood on his face and brow as he sat silent awaiting the beginning of the hearing. His eyes were sunken and circled with dark rings as if he had

spent worried and sleepless nights since his incarceration. He also appeared to have lost considerable weight.

District Attorney Bigelow, his assistant, Charles Kuschke, and County Detective D. T. McKelvey entered with a lot of photographs, a map of the lake, and a bundle containing the blue silk dress and hat worn by the unfortunate Alice Crispell when she fell into the lake.

Attorney McGuigan confidently took a seat by his client, the accused, and then Judge Fuller took his place on the bench. The murmur and whisper of voices ceased as the district attorney called Martha Holcomb, a sister of Alice Crispell, as the first witness for examination.

A Sister of Alice Testifies

Martha Holcomb, an attractive looking woman, wearing a light colored dress trimmed with black and a large white hat, testified that on the morning of July 4 she met her sister Alice, accompanied by Herbert Johns, the defendant, on South Main street and they planned to go to Harvey's Lake in the afternoon.

The witness told that the party which went to the lake consisted of her sister Alice and Herbert Johns, herself and Harry Williams, and that at the lake they met Clara Johns, a sister of the defendant and William Alcher. Martha stated that her sister Alice was seventeen years old, would be eighteen next October.

In answer to questions of the district attorney the witness said her sister wore a blue dress and that the entire party went to the Oneonta hotel between 7 and 8 o'clock for something to eat.

"Did you have something to drink?" asked Mr. Bigelow.

"Yes, we all drank beer."

"How much did your sister drink?"

"The same as the rest," replied the witness.

"How much was that?" persisted the district attorney.

"Five or six bottles of beer."

"Where were you in the hotel?"

"In the café at a table, the six of us together."

Going Home With Herbert

"How long did your party continue together?"

"About three hours."

"Tell us what your sister said about going home in the presence of Herbert Johns?" continued the district attorney.

"She said she would go home with him."

"Did she say anything else?"

"Somebody asked her if she was going to Wilkes-Barre. I think it was Harry Williams. She said she thought she would go to her home at Outlet with Herbert."

"How long did she know Herbert Johns?"

"About a year."

"When you left the hotel where did your party go?"

"We started for the car, and Alice and Herbert started on the road towards Outlet."

In answer to other questions the witness stated that she and Williams, Miss Johns and Alcher then went to the Square shortly after 12 o'clock, went to Schebe's Hotel, where they spent ten minutes and then went to their homes.

Alice Becomes Ill

"During the evening at the hotel at Harvey's Lake was your sister Alice taken ill?" asked Mr. Bigelow.

“Yes, she became sick to her stomach and retired from the room.”

“When she returned did she drink anything?”

“Yes, she drank another bottle of beer.”

“When she left the hotel did she show any signs of drink?”

“No sir.”

“Was Johns sober?”

“He was to all appearances.”

Martha Holcomb was then turned over to Attorney McGuigan for cross examination, and the latter at once attempted to bring out the fact that she a frequenter of hotels and worked in hotels in this city.

Worked in Hotels

Mrs. Holcomb stated her sister Alice would be 18 years old next October, and that she came to Wilkes-Barre first about four years ago to go to school.

In answer to questions the witness admitted that Alice worked for a few weeks as a chambermaid at the Windsor hotel, and also at Kelly’s hotel on Hazel street.

“To your knowledge how long has she been drinking?” asked Attorney McGuigan.

“I don’t know.”

“Drinking for two or three years?”

“Well, she took a glass of beer.”

“Was she frequently intoxicated?”

“I don’t know.”

“Wasn’t she affected by fits?”

“No, I did not know she was.”

All Were Friendly at the Lake

Attorney McGuigan then went over the trip to the lake and the incidents at the hotel and asked:

“From the time you met Johns and Alice until you left them that night was there any display of temper or unfriendliness between them?”

“No sir. They were always friendly.”

“That night your sister intended to go to your grandmother’s home?”

“Yes sir.”

“She was not on friendly terms with your father?”

“I don’t know.”

“Didn’t you testify at the inquest that she told you her father pointed a gun to her and threatened her?”

“She told me that.”

“You saw your father at the lake that evening?”

“Saw him at the hotel before we went in.”

“When Alice passed your father at the hotel they did not speak to each other?”

“They did not speak. He did not speak to any of us.”

Harry Williams Called

Harry Williams, a young man who accompanied Martha Holcomb to the lake, was next called and told of the party of six visiting the hotel, entering the café where they had something to eat and drink.

“How much did Alice drink?” asked District Attorney Bigelow.

“About as much as the rest.”

“How much was that?”

“About five bottles of beer each.”

“Before you left what was said about Alice going home?”

“The understanding was that Johns was to go home with Alice to her grandmother.”

“What did Johns say?”

“He said nothing, he was sick at his stomach.”

“What was the state of Alice Crispell at that time?”

“She was little under the influence of liquor.”

On cross examination witness said there was no quarrel and that Johns was sick and vomited before he started home with Alice.

“Was Mrs. Holcomb under the influence of liquor when you left the hotel?”

“We were all about the same, slightly under the influence.”

Sister of Defendant

Clara Johns, a sister of the defendant and a striking looking young woman, was called and questioned briefly. She told of the time her party returned to the Square, that she and Mr. Alcher reached her home on Wyoming street about 1 o'clock and found her brother Herbert home before her.

William Alcher, another of the party told of their being at the hotel together, getting back to Wilkes-Barre about twenty minutes after midnight and that about a half hour later he took Miss Johns home.

Tracing Steps of Alice

The district attorney then called witnesses to trace the steps of Alice and Johns from the time they left the hotel for her home until the body of the girl was found in the lake.

Stella Oney, a country girl who lived at Outlet, was called and testified to going home from the picnic ground on the night of July 4th about 11 o'clock with her brother and two others. On the road she said she passed Alice Crispell and Herbert Johns who were sitting on a curbstone along the road near the lake between the Harvey and Stardevant cottages. She said:

“As we were passing Alice spoke to me and asked me who my company was and I went over and whispered his name in her ear. Johns did not say anything. He did not speak to me.”

“After you left Alice and Johns did you meet any person until you reached home?” asked the district attorney.

“No sir.” The witness added that they went along slowly shooting off fire crackers, eating candy and jolting each other along the road. She admitted it was a lonely road.

Cross examined by attorney McGuigan the witness said the place where she saw Miss Crispell and Johns was nearer the Oneonta Hotel than the Weckesser boat house.

“Could you tell that Alice was intoxicated?” asked Attorney McGuigan.

“I could not tell. Did not think of such a thing.”

“Did you detect any odor of liquor?”

“I did, smelled the breathe, but did not know which one.”

Jesse Oney, a brother of Stella, who was with her that night corroborated the story told by his sister, and that he saw Alice and Johns seated along the roadway and that the Weckesser.

Man in Gray Suit

Mrs. Holcomb was recalled to testify that Johns wore a gray suit and white straw Panama hat on July 4th.

Joseph Pugh of Dorranceton who operated an auto bus at the lake on July 4th said he left the picnic grounds about 10:45 on that night and brought a party to the Oneonta Hotel, a distance of over four miles. He said he made the distance in fifteen minutes and saw Johns and some woman about fifteen feet from the Weckesser boat house. He was shown a picture and pointed out the exact location of the couple when he passed.

“In what direction were they going?” asked the district

attorney.

“They were standing still, possibly to keep out of the way of the machine.”

“How long do you know Herbert Johns?”

“About fifteen years.”

“Did you speak to him?”

“Yes, I said ‘Hello Bert.’ He made no answer that I heard.

Had to Be Escorted

Sephania Reese of Plymouth, who was at Harvey's Lake on July 4th operating an auto, told of leaving the Oneonta Hotel at 11:05 o'clock with a party for Lehman Centre and noticed a party of four or six in front of the hotel.

Mr. Reese said when he started out he saw a young man and woman on the highway going towards Outlet. The man wore a flexible straw hat. The girl wore a blue dress. The dress wore by the girl and taken away from the body was recovered from the lake was identified by the witness.

"What was the apparent condition of the young woman as to sobriety?" asked the district attorney.

"She had to be escorted. She could not walk alone, apparently, without assistance."

"What time was that?"

"On my return. About 11:35 o'clock."

On cross examination the witness said he saw a man lying on logs a short distance from the Weckesser boat landing when he passed.

Sounds As of Screams Heard

Mrs. S. T. Nicholson, a summer resident of the lake, said that on July 4, after 11 o'clock, she was returning home with her husband from a visit to friends at a neighboring cottage and that she resides next to the Weckesser cottage.

"State whether you heard anybody scream?" asked the district attorney.

"I did not hear a scream. I heard a noise in the distance."

"Was it a woman's voice?"

"I cannot say. It might have been. It was so far away its impossible to say."

Samuel T. Nicholson, the husband, was asked if he heard the scream and replied:

"I did not hear anything that made an impression on me at the time. It sounded like a cry from a boat, in the nature of a scream."

The witness admitted he thought no further of the noise he heard until after the hat was found near the Stardevant cottage. He added that on his way home he passed a man in the vicinity of the Weckesser boat house, but was unable to describe him.

On cross examination Mr. Nicholson said he paid no attention to the noise or scream when he first heard it, and that the man he passed aroused no suspicion by his appearance of actions.

F. J. Weckesser was called to describe his boat house and landing and the railings which guarded the sides of the same.

Found the Body

George Casterline of Harvey's Lake told of passing the Weckesser cottage about 8 o'clock on the morning of July 7 and of noticing the body of a woman floating in the lake. It was about two rods from shore and the same distance from the Weckesser landing. It was lying in about three feet of water.

On cross examination the witness said he recognized the body as that of Alice Crispell that there were no marks of violence on it and the clothing was not disarranged or torn.

B. VanBuskirk of Forty Fort told of leaving the lake on July 4 on the 12:05 car for this city, and of noticing a man that resembled Herbert Johns on the car.

Edward Kemmerer of this city, now summering at the lake, told of going in bathing in the lake on the morning of July 5 and of finding a lady's hat, identified as that of Alice Crispell, lying in the water near Nicholson's landing about three feet from shore. There were two hat pins in the hat.

Registered as Johns' Wife

Anthony Dane, a bartender at Germania Hotel, in this city, gave rather sensational testimony as to the relations of Herbert Johns and Miss Crispell, and that on July 2 and July 3 they secured a room at the hotel and registered as Herbert Johns and wife.

In answer to questions the witness said he knew them and asked them where they had been and they replied they were at Atlantic City and were married.

"Anything said about a wedding ring?" asked Mr. Bigelow.

"I asked to see the wedding ring and Alice said she had it on her left hand, under her glove, but she would not take the glove off."

Blanche Davis of this city said she knew Alice Crispell and Herbert Johns, had been in their company, that they were keeping company and had frequent quarrels.

Quarreled About Girl

"Tell us whether you heard them have any quarrel about some other girl?" asked the district attorney.

"Yes, at the Germania Hotel. Alice was angry and walked about the room."

"Who was present?"

"Her sister Martha was there. Alice was told that Martha was with Johns. We went down to the Germania and found Herbert and Martha sitting at a table."

"Tell us what was said there?"

"I don't remember. The quarrel was kept up for ten or fifteen minutes."

The witness appeared reluctant to testify and said that Alice later asked Johns to meet her.

On cross examination the witness admitted she did not see Alice or Johns together since last March.

Fred Butts, a civil engineer, produced a map giving the distances to the various points about the lake from the scene of the drowning.

Dr. S. M. Wolfe of this city assisted at the autopsy made on the body of Alice Crispell after it was exhumed. This was nine days after death. The doctor said an examination was made of the lungs, which were found filled with water.

Dr. Wolfe said they found nothing that he would call marks of violence. There was a shallow mark on the right wrist. His conclusion was that death was undoubtedly produced by drowning. He found no fractures or hemorrhage and that there was no condition or disease or pregnancy found.

Dr. P. J. Higgins of this city, who made the first post mortem examination, said it was made for the purpose of ascertaining whether there was a condition of pregnancy, but none was found. He was also present at the second autopsy, that he was absolutely sure drowning was that the cause of death and in this he was corroborated by the second autopsy.

Detective McKelvey was called and repeated a statement made by Johns at the jail that he walked down the road about a quarter of a mile with Alice after they passed. That he then decided to go home, said good bye, kissed her and left her on the road. This was given to corroborate the statement of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson that they saw a man walking on the road alone.

Asked For Discharge

Having called all the witnesses who could throw any light on the case, District Attorney Bigelow then rested the case for the Commonwealth.

Attorney McGuigan for the defendant at once asked that the defendant be discharged from custody. He gave his reasons, first that the Commonwealth had not proven that a murder was committed, and second that the defendant was not connected in any manner with her death, except through the suspicion that he was last seen in her company.

District Attorney Bigelow, while not demanding that the defendant be held, reviewed the various incidents and circumstances which case suspicion on Johns, the scream heard, the finding of the hat and later the body near where the couple were last seen.

Attorney McGuigan replied that the case consisted simply of suspicion and weak circumstantial evidence, and that if tried before a jury on such evidence their conscience would not permit a conviction.

Judge Fuller asked the district attorney if he had exhausted every effort to clear up the mystery. Mr. Bigelow replied that he had and that the only possible motive he could

find for such a crime, if one was committed, would be jealousy.

Prisoner Discharged

Judge Fuller then stated that he could not sustain a conviction under the evidence adduced against the accused, and he deemed it proper to discharge the prisoner from custody.

Johns was then given his liberty and was warmly congratulated by his friends. Among the first to greet him was his sister Clara, who came forward and kissed him.

“I Killed Alice”

“A.N.” Sends Post Card From New Rochelle; a Clue in Crispell Case

Declares That “Bert is Innocent” and That the Author is Guilty of Murdering the Girl--First Development Since the Release of Johns--May Be Cruel Joke

“Bert is innocent. I killed Alice because of her love for Johns. A. N.”

This is what a post card, post marking New Rochelle, N.Y., received at Harvey’s Lake by a member of the Crispell family this week, says. The county detectives, it is understood, will be asked to investigate.

As far as known this is the first new clue that has come to light in the Alice Crispell case since the discharge of Herbert Johns, left custody after he had been held a week charged with

the murder of the girl whose body was found in Harvey’s Lake several days after the Fourth of July on the night of which she is believed to have fallen or been thrown into the lake to drown.

William Crispell has been making inquiries for County Detective Holman during the past few days and it is supposed that he wants to turn over the post card, which it is said was addressed to the dead girl’s mother, for purposes of investigation.

Whether the card is from some cruel, practical joker, or is the express man of a tortured conscience remains a question.