

Lizzie Borden Case Is C

There's no getting away from it. Lizzie Borden has to be Fall River's most famous citizen.

Travel around the country and tell people you're from Fall River. Lizzie Borden's name will often be interjected into the conversation.

It must be true that everyone loves a mystery. As an unsolved crime, the hatchet slaying of Andrew Borden and his wife, Abby is a classic.

According to her jury, Lizzie wasn't the person who hacked Mr. and Mrs.

Borden to death on that sweltering morning of Thursday, Aug. 4, 1892. As the English Barrister Edgar Lustgarten opined in his "Verdict in Dispute," it was incredible to the jury that a refined, sheltered spinster of 32 could have killed her father and stepmother, particularly in such a brutal way.

But astounding, shocking things do happen.

What makes the Borden case so eternally fascinating is that no one can be sure exactly what hap-

pened inside that rather simple, frame house on Second Street where Lizzie lived with her parents, her older sister, Emma, and Bridget Sullivan, the family maid.

Lustgarten, like hosts of other chroniclers, doubted Lizzie's innocence on the grounds that "No one else had the opportunity or the motive."

But Lizzie had and still has her defenders. Some of them say the maid did it and others say it was an unknown tramp or intruder who wielded the hatchet.

The late Grace Hartley Howe, who was Lizzie's cousin and this city's postmistress, said the infamous Miss Borden was the most kindhearted and most charitable woman she ever knew.

The public actually knows little about her, although most have heard of her love for animals.

Despite the wagging tongues and the notoriety, Lizzie stayed in this community after her acquit-

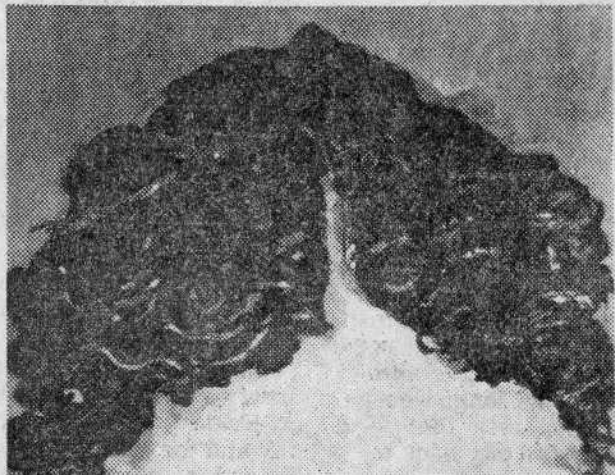
tal. She moved from the house on Second Street to a more imposing house, Maplecroft, on French Street, a more fashionable part of town.

It was at Maplecroft that the enigmatic Lizzie died of pneumonia on June 1, 1927 at the age 67. Her obituary in The Herald News summarized her life after the murders this way:

"She went on an occasional visit and received a few intimate friends, but to the general public she was almost unknown."

One of the innumerable interesting details about the Borden story is that Lizzie's sister, Emma, died 10 days later at her home in Newmarket, N.H.

Emma had been Lizzie's protector ever since the girls' mother died when Lizzie was three. Never a suspect herself since she was visiting friends out of town on the day of the murders, one can only speculate about Emma's feelings and the reason she moved away.



Classic Murder Mystery

But one can imagine the conversations the sisters might have had.

Newspapers throughout the world gave the story of the Borden murders front page coverage at the time and people have been writing about it ever since. There's no reason to think they will ever stop and there's no reason why they should.

Every visitor to the Historical Society wants to see the dinner pail that was used to carry her meals to her when she was in jail and the other Borden memorabilia. Unknown thousands have peered at the house on Second Street and tried to visualize what happened there 86 years ago.

And the answer still eludes us no matter how many books, ballets, operas and movies are produced.

Whatever the four Borden's knew is buried with them at Oak Grove Cemetery.

The four of them are

united in death like any ordinary family.

Maybe that's ironic and maybe it's not, but there's no mystery about why the

Borden case is so legendary.

Did she do it or didn't she? And if she did, what was her motive? If there

was ever a case that needed the uncanny expertise of a Sherlock Holmes or even a Columbo, this was it.

Congratulations

FALL RIVER
ON YOUR



FROM



This study of Lizzie Borden is the work of Sunny Marlow of New Bedford. It is based on a photograph dating from around 1890.

'I Am Innocent'

"I know I am innocent, and I have made up my mind that, no matter what happens, I will try to bear it bravely and make the best of it."

Thus began the story about Lizzie Borden that Kate McGuirk filed from Fall River on Sept. 18, 1982. It appeared the following day in the New York Recorder.

Mrs. McGuirk wrote that she had been associated with Miss Borden in the work of the Fruit and Flower Mission at the Central Congregational Church and that she was "anxious to see if this girl had changed her character and become a monster since the days when she used to load up the plates of vigorous young boys

and poor children at the annual turkey dinner provided during the holidays for them and take delight in their healthy appetities."

She visited Lizzie Borden in the Taunton jail on a Saturday, the "only day she is allowed to receive visitors." The writer described how she looked, unchanged but with "eyes red from long nights of weeping." She described what she wore, "a pretty plum-colored gown, with a dainty white apron . . . dressed as any lady would be who expected to receive callers."

During the interview, Lizzie Borden told the writer that what she found hardest about being in jail was "the night when there is no light. They do not

even allow me to have even a candle to read by, and to sit in the dark all evening is very hard; but I do not want any favors that are against the rules."

Lizzie Borden told her caller that she spent her days reading and sewing and writing. "Letters are my greatest comfort," she commented.

The woman accused of murdering her father and stepmother said that "There is one thing that hurts me very much. They say I don't show any grief. Certainly I don't in public. I never did reveal my feelings and I cannot change my nature now."

Miss Borden added "They say I don't cry. They should see me when I am alone or sometimes with my friends."