

[Phelps, Ida Sigler]

NEWS OF MACEDON [p. 5]

Macedon, July 29—The remains of Elmer Fish, whose body was found near Spencerport last week, were taken to Clifton Springs for burial. He leaves his wife and two young daughters; a sister, Mrs. William Stevenson, of Macedon, and a brother, Frank, of Palmyra. Mrs. Elmer Phelps leaves her husband and two little boys, of Macedon, and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Sigler, of Canandaigua. The remains were taken to Canandaigua and the funeral was held from the chapel in Woodlawn cemetery Saturday afternoon, Rev. A. E. Allison of the Macedon Universalist church officiating. (An account of the double death is found on page six.)

MACEDON ELOPING COUPLE FOUND DEAD [p. 6]

Disappeared from Home July 8 and Found in
Spencerport Woods Sixteen Days Later

The bodies of Elmer Fish, police constable of the village of Macedon, and Mrs. Elmer Phelps were found in a little hollow in a dense part of the woodland on the farm of Myron Adams, three and one-half miles west of Spencerport, Thursday afternoon. According to report, the man and woman eloped from their homes on July 8. They had been seen in each other's company for some time before the elopement. Both were married. Fish's wife and two girls and Mrs. Phelps' husband and two boys are still in Macedon. The couple lived in the same street, across the way from one another.

Besides being chief of police of the village, Fish was the representative of the Standard Oil company and prominent member of the Baptist church and Mrs. Phelps was a member of the Universalist church. Reports from Macedon were to the effect that the couple had left their homes on July 8. and that efforts to learn their whereabouts had not succeeded.

The body of the woman lay face upward on the ground close beside that of the man. She had been shot. One arm was folded over her breast, the other had fallen to her side with her hand almost touching that of the man, as if the couple had made an effort just before death overtook them to clasp hands. The light weight dark coat which she had been wearing and which evidently she had taken off just before the fatal shot was fired, had been thrown loosely over her shoulders.

But few clues which might lead to the identification of the couple were found. One of the most promising was a nickel badge which the man wore inside of his coat. The badge was inscribed: "Chief of Police." The man also wore on his finger a ring which showed that he was a member of the Modern Woodmen of the World. In his pocket was a brand new notebook, and a billfold, also two \$1 bills. A handkerchief was marked with the initial "E." A lavender [sic] necktie was marked with the firm name of Lebrecht & Jones, Palmyra.

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The revolver with which the shots were fired was so rusty that it was opened with difficulty. Three exploded shells were found in the magazine. It was found between the couple. Coroner Thomas A. Killip said that as near as could be ascertained there was no evidence of any shots, other than the two which caused death having taken effect.

The wound which caused the death of the man was a single shot through the temple on the left side. A similar wound and in the same locality had killed the woman. It was evident from the state of decomposition in which the bodies were at the time they were found that the couple had been dead at least ten days.

Charles Allen, who lives near the Colby Street Woods, said that about two weeks ago, he saw a strange man and woman going toward the Woods. The woman was dressed in dark clothing, and so was the man. The woman carried an umbrella, and the fact that an umbrella similar to the one Mr. Allen saw the woman carrying was found near the spot where the bodies were, leads to the belief that the couple seen by Mr. Allen were the same as the couple found Thursday.

Both were of large build, the man being 5 feet 10 inches tall, and perhaps weighing in the neighborhood of 175 pounds. The woman was but little shorter, probably 5 feet 9 inches tall, and weighed possibly 150 pounds. The clothing was of good quality and showed evidences that they were persons of some refinement. The woman wore two gold rings and a gold bracelet. She had been dressed in a dark suit, white shirtwaist, white shoes and white stockings. Pinned on the shirtwaist was a small gold watch. In a pocketbook was 14 cents in coins. There were no marks on her clothing to tell who she was, or where the clothing had been purchased.

Like the woman, the man was dressed in dark clothing of good quality. He wore small shoes with patent rubber soles.

Coroner Killip had the bodies sent to Walker's undertaking shop in Spencerport. According to what Adams, who found the bodies, told Coroner Killip, he had for the last week noticed an offensive odor on different occasions while walking through the woods near where the bodies were found. Thursday afternoon he determined to make a thorough search of the woods to learn the cause. He had not searched long when he came upon the bodies.

The spot which the couple chose to carry out their death pact in is almost in the center of a large wooded tract. The woods are dense and the undergrowth is quite heavy. The woods are about two miles from the B., L. & R. Railway. It is probable that the couple left the trolley line where it is nearest the woods and walked there.

A Macedon correspondent under Friday's date wrote as follows:

Tongues were busy in the little community of Macedon yesterday when the tragic love affair which resulted in the suicide pact between Mrs. Ida Phelps, wife of Elmer Phelps, and Police Chief Elmer Fish of Macedon [sic]. The bodies of the ill-fated couple, which were found on Thursday in a woodland near Spencerport, were removed yesterday from the undertaking rooms in Spencerport. The remains of Mrs. Phelps were taken to Macedon, and Fish's body was removed to Clifton Springs.

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It was reported tonight that the body of Mrs. Phelps, although in an advanced state of decomposition, had been positively identified in Macedon by friends who recognized the jewelry which she wore.

Although they had been implored to sever their relationship time and again by mutual friends, the couple had been unable to do so; and they evidently reached the conclusion that death was better than life under the circumstances. So they went to Spencerport, entered the woodland on the Mylo Adams farm, and made an end of it all. It is presumed that Fish shot the woman through the head and then turned his revolver on himself and fell at her side. Their hands were almost touching when their bodies were found by Mr. Adams.

While it was generally known that there was an attachment between Chief Fish and Mrs. Phelps, the news of the double tragedy came to the village as a distinct shock. After the efforts of their friends their open meetings ceased for a time; but it was learned that they had continued to meet in secret.

It was learned today that about ten days before the couple left their homes on their last journey together, they met with an automobile accident, when the machine which Mrs. Phelps was driving and in which Fish was riding turned turtle. Neither was injured to any extent. That accident when meetings between the two were supposed to have ceased, set the village tongues to wagging again, and it is thought that it may have had a bearing on the subsequent elopement and agreement to die.

So far as can be learned, neither Mrs. Phelps nor Chief Fish left any message behind when they went away together. How long they had been gone when they died, will remain a mystery probably, as the state in which the bodies were found precludes more than a surmise as on how long they had lain in the woods. It was learned today that they left Macedon on July 8 and they were seen on that day boarding a trolley car to Rochester.

One of the two children of Mrs. Phelps is being cared for by an aunt who lives in Macedon, and the other is with its grandmother in Canandaigua. Mrs. Fish left Macedon soon after the disappearance of her husband, taking her two children with her to Clifton Springs, where she is living with her mother.

Coroner Thomas A. Killip of Monroe County said tonight that it was unlikely that he should [would] conduct an inquest in the case. The funeral of Mrs. Phelps will take place tomorrow at 3 o'clock from the chapel of the Woodlawn cemetery in Canandaigua.

Chief Fish was in the neighborhood of 35 years of age, and Mrs. Phelps was about 25 years old.

The Herald, Fairport NY, Wed. 29 Jul 1918

Transcribed on 7 Mar 2009 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY