

Massachusetts State Police use genetic testing to ID 1978 murder victim, 'Granby Girl'

"The victim of an unsolved homicide dating back nearly 45 years has been identified thanks to advances in DNA testing and dogged work by investigators.

The remains of a woman discovered Nov. 15, 1978 buried under leaves on a logging road off Amherst Road in Granby have been identified as Patricia Ann Tucker, born July 28, 1950. Later married names for her were Patricia Heckman, Patricia Dale, and, at the time of her disappearance and death, Patricia Coleman.

"Unsolved cases sometimes seem to go cold, but investigators never give up," said Northwestern District Attorney David E. Sullivan. "The Massachusetts State Police, Granby Police and Northwestern District Attorney's staff worked collaboratively for years to achieve this breakthrough in the investigation, and—most importantly—provide some answers to victim's family."



Ms. Tucker's headstone in a Granby cemetery. Massachusetts State Police photo.

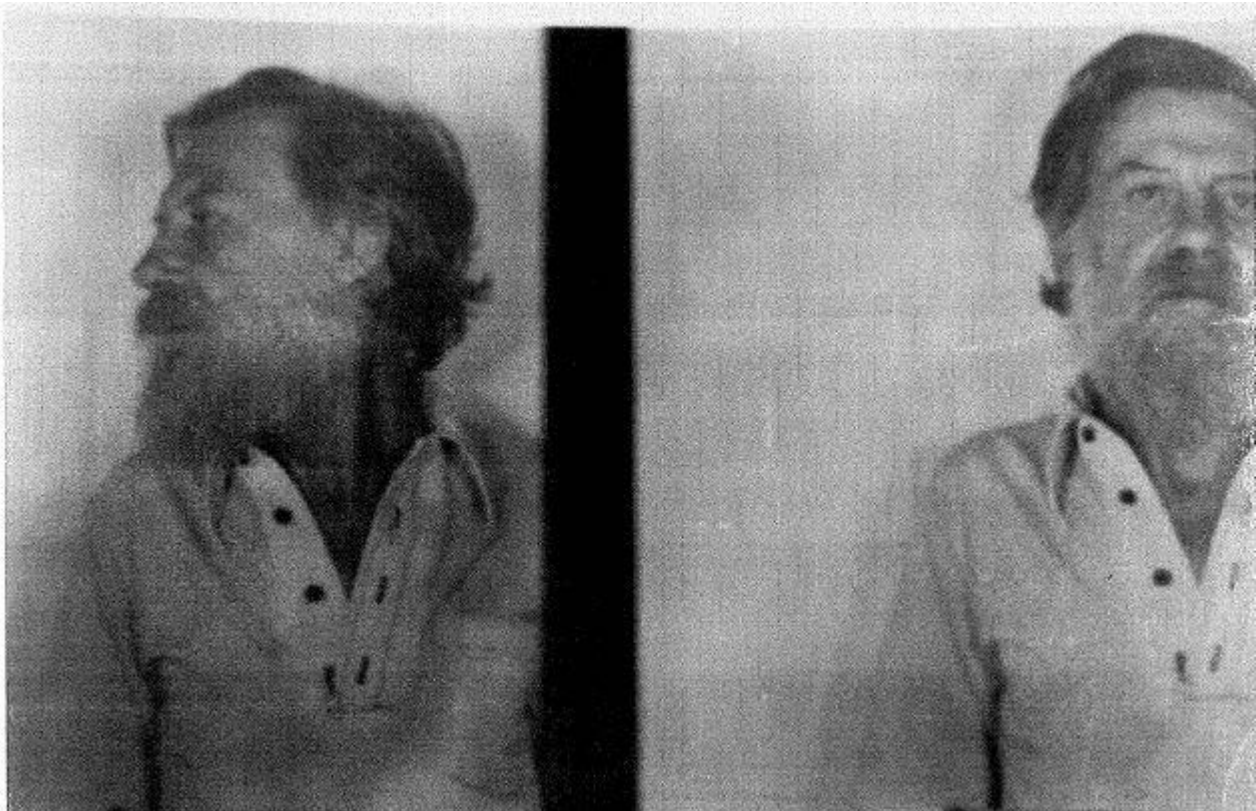
Tucker's remains have been buried in a Granby cemetery with a headstone marked "Unknown" for decades. Though the victim has now been positively identified, the identity of her killer has yet to be determined.

"While it's satisfying to finally know who 'Granby Girl' actually was, the investigation won't stop until we identify her killer and bring the family an additional measure of closure and justice," said First Assistant District Attorney Steven E. Gagne, using the name by which the victim was referred to in media accounts following the discovery of her body. "This investigation has spanned decades, and will continue until each and every possible lead is explored."

After the discovery of Tucker's remains, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner ruled that the cause of death was a bullet wound to the temple and the manner of death was homicide. The office estimated that she had been dead since about June of 1978 and that she was between 19 and 27 years

old.

Determining Tucker's identity, however, proved troublesome in the decades that followed, until recent advances in DNA technology opened new and promising avenues. About two years ago, Massachusetts authorities engaged the services of Othram, a private forensic laboratory based in Houston, Texas.



Photos of Gerry Coleman (now deceased), person of interest in Patricia Tucker's homicide. Massachusetts State Police photo.

Othram obtained Tucker's DNA profile and, through forensic genetic genealogy, identified a woman in Maryland who was likely related to her. Police contacted that woman, who in turn led them to Tucker's adult son. Comparison of his DNA to Tucker's DNA resulted in a 100 percent parent/child match. Tucker's son was just five years old when she disappeared.

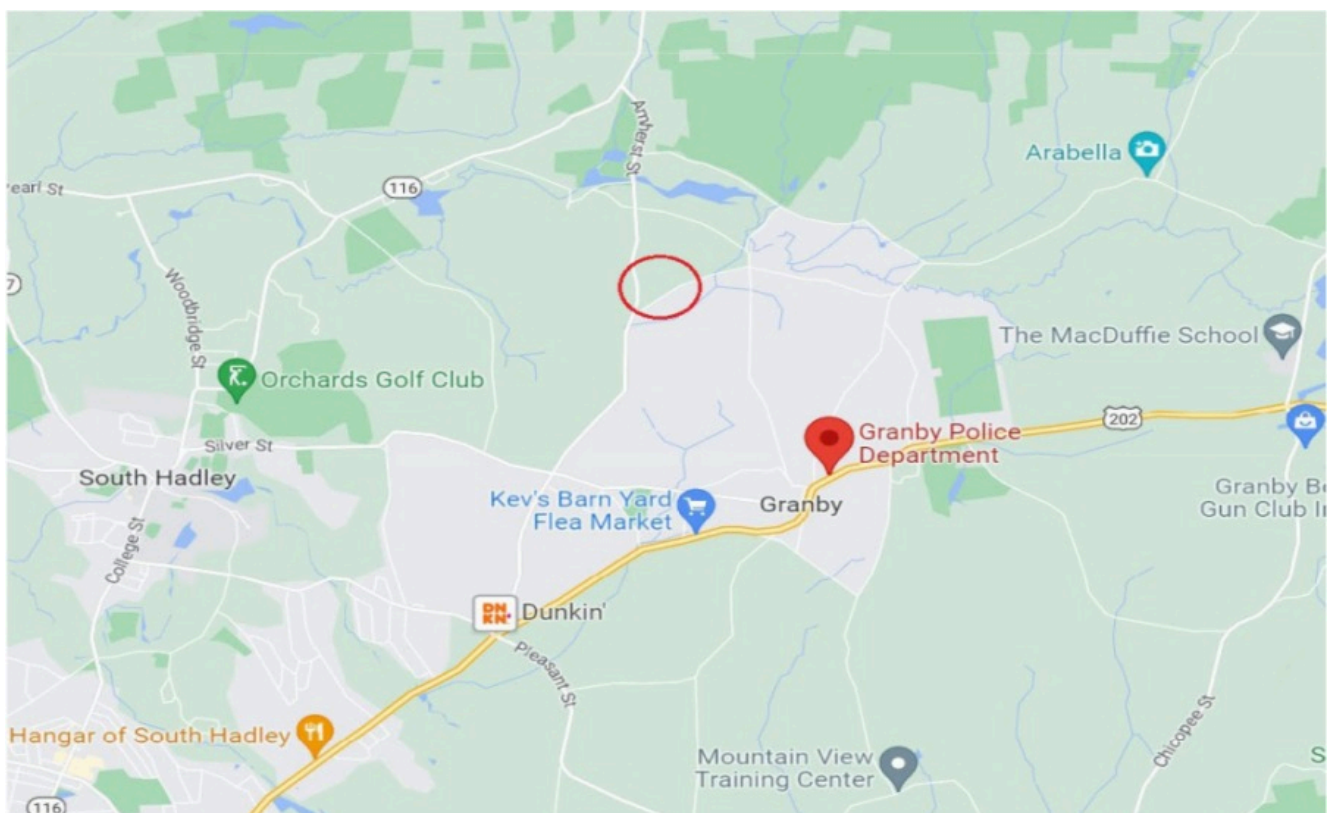
Subsequent investigation revealed that Tucker was married to Gerald Coleman at the time of her death. The two were married in 1977 in Middletown, Connecticut, and lived along the eastern shore of Lake Pocotopaug in East Hampton, Connecticut, at the time of her death. Gerald Coleman never reported his

wife missing, and died in a Massachusetts state prison in 1996. Police say Gerald Coleman is a person of interest in his wife's murder.

During a press conference today announcing the development in the case, Frist Assistant District Attorney Gagne read the following statement from Matthew Dale, the son of Patricia Tucker:

"First, I would like to say thank you to everyone in trying to identify my mother and wrapping your arms around her, especially the community of Granby. Thank you for never giving up on her. At least I have some answers now after 44 years. It's a lot to process, but hopefully, closure can begin now. Thank you again."

Anyone with information about this case is encouraged to contact the Granby Police Department by phone at 413-467-9222, email at jwhite@granbypd.org, or by submitting a message through their website, <http://www.granbypd.org/>." - Massachusetts State Police.



Location of the discovery of Ms. Tucker's body on Nov. 15, 1978. Massachusetts State Police photo.