



Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/5.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Suspects

Police are never entirely without suspects when prostitutes are victimized. In fact, a more common problem is too many suspects, with streetwalkers often unwilling to file charges or testify at trial. So it was in Vancouver, as the task force began logging names and descriptions of potential predators.

One whom the detectives considered was 36-year-old Michael Leopold, arrested in 1996 for assaulting a Low Track streetwalker, beating her and trying to force a rubber ball down her throat. A passerby heard the girl's screams and frightened Leopold away, but he surrendered to police three days later. Granted, he had been in custody since then, held in lieu of bond while he awaited trial, but with disappearances dating back to the mid-1980s, any sadist with a propensity for attacking hookers rated a closer look. Leopold regaled a court-appointed psychiatrist with his fantasies of kidnapping, raping and murdering prostitutes, but he insisted that the 1996 assault had been his only foray into real-life action. Task force investigators ultimately absolved Leopold of any involvement in the disappearances, but he had a rude surprise in store at his trial, in August 2000. Convicted of aggravated assault, Leopold received a 14-year prison sentence, with credit for the four years served before the trial.

Another suspect in the case was 43-year-old Alberta native Barry Thomas Neidermier. Convicted in 1990 of pimping a 14-year-old girl, Neidermier apparently left prison with a grudge against streetwalkers. In 1995 he was jailed again, this time for selling contraband cigarettes from his Vancouver tobacco shop, driven out of business by a heavy fine. In April 2000, Vancouver police charged Neidermier with violent attacks on seven Low Track hookers, the charges against him including assault, kidnapping, sexual assault, robbery, unlawful confinement and administering a noxious substance. None of Neidermier's alleged victims were drawn from the Vancouver missing list, and Constable Anne Drennan told reporters, "It's impossible to say at this point whether or not Neidermier may be related to those cases. Certainly he is a person of interest, and he will continue to be a person of interest."

More frustrating still were the suspects described to police without names or addresses. On August 10, 2001, Vancouver police announced their search for an unidentified rapist who attacked a 38-year-old victim outside her Low Track hotel a week earlier. "During the attack," police spokesmen said, "the man claimed responsibility for sexually assaulting and killing other women in the Downtown Eastside." The victim had escaped by leaping from her rapist's car, and while she offered a description to authorities, the boastful predator remains at large.

And there are countless more, besides. The Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society maintains a daily "bad date" file, page after page of reports from local prostitutes who have been threatened or injured by nameless "tricks." Their tales run the gamut from verbal abuse to beatings and stabbings, presented as a warning for those who support themselves and their habits on the streets.

All in vain.

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ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN

Low Track *By Michael Newton*



B.C. Map

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is the poorest neighborhood in British Columbia--in all of Canada, for that matter. No other slum or ghetto in the country matches the squalor of this 10-block urban wasteland, with its rundown hotels and pawn shops, stained and fractured sidewalks, gutters and alleyways littered with garbage, used condoms and discarded hypodermic needles. Downtown Eastside has another name as well, used commonly by residents and the police who clean up after them. They call the district "Low Track," and it fits.



Vancouver skyline

Low Track is Vancouver's Skid Row. Its cold heart is the intersection of Main and Hastings, nicknamed "Pain and Wastings" by the denizens who know it best. Low Track is the heart of British Columbia's rock-bottom drug scene, estimates of its junkie population ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 at any given moment. The drugs of choice are heroin and crack cocaine, supplied by motorcycle gangs or Asian cartels that stake out choice blocks for themselves and defend their turf with brute force. Most of Low Track's female addicts support their habits via prostitution, trolling the streets night and day, haunted creatures rendered skeletal by what one *Seattle Times* reporter has dubbed "the Jenny Crack diet." Safe sex is an illusion in this neighborhood, which boasts the highest HIV infection rate in North America.

Low Track's recent history is a tale of unrelenting failure. Vancouver lured affluent tourists by the hundreds of thousands to Expo '86, but the prospect of easy money brought a corresponding influx of the poor and hopeless, most of them gravitating to Downtown Eastside. Around the same time, competition among drug cartels flooded the district with cheap narcotics, encouraging a new generation of addicts to turn on, tune in and drop out. Surrounding districts passed new laws to purge their streets of prostitutes, driving the women out of Burnaby and North Vancouver, into Downtown Eastside. In 1994, federal cutbacks left welfare recipients short of cash, while mental hospitals disgorged patients onto the streets. By 1997, careless sex and shared needles had taken their toll in Low Track, one-fourth of the neighborhood's residents testing HIV-positive. So far, government needle-exchange programs have failed to stem the plague, despite provision of some 2.8 million needles in Low Track each year.



Missing women poster

Low Track is infamous for its "kiddy stroll," featuring prostitutes as young as 11. Some of those work the streets, while others are secured by their pimps in special trick pads. New prospects arrive in Low Track every day, runaways and adventure-seekers dubbed "twinkies" by those already trapped in The Life. A 1995 survey of Downtown Eastside's working girls revealed that 73 percent of them entered the sex trade as children and the same percent were unwed mothers, averaging three children each. Of those, 90 percent had lost children to the state; fewer than half knew where their children were. More than 80 percent of the Low Track prostitutes were born and raised outside Vancouver. In 1998 they averaged one death per day from drug overdoses, the highest rate in Canadian history.

But there were other dangers on the street, as well. Three years before Expo '86 opened its gates, prostitutes began to vanish from Low Track. By the time police noticed the trend, 14 years later, more than two-dozen had already disappeared without a trace.

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/2.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Missing

Streetwalkers are by nature an elusive breed. Many begin as adolescent runaways and never lose the habit of evasion, changing names and addresses so often that investigators have no realistic hope of tracking a specific prostitute for any length of time. When hookers vanish--as opposed to being slain and left in garbage dumpsters or motel rooms, in canals and vacant lots--no one can say with any certainty if they have disappeared by choice or through foul play.

Too often, no one cares.

No pattern was discernible in the early cases. Rebecca Guno, 23, was last seen alive on June 22, 1983, reported missing three days later. Most of Downtown Eastside's vanished women were not so promptly missed. The next "official" victim, 43-year-old Sherry Rail, would not be reported missing until *three years* after her January 1984 disappearance. Thirty-three-year-old Elaine Allenbach told friends she was moving to Seattle in March 1986 but she never arrived, reported missing in mid-April. Teresa Ann Williams, a 26-year-old Aboriginal, was last seen alive in July 1988, reported missing in March 1989. Fourteen months elapsed between the August 1989 disappearance of 40-year-old mental patient Ingrid Soet and the report to police on October 1, 1990. The first black victim, Kathleen Wattley, was 39 years old when she vanished in June 1992, reported missing on the 29th of that month.



Guno, Rail, Williams, Soet, Wattley, victims

The unknown predator(s) took a three-year vacation before claiming 47-year-old Catherine Gonzales in March 1995, her disappearance reported to authorities on February 9, 1996. The year's second victim, in April, was 32-year-old Catherine Knight, missing seven months before police received the report on November 11. Dorothy Spence, a 36-year-old Aboriginal, vanished four months after Knight, in August 1995, but her disappearance was reported earlier, on October 30. The year's last victim was 23-year-old Diana Melnick, lost in December, reported missing four days after Christmas.



Gonzales, Knight, Spence,
Melnick, victims

Again the hunt was stalled, this time until October 1996, when 24-year-old Tanya Holyk disappeared (reported on November 3). Olivia Williams rated less concern at age 22, her December 1996 disappearance ignored until July 4, 1997.



Holyk, Williams, victims

Stephanie Lane, the youngest victim so far at age 20, was hospitalized for an episode of drug psychosis on March 10, 1997. Released the following day, she was last seen alive at the Patricia Hotel on Hastings Street. Janet Henry survived a near-miss with serial killer Clifford Olson in the 1980s, drugged but spared by Olson for reasons unknown, yet she wound up in Low Track a decade later and met another predator. Henry was reported missing on June 28, 1997, two days after her last contact with relatives.



Lane, Henry, victims

August 1997 was the most lethal month to date, three women lost, although police would not learn of those cases for more than a year. Marnie Frey, age 25, was not reported missing until September 4, 1998. Nineteen days later, on September 23, the first missing-person report was filed on 32-year-old Helen Hallmark. Jacqueline Murdock, 28, was not reported missing until October 3, 1998. Detectives still have no idea exactly when or where the women vanished.



Frey, Hallmark, Murdock,
victims

The next official victim, 33-year-old Cindy Beck, dropped out of sight in September 1997, but her disappearance was reported on April 30, 1998, four months before the first of August's missing women. Andrea Borhaven's friends recall that she "never had an address" and "just bounced off the walls." She vanished sometime during

1997, they believe, but no one bothered to inform police until May 18, 1999. Thirty-nine-year-old Kerry Koski was popular, by contrast: she disappeared in January 1998 and was reported missing on the 29th of that month.



Beck, Borhaven, Koski,
victims

Four more women would vanish before Vancouver police took an interest in the case. Jacqueline McDonnell, 23, disappeared in mid-January 1998, officially reported missing on February 22, 1999. Inga Hall, age 46 or 47, was last seen alive in February 1993, her disappearance logged with remarkable celerity on March 3. Twenty-nine-year-old Sarah Jane deVries was last seen alive on April 14, 1998, reported missing by friends the same day. She left behind a diary filled with observations on a stunted life, including this: "I think my hate is going to be my destination, my executioner." Sheila Egan, a prostitute since age 15, vanished at 20, in July 1998 (reported on August 5).



McDonnell, Hall, deVries,
Egan

As that lethal summer waned, detectives in Vancouver were about to have a nightmare thrust upon them. It continues to the present day, and only time will tell if it will ever be resolved.

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http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/3.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Searchers

The official search for Vancouver's missing women began in September 1998, after an Aboriginal group sent police a list of victims allegedly murdered in Downtown Eastside, with a demand for a thorough investigation. Authorities examined the list and pronounced it flawed--some of the "victims" had died from disease or drug overdoses; others had left Vancouver and were found alive--but Detective Dave Dickson was intrigued by the complaint and launched his own inquiry, drawing up a list of Low Track women who had simply disappeared without a trace. There were enough names on that second list to worry Dickson and inspire his superiors to create an investigative task force.

The four-year search for answers had begun.

Vancouver police began their review with 40 unsolved disappearances of local women, dating back to 1971. The lost came from all walks of life and all parts of Vancouver, but the search for a pattern narrowed the roster to 16 Low Track prostitutes reported missing since 1995. By the time detectives made their first arrest in the case, that list would grow to include 54 women, vanished between 1983 and 2001, with 85 investigators assigned to the case, but in the early stages of the search police were busy trying to decide if they had a serial killer at large in Vancouver.



Inspector Kim Rossmo,
Vancouver Police

One who thought so was Inspector Kim Rossmo, creator of a "geographic profiling" technique designed to map unsolved crimes and highlight any pattern or criminal "signature" overlooked by detectives assigned to individual cases. In May 1999 Rossmo reported an unusual concentration of disappearances in Downtown Eastside, but police dismissed the notion in their public statements, insisting that the vanished women might have left Vancouver voluntarily, in search of greener streets. Inspector Gary Greer advised the press, "We're in no way saying there is a serial murderer out there. We're in no way saying that all these people missing are dead. We're not saying any of that." Rossmo, meanwhile, stood by his theory and resigned from the force after receiving a punitive demotion. His subsequent lawsuit against Vancouver P.D. was dismissed.

Internal dissension was not the only problem faced by police in their search for Low Track's missing women. Canada's Violent Crime Linkage System did not track missing persons without some evidence of foul play, and task force investigators were so far empty-handed. In the absence of a corpse or crime scene, even a specific date for most of the disappearances, forensic evidence was nonexistent. Pimps and prostitutes were naturally reluctant to cooperate with the same officers who might throw them in jail. (At one point, detectives identified a man who had serially assaulted five streetwalkers in two months, but none of the victims would file a complaint.) Resources were perpetually limited, despite increasing media attention to the case.

Still, the detectives forged ahead as best they could. In June 1999 they met with relatives of several missing women, seeking information and DNA material for prospective identification of remains. Police and coroners' databases were reviewed throughout Canada and the United States, as were various drug rehabilitation facilities, witness protection programs, hospitals, mental institutions and AIDS hospices. Burial records at Glenhaven Cemetery were examined, going back to 1978. Grim news came from Edmonton, Alberta, where police had logged 12 unsolved prostitute murders between 1986 and 1993. Closer to home, four hookers had been killed and dumped around Agassiz in 1995 and 1996, but none of them were from the Low Track missing list.

The search went on, each new day reminding officers that they were literally clueless, chasing shadows in the dark.

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/4.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Dead or Alive?

Four more prostitutes vanished from Downtown Eastside while the task force was compiling data, in the last three months of 1998. Julie Young, age 31, was last seen alive in October, finally reported missing on June 1, 1999. Angela Jardine, a 28-year-old addict with the mental capacity of a 10-year-old child, had been working Low Track's streets for eight years when she vanished in November 1998, her disappearance reported on December 6. Michelle Gurney, age 30, dropped out of sight in December, reported missing three days before Christmas. Twenty-year-old Marcella Creison got out of jail on December 27, 1998, but never returned to the apartment where her mother and boyfriend were preparing a belated Christmas dinner. Police learned of her disappearance on January 11, 1999.



Young, Jardine, Gurney,
Creison, victim

Not every woman on the missing list was gone forever, though. Between September 1999 and March 2002, five of the lost were found, dead or alive, and thus were deleted from the roster of presumed kidnap victims.

The first to vanish had been Patricia Gay Perkins, 22 years old when she abandoned Low Track and a 1-year-old son in an effort to save her own life. An incredible 18 years elapsed before she was reported missing to police, in 1996. Another three years passed before she saw her name on a published list of Vancouver's missing hookers, on December 15, 1999, and telephoned from Ontario to tell police she was alive, drug-free and living well.

Another survivor, also discovered in December 1999, was 50-year-old Rose Ann Jensen. She had dropped out of sight in October 1991 and was reported missing a short time later, added to the official missing roster when Vancouver's task force organized in 1998. Police found her alive in Toronto while scanning a national health-care database. Vancouver Constable Anne Drennan told reporters that Jensen had left Downtown Eastside "for personal reasons. It doesn't appear she knew she was being looked for."

Relatives of Linda Jean Coombes twice reported her missing, in August 1994 and again in April 1999. Unknown to her family or police, Linda had died of a heroin overdose on February 15, 1994, her body delivered to Vancouver's morgue without identification. Her mother viewed a photo of the "Jane Doe" corpse in 1995 but could not recognize her own child, wasted by narcotics, malnutrition and disease. Identification was finally made in September 1999, via comparison of DNA material submitted by the family, and another name was removed from the official victims list.

A similar solution removed Karen Anne Smith from the roster. Reported missing on April 27, 1999, she had in fact died on February 13, 1999, at the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton. The cause of death was listed as heart failure related to hepatitis C. Once again, DNA contributed to the belated identification.

Another Low Track prostitute, 24-year-old Anne Wolsey, was reported missing by her mother on January 1, 1997, though the actual date of her disappearance was anyone's guess. Five years later, in March 2002, Wolsey's father called from Montreal to tell police his daughter was alive and well. Estranged from his ex-wife by a bitter divorce, Wolsey's father--like Anne herself--had been unaware of the police report filed in Vancouver until a suspect's arrest renewed media interest in the case.

Five out of 54 deleted from the list of vanished women, but their slots never remained empty for long. There were always new victims, it seemed, but where had they gone?

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ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Suspects

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More frustrating still were the suspects described to police without names or addresses. On August 10, 2001, Vancouver police announced their search for an unidentified rapist who attacked a 38-year-old victim outside her Low Track hotel a week earlier. "During the attack," police spokesmen said, "the man claimed responsibility for sexually assaulting and killing other women in the Downtown Eastside." The victim had escaped by leaping from her rapist's car, and while she offered a description to authorities, the boastful predator remains at large.

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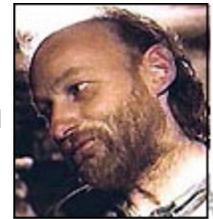
Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/6.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Piggy Palace

Late in 1998, task force detectives got their best lead yet from 37-year-old Bill Hiscox. Widowed two years earlier, Hiscox had turned to drugs and alcohol after his wife died, rescued from the downhill slide when his foster sister found him a job at P&B Salvage in Surrey, southeast of Vancouver. The proprietors were Robert William "Willie" Pickton and his brother David, of Port Coquitlam. Hiscox's helpful relative was Robert Pickton's "off-and-on" girlfriend in 1997, and Hiscox picked up his paychecks at the brothers' Port Coquitlam pig farm, described by Hiscox as "a creepy-looking place" patrolled by a vicious 600-pound boar. "I never saw a pig like that, who would chase you and bite at you," he told police. "It was running out with the dogs around the property."

Hiscox had grown concerned about the Picktons after reading newspaper reports on Vancouver's missing women. Robert Pickton was "a pretty quiet guy, hard to strike up a conversation with, but I don't think he had much use for men." Pickton drove a converted bus with deeply tinted windows, Hiscox told authorities. "It was Willie's pride and joy," he said, "and he wouldn't part with it for anything. Willie used it a lot." The brothers also ran a supposed charity, the Piggy Palace Good Times Society, registered with the Canadian government in 1996 as a non-profit society intended to "organize, co-ordinate, manage and operate special events, functions, dances, shows and exhibitions on behalf of service organizations, sports organizations and other worthy groups." According to Hiscox, the "special events" convened at Piggy Palace-- a converted building at the hog farm--were drunken raves that featured "entertainment" by an ever-changing cast of Downtown Eastside prostitutes.



Robert William
(Willie) Pickton

Police were already familiar with the Pickton brothers. David Francis Pickton had been convicted of sexual assault in 1992, fined \$1,000 and given 30 days' probation. His victim in that case told police Pickton had attacked her in his trailer, at the pig farm, but she managed to escape when a third party came in and distracted him. Port Coquitlam authorities sought an order to destroy one of David's dogs in April 1998, under the Livestock Protection Act, but the proceedings were later dismissed without explanation. Pickton had also been sued three times for damages, resulting from traffic accidents in 1988 and 1991, settling all three claims out of court.



David Francis Pickton

Soon after Piggy Palace opened, the Pickton brothers and their sister, Linda Louise Wright, found themselves in court again, sued Port Coquitlam officials for allegedly violating city zoning ordinances. According to the complaint, their property was zoned for agricultural use, but they had "altered a large farm building on the land for the purpose of holding dances, concerts and other recreations" that sometimes drew as many as 1,800 persons. Following a New Year's Eve party on December 31, 1998, the Picktons were slapped with an injunction banning future parties, the court order noting that police were henceforth "authorized to arrest and remove any person" attending public events at the farm. The "society" finally lost its nonprofit status in January 2000, for failure to provide mandatory financial statements.

Other charges filed against Robert Pickton were more serious. In March 1997 he was charged with the attempted murder of a drug-addicted prostitute, Wendy Lynn Eistetter, whom he stabbed several times in a wild melee at the pig farm. Eistetter told police that Pickton handcuffed and attacked her on March 23, but that she escaped after disarming him and stabbing him with his own knife. A motorist found Eistetter beside the highway at 1:45 a.m. and took her to the nearest emergency room, while Pickton sought treatment for a single stab wound at Eagle Ridge Hospital. He was released on \$2,000 bond, but the charge was later dismissed without explanation in January 1998.

The stabbing had crystallized Bill Hiscox's suspicion about Robert Pickton, whom he called "quite a strange character." Aside from the assault, Hiscox told police, there were "all the girls that are going missing, and all the purses and IDs that are out there in his trailer and stuff." Pickton, Hiscox told detectives, "frequents the downtown area all the time, for girls."

Police recorded Hiscox's statement and a detective accompanied him to the pig farm, afterward vowing "to push the higher-ups, all the way to the top, to investigate." Subsequent press reports indicate that the farm was searched three times, apparently without result. The brothers would remain on file, "persons of interest" to the inquiry, but no surveillance would be mounted on the farm.

Back in Vancouver, meanwhile, the list of missing women grew longer, with no end in sight.

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/7.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Limbo

As a new millennium dawned in Vancouver, the task force investigation had expanded to include more than three times the number of missing women initially listed in 1998. Some of the new presumed victims had been missing since the mid-1980s, their disappearance recognized only now, while others continued to vanish from Low Track with the search still in progress. Warnings and surveillance went for nothing, it seemed, as more women dropped out of sight.



Miner, Mah, victims

From the '80s, police now listed presumed kidnap victims Leigh Miner, last seen in December 1984, and Laura Mah, whose date of disappearance was listed simply as "1985." Details were equally lacking for vanished Nancy Clark (1991), Elsie Sebastien (1992), and 17-year-old Angela Arsenault (1994). Detectives had a month for Frances Young--April 1996--but no other details were available concerning the 38-year-old woman's final days.

Police acknowledged the disappearance of three more women in 1997, bringing that lethal year's total to nine, but evidence remained elusive. One of the three, 52-year-old Maria Laliberte, had made her last known appearance in Low Track on New Year's Day, but victims Cindy Feliks and Sherry Irving proved less accommodating, their movements so erratic that police could not pinpoint the season of their disappearances, much less specific dates.



Laliberte, Feliks, Irving,
victims

And so it went. Thirty-seven-year-old Ruby Hardy vanished sometime in 1998, but she was not reported missing until March 27, 2002. Wendy Crawford, Jennifer Furminger and Georgina Papin all disappeared in 1999, ignored until police listed their names in March 2000. A month later, on April 25, 2000, detectives acknowledged the February 1999 disappearance of 32-year-old Brenda Wolfe. Tiffany Drew, age 27, vanished on December 31, 1999, but she would not make the list for another two years, reported missing on February 8, 2002.



Hardy, Crawford, Furminger,
Papin, Wolfe, Drew, victim

At times it seemed a hopeless cause, but Vancouver police persevered. Slowly, publicity began to make a difference, if only in the speed with which new missing persons were reported. Dawn Crey, 42, was last seen alive on 1 November 2000, reported missing on December 11. Forty-three-year-old Debra Lynn Jones vanished on December 21, 2000, her disappearance logged on Christmas Day. Police stalled unaccountably on listing Patricia Johnson, last seen alive on February 27, 2001, but 34-year-old Yvonne Boen was listed on March 21, 2001, only five days after she vanished. Heather Bottomley, a 24-year-old described in Vancouver police reports as a "violent suicide risk," held the record, reported missing the same day she vanished, on April 17, 2001. Heather Chinnock disappeared that same month, followed by Angela Joesbury in June and Sereena Abotsway in July. Thirty-four-year-old Diane Rock vanished on October 19, 2001, reported missing on December 13. Mona Wilson, 26, was last seen alive on November 23, 2001, added to the list a week later.



Crey, Jones, Johnson, victim

Whatever progress detectives had made in tracking disappearances, the killer--if indeed there *was* a killer--seemed to have grown more brazen, striking at a pace unrivaled since the disappearances began. Police, for their part, could only watch and wait for their faceless quarry to make a mistake that would finally place him within their grasp.

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/8.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Predators

Because the Downtown Eastside disappearances spanned nearly two decades, Vancouver police had to consider the possibility that some sexual predator identified with other crimes might be responsible for some of the earlier cases. Unfortunately, in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest generally, there was no shortage of serial killers competing for attention.

First among equals in that respect was Seattle's elusive "Green River Killer," blamed for the death or disappearance of 49 women--mostly prostitutes or runaways--between January 1982 and April 1984. The "River Man" was also suspected of 40-plus slayings in neighboring Snohomish County, but his murder spree had ended with a whimper, leaving police and FBI profilers wringing their hands in frustration. Finally, on November 30, 2001, DNA evidence led to the arrest of 52-year-old Gary Leon Ridgeway, charged with murder in four of the Green River slayings. Vancouver police acknowledged reports that Ridgeway had visited their city, but no evidence surfaced connecting him to Low Track's missing women.



Gary Leon
Ridgeway

Another long-shot candidate was Dayton Leroy Rogers, a sadistic foot fetishist dubbed the "Molalla Forest Killer, who began stalking prostitutes around Portland, Oregon in January 1987. By August of that year he had claimed eight lives and injured 27 other victims, identified after he carelessly performed his last killing before multiple witnesses. Incarcerated since August 7, 1987, Rogers was examined and finally rejected as a possible suspect in the Vancouver abductions listed before that date.



Dayton Leroy
Rogers, mug shot

Keith Hunter Jespersen was a British Columbia native, born in 1956, who washed out of training for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police after an injury left him unfit for active duty. Instead, he hit the road as a long-haul trucker, traveling widely across North America--and murdering various women in the process. Nicknamed the "Happy Face Killer," for the smiling cartoon signature on letters he sent to police, Jespersen was jailed for a Washington murder in March 1995. At one point he claimed 160 slayings, describing his female victims as "piles of garbage" dumped on the roadside, and while he later recanted those statements, convictions in Washington and Wyoming removed him permanently from circulation. Once again, however, no link could be found between "Face" and the vanished Low Track hookers.



Keith Hunter
Jespersen

Other prospects were considered and rejected in their turn. George Waterfield Russell, sentenced to life imprisonment for the murders of three Bellevue, Washington women in 1990, was discounted because he enjoyed posing his mutilated victims, putting them on display after he slaughtered them in their own homes. Robert Yates, convicted in October 2000 of killing 13 prostitutes around Spokane, Washington, suspected of two more murders in a neighboring county, could not be placed in Vancouver for any of the local disappearances. John Eric Armstrong, a US Navy veteran arrested in April 2000, confessed to slaying 30 women around the world, but his statements excluded Vancouver and no evidence was found to contradict him.



Robert Yates

In Vancouver itself, police cast an eye on twice-convicted rapist Ronald Richard McCauley. Sentenced to 17 years in prison on his first conviction, in 1982, McCauley was paroled on September 14, 1994. A year later, in September 1995, he was charged with another assault, convicted and returned to prison in 1996. While never formally charged with murder, he is described by police as their prime suspect in the slayings of four Low Track prostitutes killed in 1995 and early 1996. Three of the victims were dumped between Agassiz and Mission, where McCauley resided; the fourth was found on Mt. Seymour, in North Vancouver. Besides those cases, in July 1997 Vancouver police declared McCauley a suspect in the 1995 disappearances of Catherine Gonzales, Catherine Knight and Dorothy Spence. No charges were forthcoming, however, and McCauley was forgotten four years later, as the spotlight focused on another suspect.



John Eric
Armstrong

This one, too, would be familiar to detectives from the early days of their investigation--and their belated reconsideration would cause no end of grief for the authorities.

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/9.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN The Body Farm



Pig farm, aerial view

Vancouver residents were unprepared for the announcement when it came, on February 7, 2002. That morning, Vancouver Constable Catherine Galliford told reporters that searchers were scouring the Pickton pig farm and adjacent property in Port Coquitlam, first examined back in 1997. "I can tell you a search is being conducted on that property and the search is being executed by the missing-women task force," she reported. Robert Pickton was already in custody, jailed on a charge of possessing illegal firearms. Bailed out on that charge, he was arrested once more on February 22, this time facing two counts of first-degree murder. Authorities identified the victims as Sereena Abotsway and Mona Wilson.



Abotsway, Wilson, victims

Pickton professed to be "shocked" by the charges, but relatives of the victims were equally agitated, noting that both women vanished three years after Piggy Palace was identified as a potential murder scene. On March 8, investigators declared that DNA recovered from the farm had been conclusively identified as Abotsway's. A month later, on April 3, Pickton was charged with three more counts of murder, naming victims Jacqueline McDonnell, Heather Bottomley and Diane Rock. A sixth murder charge, for Angela Joesbury, was filed against Pickton six days later. As in the first two cases, all four victims had been slain since Bill Hiscox had fingered Pickton as a suspect in the Low Track disappearances. May 22 a seventh first-degree murder charge was filed against Pickton when the remains of Brenda Wolfe were found on his farm.



Peter Ritchie, lawyer for
Robert William Pickton

If Pickton was the Low Track slayer, survivors asked, why had the searches of his property in 1997 and 1998 failed to uncover any evidence? More to the point, how could he abduct and murder additional victims between 1999 and 2001, when he should have been under police surveillance?

Proclaiming his innocence on all charges, Pickton was scheduled for trial in November 2002, but detectives were not finished with their search at Piggy Palace. The full operation, they announced on March 21, 2002, might drag on for as much as a year. As for other victims and any further charges, they refused to speculate. No charges have been filed against David Pickton or any other suspect.

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/10.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN

The Abyss

Tabloid headlines screamed their verdict in Vancouver on 10 April 2002: "54 WOMEN FED TO PIGS!"

But were they?

Suspect Robert Pickton, charged with seven murders so far, is presumed innocent until proven guilty, his tentative trial date still six months away at this writing. Police searching his pig farm have declared that they will not be finished with their work before spring of 2003. With results from that search pending, the fate of 47 other missing women remains conjectural--and some critics suggest that the official list is only the tip of the iceberg.

On February 13, 2002, nine days before Pickton was slapped with his first murder charge, spokesmen for Prostitution Alternatives Counseling Education claimed that 110 streetwalkers from British Columbia's Lower Mainland had been slain or kidnapped in the past two decades. Computer data obtained from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police placed the number even higher: 144 prostitutes murdered or missing with foul play suspected over the province at large.

It may be comforting to think one human monster is responsible for all those crimes, at least within Vancouver, but is it a realistic hope? Before Pickton's indictment, detectives favored other theories. Some believed a long-haul trucker was disposing of Vancouver's prostitutes, while others thought the missing women had been lured aboard foreign cargo ships, gang-raped and murdered by crewmen, then buried at sea. Still others rejected the serial killer hypothesis until the very day of Pickton's arrest. The only thing certain about Vancouver's mystery, at this point, is its bitter divisiveness.

Victoria attorney Denis Bernstein announced on April 17, 2002, that he will file a multimillion-dollar class-action suit against Robert Pickton, the Vancouver Police Department and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, seeking damages for relatives of the missing and murdered women. Bernstein accused police of "willful negligent action" in the case, telling reporters, "Deaths may have been prevented. All of these women were somebody's child. Someone loved them."

Among surviving relatives, meanwhile, there is dissension over calls for a public inquiry into police handling of the four-year investigation. Lynn Frey, stepmother of missing Marnie Frey, told the press, "Everyone's fighting about lawyers, inquiries or fundraising, yet none of that is going to bring our loved ones back." Several Aboriginal families complain of "interference" by Vancouver Police Department's native liaison unit, allegedly telling them not to speak with journalists. Victim Helen Hallmark's mother defied the ban, declaring, "We need to meet among ourselves and I'm tired of the native liaison unit telling us what to do." In response to the perceived whitewash, Kathleen Hallmark announced plans to retain a partner of famed attorney Johnny Cochrane and pursue her legal remedies in court.

In the midst of so much tumult, Canadian musicians declared their intent to release a special song, "A Buried Heart," with proceeds from its sale directed toward

construction of a drug treatment and recovery center in Downtown Eastside. Artists signed on for the project at last report included headliners Sarah McLachlan and Nellie Furtado, Colin James, Gord Downey and John Wozniak. No site so far has been selected for the new facility. In a parallel effort, Val Hughes--sister of missing Kerry Koski --told reporters that a Missing Women's Trust Fund has been established at the Bank of Montreal, accepting donations for construction of a "rapid opiate detoxification center in the Downtown Eastside."

Beyond hope for the future, there is anger. Val Hughes supports the ongoing task force investigation, but she told *The Province*, "Like all family members, I feel molten rage when it comes to the Vancouver city police. Their view was that it didn't matter if a serial killer was at work, as long as it was confined to one geographical area where the women were expendable people no one cared about. They told us our loved ones were just out partying. We want a full public inquiry, not to interfere with the criminal prosecution but to get answers."

Those answers, if they come at all, are still a vague and distant object of desire.

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/11.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Worst Canadian Serial Killer

Four more charges of murder were laid against Robert William Pickton in Port Coquitlam court Wednesday, October 2, 2002.

Pickton has now been charged with first degree murder in the deaths of Heather Gabrielle Chinnock, Tanya Marlo Holyk, Sherry Irving, and Inga Monique Hall.

Tanya Holyk and Inga Hall appeared on the earliest Missing Women list. Holyk was 21 when she was last seen in October 29 of 1996, Hall was 46 when she disappeared February 26, 1998.

Sherry Irving was 23 when she disappeared two months after Holyk, in December of 1996. Heather Chinnock was 31 when she vanished just 18 months ago, on April 15, 2001.

This brings the total number of murder charges laid against Pickton to 15, all women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The Missing Women's Task Force began searching the Pickton farm in Port Coquitlam in February of this year.

The number of women on the Missing Women list is currently 63. At a Task Force media briefing, RCMP Constable Cate Galliford said, "This case is now the largest serial killer investigation in Canadian history."

In the fall of 1989 Marc Lepine shot 14 female students and a secretary at Montreal University's L'Ecole Polytechnique, and then shot himself. In 1982 Clifford Robert Olson pled guilty to killing 11 children in Greater Vancouver.

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/12.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN Police Accountability

More women victims were linked to the pig farm owned by 54-year-old Robert Pickton. The recent discovery increased the tally to 30 women whose remains have been found on the farm. Fox News reported some of the gruesome details: "Police found human body parts in freezers used to store unsold meat. They also discovered remains in a wood chipper -- the victims' bodies turned into pig feed."

Unlike crime news coverage in the U.S., the details of the worst serial murder case in Canadian history are banned from media coverage in Canada. While this approach protects the accused from pretrial publicity that could affect a jury, it also denies the public an opportunity to hold the police accountable for the speed and quality of their investigation.

According to CBC News, Ernie Crey, an aboriginal leader, and many others have been very critical about the tardy police investigation into this case. The Crime Library reported on this problem repeatedly from 2000 onward. Like many cases where the victims are prostitutes, police assume that the missing women have just moved to other areas to ply their trade. The cases are treated very differently than if a large number of middle class women disappeared.

The Toronto Star interviewed RCMP task force spokesperson Corporal Cate Galliford who told them, "Believe it or not, we're still in the somewhat early stages of our investigation."

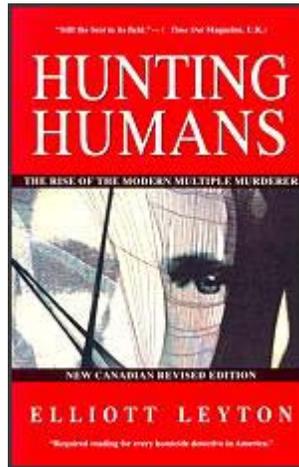
The six women who were recently identified are: Yvonne Boen, Dawn Crey, Wendy Crawford, Andrea Borhaven, Kerry Koski, and Cara Ellis. Three of the nine women remain unidentified.

Robert Pickton now faces 22 counts of murder. He has been charged with 15 counts of first-degree murder. His trial is not expected to begin until 2005.

The strict publicity ban on Pickton's preliminary trial hearing in July of 2003 was instigated to ensure information was not broadcast to potential jurors before the case was brought to trial but, despite the ban, evidence from the hearing leaked out and was reported widely. Peter Ritchie, Pickton's lawyer told reporters that the leaks were precisely what he was afraid of. "Our concern all along is that we cannot control that," he said, "so we're going to have to follow that to see what has been published."

Prior to the announcement, family members of some of the missing women accused the Vancouver police of "mishandling the investigation" stating that they had

"ignored evidence" that a serial killer was responsible and didn't take the matter seriously because "many of the women were prostitutes and drug addicts."



Hunting Humans by Dr. Elliott Leyton

Dr. Elliott Leyton, author of a popular book on serial killers called *Hunting Humans*, defended the police stating: "Responsible people have to be careful about making wild pronouncements about possible serial killers. When we are not sure if it is true, then it is inappropriate to throw people into a state of panic. Prostitution is a very dangerous profession and many of the people in it are wanderers and not well connected to any conventional system of government controls or social services. So they can drift away from the system without being noticed for a very long time, even when nothing may have actually happened to them."

The accusations that police mishandled the investigation gained new momentum when former detective and geographic profiler Kim Rossmo claimed that he had told police a serial killer was probably responsible for the disappearances of prostitutes in the Vancouver area but was ignored. Rossmo, has since sued the Vancouver department for wrongful dismissal when they failed to renew his contract.

The announcement of the new search site came just one day before a preliminary hearing in a Port Coquitlam, B.C. provincial court into the case was to begin hearing final submissions from the Crown and lawyers for Pickton.

The new site, approximately 65 kilometers east of Vancouver, is located in a high-traffic area adjacent to Highway 7, also known as the Lougheed Highway. Galliford reporters: "We started in this area based on evidence we uncovered during the course of our investigation," adding that police became aware of the area "just recently."

She said that some investigators from the Port Coquitlam farm would be searching the new site plus an eight-member team of RCMP divers. She also said that the investigation at the Port Coquitlam property was expected to continue until at least the fall and stated that two of the four soil sifters being used at the pig farm have been shut down so the soil underneath can be excavated and searched and the 52

anthropologists who were manning the sifters would be sent to the new site. The area has since been fenced off and under 24-hour protection.

Prior to the press release, Vancouver police contacted family members from all 63 missing women to inform them of the new investigation. Maggie deVries, the sister of one of the alleged victims was one of those contacted and later told reporters: "It's encouraging and horrifying simultaneously, it gives me the sense that more will be discovered."

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/13.html

ROBERT PICKTON: THE VANCOUVER MISSING WOMEN A Quiet Loner by Marilyn Bardsley

By mid-Oct, 2004, the 21-month search of Robert Pickton's 14-acre pig farm by 102 forensic anthropologists linked 30 women's DNA to the property. Twenty-seven of the women are among those listed as missing and three have not yet been identified. The newly identified women fit the same profile as the other female victims. "They have histories of working in the sex trade, histories of substance abuse and histories of frequenting the downtown eastside," Cpl. Catherine Galliford stated.

Vancouver police Sgt. Sheila Sullivan said that they had no information that linked all 69 missing women to the farm.

Pickton, who was arrested for trying to murder a prostitute on March 23, 1997, went free after charges were dropped. Also, a person who worked for Pickton tipped authorities to him in 1998, but the government did nothing to investigate the property until 2002.

Despite the wild parties that were held in the Piggy Palace on his property, Pickton is described by his friends as a quiet loner. Emanuella Grinberg of courttv.com reported that Robert Pickton "never drank or smoked but simply dedicated his life to working on the property he and his brother and sister inherited when their parents died in the 1970s." The farm raises and slaughters pigs.

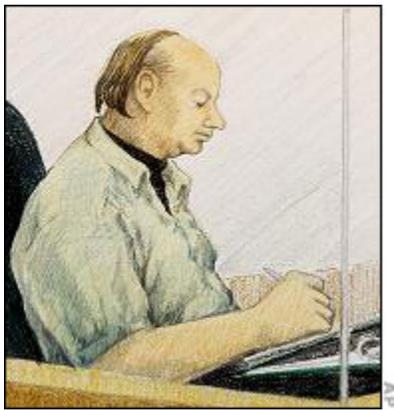
Robert Pickton and his brother, David, who was convicted of sexual assault in 1992, operate a salvage business. But David has not been charged in these murders.

In March 2004, British Columbia's provincial health officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, publicly released even more alarming news in relation to serial killer Robert Pickton. According to a March 2004 AP Worldstream article, Kendall suggested that there was a possibility that the human remains from some of Pickton's victims may have been mixed with pork meat and processed for human consumption. He was quoted in the article saying, "It's very disturbing to think about, but (there is) the possibility of some cross-contamination. But the degree of it or when or how much we really don't know."



Investigators at Pickton pig farm

The Toronto Star reported on March 12, 2004 that Pickton would often entice prostitutes to his farm, along with other guests. The article further suggested that he was, "generous, cooking for them, handing out drugs, hosting wild, never-ending parties." Investigators fear that the food he was serving to his guests may have actually been the remains of some of his victims. According to UPI, the meat products from his farm were never distributed commercially, although some 40 friends and neighbors were given some of the meat for consumption. AP Worldstream quoted Kendall who asked "anyone who may still have frozen pork products from Pickton's farm to return those products to the police."



Robert Pickton in court hearings, sketch

AP Online's article "Human Remains May Be in Canadian Meat" suggested that the risk of any human disease being transmitted to those that have consumed the tainted meat is minimal. If the pork was cooked thoroughly, it is likely that any infectious agents present in the meat would be destroyed, AP Worldstream reported. Regardless, the possibility that they may have accidentally consumed human flesh has repulsed and enraged those who received meat products from Pickton.



Peter Ritchie, one of
Pickton's attorneys

Pickton's trial date has not yet been set, although it is believed to begin sometime during spring 2005, approximately 3 years after his arrest. Daniel Girard of *The Toronto Star* quoted Crown attorney Mike Petrie that the reason for the delay is because "more than 10,000 pieces of evidence from the farm," still have to be processed by investigators. Moreover, the state also needs more time to prepare their case against Pickton. According to Trude Hugner's article, the defense team, led by attorney Peter Ritchie, was already set to begin.

It is expected that Pickton's trial will begin in early 2005. Because Canada does not have a death penalty, Pickton faces a number of consecutive life sentences if convicted.

Story Location:

http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/robert_pickton/14.html

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Michael Newton

Michael Newton has published 169 books since 1977, with 13 more scheduled for release through 2005. His recent nonfiction work includes *The Encyclopedia of Serial Killers* (2000), *The Encyclopedia of Kidnappings* (2001), and *The Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Florida* (which won the Florida Historical Society's 2002 Robert Patrick Award for Best Book in Florida History).

For more information visit his [website](#).