

# The kidnapping of charles lindbergh jr

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

No matter how you choose to raise your children, one thing is the same for every parent- the immediate sense of panic you feel when you can't find your child.

Whether a relative has scooped your newborn up for a cuddle, or your toddler is hiding in a nearby clothing rack, or your punctual teen is 30 minutes late for curfew, the wave of panic is the same. Fortunately, so is the instant relief when we see their face. So much so, we almost feel silly for even letting our minds go there. Unfortunately that isn't always the case. For aviator Charles Lindbergh and wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, on 01 March 1932 that panic would turn to terror and then heartbreak.

## **THE FAME**

At 30 years old, Charles Lindbergh had made quite the life for himself. His solo flight across the atlantic (from New York to Paris) He landed in Paris to a cheering crowd of over 150, 000 spectators, and returned home to millions who turned out for a ticker tape parade in America. His fame was world wide as he received commendations from Presidents, Kings and Dictators. (The annals of crime) In the two-year period following Lindbergh's flight, the U. S. Copyright Office recorded three hundred applications on Lindbergh songs.

He married his love, Anne Morrow, and together had a son, Charles Augustus Lindbergh, Jr. He was a beautiful little boy with blue eyes and blonde curly locks. He may have been the apple of his parents eye but had won the affection of the people as well-and the press knew it. They followed the youngfamilyeverywhere.

Even the house staff cashed in on the fame by giving tours of their main residence in Hopewell, New Jersey, U. S which, in hindsight, may have given the kidnapers the advantage of knowing where the child slept.

## **THE KIDNAPPING**

On 1 March 1932, Anne Lindbergh made a last second decision against taking a toddler with the sniffles into the cold and rainy night air to travel to her parents house. She had the nurse take young Lindbergh upstairs to bed at 8pm.

The nurse, Betty Gow, rubbed medicine on his chest, changed him into a one piece sleeping suit and put him down to sleep around 8: 30 pm (kidnapped) Following Lindberghs orders, she closed the door allowing the child to self soothe for no less than 2 hours before checking on him.

Though Anne was in a bath and Charles was in his study, both heard a noise around 9: 30 but dismissed it as being made by one of their staff. An hour later, upon checking on young Lindbergh, Nurse Gow informed them the child was gone. " They have stolen our baby!" was Lindbergh's immediate response. (kidnapped) A seal enveloped ransom note was on the open window sill.

## **THE INVESTIGATION**

As police began arriving shortly before midnight they had little to go on. Although H. Norman Schwarzkopf (father of Persian Gulf War commander Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf) of the New Jersey State Police was nominally the lead investigator in the case, control of many of the details was ceded to

Lindbergh. (encyclopedia britannica) A command center was formed in Lindbergh's 3 car garage.

Despite the command center Police failed to secure the crime scene and kept no record of who was in the home at the time of the kidnapping nor of who came and went from the home afterwards. Poor lighting and bad weather limited their search outside. They started inside the home, mainly, the nursery. The ransom note demanded specific amounts of certain denominations and seemed to be written by someone who spoke english as a second language and was uneducated.

The room was dusted for prints only to discover none would be found, anywhere -not even nurse Gows.(Annals of crime) It appeared to have been wiped clean, thoroughly and completely. It wasn't long before the press got wind of the story and began arriving. They each set up their own command centers and started doing their own investigating, walking around the house in search of clues and entering and exiting the home questioning staff.

The next morning, no witnesses saw anyone come or go on the main street in front of the home. Investigators did manage to find a broken homemade ladder several yards from the house. It is unclear whether it was ignorance or poor training was to blame as to why so few crime scene photos were taken and those that were, were neither to scale nor taken before the evidence was moved. As for the ladder, which was considered the most damning piece of evidence, (mike ray) was photographed after being broken down into 3 pieces.

Later a photo was taken of a different ladder of exact height up against the home to show a ladder of that length would reach the child's window.

Fingerprint experts found 400 partial prints, but because they were all fragmentary, they had no value in identifying anyone. (Annals of Crime)

Lack of evidence only fed speculation that some powerful criminal organization or foreign government had taken the young child (Annals of Crime) Even though President Hoover had vowed to move "Heaven and Earth" to find the child (Annals of Crime) and J. Edgar Hoover - no relation - decided to expand the FBI into a national police agency, Lindbergh chose not to cooperate with FBI agents. He first went to William Donovan (who would later head the OSS.)

Then he sought out shady characters who claimed to have underworld connections. He then went to the underworld's elite that he could find - the ones in prison. Al Capone offered his assistance, upon his release, which was immediately denied. Without consulting investigators he then gave copies of the ransom note to all parties contacted in an attempt to find out who wrote it. The shady characters showed their shadiness by immediately selling their copies to the press.

With the press competing in their print wars they ran with their lead, publishing the note. Suddenly, ransom notes claiming to be the kidnapers started to appear. Some raise the ransom and some included items like a thumb guard, which the baby (along with 1000's of other babies) had on when abducted, so was assumed to be his (but could not be proven to be young Lindberghs.)

The third ransom note was received by Colonel Lindbergh's attorney on March 8, informing that an intermediary appointed by the Lindberghs would not be accepted and requesting a note in a newspaper. On the same date, Dr. John F. Condon, Bronx, New York City, a retired school principal, published in the "Bronx Home News" an offer to act as go-between and to pay an additional \$1,000 ransom.

The following day the fourth ransom note was received by Dr. Condon, which indicated he would be acceptable as a go-between. This was approved by Colonel Lindbergh (fbi 2010). In total, 12 ransom notes were received from the kidnapers. None were found in the same place and the person contacted as to their whereabouts changed each time as well.

After the 12th note, which reduced the ransom to the original asking price of \$50,000, Dr. Condon began negotiating through the newspapers on when and where to meet. On April 2, 1932, Dr. Condon with Lindbergh not far in a park car, met with "John" at St. Raymond's Cemetery in the Bronx to exchange the ransom for the child's whereabouts. Because Lindbergh wanted the focus on child recovery and not kidnapper apprehension, the police were not told about the exchange, however the bank did record the serial numbers from the 10,000 in cash and 40,000 in gold certificates.

"John" gave them the 13th and last note stating the child could be found on a ship called "The Nelly" in Martha's Vineyard under the care of 2 innocent women under the impression they were babysitting. Instead of following "John" they contacted police who informed local authorities and Lindbergh took to the air to find the ship. Despite all efforts, the ship could not be

found. Later they would find it didn't even exist. Lindbergh conceded he had gained nothing by paying the ransom.

### **THE DISCOVERY**

On May 12, 1932, the body of the kidnapped baby was accidentally found, partly buried, and badly decomposed, about four and a half miles southeast of the Lindbergh home, 45 feet from the highway, near Mount Rose, New Jersey, in Mercer County. The discovery was made by William Allen, an assistant on a truck driven by Orville Wilson. The head was crushed, there was a hole in the skull and some of the body members were missing.

The body was positively identified by Lindbergh's wife, and after cause of death was determined, ordered its immediate cremation in Trenton, New Jersey, on May 13, 1932. The Coroner's examination showed that the child had been dead for about two months and that death was caused by a blow on the head. (FBI 2010) Now a murder investigation, the Bureau (who was acting merely in an auxiliary capacity, since there was no federal jurisdiction.) was now in charge.

The President directed that all governmental investigative agencies should place themselves at the disposal of the state of New Jersey and that the FBI should serve as a clearinghouse and coordinating agency for all investigations in this case conducted by federal investigative units. On May 23, 1932, the FBI in New York City informed banks in greater New York that the Bureau was the coordinating agency for all governmental activity in the case.

A close watch for ransom money was requested. A pamphlet containing serial numbers was created. Copies of this pamphlet were given to each employee handling currency in banks, clearinghouses, grocery stores in certain selected communities, insurance companies, gasoline filling stations, airports, department stores, post offices, and telegraph companies. (FBI 2010)

As time went on, the money and certificates popped up along the eastern seaboard, but police had no way to analyze the bills recovered. Just as the case turned cold, on May 1st, 1933 there was an executive order released for any individuals in possession of any gold certificates to turn them into a bank for money; if you were to be found in possession of the gold certificates after this date you were held criminally responsible and could be punished via a fine of \$10,000 or up to ten years in prison.

Prior to this deadline, \$2990 in gold certificates matching the serial number were turned into a local bank, but the bank attendants were busy due to the deadline and did not notice the serial numbers until after the individuals left the bank. What seemed to be a fruitless endeavor finally bore its first solid fruit in Sept 1934.

16 certificates had popped up in New York. A suspicious gas station attendant had written the license plate number of a man who had used the certificate to purchase gas on the certificate itself. Soon after the bank teller informed the FBI. The license plate belonged to a German immigrant carpenter named Bruno Richard Hauptmann. He was married and had a son close in age to young Lindbergh had he been alive.



## **TRIAL AND EXECUTION**

When police arrested Hauptmann on Sept 19 1934 he had a \$20 certificate on his person. Police claimed to have found many pieces of evidence in Hauptmann's home. Over \$13,000 in certificates were found in his garage. An apparent sketch of a collapsible ladder similar to the one used in the kidnapping was found. Jim Condon's telephone number and address was found written on a closet wall in the house (history.com); whether this handwriting matched Hauptmann's or the ransom notes is unknown.

Hauptmann did admit to police that he wrote the information down himself, but this was after hours of interrogation and at least one severe beating (FBI, 2010). Some questioned why he would still have these items 2 years after the kidnapping. The most damning evidence was found in the attic. Investigators noticed a beam missing from his rafters.

The piece that would come to be known as "Rail 16" was found to be part of the homemade ladder found by the Lindberghs' home and became a large part of the prosecution's case. Wood expert Arthur Koehler was one of 8 experts who testified for the prosecution. He matched Rail 16 of the kidnap ladder with the flooring from the attic.

The four irregularly spaced extra nail holes in Rail 16 matched up perfectly with the holes in the attic floor joists. Prosecutor Wilentz broke up their dry testimony by bringing on a statuesque beauty, Hildegard Alexander, described as "a blonde pajama model," who testified that she saw Hauptmann staring at Dr. Condon in a telegraph office. Alexander was one of

many eyewitnesses for both sides whose testimony seemed contrived.

(crime mag)

This included an 87-year-old Hopewell man, testifying for the prosecution, claimed that Hauptmann drove by his house the morning of the kidnapping. That is, he remembered the face of a stranger in a car, before he had any reason to take notice of him, and could pick him out in the courtroom three years later. Only after the trial, the defense learned that this witness was legally blind and had been so at the time of the sighting.

This could've been known if the defense had challenged his eyesight as expected of an 87 year old witness. Even Lindbergh's claim that he recognized Hauptmann's voice as being the same voice that said " Hey, Doc," at the cemetery 2 ½ years earlier seems far-fetched. But he was the Lone Eagle. As the prosecutor told the jury, " And Lindy remembered that voice. And who is to say he didn't? Are you going to substitute your judgment for his?". (crime mag)

## **VERDICT AND SENTENCING**

On Feb. 13, 1935, after 11 hours of deliberation, the jury returned a guilty verdict. Hauptmann was sentenced to death. A series of appeals, ultimately reaching the Supreme Court in December 1935, were unsuccessful, and a clemency bid was rejected on March 30, 1936. Desperate to bring others to justice but running out of time, the prosecution offered Hauptmann a deal- your life for your confession and accomplices. A newspaper offered \$90, 000 to Hauptmann's wife and child to accept the deal. (Fleming, 2010)

Hauptmann, denying until the end any involvement in the crime, told them he had no names to give. On April 3, 1936, 19 months after the verdict, he was executed by electric chair. Soon after the United States Congress adopted a federal kidnapping statute—known as the Federal Kidnapping Act 18 U. S. C. § 1201(a)(1) (popularly known as the Lindbergh Law, or Little Lindbergh Law) imposing the death penalty for transporting a kidnapped victim across a state line. (history. com)

### **CONCLUSION**

This day, many forensic scientists and police investigators are under the belief that Bruno Richard Hauptmann was innocent and that he fell victim to police and their need for closure a case. There was too much circumstantial evidence and police made too many mistakes; crime scenes were contaminated, evidence lacked and was not always connected. (FORENSIC FILES)

Lindbergh's dominating control of the investigation raises even more questions. Sadly, Lindbergh's fame was greater than Hauptmann's innocence. A point made clear by the jury, who so quickly found him guilty beyond reasonable doubt, even though so much was left unclear or unknown.