Lindbergh Baby Kidnapping Case and Its Impact

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SWGDAM (Fredericksburg, VA)
July 13, 2016
An Informative Book on the Topic

• Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr. (“Charlie” or “the Eaglet”) was born to aviators Charles Lindbergh and Anne Morrow Lindbergh on June 22, 1930.

• He was kidnapped from his nursery crib in his second story room in Hopewell, New Jersey on March 1, 1932 – and a ransom note is left

Dear Sir!

Have 50000$ redy. 25000$ in 20$ bills 15000$ in 10$ bills and 10000$ in 5$ bills. After 2-4 days we will inform you were to deliver the mony.

We warn you for making anyding public or for notify the police. the child is in gut care.

Indication for all letters are singnature and three holes.

The Nursery Ransom Note
The Crime Scene in Hopewell, NJ

Testing Ladder Found Near Home to Get into Second Story Bedroom

Empty Crib in Charlie’s Nursery
Forensic Evidence Available

• **Handwriting**
  – _**Ransom note**_ was left at crime scene with a unique symbol on it
  – An additional 12 ransom notes were received over the month following the crime
  – Multiple handwriting experts would become involved yet no initial suspects had comparable handwriting

• **Wood analysis**
  – _**Ladder**_ left at scene
  – Wood expert Arthur Koehler traced pieces of the ladder to a Bronx, NY lumberyard
Forensic Experts and Early Laboratories in the 1930s

- Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory established at Northwestern University in Chicago by Calvin Goddard in 1930
- FBI Laboratory established in November 1932
- New Jersey State Police (NJSP) Forensic Laboratory was established shortly after the Lindbergh case

- Wilmer Souder at the National Bureau of Standards (NBS) started casework with handwriting, typewriters, and firearms analysis (“ballistics”) in 1929 for primarily federal requests → performed over 800 cases from 80 agencies from 1929 to 1953
- Several private experts for handwriting and firearms analysis
Ransom Notes

• More than a dozen ransom notes were sent to Charles Lindbergh with demands for $50,000

• Money (in marked bills) was paid on April 2, 1932 through an intermediary John F. Condon ("Jafsie")
John F. Condon a.k.a. "Jafsie"

- A retired school principal in Bronx, New York who served as a “go-between” intermediary with the kidnapper(s) and Charles Lindbergh

- Became involved starting March 10, 1932 with the fourth ransom note

http://www.lindberghkidnappinghoax.com/jafsie.html
Search for the Kidnapper Intensifies…

Baby’s remains were discovered in the woods near Lindbergh’s home on May 12, 1932.

A foot deformity along with clothing fragments helped with identification of the remains, which were cremated soon after discovery.
Power Struggle during the Investigation

Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf
(Superintendent, New Jersey State Police)

Director J. Edgar Hoover
(Bureau of Identification, later FBI)
National Bureau of Standards (NBS → NIST) Was Asked to Help in the Lindbergh Case

Dr. Wilmer Souder, an NBS physicist, examined the ransom notes on April 1, 1932 at Lindbergh’s home and invited NJSP to NBS to photograph them for study.

Dr. Souder in his NBS Identification Laboratory in April 1935 (shortly after he testified in the Lindbergh case)
Lindbergh Case 1932-1935

1932
- Kidnapping (March 1)
- Ransom Paid (April 2)
- Body Found (May 12)

May 9-14, 1932
Lieut. R. A. Snook at NBS
- Examination and photography of notes
- Fabrication of alphabet key
- Coded as Adamson Case/T-67196

1933

1934
- Hauptmann Arrest (Sept 19)

1935
- Trial Begins (Jan 2)
- Trial Ends (Feb 14)

Hauptmann executed April 3, 1936

Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr. born June 22, 1930
A secret [test] number … was assigned to the [Lindbergh] case, which was to be known to the Bureau of Standards as the Adamson case …
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Lindbergh Case 1932-1935

Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr. born June 22, 1930

Souder examines ransom letters in Hopewell, NJ (April 1)

Photographs of ransom letters taken in Washington DC at National Bureau of Standards (May 9)

8,000 to 10,000 documents examined by Wilmer Souder (NBS)

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Box of Ransom Note Photographic Negatives Found November 24, 2015

Re-Discovery!
A Lindbergh Ransom Note Photo Taken at NBS on May 9, 1932 for the "Adamson" Investigation

"I found a noise in the corner of the porch underneath a stone. This noise will tell you where to find me. Act accordingly. After 3/4 of a hour be on the place. Bring the money with you."

NBS Test # T67196
New Jersey State Police,
(Attn: Col. Norman Schwarzkopf),
Trenton, New Jersey

Subject: Handwriting

Gentlemen:

The documents submitted by your Lieutenant Russel A. Snook, #154, on May 9 as arranged by your telephoned message of May 5 to our Dr. Wilmer Souder have been carefully compared and photographed.

It is the opinion of Dr. Souder who examined these documents, in your presence, on April 1, and again during this week that they were all written by the same individual.
The master negatives and photostats of all prints accompanying this report were sealed by your agent and are deposited in the Standards vault of this Bureau. Two sets of complete prints are likewise sealed and deposited in the vault. These are available upon your order for further sets of prints or for delivery, sealed, to a properly identified agent.

This Bureau offers your organization the fullest cooperation of its facilities in any future developments in this case.

Respectfully,

George K. Burgess, Director

Inclosure
Senator Morrow was Charles Lindbergh’s father-in-law

New Jersey State Police,
(Attr: Col. Norman Schwarzkopf),
Trenton, New Jersey

Subject: Handwriting

Gentlemen:

Upon request of Mr. George R. Dye, secretary to the late Senator Morrow, this Bureau has examined the handwritings appearing on approximately 8,000 documents filed in the Senate Office Building.

No agreement was found for any specimen with the specimens formerly inspected in our Test No. Tw 67196.

Respectfully,

George K. Burgess, Director
There is an additional Souder notebook that we currently do not have...

Transcription of Souder’s Handwriting from an entry in his Vol. 1 Identification of Documents 1929-1933:

Sept. 6, 1932
[submission from] Mr. Woodward
See Adamson Vol. [notebook volume]
Mr. Frank J. Wilson,
Taft Hotel,
New York, New York.

Dear Frank:

Dr. Souder reports that after examining and studying the handwriting of Morris M. Schechtman in the books of the Max Schling Seedsman Company and other documents, he is convinced that Schechtman did not write the Lindbergh notes or the "Deposit Slip".

I sent to you yesterday under separate cover the two books of the Max Schling Seedsman Company.

Dr. Souder has also given me the eleven pages on which appear the samples of the handwriting of Carl O. Giessler. These I will keep in the files here, unless you want them in New York.

Sincerely,

F. N. Woodward,
Special Agent
Bruno Richard Hauptmann Arrested

- In September 1934, a gas station attendant received a marked Lindbergh bill ($10 gold certificate) and wrote the car license plate number on the back.

- Bruno Richard Hauptmann, a German immigrant, was arrested and $13,760 of marked bills were found in his garage.

http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/Hauptmann/hauptmannletter.html
Hauptmann was asked to write almost a dozen exemplar letters so that his handwriting could be compared to the ransom notes.

This one (found in the National Archives NBS records) was written the day after he was arrested.
Courthouse in Flemington, NJ
Trial Held: January 2 to February 14, 1935

http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/lit trials/Hauptmann/Hauptmann.htm
The Trial was a Bit of a Circus
Lindbergh Case Handwriting Comparisons

One of the ransom notes

Exemplar letter written by Bruno Richard Hauptmann shortly after his arrest

Question (Q) Specimen

Known (K) Specimen
Handwriting Exhibits for Court

http://jimfisher.edinboro.edu/lindbergh/photos/writing3.jpg
From the FBI.gov Website

**Known Signature of Hauptmann (top) Compared to Ransom Note Lettering**

A comparison of the writing appearing on the ransom notes with Hauptmann’s signature disclosed remarkable similarities in inconspicuous, personal characteristics and writing habits, which resulted in a positive identification by the handwriting experts of the Laboratory.

**Hauptmann signature**

**Individual letters from ransom notes**

https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/history/famous-cases/the-lindbergh-kidnapping/image/7.jpg/view
Handwriting expert Clark Sellers (from Los Angeles) showing his court exhibit
Evidence that Souder Discussed in the Hauptmann Trial

Souder testimony on January 16, 1935 is 36 pages in the State v Hauptmann transcript
Numbers indicate order of court testimony given

Expense fees (per *NY Times* article on 3/14/1935)

1. Osborn, N.Y.C. - $12,000
2. Stein, N.Y.C. - $4,800
3. Tyrrell, Milwaukee - $3,507
4. Walter, Chicago - $4,856
5. Cassidy, Richmond - $3,536
6. Souder, Washington - $69.15
7. Osborn, Jr., N.Y.C. - $9,655
8. Sellers, Los Angeles - (no data)
Ladder Analysis

Ladder wood was said to have matched corresponding features in boards coming from Bruno Hauptmann’s attic in his Bronx home

Ladder Being Brought into the Court (Feb 9, 1935)
In Court, the Ladder Is Compared to Hauptmann Attic Wood Pieces

Taken from the attic of the Hauptmann home in the Bronx. Mr. Koehler is pointing to the nail hole which is identical, according to the prosecution, in both pieces of wood.

Arthur Koehler, wood technologist of the United States Forest Products Laboratory (Madison, WI)

Frederick Pope, part of Hauptmann’s defense team
FBI Laboratory and Wilmer Souder 1934

1932
- Kidnapping (March 1)
- Ransom Paid (April 2)
- Body Found (May 12)

1933
- FBI Lab (Nov 24)

1934
- Souder advisor to FBI laboratory
- Hauptmann Arrest (Sept 19)

1935
- Trial Begins (Jan 2)
- Trial Ends (Feb 14)

Hauptmann executed April 3, 1936

Jan 15, 1934 letter from Assistant Atty. Gen. to NBS Director, Courtesy of John Fox, FBI Historian

Wilmer Souder
Suggested equipment and arrangement of laboratory
Reviewed lab findings
Provided training for agents

Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr. born June 22, 1930

FBI Laboratory and Wilmer Souder 1934

Jan 15, 1934 letter from Assistant Atty. Gen. to NBS Director, Courtesy of John Fox, FBI Historian
Invited Guests to NIST Colloquium on Wilmer Souder (June 10, 2016)

They helped with resource materials on Wilmer Souder

Kathy Leser
(Souder’s granddaughter)

Kathleen Storer
(USSS QD Examiner)

Patricia Manzolillo
(USPS Lab Director)

John Fox
(FBI Historian)

Edward Appel
(Retired FBI Agent; Charles Appel’s son)

Jason Long
(ATF Lab Librarian)
Part of a Current NIST Museum Exhibit on Souder Highlights His Work in the Lindbergh Case