



SINCE

1841

# WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM



## The Dayton Strangler

Between 1900 and 1909, a killer stalked the streets of Dayton. Though unsolved to this day, it was (and is) believed that the same person was responsible for the murders of 5 to 9 people; primarily young women between the ages of 11 and 25.

Two of the Strangler's victims were laid to rest here at Woodland Cemetery—the first victim, Ada Lantz, & Mary Forschner.

11 year old Ada Lantz disappeared from her parents' birthday party on the evening of October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1900.

While the adults played cards and chatted with friends, Ada slipped outside unnoticed. Her body was discovered soon after; beaten, assaulted, and shoved through a narrow



opening into the vault beneath the privy.

Dayton police arrested several suspects—including an elderly man with one leg & an errant bicycle thief—but all were eventually released due to a lack of evidence.

With details of the brutal murder making headlines both near and far, the Dayton police, led by Chief John Newton Allaback, felt extraordinary pressure to crack the case.



Ada Lantz

Rests in [section 111, lot 2976](#)

**Illustration** published by the Dayton Daily News, 10/15/1900.

Nicknamed 'the Dayton Strangler' by the press, the killings did not stop. Dona Gilman (20) was murdered in November of 1906, followed by Anna Markowitz (24) & her sweetheart, Abe Cohan, in August of the next year. Dayton's 'Strangler' was far from finished...

A little after six o'clock in the evening of January 23, 1909, Mary Forschner set off on an errand. Newly 15 with a job of her own, Mary was thrilled that her mother trusted her to make the family's weekly deposit at the Dayton Savings and Trust Company. Though the street was not well lit, it was only a few blocks to the trolley stop and a quick ride downtown.

That is, if Mary Forschner ever reached the trolley stop. Her mother became concerned when Mary did not return as expected, but both parents suspected that Mary had gone to join her older sister Maggie at a party. When Maggie arrived home later that night, Mary was not with her.

The girls' stepfather, Robert Geppert, called the police. They weren't terribly concerned—after all, it wasn't (and still isn't) unusual for a teenage girl to stay out late on a Friday night.

Feeling that something wasn't right, Geppert grabbed a lantern, called a few neighbors, and began to search.



Mary Forschner

Rests in [section 103, lot 2601](#)

**Photo** published by the Dayton Herald, 1/28/1909.

After noticing some disturbed soil, searchers followed a muddy trail onto the nearby Grafton Kennedy estate. The track ended at the door of a small barn. There, with the aid of his lantern, Robert Geppert found his stepdaughter's lifeless body.

Upon performing the autopsy, the coroner concluded that Mary Forschner had been assaulted and strangled.

The Dayton Strangler, leaving only the imprints of his abnormally large hands on his victim's neck, had slipped away into the freezing night once again.



John Newton Allaback joined the Dayton Police department in 1886, and quickly rose through the ranks. He was appointed chief of police in November of 1908; a position he held until his death in 1922.

Chief Allaback rests in section 120, lot 281 at Woodland Cemetery.

**Photo:** Courtesy of the Dayton Metro Library's Montgomery County Picture File collection.

## John Newton Allaback

(Chief of Police)

"I have no theory, absolutely none. There is nothing to theorize on, no clue, not even a piece of paper, a handkerchief, a rag, match or anything. The circumstances are absolutely disheartening. The people are crying for action, for the arrest of the murderer, and we can find none to arrest. Our hands are virtually tied. There is nothing we can do. We have exhausted every avenue of information, and yet we have accomplished practically nothing. It's a pretty tough thing to say, but it's a fact, that we are just where we began.

"I was first notified of the murder at 2:30 yesterday morning. Sergeant Haley sent a man to my house to awaken me. I got up at once, dressed and got my breakfast, and drove over to the house. It was then almost broad daylight. From that time on I have done nothing but think and work. I laid awake nearly all night in bed, trying to think out the proper course to pursue, but I am yet in the dark. This, of course, applies to the department, as all of the men who have been working on the case, have met with no success.

"There's nothing more to say. You know as much as I do. We'll never give up, in spite of failures, as long as there's the least possible chance to get the murderer. I am in hopes of something turning up by evening, but I may be disappointed."

**Quote:** Published by *the Dayton Herald*, 10/15/1900



## Preservation Season 2025 Comes to a Close:

As cooler weather moves in, preservation season comes to a close. This isn't because we're afraid of chilly weather, but due to the way temperature affects the materials we are working with. As they get cold, granite and other types of stone become more brittle, and necessary ingredients—like mortar and epoxy—are less effective.

Over the past year, Woodland has preserved and repaired more than 100 grave markers; including the Dog & Boy monument to young Johnny Morehouse and the McMillen Angel.

Nicknamed 'Millie', this marble angel fell victim to a tree branch which damaged her right arm and wing. At this point in her restoration, the wing and much of the arm have been repaired. The final touches—replacing Millie's right hand and returning some fine detail to her wing—will begin next spring.

# Upcoming Events!



Military Tribute Tour



Almost Winter Bird Walk



Street Names of Dayton



## Lantern Tours SOLD OUT!

Wow! Our History Mystery Murder & Mayhem lantern tours have already sold out for the month of October!

Thank you for your support, and keep checking back; History Mystery Murder & Mayhem is offered throughout the year!

| October |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S       | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|         |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 5       | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 12      | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19      | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26      | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |

Don't get caught by surprise:

Please be sure to bring home all decor items that you wish to keep.

Key:

Dark Green = Weekly Clean Off  
 Orange = Do Not Clean Off  
 Soft Grey = At Woodland's Discretion

## Support Woodland:

Woodland is proud to remain an active part of the Dayton community as a popular place to walk, relax and enjoy.

We invite you to contribute to the Woodland Arboretum Foundation to ensure that

what's meaningful to you today, continues tomorrow! Your gift makes an immediate impact on the horticulture, arboriculture, and restoration efforts needed to maintain one of Dayton's most historic and beautiful outdoor museums.

Thank you for your generous support of Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum.

[DONATE ONLINE!](#)

## Come Visit Us!



### Office Hours:

Monday-Friday  
8am-5pm

If you need help finding where someone is buried, need directions to a particular area, or have questions about pre-planning or funeral services, Woodland's Staff is here to assist you!

### Volunteer opportunities

Woodland is seeking volunteers to give presentations to community groups on subjects such as local history, notable biographies, and trees.

Not into public speaking? Consider getting involved with our horticulture team, or assisting with special events & research projects.

\*If there is something you'd like to see here at Woodland please reach out to us & suggest it!

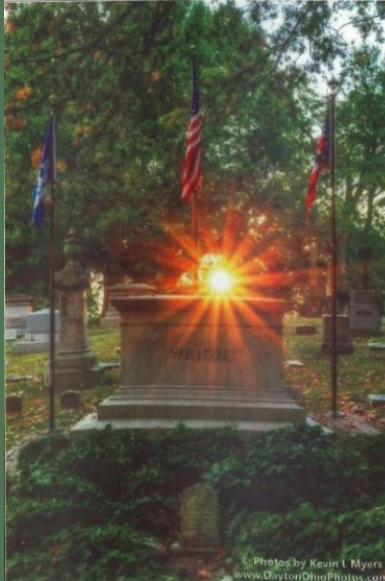
### Tours & More:

We welcome walkers, runners, and wanderers -- leashed dogs & school groups.

Register for a guided tour: visit the Woodland Cemetery website! Learn about fascinating Daytonians resting peacefully in one of America's oldest rural garden cemeteries!

Or check out our **virtual tours!** (if you really don't want to go outside)





Photos by Kevin L. Myers  
www.DaytonOhioPhotos.com



SINCE 1841

# WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM

Committed to providing dignified and caring funeral services and burial options to families of all faiths since 1841.

## Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum

118 Woodland Ave.  
Dayton, OH 45409  
woodlandcemetery.org

***Beautiful. Timeless. Still Available...***



Discover the men and women who made it great in Dayton on a guided walking or bus tour. Self-guided tours are available on our mobile app.

For information call 937-228-3221 or e-mail [info@woodlandcemetery.org](mailto:info@woodlandcemetery.org)

Woodland Cemetery & Arboretum | [Visit our website!](#)

Woodland Cemetery & Arboretum | 118 Woodland Ave. | Dayton, OH 45409 US

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