

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *The Ghosts of Hopewell*

REFERENCE: Fisher J. *The Ghosts of Hopewell*, Southern Illinois University Press, Box 3697, Carbondale, IL 62902-3697, 1999, \$24.95, 200 pp.

The Ghosts of Hopewell by Jim Fisher² is an excellent sequel to his earlier book, *The Lindbergh Case* which covered the events of the Hauptmann-Lindbergh case from the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, through the lengthy investigation and trial, to Hauptmann's execution for the crime in 1936.

The Ghosts of Hopewell, with a subtitle "Setting the Record Straight in the Lindbergh Case" deals with another aspect of the case that is almost as shocking as the Lindbergh baby kidnapping itself. Beginning in the 1970s the revisionists started coming out of the woodwork to portray Hauptmann as the victim of a massive police and prosecution frame-up. Prominent among them were authors of books such as *Scapegoat* (1), *The Airman and the Carpenter* (2), and *Lindbergh—The Crime* (3), together with investigative reporters, TV and movie producers, interview pundits and law professors. Some even drew the Lindberghs themselves into this gigantic conspiracy claiming that they killed their own baby or were involved in various other ways in the cover-up. According to the revisionists, every one of the prosecution's witnesses at the trial, including the forensic experts, were either misguided, misled or deliberately lied under oath. Under such a barrage of misinformation, public opinion has been swayed from an overwhelming consensus during the 1935 trial that Hauptmann was guilty to a general belief today in his innocence.

They picked the wrong case on which to practice their modern version of journalistic voodooism, says Fisher as he demolishes one by one the ridiculous assertions of this gang of media revisionists who have tried to win a war pitting half truths and unsupportable theories against the strongest case of circumstantial evidence ever to be presented in any criminal trial. The forensic evidence tying Hauptmann to the commission of the crime was so over-

whelming and unanswerable as to leave no doubt in the minds of the Flemington jury, or anyone else who had the eyes to see and the ears to hear, that Hauptmann was guilty—beyond a reasonable doubt.

Of particular interest to the forensic scientist is Fisher's account of the physical evidence brought to bear against Hauptmann: the ransom money consisting of marked gold certificates, found in his garage; the brace to the kidnap ladder with grain pattern, nail holes and mill markings identical to those found in a cut rafter in Hauptmann's attic; the identifying ridge patterns carved in the brace by Hauptmann's defective hand plane; and finally the 14 ransom notes identified by eight prominent questioned documents examiners from all parts of the United States (4), as being in the hand of Bruno Richard Hauptmann.

In the final chapter of the book, Fisher, an ex FBI agent, details some surprising, additional evidence of Hauptmann's guilt discovered during his research efforts. I won't spoil the surprise, but in this reviewer's humble opinion the new evidence uncovered by Fisher would have been almost enough to convict Bruno Hauptmann—a second time.

The Ghosts of Hopewell is a well researched, easy-to-read account of a famous case that has fallen victim to the politically correct, profit-oriented media of our day. It should be in the library of every forensic scientist as a reminder to get out there with their own message or perish from the politically correct revisionists of the future.

References

1. Scaduto A. *Scapegoat: the lonesome death of Richard Hauptmann*, GP Putnam's Sons, New York, 1976.
2. Kennedy L. *The airman and the carpenter: the Lindbergh kidnapping and the framing of Richard Hauptmann*. Viking Penguin Inc., New York, 1985.
3. Behn, Noel. *Lindbergh: the crime*. Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1994.
4. Albert S. Osborn, Albert D. Osborn, Elbridge Stein from New York; John Tyrrell from Milwaukee, Herbert J. Walter from Chicago; Clark Sellers from Los Angeles; Harry Cassidy from Richmond; and Wilmer Souder, Bureau of Standards, Washington D. C.

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