

The Massey Murder by Charlotte Gray

Notes for Book Clubs

Who were the Masseys?

Daniel Massey (1798-1856) was a prosperous Methodist farmer near Cobourg, Upper Canada. He became interested in farm machinery in the 1830s, and in 1847 he invested in a foundry at Bond Head. In 1849, he moved to Newcastle and established the Newcastle Foundry and Machine Manufactory.

Hart Almerrin Massey (1823-1896) propelled his father's Newcastle Foundry into a dynamic farm-implement producer by mergers, spirited sales and advertising techniques, and acquisition of patents for labour-saving American mowers, reapers and binders that transformed the productivity of Canadian agriculture.

In 1870, he incorporated the Massey Manufacturing Company, which relocated to Toronto in 1879. Massey directed the firm's successful entry into foreign markets. His company was the first North American firm of its kind to go abroad. In 1891, Massey merged his company with other Canadian rivals to form Massey-Harris Company Ltd. He served as president from 1891 to 1896. The new Massey-Harris Company became the largest of its kind in the British Empire.

In addition to his business success, Hart Massey contributed to many charitable, educational and religious institutions. He erected Toronto's Massey Music Hall (now called Massey Hall) in memory of his son **Charles Albert Massey** (1848-1884), and the Fred Victor Mission in memory of his son **Frederick Victor Massey** (1867-1890).

Hart Massey's philanthropy continued with his last surviving son, **Chester Daniel Massey** (1850-1926). Charles administered Hart Massey's estate, which was reorganized in 1918 as the Massey Foundation. It supported numerous philanthropies, and constructed Hart House and Massey College at the U of Toronto.

Chester Daniel Massey had two famous sons. **Charles Vincent Massey** (1887-1967) is best known as Canada's first Canadian governor general. All previous governors general were British. Vincent Massey served as Canada's 18th governor general from 1952 to 1959.

Chester's other son, **Raymond Hart Massey** (1896-1983), was a famous stage and screen actor. His distinguished film career began in 1931 and included over 70 movies,

ranging from *The Scarlet Pimpernel* to *East of Eden*. In the late 1950s and 1960s, he became known to a new generation as Dr. Gillespie in the TV series *Dr. Kildare*.

Vincent and Raymond Massey were first cousins of Bert Massey, killed in 1915 by Carrie Davies.

Criminal Procedure, then and now:

1915:

Bert Massey was killed on Monday, February 8, 1915.

The *coroner's inquest* started on Tuesday, February 9 at 8 pm; it was adjourned for 5 days.

It resumed on Monday, February 15 at 8 pm; the verdict was read at 10:40 pm: Bert Massey had been deliberately killed and Carrie Davies should be charged with murder.

The *murder trial* began 11 days later on Friday, February 26; it continued on Saturday, February 27 at 9 am for another 2 hours or so.

Chief Justice Mulock began his charge to the jury that day at 11:20 am; the jury retired at 11:45 am (charge was 25 minutes or less).

At 12:15 pm (just 30 minutes later), everyone returned to court to hear the jury's verdict. The judicial process was completed within three weeks.

2014:

There is usually a *preliminary inquiry* before a murder trial, unless the prelim is waived by the accused, or the Crown proceeds by way of preferred indictment, which is rare. The time between the commission of a murder and the preliminary inquiry is approximately one year.

Another year usually elapses between the prelim and the *murder trial*, i.e. it normally takes about two years for a murder case to go to trial.

Some questions to consider when discussing *The Massey Murder*:

1. Why did Carrie Davies return to her employer's home after visiting her sister and brother-in-law?
2. Who was the victim in this story?
3. Was it the correct verdict - why do you think the jury came to the conclusion it did - was justice done?
4. What role did newspapers play? Would the story be told differently today?
5. Why was evidence about Carrie's virginity important?
6. What do you think about the idea of a separate court for female offenders, or of the defence of "unwritten law"?
7. What impression do you have of Crown prosecutor Edward Du Vernet and defence lawyer Hartley Dewart?
8. What difference did it make that Canada was at war?

9. How did the women's suffrage movement affect the case?
10. What difference did the jury's decision make in the longterm?

What happened to Carrie?

(This is taken from Charlotte's blog)

“What happened to Carrie Davies? In the book, I shared what little I knew. After her unexpected acquittal she disappeared from public record until the 1980s, when an enterprising *Toronto Star* reporter named Frank Jones tracked down her daughter, Margaret Grainger. Margaret knew nothing of this episode in her mother's life. She wept when Frank produced photocopies of the 1915 accounts.

Thirty years later, I called the number that Frank had called, and spoke to Margaret's daughter, another Margaret. Could I speak to her mother? I enquired. Carrie's granddaughter explained that her mother was now very elderly, and did not want to talk about the case. She had never read the novel that Frank had written about it, and she was not well at the moment. And Carrie's granddaughter did not want to go against her mother's wishes. I pushed: Could I come and see them? The younger Margaret was firm. No.

Margaret Grainger came to my reading at Runnymede Library in Toronto. She is the granddaughter of Carrie Davies, the 18-year old English servant whose murder trial is the centerpiece of my book. Margaret told me that she had clear memories of her grandmother: “She was a happy, smiling person,” she said. Although Margaret's grandfather proved to be an unsuccessful businessman, and the family was never financially secure, Margaret recalled a loving grandma and a harmonious household where she often stayed as a little girl. But when Margaret was barely in her teens, Carrie died – too young to collect a pension. In the words of Margaret's mother: “She died of hard work.”

The conversation with Margaret altered my perception of the adult Carrie. I had assumed that she had a sad life, with the wolf never far from the door and jarring memories hidden just below the surface. But according to her granddaughter, she had successfully left behind the unhappy past.”

How did the Massey family deal with the scandal?

(This is also taken from Charlotte's blog)

“Arnold Massey and his sister Janet came to one of my talks. They were descendants of Arthur, the Bert Massey’s brother - the branch of the family that the tight-fisted old patriarch Hart had effectively disinherited.

Charlie Massey, Bert and Arthur’s father, was the eldest of Hart’s sons, and the one who had done most to build up the Massey Manufacturing Company into the largest maker and supplier of agricultural implements in the British Empire. But he had died young, and the old man was so determined to keep ownership of the company in his control that Hart rewrote his will.

Although Hart Massey’s estate was worth a fortune, Charlie’s children each received only a pittance. The Charlie Massey branch became the “other” Masseys – spurned by their wealthier relatives including Bert’s first cousin Vincent, the future governor-general. That’s why Bert Massey, Carrie Davies’s employer, lived in a modest house on Walmer Road rather than a grand mansion on Jarvis Street (the 1915 equivalent of the Bridle Path.)

As I signed a book for Arnold Massey later, he told me details that would have fleshed out my picture of what happened that fatal night. Or at least, he told me how his side of the family had always regarded the events of Bert’s death.

Although his grandmother, Mary Ethel Massey had told the press that her brother-in-law Bert was “not a man who would bother about servant girls,” Arnold told me that Bert Massey’s reputation as a womanizer was part of family lore. Bert’s wife Rhoda was visiting relatives in the States when Bert attempted to kiss Carrie, prompting her cry, “He tried to ruin me!” The shooting was not a heat-of-the-moment event, because several hours had elapsed between the fumbled kiss and the fatal shot: Bert was killed in cold blood.

Arnold told me that “We always supposed that Carrie felt she had to defend the honour of Rhoda, in the face of Bert’s infidelities.” Had I known more of Bert’s reputation, I would have described it more vividly.”