

The Mystery of the Revolver Found in a Paper Bag Near a Street Curb at Ross and Lamar, Dallas, November 23, 1963

(an American true crime story)

It was a snub-nosed Smith & Wesson .38 revolver, modified to fire .38 Special bullets, the most common kind of concealed-carry handgun in America at the time, the kind of weapon used in the murder of Dallas Police Officer J.D. Tippit who had been shot and killed a few hours earlier in Oak Cliff, by an assailant waiting for Tippit as his patrol car arrived when expected. The killer went to the patrol car from the sidewalk, put his face down close and spoke to the officer through a cracked front passenger window vent (Officer Tippit had not even rolled down the car passenger door window)—an assailant wearing a white or light-colored shirt under an off-white light tan zippered cloth jacket, wavy dark brown hair, so dark it looked black, block cut rear hairline (and from fingerprints the gunman left, and from what an eyewitness named Frank Wright saw, the assailant was shooting left-handed).

The killer said something, with his face leaned down close to that vent so he could speak through, that lured Officer Tippit out of his patrol car. The officer did not see what was coming. Unprovoked, without warning, the killer shot the officer to death in cold blood, in a fusillade that took only seconds,

stepped in front of the patrol car to look,
 verified a perfect kill shot right in the temple
 (so perfect there was no need for a final coup de grace).

Mission accomplished, the gunman calmly and professionally ejected the
 spent shell casings from his Smith & Wesson and reloaded,
 began slow-losing from the scene,
 and was heard by a witness, a cab driver crouched down as the killer went by,
 the killer talking to himself,
 saying under his breath, “poor dumb cop”
 (it was just business, nothing personal, all in a day’s work).

But where were we? Oh yes!—
 the Smith & Wesson .38, its chamber modified to fire .38 Specials, found in a
 paper bag with an apple and an orange at Ross and Lamar in downtown
 Dallas,
 by an ordinary Dallas citizen
 making deliveries early Saturday morning,
 at 7:30 AM, Saturday, November the 23rd, 1963,
 who turned it in to the Dallas Police.

That revolver inside a paper bag,
 with an orange and an apple,
 found next to the street curb at Ross and Lamar,
 had been abandoned by someone
 (after a recent use—what else?),
 the paper bag, outwardly disguised as street litter
 awaiting the next nightly street sweeping.

(And the chorus is singing: *who* would want to dispose of a perfectly good
 revolver like that?)

One of the street sweeping vehicles from the City,
 which worked nightly on the most-trafficked streets of downtown Dallas,
 including the corner of Ross and Lamar,
 would carry that paper bag with its hidden secret inside,
 like other refuse
 to a city landfill,
 where that revolver’s existence would never be known,

**what it had been used for,
who had used it,
who had disposed of it there,
someone up to no good
(there is not even a conceivable innocent explanation).**

**Except gods intervened,
decided this crime should not be perfect,
decided a clue must be left.
By a stroke of fate a delivery man (a man named Willie Flatt) found it,
before it would have gone to the landfill
(a few hours after the murder of Officer Tippit,
the Dallas area's only recent murder by handgun),
and he turned it in to the Police
and the Police turned it over to the FBI.**

**And the FBI had it
And they had another Smith & Wesson .38, modified to shoot .38 Special,
found on the person of Lee Harvey Oswald arrested in a movie theater.
Two suspected murder weapons that weekend.
(For those who need it spelled out, that was one too many.)
The FBI in D.C. had them both, both of those Smith & Wessons,
the FBI was actively investigating them both at the same time.
(Documents that later came to light showed that.)**

**The FBI had the killer's shell hulls from the crime scene of the Tippit murder
(during a two-day period from November 28 to November 30 with no chain of
custody document record or testimony or explanation for delay, between
when FBI Agent Drain signed for them in Dallas on Thursday, and when the
FBI lab in the Justice Department building in Washington, D.C., received four
shell hulls from an unspecified submitter on Saturday).**

**The FBI would be expected to have tested both revolvers
to find which of those Smith & Wessons had been the weapon used in the
killing of Officer Tippit.**

**But if any formal examination of the Ross and Lamar Smith & Wesson
revolver was done, it was kept secret by the FBI, never disclosed to the
Warren Commission**

or to the American people.

The very existence of that Ross and Lamar revolver itself was not disclosed to the Warren Commission and did not become known to the American people until long after the Tippit murder case had been written up in the Warren Report, considered settled, forgotten history, ancient history.

(Officer Tippit was a husband and father of three when he lost his life.)

They said the man carrying concealed like millions of Americans, the man arrested in the theater wearing a dark brown shirt with medium-brown thinning hair and a tapered rear hairline, had done it,

Not the abandoner of the Smith & Wesson .38, modified to shoot .38 Special, in a paper bag at Ross and Lamar.

Lee Harvey Oswald, it might be said, was at the wrong place at the wrong time, when police swarmed that theater in force, angry as hornets, in hot pursuit of the killer of one of their own (bad afternoon for Lee to choose to go see a movie)

Oswald had on his person a Smith & Wesson .38 too. It too had been modified to shoot .38 Special, just like the unknown professional who abandoned the Smith & Wesson at Ross and Lamar, a disposal of a murder weapon.

They said Oswald's Smith & Wesson was the Tippit murder weapon. But it was not.

The paper-bag revolver found at Ross and Lamar was.

And they disappeared that paper-bag revolver found at Ross and Lamar (yes, literally disappeared it) and they disappeared all records of any forensic analysis (if any records were made of *that*)

**Just gone, just gone today,
like wisps in the wind.
Sands of time.
Forgotten.
Yes, it was a coverup.**

Here are the documents.

*Compiled by Gregory Doudna
March 15, 2026
www.scrollery.com*

For reference purposes, here are the known FBI documents telling of the Paper-Bag Revolver found near a street curb at Ross and Lamar in downtown Dallas early the morning of November 23, 1963, which from its timing may be presumed to have been the murder weapon used in the murder of Officer J.D. Tippit of the previous afternoon. The find of this weapon and information of its existence was kept concealed from the Warren Commission in its investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald in the murder of Tippit. No Dallas Police paperwork is known to survive concerning this weapon even though it was originally turned in to the Dallas Police who conveyed it to the FBI. The whereabouts of this revolver is unknown today and presumed permanently unrecoverable. These documents were obtained from <https://jfkconspiracyforum.freeforums.net/thread/983/gun-bag>, dated July 24, 2020 (accessed Feb 15, 2026). Following the documents I have compiled summary information on how they came to light.—*gd*

THE DOCUMENTS

Document 1 (Nov 25, 1963)

MEMORANDUM

**TO SAC, DALLAS (89-43) DATE: 11/25/63
FROM SA RICHARD E. HARRISON
SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY**

On 11/23/63, Patrolman J. RAZ brought into the Homicide and Robbery Bureau, Dallas PD, a brown paper sack which contained a snub-nosed .38 caliber Smith & Wesson, SN 893265.

This gun had the word "England" on the cylinder and had been found at approximately 7:30 AM in a brown paper sack, together with an apple and an orange, near the curb at the corner of Ross and Lamar Streets and was turned in

by one Willie Flat, white male, 9221 Metz Drive, employed at 4770 Memphis, to the Dallas PD.

2 - Dallas
REH:cah
(2) FBI DL 89-43-636

Document 2 (Nov 28, 1963)

ORDNANCE, IN EFFORT TO FURTHER TRACE WEAPON WHICH, ACCORDING TO RETEL, WAS FOUND IN A PAPER BAG IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF ASSASSINATION AREA.
END AND ACK PLS

WA K"1"M 0 6-16 PMKOK FBI WA ELR
DL 5-17 PM OK FBI DL DRL
PH 6-17 PM OF FBI PH JTA
TU CLR
END ACK WA 11-28 PM OK FBI WA ELR DL 10-26 PM CST OK FBI DL VRG
SI 10-27 PM CST OK FBI SI WJA BS 10-28 PM OK FBI BS RCS

FBI HQ 62-109060-857

Document 3 (Nov 29, 1963)

URGENT 11-29-63 6-10 PM RCS TO DIRECTOR AND SACS, DALLAS AND PHILADELPHIA FROM SAC, BOSTON /89-43/ 2-P
ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY, NOVEMBER TWENTY-SECOND, SIXTYTHREE, DALLAS, TEXAS.
RE DALLAS TEL INSTANT DATE.

ON NOV. TWENTYNINE SIXTYTHREE FRED MILLER, SALES MANAGER OF SMITH AND WESSON INC., ADVISED SA THOMAS F. SULLIVAN THAT RECORDS SMITH AND WESSON, INC., SPRINGFIELD, MASS., DISCLOSE THIRTY-EIGHT CALIBER REVOLVER, SN EIGHT NINE THREE TWO SIX FIVE, WAS SHIPPED ON JANUARY THIRTEEN, FORTYTWO, TO U.S. GOVERNMENT, HARTFORD ORDNANCE, HARTFORD, CONN. HARTFORD ORDNANCE AT THAT TIME WAS DIVISION OF SPRINGFIELD ARMORY, SPRINGFIELD, MASS., AND ALL FIREARMS RECORDS AT THAT AGENCY WERE FORWARDED DURING NINETEEN FIFTY TO MISMS RECORDS CENTER, LETTERKENNY ORDNANCE, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

MILLER ADVISED HE BELIEVED SHIPMENTS TO HARTFORD ORDNANCE AT THAT TIME WERE DESTINED FOR ENGLAND UNDER LEND-LEASE AGREEMENT AND STAMPING ON CYLINDER IS PROBABLY A PROOF-MARK OF THAT GOVERNMENT CERTIFYING ITS ACCEPTANCE. SUCH WEAPONS ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN SOLD SURPLUS IN

[PAGE TWO]

ENGLAND, ALTERED AND RECHAMBERED IN THAT COUNTRY TO ACCOMMODATE THIRTY-EIGHT SPECIAL AMMUNITION. SUCH WEAPONS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY IMPORTED FOR SALE BY U.S. GUN DEALERS.

Document 4 (Nov 29, 1963)

PHILADELPHIA CONTACT MISMA RECORDS CENTER, LETTERKENNY

URGENT 11-29-63 8-58 AM CST EEA TO DIRECTOR AND SAC, BOSTON FROM SAC, DALLAS /89-43/ 1-P
ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY, NOVEMBER TWENTYTWO, LAST, DALLAS, TEXAS

FOR THE INFORMATION OF BOSTON OFFICE ON THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER TWENTYTHREE, LAST, A SNUB NOSE THIRTY EIGHT CALIBER SMITH AND WESSON, SERIAL NUMBER EIGHT NINE THREE TWO SIX FIVE, WITH THE WORD QUOTE ENGLAND UNQUOTE ON THE CYLINDER WAS FOUND AT APPROXIAMTELY SEVEN THIRTY AM., IN A BROWN PAPER SACK IN THE GENERAL AREA OF WHERE THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY TOOK PLACE.

BOSTON IS REQUESTED TO CONTACT SMITH AND WESSON AT SPRINGFIELD, MASS., AND TRACE OWNERSHIP OF THIS WEAPON.

END ACK IN ORD 10-02 AM OK FBI WA LA BS OK FBI BS 10-01 AM NCP TU CLEAR

FBI HQ 62-109060-485

Document 5 (Nov 29, 1963)

URGENT 11-29-63 11-21 PM EST JTA TO DIRECTOR AND SACS, DALLAS, SPRINGFIELD AND BOSTON FROM SAC, PHILADELPHIA /157-916/ 1 P
ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY, ELEVEN TWENTYTWO SIXTYTHREE, DALLAS, TEXAS.

RE BOSTON TELETYPES INSTANT, TWELVE THIRTY-TWO PM AND SIX TEN PM AND PH TELETYPE TO BUREAU, DALLAS AND SPRINGFIELD INSTANT FIVE FORTYEIGHT PM.

BOSTON ADVISES RECORDS OF SMITH AND WESSON INC., SPRINGFIELD, MASS. SHOW THIRTY-EIGHT CALIBER REVOLVER, SN EIGHT NINE THREE TWO SIX FIVE WAS SHIPPED JANUARY THIRTEEN, NINETEEN FORTY-TWO TO US GOVERNMENT, HARTFORD ORDNANCE, HARTFORD, CONN. AND RECORDS WERE SHIPPED TO LETTERKENNY ORDNANCE, PHILADELPHIA, PA., IN NINETEEN FIFTY.

RE PH TELETYPE SHOWS THESE RECORDS SENT COMMANDING GENERAL, US ARMY

WEAPONS COMMAND, ROCK ISLAND, ILL, FOR INFO SPRINGFIELD INSTANT WEAPON FOUND IN PAPER BAG IN IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF ASSASSINATION AREA.

SPRINGFIELD CONTACT ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL RE FURTHER TRACING OF WEAPON.

END ACK WA 11-28 PM OK FBI WA ELR DL 10-26 PM CST OK FBI DL VRG SI 10-27 PM CST OK FBI SI WJA BS 10-28 PM OK FBI BS RCS

FBI HQ 62-109060-638

Document 6 (Nov 30, 1963)

URGENT 11-30-63 3-27 PM CST DM TO DIRECTOR, /62-109060/42-24016 AND SAC, DALLAS FROM SAC, SPRINGFIELD /89-23/ ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY AFO. NSPI JACK L. RUBY, AKA., JACK RUBENSTEIN, JACK LEON RUBY. LEE HARVEY OSWALD DASH VICTEM, DECEASED. CR. RE PHILADELPHIA TEL NOVEMBER TWENTYNINE LAST.

ON NOVEMBER 30 INSTANT, GEORGE L. MAYERNICK, DEPUTY SHERIFF, AMSWE DASH SMD DASH I, ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL, ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS, ADVISED SA ELYON H. DAVIS THERE IS NO RECORD IN THE FILES OF AMSWE DASH SMD DASH I OF SMITH AND WESSON THIRTYEIGHT CALIBER REVOLVER, SN V FIVE ONE TWO ONE ZERO. MAYERNICK ALSO ADVISED THERE IS NO RECORD OF SMITH AND WESSON THIRTYEIGHT CALIBER REVOLVER, SN EIGHT NINE THREE TWO SIX FIVE IN FILES OF AMSWE DASH SMD DASH I.

NO FD THREE ZERO TWO BEING SUBMITTED, UAC. COPIES MAILED BOSTON AND PHILADELPHIA. P.

END AND ACK BOTH STS PLS WA 4-30 PM OK FBI WA RDR DL EAEP PM OK FBI DL WD 3-30 P VVM CC-MR ROSEN

FBI HQ 62-109060-858

HOW THE PAPER-BAG REVOLVER DOCUMENTS CAME TO LIGHT

Below are excerpts from an article by researcher Bill Adams telling how knowledge of the paper-bag revolver came to light and his and others' contributions to bringing that about.

Bill Adams, "Second Gun or Second Guessing? The Story of the Revolver in the Paper Bag," *The Fourth Decade*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (May 1996): 8-15 (<https://maryferrell.org/showDoc.html?docId=48693#relPageId=8>).

"The FBI unleashed a controversy in 1978 when they released 100,000 pages of documents concerning its investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy.

Within those 100,000 pages was a very intriguing FBI document. That same year the Assassination Information Bureau (AIB) reviewed the FBI document release and reported the discovery of various documents in the AIB's newsletter, 'Clandestine America.' One issue of the newsletter mentioned that a .38 caliber revolver was discovered 'in a paper bag in the immediate vicinity of the assassination site.'

"In the Fall of 1991 I was reading through Paul Hoch's collection of 'Clandestine America' when I came across the AIB article on the revolver [1]. (...) Over the next few months I contacted many assassination researchers and was disappointed to learn that none of them had ever heard of the revolver. Late in 1991 I finally located a copy of a document concerning the revolver. Researcher John Woods II had a copy of the document in a collection of documents he had obtained regarding the HSCA investigation into the assassination. The document contained the following information:

'... For the information of the Boston office on the morning of November Twentythree, last, a snub nose thirty eight caliber Smith and Wesson, serial number eight nine three two six five, with the word quote England unquote on the cylinder was found at approximately seven thirty AM, in a brown paper sack in the general area of where the assassination of President Kennedy took place.' [2]

"(...) As a result of the Assassination Records Collection Act (ARCA) of 1992 the FBI files reviewed by the HSCA were released to the National Archives. One of these FBI files turned out to be a two page document concerning the FBI's attempts to trace the revolver. [4] (...) I obtained this document from another researcher and now possessed four different revolver documents. (...)

"Early in 1995 Paul Hoch sent me a copy of another AIB discovered document concerning the revolver. He discovered this document while looking for other material I had requested, unrelated to the revolver investigation. This document was also apparently included in the 1978 FBI document release. This document was a new fifth document that I had never seen before and my FOIA requests had not uncovered. The document provides the missing piece to the revolver puzzle. The document not only reveals where the revolver was found but who found it. (...)

'On 11/23/63, Patrolman J. Raz brought into the Homicide and Robbery Bureau, Dallas PD, a brown paper sack which contained a snub-nosed .38 caliber Smith & Wesson, SN 893265 . . . had been found . . . near the curb at the corner of Ross and Lamar Streets and was turned in by one Willie Flat ...'" [8]

Notes from the article:

[1] Assassination Information Bureau, Clandestine America Volume 2, Number 1, 1978. [2] FBI Dallas Field Office to FBI HQ [62-109060-485] and Boston Field Office, November 29, 1963. [4] FBI Boston Field Office to FBI HQ [62-109060-857], Dallas Field Office, Philadelphia Field Office, November 29, 1963. [8] FBI Dallas Field Office SA [89-43-636] to FBI Dallas Field Office SAC, November 25, 1963.

A MENTION OF THE PAPER-BAG REVOLVER IN A WIDELY-READ ARTICLE IN 1994

From Anthony Summers and Robbyn Swan, "The Ghosts of November," *Vanity Fair*, December 1994:

"Just when you think the story holds no more factual surprises, it tends to produce one. We now have an F.B.I. report revealing that, at 7:30 on the morning after the assassination, 'A SNUB NOSE THIRTY EIGHT CALIBER SMITH AND WESSON, SERIAL NUMBER EIGHT NINE THREE TWO SIX FIVE, WITH THE WORD QUOTE ENGLAND UNQUOTE ON THE CYLINDER WAS FOUND ... IN A BROWN PAPER SACK IN THE GENERAL AREA OF WHERE THE ASSASSINATION TOOK PLACE.' ... In spite of repeated Freedom of Information requests by California researcher Bill Adams, the F.B.I. has not revealed how its investigation of the gun was concluded."

ABOUT THE FINDER OF THE PAPER-BAG REVOLVER

*A Record from "Mary's Database" on the Mary Ferrell Foundation website
(<https://maryferrell.org/php/marysdb.php?id=3815>):*

Record: FLAT, WILLIE

Sources: FBI Dallas Field Office SA to FBI Dallas Field Office SAC, 89-43-636

Mary's Comments: On Nov 25, 1963, FBI report of Dallas Patrolman J. Raz bringing into Homicide and Robbery Bureau, Dallas PD, a brown paper sack which contained a snub-nosed .38 caliber Smith & Wesson, Serian # 893265. It has been found near the curb at the corner of Ross and Lamar Streets and was turned in by one Willie Flat. In 1963, there was NO "Flat" in Texas. There was a Willis Earl Flatt, 1023 Mount Auburn Ave., Dallas, TX 75223-1533 (214) 827-0382. In 1963, he was a mechanic at Southwest Coach Company on East Northwest Highway. He is living in same house on Mount Auburn in 1996.

*Willis Earl Flatt (1921-2003), Dallas, Veteran, U.S. Army, World War II
(<https://www.interment.net/united-states/texas/veterans-burials/records.php?page=1678>).*

R.I.P.´