

Michigan Every Day **By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly**

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Body washes ashore; spawns Manistee murder case

Two young men, George Vanderpool and Herbert Field arrived in Manistee in the fall of 1868 and became partners in a small bank. After church on a Sunday afternoon in September, the man met at their office. They were prominent members of the thriving logging town and, by all appearances, their business partnership was amicable. However, prosecutors would later argue that they drew up papers on this Sunday to dissolve their business. It was the last time anyone saw Field alive.

The disappearance of a prominent citizen caused a stir in the town and Vanderpool was accused of murder. Investigators believed he crept up behind his partner and struck him on the head before disposing of the body into the water. The mood of Manistee was fervently against Vanderpool. His trial took two months with the evidence against him all circumstantial.

However, he was found guilty of first-degree murder and sent to the state prison at Jackson for life in solitary confinement. By the time of his conviction, the case had become national news and many Michigan residents believed Vanderpool was railroaded by authorities in Manistee.

The case hinged around a red stain found in the partners' office and expert witnesses argued over what it meant. One doctor claimed, without a doubt, that medical science proved the stain was the blood of a human being.

Another doctor, with just as much certainty, maintained that science offered no method to determine whether the stain was human or animal blood. In addition, Field, who was in his early 20s at the time of his death, was known as a restless adventurer who repeatedly put his life at risk. As more people became uncertain of Vanderpool's guilt, money was raised from around Michigan to fund his appeal. Eventually Vanderpool's supporters secured a new trial, this one held in Kalamazoo. This time the jury could not reach a verdict. Seven on the jury believed Vanderpool to be guilty. Five voted for acquittal. A third trial in Kalamazoo ended in Vanderpool's favor. He walked away a free man and there is no record that anyone paid for the murder of Field.