

Grave of Bill Woolley, Murderer of 1870's, Hidden in Bramble-Covered Patch at Hamilton

By E. BURKE MALONEY

WHEN the wind comes up in fitful gusts on dark nights, and moans thru the bare trees which skirt the old Gully road as it inclines upward to meet Old Corlies' road in Hamilton, there are some who say that it may not be the wind at all—it may be the ghost of Bill Woolley.

On the bushy slope where the two roads join is the burying ground of the original Hamilton Methodist church. Bristling with thickets and brambles, it is carpeted by many layers of dead leaves which help conceal the evidence of a cemetery.

But old Bill Woolley's body doesn't lie in the church burying ground altho his mouldering bones are buried in the same wadded tract. The Woolley grave was dug just outside the limit of the church plot and for many years a worn fence separated his mortal remains from those of his neighbors: for Bill Woolley had killed When Charles E. Hurley, 1116 Fifth avenue, Asbury Park, was a small boy, his father used to tell a dark tale of the murder, Woolley's trial and subsequent hanging at Freehold. He believes it was the last hanging at the county seat and puts the year about 1874.

"That's the spot where the murderer took place," Mr. Hurley observed as the car passed by the triangular tract at the junction of Sylvania and Corlies avenue, Neptune City.

"Hart Fleming used to live there but the house has been gone for years."

It seems that Hart Fleming took more than a neighborly interest in Woolley's wife who was said to return the interest. One night the paramours were discovered in flagrant delicti by the husband, but for some unexplained reason, the murder was not committed until the next day. It may have been that there was no weapon handy.

The following noon, Woolley walked into his neighbor's house with a shotgun. The luckless Fleming was enjoying his lunch. "He was eating beets, they tell me," remarked Mr. Hurley. "At least they found a mess of beets on the floor after Woolley had shot a hole clean thru his middle."

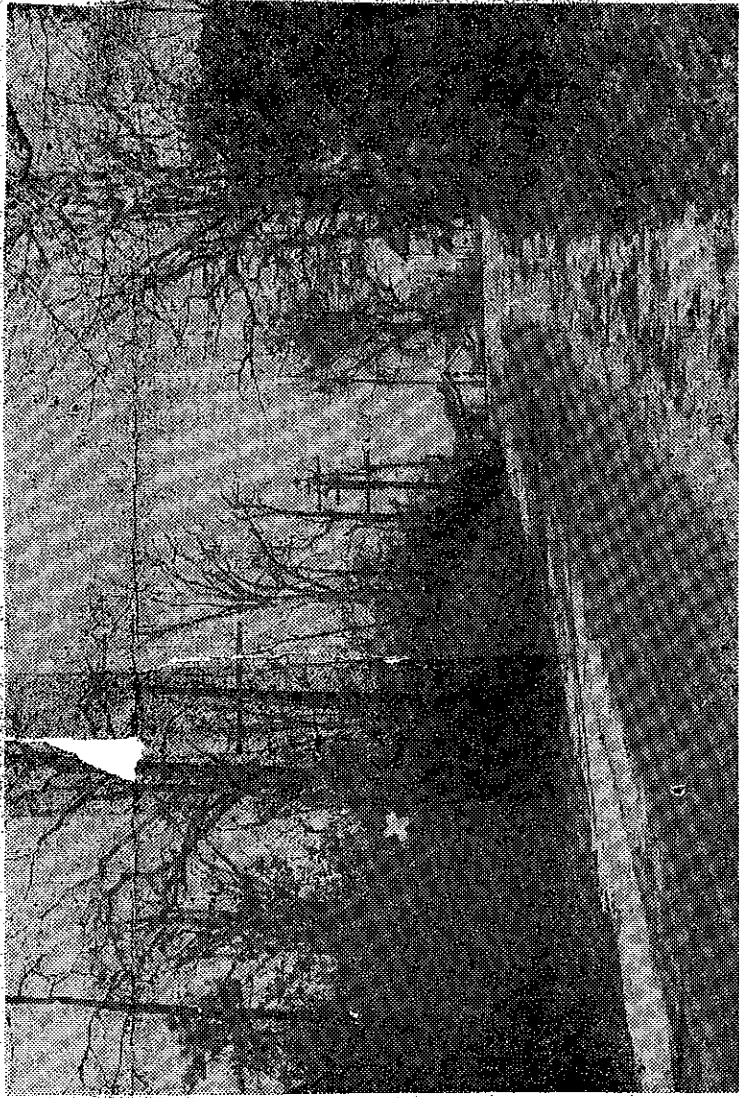
AFTER the hanging, the Hamilton church officials would not permit a murderer to be buried in the regular plot, so a grave was dug on the other side of the barrier fence and but a few bones-length from the graves of the faithful, none of whom had ever been convicted of a homicide and most of whom had died natural deaths.

One day last week, Mr. Hurley, who is approaching his eightieth birthday, guided a curious newspaperman thru mazes of thorns, brambles and other booby-traps of nature to the spot where the outcast corpse was interred.

"When we were lads, we used to put white sheets over our heads and come here at night and moan. We scared lots of people that way," he reminisced.

"This old Gully road, lead to Boobytown; the name for Glendola,"

When Mr. Hurley the Hamilton chu-



'THE TRAP'—That's what they used to call this part of the Hamilton section of Neptune township. No one seems to know why. The X marks the spot where a murderer was buried, just outside the limits of the old Hamilton burying ground which is on the left corner where the Glendola road meets Old Corlies' road. (Press Photo)

west of the present cemetery on the opposite side of Old Corlies' road from the present church.

Riding along West Bangs avenue on the way home just beyond the spot where once stood the Indian Lady—a tall pine tree which was used as a landmark by ships at sea—Mr. Hurley observed, "That's where Abram Garrabrandt used to have his grist mill. Old Abram went to his grave insisting that the earth was flat. If it was round, he used to say, all the water would spill out of my armpit."

*Historians say it was the
Old Presbyterian Graveyard
(from Shrewsbury)

--Margaret Goodrich, Museum Curator