CASE FILE 87-1142

COLD CASE KIT

THE HALVORSEN SAPPHIRE

UNSOLVED

Port Ashby, Maine · October 3, 1987

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HOW TO PLAY

1. Read the letter first. It sets out the three questions you need to answer.
2. Go through every exhibit. Times, keys and small print matter, so keep a pencil handy.
3. Test every suspect against the evidence, not against their story.
4. Check your answers at **coldcasekit.com/cases/halvorsen-sapphire/solve/**. Hints are there too, one at a time.

1–4 players · 45–60 minutes

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HALVORSEN HOUSE MUSEUM

14 Harbor Street · Port Ashby, Maine

November 2, 2026

Dear Investigator,

On the evening of Saturday, October 3, 1987, the Halvorsen sapphire brooch was taken from its display case in our front parlor while sixty members of the museum were in the house. The police never charged anyone. The insurer paid the owner $40,000 the following spring, and the file was closed in 1989.

Last month, while we cleared the attic for our 140th anniversary, a volunteer found a box labeled "Sapphire — keep." Inside were copies of the police report, the statements taken that night, and the log the Courier's photographer kept while he worked the party. Everyone named in these papers has since died or moved away. I would still like to know what happened in my museum, and I think these pages are enough to tell us.

Please read everything before you settle on anyone. When you are ready, answer the three questions on the next page. You can check your answers, and ask for a hint if you get stuck, at coldcasekit.com/cases/halvorsen-sapphire/solve/.

With thanks,

Ruth Abernathy

Ruth Abernathy
Director, Halvorsen House Museum

THE THREE QUESTIONS

1. Who took the brooch?

(A) Margaret Dunmore
(B) Thomas Reyes
(C) Daniel Kowalski
(D) Eleanor Whitcomb

2. How was the case opened?

(A) With the key on Mrs. Dunmore's key ring
(B) With the spare key from the office desk
(C) The lock was forced
(D) The case had been left unlocked

3. How did the brooch leave the house?

(A) In the catering van
(B) Over the garden wall during the lantern tour
(C) With someone who left without being searched
(D) It never left; it is still hidden in the house

PORT ASHBY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Incident report — narrative

REPORT NO.	87-1142
DATE	October 3, 1987
OFFENSE	Larceny — jewelry (one sapphire and gold brooch, insured value $40,000)
LOCATION	Halvorsen House Museum, 14 Harbor Street
REPORTING OFFICER	Sgt. Ellen Brandt, badge 212

CALL

At 8:47 pm the museum director, Mrs. Margaret Dunmore, telephoned the station from the museum office to report that a brooch had been stolen from a display case during a members' reception. I arrived with Ptl. Novak at 9:05 pm.

THE DISPLAY CASE

The brooch was displayed alone in a glass-topped case in the front parlor. At 8:40 pm Mrs. Dunmore and six members came into the parlor for the 8:40 house tour and found the case empty. The lid was down and locked.

There is no damage to the case, the glass or the lock. It was opened with a key and locked again afterward.

The lock is old and stiff. At my request the custodian, Mr. Walter Ames, opened it, lifted the lid and locked it again three times. His best time was 3 minutes 10 seconds, and he knows the lock. Whoever did this needed at least three minutes at the case.

KEYS

There are two keys to the case. One is on Mrs. Dunmore's key ring, which she wore on her belt all evening. She states it never left her, and the newspaper photographs show it on her belt.

The spare is kept in the top drawer of the desk in the museum office. The office was locked all evening and its lock was not forced. Three people held office keys: Mrs. Dunmore; Mrs. Eleanor Whitcomb, chair of the board of trustees and owner of the brooch; and Mr. Thomas Reyes of Harbor Light Catering, who was lent a key for the evening so he could use the office telephone and the storeroom.

The volunteer docent, Mr. Daniel Kowalski, holds no keys to the office or the case.

SEARCH

From 8:45 pm staff kept the front door shut and asked every guest to open coats and bags before leaving. Forty-one guests were checked this way before we arrived. Mrs.

Whitcomb said she felt faint and was helped out to her car at 8:50 pm by her driver, Mr. Harold Cole. She was not searched.

Ptl. Novak and I searched the catering van at 9:20 pm and found nothing of interest. The garden is walled and its one gate was padlocked; the garden tour came back in through the kitchen door with Mr. Kowalski. Staff and officers searched the house that night and again on October 4. The brooch was not found.

PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Statements were taken that night from Mrs. Dunmore, Mr. Reyes, Mr. Kowalski, and, by telephone on October 4, from Mrs. Whitcomb. Copies attached. The Courier photographer, Mr. Walter Simms, gave me a copy of his shooting log.

STATUS

Open. No arrest.

E. Ellen Brandt

Sgt. Ellen Brandt #212

STATEMENT OF MARGARET DUNMORE

Director, Halvorsen House Museum, 58

Taken October 3, 1987, 9:30 pm, museum office by Sgt. E. Brandt

Q. Where were you between eight and twenty to nine?

A. Working, the whole time. I was at the front door with the Mayor until a quarter past, then I gave my remarks in the dining room — about fifteen minutes, I always run long — and then I was back in the hall getting the 8:40 group together. Walt from the Courier followed me around with his camera half the night.

Q. Your key to the case?

A. On my belt. It is always on my belt. I did not take it off and nobody asked me for it.

Q. Who else could get into the office?

A. Eleanor has a key, as chair. And I lent one to Tom Reyes this afternoon so he could use our telephone. His van radio doesn't reach the shop from Harbor Street.

Q. Did anyone seem out of place tonight?

A. No. Eleanor looked tired. She has had a terrible autumn, with the business.

I have read this statement and it is true. Margaret Dunmore

STATEMENT OF THOMAS REYES

Owner, Harbor Light Catering, 34

Taken October 3, 1987, 9:50 pm, museum kitchen by Sgt. E. Brandt

Q. Where were you this evening?

A. In the kitchen. All night. Somebody has to plate the food.

Q. You didn't leave the house at any point?

A. No. Why would I leave? I called the shop from the office about seven, before the guests came, and that's the only time I was out of the kitchen until coffee.

Q. When was coffee?

A. After Mrs. Dunmore's speech. Half past eight, more or less. I was in the dining room pouring when the shouting started.

Q. Did you go near the parlor?

A. I don't even know which room the parlor is.

I have read this statement and it is true. Thomas Reyes

STATEMENT OF DANIEL KOWALSKI

Volunteer docent, student at Ashby College, 20

Taken October 3, 1987, 10:05 pm, museum kitchen by Sgt. E. Brandt

Q. When did you last see the brooch?

A. Just after eight. I took the eight o'clock tour through the parlor, and the man from the Courier wanted a picture of the case, so I stood next to it. It was there. Then I went to get the lantern tour ready.

Q. The lantern tour?

A. Out in the garden. We went out the kitchen door at a quarter past and I brought them back in at eight thirty-five. Eight people. They were with me the whole time, ask any of them.

Q. Do you have a key to that case?

A. No. I've never even held one. I know how this looks, officer. Everybody knows I'm short on tuition. But I didn't take it.

I have read this statement and it is true. Daniel Kowalski

STATEMENT OF ELEANOR WHITCOMB

Chair, Board of Trustees; owner of the brooch, 66

Taken October 4, 1987, 11:15 am, by telephone by Sgt. E. Brandt

Q. Where were you during the reception?

A. In the dining room, at the board table, from the moment I arrived. I did not leave it until I felt unwell and went home.

Q. What time did you leave?

A. Ten minutes to nine, perhaps. Harold had the car at the door. I had no idea anything had happened until Margaret telephoned this morning.

Q. Did you go into the office at any point?

A. No. Why would I?

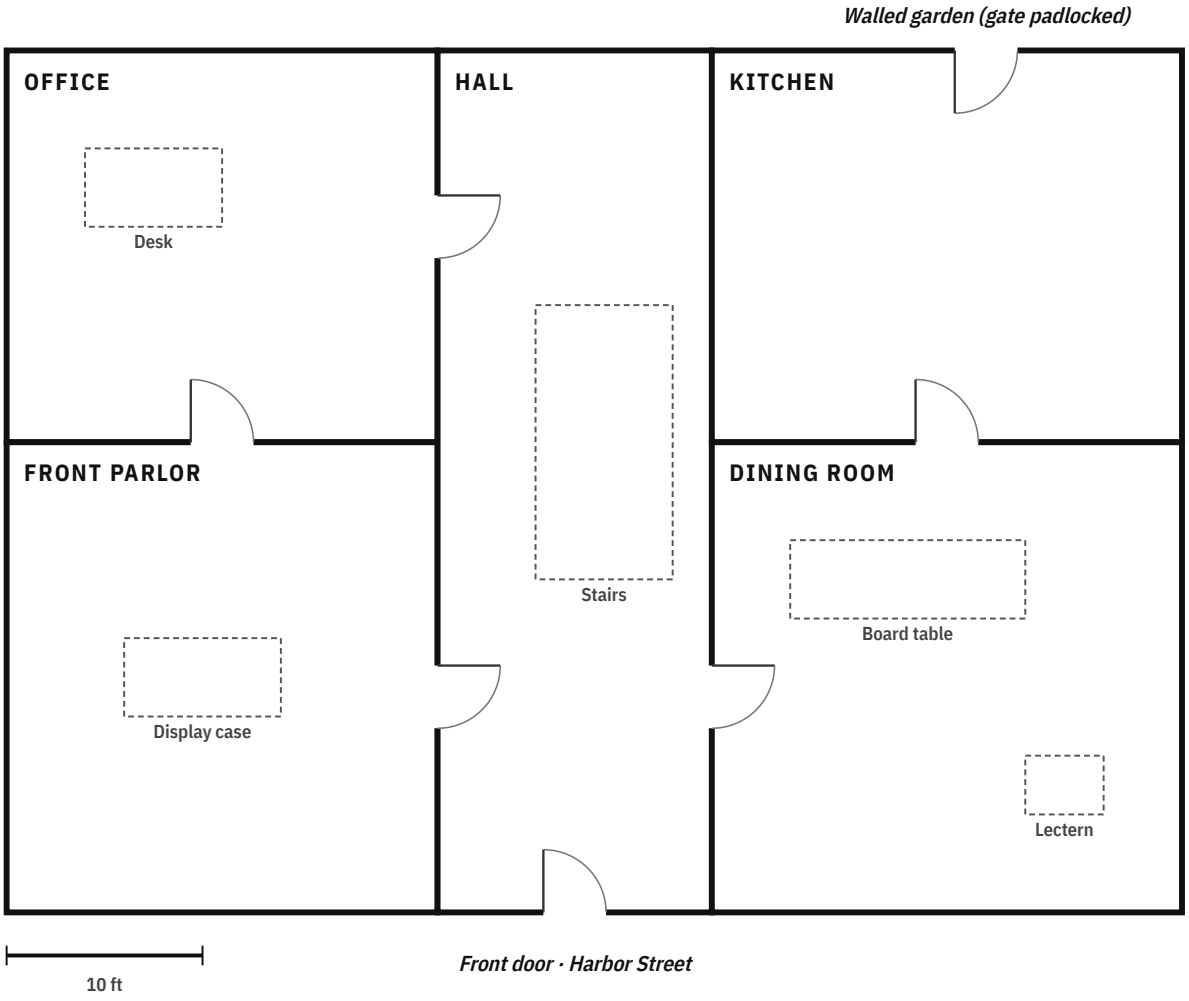
Q. The brooch was yours?

A. My mother's. I lent it to the house because it belongs there, with the Halvorsen things. It is insured, of course, but that is hardly the point.

Taken by telephone. Not read back or signed.

HALVORSEN HOUSE — GROUND FLOOR

Sketch, not to exact scale



Measured by Sgt. Brandt, Oct. 4, 1987. Walking from any room to the next through a door takes about one minute in a crowd. The front door is on Harbor Street; the kitchen door opens on the walled garden.

Port Ashby Courier · Walter Simms · Sat., Oct. 3, 1987
Halvorsen House members' evening, for Sunday Living section

Roll 1 (Tri-X 400)

#1-4	7:58	Mrs. Dunmore greets members at the front door.
#5	8:02	Harbor Light Catering — Tom Reyes plating desserts.
#6-7	8:05	Board chair Eleanor Whitcomb with Mayor Gil Pratt at the board table.
#8	8:08	Mrs. Dunmore and Mayor Pratt in the hall.
#9-12	8:10	The Halvorsen sapphire in its case, for the Sunday feature. Docent Dan Kowalski beside it.

Roll 2 (Tri-X 400)

#1	8:14	Mrs. Dunmore at the lectern, opening remarks.
#2	8:17	Lectern, from the side.
#3	8:20	Wide shot of the room from the lectern. Board table in front; Mrs. Whitcomb's chair empty.
#4	8:23	Members laugh at the 1938 hurricane story.
#5	8:26	Mrs. Dunmore holds up the 1887 deed.
#6	8:29	Lectern, closing.
#7	8:31	Applause. Mrs. Dunmore and Mrs. Whitcomb at the board table.
#8	8:33	Tom Reyes pours coffee for Mayor Pratt while Mrs. Dunmore talks with donors.
#9	8:36	Mrs. Dunmore and Mayor Pratt by the stairs. Key ring on her belt.
#10	8:37	Coffee service.
#11	8:39	Mrs. Dunmore gathers the 8:40 tour group.

Times from my watch, written down as I shot. Checked against the hall clock at 8:00 — W.S.

Lantern Tour of the Gardens — 8:15 pm

Members' Evening, October 3 · Guide: Dan Kowalski · Limit 10

#	NAME	NOTES
1	Frances Hale	
2	Robert & June Okafor	
3	Pat Lindqvist	bad knee — slow!
4	Carol Beaumont	
5	Hugh Tanner	
6	Lois Tanner	
7	Agnes Pruitt	
8		
9		
10		

Out the kitchen door 8:15. Back in 8:35.
All 8 with me the whole time. — D.K.

BAYVIEW WINE & SPIRITS
211 SHORE RD
PORT ASHBY ME
(207) 555-0192

10/03/87 20:21 REG 2 CLK 04

4 CHABLIS 1.5L	37.96
@ 9.49	
2 ROSE 1.5L	17.98
@ 8.99	
6 SELTZER 1L	5.34
@ 0.89	
SUBTOTAL	61.28
ME TAX 5%	3.06
TOTAL	64.34

CHARGE ACCT 0417 HARBOR LIGHT CATERING

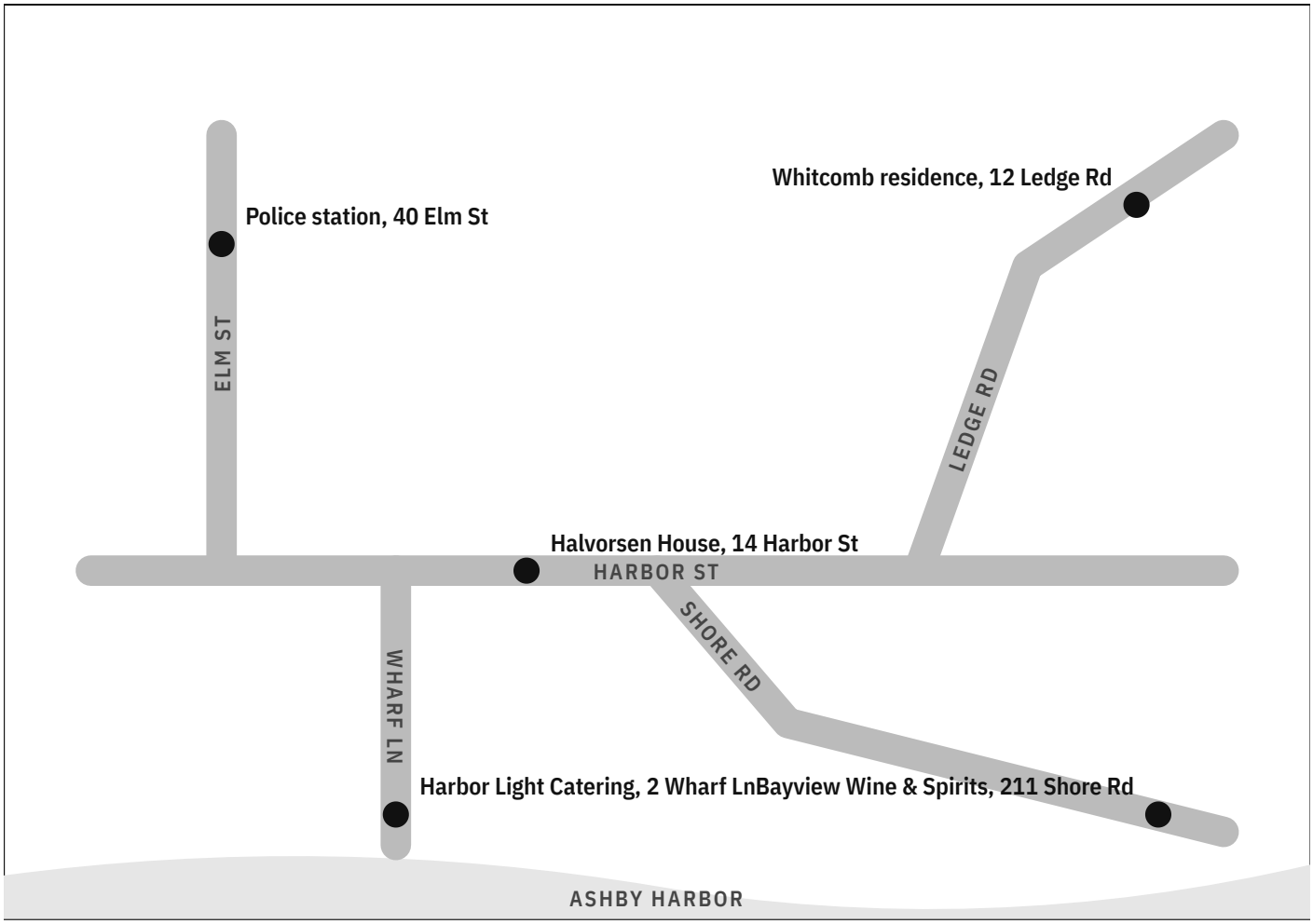
SIGNATURE
J. Reyes

THANK YOU
NO RETURNS ON CHILLED WINE

Found on the kitchen counter at Halvorsen House during the second search, Oct. 4, 1987. — E.B.

PORT ASHBY — HARBOR DISTRICT

Prepared for case 87-1142



DRIVE	TIME
Halvorsen House to Bayview Wine & Spirits	9 min by car
Halvorsen House to 12 Ledge Rd	6 min by car

> Drive times measured by Sgt. Brandt on Oct. 4, 1987, Saturday-evening traffic, door to door. The caterers park at the kitchen door.

NEW ENGLAND TELEPHONE

Detail of calls, October 3, 1987 (supplied to PAPD on request)

ACCOUNT	Halvorsen House Museum
LINE	(207) 555-0110 — office
SERVICE ADDRESS	14 Harbor St, Port Ashby ME

DATE	TIME	TYPE	NUMBER	LENGTH
10/03/87	6:52 PM	OUTGOING	555-0163	3 MIN
10/03/87	8:18 PM	OUTGOING	555-0147	4 MIN
10/03/87	8:47 PM	OUTGOING	555-0100	6 MIN
10/03/87	9:15 PM	INCOMING	555-0128	2 MIN

> Local calls are listed by the number dialed or, for incoming calls, the number calling. All numbers are in the 207 area.

PORT ASHBY & VICINITY — 1987 TELEPHONE DIRECTORY (EXCERPT)

Ames Walter ..... 3 Cove Rd 555-0135
Dunmore M & R ..... 8 Elm St 555-0128
Harbor Light Catering ..... 2 Wharf Ln 555-0163
Kowalski D ..... Ashby College, Pell Hall 555-0171
Police Dept (non-emergency) ..... 40 Elm St 555-0100
Simms Walter ..... 19 Shore Rd 555-0184
Whitcomb E & H ..... 12 Ledge Rd 555-0147

PORT ASHBY COURIER · SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1987 · BUSINESS

Whitcomb Shipping enters receivership

BY ANNE CORLISS, COURIER STAFF

Whitcomb Shipping, the 91-year-old Port Ashby freight line, was placed in receivership Friday after its lenders called in loans of more than $2 million, the company confirmed.

The firm's two remaining coastal freighters will be sold. Court papers show that the Whitcomb family home on Ledge Road was pledged as security for the loans last spring.

"We are doing everything we can for our people," said Eleanor Whitcomb, who has run the company since her husband's death in 1984.

PORT ASHBY COURIER · SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1987 · LIVING

Halvorsen sapphire to star at members' evening

The Halvorsen sapphire brooch, made in Boston in 1889 for the wife of sea captain Nils Halvorsen, will be shown at Halvorsen House on October 3 for the first time in 40 years.

The brooch is on loan from board chair Eleanor Whitcomb, whose mother bought it at the Halvorsen estate sale in 1948. It is insured for $40,000.

PORT ASHBY COURIER · MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1987 · FRONT PAGE

Sapphire stolen during museum reception

Police say lock was opened with a key

A sapphire brooch insured for $40,000 was stolen from a locked case at Halvorsen House on Saturday night while some 60 members of the museum attended a reception there, police said.

"Whoever took it had a key, or the use of one," said Sgt. Ellen Brandt. She said several people were being interviewed and asked anyone who attended the reception to call the station.