St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's & Coroner's Offices Team with Othram to Identify a 1986 Homicide Victim

After 38 years, a murdered woman, whose remains were discovered in Lake Pontchartrain near Slidell, Louisiana, has been identified as Pamela Lee Hupp, born April 28, 1958.

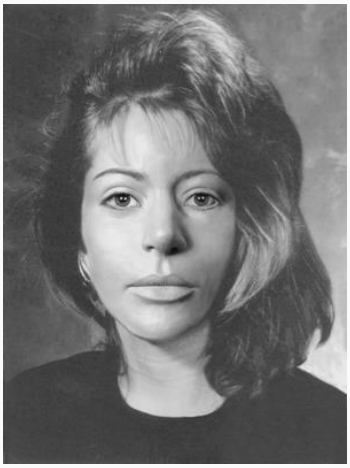
Solved

Summary

In June 1986, a fisherman discovered the remains of an unidentified individual weighed down in Lake Pontchartrain near Slidell, Louisiana. Slidell is located northwest of New Orleans. Members of the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Water Patrol Division responded and located the deceased individual approximately forty yards from the eastbound lanes I-10 and thirty-forty yards from the end of a pier off Howze Beach Service Road. The individual was relocated to the end of Lakeview Drive (Rats Nest Road), near a restaurant.

It was determined that the individual was a pregnant white female estimated to be in her early twenties. The woman's remains were transported by the St. Tammany Parish Coroner's Office for autopsy. Following the post mortem examination, her death was ruled a homicide. The woman was estimated to be between the ages of 20 and 30 years old, stood 5'4" tall, and weighed 126 pounds.

In February 2008, details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP852 and she became known as Slidell Jane Doe, also commonly known as Lake Pontchartrain Jane Doe. The Louisiana State University (LSU) FACES Lab developed a forensic approximation of what the Jane Doe may have looked like during her life. The case information and the victim's profile were aired on the "America's Most Wanted" television show in hopes that it would generate new leads about the woman's identity. The Louisiana State Police Crime Laboratory and St. Tammany Parish Coroner's DNA laboratory also conducted traditional DNA testing. Despite extensive efforts by law enforcement investigators to identify the woman, no matches were found, and the case went cold.



In 2022, the St Tammany Sheriff's Office submitted forensic evidence to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas to determine if advanced DNA testing could help identify the woman. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the evidence and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile for the woman. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team used the profile in a genetic genealogy search to develop new investigative leads that were returned to law enforcement.

Using this new information, a follow-up investigation was conducted leading investigators to potential relatives of the woman. Reference DNA samples were collected from the potential relative and compared to the DNA profile of the unknown woman. This investigation led to the positive identification of the woman, who is now known to be Pamela Lee Hupp, who was born April 28, 1958. Pamela was twenty-eight years old and pregnant with her second child, at the time of her murder. The investigation into Pamela's death is active and ongoing.

Funding for the advanced DNA testing and forensic genetic genealogy used in this case was provided by NamUs, a national clearinghouse that assists the criminal

justice community with the investigation and resolution of missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases across the United States and its territories. NamUs is funded and administered by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and is managed through a contract with Research Triangle Institute International. We are grateful for the support of RTI, NamUs, and the NIJ.

The identification of Pamela Lee Hupp represents the third case in the State of Louisiana where officials have publicly identified an individual using technology developed by Othram. To read about other Louisiana cases, click here.