

COLD CASES

# Cold case solved: Missing Harrisburg man identified as body pulled from Susquehanna River in 1998

The coroner's office has determined that James Gibson, reported missing on Feb. 4, 1998, was the identity of the body pulled from the Susquehanna River.



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Published: 4:03 PM EDT July 2, 2024

Updated: 4:03 PM EDT July 2, 2024

LANCASTER COUNTY, Pa. — The identity of a John Doe in a decades-old cold case has been determined.

At 12:16 p.m. on April 18, 1998, a fisherman came across the body of an adult man in the Turkey Point area of the Susquehanna River, in Manor Township, Lancaster County, according to the Lancaster County Coroner's Office.

There was no clothing on the body and significant postmortem changes, caused by time and environmental factors, made the man unrecognizable. According to the coroner's office, it was difficult to determine an accurate profile of what the man could have looked like before death.

An autopsy was performed on April 20, 1998, which revealed no evidence of trauma, according to the coroner. The cause of death was determined to be from drowning. The manner of the death remained pending.

Since the man's identity remained unknown, a dental exam was done two days later. Characteristics of each tooth were carefully documented for future comparison with antemortem dental x-rays or dental charting. Radiology studies were also performed.

A preliminary profile documented the man as possibly being white with a height estimation of 6'1" and a weight estimation of 260 pounds. The first facial reconstruction was done during this time, and a clay bust of the man was created.

However, the case turned cold with no leads on the John Doe's identity.

In 2008, Manor Township Police submitted a press release to local media outlets, hoping that someone would come forward to identify the male. A second release was submitted in 2013.

In April 2017, the Lancaster County Coroner's Office hired the help of several other agencies to reopen the case. By June that year, the coroner's office began working with the FBI to generate a second facial reconstruction.

At the end of July 2018, the FBI finalized their reconstruction, and the public was provided with a new look at the unidentified male.

Despite ongoing public interest, the man's identity remained unsolved.

In September of 2023, the coroner's office began coordinating with the [DNA Doe Project](#), a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping identify unidentified decedents using forensic genealogy. One tooth was needed from the

unidentified man for DNA, which was provided by the coroner's office to the DNA Doe Project.

<https://www.fox43.com/article/news/crime/cold-cases/identity-man-found-dead-1998-revealed-missing-person-harrisburg/521-f6861671-6583-4797-97ad-6cfd3764846>