

GEORGE PERROT CASE TIMELINE

1984-1985

The Sixteen Acres neighborhood of Springfield, Mass. experiences a series of rapes of elderly women over an 18-month period.

1985

Nov. 30

Emily Lichwala's house in Springfield, Mass. is broken into between 3 and 3:30 a.m. Lichwala does not see the person who breaks in but runs to a neighbor's house to call police. Shortly after 4 a.m., a man breaks into the home of a 78-year-old woman, about a mile away. The woman is assaulted and raped. Once her attacker leaves, she calls the police and is taken to the hospital. The victim describes her attacker as a clean-shaven man with short, black wavy hair that did not go past his neck.

Dec. 7

George Perrot, 17, breaks into the home of Joseph McNabb and later snatches a woman's purse outside a Denny's restaurant in the early hours of the morning. Soon after, Perrot is arrested at his sister and brother-in-law's home and taken to the Detective Bureau for questioning. At 5 a.m., Sgt. Thomas Kelly and Det. Thomas Jarvis question Perrot about the purse snatching, and he admits to that and the break-in at McNabb's. Jarvis questions Perrot three more times throughout the day about the events of Nov. 30. Perrot, who had a mustache and long hair at that time, is put in a [lineup](#) with six other men who have long hair and mustaches, despite the clean-cut characteristics described by the victim. McNabb identifies Perrot. The rape victim and Lichwala are unable to identify anyone. A rape victim from a previous assault is brought in and is also unable to identify anyone.

Dec. 16

A Hampden County grand jury indicts Perrot for armed robbery, indecent assault and battery, aggravated rape, burglary and assault in a dwelling and breaking and entering with intent to commit a felony.

1987

April 1

Assistant District Attorney Francis Bloom [personally drives](#) blood and hair samples taken from Perrot one day earlier to the FBI in Washington, D.C. A little over a month later, the victim's blood samples are mailed to the FBI.

Dec. 8

Jury trial begins. Perrot's state-appointed attorney James Hammerschmith declines to give an opening statement.

Dec. 14

The jury finds Perrot guilty on all charges. He is sentenced to two life terms for aggravated rape and armed burglary, and a total of 18-25 years for armed robbery and indecent assault and battery on an adult.

1990

July 5

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court grants Perrot a [new trial](#), due to the trial judge's error in allowing an improperly obtained purse into evidence.

Oct. 25

In late September or early October, while preparing to retry the case, ADA Elizabeth Dunphy Farris approaches Sgt. Kelly about what appears to be a confession to the Nov. 30 break-in and rape, signed by Perrot and Kelly, that had been left in the prosecution's

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files. On Oct. 25, Kelly submits a [report](#) stating that Bloom had created the document after Perrot's conviction and forged the signatures in an attempt to elicit confessions to another rape from two of Perrot's friends.

1991

Feb. 25 A Grand Jury hearing is held on a motion to dismiss based on the fabricated confession.

March 19 The defense's motion to dismiss for prosecutorial misconduct is denied.

1992

Jan. 1 Second jury trial begins; Brett Vottero leads the prosecution, while Perrot is represented by John Ferrara.

Jan. 8 The jury returns a guilty verdict for all charges. Perrot is sentenced to two concurrent life sentences—one for aggravated rape, the other for burglary and assault on an adult. On robbery, burglary, and indecent assault and battery charges, Perrot was sentenced to 33 to 45 years, to be served concurrent with the life sentences.

1993

Dec. 16 At the recommendation of a committee of the Board of Bar Overseers, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts publicly [censures](#) Bloom for creating and presenting a false confession.

1995

May 3 The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court affirms Perrot's convictions on appeal.

2000

April 25 Perrot files a motion for new trial.

2001

Sept. 10 Superior Court Judge Lawrence Wernick [orders](#) a new trial, citing his concern about the effects of Vottero's "improper and prejudicial" statements in his closing arguments.

2003

May 12 The Massachusetts Appeals Court [reverses](#) Wernick's new trial order in an unpublished decision.

2006 – 2009

In 2006 Perrot petitions for and is denied in 2007 funds to conduct DNA testing. In October 2008, Perrot again moves to preserve the physical evidence in his case: a pair of gloves, a bed sheet, and a single hair. A Springfield Police officer who in 2004 searched for the sexual assault kit taken in the case was reportedly unable to find it. Perrot's attorney, Greg Schubert, files two separate affidavits, one in [2007](#) and a second in 2009, stating that he viewed Perrot's requested evidence and confirmed that it was in custody of the Hampden County Superior Court. Despite these affidavits, a Springfield police officer is [unable to locate](#) the requested evidence. Perrot's motion to preserve the physical evidence is denied in March 2009.

2008

June 6 Perrot, representing himself, files a motion for a new trial.

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- Aug. 21 Motion for new trial denied.
- 2012**
- May 16 Perrot files a motion under the DNA Access Act, which went into effect the following day, to test the physical evidence in his case, and for the court to order the DA's office to conduct a search for any missing evidence.
- Sept. 21 The court [allows](#) Perrot's motion to test the gloves and the bed sheet, but denies his request for the Commonwealth to conduct a further search for physical evidence, including the hair and a sexual assault kit.
- 2013**
- June 27 The FBI Microscopic Hair Comparison Analysis Review Team examines FBI hair analyst Wayne Oakes's laboratory reports and testimony in Perrot's case, looking for three types of errors. In the final report, sent to Perrot and the Hampden County District Attorney over a year later, they find that the testimony "exceed[ed] the limits of science" and included all three types of errors.
- 2014**
- Apr. 24 Bode Technology notifies the defense, prosecution, and Court that the DNA tests (allowed in 2012) had failed to produce measurable levels of DNA from remaining bloodstains found on the sheet. Because of the low likelihood of obtaining DNA results in these circumstances, Perrot decides against moving forward with DNA testing on these items at this time.
- July [Motion](#) for new trial filed.
- Aug. 5 The FBI notifies the Innocence Project and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers of the result of their review of Perrot's case, and asks them to submit a response.
- Aug. 13 The Innocence Project and the NACDL, having identified more errors in Perrot's case through their independent review, send their findings back to the FBI.
- Oct. 16 The FBI sends Perrot and Hampden County District Attorney James Orenstein the [results](#) of the joint review, this time for Perrot's case.
- 2015**
- Feb. 25 A pre-evidentiary hearing on the motion for a new trial is held by Hampden County Superior Court Judge Jeffrey C. Kinder, who points out that he may have a conflict of interest because Perrot's former attorney, Ferrara, is now a judge in the same court. Perrot's motion for a new trial argued Ferrara was ineffective in the second trial. The defense requests to have the case reassigned to another judge from a different district. The prosecution agrees that the case should be reassigned.
- Mar. 20 Perrot's case is assigned to Judge Robert J. Kane, associate justice of the Superior Court in Bristol County.
- July 1 Judge Kane [orders](#) an evidentiary hearing to take place in September, with testimony from experts on the FBI review and forensic hair analysis, as well as Ferrara. Kane also grants part of Perrot's discovery requests.

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- Sept. 11 Evidentiary [hearing](#) held in Bristol Superior Court in Fall River. Hair microscopy experts Elizabeth Ziolkowski, formerly of K-Chem Labs in Massachusetts, and Cary Oien, of the FBI Crime Laboratory, testify on the practices in their field at the time of Perrot's second trial. Ferrara also testifies about his strategy in the 1992 trial.
- Sept. 25 The evidentiary hearing continues in Fall River. Witnesses Marc LeBeau, Chief Scientist of the Scientific Analysis Section at the FBI Laboratory, and David Koropp, an attorney at Winston & Strawn in Chicago who served as counsel to the Innocence Project and NACDL during their joint review of hair cases with the FBI, testified about the review process and their findings. Statistician Karen Kafadar, who was involved in the 2009 NAS report and advised members of the current review, testified to hair microscopy's lack of scientific validity and significance. Michael Higgins, president of K-Chem Laboratories in Westford, Mass., also testified briefly.
- Dec. 31 Attorneys for Perrot file their final [brief](#) and [response](#) to the prosecutors' [proposed findings of fact](#).
- 2016**
- Jan. 4 Hampden County prosecutors file their final [brief](#) in opposition to Perrot's motion for a new trial and their [response](#) to the defense's [proposed findings of fact](#)— the final documents Judge Kane is scheduled to receive before making a decision.
- Jan. 26 Judge Kane [allows](#) Perrot's motion for a new trial for his convictions relating to the Nov. 30, 1985 rape and burglary. Kane writes that "the new consensus on the limitations and nature of hair analysis evidence constitutes newly available evidence....This scientific evidence establishes that the evidence testified to by (FBI agent Wayne) Oakes as an expert (in Perrot's case) exceeded the limits of science and ought not to have been admitted."
- The decision is almost certainly the first in the nation to overturn a conviction based on these newly-discovered limitations of hair microscopy.
- The motion is denied in regard to his conviction for the Lichwala break-in.
- Feb. 10 Kane releases Perrot on personal recognizance with minor restrictions at a bail hearing at Bristol County Superior Court in New Bedford.
- Feb. 23 Prosecutors give notice that they will appeal Kane's decision.
- Feb. 25 Attorneys for Perrot give notice of a cross-appeal dealing with the conviction for the Lichwala break-in.
- 2017**
- Jan. 17 The Massachusetts Appeals Court allows prosecutors' motion to extend the deadline to file their brief and appendix.
- Oct. 18 Prosecutors [drop their case](#) against Perrot, and he is officially exonerated.