



PARAPHERNALIA as mysterious to the average person as that used by magicians—and far more effective—is part of the regular working equipment of police identification experts. Cameras, special lights, all kinds of films, build-up materials and other kinds of record supplies help in tracking down criminals. Lacy Savage is shown with some of the things that are used regularly in his work.—(All Staff Photos.)



THERE'S THE EVIDENCE! Those tell-tale prints not visible to the naked eye on the piece of black metal were quickly brought out through tricks well known to identification men. Captain R. G. Simpson, head of the Records and Identification Division looks on while Savage uses magic powder and brush.

When Bandit Said, "Can't Argue With Prints," He Knew What a Job Fingerprinting Is Doing

By MAMIE H. BRADY
(Staff Writer)

Fingerprinting—a glamorous method of crime detection which science says never lies—is doing a tremendous job of dragnetting criminals. At the same time, says Lacy M. Savage, expert with the identification division of the Winston-Salem Police Department, fingerprinting is reaching new heights on other service fronts and on the battlefields.

Spectacular achievements, like the recent capture of Elmer Turner, notorious murderer, kidnaper and robber of local used car dealers, are striking examples of crime detection. The criminal said there wasn't any use to make denials when he was arrested—"they got my prints and you can't argue with them."

Less dramatic, but equally important, is the indisputable accuracy of fingerprint records that readily prove one is a law-abiding citizen and worthy of trust in a war job or on some special mission.

Summarizing the work here, Savage said it is routine to photograph and fingerprint persons who are arrested. A check is then made for previous records locally and elsewhere to provide information for proceeding in handling the case.

All bus and taxi drivers, police and auxiliary police are fingerprinted and have these and their pictures on file at police headquarters. They also carry a copy themselves.

Since the war started, the staff of the local identification department, and experts elsewhere, have spent much time in assisting the war effort. The far-reaching importance of this work is seen in the 19,400 national defense prints recorded here.

Back in the days when many applicants were being investigated for appointments looking toward commissions in the army and navy, or assignment to war jobs that required the utmost in integrity, identification experts worked around the clock to assist in preparing records.

Men and women who are in the armed forces are fingerprinted and this record is kept along with other papers in their files. It serves many purposes. If the individual should go A.W.O.L. or commit a crime it helps in locating the person, a service that has been used extensively. It also is a protection for it gives assurance that there will be little chance for "unknown" soldiers. Other means of identification may be destroyed, but as long as there is a single

finger left, this will prove who he is.

Science, said Savage, has proved that it is impossible to change fingerprints beyond recognition. Historical records give accounts of drastic efforts to mutilate fingers—but the prints are there just the same.

Getting those tell-tale prints is not as easy as the amateur sleuth would have one believe, the expert said. Crime and mystery stories and movies make it seem easier than it actually is. For, it is rare, indeed, when prints are immediately found at the scene of a crime.

It is the latent print—the one that apparently was not there—that plagues experts. Every magic trick known to the worker is brought into use to "build up," "take off" or "bring out" the print so it can be recorded. Howdini didn't tell spectators how the accomplished his magic feats and professional identification men don't give out their secrets either.

Black light, colored light and other means are used, too, to show up "invisible" writing and make it photographable. Many types of fraud are also exposed with magic chemicals.

Savage said Winston-Salem's contacts with the F. B. I. and other cities and towns throughout the nation make it possible to make rapid check-ups on suspects. When one is arrested for a serious crime, the F. B. I. and these other places are checked through a co-operative system to see if the criminal has a previous record.

In January and February of this year 1,345 persons were fingerprinted here, and 729 pictures were printed out. During that same period 261 identifications were received from the F. B. I., 84 of them showing fugitives who were wanted.

During the first two months of this year more than 200 prints were sent to Washington to become part of the national file records.

At the local office here there are 24,675 pictures and 35,000 fingerprint records on file. There are more than 100,000 criminal history cards in the files many of them being for minor offenses since a card is on file for every person who has been arrested here since the system was installed.

Many kinds of evidence are photographed. In the case of a murder pictures are made of the victim, the weapon if one is used and anything that might assist in properly presenting the case in court. Recently pictures of the room and various arrangements in

it were photographed to be used in a rape case.

Fingerprint and photographic identifications are being used more extensively in industries and other places where large numbers of persons are employed. Many concerns have their own department and are quite pleased with results.

Peacetime uses for identification—and the need for it—were graphically illustrated in the recent fire at Cleveland. Sixty-three caskets were filled in an open grave and funeral services held in three fathoms. Hundreds of mourners stood by. But none of them knew the identity of the burned victims. Fingerprint records would have made it possible to know.

Footprinting of infants is used extensively in hospitals to prevent a mix-up of newly born babies.



PHOTOGRAPHING THE LATENT PRINT that has been built up with chemical processes is next to final step by Expert Savage in getting his record ready to be studied. As many prints may be made as desired after the photograph has been taken.