

Bruchac

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Murders & robberies -  
Adamsville, Ala.,  
(Thomas Jannitz)



# Killers of 3 persons in Adamsville remain at large; 2 men freed

BY ANDREW KILPATRICK  
News staff writer

The killers of three Adamsville people shot to death Thursday remained at large early today, according to Jefferson County Sheriff Mel Bailey. Two men questioned in connection with the case were released after investigators were satisfied they had the wrong men.

"We think the motive was robbery because the man at the first house was robbed," but at the second house the occupants had a gun, and that's apparently what triggered the slayings there, according to Lt. Don Haynes.

One of the victims, 17-year-old Lillie Mae Thomas, pleaded "Help me! Help me!" to an Adamsville detective shortly before she died Thursday afternoon.

Miss Thomas, of 4715 Railroad Ave., ran from the house when the shooting started, but was shot on her lawn at close range with a shotgun.

SHE dragged herself across the front lawn after two men came into her home and shot and killed John Thomas Sr., 75, and Mrs. Laura Smith, 55, Bailey said.

Adamsville detective Jerry Edwards, first officer on the scene, said he was able to ask Miss Thomas some questions about the attackers and got some responses.

Edwards, sheriff's deputies and ambulance workers were unable to save her. Within minutes she died of the wound which cut an artery in her right leg.

"I COULD have saved her if I had gotten to her five minutes earlier," said sheriff's paramedic Bill Carter.

John Thomas Sr. and Mrs. Smith were found lying on the living room floor and touching each other, both shot one time with a handgun.

Thomas Sr. was a retired coal miner, and Mrs. Smith looked after him. Miss Thomas was the granddaughter of Thomas Sr.

John Thomas Jr. came to the home after he heard about the triple homicide.

Oliver Jones, 62, who lives next door to the Thomases, told deputies he was working on his truck about 2:45 p.m. when two black men armed with a pistol jumped him, tied and gagged him 4 and left him on the bed in his house. They took about \$100 and his shotgun and some shells, Haynes said.

When Jones got free, he rushed to the home of Stephen Henderson who checked and found Miss Thomas on the lawn. When he walked up on the porch of the Thomas home, he could see that John Thomas Sr. and Mrs. Smith were dead, he said.

In the woods about 100 yards from the Thomas home, deputies found a double-barrelled shotgun which they said is the one that was taken from Jones.

TWO MEN were seen leaving the scene.

Deputies were investigating a lead that apparently someone who called the Adamsville police about the tragedy had been told by Mrs. Smith she was afraid something would happen at the house.



HENDERSON



THOMAS JR.



POLICE RELEASE COMPOSITE DRAWINGS OF SUSPECTS

...Description of vehicle used in crime is not available



## SECOND FRONT page



News staff photo—Ed Bruchac

**SCENE NOT FAR FROM ADAMSVILLE'S CITY HALL: THREE PEOPLE WERE KILLED**  
...A man next door was robbed and tied up prior to the slayings

**Kidsnitch in - - - mala**