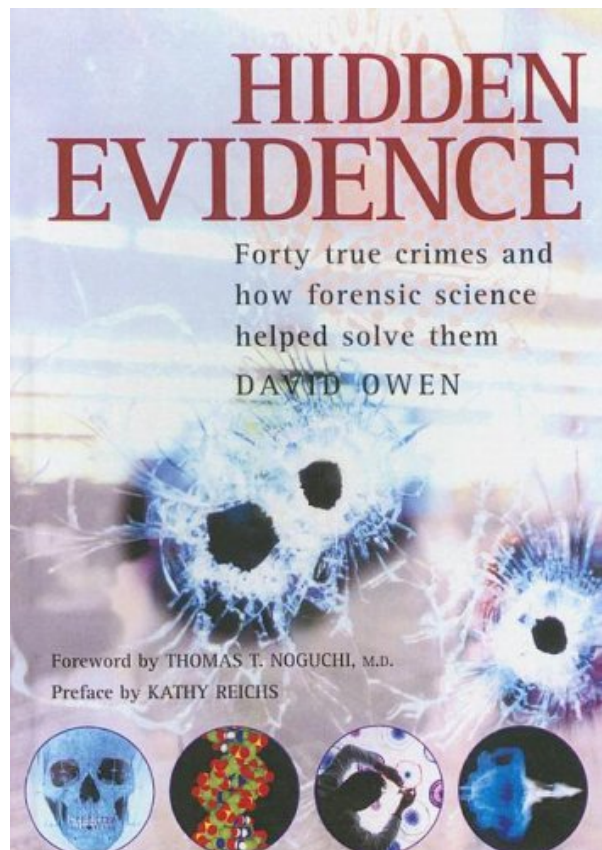
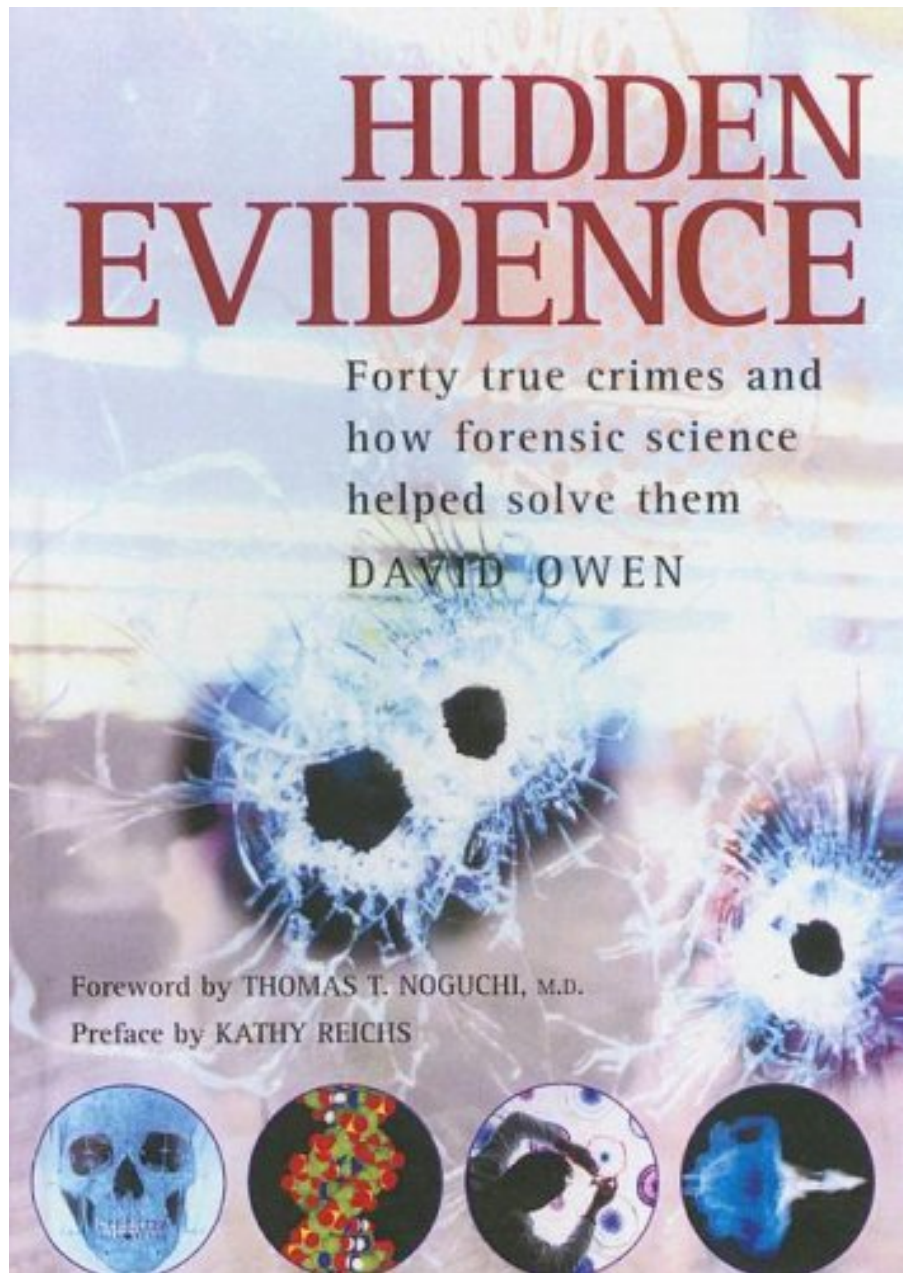


# **HIDDEN EVIDENCE: 40 TRUE CRIMES AND HOW FORENSIC SCIENCE HELPED SOLVE THEM BY DAVID OWEN**



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From Publishers Weekly

Once it took a thief to catch a thief; these days it more often takes forensic scientists. The experts who scrutinize fibers and fabrics, tire tracks and shoe prints, cell scrapings and bloodstains. Journalist and engineer Owen's first book shows how these scientists work and what they discover. Forensic geologists trace pebbles and soil; engineers examine aircraft panels and wreckage to find the cause of a crash. Forensic pathologists investigate corpses for their time and manner of death; chemists test hair and blood for DNA. Owen organizes his book by type of evidence, which sometimes corresponds to manner of death: drowning, hanging, poison, guns, and the identification of bodies each get chapters. Each case shows how the scientists work. Some concern famous victims (Czar Nicholas II) or notorious criminals (Josef Mengele); some date from the 19th century, while others show off advanced technology. Fingerprints are the oldest way to prove a person's presence at a crime scene. Another early tool, the comparison microscope, presented two magnified images side by side, making it easy to check if, for example, two bullets came from the same gun. Forensic scientists don't just catch criminals, we learn; they also save lives by preventing accidents. When a U.S.S. Iowa turret blew up in 1989, killing 47 sailors, the navy labeled the disaster sabotage; explosives experts discovered the real cause, a flaw in the guns' loading procedures, thus preventing repeats of the tragedy. More than 420 photos (many in color) enhance the text, and retired L.A. coroner Thomas Noguchi and mystery writer Kathy Reichs vouch for the book in two short introductions. (Sept.)

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The writing is lively but succinct, complete without being morbid. The illustrations and photos complement the text and go a long way in explaining sophisticated techniques ... Highly recommended for public libraries. (Christine Moesch Library Journal 2000-10-01)

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Hidden Evidence takes you to the scenes of 40 infamous crimes and into the heart of the forensic investigations. These are the true crime shockers that have grabbed headlines and aroused public passions. David Owen explains the scientific procedures that helped crack every one of these cases -- from the gathering of elusive physical clues to the examination of weapons and bodies, to the use of sophisticated scientific analysis.

Threaded throughout the book is the history of forensic science and the technologies that support it, including:

fingerprinting, autopsies, handwriting analysis, ballistics, hair sampling, blood typing, DNA testing, dental records, gas chromatography, mass spectrometry, compound and electron microscopes, and toxicology.

The high-profile cases David Owen used to illustrate forensic developments are from as early as 1775, when Paul Revere used dentures to identify a slain soldier, to the latest developments in the Oklahoma bombing. Most will be familiar to readers, such as: The Lindbergh Kidnapping, Pan Am Flight 103, The Kennedy Investigation, The Hitler Diaries, Wayne Williams, Ted Bundy, Jeffrey MacDonald, Dr. Josef Mengele, Robert Maxwell's suicide, Tsar Nicholas II, and The World Trade Center bombing.

David Owen presents the facts, steering clear of speculation. Comprehensive in scope, thoroughly researched and expertly compiled, Hidden Evidence is, in the words of former Los Angeles County Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi, "a fascinating book ... [and] an excellent mini-encyclopedia of widely discussed, high-profile cases."

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Most helpful customer reviews

17 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

A Gruesome Picture Book of Forensic Science

By ealovitt

"Hidden Evidence" is a trade paperback that relies more on photographs than text, and some of the pictures are pretty gory. This is the first forensic science book I've read where there was actually a photograph of the aftermath of one of the 'Jack the Ripper' murders. David Owen has still assembled an interesting book. Some of the forty crimes that he uses as examples are well-known, e.g. Wayne Williams, the Atlanta child killer. Others will probably be unknown to the reader (Americans, at least). For instance, there are several gruesome goings-on Down Under that the author touches on, including the sixty-three-year-old auntie who liked to put thallium in her relatives' tea.

Although "Hidden Evidence" held my interest, I wish the author had gone into more detail about the forensic techniques that he describes and also more detail about some of the crimes. He skips from case to case so quickly that there is little room for suspense or a clear description of the amount of work it took to solve some of these crimes. I think the British have the edge over us Americans when it comes to writing true crime/forensic science books. One of my favorites is "Forty Years of Murder" by Professor Keith Simpson, who was the British Home Office pathologist for forty years. Another favorite is the biography of Bernard Spillsbury, who was Simpson's chief crime-solving rival.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Enjoyable, but you're going to want more information.

By A Customer

The book does a good job at very briefly going over the fundamentals of forensic science. Emphasis on the "briefly". Some issues / concepts such as DNA analysis get a bit more coverage. The 40 crimes referenced in the book's description are "poof" finished before you know it, often two pages of mostly photos. To the authors credit the photo quality and layout are first-class. Also, only a few of the photos are really disturbing in nature. A brief bibliography is included. You'll want to check it out to get the additional detail needed for this subject.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Picture-laden, text-light good general overview of forensics

By A Customer

This is a picture book for adults about forensics. The photos and illustrations are amazing, varied, and, often, gruesome and graphic. The text seems like an afterthought; nothing more than the basic information is given, and each case study covers the facts and very little else. This book is not for someone like myself who studies forensics, but rather for someone who is hooked on CSI, doesn't know anything about the topic, and wants to read more about it. This book is a much better general forensics overview and has more detailed information [and more information generally] than The Forensic Science of C.S.I.

Hidden Evidence also explains the major types of forensic science [ballistics, DNA, trace evidence, etc] and uses case studies to document each field. Overall, this book is a good starting point for anyone interested in forensic science.

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