

# POLICE ACCUSE GIRL OF HOLDUP MURDER

**Think Millie De Marco Directed,  
if She Did Not Conceive, At-  
tack on "Cranberry King."**

**SAYS BAD MEN DUPED HER**

**Ten Now Suspected of Part in Plan  
to Steal \$4,000 Saved by Mrs.  
Smathers's Heroic Drive.**

*Special to The New York Times.*

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 6.—When Mrs. Elsie R. Smathers, though wounded in the back and leg, drove her automobile yesterday afternoon through a group of masked bandits whose bullets had killed her uncle and wounded her father and a business friend, another girl, as young or younger than Mrs. Smathers, stood concealed in the woods where the attack occurred at Atsion, N. J., and watched the failure of a holdup which, the police here believe, she aided in directing if she didn't conceive. Today the girl stood before Magistrate Beaton in the court here and, with three men, Italians and fellow-countrymen, pleaded not guilty.

The four were arrested late last night after detectives, following the clue of an automobile license plate found near the scene of the holdup in some bushes that apparently had torn it from the car, had learned that Giuseppe Russo, Frank Vessela, Frank Ladona, and the girl, Millie De Marco, 19 years old, had all left this city early yesterday morning in Vessela's motor car.

They learned also that the girl had once worked for A. J. Rider, father of young Mrs. Smathers, whose great holdings of cranberry bogs, together with his position as President of the New Jersey Cranberry Growers' Association, have earned him the title of the Cranberry King. They learned that she and Russo were old acquaintances, occupying apartments in the same house at 1,125 South Twelfth Street, and, from the girl's brother, they learned that only last week she had complained to him that she needed money. On these facts they built the theory that the girl, if she did not plan it, at least took part in an attempt to rob Mr. Rider of the \$4,000 which he was carrying to meet the bi-weekly payroll of his 300 cranberry pickers. She, at least among the four, knew Mr. Rider and knew that it was his custom to pay his employes himself.

In an impassioned statement to a priest of St. Rita's Church the girl denied that she had knowingly taken part in the holdup, but her admissions were enough to strengthen the police in their first theory. To the priest she declared:

"I am innocent of any wrong-doing. I am the innocent dupe of bad men who took advantage of my knowledge of the cranberry bog country. Giuseppe was very attentive to me and on Thursday morning, early, he said to me: 'Millie, you are working too hard; how would you like an automobile trip?'

"I said I would like to go, and so we started off early—Russo, myself, and the man who drove the car."

The girl seemed anxious not to give details of the trip, but finally she said that two men whom she didn't know entered the car near Camden and accompanied them to Summit Ridge, near Atsion, the scene of the attack. There, the girl said, the men left her sitting in the car. She heard shots, and presently Russo and the others, except one man, returned to the car and drove off rapidly.

Vessela told a story to the police that corroborated the tale of the girl only in part. He said that she, with Russo, Ladona and two men he did not know, called at his home at 4:30 o'clock Thursday morning and directed him to drive to Atsion. He was ready for the early start, he said, because Russo had engaged him 'as long ago as Monday. At Atsion, Vessela said, Russo suggested that he remain with the car.

"Russo, the girl and the two strangers," Vessela went on, "started away through the woods, leaving Ladona and myself in the car. In half an hour the girl came back. She was excited. Half an hour after that Russo, the strangers I had carried, and two more men came running to the car. They jumped in and I started off at their direction at full speed. These last two men left the car in Burlington, and I brought the others here."

Mrs. Smathers and J. M. Ridgely, friend of her father, who was wounded seven times as he stood in the back of the car and exchanged shots with the bandits, are in Jefferson Hospital here. Early today Mrs. Smathers told the police that the wind displaced the mask of one of the bandits and disclosed features which she thought resembled Russo's. Both Mrs. Smathers and Ridgely are in serious condition, and it is feared Ridgely may die. A. J. Rider is at his home in Hammonton. He was shot in the back and jaw, but is expected to recover.

Pending further investigation the prisoners were held without bail charged with suspicion of murder. They will be extradited to Mount Holly, N. J., and put in the Burlington County Jail there.

The police expect to make more arrests. They think ten in all were in the plot.

A report from Hammonton today told of the finding of a letter written in Italian near the scene of the shooting. This contained an injunction to shoot Mrs. Smathers first.