

# AGED COUPLE SLAIN IN BROOKLYN HOME

**Business Man, 74, and Wife,  
80, Beaten to Death—Bodies  
Found by Son, Partner**

Fifty detectives were searching the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn last night for clues to the slaying of a 74-year-old business man and his 80-year-old wife in their six-room apartment at 105 Quincy Street. Both victims had been bludgeoned, but the murder weapon was not found.

The couple, Camilo Leyra and his wife, Catherine, married fifty-two years, were found in their ground floor apartment in the rear of the four-story brick structure. They had occupied the dwelling for fifteen years.

Mr. Leyra, proprietor of the Westley Carbon and Ribbon Company at 22 Warren Street, Manhattan, was discovered on his back on the floor in the vestibule just inside the door of his apartment. The apartment house door was closed but unlocked. Mr. Leyra still had his overcoat on, and a morning newspaper dated yesterday was near him. Although he had been beaten severely, \$42 was found in his wallet.

His wife, wearing a housedress, was on her side on the floor in the kitchen. She apparently had been washing clothes. A faucet in the sink was still running.

Nothing in the apartment had been disturbed.

Camilo Leyra Jr., 50, of 1406 Eightieth Street, North Bergen, N. J., the couple's son, and two other men found the body of the father at 3:30 P. M. and called the police. Officials found the wife soon after.

The son was accompanied by William Herrschaft of 1112 Metcalf Avenue, the Bronx, a partner with Mr. Leyra Jr. in the Cartex Cutting Company, a business at the Warren Street address. The third man was Manuel Valdez of 94-37 Eighty-sixth Road, Woodhaven, Queens, who owns a business in the same office building.

## Absence Started Search

Mr. Herrschaft told the police that at 6 P. M. Monday the father said he had several business calls to make yesterday morning, but would arrive at his own office at 10:30 o'clock. After Mr. Herrschaft found Mr. Leyra had not appeared, he called the son. Then the men went to the home.

Mrs. Alice Williams, wife of the building superintendent, said she had noticed water dripping through the ceiling in their basement apartment from the Leyra unit above, but had believed it to be rusty seepage and had not investigated.

Harry Rhein, a candy store proprietor at 367 Franklin Avenue, at the corner, told authorities that according to his custom Mr. Leyra picked up his morning newspaper yesterday between 8:30 and 9 o'clock. Then, he added, the victim turned back in the direction of his home instead of proceeding to the subway.

Mr. Rhein also said that Mr. Leyra had told of an attempted mugging a month ago at the Clason Avenue and Fulton Street station of the IND subway in which the elderly man had successfully fought off his attacker.

The police said that preliminary evidence indicated that Mr. Leyra had surprised the murderer when he returned home unexpectedly and struggled with his attacker before collapsing. Strands of hair—not his own—were found on the back of his hands and taken to police laboratories for examination.

Dr. M. Edward Marten, assistant chief Medical Examiner of Kings County, said later he estimated the couple had been dead about eight hours before the double homicide was discovered.

## SCORES QUESTIONED IN BROOKLYN DEATHS

Scores of persons were questioned and released yesterday in the police investigation of the slaying Tuesday of an aged couple in their apartment in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn.

A hundred detectives under Assistant Chief Inspector Patrick F. Kenny continued the search for the slayer last night.

The victims were 74-year-old Camilo Leyra and his wife, Catherine, 80, who were bludgeoned in their six-room, ground floor dwelling at 105 Quincy Street.

The police were following up two theories: one, that the two murders were the result of a frustrated robbery in which the thug or thugs failed to get \$60 found in a bedroom bureau drawer and \$42 in the wallet of the dead man; and, two, that the crimes were motivated by vengeance because the elderly couple had complained on numerous occasions to the police of hoodlums, loud radios and noise in the neighborhood. The dead woman was said to have written a letter to Mayor O'Dwyer about the annoyances that was turned over to the Classon Avenue police station.

Late yesterday Police Commissioner William P. O'Brien and William T. Whalen, Chief of Detectives, visited the Classon Avenue station to confer with other police officials about developments in the case.

# SON ADMITS KILLING BROOKLYN COUPLE

## Had Argued With Father Over Business—Took Candy Home to Wife After Slayings

Fifty-year-old Camilo Leyra Jr., son of the aged couple who were found murdered Tuesday afternoon in their apartment in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, confessed last night that he had killed his parents after a quarrel with his father about business matters, Miles F. McDonald, District Attorney of Kings County, announced at the Classon Avenue police station.

The bodies of Camilo Leyra, 74 years old, and his wife, Catherine, 80, were discovered by the son and two men in their ground floor apartment at 105 Quincy Street. Both had been bludgeoned.

A funeral service for the couple was held yesterday morning at the Nativity of Our Blessed Lord Roman Catholic Church, Classon Avenue and Madison Street, Brooklyn. Burial followed at St. John's Cemetery, Middle Village, Queens. The prisoner attended both and then was taken back to the police station for continued questioning.

The break came at 7:30 P. M. and an hour later Mr. McDonald said that the son would be charged with homicide and arraigned this morning in Felony Court.

According to Mr. McDonald, Leyra left the apartment of Miss Lee Adamski, 28 years old, at 205 West Tenth Street, Manhattan, Tuesday at 7:30 A. M. and went directly to the six-room dwelling of his parents in Brooklyn to discuss selling out the shares held by the father and son in the Westley Carbon and Ribbon Company at 22 Warren Street, Manhattan.

### Father Wanted New Start

Leyra senior and junior were co-owners of the concern with William Herrschaft of 1112 Metcalf Avenue, the Bronx, but the father wished to dispose of the stock held by himself and his son and start another concern.

The District Attorney said the prisoner drank tea with his parents while protesting the proposed sale. After his father left to buy, as was his custom, a morning newspaper on his way to work, the younger Leyra picked up a hammer in the kitchen and hit his mother several times on the head.

Several minutes later, according to Mr. McDonald, the son heard the father coming back toward the apartment house door. When the father re-entered the vestibule, Leyra struck him from behind, Mr. McDonald said, and as the father fell his son slugged him several more times.

The District Attorney said that the son wrapped the hammer in a towel and tossed it away into a passing truck as he fled on Fulton Street toward the subway. Returning to Miss Adamski's apartment he changed into another suit and left before Miss Adamski returned.

He took with him and handed to a vagrant the bundle of blood-stained clothes, Mr. McDonald said, then bought a box of candy and went to his home at 1406 Eightieth Street, North Bergen, N. J., where he lived with his wife, Dorothy, and three children. He said he gave the candy to his wife for her birthday, returned to Manhattan, heard from his business associates that his father had not come to work, and calmly led Mr. Herrschaft and a relative to his parents' home.

### Police Record Given

According to Mr. McDonald, the prisoner has a police record that includes the following: a 1930 conviction for nonsupport, sentenced to six months in the workhouse; a 1938 conviction for bigamy with a sentence in Sing Sing of six months to three years; and a 1948 conviction on a grand larceny charge with probation disposition that would have expired next year.

Throughout the investigation, police officials said the son, a black-haired, stocky man, acted cool and unworried.

Mr. McDonald praised the police work of Captains Frank Robb and John J. Menehan. He announced the confession in the presence of Police Commissioner William P. O'Brien and William T. Whalen, Chief of Detectives.

## MURDER CASE SPEEDED

### Leyra, Accused of Slaying Aged Parents, Rejects Counsel

Camilo Leyra Jr., 51 years old, who is accused of slaying his aged parents last Tuesday in their apartment at 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, was held without bail yesterday on a charge of homicide by Magistrate Eugene R. Canudo in Felony Court, Brooklyn.

Miles F. McDonald, Kings County District Attorney, promised that Leyra's case would be brought before the grand jury "within a week."

Leyra, the police reported, admitted on Friday night that he had killed his parents, Camilo, 74, and Catherine, 80, after a quarrel with his father over business matters. The police said that he told them he had struck the two with a hammer.

Magistrate Canudo asked the prisoner if he wished to retain a lawyer. Leyra replied that he wanted to consult the District Attorney. Mr. McDonald shook his

head and said, "You had better consult someone else." Leyra thereupon rejected the Magistrate's offer to appoint a Legal Aid Society attorney who was present in the courtroom.

Leyra lives at 1406 Eightieth Street, North Bergen, N. J.

## **Leyra Trial Set for March 6**

*New York Times (1857-Current file); Jan 24, 1950;*

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2006)

pg. 39

## **Leyra Trial Set for March 6**

Judge Samuel S. Leibowitz in Kings County Court yesterday fixed March 6 as the trial date for Camilo Leyra Jr., 50 years old, charged with first-degree murder in the hammer slaying last Jan. 10 of his aged parents in their home, 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn.

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## **SLAIN MAN'S WILL FILED**

### **It Left Only \$1 to Son Accused in Double Murder in Brooklyn**

The will of Camilo Leyra Sr., 74 years old, who was found slain last Jan. 10, with his aged wife, Catherine, was filed for probate yesterday with the County Surrogate by the office of the District Attorney of Kings County.

Dated Jan. 9, 1948, the document, handwritten and totaling 100 words, gave his son, Camilo Jr., who is accused of the double slaying, \$1, and "all other monies, real and personal property," to his wife. No value was set on the property and no provision was made for the disposal of the estate in the event of Mrs. Leyra's death.

Earlier in the day, the younger Leyra, who is 50, appeared before Judge Samuel S. Leibowitz in Kings County Court, where he changed his plea from not guilty to not guilty with the specification of insanity. In accepting the plea, the court appointed Dr. Thomas S. Cusack and Dr. Carroll Leja Nichols, psychiatrists, to examine Leyra for the defense.

Leyra is charged with the hammer slaying of his parents in their apartment after an argument with his father over business matters. He is married and lives at 1406 Eightieth Street, North Bergen, N. J.

## Hammer-Slaying Trial Delayed

*New York Times (1857-Current file); Mar 2, 1950;*

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2006)

pg. 6

## Hammer-Slaying Trial 'Delayed'

The trial of Camilo Leyra Jr., 50 years old, on a first-degree murder charge in the hammer slaying of his elderly parents in their home at 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, on Jan. 10, was postponed yesterday from March 6 to April 24 because of the illness of Acting Police Capt. John J. Meehan, who is expected to be one of the prosecution's chief witnesses.

## LEYRA FOUND GUILTY IN PARENTS' MURDER

After deliberating only an hour and a half, a jury in Kings County Court yesterday found Camilo Leyra Jr., 50 years old, guilty of first-degree murder in the slaying of his aged parents. The absence of any recommendation of mercy by the jury makes the death penalty mandatory.

The all-male blue ribbon jury, which retired at 12:50 P. M. to deliberate, had been instructed by Judge Samuel S. Leibowitz to disregard any "deception" that might have influenced the defendant to confess, unless they had a "reasonable doubt" leading them to believe that he had been threatened.

Leyra's chief point in his defense was that he had been tricked into making his confession by hypnosis at the hands of a police psychiatrist.

Judge Leibowitz mentioned the hypnosis angle briefly, explaining that Leyra had made his disclosures to a number of persons and that a witness for the defense, Dr. Thomas S. Cusack, had admitted that a person could not remain hypnotized for more than fifteen minutes without the presence of the hypnotist.

Leyra received the verdict without any outward signs of emotion.

Leyra was accused of the hammer-slaying last Jan. 10 of his father, who was 74 years old, and his mother, Katherine, 80, in their apartment at 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, after the defendant had quarreled with his father over business matters.



## SLAYER'S SENTENCING DELAYED BY ODD PLEA

As the result of an unusual plea yesterday in Kings County Court by Leo Healy, defense attorney, the scheduled sentencing of Camilo Leyra Jr. to the electric chair for the murder of his aged parents was deferred until today.

Leyra, who is 50 years old, was convicted on May 10 of killing his 74-year-old father and his mother, Catherine, 80, in their home at 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn.

Mr. Healy asked Judge Samuel S. Leibowitz to "pronounce judgment on the father's murder first, so that his mother will never have the feeling that her own son was sentenced for killing his own mother."

"If under the law you can pass judgment on the father's murder first," he said, "I know that the defendant's mother, if she stood here pleading for her son, would want that to be done."

Judge Leibowitz replied that he would like to grant the plea, and would study the law on it overnight.

"There is no crime more shocking than when a son spills the blood of his mother, especially since it was solely for pecuniary gain," the judge said.

Leyra, standing quietly beside his attorney, mumbled: "I'm innocent."

Camilo Leyra Jr., 50-year-old convicted slayer of his aged parents, was sentenced twice yesterday to die in the electric chair at Sing Sing Prison. Judge Samuel S. Leibowitz fixed the week of July 2 for the execution.

Yielding to a plea by Leo Healy, defense counsel, Judge Leibowitz pronounced judgment on the slaying of the father first, with the observation that "this makes the sentencing in the mother's case more or less academic." Mr. Healy had made the unusual request "so that his mother in Heaven should never feel that her own son was sentenced for killing her."

Leyra, who is married and has three children, was outwardly calm as the court ordered his execution. He was convicted on May 10 of the hammer slaying of his 74-year-old father and his mother, Catherine, 80, in their home at 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, after a quarrel with the elder Leyra over financial matters.

# LEYRA HELD GUILTY OF KILLING PARENTS

**Brooklyn Man, 51, Faces Death  
as Father's Slayer, Life  
in Prison as Mother's**

A Kings County jury returned verdicts last night providing both for a death sentence and a forty-year-to-life prison term for Camilo Leyra Jr., who won a new trial after being sentenced last May for the hammer slaying of his mother and father. Which of the two possible sentences will be imposed was not made clear.

Court attendants said the law made no provisions for such cases, and that it would be discretionary with the sentencing judge—in this case Samuel W. Leibowitz—to determine whether the defendant will live or die in the electric chair.

Leyra, a 51-year-old convicted bigamist, was accused of killing his mother, Catherine, 80, and his father, Camilo Sr., 74, on Jan. 10, 1950, in a quarrel over money in their home at 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn. In the first trial a jury convicted the son for the murders and made no recommendation for mercy. A new trial was ordered on the ground that a psychiatrist had coerced him into making a confession.

Yesterday, in the second trial, the jury returned a verdict of guilty in the second degree against Leyra for his mother's death. Such convictions provide for prison terms of forty years to life.

The jury then reported it had found the defendant guilty of murder in the first degree in the death of the father. It made no recommendation of mercy. Judge Leibowitz set no date for sentencing.

Leyra, a chunky individual who had remained apparently unperturbed when he was arrested for the double crime, appeared calm and indifferent yesterday as he stood in his baggy blue suit and heard the verdicts.

The jury received the case at 5:30 P. M., deliberated for an hour, and then took two hours for supper before resuming deliberations at 8:30 P. M. The verdicts were rendered at 11:10 P. M.

# LEYRA SENTENCED TO DEATH, PRISON

## Slayer of Parents Draws Two Decrees Because of Jury's Split at Second Trial

Camilo Leyra Jr., 51 years old, who was convicted last month for the second time in the slaying of his aged parents, was sentenced twice yesterday—to die in the electric chair in the week of Feb. 3 and to serve a prison term of seventy-five years to life.

The unusual action by Judge Samuel S. Leibowitz was prompted by a jury's verdict in Kings County Court on Dec. 21. After hearing evidence in Leyra's second trial, the jury found him guilty of first-degree murder in the death of the father and guilty of second-degree murder in the slaying of the mother.

In the split decision the jury indicated that the killing of Leyra Sr., was willful, deliberate and premeditated while in the case of Mrs. Leyra there was intent to kill with the absence of deliberation and premeditation.

Since the jury made no recommendation of mercy in the first-degree murder verdict, it was mandatory for the court to pronounce the death penalty. However, there is an automatic appeal to the State Court of Appeals in such cases.

Leyra was accused of the hammer slaying of his mother, Catherine, 80, and his father, 74, on Jan. 10, 1950, in a quarrel over business matters. The double murder took place at the home of his parents, 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn.

On May 4, 1950, Leyra was convicted of both killings and was sentenced to the electric chair. Last April the Court of Appeals reversed the conviction on the ground that a confession offered as evidence resulted from "mental coercion."

## LEYRA SENTENCE UPHeld

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

*New York Times (1857-Current file)*; Oct 25, 1952;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2006)

pg. 33

## LEYRA SENTENCE UPHeld

### Slayer of Parents Slated for Execution at Sing Sing

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

ALBANY, Oct. 24—The State Court of Appeals upheld today, four to two, the first-degree murder sentence of Camilo Leyra Jr., twice convicted of having slain his aged parents with a hammer in their Brooklyn home in January, 1950. The Court set the date of his execution for the week of Dec. 1 at Sing Sing.

Leyra was first convicted in May, 1950, but the Court of Appeals reversed the conviction the following April on the ground that it was based on an alleged confession obtained from the defendant by "mental coercion" on the part of a psychiatrist.

Leyra was convicted again last December and sentenced to death for the murder of his father, Camilo Leyra Sr., 74 years old, and to a prison term of seventy-five years to life for the murder of his mother, Catherine Leyra, 80.

The court majority held that the court in the second trial had properly instructed the jury that the "confession" could not be considered as evidence of guilt.

## **Slayer Loses Appeal on Rights**

*New York Times (1857-Current file); Nov 25, 1953;*

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2006)

pg. 32

### **Slayer Loses Appeal on Rights**

The United States Court of Appeals upheld yesterday a ruling that Camilo Leyra Jr. had not been denied his constitutional rights when he was convicted of slaying his elderly parents in 1950. Leyra, 54 years old, is under sentence of death. He contended that his rights had been abridged when the state offered in evidence a confession that he repudiated.

## LEYRA CONVICTED OF MURDER AGAIN

Jury in Third Trial for the  
Slaying of Parents Makes  
No Mercy Recommendation

Camilo Leyra, 55-year-old salesman, was convicted of first-degree murder last night in Kings County Court in the killing of his father and mother. There was no recommendation for mercy.

It was the third time the defendant had been convicted for the same crime. The New York State Court of Appeals reversed the first conviction when the defense argued that "mental coercion" had been used on Leyra to get a confession. The United States Supreme Court ordered a third trial on the ground that "involuntary statements" had been forced from the defendant by the police.

Leyra has spent three years in the death house at Sing Sing Prison. He showed no emotion when the all-male jury reached its verdict. He was returned to Brooklyn City Prison for sentencing later. With no recommendation, it is mandatory that

Judge Hyman Barshay sentence him to the electric chair again.

Leyra was accused of bludgeoning to death Camilo Leyra Sr., 74 years old, and his wife, Catherine, 80, in their home at 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, on Jan. 10, 1950. At the time, Leyra was living with his wife, Dorothy, and their three children at North Bergen, N. J.

In charging the jury, Judge Barshay told the panel that it could return a verdict of first-degree murder, second-degree murder or first-degree manslaughter. He stressed the importance of reaching the verdict "beyond reasonable doubt."

Leyra's father had operated a carbon and typewriter ribbon firm in Manhattan at the time of the slayings. The son was a salesman for the firm. To augment his income, he also served as a bartender in a Greenwich Village tavern in the evenings.

# LEYRA ABSOLVED IN PARENTS' DEATH

## Man Sentenced 3 Times to Die for Murder Is Freed by the Court of Appeals

Special to The New York Times.

ALBANY, April 27—A Brooklyn man who three times had been sentenced to die for the murder of his parents was set free today by the Court of Appeals.

The man was Camilo Leyra Jr., now 55 years old. The state's highest court, dismissed by a 4-to-2 vote the first-degree murder indictment against him and ordered him freed from the Sing Sing death house.

Two previous convictions had been reversed by higher courts on the grounds that an improper confession had been admitted at his trial. The first case went to the Court of Appeals, the second to the United States Supreme Court.

The state's highest court concluded today, however, that without the confession "the prosecution has produced not a single trustworthy bit of affirmative, independent evidence connecting defendant with the crime."

"Under the circumstances, a regard for the fundamental concept of justice and fairness, if not due process, imposes upon the court the duty to write finis to further prosecution against this defendant," the majority declared.

Associate Judges Stanley H. Fuld, Charles S. Desmond, Adrian P. Burke and John Van Voorhis composed the majority. The dissenters were Chief Judge Albert Conway and Associate Judge Charles W. Froessel.

Mr. Leyra was originally convicted of killing his 74-year-old father and 80-year-old mother in their Brooklyn apartment in January, 1950. The prosecution contended that they were arguing over money.

His first conviction was reversed by the Court of Appeals on the ground that a confession had been obtained by "mental coercion." The United States Supreme Court reversed the second because police had wrung "an involuntary statement" from the defendant.

In today's ruling the majority opinion declared that statements made by Leyra to the police could well have been influenced by lack of sleep, painful sinus attacks he was undergoing, the shock of his parents' murder and the destruction of his alibi.

"It seems quite probable," the majority said, "that both the police and the District Attorney, relying too heavily on the 'confessions' that they had obtained . . . failed to do the essential careful and intensive investigations that should be done before a defendant is charged with crime, certainly one as serious as murder."



## LEYRA, IN DEATH CELL 5 YEARS, IS RELEASED

Special to The New York Times.

*New York Times* (1857-Current file); May 3, 1956;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2006)

pg. 25

# LEYRA, IN DEATH CELL 5 YEARS, IS RELEASED

Special to The New York Times.

ROSSINING, N. Y., May 2—  
Camilo Leyra Jr., a 56-year-old  
Brooklyn salesman, walked out  
of Sing Sing Prison to freedom  
today after having spent almost  
five years in the death house.

Leyra, who was convicted  
three times of murdering his  
aged parents, but each time won  
a reversal from higher courts,  
established a record for occupa-  
ncy in a death house cell here  
since the electric chair was in-  
stalled in 1889. He had spent  
four years, nine months and  
three days in the death house.

When Leyra walked through  
the gate of the high-walled peni-  
tentiary at noon, he had \$20 and  
a new tan suit, both furnished  
by the state. He declared that  
he would spend the rest of his  
life searching for the killed of  
his parents.

In each trial Leyra was con-  
victed of the hammer-slaying of  
his 74-year-old father and 80-  
year-old mother in their Brook-  
lyn apartment in January, 1950.

The prosecution contended that  
they had been arguing over  
money. Higher courts, including  
the United States Supreme Court  
on the second appeal, reversed  
the convictions on the ground  
that they had been obtained  
through coercion or insufficient  
evidence.

When he was first arrested on  
the murder charges, the District  
Attorney's office of Kings Coun-  
ty said that his police record in-  
cluded a 1938 conviction for  
bigamy.

The Kings County Court order  
setting Leyra free was brought  
here today by Frederick W.  
Scholem and Osmond K. Fraen-  
kel, his attorneys, who drove him  
back to New York City.