

Decades later, remains found in burned home identified as missing woman

Melinda Holder, 36, reported missing to Green Cove Springs police on Jan. 24, 1989



Melinda Joyce

Holder (News4Jax.com)

GREEN COVE SPRINGS, Fla. – After more than 30 years, police have identified human remains that were found in the rubble of a house fire as belonging to a woman who was reported missing to the Green Cove Springs Police Department.

According to a news release, Melinda Joyce Holder, 36, was reported missing on Jan. 24, 1989 by her adopted mother, who noted she had not been seen in days. Throughout 1989, investigators followed many leads into Holder's disappearance, but she was not found.

Police said on the night of Dec. 10, 1989, police and firefighters responded to a house fire on Harrison Street, where they found a vacant home fully engulfed in flames. The following day, investigators at the scene of the fire found human bones in the rubble.

Investigators determined the remains to be a woman matching Holder's description, however, later DNA tests failed to return a positive identity.

Police said it wasn't until recently the case was revisited and investigators collected DNA samples from Holder's children, which were tested by the University of North Texas. With the test results, the medical examiner was able to issue a death certificate for Holder.

According to the news release, evidence from the 1989 fire leads investigators to believe Holder was deceased for a "considerable amount of time before her body was damaged in the fire." The investigation is ongoing.

Family members held a memorial Saturday at the First African Missionary Baptist Church.

Police asked anyone with additional information on Holder's disappearance, her death or the house fire on Harrison Street to contact Green Cove Springs police at 904-529-2220 or First Coast Crime Stoppers.