Police served a search warrant at the house on Sept. 26 looking for evidence in connection with a rape and felonious assault, Cleveland police Lt. Stacho said. Police entered the house and found two decomposing bodies on the third floor of the home.

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CLEVELAND – On Thursday, Oct. 29, police went to 12205 Imperial Ave., in Cleveland to arrest Anthony Sowell, a registered sex offender wanted for an attack inside the home last month.

Police served a search warrant at the house on Sept. 26 looking for evidence in connection with a rape and felonious assault, Cleveland police Lt. Stacho said. Police entered the house and found two decomposing bodies on the third floor of the home. In the basement, police also found a freshly dug grave, where a third body was discovered Friday afternoon.

Now police are carrying out a more extensive search. Vans from the coroner's office were lined up outside the East Side house. Stacho said three bodies were found initially, and the remains of three others were located. Now the total found is up to 10 and a skull was also found in a paper bag in the home.

Six of the bodies are women, five of whom police say were strangled. The other was too decomposed to determine the cause of death. Another body was found in the back yard, the others in the house.

Cleveland detectives met Sunday with the families of missing local women to gather photographs and biographical information to help them focus their investigation and identify the bodies.

“Detectives will focus the investigation on missing people in Sowell’s neighborhood and then expand to other areas in the city,” Police Chief Michael McGrath said.

Sowell had shared the duplex with his stepmother since 2005, when he was released from prison after serving 15 years for raping a 24-year-old woman in East Cleveland. Sowell was arrested Saturday about a mile from his house. Police will scrutinize missing-person reports made after Sowell’s release from prison.

McGrath said Sowell’s history shows he preyed on people close to him. “He had a specific motive,” the chief said. “His victims that we know about met him on the street, and he got them to his house.” Police set up a command post near Sowell’s home Saturday and urged people to come forward with information on missing relatives or friends. Only four people have provided information, police said.

Sowell was arrested Saturday, Oct. 31, walking down Mount Auburn Avenue, just blocks away from his house. A passer-by had seen Sowell and drove to 4th District police station and reported he had seen Sowell.

It appears the case could be one of the worst mass killings in Northeast Ohio history. Based on the autopsies, the victims appear to be female and appear to have been strangled, the coroner's office said. The bodies could have been there for weeks, if not months or years.

Judy Martin of Survivors/Victims of Tragedy said uncertain families will gather to console each other and honor the dead.

"They are deeply anguished and horrified at the thought that one of the bodies could be their missing loved one, while at the same time looking for answers," said Martin. Hundreds of people gathered outside the home on Monday night for a candlelight vigil, The vigil was held in honor of the six women whose remains were found on Sowell's property. Families held up photographs of missing women who have disappeared since Sowell was released from prison in 2005.

Gloria Walker's family members said she disappeared in April 2007 and is hoping that she was not one of Sowell's victims. "It's been horrible for the entire family," said Sandy Drain, a relative of Walker's. "We really would like to have closure and we still pray that she's alive, but we're still looking for closure."

For the past few years, neighbors assumed the foul smell enveloping their street corner had been coming from a brick building where workers churned out sausage and head cheese. It got

so bad that the owners of Ray's Sausage replaced their sewer line and grease traps. Now they know the odor was coming from a three-story house next door where the decomposing bodies of six women were found.

City Councilman Zack Reed on Tuesday said he and other community leaders want an investigation into whether police and health inspectors missed any signs that could have tipped them off to the decomposing bodies inside the house. Reed's mother lives a block from the area, and he said he called the city health department on more than one occasion.

"What happened from there, we don't know," he said. "It was no secret that there was a foul odor. We don't want to point fingers, but clearly something could have been done differently."

Police discovered the bodies Thursday after a woman reported being raped at Sowell's home. The 50-year-old Sowell is being held in jail on an arrest warrant, and has been charged with five counts of aggravated murder, rape, kidnapping and felonious assault on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

Four families of missing women have submitted DNA samples to the coroner's office to help identify the bodies. Authorities are seeking samples from Sowell, as well.