



# Murder, New England: A Historical Collection of Killer True-Crime Tales

*M. William Phelps*

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Bestselling true-crime author M. William Phelps, star of the new investigative television series “Dark Minds,” takes readers to his own backyard in these eight bloodcurdling murder cases. Think New England is all bucolic landscapes and Robert Frost poems? Think again.

In *Murder, New England*, Phelps explores different motives, themes, and community reactions to horrific crimes:

- \*\* Murder by Blood: The Strange Death of Rebecca Cornwell (1673, Narragansett Bay, RI). A 73-year-old widow burned to death in front of her bedroom fireplace...
- \*\* William Beadle: Husband, Father, Murderer (1782, Wethersfield, CT). A man murders his wife and kids before taking his own life...
- \*\* The Angry Man: Murder in Manchester (1821, Manchester, NH). A poor widow killed in her home by a “ruffian” looking for food and drink...
- \*\* Better Off in Heaven: John Kemmler Kills His Three Children (1879, Holyoke, MA). After losing his mill job, a man kills his daughters because he fears they will become prostitutes...
- \*\* Birth of the “Big Seven”: Gaspare Messina’s Mafioso (1917, Boston). An ol’ fashioned Mafia murder tale...
- \*\* Electronic Kill Machine: “Forensic Files” Murder (2001, Somerville, MA). Teenage slackers, the show “Forensic Files,” and the murder of a grandmother blamed on TV, youth, drugs, sex, money, and rock-n-roll...
- \*\* Sings of Life (2006, Lanesborough, MA). A woman employs the help of her cocaine-snorting daughter and Goth son to help her get rid of their step-father.
- \*\* Sesame Street Murder: Death on Big Bird’s Estate (2008, Woodstock, CT). A young woman out for a jog murdered by the groundskeeper of an estate owned by the puppeteer who played Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch.

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### **A chilling scene unfolds on the Woodstock, Connecticut, estate of the Sesame Street puppeteer who played Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch:**

Near the end of the access road was a picnic area with a large pagoda-like structure topped by an A-framed roof. Two paddle boats were stored under the ceiling of the open-air building. The pagoda had that sacred, spiritual look one would expect of a place to relax and meditate. Here was a haven separated from the main living space where one could retreat and disconnect from the world.

What upset the serenity of the scene was the trail of blood. It lead from the roadway directly to the pagoda—and yet stopped in the center of the ground under the ceiling. The paddle boats, investigators noticed, had blood spatter and smudge marks on them. But what did it mean that the trail of blood just stopped?

As they continued to search, troopers looked above them and spied a set of pull-down stairs. There was a storage area or attic within the pagoda’s A-frame.

The blood trail had stopped directly beneath the pull-down stairs.

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