



Murder at Rocky Point Park:: Tragedy in Rhode Island's Summer Paradise

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On a summer day in 1893, little Maggie Sheffield was murdered. Maggie's own father did the unthinkable against a backdrop of laughter and barrel organ music at Rocky Point Amusement Park. The tragedy aroused a strange reaction from the peaceable community of Warwick, Rhode Island. Many seemed to be more concerned for the murderer, Frank Sheffield, than for his young victim. Frank was rumored to be insane or addicted to drugs, and after a trial, he was found not guilty by reason of insanity. The murder did not tarnish Rocky Point's reputation as a premier destination, and the park operated until 1995. Investigating official records and newspaper archives, author Kelly Sullivan Pezza uncovers the facts and oddities behind a grim crime in Rhode Island's summer paradise.

Murder at Rocky Point Park:: Tragedy in Rhode Island's Summer Paradise Details

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Carol Perreault says

Interesting history of the park

Sjervey says

I found this interesting because I went to school in Rhode Island, but it would not have held my interest otherwise. The book shifted focus from a recounting of the killing to a history of the amusement park. It would have worked better as a history of the park with a section on the killing. The park's place in Rhode Island history was far more important.

Noel-marie says

Disappointing.

Far more a summary of research than a retelling of events. Too much time spent simply listing out what each person involved (even peripherally) ended up doing later.

Callie says

Hmmm...didn't think a historical postcard inspired book would resort to newspaper tactic of over sensationalized title. Better title would have been the history, genealogy, tragedy, growth, and demise of Rocky Point...the title as it stands is misleading as it's a VERY small portion of the beginning of the book...and even then, it's still misleading because it doesn't tell the story of murder so much as it happened in two sentences, and then it's off to the genealogy of all the people involved, above and beyond the victim and the accused...and the the sons of and daughters of..... the dates are all over the place, backtracking, switching times and people, and then time periods, and more history of the place, a couple blips of more unrelated death,....and some poorly worded sentences mixed in but murder eh, that was done and over with no real substance to it.

Theresa says

Although attention given to the murder and well researched, it is overshadowed by Rocky Point Park history. It was very interesting to follow the changes over the years.

Lorna says

If you're looking for a murder mystery, this is not the book for you. If you are interested in the history of Rocky Point park then you will enjoy.

David Stone says

I was extremely impressed by this book. The story of Maggie Sheffield's murder at Rocky Point had been long forgotten, but it is now part of the park's lore forever, even if it is one of the saddest episodes in its history. Even though there is little historical evidence remaining about the murder and trial, the book still contains an admirable amount of detail about Frank's descent into madness and the tragic voyage aboard the Bay Queen that concluded in horror behind a ledge at the amusement park. Most fascinating to me was the author's reconstruction of what the murderer ate in the days leading to the crime and what this revealed about whether he was insane or drugged when he killed his daughter. I suppose what lends Maggie's story such piquancy is that she should have been having the best day of her life at Rocky Point and that her attack came not only from a person she loved, but at a place which everyone loved.

In my own books Clamcake Summer and Chowder Summer, I have written about Rocky Point's food history. Murder at Rocky Point addresses the culinary aspects of the park's history deliciously well and with a thoroughness that earned my respect as a fellow historian who has toiled in the same archives.

There were a few places in the book where I might have appreciated more detail. For example, why was Frank jailed and tried in East Greenwich rather than Warwick? On the other hand, I didn't realize that this book would also be the ultimate compendium of information about Rocky Point from its earliest days to the present. I was enthralled by all the information the author unearthed and I recommend this as the definitive Rocky Point resource, with one exception. How curious that it doesn't include any discussion of the murder of Jason Bass by Adam Emery and the unsolved mystery of Emery's disappearance, a tragedy which, like Maggie's, began at Rocky Point.

Kristin says

this book should really be called "the history of Rocky point" with a few chapters about a horrific murder that happened there.

Bill says

This book is about a 100 year old murder and it is about the history of Rocky Point Park. It is well researched and detailed. My guess is enough material just was not available for a full book about the murder so the author continued it with her fascinating account of the park. This is local history at its best and should be read by all who are interested in Rhode Island local history.
