



The Secret Lives of Sgt. John Wilson: A True Story of Love and Murder

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Obsession, murder and retribution in the early west.

The Secret Lives of Sgt. John Wilson: A True Story of Love and Murder Details

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Author : Lois Simmie

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From Reader Review The Secret Lives of Sgt. John Wilson: A True Story of Love and Murder for online ebook

Scott Harris says

Having never heard this tale and thinking it was going to relate to another great Canada Mountie story, this murderous husband tale surprised me. It is a little known but unique story about an early 20th century immigrant, the formation of the NWMP, romance, marriage and murder. It is somewhat surprising to see the speed with which police officials went after their own man in these early days of their history and ended up with their first member who was convicted and hung for his crime.

Julie Golding Page says

I wanted to give this book a higher rating, as it's an interesting story, Canadian, local to my current province of residence (Saskatchewan), and required reading for some high school students. However, I cannot say I ever actually liked the book as I read it, and thus I am compelled to give it a low rating. However, those who enjoy reading true crime books would likely find this book to be a very good one.

For me, reading this book was a depressing experience, as it's the story of a Mountie gone bad - so bad, in fact, that he murders his pregnant wife and buries her in a culvert, then marries someone else right away. It's set in the WWI era, so Saskatchewan itself feels very gritty, a Wild West, rough-and-tumble sort of place. While that may be true for the era, it lends the story an overall dark or hopeless atmosphere from the outset. This feeling is hard to shake, and as I read the book I felt as if I were watching the Titanic go down - I knew what was coming, and I knew it wasn't good. I don't like that sort of story, where there is no real hope at the end, so I did not enjoy the book, despite the many check marks in its favour.

Dallas says

I liked this because it was a mystery and yet non-fiction. Made me want to keep reading!

Carrie Slager says

I initially picked up this book because it was semi-local. (When you're in Saskatchewan, any fiction vaguely mentioning your province is 'local', no matter how far away the story plays out from where you actually are.) I like true crime books, even if I don't necessarily always review them. But this one I had to review.

Now, the main problem with The Secret Lives of Sgt. John Wilson is that it tries so hard to be both a novel and a nonfiction account of a cold-blooded murder. In the end, it works as neither. In some respects, this has to be a fictional novel because (despite the award for nonfiction!) Lois Simmie really does insert her own flair into it and speculates highly on what John Wilson was feeling at the time. This is without backing it up with evidence like testimony from his trial or something similar, mind you.

And that's why, despite the award, I also don't consider this to be nonfiction. This is more of that hybrid

genre, creative nonfiction. Normally the genre of something wouldn't matter to me at all except for the fact that this book works as neither fiction or nonfiction for me. As fiction, it's boring and as nonfiction it's not exactly strictly true to the facts the way you see with other true crime.

Enough of my griping about categorization, though. It's not all that relevant when a short read like this (something like 200 pages) was threatening to put me to sleep. As I said, part of it was the fact that Lois Simmie included almost verbatim the letters of Polly Wilson's relatives, who had sent them to so many different policeman it made my head spin. Frankly, the first part of the book leading up to the murder was boring as well. There was too much focus on mundane events whereas the murder itself barely had any page time at all.

It shouldn't have been because it really had the potential to let us watch John Wilson's slow descent into madness and murder, but it was because Lois Simmie has a very dry writing style. It's like she's writing a textbook for schoolchildren, not an actual book (be it nonfiction or fiction). Even nonfiction writers can insert their own flair as long as they're not playing with the facts, just like Toby Wilkinson in his book *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*. He was very factual and backed up his speculations with evidence, but he also added in his own commentary of events on occasion in very cynical one-liners. He also wrote in such a way that his audience was engaged whereas Simmie doesn't seem to care whether anyone is interested in her book by the second half.

I had been interested in this murder case, having never heard of it before, which is why I picked up this book. However, had I known it was going to be such a dull affair as this, I never would have wasted my time with it. I can't honestly recommend it.

I give this book 1/5 stars.

Dallas Wuschenny says

I have partly read this book before while I was in grade 12 at school. So roughly in 2008 or 2009 I can't remember which semester that I had Canadian English.

I loved the book so far that I went out and bought it for myself and will read it again and hopefully enjoy it more that I'm older and more mature.

Erika Nerdy pants says

I enjoyed reading this account of a murder in early Saskatchewan. I wish the main characters could have been fleshed out a little more, but the author had limited sources of information, but used them well to bring the story to life.

Matthew says

BLAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!

Ivy McPherson says

This guy is an ass, but it was pretty good.

Martha says

While the murder story was pitiful at best, I liked the taste of old time Saskatchewan (7 hours to drive from Saskatoon to Regina, at 20 miles per hour!).

Jacque says

A bit of a slog but super interesting Canadian history, yay!

Nicolette (FallingOverBooks) says

I read this book for English class, but I actually really liked this book. And considering it's a true story and it happened where I live makes it even more cooler and creepy at the same time. John Wilson was definitely a crazy one and I felt so sorry for Polly and her family. It's a mystery novel and I really enjoyed it. And I definitely recommend this novel for any one who lives in Canada or who loves mysteries and true stories!
