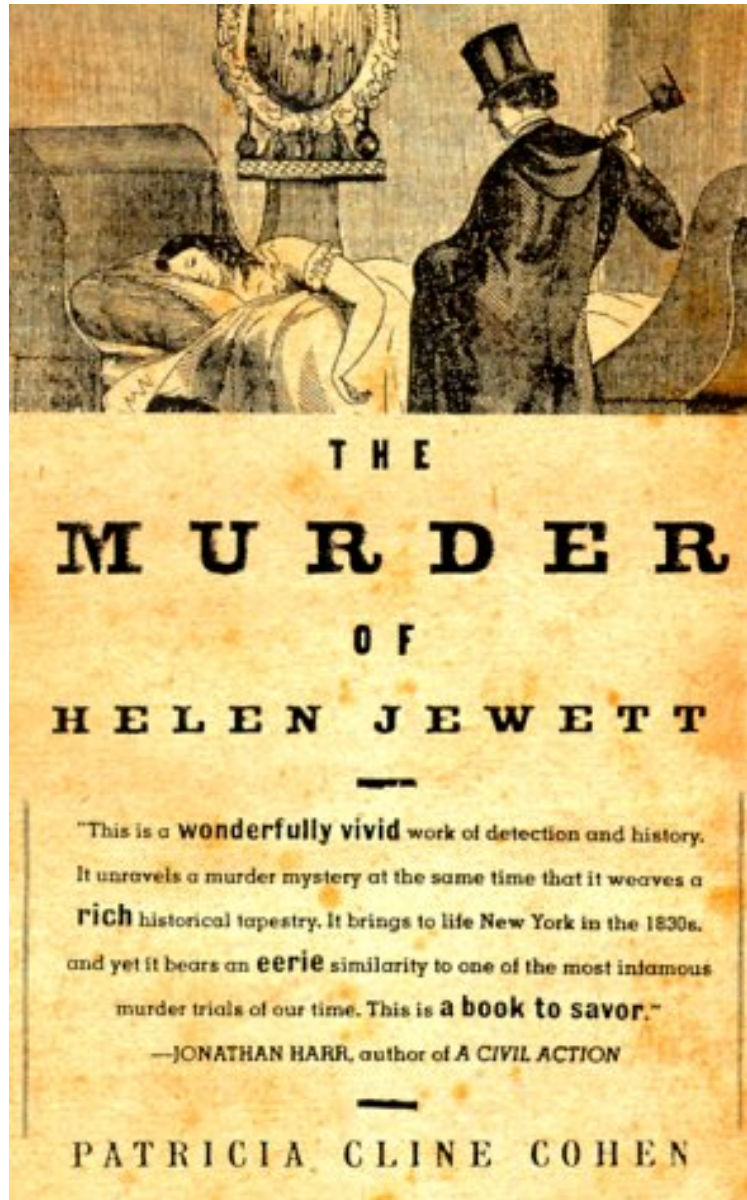


(Free and download) The Murder of Helen Jewett

The Murder of Helen Jewett

Patricia Cline Cohen

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Patricia Cline Cohen : The Murder of Helen Jewett before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Murder of Helen Jewett:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very well researched but thats part of the problem. ...By J. J. O'connor Very well researched but thats part of the problem. Every character, however peripheral, is fully researched

and discussed in depth and while the author seems to have a solid grasp of the times, after a while it starts to plod. You could edit 200 pages and make this interesting story sharper. She also says very little about the alleged murderer until the last portion of the book. His self-absorption and coldness was actually very supportive of her view as to why she believes he was the murderer but she holds off getting to it until she has run thru the genealogy of damn near everyone in New England. But this is still very much worth reading and shows how the perceptions about women and sex and prostitution clearly impacted how this case was tried. You should speed thru some sections that involve peripheral characters (you will know) and skip the redundant stuff.6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Whodunit?! The O. J. Simpson trial of the 19th centuryBy James HuffmanWe shouldn't like murder mysteries, but we usually do.While there's a real tragedy going on -- someone killed, families in disarray, a killer on trial -- we hang on for the gory details.Folks were no different in New York City in 1836, which is the setting for the real life, true story of the murder of Helen Jewett, a lady of negotiable virtue, who plied her trade at an upscale brothel. It's the story of Jewett's life, and how she came to be who she was, and how she came to do what she did for a living.And about Richard Robinson, her accused killer, and how a mild-mannered store clerk from rural New England came to New York, and was arrested for Jewett's murder.And about the trial, and about the crowds there (mostly young -- the defendant was 18 -- clerks like the accused), and about how long the trial lasted, and about the speculation that the judge might have been bribed.But this is more than a murder mystery. Because the author tells us vivid details about life in New York City during that time, and how prostitutes lived in that era (I didn't know that prostitution was legal in New York at that time), and how young Americans grew up during that time, and what was expected of them as far as behavior and decorum.This is a scholarly book. It's labeled "history/women's studies," and I wouldn't take that away Patricia Cline Cohen, the historian who wrote the book. But if you just want a better-than-average read that will entertain you as well as teach you, you can do no better than this. I might even suggest -- since I'm writing this review on May 8 -- it wouldn't be a bad beach book. The cover and title are just trashy enough that the people on the next towel won't think you're a nerd on the beach. It'll have to be a secret between you and me and the author that while you're busy turning pages, you're also having your mind expanded.48 of 51 people found the following review helpful. Excellent! But...By D. C. CarradThis is a terrific book, a previously obscure but fascinating incident brought to light and examined in appropriate detail. The author's style is smooth and transparent, and this book really is a great pleasure to read and most enlightening about many aspects of 1830's life in New York City and America. The author does have an irritating habit of attributing everything to feminist theory, often without any justification in fact other than her pet theories. For example, at one point a gang breaks into a brothel, breaks some glasses, lights some fires, insults the madam and the prostitutes. The author insists "They were not robbers...they were contemptuous vandals, there to remind the women of the ultimate power men have over them by sheer physical force and intimidation." Well, perhaps. But it seems equally likely that they were sent as revenge by an angry customer, to intimidate by a rival brothel keeper, to frighten the madam into paying a debt...or a dozen other reasons. I don't know. Neither does the author of this book. But she leaps to this conclusion and allows of no other possibility, as she does in perhaps a dozen other places in this book. "To the man with a new hammer, everything looks like a nail" runs the old proverb, and one sees it at work here in these dogmatic assertions based on nothing but the author's late 20th century feminist theories. Fortunately these passages are few and far between in this fine book. Just ignore them when they pop up, and you will enjoy this excellent work of history written in a refreshingly jargon-free style.

In 1836, the murder of a young prostitute made headlines in New York City and around the country, inaugurating a sex-and-death sensationalism in news reporting that haunts us today. Patricia Cline Cohen goes behind these first lurid accounts to reconstruct the story of the mysterious victim, Helen Jewett. From her beginnings as a servant girl in Maine, Helen Jewett refashioned herself, using four successive aliases, into a highly paid courtesan. She invented life stories for herself that helped her build a sympathetic clientele among New York City's elite, and she further captivated her customers through her seductive letters, which mixed elements of traditional feminine demureness with sexual boldness.But she was to meet her match--and her nemesis--in a youth called Richard Robinson. He was one of an unprecedented number of young men who flooded into America's burgeoning cities in the 1830s to satisfy the new business society's seemingly infinite need for clerks. The son of an established Connecticut family, he was intense, arrogant, and given to posturing. He became Helen Jewett's lover in a tempestuous affair and ten months later was arrested for her murder. He stood trial in a five-day courtroom drama that ended with his acquittal amid the cheers of hundreds of fellow clerks and other spectators.With no conviction for murder, nor closure of any sort, the case continued to tantalize the public, even though Richard Robinson disappeared from view. Through the Erie Canal, down the Ohio and the Mississippi, and by way of New Orleans, he reached the wilds of Texas and a new life under a new name. Through her meticulous and ingenious research, Patricia Cline Cohen traces his life there and the many twists and turns of the lingering mystery of the murder. Her stunning portrayals of Helen Jewett, Robinson, and their raffish, colorful nineteenth-century world make vivid a frenetic city life and sexual morality whose complexities, contradictions, and concerns resonate with those of our own time.From the Hardcover edition.

.com In 1836, the murder of young New York City prostitute Helen Jewett and the ensuing trial of her lover captivated the nation. Jewett (her real name was Dorcas Doyen; Jewett used many pseudonyms during her short life) was an archetypal 1830s model of fallen virtue. A bright, literate girl who worked as a servant for a respected Maine family, Jewett became "disgraced," losing her virginity outside of wedlock, and eventually taking up work as a prostitute in bustling New York City. One of her clients, Richard Robinson, was a young clerk of uncommon literary talent. The two exchanged a long series of letters, often loving and careful, then as quickly as a summer storm, they turned violent and angry. Early on the morning of April 10, 1836, Robinson stabbed Jewett to death in her brothel room and set fire to her bed. Robinson was eventually acquitted of the crime despite an overwhelming amount of evidence that both placed him at the scene and his hand on the murder weapon. The decision was universally reviled, and Robinson became an outcast who eventually exiled himself to Texas. Cohen ably places this rather ordinary crime within the context of 19th-century urban life and the development of a fledgling tabloid journalism, showing just how people throughout America came to be shocked by a crime that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. The Murder of Helen Jewett is as much about mores and customs as it is about a lost soul. --Tjames MadisonFrom Publishers

WeeklyMassive publicity surrounded the arrest of a young clerk named Richard Robinson for murdering prostitute Helen Jewett with a hatchet in New York City in 1836. The 20 reporters and approximately 6000 spectators who attended the trial made it the most infamous case of its day and made celebrities of its attorneys and witnesses. Despite overwhelming evidence, Robinson was acquitted, but the story as presented here isn't so much a 19th-century potboiler as an examination of New York City's thriving illicit sex trade and the fascination it inspired. Cohen (The American Promise) examines the case with zeal and skill. Details of life in 1830s New York City?a time when it was surpassing Boston and Philadelphia as the country's preeminent metropolis?are involving. And Cohen's depiction of gender inequality in Jacksonian America adds to her stellar achievement. Photos. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalHistorian Cohen (history, Univ. of California at Santa Barbara) examines an early precursor of our most recent crime and trial of the century. In the 1836 hatchet murder of a young New York City prostitute, considerable circumstantial evidence pointed toward one person, a client/lover blessed with a good name and a top-notch attorney. Gender biases came into play at the five-day trial, and Richard Robinson was acquitted after laughably short deliberations. The newspapers kept the public captivated before, during, and long after the trial. Many cheered the verdict, while others called for the dismissal of the presiding judge and district attorney. Cohen's able account leads to the conclusion that the more things change the more they stay the same, at the same time presenting intriguing portraits of the victim, her lover, and Jacksonian-era attitudes toward sexuality and the sexes. Recommended for larger history collections.?Jim G. Burns, Ottumwa, IACopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.