

Rutland Historical Society Quarterly

Vol. 23, No. 4, 1993

John Phair Murder Case - 1874

A murder committed in Rutland in 1874, with victim and accused portrayed on the cover, is retold here as it was reported by the Daily Globe, and edited for this edition by James and Helen Davidson.

The victim, Ann Freese, a widow of ostensibly poor character, who lived in part of the town known as the “swamp” was robbed and stabbed. Her house was set on fire ostensibly to cover up the crime.

The apparent motive was one of robbery. The perpetrator was identified as John Phair from Vergennes whose reputation was equally poor. Although claiming his innocence throughout, he was convicted and hanged in 1879.

The story, told day by day as it evolved, is described in great detail. It is accompanied by numerous photographs of places and people that were part of the crime investigation. A fascinating account of a long ago crime.