



The Trial of Levi Weeks: Or The Manhattan Well Mystery

Estelle Fox Kleiger KLEIGER, Estelle Fox Klieger

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In 1799, the murder of a young woman caused a terrific stir in the city of New York. The victim was Gulielma Sands who, on December 22, left the boardinghouse where she lived, never to return. Her bruised body was found several days later in the Manhattan Well, a twenty-minute carriage ride from her home. The accused was Levi Weeks, a fellow boarder who, Miss Sands had claimed, was to marry her the night she disappeared. Two of the attorneys for the defense were Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, friends of Ezra Weeks, a prominent builder and brother of the accused.

The citizens of New York raised an enormous hue and cry over the murder: the body was displayed in the streets before the trial; mobs shoved their way into the courtroom to see the famous lawyers at work and to get a glimpse of the accused; and—when the verdict was read—few felt that justice had been done.

This book tells the story of the trial of Levi Weeks and includes the entire transcript of the first American murder trial ever recorded. It is at once a riveting retelling of a true crime in which the voices of early New Yorkers come to us freshly from over two centuries, and a riveting legal and social history of New York in the early years of the Republic.

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