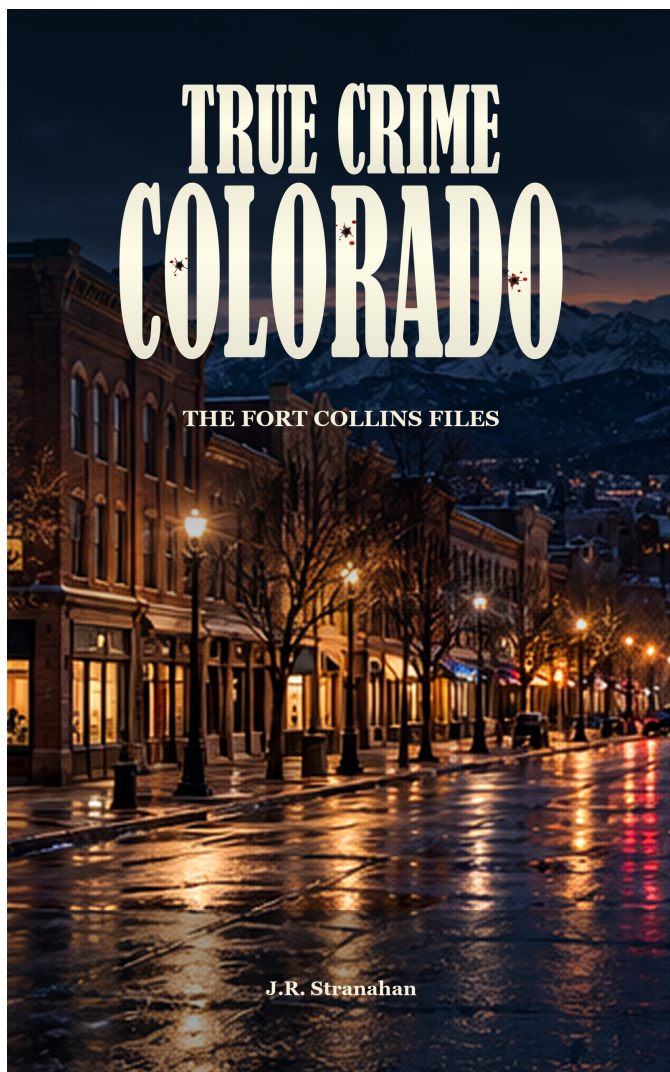




True Crime Colorado: The Fort Collins Files

J.R. Stranahan

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The Murder of Peggy Hettrick

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File 1: The Murder of Peggy Hettrick

Place and period: Fort Collins, 1987-present

Present legal status: Timothy Masters's murder conviction was vacated in 2008 and the charge was dismissed. No one presently stands convicted of Peggy Hettrick's murder, which remains unresolved.

This file belongs first to Peggy Hettrick, her family, Timothy Masters, and the Fort Collins community. The public record is necessarily organized around investigation and adjudication, but a criminal case is not the measure of a life. The account uses the available record to describe what happened and how institutions responded, while avoiding invented biography where sources are silent.

The human scale

Hettrick's body was found in a field near a residential area. That fact is the fixed point for this portion of The Murder of Peggy Hettrick. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. In Fort Collins, later retellings sometimes collapse the investigation and the judgment into one continuous story. The public record does not. It preserves the order in which information appeared and the forum in which it was tested. The present legal posture is stated separately: Timothy Masters's murder conviction was vacated in 2008 and the charge was dismissed. No one presently stands convicted of Peggy Hettrick's murder, which remains unresolved.

For Peggy Hettrick, her family, Timothy Masters, and the Fort Collins community, the procedural vocabulary cannot be allowed to eclipse consequence. The investigation focused on teenage neighbor Timothy Masters. The detail belongs here because it changes the chronology,

not because it supplies atmosphere. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. Keeping that boundary visible lets the reader understand both the institutional response and the loss that made the response necessary.

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A headline can make this episode appear settled in a sentence. The underlying record is narrower. Post-conviction review disclosed evidence and forensic problems that led to vacatur. From there, the inquiry moves through source, timing, corroboration, and legal consequence. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. None of those steps authorizes invented dialogue or a claim about what Peggy Hettrick, her family, Timothy Masters, and the Fort Collins community privately thought.

Location matters in this file. Fort Collins determined which agencies, courts, and communities carried the case, while 1987-present marks the span over which the public learned it. Dismissal of the charge requires the case to be described as unresolved, not as a solved murder. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. The result is a chronology with identifiable custodians rather than a collection of free-floating claims.

This part of the account begins with a modest question: what did the cited source actually establish? Its answer is plain: Hettrick's body was found in a field near a residential area. The answer does not

automatically prove motive, identity, or every charge in the case. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. The remaining status is stated without embellishment: Timothy Masters's murder conviction was vacated in 2008 and the charge was dismissed. No one presently stands convicted of Peggy Hettrick's murder, which remains unresolved.

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The first account

By the time *The Murder of Peggy Hettrick* reached public memory, sequence had become easy to lose. Post-conviction review disclosed evidence and forensic problems that led to vacatur. Restoring sequence shows what investigators knew, what prosecutors alleged, what the defense contested, and what a court or jury ultimately resolved. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. An older headline cannot replace the current status: Timothy Masters's murder conviction was vacated in 2008 and the charge was dismissed. No one presently stands convicted of Peggy Hettrick's murder, which remains unresolved.

There is no need to enlarge the evidence to make this file serious. Dismissal of the charge requires the case to be described as unresolved, not as a solved murder. That proposition is consequential on its own. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. The account therefore avoids borrowing certainty from unrelated defendants, other jurisdictions, or later cases that happen to resemble events in Fort Collins.

The public record speaks most reliably when attribution travels with the claim. Here is the supported proposition: Hettrick's body was found in a field near a residential area. The source may recount an allegation, summarize trial proof, or state a judgment, and the language must match that function. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. That practice protects the accuracy of the case and the dignity of Peggy Hettrick, her family, Timothy Masters, and the Fort Collins community at the same time.

At this stage of the file, absence is also information. The available materials establish this much: The investigation focused on teenage neighbor Timothy Masters. They do not establish every rumor that accumulated during 1987-present. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. Refusing to bridge those gaps with speculation keeps the unresolved portions visible instead of disguising them as narrative momentum.

Consider the detail in its proper scale: A 1999 jury convicted Masters on a circumstantial case. It is neither disposable nor self-executing. Its force depends on where it sits among the other records from Fort Collins. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. A measured account can explain that relationship without turning legal caution into a repetitive disclaimer.

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Building a chronology

The most useful context is the context that changes interpretation. The investigation focused on teenage neighbor Timothy Masters. In the Fort Collins record, that detail helps explain why a particular investigative or legal step followed. Dates and sequence preserve the difference between early uncertainty and later knowledge. General crime lore would add volume but not understanding, so it is left outside the account.

The end of a proceeding is not always the end of a case's public life. A 1999 jury convicted Masters on a circumstantial case. Families, institutions, and communities continued to live with the result after 1987-present. Dates and sequence preserve the difference between early uncertainty and later knowledge. The legal status is reported in its own terms: Timothy Masters's murder conviction was vacated in 2008 and the charge was dismissed. No one presently stands convicted of Peggy Hettrick's murder, which remains unresolved. It does not imply that every question or consequence disappeared.

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Physical evidence

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Witness evidence

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Digital and documentary trails

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Charging choices

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The courtroom

What happened to Peggy Hettrick, her family, Timothy Masters, and the Fort Collins community generated records made for different audiences: investigators, lawyers, judges, jurors, officials, and the public. The investigation focused on teenage neighbor Timothy Masters. Those records overlap, but they are not interchangeable. A trial tests admissible proof under defined rules and does not recreate every event or rumor surrounding a case. Reading across them carefully prevents a later summary from erasing an earlier uncertainty or a later reversal.

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Appeal and review

A headline can make this episode appear settled in a sentence. The underlying record is narrower. Dismissal of the charge requires the case to be described as unresolved, not as a solved murder. From there, the inquiry moves through source, timing, corroboration, and legal consequence. Appellate review addresses claimed legal error on a fixed record rather than conducting a second trial. None of those steps authorizes invented dialogue or a claim about what Peggy Hettrick, her family, Timothy Masters, and the Fort Collins community privately thought.

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Uncertainty

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Institutions

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Status at manuscript lock

The controlling status for this account is: Timothy Masters's murder conviction was vacated in 2008 and the charge was dismissed. No one presently stands convicted of Peggy Hettrick's murder, which remains unresolved. That sentence is deliberately narrower than a television summary. It does not merge co-defendants, convert accusations into findings, or imply that an appeal erased a human death. Later proceedings may change the legal posture, but they should not be projected backward onto the record described here.

Sources from the edition

The Murder of Peggy Hettrick

- Colorado Supreme Court, Masters v. People: <https://law.justia.com/cases/colorado/supreme-court/2002/01sc291-0.html> - Federal District Court, Masters v. Broderick: <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/colorado/codce/1%3A2008cv02278/109885/136/>

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