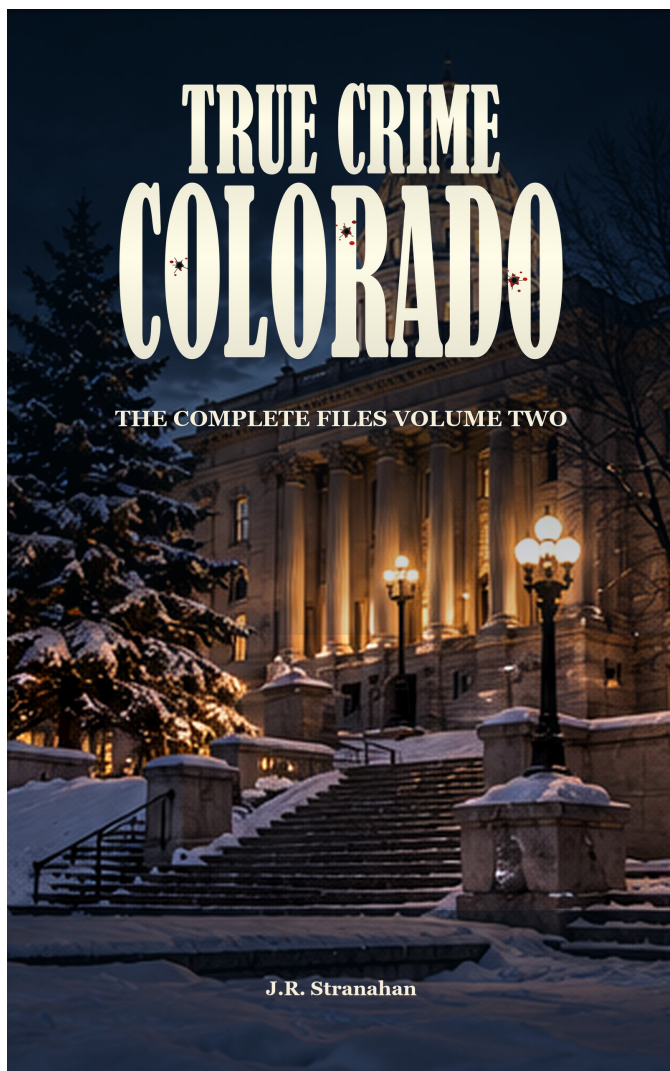




True Crime Colorado: The Complete Files, Volume Two

J.R. Stranahan

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The Disappearance and Murder of Kelsie Schelling

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File 1: The Disappearance and Murder of Kelsie Schelling

Place and period: Pueblo, 2013-2021

Present legal status: Donthe Lucas was convicted of first-degree murder and received life imprisonment without parole even though Kelsie's body was not recovered.

This file belongs first to Kelsie Schelling, her unborn child, her family, friends, and the Pueblo 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

Schelling traveled to Pueblo after communicating with Lucas. That fact is the fixed point for this portion of The Disappearance and Murder of Kelsie Schelling. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. In Pueblo, 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: Donthe Lucas was convicted of first-degree murder and received life imprisonment without parole even though Kelsie's body was not recovered.

For Kelsie Schelling, her unborn child, her family, friends, and the Pueblo community, the procedural vocabulary cannot be allowed to eclipse consequence. Her vehicle and electronic accounts were used after she disappeared. 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.

The 2013-2021 record from Pueblo contains a point that resists shorthand: Investigators reconstructed movements through video, telephone, and financial records. The present legal posture is equally specific: Donthe Lucas was convicted of first-degree murder and received life imprisonment without parole even though Kelsie's body was not recovered. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. One proposition may be established while a neighboring proposition remains disputed. Treating them separately is not hesitation; it is accurate reporting.

A headline can make this episode appear settled in a sentence. The underlying record is narrower. The prosecution proceeded without recovering her body. 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 Kelsie Schelling, her unborn child, her family, friends, and the Pueblo community privately thought.

Location matters in this file. Pueblo determined which agencies, courts, and communities carried the case, while 2013-2021 marks the span over which the public learned it. A jury found Lucas guilty of first-degree 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: Schelling traveled to Pueblo after communicating with Lucas. 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: Donthe Lucas was convicted of first-degree murder and received life imprisonment without parole even though Kelsie's body was not recovered.

The case file gives different kinds of information different weight. Her vehicle and electronic accounts were used after she disappeared. A contemporaneous observation, a laboratory result, a charging allegation, and an appellate finding do not perform the same job. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. Describing those jobs plainly is especially important when the story concerns Kelsie Schelling, her unborn child, her family, friends, and the Pueblo community.

The first account

By the time The Disappearance and Murder of Kelsie Schelling reached public memory, sequence had become easy to lose. The prosecution proceeded without recovering her body. 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: Donthe Lucas was convicted of first-degree murder and received life imprisonment without parole even though Kelsie's body was not recovered.

There is no need to enlarge the evidence to make this file serious. A jury found Lucas guilty of first-degree 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 Pueblo.

The public record speaks most reliably when attribution travels with the claim. Here is the supported proposition: Schelling traveled to Pueblo after communicating with Lucas. 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 Kelsie Schelling, her unborn child, her family, friends, and the Pueblo community at the same time.

At this stage of the file, absence is also information. The available materials establish this much: Her vehicle and electronic accounts were used after she disappeared. They do not establish every rumor that accumulated during 2013-2021. 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: Investigators reconstructed movements through video, telephone, and financial records. It is neither disposable nor self-executing. Its force depends on where it sits among the other records from Pueblo. 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.

The language of this chapter changes when the legal posture changes. The prosecution proceeded without recovering her body. If the proposition came from an accusation, it remains attributed; if it survived adjudication, the judgment is named; if review altered the result, the alteration is carried forward. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. The controlling endpoint is recorded separately: Donthe Lucas was convicted of first-degree murder and received life imprisonment without parole even though Kelsie's body was not recovered.

What happened to Kelsie Schelling, her unborn child, her family, friends, and the Pueblo community generated records made for different audiences: investigators, lawyers, judges, jurors, officials, and the public. A jury found Lucas guilty of first-degree murder. Those records overlap, but they are not interchangeable. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. Reading across them carefully prevents a later summary from erasing an earlier uncertainty or a later reversal.

Building a chronology

The most useful context is the context that changes interpretation. Her vehicle and electronic accounts were used after she disappeared. In the Pueblo 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.

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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

By the time *The Disappearance and Murder of Kelsie Schelling* reached public memory, sequence had become easy to lose. The prosecution proceeded without recovering her body. Restoring sequence shows what investigators knew, what prosecutors alleged, what the defense contested, and what a court or jury ultimately resolved. An indictment states allegations, while a plea or verdict resolves only the counts and defendants actually adjudicated. An older headline cannot replace the current status: Donthe Lucas was convicted of first-degree murder and received life imprisonment without parole even though Kelsie's body was not recovered.

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The courtroom

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Appeal and review

A headline can make this episode appear settled in a sentence. The underlying record is narrower. A jury found Lucas guilty of first-degree 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 Kelsie Schelling, her unborn child, her family, friends, and the Pueblo community privately thought.

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Institutions

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Status at manuscript lock

The controlling status for this account is: Donthe Lucas was convicted of first-degree murder and received life imprisonment without parole even though Kelsie's body was not recovered. 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 Disappearance and Murder of Kelsie Schelling

- Colorado Judicial Branch, case opinions:

<https://www.coloradojudicial.gov/supreme-court/opinions>

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