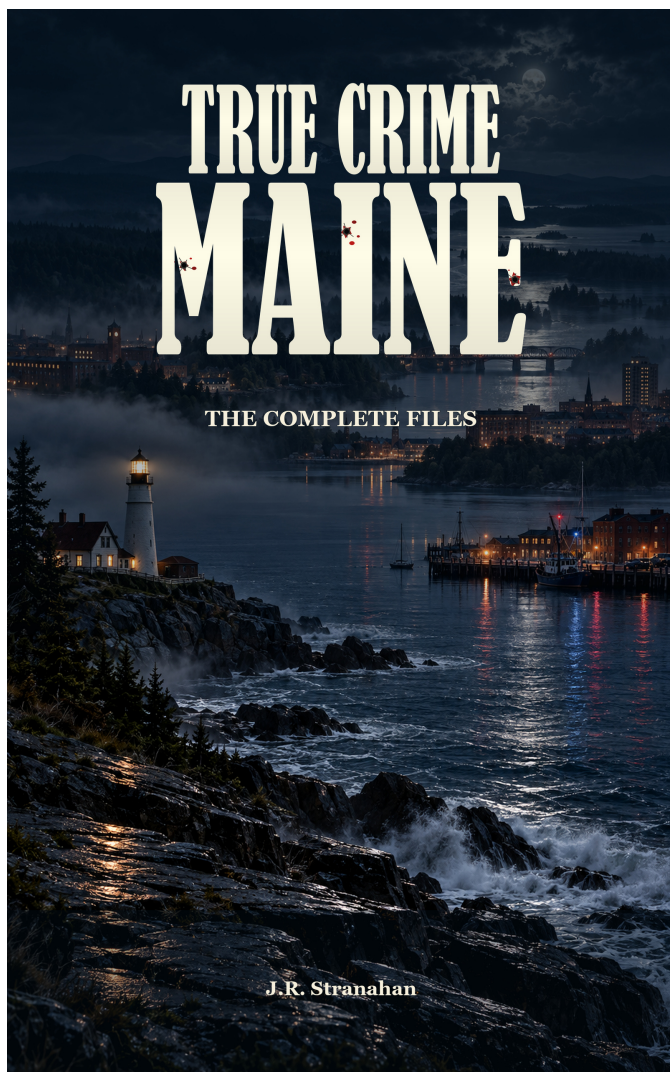


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File 1: The Murder of Sarah Cherry

Place and period: Bowdoin, 1988-2025

Present legal status: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in force.

This file belongs first to Sarah Cherry and her family. 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

Twelve-year-old Sarah Cherry disappeared while babysitting in Bowdoin in July 1988. That fact is the fixed point for this portion of *The Murder of Sarah Cherry*. Begin with the person harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community that had to live with the absence. In Bowdoin, 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: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in force.

For Sarah Cherry and her family, the procedural vocabulary cannot be allowed to eclipse consequence. Her body was found two days later in a wooded area. The detail belongs here because it changes the

chronology, not because it supplies atmosphere. Begin with the person harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community that had to live with the absence. Keeping that boundary visible lets the reader understand both the institutional response and the loss that made the response necessary.

The 1988-2025 record from Bowdoin contains a point that resists shorthand: Items belonging to Dechaine were found near the house, and rope evidence and the location of his truck became parts of the prosecution case. The present legal posture is equally specific: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in force. Begin with the person harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community that had to live with the absence. 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. Dechaine has maintained his innocence and sought relief through repeated DNA and post-conviction proceedings. From there, the inquiry moves through source, timing, corroboration, and legal consequence. Begin with the person harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community that had to live with the absence. None of those steps authorizes invented dialogue or a claim about what Sarah Cherry and her family privately thought.

Location matters in this file. Bowdoin determined which agencies, courts, and communities carried the case, while 1988-2025 marks the span over which the public learned it. The 2025 order concluded that the statutory and evidentiary grounds presented did not justify a new trial. Begin with the person harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community that had to live with the absence. 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: Twelve-year-old Sarah Cherry disappeared while babysitting in Bowdoin in July 1988. The answer does not automatically prove motive, identity, or every charge in the case. Begin with the person harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community that had to live with the absence. The remaining status is stated without embellishment: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in force.

The case file gives different kinds of information different weight. Her body was found two days later in a wooded area. A contemporaneous observation, a laboratory result, a charging allegation, and an appellate finding do not perform the same job. Begin with the person harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community that had to live with the absence. Describing those jobs plainly is especially important when the story concerns Sarah Cherry and her family.

The first account

By the time *The Murder of Sarah Cherry* reached public memory, sequence had become easy to lose. Dechaine has maintained his innocence and sought relief through repeated DNA and post-conviction proceedings. Restoring sequence shows what investigators knew, what prosecutors alleged, what the defense contested, and what a court or jury ultimately resolved. Separate what witnesses reported at the time from what investigators later inferred. An older headline cannot replace the current status: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in force.

There is no need to enlarge the evidence to make this file serious. The 2025 order concluded that the statutory and evidentiary grounds

presented did not justify a new trial. That proposition is consequential on its own. Separate what witnesses reported at the time 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 Bowdoin.

The public record speaks most reliably when attribution travels with the claim. Here is the supported proposition: Twelve-year-old Sarah Cherry disappeared while babysitting in Bowdoin in July 1988. The source may recount an allegation, summarize trial proof, or state a judgment, and the language must match that function. Separate what witnesses reported at the time from what investigators later inferred. That practice protects the accuracy of the case and the dignity of Sarah Cherry and her family at the same time.

At this stage of the file, absence is also information. The available materials establish this much: Her body was found two days later in a wooded area. They do not establish every rumor that accumulated during 1988-2025. Separate what witnesses reported at the time 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: Items belonging to Dechaine were found near the house, and rope evidence and the location of his truck became parts of the prosecution case. It is neither disposable nor self-executing. Its force depends on where it sits among the other records from Bowdoin. Separate what witnesses reported at the time 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. Dechaine has maintained his innocence and sought relief through repeated DNA and post-conviction proceedings. 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

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What happened to Sarah Cherry and her family generated records made for different audiences: investigators, lawyers, judges, jurors, officials, and the public. The 2025 order concluded that the statutory and evidentiary grounds presented did not justify a new trial. Those records overlap, but they are not interchangeable. Separate what witnesses reported at the time 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 body was found two days later in a wooded area. In the Bowdoin record, that detail helps explain why a particular investigative or legal step followed. Dates and sequence matter because later knowledge can make early decisions seem more certain than they were. 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. Items belonging to Dechaine were found near the house, and rope evidence and the location of his truck became parts of the prosecution case. Families, institutions, and communities continued to live with the result after 1988-2025. Dates and sequence matter because later knowledge can make early decisions seem more certain than they were. The legal status is reported in its own terms: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in

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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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There is no need to enlarge the evidence to make this file serious. The 2025 order concluded that the statutory and evidentiary grounds presented did not justify a new trial. That proposition is consequential on its own. An indictment states allegations; a plea or verdict resolves only the counts and defendants actually adjudicated. The account therefore avoids borrowing certainty from unrelated defendants, other jurisdictions, or later cases that happen to resemble events in Bowdoin.

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At this stage of the file, absence is also information. The available materials establish this much: Her body was found two days later in a wooded area. They do not establish every rumor that accumulated during 1988-2025. An indictment states allegations; a plea or verdict

resolves only the counts and defendants actually adjudicated. Refusing to bridge those gaps with speculation keeps the unresolved portions visible instead of disguising them as narrative momentum.

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The courtroom

What happened to Sarah Cherry and her family generated records made for different audiences: investigators, lawyers, judges, jurors, officials, and the public. Her body was found two days later in a wooded area. Those records overlap, but they are not interchangeable. A trial is structured proof under rules, not a complete replay of every event or every rumor surrounding it. Reading across them carefully prevents a later summary from erasing an earlier uncertainty or a later reversal.

The most useful context is the context that changes interpretation. Items belonging to Dechaine were found near the house, and rope evidence and the location of his truck became parts of the prosecution case. In the Bowdoin record, that detail helps explain why a particular investigative or legal step followed. A trial is structured proof under rules, not a complete replay of every event or every rumor surrounding it. General crime lore would add volume but not understanding, so it is left outside the account.

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For Sarah Cherry and her family, the procedural vocabulary cannot be allowed to eclipse consequence. Twelve-year-old Sarah Cherry

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Appeal and review

A headline can make this episode appear settled in a sentence. The underlying record is narrower. The 2025 order concluded that the statutory and evidentiary grounds presented did not justify a new trial. From there, the inquiry moves through source, timing, corroboration, and legal consequence. An appellate court tests legal error and the governing record, not whether judges would retell the case the same way. None of those steps authorizes invented dialogue or a claim about what Sarah Cherry and her family privately thought.

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Uncertainty

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Institutions

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For Sarah Cherry and her family, the procedural vocabulary cannot be allowed to eclipse consequence. Items belonging to Dechaine were found near the house, and rope evidence and the location of his truck became parts of the prosecution case. The detail belongs here because it changes the chronology, not because it supplies atmosphere. Police, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, laboratories, journalists, and families each occupy different roles. Keeping that boundary visible lets the reader understand both the institutional response and the loss that made the response necessary.

The 1988-2025 record from Bowdoin contains a point that resists shorthand: Dechaine has maintained his innocence and sought relief through repeated DNA and post-conviction proceedings. The present legal posture is equally specific: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in force. Police, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, laboratories, journalists, and families each occupy different roles. 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 2025 order concluded that the statutory and evidentiary grounds presented did not justify a new trial. From there, the inquiry moves through source, timing, corroboration, and legal consequence. Police, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, laboratories, journalists, and families each occupy different roles. None of those steps authorizes invented dialogue or a claim about what Sarah Cherry and her family privately thought.

Location matters in this file. Bowdoin determined which agencies, courts, and communities carried the case, while 1988-2025 marks the span over which the public learned it. Twelve-year-old Sarah Cherry disappeared while babysitting in Bowdoin in July 1988. Police, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, laboratories, journalists, and families each occupy different roles. The result is a chronology with identifiable custodians rather than a collection of free-floating claims.

After the judgment

This part of the account begins with a modest question: what did the cited source actually establish? Its answer is plain: Dechaine has maintained his innocence and sought relief through repeated DNA and post-conviction proceedings. The answer does not automatically prove motive, identity, or every charge in the case. Sentencing, resentencing, parole, dismissal, or an open investigation can change the legal status without changing the human loss. The remaining status is stated without embellishment: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in force.

The case file gives different kinds of information different weight. The 2025 order concluded that the statutory and evidentiary grounds presented did not justify a new trial. A contemporaneous observation, a laboratory result, a charging allegation, and an appellate finding do not perform the same job. Sentencing, resentencing, parole, dismissal, or an open investigation can change the legal status without changing the human loss. Describing those jobs plainly is especially important when the story concerns Sarah Cherry and her family.

By the time *The Murder of Sarah Cherry* reached public memory, sequence had become easy to lose. Twelve-year-old Sarah Cherry disappeared while babysitting in Bowdoin in July 1988. Restoring sequence shows what investigators knew, what prosecutors alleged, what the defense contested, and what a court or jury ultimately resolved. Sentencing, resentencing, parole, dismissal, or an open investigation can change the legal status without changing the human loss. An older headline cannot replace the current status: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in force.

There is no need to enlarge the evidence to make this file serious. Her body was found two days later in a wooded area. That proposition is consequential on its own. Sentencing, resentencing, parole, dismissal, or an open investigation can change the legal status without changing the human loss. The account therefore avoids borrowing certainty from unrelated defendants, other jurisdictions, or later cases that happen to resemble events in Bowdoin.

The public record speaks most reliably when attribution travels with the claim. Here is the supported proposition: Items belonging to Dechaine were found near the house, and rope evidence and the location of his truck became parts of the prosecution case. The source may recount an allegation, summarize trial proof, or state a judgment, and the language must match that function. Sentencing, resentencing, parole, dismissal, or an open investigation can change the legal status without changing the human loss. That practice protects the accuracy of the case and the dignity of Sarah Cherry and her family at the same time.

At this stage of the file, absence is also information. The available materials establish this much: Dechaine has maintained his innocence and sought relief through repeated DNA and post-conviction proceedings. They do not establish every rumor that accumulated during 1988-2025. Sentencing, resentencing, parole, dismissal, or an open investigation can change the legal status without changing the human loss. Refusing to bridge those gaps with speculation keeps the unresolved portions visible instead of disguising them as narrative momentum.

Status at manuscript lock

The controlling status for this account is: Dennis Dechaine was convicted of murder and kidnapping and is serving a life sentence. In January 2025, the Superior Court denied his latest motion for a new trial and dismissed a related prosecution motion; the conviction remains in force. 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 Sarah Cherry

- Maine Superior Court 2025 Dechaine order: <https://www.courts.maine.gov/news/dechaine/orders-on-defendants-motion-for-new-trial.pdf> -
Maine Supreme Judicial Court opinions:
<https://courts.maine.gov/courts/sjc/opinions.html>

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