



Nameless Indignities: Unraveling the Mystery of One of Illinois's Most Infamous Crimes

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2013 GOLD MEDAL/INDIEFAB AWARDS(ForeWord Review); 2014 BRONZE MEDAL/IPPY AWARDS: If you like history relating to crime, law, medicine, psychology, journalism, or genealogy – then this Victorian mystery is for you. Nameless Indignities is a true story, full of incredible twists and turns, and will hold you in its grip from beginning to end with multiple suspects, a lynch mob, perjury and bribery, failed kidnappings, broken family ties, cover-ups, financial devastation, and at least two suicides.

When young schoolteacher Emma Bond was brutally gang-raped and left for dead in her rural Illinois schoolhouse in June 1882, an enduring mystery was born. Although she survived, her recovery was hindered by hysteria, amnesia, and some unusual physical complications. The story was covered by newspapers across the land, but some of the wounds inflicted upon the victim were so appalling that the press refused to print the ugliest details, referring to them only as “nameless indignities.” Eighteen months went by before three of the six suspects were brought to trial.

After the verdict, however, the public’s unwavering support for the victim began to fade amid persistent theories and rumors that she had lied and that no crime had been committed. At the time, educators, editors, politicians, lawyers, and doctors eagerly weighed in on the case and its ramifications. But with Victorian doctors unable to agree on anything of a physical or a psychological nature, Emma’s life went into a tailspin from which she never recovered. The crime also took a heavy toll on local residents, pitting families and neighbors against one another. The fact that the case was never fully resolved gave it a certain staying power, with its many unanswered questions persisting well into the twentieth century.

The author, whose great-great aunt was the victim, concludes with her own theory on the crime, based on some new evidence that she recently uncovered.

Nameless Indignities: Unraveling the Mystery of One of Illinois's Most Infamous Crimes Details

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From Reader Review Nameless Indignities: Unraveling the Mystery of One of Illinois's Most Infamous Crimes for online ebook

Randee Baty says

A very compelling true crime story from the Illinois of the 1880's!

I really enjoyed this book! A young schoolteacher, left alone in the schoolhouse at the end of the day, is subjected to "nameless indignities" by persons unknown. What follows is a gripping tale of neighbor against neighbor, shoddy investigations, attempted lynchings, pompous lawyers and the ruination of a young woman's life.

The research that it took for Susan Elmore to put together this story is mind-boggling! Using family stories, newspaper accounts and court records, she has constructed a clear, interesting and realistic portrait of what happened in the small settlements in rural Illinois. As a person who loves to do genealogy research, I'm thrilled to see how in-depth the research can be. As a person with roots near the locations in Illinois, I love the historic picture she presents of the area. As a lover of mysteries, this sets one's imagination racing.

There is a lot of detail and some people may find that it moves too slowly for them but for me, all the detail just helped me immerse myself in the people, the setting and the time period. I loved it from start to finish.

I received this book through Goodreads First Reads program and I really appreciated the opportunity to read and review this book.

Barb says

The story started kinda slow, with all the families and the "who is this" needed to set up the narrative. But it turned into a fascinating read, with a lot of twists and turns along the way. I was impressed by the amount of research, and how much she was able to find, and how objective the author remained, given that this was her family story.

Neva Womack says

What do you do when you find out your great great aunt was involved in a controversial court case. If you are Susan Elmore, you research it and write an in depth book. This was not an easy book to read but well worth the effort. Makes me wonder what skeletons I have in my family closet.

Lindsay says

Very interesting crime that took place in my hometown in 1882. Written as a story that held my attention, though I admit to glossing over some of the trial proceedings that got very long and very he said, she said. The author also speculates about who actually committed this crime since no one was ever convicted. If you like this genre of books, this story will not disappoint.

Gina says

A fascinating true story with lots of twists and turns and unexpected happenings. The book covers the crime, the time leading up to the trial, the trial itself, and the aftermath. The most interesting, fascinating part of the story to me is everything that happens after the trial. The author does a great job of telling the story which is clearly very well researched. I highly recommend!

Briana D says

I usually don't enjoy nonfiction but that was not the case with this book. I couldn't put it down. The crime and trial are extremely interesting but the part I enjoyed most was after the trial. There were moments I gasped out loud because I was so surprised by the twists and turns. It would make a great movie.

Jennifer says

I wanted to like this book, i REALLY did. The description coupled with the fact that I live in Illinois made this book intriguing. But the bottom line is that the book is extremely hard to "get in to". The first 4 'sections' of the book (total of 5 sections, each with multiple chapters) were all descriptions of numerous characters and events and descriptions. You are BOMBARDED with information you will never remember, nor be able to keep characters straight.

I forced myself to finish the book, because I hate to start something and not finish it. Finally, in the 5th section, I found myself actually enjoying the story. And that's because this final section was actually being written in a more story-like fashion.

I want to give this book 5-stars. No doubt the author spent a TON of time researching and compiling all the data in this book. My father's big into genealogy, so I know this is no easy feat. With that being said, I respect that the author put so much work into it. But the bottom line is that unless this impacts your own family, nobody else is going to find this interesting.

Patricia Reding says

Reviewed for Readers' Favorite at www.ReadersFavorite.com.

When Susan Elmore discovered a family connection to the victim of one of the most notorious crimes in Illinois history, Emma Bond, her curiosity got the better of her and her journey ended with *Nameless Indignities*. So began Elmore's search into records available about Emma, the "nameless indignities" the

press mentioned were inflicted upon her, the small Illinois community that was the setting of the crime, and more. Emma's story was incredible in that as a young school teacher she told of how, after someone covered her head so that she could not see, two (or was it three?) men pulled her up into the attic-like space of the schoolhouse, then assaulted her, all late in the afternoon on a typical June day. Thereafter, Emma wavered between life and death for an extended period. Meanwhile, three (and later more) local men were charged with the crime. But were they the responsible parties, or had a crime, in fact, even been committed?

We take for granted in many ways today the technology that makes it possible to identify criminals, the procedures we use to investigate crimes and crime scenes, and so on. As Susan Elmore rightly points out in *Nameless Indignities*, however, investigating and solving crimes in days gone by was a very different matter. In the case at hand, a part of a toenail was examined by eye, to determine if it might belong to one of the defendants. Today, a simple DNA test would be the first order of business. On the other hand, this history shows how our media plays a similar part in events as it did in those long ago days. Susan Elmore's new theory of the crime and careful and complete rendition of events is certainly an interesting and most readable glimpse into a sensational crime from the past.

Christine says

I loved this book! True, it is set in my neighborhood. True, I know the author's family. But those reasons only partly justify my fondness of the book. The main contributor to my liking the book is the story. It is riveting! The crime itself, the hearings and trial, the events after the trial - all are captivating. As I was reading, I kept thinking, "This would make a GREAT movie!"

Sometimes I find non-fiction dry. Not in this case. The author describes the setting, events, and characters with such detail that I had no opportunity to be bored. In fact, I was bothered every time I had to put the book down.

Finally, I appreciate the time and effort the author put into researching every aspect of this story. She gives all the known details and adds her educated opinion respectfully and without bias, giving the reader much to consider. I highly recommend this thoughtful, intriguing, well-written book.

Maria Beltran says

Reviewed by Maria Beltran for Readers' Favorite

Susan Elmore's novel, *Nameless Indignities: Unraveling the Mystery of One of Illinois's Most Infamous Crimes*, is a non-fiction, true crime story that happened in the late 1800s. Emma Bond, a young schoolteacher is viciously gang-raped and left for dead in her school. She miraculously survives and, as her case makes newspaper headlines across the United States of America, she endures a life of severe mental and physical difficulties. The physical wounds inflicted on her are so horrendous that the shocked press refer to them as 'nameless indignities.' Eighteen months later, a trial begins and three of the six suspects are subsequently convicted. Public opinion, however, shifts as rumors that she made up the story begin to circulate. This is a true to life story that profoundly wounds a young schoolteacher, a community and a nation and it still reverberates until today.

Winner of the IndieFab Gold and the IPPY Bronze awards, *Nameless Indignities: Unraveling the Mystery of One of Illinois's Most Infamous Crimes*, is an extremely interesting read. As the saying goes, truth is stranger than fiction, and this is exactly what comes to mind as I go on a dizzying ride from the first to the last chapters of this book. A crime is committed and there are several suspects. What follows is a string of dramatic events with lynch mobs, perjury and bribery accusations, botched kidnapping, shattered families, suicides and other upheavals. Author Susan Elmore uncovers new evidence on a 130-year-old case that has shocked the nation and directly impacted the lives of a number of people in the community, including her family because Emma Bond happens to be her great-aunt. The result is a novel that gives its readers a general look at criminal law, medicine, psychology, journalism, and life in the US during the Victorian age. Emma Bond's story is extremely touching, it leaves an aftertaste in my mouth. This is a well-researched book that is certainly difficult to put down!

Steve Newman says

Very strong book. If you like 19th century True Crime with tons of historical detail, you should get it.

CD says

A slice of 19th Century American History brought to the attention of the current era. *Nameless Indignities*,... by Susan Elmore is True Crime journalism with all the juicy bits from the era that it is all too easy to forget had its paparazzi! Muckracking journalist didn't always have a political scandal to pursue. A violent crime was just as good and sold papers.

The American Mid-West post Civil War was a well established with social order and mores, a justice system that was like any place else in the United States that was not territorial or not yet admitted to the Union. There were a few remnants of Civil War prejudices and hard feeling remaining, yet they did not drive the common society as they still did a state or two west of Illinois. Mid-Central (today almost the northern part of Southern Illinois) Illinois was an agricultural society. Money was to be made and with it came typical social stratification. So did resentments, family feuds, and darker things. Violence was not far away and the sensational crime was also close at hand.

Author Susan Elmore unearths from personal family history a dark and sordid tale of brutal rape and the aftermath including manhunts, near lynching, a criminal investigation and trial out of today's crime obsessed media. From the case's background to the final days and lingering judgements of history there is research in abundance in to the story. Clever use of cross referenced genealogical records and census records track suspects and their families across the country and in to the 20th Century. Apparent exhaustive newspaper research brings to the page the arc of the victims life from her childhood and privilege to her final sordid end.

There is detail on top of detail. Genealogy of nearly every character in this story is rich in sourcing and depth. So deep the reader begins to struggle for air. Keeping track of the various threads of this story become tedious. Not difficult or obscure, just details that are best left to notes. The book has no pace beyond meticulous. It is in fact not always an enjoyable read and is describable as laborious for many pages at a time.

Since the rise of the modern historical(not historical fiction) story written by non-historians or by journalists, books like Nameless Indignities have exploded across the racks of available reading material. Few will rise to the level of Erik Larson and most will be of regional interest at best. This one held such promise. It instead disappoints on every level. There is too much of everything much of which could have solved with editing and some reorganization. Combined with the impression that the book leaves of it being an exhaustive report of all the people who lived in the area and the relationships it is monotonous. The author could have spent a bit more time to chronicle how the area that the crime occurred in evolved in the next few decades and given a much richer background. The sources seem narrow on closer examination and perhaps that was the editing that did occur. But the book misses the mark on several levels.

This is a work to read for some perspective on how journalists in the 19th century were just as involved in driving or perverting the course of justice as the have again become in the 21st Century. This is a work that points out eclectic portions of the biographies of a number of historical figures that were associated with Lincoln and with the growth of the State of Illinois. But it misses the mark on so many topics that it becomes more of a task to read than a valuable resource or as a potential brilliant contribution brought down by the approach to writing that is employed.

Not terrible. The best parts are at the end of the work. Yet if a reader has not steeled themselves to dozens of pages of detail and nauseum the final conclusions have little merit.

A.J. says

I can't help but wonder if a hundred years from now, someone is going to dig back in the old archives of internet caches to find the accounts of the Steubenville rape case, or some similar event, that for brief moment filled the news and now barely gets a second thought, despite the long-reacting effects of the crime. I wonder, because from 1882-1884, the brutal gang-rape of Emma Bond and the ensuing trial of the men accused of attacking her made national news, but in 2013 I had never heard of this case until reading this book. That in itself is fascinating to me: to see how quickly such a shocking and well-publicized crime and trial faded into obscurity in the annals of history.

Elmore does an excellent job of presenting a thorough and relatively unbiased account of the crime, the trial, and even her theory as to a likely reconstruction of what really happened. Because the case was so famous and publicized in its time, Elmore was able to locate a wealth of documentation to draw from to provide a clear account...or at least, an account of how unclear the proceedings of the case were. Probably the most difficult thing about this book is keeping a grip on the sheer number of people involved, especially with so many of them related and named after each other (though to be fair, that is history's fault, and Elmore keeps her names and references relatively consistent, which makes tracking the players a bit easier).

The thing I like the most about this sort of non-fiction is that it is so scaled down in scope. This isn't an epic global account of kings or popes, this is the history of one horrific event that could have destroyed a small town in Illinois. There is insight into the workings of the late 19th Century US court system, the way in which the average person and the larger Victorian media responded to a brutal sexual crime, and everyday life in 1880s Midwestern America.

It's hard to give this sort of thing a rating in stars for enjoyment, because it isn't exactly the sort of thing I would tell anyone to just go pick up and read. However, if you have an interest in a smaller-scaled history regarding crime, women, the court system, or late-Victorian America, it might be worth a look.

I received a copy of this book through GoodReads First Reads giveaways.

Angela says

I love stuff like this, and this book was well-written by all means. I just couldn't get into it. There were too many characters for me to keep track of and I have way too many books to read on my to-read list to spend too much time trying to get thru one that doesn't keep my interest. I may pick it up again someday, but i doubt it.

However, the author is a great writer and the work it took to write a book like this had to have been completely time-consuming hard work. I applaud her efforts and information gathering!
