

Reviews and Praise for

THE NAKED QUAKER TRUE CRIMES AND CONTROVERSIES FROM THE COURTS OF COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND

By Diane Rapaport

Commonwealth Editions, October 2007

EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS

National Genealogical Society Quarterly (March 2008)

“Rapaport combines the skills of an experienced trial lawyer with the art of fine storytelling to present a scholarly and richly readable record of the times and trials of early New Englanders.”

Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly (March 10, 2008)

“[F]or history buffs with a penchant for the bizarre, *The Naked Quaker* is just what the doctor ordered. . . . What makes this collection even more interesting for the casual reader and the aficionado alike are the photos of the actual writs, bonds, warrants and transcripts that pepper this slim volume. The *Quaker* leads you through the annals of the religious/litigious fanaticism that shaped the legal landscape of New England.”

Boston Globe (March 6, 2008)

“Call it Court TV meets the History Channel. Via a collection of true vignettes, Rapaport reveals that our Puritan forebears were not all stiff hats and stern faces. Colonial misbehavior was rampant. Pigs were purloined, wives were led astray, too many drams of rum were drunk, and even church pews were fought over in unseemly ways.”

Harvard Magazine (January-February 2008)

The Naked Quaker is one of “three worthy books full of Harvard references [that] have arrived on the shelf.”

New England Historical and Genealogical Register (January 2008)

“This little volume is not only entertaining, it is enlightening. Some twenty-five well-written stories from New England court records provide a lively picture of the various shenanigans that went on in the “olden days.” From “The Witch at the Top of the Stairs,” and “A Woman of ‘Enthusiastical Power,’” through “Selling Silvanus Warro,” and “The Purloined Pigs,” to “Captain Barefoot Goes to Court,” these excerpts portray a whole range of miscreants, including Lydia Wardell, who protested the persecution of Quakers by disrobing in the Newbury, Massachusetts, church in April 1663. Detailed endnotes and often amusing illustrations round out the picture.”

California Bookwatch (December 2007)

“Collections strong in regional American history – particularly New England regional history – will want to add *The Naked Quaker*. . . . A wider audience can now appreciate these lively vignettes of early crime.”

The Bookwoman, Women's National Book Association (Fall 2007)

"A former trial lawyer, Diane brings the Colonial era to life with tales both heartbreaking and funny from the court records of the day. Stories of witchcraft, illicit sex, slavery, and the high crime of swearing fill the pages of this entertaining and enlightening book."

The Hingham Journal (October 25, 2007)

"This delightful little book, . . . for all its fun, is also a product of serious historical research. . . . Twenty-five real-life stories as quirky and fascinating as any fictional tale could be."

Greenwich Time (October 24, 2007)

"Fortunately for historians, seventeenth century judges and court clerks kept 'careful records, which now offer us a glimpse into our ancestors' past.' . . . This entertaining book. . . reveals a fundamental truth: our ancestors were neither saints nor humbugs, but decent people trying to build a City on the Hill in tough surroundings."

ForeWord Magazine (October 17, 2007)

"ForeWord Footnotes" describes *The Naked Quaker* as a new history "title of note from our review stacks, . . . twenty-five stories taken from court records, including that of a Quaker woman who dropped her dress at a Sunday meeting...."

Cape Cod Times (October 14, 2007)

"Inside Diane Rapaport's 'true crimes and controversies from the courts of colonial New England' are stories that will remind you that our forebears could be just as unusual and nutty as our contemporaries."

The Barnes & Noble Review (September 2007)

"Diane Rapaport's previous book was *New England Court Records: A Research Guide for Genealogists and Historians*, so it seems only right that she would share her own most exciting archival finds. As its title suggests, *The Naked Quaker* bares seldom-seen aspects of Colonial New England life. Representative chapter headings include 'Witches & Wild Women,' 'Coupling,' 'Parents & Youth,' 'Tavern Tales,' 'Slaves & Servants,' and 'Neighbor vs. Neighbor.' Glimpses into a vanished world."

OTHER PRAISE

"Diane Rapaport's *Naked Quaker* is a marvel of New England storytelling. Highly entertaining and grounded in the best scholarship, it leaves a new and lasting impression of true crimes and other incidents in the colonial period."

-- D. Brenton Simons, President and CEO, New England Historic Genealogical Society, and author of *Witches, Rakes & Rogues*

"We 21st century citizens seem to pride ourselves on inventing vice, but as the true (and frequently peculiar) stories in *Naked Quaker* reveal, we've got nothing on our raucous ancestors! You'll enjoy reading this book as much as your favorite, guilty-pleasure tabloid, but will look eminently more respectable doing so! And here's a mystery to ponder on your reading journey: which of these colorful tales pertains to an ancestor of Barack Obama?"

-- Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak, co-author of *Trace Your Roots with DNA*, co-founder of Roots Television, and Chief Family Historian of Ancestry.com

“Rapaport puts an entertainingly human face on an incomprehensible world where swearing could land you in jail and illicit sex could get you enslaved. No one taps into the human comedy in court records better.”

-- Melinde Lutz Sanborn, FASG, Editor, *New Hampshire Genealogical Record* and *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*

“Diane Rapaport's use of early court records is ingenious. With careful reading of these overlooked archives, she brings life to dozens of little known individual stories. Read together, they add dimension to our understanding of the rigors of daily life in colonial New England.”

-- Megan Sniffen-Marinoff, Harvard University Archivist

“*The Naked Quaker* lays bare Colonial justice through the colorful tales of a woman accused of witchcraft because chickens died after she passed by, a man named Bacon charged with stealing pigs, a semi-literate sailor whose sentence for illegally selling wine included serving as a constable Court TV is no match!”

-- Laurie Beckelman, President, Women's National Book Association

"Lawyer Rapaport's decade of sleuthing in colonial court records brings to light fascinating new information about witchcraft, sexuality, and slavery in early New England."

-- Eve LaPlante, author of *Salem Witch Judge* and *American Jezebel*

“Who’d imagine that a little book about court cases in seventeenth century New England could be so completely enchanting? . . . Diane Rapaport, a trial lawyer-turned-storyteller, combed through . . . archives. . .to collect these real-life tales. Her magic touch turns them into a quirky, irresistible read. . . Highly recommended!”

-- Linda Bulger, reader review at Amazon.com (Oct. 16, 2007)

“Whoever thinks history is boring probably hasn’t been paying attention – and certainly hasn’t read Diane Rapaport’s *The Naked Quaker*. . . . In this collection we encounter. . . witchcraft charges; neighbors from hell (like Bacon the pig thief); and humble folk . . . (like enslaved Sylvanus Warro fighting for his freedom). . . [A] darned good read.”

-- Marilynne Roach, author of *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-by-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege*