

Would You Want to Live in a Serial Killer's House?

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If you're in the market for an "excellent handyman's special," you might want to check out a two-story ranch-style house that's for sale in East Meadow, N.Y. What the property listing doesn't mention, though, is that Joel Rifkin, one of the area's most notorious serial killers, used to live here.

Nor does it have to, under New York's disclosure laws, despite the fact that prospective buyers might think twice upon learning of the home's sinister past.

"There is no requirement under New York law to notify a purchaser or a respective purchaser of a murder, death or unpleasant act that occurred in the home," notes **Adam Leitman Bailey**, an attorney who practices real estate law in New York and New Jersey. "New York is a caveat emptor [buyer beware] state."

The 34-year-old Rifkin was arrested in 1993 after he crashed his pickup truck into a utility pole and police found the remains of a 22-year-old woman in the back of his vehicle. Authorities later connected Rifkin to more than half a dozen homicides that occurred between 1989 and 1993.

In 1994, Rifkin was found guilty of committing nine murders and was sentenced to 203 years to life. He is incarcerated at Clinton Correctional Facility in Clinton County, N.Y.



This screen grab from Google Street View shows serial killer Joel Rifkin's former home, which is up for sale.

According to TruTV's Crime Library, while some of Rifkin's victims were killed in his vehicle, others were slain and dismembered inside his East Meadow home.

The sale of the home was prompted by the recent death of Rifkin's mother, Jeanne Rifkin, *Newsday* reports. The asking price is \$424,500.

"This two-story expanded ranch features a nice open floor plan, hardwood floors, four nice-size bedrooms and two lovely bathrooms," the property listing on the Century 21 website says. "Great home, located in a wonderful neighborhood and in the superb Barnum Woods School District. All buyers welcomed."

AOL News attempted to reach Laffey Associates, the agency behind the listing, to determine whether it planned to notify potential buyers of the house's history. However, the phone operator who picked up

refused to answer questions or provide a contact at the corporate office.

Calls to a public relations official at Century 21 were not returned by publication time.

Coincidentally, the "Amityville Horror" house is also for sale in New York, for \$1.15 million. The home is the site of a brutal 1974 mass murder, in which Ronald DeFeo Jr., then 23, murdered six of his family members. The crime and subsequent alleged supernatural incidents were detailed in several books and movies.

Previous owners of the Amityville home had the address changed and made modifications to the exterior in an attempt to make it difficult to identify. Nonetheless, the house continues to attract tourists.

But most stigmatized properties are not as well known. Which raises the question: If a potential buyer inquires about whether a suicide or homicide occurred inside a home, would the real estate agent have to disclose that information?

"Can you lie? No, you can't," New York real estate attorney [REDACTED] told AOL News. "Can you say, 'I just don't know,' when in fact you do know? No, that's also fraud.

"If you do in fact know, you have to say so. Otherwise, you're defrauding because you're concealing your knowledge of an incident," he continued.

Would knowledge of a horrific crime play a role in determining whether someone would purchase a home? Some say yes.

"Why would I want to own a house where someone was brutally murdered?" says Rachel Pender, who, along with her husband, is in the market for a home in New York.

"The last thing I want to do is lay awake at night thinking about it," adds Rachel's husband, Donald.

Not everyone, however, is completely against the idea.

"I would definitely buy the house. It's a part of true crime history, much like the Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast," Jessika Gein told AOL News. Gein and her husband, Eric, own Serial Killers Ink, a leading "murderabilia" outlet.

"As of late, there seems to be quite a few true crime artifacts making the headlines, such as Drew Peterson's motorcycle and Jack Kevorkian's van," she says, "which goes to show America's thirst for true crime memorabilia."