

0. THE UNSPEAKABLE - Story Preface

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It wasn't the first time Albert Fish had been arrested by the New York Police. Three years after killing Grace Budd, he had been picked up and institutionalized at Bellevue Hospital (in 1931).

- His crime then? Writing obscene letters to women.
- His penalty? A few months in Bellevue where he was examined by psychiatrists, including Dr. Menas Gregory.
- His treatment? Nothing much, since Dr. Gregory let him go.

Although Gregory determined Fish "has manifested sex perversion from early life," he did not exhibit "mental deterioration or dementia." In short, Fish was a pervert who knew what he was doing.

According to Dr. Gregory's report:

As a result of our psychiatric examination we are of the opinion that this man at the present time is not insane.

Four years later - in 1935 - the prosecution would advocate his sanity throughout the trial. So would Dr. Gregory.

As the police first listened to Fish tell his tale of horrifying proportions, however, no one believed he was telling the truth. No one wanted to believe a man (sane or insane) could kill a child and then commit further atrocities so ghastly as to make the act of murder less heinous than its aftermath.

Fish admitted to killing Grace Budd at Wysteria cottage in Westchester County. The home - built in 1857 (a few years before the American Civil War began) - was in an isolated area (on Mountain Road in Irvington, New York).

The house still stands, remade and beautiful. Surrounded by trees, in full bloom during the summer months, the location would have provided significant cover for someone with nefarious motives.

When Albert Fish arrived at the scene with police officers, he showed the investigators where to recover the remains of Grace Budd, including her little skull.

Bones found in a well on the property caused investigators to wonder if they had retrieved all evidence from the water. To be sure, they had the well pumped dry.

Gathering those remains in a basket, the police kept them as evidence. That evidence would later be used as a trial exhibit, despite the strong objections of Fish's lawyer, James Dempsey.

But what of the claims of cannibalism? Initially, he denied it to reporters just as he denied involvement in the deaths of other children:

I don't know anything about those other bones they say they've found. And cannibalism! The very thought sickens me.

The act should have sickened him as much as the thought.

Instead, Hamilton Albert Fish will be forever remembered as the real-life model for Hannibal Lecter. It was up to Dr. Wertham to tell the jury what Fish had told him.

After the testimony was over, no one doubted Fish had done what he had denied doing to reporters.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-UNSPEAKABLE-Hannibal-Lecter-and-Albert-Fish>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-UNSPEAKABLE-Hannibal-Lecter-and-Albert-Fish>

Media Stream



Albert Fish - Police Photo

Image, described above, Public Domain.

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Albert Fish at Trial

Photo online, courtesy New York City archives.

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Wysteria Cottage

Image online, courtesy Murderpedia.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Wysteria-Cottage>



Wysteria Cottage - Isolated Area

Image of a photograph, taken in 1934, of investigators at the crime scene. Online, courtesy *New York Daily News*.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Wysteria-Cottage-Isolated-Area>



Wysteria Cottage - Remade

Image on home, online courtesy several real-estate websites.

PD

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Wysteria Cottage - Surrounding Area

Image, described above, online courtesy various real-estate websites.

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Wysteria Cottage - Trees at the Site

Image described above, online courtesy various real-estate websites.

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Fish - Showing Police Where to Search at Wysteria Cottage

Image online, courtesy *New York Daily News*.

PD

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Fish-Showing-Police-Where-to-Search-at-Wysteria-Cottage>



Grace Budd Investigation - Basket Used by Police

Image, described above, online courtesy Murderpedia.

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Wysteria Cottage - Pumping the Well Dry

Image, described above, online courtesy *New York Daily News*.

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Diggin-Up Grace Budd's Remains

Image depicting a scene from the investigation at Wysteria Cottage in March of 1934. Online, courtesy Murderpedia.

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Grim Scene - Finding Remains

Image depicting remains found in the Grace Budd crime-scene investigation. Online, courtesy Murderpedia.

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James Dempsey

Image of defense-lawyer James Dempsey with Albert Fish, online courtesy Murderpedia.

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