

“I couldn’t help it!” – Jesse Pomeroy

Normally with a murder, the public sides with the family of the slain while the very few, if any, stand with the accused. What if the accused was your fourteen-year-old son? Even though he had been accused of some of the most horrifying acts that a young man could be accused of, would you still stand behind them? Everyone, murderer or not, is someone’s child but would you or could you stand beside that child?

Ruth Ann Pomeroy (Snowman) stood beside her son, who was dubbed The Boy fiend when he was accused and in the end, she lost so much.

Jesse Pomeroy was born on November 29, 1859, to Thomas and Ruth Ann Pomeroy in Charlestown, Massachusetts. In his early years, life wasn’t easy for Jesse who was often tormented due to his appearance. Jesse’s right eye was covered in a white film, some say from a possible smallpox vaccination but there hasn’t ever been a definitive answer. He also had a cleft palate. It was said that his own father couldn’t stand to look at him and beat him often, flogging him bareback and after once such beating Jesse’s mother, Ruth ran his father out of the house while wielding a knife, never to return.

By the age of five Jesse was caught torturing a cat and suddenly the string of missing pets was understood. He progressed to humans by the young age of twelve and his kills would escalate quickly. In December of 1871, he tortured young Billy Paine in Chelsea, a suburb of Boston. The young boy was stripped naked and tied to a beam and then beat with a rope until he lost consciousness. The one who did the deed left, disappearing into the shadows. Less than two months later in February of the 1872 Jesse would beat and torture another boy, Tracy Hayden was tortured in a similar way but in the end, he was also hit in the face with a board that caused his nose to be broken and knocked out any of his teeth. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1872, Jesse would beat and torture Robert Maier and this would be the first time that Jesse would start to achieve some kind of sexual gratification from the beatings. On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1872 Jesse would have an orgasm while he beat and tortured Johnny Balch. In August of that year Jesse and his family, minus his father, moved from Chelsea to South Boston. Here Jesse’s mother would open a dress shop that was located directly across from the family’s home. Hoping for a new start with just herself and her children, however, young Jesse would still be on a downward spiral of depravity.

His first victim in South Boston was George Pratt on August 17, 1882. He binds the young lad up and tortures him. The torture includes bites over his body, hard enough to take chunks out and stabbing him with a needle. In the month of September, Jesse was going to escalate even faster than beforehand. The next attack was on September 5<sup>th</sup> of the same year, six-year-old Harry Austin was leered away by Jesse where he was bound, tortured but Jesse was to move onto his next step down the dark road he was on when he took a knife to young Harry, stabbing him repeatedly and even attempted to cut the boy’s penis off. A week later Jesse struck again and this time kidnapping and tortured Joseph Kennedy, stabbing him in the end. On September 17<sup>th</sup>, five-year-old Robert Gould was enticed away from watchful eyes where he was then stripped, beat and slashed with a knife. This event led to the police’s first account of who had been behind the attacks after they had been given a description of Jesse’s white eye that was very distinctive. Three days later on September 20<sup>th</sup>, Jesse was identified by his victim Joseph

Kennedy and after being questioned, Jesse confesses to all of his crimes. It was at this time that Jesse had been arraigned for attacks on eight children and he was to be held at the Massachusetts House of Reformation until he turned eighteen years old. While there the young children were scared of him while the older bullied him. His mother pleaded for his release and he wish was granted on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1874, being released into the care of his mother after they confirmed that Jesse would not only have a place to live and work to occupy his time. After finding out that he could both help in his mother's dress shop and help his brother to deliver papers, Jesse left the house of reformation, however, it didn't take long before Jesse fell back into his old ways and his old ways soon advanced into a much more sever crime this time around. This time around he would become a murderer.

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1874 young Katie Curran left her home in order to make a purchase. She ended up at the very dress shop where Jesse Pomeroy worked. He advised that he had what the young girl was looking for in the lower level of the shop and the ten-year-old girl followed him, meeting a grizzly fate. Katie became his first victim. In the next month, April of 1874, three major events would take place. First, Jesse tried to take five-year-old Harry Field but luckily for the child, another old boy interrupted this attempt. Whether he was getting cocky, after having successfully committed his first murder, thus getting sloppy or if it was just ill timing, although it was good timing for the youngster. Later that same month on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1874 lures four-year-old Horace Millen off where he killed him, making Millen the second victim of Jesse Pomeroy. The boy's body was severely mutilated, his head being nearly decapitated. There were thirty-one knife wounds. The next day on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Jesse, who is known for having a past record, is suspected of killing Millen and is arrested. A knife is found with blood near the handle and on Jesse's shoes, mud that was found in the marsh where young Millen's body was found.

One thing I found to be very interesting was the use of plaster casting that was made from the show print at the crime scene of Millen that perfectly fit Jesse but it also told the police that the suspect walked in the same way as Jesse. Even with knowing all of this, Jesse first pleads not guilty and was indicted. Doctor having talked with him found Jesse to be sane, only getting thrills from the pain of others.

In July of this year the landlord sold the property where Ruth resided in and after starting to make major repairs, the workers starting in the cellar, they stopped when they uncovered a badly decomposed body on July 18<sup>th</sup>. Knowing their daughter was still missing, among those who had come to view the body was the parents of Katie Curran, identifying her by the clothes that were still on the child's body. Knowing that Jesse had been seen with Katie, the police took Jesse to view the body where finally, he confessed to killing young Katie as well. In December of 1874, Jesse Pomeroy was convicted of the murder of Katie Curran and sentenced to be hanged.

In 1876, two years after his conviction, Jesse's death sentence was commuted to solitary confinement, first going to Suffolk County Jail before moving to Charlestown State Prison, and that was where he would stay for the rest of days on this earth. He was sixteen when this took place. Over his years in, Jesse attempted many escapes only to have this fail. While in prison, Jesse taught himself to read many foreign languages, wrote poetry and studied law books which are what lead Jesse to challenge his conviction and requested a pardon.

He was in solitary for forty years until his sentence was commuted again in 1917, this time to life in prison thus allowing him to have the same privileges as other inmates. Although it wasn't the pardon that he had wanted, it was better than having countless hours with his own thoughts. In 1929, Jesse Pomeroy, now an old man was transferred to the Bridgewater Hospital for the Criminally Insane and he remained there until his death on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1932. He was seventy-two years old.

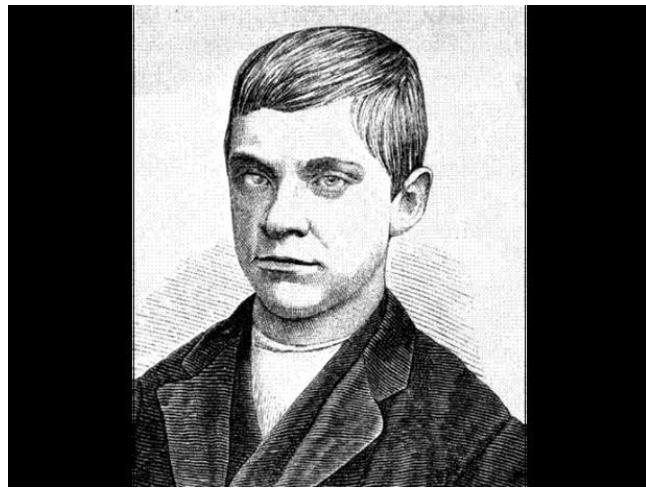
Jesse Harding Pomeroy is one of the youngest to have been convicted of murder in the United States. If you're keeping count his totals were two kills and eight counts of torture. Not justifying anything that Jesse did, as all of his acts were horrid, but as a young child himself went through a large amount of abuse at the hands of his father and being bullied by others around him. He stated that he only picked children because he had the physical ability to force them to do his will. I wonder, like many other cases where a killer has suffered abuse at the hands of others, that if Jesse hadn't been abused, bullied and tortured himself, would he have become the monster he did? His mother, wanting to believe that her son didn't do anything in the first place, lived out the rest of her life knowing that her son was a murderer. He had taken the lives of others and then his life was taken as well as punishment. Now there has been plenty of abuse cases where you find out the victim has become a normal well-rounded person in everyday life, which has made a better life for themselves to leave that pain in the past as best as they can; no homicidal thoughts. Since Jesse did have to endure such pain, it's too bad that he couldn't have picked the other path rather than the one that he went down. His time spent in prison seemed to prove that he was an intelligent man if he applied himself. In the end, like others before and after him, the darkness took over his life and he made choose to embrace it and it ended up taking him down with it.

If this was your child, how would you react? Would you believe that they were innocent no matter what the evidence that was stacked against them? Could you? Every victim is someone's child but every murderer is someone's child as well. It takes a strong person to move past the loss of a child but I think it takes just as much strength to live with the fact that your child has taken a life. Wondering if you did something wrong or if there was something you could do but knowing that it's too late. Now I'm in no way justifying any horrible acts by Jesse Pomeroy or anyone, simply asking a question if you think you could be that strong to go through either. I like to think that I would be although I'm not sure.

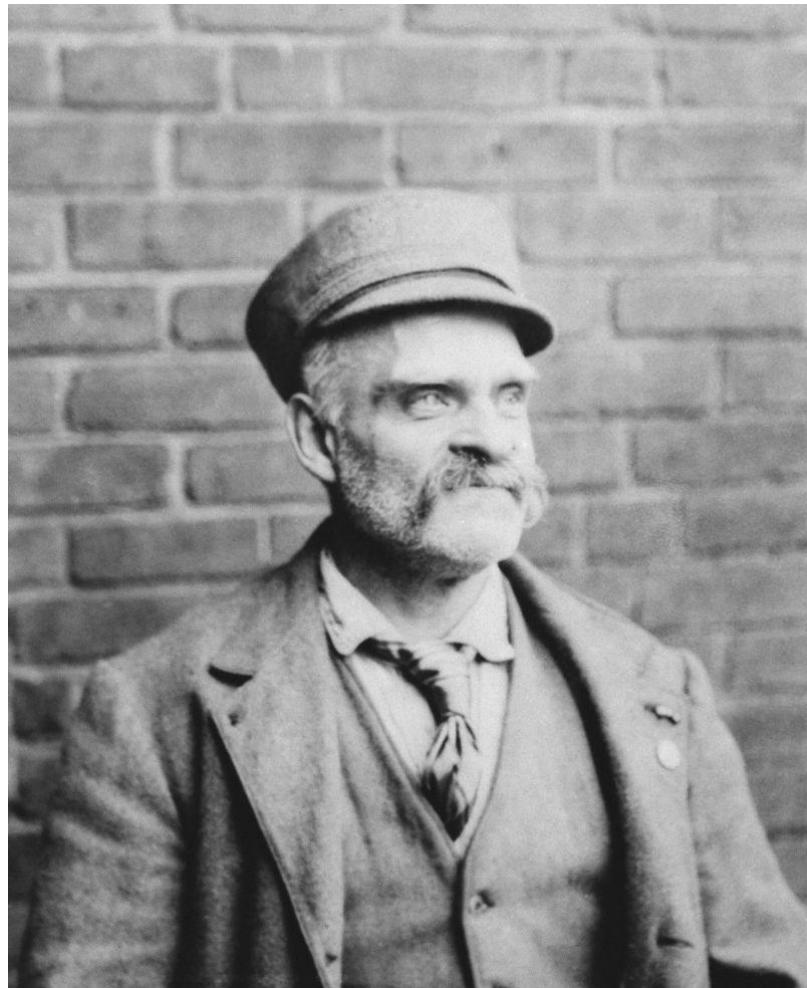
I have attached pictures below.

Until next time –

Ali



Perhaps the most famous picture of Jesse Pomeroy, an early drawing of the young man that would be known as The Boy Fiend.



An older Jesse Pomeroy



Ruth Ann Pomeroy



Katie Curran



Horace Millen