**Albert Fish**

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*For the Canadian politician, see* [*Albert Fish (politician)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish_%28politician%29)*.*

*For other people named Hamilton Fish, see* [*Hamilton Fish (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamilton_Fish_%28disambiguation%29)*.*



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| **Albert Fish** |
| http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/81/Albert_Fish_1903.JPG/180px-Albert_Fish_1903.JPGMugshot from 1903 |
| **Background information** |
| **Birth name:** | Hamilton Howard Fish[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-ReferenceA-0) |
| **Also known as:** | The Gray Man, The Werewolf of Wysteria, The Brooklyn Vampire, The Boogey Man[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-1)[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-2) |
| **Born:** | May 19, 1870(1870-05-19)[Washington, D.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington%2C_D.C.) |
| **Died:** | January 16, 1936 (aged 65) |
| **Cause of death:** | [Electric chair](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electric_chair), [Sing Sing Correctional Facility](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sing_Sing_Correctional_Facility) |
| **Sentence:** | [Death](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_punishment) |
| **Killings** |
| [**Number of victims**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_murderers_by_number_of_victims)**:** | 3 (known) |
| **Span of killings:** | 1924–1932 |
| **Country:** | [USA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) |
| **State(s):** | [New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York) |
| **Date apprehended:** | 1934 |

**Hamilton Howard "Albert" Fish**[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-ReferenceA-0) (May 19, 1870 – January 16, 1936) was an American [serial killer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serial_killer). He was also known as the **Gray Man**, the **Werewolf of Wysteria**, the **Brooklyn Vampire**, and **The Boogeyman**.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-katekray-3) A [child rapist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_molestation) and [cannibal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannibalism), he boasted that he "had children in every state,"[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-katekray-3) and at one time put the figure at around 100. However, it is not clear whether he was talking about rapes or cannibalization, less still as to whether he was telling the truth. He was a suspect in at least five murders in his lifetime. Fish confessed to three murders that police were able to trace to a known [homicide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homicide), and he confessed to stabbing at least two other people. He was put on trial for the [kidnapping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kidnapping) and murder of Grace Budd, and was convicted and executed by [electric chair](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electric_chair).[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-pay-4)[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-wife-5)

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**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=1)**] Early life**

He was born as **Hamilton Howard Fish** in [Washington, D.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington%2C_D.C.) on 19 May 1870, to Randall Fish (1795–1875).[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-6) He said he had been named after [Hamilton Fish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamilton_Fish), a distant relative. His father was 43 years older than his mother[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-1870census-7) and 75 years old at the time of his birth. Fish was the youngest child and had three living siblings: Walter, Annie, and Edwin Fish. He wished to be called "Albert" after a dead sibling, and to escape the nickname "Ham & Eggs" that he was given at an [orphanage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orphanage) in which he spent much of his childhood.

His family had a history of [mental illness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_illness): his uncle suffered from religious [mania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mania), a brother was confined in the state mental hospital, another brother had died of [hydrocephalus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrocephalus) and his sister had a "mental affliction". Three other close relatives suffered from severe mental illnesses and his mother was believed to suffer frequent aural and/or visual hallucinations.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-Schechter-8)[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-crimelibrary-9) His father was a river boat captain, but by 1870 he was a fertilizer manufacturer.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-1870census-7) The elder Fish died of a [heart attack](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myocardial_infarction) at the Sixth Street Station of the [Pennsylvania Railroad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania_Railroad) in 1875 in [Washington, D.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington%2C_D.C.) Fish's mother, who was now forced to find work and not able to care for her son, put him into Saint John's orphanage in Washington where he was frequently stripped naked along with other boys who would then be whipped and beaten in front of each other by teachers. He eventually came to enjoy physical pain and the communal beatings would often cause [erections](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erection), for which the other orphans teased him.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-TSK-10)

By 1880, his mother had a government job and was able to look after him. In 1882, at age 12, he began a relationship with a telegraph boy. The youth introduced Fish to such practices as [drinking urine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urolagnia) and [coprophagia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coprophagia). Fish began visiting public baths where he could watch other boys undress, and spent a great portion of his weekends on these visits.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-TSK-10) Throughout his life he was also a [profligate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Profligate) and compulsive writer of obscene letters to women whose names he acquired from [classified advertisements](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classified_advertising) and [matrimonial agencies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dating_agency).[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-Schechter-8)

By 1890, Fish had arrived in [New York City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City), and he said he became a male [prostitute](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitute). He also said he began [raping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape) young boys, a crime he kept committing even after his mother arranged a marriage.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-crimelibrary-9) In 1898, Fish was married to a woman nine years his junior. They had six children: Albert, Anna, Gertrude, Eugene, John, and Henry Fish.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-crimelibrary-9)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=2)**] First incarceration**

Throughout 1898 he worked as a house painter, and he said he continued molesting children, mostly boys under six. He later recounted an incident in which a male lover took him to a waxworks museum, where Fish was fascinated by a [bisection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bisection) of a [penis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penis); soon after, he developed a morbid interest in [castration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castration). During a relationship with a [mentally retarded](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_retardation) man, Fish attempted to castrate him after tying him up, but the man's screaming frightened Fish, who fled after leaving him a $10 bill. Fish then increased the frequency of his visits to [brothels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brothel) where he could be whipped and beaten.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-TSK-10) In 1903 he was arrested for [embezzlement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Embezzlement) and was sentenced to incarceration in [Sing Sing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sing_Sing).





Over a dozen needles Fish [self-embedded](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-embedded) into his pelvis and [perineum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perineum).

In January 1917, Fish's wife left him for John Straube, a handyman who boarded with the Fish family, leaving him to look after his children on his own.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-11) Following this rejection, Fish began to hear voices; for example, he once wrapped himself up in a carpet, explaining that he was following the instructions of [John the Apostle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Apostle).[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-TSK-10) It was around this time that Fish began to indulge in [self-harm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-harm). He would [self-embed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-embed) needles into his groin, which he normally would remove afterwards, but soon he began to insert them so deeply that they were impossible to take out.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-crimelibrary-9) Later x-rays revealed that Fish had at least 29 needles lodged in his [pelvic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pelvis) region.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-crimelibrary-9) He also hit himself repeatedly with a nail-studded paddle.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=3)**] Early attacks and attempted abductions**

In 1910, Fish committed what may have been his first attack on a child, Thomas Bedden, in [Wilmington, Delaware](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilmington%2C_Delaware).[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-12) Later, he stabbed a mentally challenged boy around 1919 in [Georgetown, Washington, D.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgetown%2C_Washington%2C_D.C.).[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-NYT03261935-13) Consistently, many of his intended victims would be either mentally challenged or [African Americans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Americans), because he believed they would not be missed.[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-14)

On July 11, 1924, Fish found eight-year-old Beatrice Kiel playing alone on her parents' [Staten Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staten_Island) farm. He offered her money to come and help him look for [rhubarb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhubarb) in the neighboring fields. She was about to leave the farm when her mother chased Fish away. Fish left, but returned later to the Kiels' [barn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barn) where he tried to sleep for the night before being discovered by Hans Kiel and told to leave.

At the age of 55, Fish began to experience delusions and hallucinations that [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God) commanded him to [torture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torture) and castrate little boys.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-crimelibrary-9) Doctors said he suffered from a religious [psychosis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychosis).

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=4)**] Second incarceration**

Fish remarried on February 6, 1930, in [Waterloo, New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waterloo%2C_New_York), to an Estella Wilcox but divorced after only one week.[[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-15) Fish was later arrested in May 1930 for "sending an obscene letter to a woman who answered an advertisement for a maid."[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-NYT12151934-16) He had been sent to the [Bellevue psychiatric hospital](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellevue_Hospital_Center) in 1930 and 1931 for observation, following his arrests.[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-took-17)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=5)**] Grace Budd murder**





Grace Budd (1918–1928)

On May 25, 1928, Edward Budd put a classified ad in the Sunday edition of the [*New York World*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_World) that read: "Young man, 18, wishes position in country. Edward Budd, 406 West 15th Street." On May 28, 1928, Fish, then 58 years old, visited the Budd family in [Manhattan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan), [New York City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) under the pretense of hiring Edward. He introduced himself as Frank Howard, a farmer from [Farmingdale, New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farmingdale%2C_New_York). When he arrived, Fish met Budd's younger sister, 10-year-old Grace. Fish promised to hire Budd and said he would send for him in a few days. On his second visit he agreed to hire Budd, then convinced the parents, Delia Flanagan and Albert Budd I, to let Grace accompany him to a birthday party that evening at his sister's home. The elder Albert Budd was a [porter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porter) for the [Equitable Life Assurance Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Equitable_Life_Assurance_Society_of_the_United_States). Grace had a sister, Beatrice; and two other brothers, Albert Budd II; and George Budd. Grace left with Fish that day, but never returned home.[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-18)

The police arrested Charles Edward Pope on September 5, 1930 as a suspect in the kidnapping. He was a 66-year-old apartment house superintendent, and was accused by his estranged wife.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-wife-5) He spent 108 days in jail between his arrest and trial on December 22, 1930.[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-19) He was found not guilty.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=6)**] The letter**

Six years later, in November 1934, an anonymous letter was sent to the girl's parents which led the police to Albert Fish. Mrs. Budd was illiterate and could not read the letter herself, so she had her son read it to her.[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-20) The unaltered letter is quoted below, complete with Fish's misspellings and grammatical errors:

Dear Mrs. Budd. In 1894 a friend of mine shipped as a deck hand on the Steamer Tacoma, Capt. John Davis. They sailed from [San Francisco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco) for [Hong Kong](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_Kong), [China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China). On arriving there he and two others went ashore and got drunk. When they returned the boat was gone. At that time there was [famine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Famine) in China. Meat of any kind was from $1–3 per pound. So great was the suffering among the very poor that all children under 12 were sold for food in order to keep others from starving. A boy or girl under 14 was not safe in the street. You could go in any shop and ask for steak—chops—or stew meat. Part of the naked body of a boy or girl would be brought out and just what you wanted cut from it. A boy or girl's behind which is the sweetest part of the body and sold as [veal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veal) cutlet brought the highest price. John staid [sic] there so long he acquired a taste for human flesh. On his return to N.Y. he stole two boys, one 7 and one 11. Took them to his home stripped them naked tied them in a closet. Then burned everything they had on. Several times every day and night he spanked them – [tortured](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torture) them – to make their meat good and tender. First he killed the 11 year old boy, because he had the fattest ass and of course the most meat on it. Every part of his body was cooked and eaten except the head—bones and guts. He was roasted in the oven (all of his ass), boiled, broiled, fried and stewed. The little boy was next, went the same way. At that time, I was living at 409 E 100 St. near—right side. He told me so often how good human flesh was I made up my mind to taste it. On Sunday June the 3, 1928 I called on you at 406 W 15 St. Brought you pot cheese—strawberries. We had lunch. Grace sat in my lap and kissed me. I made up my mind to eat her. On the pretense of taking her to a party. You said yes she could go. I took her to an empty house in Westchester I had already picked out. When we got there, I told her to remain outside. She picked wildflowers. I went upstairs and stripped all my clothes off. I knew if I did not I would get her blood on them. When all was ready I went to the window and called her. Then I hid in a closet until she was in the room. When she saw me all naked she began to cry and tried to run down the stairs. I grabbed her and she said she would tell her mamma. First I stripped her naked. How she did kick – bite and scratch. I choked her to death, then cut her in small pieces so I could take my meat to my rooms. Cook and eat it. How sweet and tender her little ass was roasted in the oven. It took me 9 days to eat her entire body. I did not fuck her tho [sic] I could of had I wished. She died a virgin.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-crimelibrary-9)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=7)**] Capture and final incarceration**

The letter was delivered in an envelope that had a small [hexagonal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hexagon) emblem with the letters "N.Y.P.C.B.A." standing for "New York Private Chauffeur's Benevolent Association". A janitor at the company told the police he had taken some of the stationery home but left it at his rooming house at 200 East [52nd Street](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/52nd_Street_%28Manhattan%29) when he moved out. The landlady of the rooming house said that Fish had checked out of that room a few days earlier. She said that Fish's son sent him money and he had asked her to hold his next check for him. [William F. King](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=William_F._King&action=edit&redlink=1) was the lead investigator for the case. He waited outside the room until Fish returned. Fish agreed to go to the headquarters for questioning then brandished a razor blade.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-Schechter-8) King disarmed Fish and took him to police headquarters. Fish made no attempt to deny the Grace Budd murder, saying that he had meant to go to the house to kill Edward Budd, Grace's brother.[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-21) Fish said it "never even entered his head" to [rape](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape) the girl,[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-SerialKillers-22) but he later admitted to his attorney that he did have two involuntary ejaculations which was used at trial to make the claim the kidnapping was sexually motivated and thus avoid mention of cannibalism.[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-23)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=8)**] Postcapture discoveries**

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=9)**] Billy Gaffney**

A 4-year-old child named Billy Gaffney was playing in the hallway outside of his family's apartment in [Brooklyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn%2C_New_York) with his 3-year-old friend, Billy Beaton, and Billy's 12-year-old brother on February 11, 1927. When the 12-year-old withdrew into the Beatons' apartment, both of the younger boys disappeared; Billy Beaton was soon found on the roof of the apartment house. When asked what happened to Gaffney, Beaton said "the [boogey man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boogey_man) took him." Initially [Peter Kudzinowski](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Kudzinowski) was a suspect in the boy's murder. Then, Joseph Meehan, a motorman on a [Brooklyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn) [trolley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tram), saw a picture of Fish in the newspaper and identified him as the old man that he saw February 11, 1927, who was trying to quiet a little boy sitting with him on the trolley. The boy was not wearing a jacket and was crying for his mother and was dragged by the man on and off the trolley. Also, the younger Beaton described the "boogey man" as an elderly man with a slim build, gray hair and a gray moustache, which matched Fish's description.[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-24) Police matched the description of the child to Billy Gaffney. Gaffney's body was never recovered.[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-25) Gaffney's mother visited Fish in Sing Sing to try to get more details of her son's death.[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-26) Fish confessed the following:

I brought him to the Riker Ave. dumps. There is a house that stands alone, not far from where I took him. I took the boy there. Stripped him naked and tied his hands and feet and gagged him with a piece of dirty rag I picked out of the dump. Then I burned his clothes. Threw his shoes in the dump. Then I walked back and took the trolley to 59 St. at 2 A.M. and walked from there home. Next day about 2 P.M., I took tools, a good heavy [cat-of-nine tails](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cat_o%27_nine_tails). Home made. Short handle. Cut one of my belts in half, slit these halves in six strips about 8 inches long. I whipped his bare behind till the blood ran from his legs. I cut off his ears – nose – [slit his mouth from ear to ear](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasgow_smile). Gouged out his eyes. He was dead then. I stuck the knife in his belly and held my mouth to his body and drank his blood. I picked up four old potato sacks and gathered a pile of stones. Then I cut him up. I had a grip with me. I put his nose, ears and a few slices of his belly in the grip. Then I cut him through the middle of his body. Just below the belly button. Then through his legs about 2 inches below his behind. I put this in my grip with a lot of paper. I cut off the head – feet – arms – hands and the legs below the knee. This I put in sacks weighed with stones, tied the ends and threw them into the pools of slimy water you will see all along the road going to North Beach. I came home with my meat. I had the front of his body I liked best. His monkey and pee wees and a nice little fat behind to roast in the oven and eat. I made a stew out of his ears – nose – pieces of his face and belly. I put onions, carrots, turnips, celery, salt and pepper. It was good. Then I split the cheeks of his behind open, cut off his monkey and pee wees and washed them first. I put strips of bacon on each cheek of his behind and put them in the oven. Then I picked 4 onions and when the meat had roasted about 1/4 hour, I poured about a pint of water over it for gravy and put in the onions. At frequent intervals I basted his behind with a wooden spoon. So the meat would be nice and juicy. In about 2 hours, it was nice and brown, cooked through. I never ate any roast turkey that tasted half as good as his sweet fat little behind did. I ate every bit of the meat in about four days. His little monkey was as sweet as a nut, but his pee-wees I could not chew. Threw them in the toilet.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-crimelibrary-9)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=10)**] Trial and execution**

The trial of Albert Fish for the premeditated murder of Grace Budd began on March 11, 1935, in [White Plains, New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Plains%2C_New_York) with Frederick P. Close as judge, and Chief Assistant District Attorney, Elbert F. Gallagher, as the prosecuting attorney. James Dempsey was Fish's defense attorney. The trial lasted for 10 days. Fish pleaded [insanity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insanity), and claimed to have heard voices from God telling him to kill children. Several [psychiatrists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychiatrist) testified about Fish's [sexual fetishes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_fetishism) which included [coprophilia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coprophilia), [urophilia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urolagnia), [pedophilia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedophilia) and [masochism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masochism). Dempsey in his summation noted that Fish was a "psychiatric phenomenon" and that nowhere in legal or medical records was there another individual who possessed so many sexual abnormalities.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-Schechter-8)

The defense's chief expert witness was [Fredric Wertham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fredric_Wertham), a psychiatrist with a focus on child development who conducted psychiatric examinations for the New York criminal courts. Over two days of testimony, Wertham explained Fish's obsession with religion and specifically his preoccupation with the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-24). Wertham said that Fish believed that by similarly "sacrificing" a boy it would be penance for his own [sins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sin) and that even if the act itself was wrong angels would prevent it if God did not approve. Fish had already attempted the sacrifice once before but had been thwarted when a car drove past. Edward Budd had been the next intended victim but he turned out to be larger than expected so he settled on Grace. Although he knew Grace was female, it is known that Fish perceived her as a boy.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-Schechter-8) Wertham then detailed Fish's [cannibalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannibalism), which in his mind he associated with [communion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_%28liturgy%29#Communion_rite). The last question Dempsey asked Wertham was 15,000 words long, detailed Fish's life and ended with asking how the doctor considered his mental condition based on this life. Wertham answered "He is insane".[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-Schechter-8) Gallagher cross examined Wertham on whether Fish knew the difference between right and wrong. He responded that he did know but that it was a perverted knowledge based on his views of sin, atonement and religion and thus was an "insane knowledge".[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-Schechter-8) The defense then called two more psychiatrists who supported Wertham's findings.[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-27)

The first of four rebuttal witnesses was [Menas Gregory](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Menas_Gregory&action=edit&redlink=1), the former head of the [Bellevue psychiatric hospital](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellevue_Hospital_Center) who had treated Fish in 1930. He testified that Fish was abnormal but sane. Under cross examination, Dempsey asked if [coprophilia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coprophilia), [urophilia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urolagnia) and [pedophilia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedophilia) indicated a sane or insane person. Gregory replied that such a person was not "mentally sick" and that these were common perversions that were "socially perfectly alright" and that Fish was "no different from millions of other people", some very prominent and successful, that suffered from the "very same" perversions. The next witness was [The Tombs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tombs) resident physician, [Perry Lichtenstein](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Perry_Lichtenstein&action=edit&redlink=1). Dempsey objected to a doctor with no training in psychiatry testifying on the issue of sanity but justice Close overruled on the grounds that the jury could decide what weight to give a prison doctor. When asked if Fish causing himself pain indicated a mental condition Lichtenstein replied, "That is not [masochism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masochism)" as he was only "punishing himself to get sexual gratification". The next witness, Charles Lambert, testified that coprophilia was a common practice and that religious cannibalism may be psychopathic but "was a matter of taste" and not evidence of a psychosis. The last witness, [James Vavasour](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=James_Vavasour&action=edit&redlink=1), repeated Lamberts opinion.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-Schechter-8)

Another defense witness was Mary Nicholas, Fish's 17-year-old stepdaughter. She described how Fish taught her and her brothers and sisters a "game" involving overtones of [masochism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masochism) and child molestation.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-crimelibrary-9)

The jury found him to be [sane](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanity) and guilty, and the judge ordered the [death sentence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_sentence). After being sentenced, Fish confessed to the murder of eight-year-old Francis X. McDonnell, killed on [Staten Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staten_Island). McDonnell was playing on the front porch of his home near [Port Richmond, Staten Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Richmond%2C_Staten_Island) in July 15, 1924. His mother saw an "old man" walk by clenching and unclenching his fists. He walked past without saying anything. Later in the day, the old man was seen again, but this time he was watching McDonnell and his friends play. McDonnell's body was found in the woods near where a neighbor had seen the "old man" taking the boy earlier that afternoon. He had been assaulted and strangled with his suspenders.[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-NYT03261935-13)

Fish arrived at prison in March 1935, and was executed on January 16, 1936, in the [electric chair](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electric_chair) at [Sing Sing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sing_Sing). He entered the chamber at 11:06 p.m. and was pronounced dead three minutes later.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-pay-4) He was buried in the Sing Sing Prison Cemetery. He was recorded to have said that electrocution would be "the supreme thrill of my life".[[29]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-28) Just before the switch was flipped, he stated "I don't even know why I am here." According to one witness present, it took two jolts before Fish died, creating the rumor that the apparatus was short-circuited by the needles Fish previously inserted into his body.[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-SerialKillers-22)

Many years later, Wertham heavily criticized the prosecution's psychiatric witnesses for making "extraordinary statements under oath" that served to give a "black eye to psychiatry". He maintained that society would have been better served by understanding what made Fish who he was.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-Schechter-8)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=11)**] Victims**

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=12)**] Known**

* Francis X. McDonnell, age 8, July 15, 1924
* Emma Richardson, age 5, October 3, 1926
* Billy Gaffney, age 4, February 11, 1927 [[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-NYT12151934-16)
* Grace Budd, age 10, June 3, 1928 [[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-wife-5)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=13)**] Suspected**

* Yetta Abramowitz, age 12, 1927 [[30]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-river-29)
* Mary Ellen O'Connor, age 16, February 15, 1932 [[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-NYT12151934-16)
* Benjamin Collings, age 17, December 15, 1932 [[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Fish#cite_note-NYT12151934-16)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=14)**] See also**

* [H. H. Holmes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H._H._Holmes)
* [Lonely hearts killer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lonely_hearts_killer)
* [Peter Kudzinowski](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Kudzinowski), a serial killer who committed his crimes against children in the same timeframe and location
* [List of individuals executed in New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_individuals_executed_in_New_York)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=15)**] References and notes**

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**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Albert_Fish&action=edit&section=16)**] External links**

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