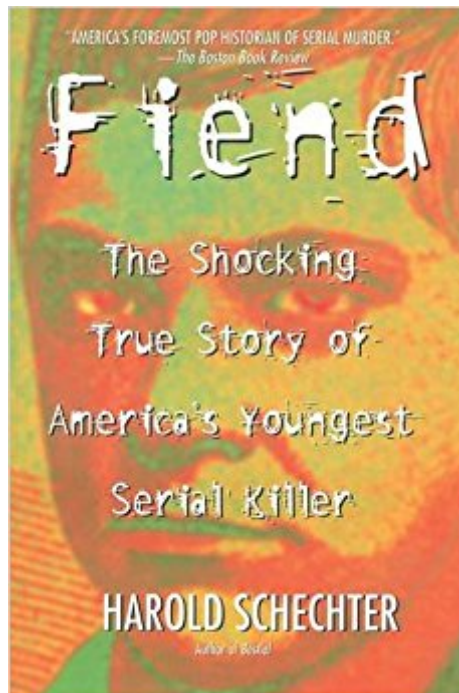




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# **Fiend: The Shocking True Story Of America's Youngest Serial Killer**



## Synopsis

A MONSTER PREYED UPON THE CHILDREN OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY BOSTON. HIS CRIMES WERE APPALLING -- AND YET HE WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A CHILD HIMSELF. When fourteen-year-old Jesse Pomeroy was arrested in 1874, a nightmarish reign of terror over an unsuspecting city came to an end. "The Boston Boy Fiend" was imprisoned at last. But the complex questions sparked by his ghastly crime spree -- the hows and whys of vicious juvenile crime -- were as relevant in the so-called Age of Innocence as they are today. Jesse Pomeroy was outwardly repellent in appearance, with a gruesome "dead" eye; inside, he was deformed beyond imagining. A sexual sadist of disturbing precocity, he satisfied his atrocious appetites by abducting and torturing his child victims. But soon, the teenager's bloodlust gave way to another obsession: murder. Harold Schechter, whose true-crime masterpieces are "well-documented nightmares for anyone who dares to look" (Peoria Journal Star), brings his acclaimed mix of page-turning storytelling, brilliant insight, and fascinating historical documentation to Fiend -- an unforgettable account from the annals of American crime.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

You've probably never heard of Jesse Pomeroy unless you've read Caleb Carr's 1994 novel, *The Alienist*, which features a brief prison interview with "America's most famous lifer." But this legendary bogeyman will be hard to forget after you read his life story. Pomeroy tortured and murdered children in Boston in the 1870s. He was himself a child at the time, only 14 when he was

finally arrested. Author Harold Schechter, a New York literature professor who has made a name for himself documenting nonfiction accounts of heinous crimes, deftly resurrects the past from newspaper accounts, letters, and other historical documents, including a reform school's massive volume disturbingly titled *History of Boys*. Schechter doesn't take the easy way out. He could have just pieced together reports and accounts, letting the record stiffly tell the tale. Instead, he blends his research into a seamless story, fascinating in its horror, as well as its ability to turn the century-old characters into real people. The reader will be pleased to find copies of engravings, photos, and sketches of Pomeroy, from his heyday as "boy-fiend," as well as his later days behind bars, when fellow inmates changed his nickname to a less-sinister "Grandpa." Schechter sets out to teach a lesson, and in *Fiend* he succeeds at reminding us that modern times don't have a monopoly on juvenile terror. --Jodi Mailander Farrell

From serial killer expert Schechter comes a grisly, hopped-up, but surprisingly well-executed narrative of the vicious crimes and long imprisonment of Jesse Pomeroy, the notorious 19th-century "Boston Boy Fiend." Schechter argues that "killer kids have always been with us," but even in the context of a history of horrifying examples of youth violence, the case of Pomeroy is appalling. An abused, deformed, impoverished child, he graduated at age 12 from animal cruelty to the ritualized torture and mutilation of younger boys. In 1872 he was caught and sentenced to six years in a reformatory. He presented a rehabilitated facade and, following his shrewish but loyal mother's campaigning, was released after 16 months. Six weeks later he killed a neighborhood girl; an indifferent constabulary failed to discover her body until after Pomeroy was apprehended for a second vicious child-murder. This confluence caused unprecedented outrage; ultimately, Pomeroy received a life sentence in solitary confinement. While Schechter has displayed a career enthusiasm for what Hannibal Lecter termed "louche" subject matter (Schechter's books on serial murderers have been titled *Bestial*, *Depraved*, *Deranged*, etc.), he is a deft writer and does well at re-creating from documentation the thoughts and perspectives of long-dead figures; even Pomeroy is rendered subtly, with creepy verisimilitude. Schechter ably portrays the "living death" of Pomeroy's captivity (he served 53 years, making repeated escape attempts, and had become a media curiosity by the 1920s), and captures the poignancy of the infirm Pomeroy's release, in 1929, to a prison farm, where he remained until his death in 1932. This is a memorably gothic tale of sadistic psychosis and social vengeance. True-crime lovers will not want to miss it. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book has a bit of a slow ending but 5 stars for the rest. This was one sick puppy. He should have been shot after they caught him the first time. I love the authors intro about the "good old days" a view I always had.

This was a fascinating book, as all of Schechters' books are but this one, perhaps because the boy was so young, really makes you go "wow, some people are just insane". It gives you a glimpse back in time to when it happened by painting a visual picture for you and then takes you into the psyche of those involved. Great book. Great story that is really, not well known and should be.

Difficult subject, no doubt. Schechter provides you with historical context that make his books interesting. Not as rich in detail as his coverage of Roland Molineux at the turn of the century in "The Devil's Gentleman...", but equally well endowed with an easy writing style and fair amount of history.

Well written. Mixes current & past crimes as the tale is told. It's amazing how blind Jesse's mother is to his guilt. Beyond blind love.

I have never heard of this guy mostly because he lived in the 19th century. He started on his "career" in his preteens and came from a very broken home but he was very stubborn, probably an Obsessive Compulsive personality. He was so feared that he spent more than 40 years in solitary confinement - a record. All told, it's a pretty good read.

An excellent read, and a shockingly horrible man.

I had read the alienist, so I was interested in this character - a child serial killer at the turn of the century. The author managed to weave an interesting tale which can't be easy when reading a non-fiction novel. At times it was more like reading fiction because you become engrossed in the story. There were a few parts that I thought were a little repetitive, but for the most part - well worth reading.

This book was very well written. I could barely put it down. An amazing story of survival against all odds. What this poor boy endured and a family so sick it's hard to believe. Thank heaven for his sister and other amazing people who came to help him.

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