

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,000

The following program contains disturbing violent images.

2

00:00:04,000 --> 00:00:06,000

Viewer discretion is advised.

3

00:00:12,000 --> 00:00:18,000

Tonight, a spree of gruesome murders that shocks Victorian England and the world.

4

00:00:18,000 --> 00:00:22,000

A homicidal maniac whose true name remains a mystery.

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00:00:22,000 --> 00:00:26,000

The police comb through suspect after suspect.

6

00:00:26,000 --> 00:00:30,000

But there's either no evidence to support that they were there or they have alibis.

7

00:00:30,000 --> 00:00:32,000

So they're left grasping at straws.

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00:00:32,000 --> 00:00:39,000

Now we uncover the top theories about one of history's most notorious serial killers.

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00:00:39,000 --> 00:00:46,000

A few contemporaries believe that Jack the Ripper might well have been a woman.

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00:00:46,000 --> 00:00:52,000

I hope to prove my grandfather's grandfather was also Jack the Ripper.

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00:00:52,000 --> 00:00:59,000

Can his or her identity ever be proven? Who is Jack the Ripper?

12

00:01:15,000 --> 00:01:20,000

London, England, August 31st, 1888.

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00:01:20,000 --> 00:01:25,000

It's early morning in the impoverished East End neighborhood.

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00:01:25,000 --> 00:01:33,000

The East End of late Victorian London was a sprawling metropolis within the city of London itself.

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00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:45,000

There were respectable artisans and small traders and shopkeepers, but for the most part it was the home to the poor, the abject poor, and sometimes the homeless poor.

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00:01:46,000 --> 00:01:51,000

Delivery driver Charles Cross walks through the city's dark streets.

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00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:56,000

Charles Cross is walking along Bucks Row on his way to work at 3.40 a.m.

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00:01:56,000 --> 00:02:03,000

and he spots what he perceives as a unclaimed or discarded tarp hole, which is quite a find.

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00:02:03,000 --> 00:02:09,000

But what he finds isn't a tarp. It's a female body.

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00:02:09,000 --> 00:02:13,000

At first he thinks that this woman is either drunk or asleep.

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00:02:13,000 --> 00:02:18,000

In fact, she's dead. Her throat has been slit and she's been mutilated.

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00:02:18,000 --> 00:02:24,000

Area residents identify the victim as Mary Ann Polly Nichols.

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00:02:24,000 --> 00:02:33,000

Polly Nichols began life as the daughter of a respectable, skilled artisan and his laundress wife.

24

00:02:33,000 --> 00:02:36,000

She married young. She had children.

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00:02:36,000 --> 00:02:47,000

But alcohol and marital discord led her to leave the conjugal home and to live a life on the streets as a sex worker.

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00:02:47,000 --> 00:02:54,000

These women were living very much a day-to-day existence, not necessarily knowing where they were going to sleep that night.

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00:02:54,000 --> 00:03:00,000

This put them at a very extreme risk to be taken advantage of because they did not have a steady living.

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00:03:00,000 --> 00:03:06,000

At the time, most crimes against sex workers in London received very little attention.

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00:03:06,000 --> 00:03:11,000

But the brutal nature of this attack forces police to take notice.

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00:03:11,000 --> 00:03:17,000

This was a attack that was beyond brutal and almost unprecedented.

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00:03:17,000 --> 00:03:25,000

Murder was not uncommon in the East End, but a murder like this was definitely something that drew attention to both police and citizenry.

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00:03:25,000 --> 00:03:33,000

After the Nichols murder, Commissioner Warren assigned First Class Inspector Frederick Abberline in charge of the White Chetville murder case.

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00:03:33,000 --> 00:03:38,000

Abberline interviews the local women looking for suspects.

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00:03:38,000 --> 00:03:45,000

Everyone he speaks to recalls the same elusive figure. He's even been given a nickname.

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00:03:45,000 --> 00:03:51,000

Common thread amongst all the working women was there was a man that was extorting them for their money.

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00:03:51,000 --> 00:03:55,000

His nickname was Leather Apron.

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00:03:55,000 --> 00:04:00,000

The reason they called him Leather Apron is because that's what he always wore.

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00:04:00,000 --> 00:04:06,000

And the working women were convinced that he killed Polly Nichols.

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00:04:10,000 --> 00:04:15,000

Soon the mysterious Leather Apron is making headlines.

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00:04:15,000 --> 00:04:20,000

The press latches on to the story almost immediately and starts running with it.

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00:04:20,000 --> 00:04:30,000

Some of the key sensational newspapers like The Star or The Palm El Gazette devoted particular attention to the lurid details of the crime.

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00:04:30,000 --> 00:04:34,000

All of these created a media spectacle, a frenzy.

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00:04:34,000 --> 00:04:38,000

The publicity quickly generates a possible sighting.

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00:04:38,000 --> 00:04:49,000

Two days after the murder of Polly Nichols, a woman sees an individual who she thinks is Leather Apron and yells out to a police officer.

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00:04:49,000 --> 00:04:51,000

There he goes.

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00:04:51,000 --> 00:04:55,000

The police officer decided to chase him down. He apprehends him.

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00:04:55,000 --> 00:05:03,000

The man denies that he's Leather Apron. The woman still claims that he is. Ultimately the police officer lets him go.

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00:05:03,000 --> 00:05:09,000

Nearly a week passes as the police try to track down Leather Apron.

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00:05:09,000 --> 00:05:13,000

Before they can, the killer strikes again.

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00:05:13,000 --> 00:05:23,000

At about 6 a.m. an elderly man walking along Hanbury Street near where he lived saw this body again in the shadows of the building.

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00:05:23,000 --> 00:05:31,000

Later on after the police were called, this second victim was identified as Annie Chapman.

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00:05:31,000 --> 00:05:38,000

Annie Chapman's wounds were very similar to Polly Nichols but much more severe. The throat was cut deep to the spine again.

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00:05:38,000 --> 00:05:43,000

The intestines were thrown over the shoulder and the uterus was missing.

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00:05:43,000 --> 00:05:53,000

Nearby, not far from Annie's body, was a wet Leather Apron which may have been washed or the killer may have used to wash their hands and then wipe them on the apron.

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00:05:53,000 --> 00:05:56,000

Could this be proof that the same killer has struck again?

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00:05:56,000 --> 00:06:05,000

The press thinks yes. After the second victim is found, the public sentiment in the East End turns ugly.

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00:06:05,000 --> 00:06:13,000

At this point, the public is becoming more and more frantic. Will there be another murder? When will it occur?

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00:06:13,000 --> 00:06:26,000

Why can't the police identify the murder? The lack of solving the crime heighten the anxiety, not just in Whitechapel but in Greater London as well.

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00:06:26,000 --> 00:06:33,000

The newspapers repeat the fact that these eyewitnesses were describing suspects as Jewish or Jewish looking.

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00:06:33,000 --> 00:06:38,000

And so it became this idea that a Jewish man was killing women in Whitechapel.

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00:06:38,000 --> 00:06:43,000

Fights are breaking out in the streets, crowds are chanting down with the Jews and there are full on riots.

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00:06:43,000 --> 00:06:51,000

Faced with escalating violence, police hurry to locate Leather Apron and quickly nab a suspect.

63

00:06:51,000 --> 00:07:00,000

Police held an inquest and they realized that there was a boot finisher who was also a Polish Jew named John Pizer.

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00:07:00,000 --> 00:07:04,000

And on September 10th, he was arrested.

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00:07:04,000 --> 00:07:10,000

Pizer's neighbors and friends attested his innocence. They believed him to be a good man.

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00:07:10,000 --> 00:07:15,000

That didn't stop the police from harassing him further and doing a search of his home.

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00:07:15,000 --> 00:07:22,000

When searching Pizer's home, they found five knives which they believed to have blood on them.

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00:07:22,000 --> 00:07:27,000

While the police analyze the knives, they interrogate Pizer.

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00:07:27,000 --> 00:07:32,000

On the night of Polynykul's murder, Pizer maintains that he was staying at Crossman's Lodge.

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00:07:32,000 --> 00:07:40,000

On the second night for Annie Chapman's murder, Pizer claims he was holed up in his own home, living in fear.

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00:07:40,000 --> 00:07:46,000

Police are able to confirm Pizer's alibis and eliminate the key evidence against him.

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00:07:46,000 --> 00:07:53,000

There was no blood on those knives. After closer examination, they found out that what was on the knives was actually rust.

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00:07:53,000 --> 00:08:05,000

The police ultimately bring in Pizer for additional questioning, as several eyewitnesses question whether he might have been at the scene of some of the murders.

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00:08:05,000 --> 00:08:16,000

They put him through two lineups, but the lineups amount to nothing essentially because the accusers turn out to be non-credible.

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00:08:16,000 --> 00:08:20,000

Pizer is released without charge on September 11th.

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00:08:20,000 --> 00:08:28,000

The fact that these two lineups failed to identify Pizer raised the ongoing further question.

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00:08:28,000 --> 00:08:33,000

If Pizer wasn't the murderer, then who was?

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00:08:38,000 --> 00:08:47,000

In 1888, residents of London's East End are on high alert in the wake of the brutal murders of two young women.

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00:08:47,000 --> 00:08:57,000

After Annie Chapman's murder, two weeks passed with nothing, and so people might be wondering, is he done? Was this it? Did he leave? Is he in prison?

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00:08:57,000 --> 00:09:00,000

Nobody really knows what was happening.

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00:09:00,000 --> 00:09:08,000

A few weeks later, not one, but two more women were discovered brutally murdered.

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00:09:08,000 --> 00:09:22,000

Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes were discovered within hours of each other, both had their throat slashed and both had abdominal wounds with their viscera removed.

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00:09:22,000 --> 00:09:31,000

This was clearly a pattern for young women who were brutally murdered within a short period of time, all within blocks of each other.

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00:09:31,000 --> 00:09:39,000

This heightened the anxiety, not just from the neighborhood, but from the police as well.

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00:09:39,000 --> 00:09:47,000

This was something that like nobody had ever seen. London was probably dealing with its first known serial killer.

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00:09:48,000 --> 00:09:57,000

At this point, even though we now had a third and a fourth victim, there were no eyewitnesses and there were no leads.

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00:09:57,000 --> 00:10:04,000

So the police, quite frankly, were still very much in the dark as to who the murderer was.

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00:10:04,000 --> 00:10:16,000

All that changes on October 1st, when a memo now called the Dear Boss Letter transforms a local investigation into a worldwide phenomenon.

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00:10:17,000 --> 00:10:26,000

On September 27th, the Central News Agency received the Dear Boss Letter but dismissed it as a hoax as there were hundreds of letters coming in.

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00:10:26,000 --> 00:10:31,000

But then, September 30th occurred and Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes were murdered.

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00:10:31,000 --> 00:10:35,000

And in that letter, there were two details that matched the murders.

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00:10:35,000 --> 00:10:38,000

The first was that he was going to get to work right away.

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00:10:38,000 --> 00:10:45,000

The second was he's going to clip the ear off one of the women, so the police decided to publish that letter.

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00:10:45,000 --> 00:10:49,000

It's called the Dear Boss Letter because that's how the letter begins.

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00:10:49,000 --> 00:11:02,000

The killer is addressing the head of the police as boss and in it, he mocks the police efforts and suggests their miles off track in their assumptions and searches.

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00:11:02,000 --> 00:11:14,000

The Dear Boss Letter creates a gripping public persona and seems to invite both investigators and the public to want to know more about him.

97

00:11:14,000 --> 00:11:20,000

Dear Boss, I keep on hearing the police have caught me, but they won't fix me just yet.

98

00:11:20,000 --> 00:11:25,000

I've laughed when they look so clever and talk about being on the right track.

99

00:11:25,000 --> 00:11:30,000

I am down on oars and I shan't quit ripping them till I get buckled.

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00:11:30,000 --> 00:11:36,000

The disturbing letter ends with perhaps the most famous alias of all time.

101

00:11:36,000 --> 00:11:39,000

My knife's so nice and sharp.

102

00:11:39,000 --> 00:11:42,000

I want to get to work right away if I get a chance.

103

00:11:42,000 --> 00:11:48,000

Good luck. Yours truly, Jack the Ripper.

104

00:11:48,000 --> 00:12:11,000

The Dear Boss Letter fundamentally changed how people began to think about the murderer because it endowed the murderer with a playful, sardonic, wicked and some thought perverted and maniacal lust to violate the bodies of these sex workers.

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00:12:11,000 --> 00:12:24,000

This letter associated these murders as the victims of Jack the Ripper rather than what they had been beforehand, the Whitechapel murders.

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00:12:24,000 --> 00:12:32,000

On November 9th, the Ripper claims another victim, 25-year-old sex worker Mary Jane Kelly.

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00:12:32,000 --> 00:12:37,000

Mary Jane Kelly's murder was the most horrific of all of the murders.

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00:12:37,000 --> 00:12:42,000

She had her own little room at 13 Millers Court where she spent her nights.

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00:12:42,000 --> 00:12:47,000

And so the Ripper was able to take his time with her after he murdered her.

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00:12:47,000 --> 00:12:53,000

When they opened the room in the morning, they discovered pieces of her spread out around the room.

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00:12:53,000 --> 00:12:56,000

She had been carved down to the bone in some cases.

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00:12:56,000 --> 00:13:06,000

And they also weren't entirely sure that the body was Mary Jane Kelly because her face was so mutilated that identification is nearly impossible.

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00:13:06,000 --> 00:13:15,000

It was long assumed that the killer had anatomical or medical knowledge of the human body and Mary Kelly's murder totally cemented that.

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00:13:15,000 --> 00:13:20,000

She had many organs removed and they were removed cleanly and precisely.

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00:13:20,000 --> 00:13:24,000

And that took a significant level of skill to be able to achieve that.

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00:13:24,000 --> 00:13:29,000

After Kelly's murder, the killings stopped, but the culprit remains at large.

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00:13:29,000 --> 00:13:35,000

It's easy to go back and look at the police work of 1888 and be critical.

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00:13:35,000 --> 00:13:42,000

However, we have to realize they had so few tools in order to investigate any crime.

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00:13:42,000 --> 00:13:53,000

So much of the evidence was innuendo, was suspicion, was rumor, and that doesn't pin down the identity of Jack the Ripper.

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00:13:53,000 --> 00:14:00,000

The case languishes for several years until a new detective is assigned in early 1892.

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00:14:00,000 --> 00:14:05,000

Melville McNaughton is asked to investigate the Ripper murders further.

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00:14:05,000 --> 00:14:12,000

McNaughton began to build a profile which a lot of people still turn to today.

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00:14:12,000 --> 00:14:17,000

He believed the Ripper was well educated, potentially a Polish immigrant.

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00:14:17,000 --> 00:14:24,000

And he also thought that it was somebody that again had anatomical or medical knowledge.

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00:14:28,000 --> 00:14:36,000

He conducts different interviews, compiling suspects, and a name that pops out to him is Michael Ostrog.

126

00:14:36,000 --> 00:14:39,000

Ostrog seems to fit the profile perfectly.

127

00:14:39,000 --> 00:14:46,000

McNaughton stated two main points about Ostrog, that he had surgical experience from Russia

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00:14:46,000 --> 00:14:49,000

and also that he was a homicidal maniac.

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00:14:49,000 --> 00:14:54,000

He writes, this man was said to have been habitually cruel to women

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00:14:54,000 --> 00:14:59,000

and for a long time was known to have carried with him surgical knives and other instruments.

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00:14:59,000 --> 00:15:04,000

And his whereabouts at the time of the Whitechapel murders could never be satisfactorily accounted for.

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00:15:04,000 --> 00:15:09,000

Despite a manhunt, police are unable to locate Ostrog.

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00:15:09,000 --> 00:15:12,000

Later investigations reveal why.

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00:15:12,000 --> 00:15:17,000

Several of the original investigators went to their graves believing that Jack the Ripper was Michael Ostrog.

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00:15:17,000 --> 00:15:23,000

But Ostrog could not in fact have been Jack the Ripper because he was imprisoned in France at the time under the name of Grand Bidon.

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00:15:23,000 --> 00:15:30,000

But Ostrog isn't the only potential suspect named by McNaughton. There's another possibility.

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00:15:33,000 --> 00:15:40,000

McNaughton also named another suspect in his memoranda and it wasn't a full name, it was just simply a last name.

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00:15:40,000 --> 00:15:48,000

Kosminski, he was a tailor who arrived in Whitechapel in the 1880s, early 1880s and later became a barber.

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00:15:48,000 --> 00:15:55,000

Kosminski was a great fit for the Ripper profile. He was considered violent towards women.

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00:15:55,000 --> 00:16:04,000

He had homicidal tendencies. His mental stability came into question and he was also local during the murders.

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00:16:04,000 --> 00:16:06,000

Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.

142

00:16:06,000 --> 00:16:16,000

Little else is known about Aaron Kosminski at the time, but in 2014 a British author, Russell Edwards, makes a shocking discovery.

143

00:16:16,000 --> 00:16:24,000

Edwards attends an auction and buys a shawl that is supposed to have belonged to Catherine Eddowes and have been found on her body the night of her murder.

144

00:16:24,000 --> 00:16:36,000

He found two blood samples on Eddowes scarf. It was his hope that these blood stains might lead to the identity of the Ripper and specifically to Kosminski.

145

00:16:36,000 --> 00:16:40,000

The results were very, very intriguing.

146

00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:48,000

When they compare the DNA on the shawl with the DNA of Kosminski's descendants, they discover a match of 99.2% and a match of 100%.

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00:16:48,000 --> 00:16:56,000

It sounds like they found him. However, the DNA on the shawl that was tested was mitochondrial DNA and not nuclear DNA.

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00:16:56,000 --> 00:17:11,000

Nuclear DNA can pretty much identify an individual specifically. On the other hand, mitochondrial DNA can say this blood came from someone with Eastern European ancestry.

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00:17:11,000 --> 00:17:22,000

So even though this blood on the scarf of Eddowes was consistent with Kosminski, it by no means identified Kosminski as the murderer.

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00:17:22,000 --> 00:17:27,000

So it appears Jack the Ripper has again slipped through our grasp.

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00:17:27,000 --> 00:17:30,000

Or has he?

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00:17:31,000 --> 00:17:40,000

As London police struggle to find Jack the Ripper, their task seems nearly impossible.

153

00:17:40,000 --> 00:17:49,000

The police comb through suspect after suspect, but there's either no evidence to support that they were there or they have alibis. So they're left grasping at straws.

154

00:17:49,000 --> 00:17:57,000

John Pizer, Michael Ostrog, Aaron Kosminski. Each of them has seemed like a promising suspect, but ultimately each is cleared.

155

00:17:57,000 --> 00:18:09,000

But one expert believes McNaughton was on the right track with one name, Kosminski. It's just a simple case of mistaken identity.

156

00:18:09,000 --> 00:18:21,000

McNaughton's initial instincts with Kosminski were sound, but later research led us to a different person with an even darker history.

157

00:18:22,000 --> 00:18:29,000

In December 1888, a man named David Cohen is admitted to a London asylum.

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00:18:29,000 --> 00:18:38,000

David Cohen wasn't actually a real name. It's the name that the police would use for an unknown Jewish suspect, much like we use the name John Doe today.

159

00:18:38,000 --> 00:18:51,000

Whilst committed, Cohen exhibits violent behaviour. He attacks staff, he attacks women, he shows violent tendencies, the very tendencies that elevate somebody to the status of a suspect.

160

00:18:51,000 --> 00:19:04,000

Cohen also had syphilis and had been treated for it, which suggests that he potentially engaged with prostitutes and may have caught it from them, which could attribute his disdain to the working ladies of East End.

161

00:19:04,000 --> 00:19:08,000

Most notable about this suspect is the timing.

162

00:19:08,000 --> 00:19:16,000

The murder cease after Cohen is committed, but the police don't make the connection in time and he dies before his true identity is known.

163

00:19:16,000 --> 00:19:25,000

Cohen remains anonymous until 1987, when British researcher Martin Fido claims to finally know his true identity.

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00:19:25,000 --> 00:19:29,000

Cohen's real name is believed to be Nathan Kaminsky.

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00:19:29,000 --> 00:19:34,000

Kaminsky, Kosminsky. It's very easy to see how McNaughton could have confused one name from the other.

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00:19:34,000 --> 00:19:38,000

And the parallels don't end there.

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00:19:38,000 --> 00:19:43,000

Nathan Kaminsky was a Jewish resident of the East End who was treated for syphilis.

168

00:19:43,000 --> 00:19:51,000

There's one other key detail about Kaminsky. He was a bootmaker, so he spent hours working with very sharp tools, and he wore a leather apron.

169

00:19:51,000 --> 00:20:00,000

It certainly appears plausible that this simply may have been a mistake between two names that were very similar.

170

00:20:00,000 --> 00:20:06,000

When Inspector Abilene retired in 1892, that was not the end of the case for him.

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00:20:06,000 --> 00:20:12,000

He still conducted more research and compiling a list of suspects. For him, it was unfinished business.

172

00:20:12,000 --> 00:20:23,000

In 1903, almost 15 years after the crime, the now retired chief investigator, Frederick Abilene, announces another suspect.

173

00:20:23,000 --> 00:20:29,000

So a man named George Chapman was executed in February 1903.

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00:20:29,000 --> 00:20:36,000

In Abilene, after reading that, saw the similarities between the white chapel murders and the murders that Chapman did.

175

00:20:36,000 --> 00:20:44,000

It convinced him enough that Chapman may very well have been Jack the Ripper.

176

00:20:44,000 --> 00:20:54,000

George Chapman was not his birth name. He was born as Severin Kuzhawski, and he came to London from Poland in 1888, coincidentally the same year of the Ripper murders.

177

00:20:54,000 --> 00:21:07,000

In Poland, he was a surgeon's assistant dressing wounds and the like. In London, he became a barber and ran a barbershop on Cable Street during the times of the murders.

178

00:21:07,000 --> 00:21:18,000

Kuzhawski left for America, and his departure from English shores coincided with the ceasing of the Jack the Ripper murders.

179

00:21:19,000 --> 00:21:26,000

If Chapman was Jack the Ripper, it's possible his killing streak didn't stop after all.

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00:21:26,000 --> 00:21:36,000

George Chapman marries three more times over a period of nine years, and all three succumbed at his hands to poisoning.

181

00:21:36,000 --> 00:21:47,000

Chapman is tried and executed for his wife's murders in 1903. The case generates headlines for weeks.

182

00:21:47,000 --> 00:21:56,000

Upon his arrest and hanging in 1903, he says to Inspector Godley, congratulations, you have caught Jack the Ripper at last.

183

00:21:56,000 --> 00:22:13,000

On Averlin's own admission, Chapman was not even on his radar as a suspect at the time of the murders, but due to subsequent research and Averlin building a greater profile of what he was after, George Chapman just ticked every box for him.

184

00:22:14,000 --> 00:22:17,000

But Averlin's suspicions come too late.

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00:22:17,000 --> 00:22:27,000

Chapman was hung, so he went to his death without ever being identified as Jack the Ripper. We will never have that answer.

186

00:22:28,000 --> 00:22:39,000

Jack the Ripper. Three words at the end of an 1888 letter that continued to elicit fear to this day.

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00:22:39,000 --> 00:22:47,000

For over a century that letter has been thought to be the only piece of physical evidence tied to the true killer.

188

00:22:47,000 --> 00:22:53,000

That changes in 2011, when one man uncovers a dark family secret.

189

00:22:57,000 --> 00:23:10,000

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Inside Moyamen Singh prison, a serial killer is executed by hanging. His name H. H. Holmes.

190

00:23:10,000 --> 00:23:17,000

H. H. Holmes was taken down off of the scaffold and placed in a double wide coffin that was already half full of cements.

191

00:23:17,000 --> 00:23:22,000

Then the coffin was filled the rest of the way with cements and buried in an unmarked grave.

192

00:23:23,000 --> 00:23:27,000

Decades later, one man finds out an alarming fact.

193

00:23:27,000 --> 00:23:44,000

When I was 40 years old and my grandfather had passed away, I was given some material which led me to believe that the man known to history as Dr. H. H. Holmes was actually Herman Webster Mudgett, my great great grandfather.

194

00:23:45,000 --> 00:24:02,000

For the last 10 to 15 years of my life, I've been researching the possibility that Dr. Holmes, along with the 40 other aliases he used on his criminal exploits, was also the most notorious cold case of all time, Jack the Ripper.

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00:24:03,000 --> 00:24:18,000

Born Herman Mudgett, Holmes moves to Chicago in 1886, where he eventually rushes to build a three-story hotel for the upcoming World's Fair.

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00:24:18,000 --> 00:24:24,000

This World's Fair was especially important for Chicago because Chicago won out over so many better known cities.

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00:24:24,000 --> 00:24:29,000

This was the chance for Chicago to prove to the world that they were a city worth reckoning with.

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00:24:30,000 --> 00:24:34,000

Everyone that went to the fair needed a place to stay.

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00:24:34,000 --> 00:24:36,000

Holmes knew that.

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00:24:36,000 --> 00:24:38,000

He planned the building.

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00:24:38,000 --> 00:24:50,000

He constructed it as a motel in order for innocent victims to spend the night so that he could choose which one he wanted to pursue his terrible business.

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00:24:50,000 --> 00:24:57,000

He had secret rooms, rooms that could be sealed off and people could be suffocated or rooms that could be filled with gas.

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00:24:57,000 --> 00:25:06,000

After Holmes murdered his victims on the upper floor, he sent them down chutes into the basement where they could be dissolved in vats of acid or quick lime.

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00:25:06,000 --> 00:25:13,000

He would then sell the skeletons to medical schools for about \$200 each, which would be \$5,000 to \$10,000 since today's money.

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00:25:13,000 --> 00:25:15,000

This is someone who's truly monstrous.

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00:25:15,000 --> 00:25:22,000

So much time and dedication to create the perfect space for him to murder exactly when and how he wants to.

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00:25:23,000 --> 00:25:28,000

Then in 2011, fresh information raises new questions.

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00:25:28,000 --> 00:25:33,000

Could Britain's infamous serial killer actually be H.H. Holmes?

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00:25:33,000 --> 00:25:44,000

I was approached by a group of gentlemen who were also investigating the possibility that Holmes had been in London during the infamous Whitechapel murders.

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00:25:44,000 --> 00:25:59,000

He had been there looking into the possibility of opening up a business, selling human body parts and articulated skeletons to medical schools and universities, just as he had done in America.

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00:25:59,000 --> 00:26:04,000

Jeff believes Holmes' background is a perfect match for the Ripper.

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00:26:04,000 --> 00:26:13,000

H.H. Holmes, as Herman Webster Mudgett, obtained his degree as a doctor, a licensed physician to practice medicine in America.

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00:26:13,000 --> 00:26:20,000

Some speculate that, like H.H. Holmes, Jack the Ripper might be selling pieces of his victims.

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00:26:20,000 --> 00:26:28,000

One of the rumors going around at the time was that there was a doctor who was willing to pay 20 pounds for each human uterus he received.

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00:26:28,000 --> 00:26:31,000

Two of Jack the Ripper's victims had their uterine removed.

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00:26:31,000 --> 00:26:36,000

This is similar to the idea of Holmes selling human skeletons for money. Could they be connected?

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00:26:36,000 --> 00:26:41,000

As a next step, Jeff investigates the infamous Dear Boss letter.

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00:26:41,000 --> 00:26:48,000

While I was investigating the possibility that Holmes had been in London, had written Dear Boss and had murdered Catherine Edo's.

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00:26:48,000 --> 00:26:55,000

I was approached by a gentleman from Pennsylvania and he presented me with some handwriting comparisons.

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00:26:55,000 --> 00:27:04,000

I was shown these handwriting comparisons with perhaps the most infamous true crime letter of all time, Dear Boss.

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00:27:04,000 --> 00:27:09,000

It chilled me to the bone. It was obviously the same handwriting.

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00:27:09,000 --> 00:27:14,000

I knew that graphology and handwriting comparison was a powerful forensic science.

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00:27:14,000 --> 00:27:21,000

I went to the scientists at the University of Buffalo who had designed a computer program, the Cedar Fox system,

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00:27:21,000 --> 00:27:28,000

which was recognized by the federal courts, which was recognized by the FBI, which was recognized by Scott Linyard.

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00:27:28,000 --> 00:27:33,000

They took the material, the Dear Boss letter, and the Holmes correspondence.

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00:27:33,000 --> 00:27:41,000

Their professional opinion was that it was similar in style. They ran it through their system and when they returned with their results,

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00:27:41,000 --> 00:27:51,000

over 90% similarity. I needed to tell the world we had done it. We had, after 134 years, we had finally solved Jack the Ripper.

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00:27:51,000 --> 00:27:58,000

With such a prolific crime spree in America, how could Holmes have committed a murder in London?

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00:27:58,000 --> 00:28:06,000

While investigating the possibility that Holmes had been in London at the exact time of the Whitechapel murders,

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00:28:06,000 --> 00:28:18,000

we were able to discover letters that Holmes had written expressing his frustration with being unable to obtain his favorite American periodicals while he was in London.

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00:28:18,000 --> 00:28:29,000

In 2006, Scott Linyard and the BBC commissioned a composite rendering of Jack the Ripper based on first-hand accounts from 1888.

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00:28:29,000 --> 00:28:45,000

While it's not something that could prove guilt at a murder trial, the drawing, if you'll take a close look, has a remarkable resemblance to the photograph the Boston police took of H.H. Holmes after they arrested him.

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00:28:45,000 --> 00:29:00,000

It's almost exact. There is a fascination with how many H.H. Holmes actually murdered, just as there is a fascination with serial killing in our society.

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00:29:00,000 --> 00:29:12,000

We all want to know how many innocents died at his hand. One day, I hope to prove that H.H. Holmes, my direct ancestor, my grandfather's grandfather,

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00:29:12,000 --> 00:29:15,000

is also Jack the Ripper.

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00:29:16,000 --> 00:29:22,000

Until that day, the Holmes theory remains yet another intriguing possibility.

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00:29:25,000 --> 00:29:38,000

At the time of Jack the Ripper's murders and in the decades since, nearly every investigator has relied on one crucial assumption, that the killer was male.

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00:29:39,000 --> 00:29:42,000

Most violent murders of women are men, but not all of them.

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00:29:43,000 --> 00:30:02,000

The poor women of East London were no strangers to courts. Many were hauled in for disorderly conduct, for rough taunts, for fighting, for themselves engaging in violent acts, sometimes against men, sometimes against other women.

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00:30:02,000 --> 00:30:18,000

This understanding that women were capable of violence perhaps fueled at least a few to speculate that Jack the Ripper might have been Jilda Ripper, a female killer.

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00:30:19,000 --> 00:30:31,000

The idea of Jilda Ripper actually originates from the time of the murders themselves. After the murder of the fifth victim, Mary Jane Kelly, Mary Kelly's estimated time of death was between 3.30 and 4.00 a.m.

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00:30:31,000 --> 00:30:41,000

And this is based on the doctor looking at her body, the stiffness of her limbs, and the temperature of her body, as well as witnesses who heard or last saw Mary Jane Kelly alive.

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00:30:42,000 --> 00:30:50,000

There is however one witness, Carolyn Maxwell, who claims to have seen Mary Jane Kelly the morning

after her murder at 8.00 and 9.00 a.m.

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00:30:50,000 --> 00:31:02,000

Carolyn was very certain of her identification because she knew Kelly and because Kelly was wearing a very specific outfit that Maxwell had seen before, including a very specific red shawl.

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00:31:03,000 --> 00:31:13,000

Despite the fact that their evidence seems to go against what the doctors have said, Carolyn Maxwell is very certain of both the date and the time because of when her husband would have to go to work.

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00:31:13,000 --> 00:31:20,000

Although it was just one witness's account, Inspector Frederick Aberline believes there could be something to it.

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00:31:21,000 --> 00:31:31,000

Aberline concludes that it could have been the ripper who put on Mary Jane Kelly's clothes and was seen by Carolyn Maxwell. So therefore the ripper could be a woman.

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00:31:32,000 --> 00:31:49,000

Aberline however is never able to identify who this woman might be, so he moves on to investigate other theories. But in 1939, author William Stewart picks up where Aberline left off.

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00:31:49,000 --> 00:31:58,000

William Stewart believes that if Jack the Ripper actually had been a woman, that she in fact might have been a midwife.

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00:31:58,000 --> 00:32:10,000

Many of these young women were prostitutes. It would not have been uncommon that they would be seeking an abortion or in some cases a delivery.

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00:32:10,000 --> 00:32:26,000

So therefore a midwife walking those streets in the middle of the night with an apron with blood on it would not necessarily have caused suspicion. It could have been fairly commonplace given that environment at that time.

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00:32:26,000 --> 00:32:32,000

Stewart points to the state of Mary Jane Kelly's room as further proof.

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00:32:32,000 --> 00:32:45,000

A midwife could have gotten close to these women. When Mary Jane Kelly's body was discovered, her clothes were folded on the chair next to the bed. This was an indication that she was very comfortable and calm and was not surprised by somebody coming in unexpectedly.

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00:32:45,000 --> 00:32:50,000

But why would a midwife specifically target Mary Kelly?

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00:32:50,000 --> 00:33:03,000

We don't know why Mary Jane Kelly was killed, but Stewart suggests that she asked the midwife to come to perform an abortion, changed her mind, and then threatened to rat the midwife out to the police since abortions were at the time illegal.

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00:33:03,000 --> 00:33:06,000

If the killer was a woman, who was she?

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00:33:06,000 --> 00:33:20,000

Any surgeon will tell you that to make an abdominal incision to remove the viscera requires a fair amount of strength. It's not something that can be done without some power and it takes some time.

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00:33:20,000 --> 00:33:28,000

So that again leads me to believe that Jack the Ripper was a fairly well-built, strong individual.

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00:33:28,000 --> 00:33:37,000

About two years later, the police identified a woman who they thought might have been Jack the Ripper.

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00:33:37,000 --> 00:33:45,000

In December of 1890, a woman named Mary Percy is executed because she murdered her lover's wife and child and dumped their bodies in the streets.

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00:33:45,000 --> 00:33:50,000

Similar to the Ripper's victims, both the wife and child had their throats cut.

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00:33:50,000 --> 00:33:56,000

We don't actually know very much about Mary Percy. We don't know for sure that she was a midwife or had medical knowledge.

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00:33:56,000 --> 00:34:00,000

But we do know that she was capable of this kind of violence.

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00:34:00,000 --> 00:34:04,000

Ripper investigator Melville McNaughton describes Percy saying,

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00:34:04,000 --> 00:34:10,000

I have never seen a woman of stronger physique. Her nerves were as iron-cast as her body.

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00:34:10,000 --> 00:34:15,000

Ultimately, no female is arrested in the Jack the Ripper case.

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00:34:15,000 --> 00:34:23,000

I can understand why McNaughton may have thought this, but people at the time especially would not have wanted to believe that a young woman would have been capable of such things.

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00:34:23,000 --> 00:34:29,000

At the time, that was the end of the Jill the Ripper theory, until new evidence surfaces.

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00:34:29,000 --> 00:34:44,000

In May of 2006, an Australian researcher, Ian Finley, identified female DNA from the saliva of one of the envelopes that were sent by Jack the Ripper.

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00:34:44,000 --> 00:34:56,000

However, I think you need to put this in the context of even with modern DNA analysis, you're still dealing with samples over a century old.

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00:34:56,000 --> 00:35:02,000

And I think that calls into question how valid those findings are.

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00:35:02,000 --> 00:35:12,000

It's really a shame that we can't explore this further, but I think for the time being, we should continue to refer to him as Jack the Ripper.

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00:35:15,000 --> 00:35:23,000

There's no doubt that the most famous unsolved murder case in London's history is that of Jack the Ripper.

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00:35:23,000 --> 00:35:29,000

Jack the Ripper ruthlessly ended the lives of five women.

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00:35:29,000 --> 00:35:39,000

But his legacy has been immensely productive of cultural forms, of novels, documentaries, works of art,

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00:35:39,000 --> 00:35:47,000

each of which seeks to try to tell this story and understand its meanings.

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00:35:47,000 --> 00:35:52,000

But what if this famed British mystery isn't strictly British?

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00:35:52,000 --> 00:36:02,000

In 2005, Trevor Marriott releases a book that offers a new possibility, a new suspect, bringing infamy to a relatively unknown.

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00:36:02,000 --> 00:36:14,000

It suggests that the Ripper might have been a merchant seaman who never lived in London at all, but was docked at the Thames during the times of the Jack the Ripper murders.

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00:36:19,000 --> 00:36:25,000

In 1894, Juliana Hoffman is found slain in her New York apartment.

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00:36:25,000 --> 00:36:34,000

Her throat was cut from ear to ear. Two years later, the culprit was executed in Sing Sing Prison by an electrician.

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00:36:34,000 --> 00:36:41,000

Her killer was a man named Kyle Figenbaum, and his lawyer, upon his execution, has said,

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00:36:41,000 --> 00:36:50,000

I believe that Kyle Figenbaum, whom you have just seen put to death in the electric chair, can easily be connected with the Jack the Ripper murders in Whitechapel, London.

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00:36:50,000 --> 00:36:57,000

When Trevor Marriott digs deeper, he realizes there's a chance that Figenbaum's lawyer was right.

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00:36:57,000 --> 00:37:08,000

The docks on the Thames are in very close proximity to the murder sites in Whitechapel, so that does lend to the fact that he could have done this. He was definitely close enough.

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00:37:09,000 --> 00:37:21,000

As a merchant seaman such as Figenbaum, they would never have been caught because they come into port, commit the murder, and then leave, only to return again to commit the next murder.

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00:37:21,000 --> 00:37:27,000

When Marriott analyzes London's port records, his theory becomes more plausible.

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00:37:27,000 --> 00:37:37,000

Trevor Marriott believes that Kyle Figenbaum was German, and his theory on Figenbaum centers around the Norddeutsche Lloyd shipping company.

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00:37:37,000 --> 00:37:51,000

According to Trevor's theory, a lot of vessels from this German shipping company had both docked in London at the time of the murders, and that could place him on the Norddeutsche Line vessels.

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00:37:52,000 --> 00:37:56,000

According to Marriott, the killings might not stop there.

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00:37:57,000 --> 00:38:09,000

This theory makes a lot of sense, in part because the police were looking very specifically at locals, that people living there are with connections to the area, and especially because Jack the Ripper was never caught.

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00:38:09,000 --> 00:38:14,000

And so Jack the Ripper may have had murders and other ports of call that were never connected back.

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00:38:14,000 --> 00:38:25,000

Marriott does further research into the Norddeutsche Lloyd shipping company, and tracks departures from Bremen, and analyzes the times that they are docked in other countries.

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00:38:25,000 --> 00:38:27,000

He stated,

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00:38:27,000 --> 00:38:45,000

In addition to the London killings, there are six prostitutes murdered in Nicaragua in January 1889, one in Wisconsin in 1890, two more in Germany and Switzerland that same year, and three more in America through 1894, all of which coincide with those German merchant vessels coming and going.

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00:38:45,000 --> 00:38:50,000

Many of the women had their throats cut, which is a river trademark.

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00:38:50,000 --> 00:38:54,000

The targets were also similar. Many were prostitutes.

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00:38:54,000 --> 00:39:03,000

So there was definitely a crossover between the killings that Marriott found in other countries, along with the Ripper murders in London.

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00:39:04,000 --> 00:39:09,000

But without more solid evidence, it's impossible to prove Fiegenbaum's guilt.

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00:39:10,000 --> 00:39:21,000

While there is evidence that contradicts Fiegenbaum as Jack the Ripper, the underlying theory of the killer being an emergent seaman is very credible.

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00:39:23,000 --> 00:39:29,000

It's interesting, sure, but tying all of this to one man is a bit of a stretch.

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00:39:29,000 --> 00:39:34,000

I mean, there are plenty of misogynistic, violent men in the world.

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00:39:34,000 --> 00:39:37,000

I mean, just look at how many we've spoken of just from London.

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00:39:39,000 --> 00:39:47,000

The most powerful evidence that we have about the Ripper's crimes were the bodies of his victims.

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00:39:48,000 --> 00:40:07,000

And while he taunted the police and the public by producing for himself a diabolical, wicked, witty public persona, he left behind so few hard clues by which we can actually nail down who he was.

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00:40:08,000 --> 00:40:12,000

Can we ever crack the case of Jack the Ripper?

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00:40:13,000 --> 00:40:18,000

I don't think we're ever going to find out who Jack the Ripper really was, but I also don't think we're going to stop looking.

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00:40:22,000 --> 00:40:33,000

There may be no killing spree in history with more possible suspects and fewer pieces of concrete evidence than the one committed by the self-proclaimed Jack the Ripper.

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00:40:33,000 --> 00:40:45,000

But with so many obsessed investigators dedicated to closing this case, perhaps soon Jack the Ripper will get a new name, one that finally reveals his true identity.

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00:40:46,000 --> 00:40:51,000

I'm Lawrence Fishburne. Thank you for watching History's Greatest Mysteries.