



HISTORY &  
CULTURE  
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## Ed Gein

Murderer (1906–1984)

Ed Gein was a notorious killer and grave robber. He inspired the creation of several film characters, including Norman Bates ('Psycho'), Jame Gumb ('The Silence of the Lambs') and Leatherface ('Texas Chainsaw Massacre').

## Synopsis

Ed Gein was obsessively devoted to his mother, a religious fanatic. After her death, Gein began robbing graves—keeping body parts as trophies, practicing necrophilia, and experimenting with human taxidermy. He then turned to murder, killing at least two women in 1957. Gein inspired film characters Norman Bates (*Psycho*), Jame Gumb (*The Silence of the Lambs*) and Leatherface (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*).

### NAME

Ed Gein

### OCCUPATION

**Murderer**

### BIRTH DATE

**August 27, 1906**

### DEATH DATE

**July 26, 1984**

### PLACE OF BIRTH

**La Crosse, Wisconsin**

### PLACE OF DEATH

**Madison, Wisconsin**

### AKA

Ed Gein

### NICKNAME

The Butcher of  
Plainfield

### FULL NAME

Edward Theodore Gein

## Early Life

Edward Theodore Gein was born on August 27, 1906 in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The son of a timid alcoholic father and a fanatically religious mother, Gein grew up alongside his older brother, Henry, in a household ruled by his mother's puritanical preachings about the sins of lust and carnal desire.

## Grave Robbing and Murderer

Obsessively devoted to his mother until her death in 1945, Gein never left home or dated women. After she died, he became increasingly deranged and eventually began prowling cemeteries to unearth recently buried female corpses. He would cut off body parts and keep them as trophies, returning the corpses seemingly undisturbed to their graves. In 1954, Ed Gein turned from grave robbing to murder, a task he was less meticulous about. Police implicated him in the murders of two women in 1957. During the investigations, police learned that he had practiced necrophilia and experimented with human taxidermy.

That same year, Gein pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. He was found unfit to stand trial and committed to a mental hospital for criminals. Nearly ten years later, he would be declared fit to stand trial and was ultimately found guilty of murder. He was confined in various criminal psychiatric institutions, including the Central State Hospital in Wisconsin and the Mendota Mental Health Institute, where he died of respiratory and heart failure due to cancer, on July 26, 1984, at age 77.

His killings live on as the infamous inspiration for such film characters as Norman Bates (*Psycho*), Jame Gumb (*The Silence of the Lambs*) and Leatherface (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*).

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