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[The Real Alice in Wonderland: Lewis Carroll's Muse & Rumors About Their Relationship](#)



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Alice Lidell was the inspiration for Alice in Wonderland. Was there something sinister about the relationship between Lewis Carroll and this little girl? Was Lewis Carroll's obsession with children innocent or evil?

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known as his pen name Lewis Carroll, had a real Alice in his life, the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, Alice Liddell, where Dodgson lived and worked as a lecturer in mathematics and church deacon.

Charles was a tall, attractive man. Popular myth has it that he was shy and socially awkward, but in reality he traveled in wide social circles. He did have a pronounced stammer that some people said didn't present itself if he was speaking with children. The fact that he enjoyed the company of children and had many child companions, mostly little girls, was well known.



Alice Liddell as a Beggar Girl, age 7, taken by Charles Dodgson

His relationship with Alice and her closest siblings in age Lorina, who was three years older, and Edith, who was two years younger, began soon after the Liddell family moved into the deanery. Dodgson lived next door and could observe the girls play in the garden through a window. He often asked that the girls visit. Being a gifted amateur photographer when the art form was still quite new, he frequently requested permission to photograph them.

Mrs. Liddell was not as big of a fan of Charles Dodgson as her children were and was quite chilly to him. As early as 1856, which was the same year the family took up residence at the deanery, she asked him to stop taking photos of them. Due to her frostiness, Dodgson kept away until the Dean and Mrs. Liddell took a vacation without the girls and he took the opportunity to ingratiate himself with the nanny, Mrs. Prickett. He was again seeing the girls frequently and rumors began to stir about an affair between the Reverend Dodgson and the governess. According to Dodgson's diaries there was nothing to this.

In 1862, on a rowing trip on The Isis with the Liddell girls and a colleague, Rev. Duckworth, Alice, age 10 at the time, asked Dodgson to entertain them with a story, something he often did. The result was *Alice in Wonderland*, or rather the first draft. Alice was so delighted with "her story" she begged Dodgson to write it down, something he did in the coming months.





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Alice Liddell and Charles Dodgson Kissing

Soon after, however, Dodgson suffered a falling out with the Liddells in June of 1863. He was never to visit the girls again. Rumors circulated at the time that it was over college politics or that the parents of the little girls thought he was using their friendship to court the governess. Darker whispers centered on Mrs. Liddell becoming suspicious of a single man in his 30s being so focused on young children and all the horrible things that eludes to. What happened that was the final breaking point? Much of the scandal in the years following owed not to any evidence, but the disturbingly convenient lack of it.

Upon the sudden death of the man the world knew as Lewis Carroll from pneumonia, the Dodgson family became heirs of what probably seemed to them mountains of personal papers. Much of it they discarded but they kept his diaries. His journals stayed in the family until they were given to the British Museum in 1969. Scholars who were hoping to find out more about Dodgson's time with Alice were going to be disappointed- the years of companionship he spent with the Liddell children were missing. From April 18, 1858 to May 8, 1862 has disappeared, most likely destroyed by someone in the Dodgson family. Also damning, is the fact that key pages from his other diaries, most notably June 27-29, 1863 which would cover the cause of the final break with Liddell family. Although a huge supply of letters between Charles Dodgson and his other child friends survive, not one letter between him and his Alice has ever been found. Clearly, there was something to hide.

Through the years, what may have occurred has been nothing but speculation. The idea that there was anything sinister or unseemly about the relationship between famous Lewis Carroll and his muse Alice Liddell seemed a bit unfair since Charles Dodgson was not alive to defend himself. The fans of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* did not want to hear wild gossip about the author of such beloved whimsical children literature. Then the "lost" photos surfaced.

These photographs were all of young girls and many were nude. Their poses were often contrived to be sultry or alluring, more mature than you would expect portraits of children to be. Many critics have jumped to Charles Dodgson's defense saying that times were different then and the image of a nude child was nothing but innocence. There was certainly

nothing immoral in their nature, they contend. We may never know Dodgson's motivation for his photography, but if someone today would be found with photos of their friends children posed nude, it would be considered inappropriate at best and more like illegal.



Evelyn Hatch, photographed by Charles Dodgson, colored by Anne Lydia Bond

It appears that whatever was between Lewis Carroll and the real Alice in Wonderland is lost to history. Alice Hargreaves, which was Alice's married name, never alluded to what prompted her family to break off contact with Charles Dodgson. Her mother went so far as to forbid her father's biographer from even mentioning Charles Dodgson's name. Perhaps the very secrecy of all involved has put an evil spin on something that was quite mundane, and the photos of innocent children are just that- innocent.

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Posted August 18, 2010 at 12:20 am
good info



3. [C.S. Nelson](#)
Posted September 7, 2010 at 3:26 pm
Could explain his obsession with changing size.



4. Angus Moffett
Posted March 31, 2011 at 8:32 pm
Rumor, innuendo, all brought to the fore by popular mythology, 'historical fictions' like 'Still She Haunts Me' and "Alice I Have Been" and film.

Also – the photo presented here of Dodgson and Alice kissing is a fake. It isn't a terribly good idea to compose an article ostensibly about whether Dodgson was a pedophile and then present a fake photo of him that seems to reinforce that image.

The popular obsession with the 'dark side' of Lewis Carroll is one that would have shocked him – there is ZERO evidence of any drug use, or sexual relationship with ANYONE, least of all a child. He was a deeply religious man and while he never pursued a church career (he loved the theater and photography too much), his life is an example of chastity. If Dodgson had been the monster that so many try to insinuate, he would have been rebuked from society – he was not. He remained on very good terms with many of his child-friends even after they grew up and all photographs he took of them, including the nudes, were done with the strictest permission of their parents. Such images were not unusual in Victorian England – naked children were presented as images of cherubic innocence.

If Dodgson harbored any deeper feelings for his child friends, he kept it strictly to himself.



5. [Duane Wyatt](#)
Posted September 4, 2011 at 6:48 pm
very different i respect the fact it must have took time to write it, i thought it was very good, well done.

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