



The ghosts of Ohio® Newsletter

Volume 12 Issue 6

From the Spooky Desk of James A. Willis

FALL IS COMING, AND SO ARE THE GHOSTS!



James

On the way home one evening, I must have blinked because I clearly missed fall officially trying to poke its way into Ohio. The temperatures outside certainly weren't any indication.

However, as I pulled into my driveway and started meandering down it toward my house, there they were: a few dead yellow, orange, and brown leaves scattered along the driveway. Sure, they could have blown off a dead tree back in the woods behind my house, but in my heart, I know they didn't. Fall is on its way!

Now, you might think my excitement over the fall is due to meaning Halloween

season is right around the corner. If you do, you're partially right. But this year, there's a special reason for my excitement. That's because, after taking most of 2014 off, The Ghosts of Ohio is hitting the road this fall and crisscrossing the Buckeye state with one goal in mind: To chill your bones and make you smile!

We're not just giving you a bland "talking to," either. Nope. We are in the process of creating a full multimedia event that will include video, audio, and photographs from some of the favorite places we've investigated over the years. We're even creating special "warm up" music to play before the presentations to get you all in the mood. Oh yeah, and there will be all sorts of surprises along the way, including the opportunity for you to not only hear a presentation, but to join us on a ghost hunt later that same evening. Put it this way, short of getting a confetti cannon fired at

you (a thought I briefly entertained before the rest of The Ghosts of Ohio squashed the idea), we are going to do our best to make you walk away from one of our presentations grinning from ear to ear.

So make sure you take a look at the current list of appearances, which appears in this issue. Don't skip over all the other good stuff here, either! Hope to see you all this fall!

Now I'm off to see if I can find someone interested in buying a barely used confetti cannon.

James A. Willis
Founder/Director



THIS FALL, VISIT SOME OF OHIO'S HISTORIC HAUNTS WITH US!

Last issue, we let everyone in on a secret that we've been keeping to ourselves for almost three years: Our founder, James A. Willis, is writing a book! And not just any book, mind you. This is a book written about historic ghosts in the state of Ohio, produced by Kent State University Press, no less.

But the coolest thing about the book coming out soon is that we are planning to head back to some of the locations covered in *Ohio's Historic Haunts* and give special presentations. What makes these presentations so special is that we will be talking about the ghosts and legends associated with the building you will be sitting inside of at that very moment! How cool is that?

Want some inside scoop on the locations featured in *Ohio's Historic Haunts*? Willis will be posting top-secret stuff about each location on his blog, [Strange and Spooky World](#). And this fall, we'll be touring the Buckeye state with him, giving everyone the inside scoop on what happened at each location, complete with audio, video, and photos.

Copies of *Ohio's Historic Haunts* will be available for sale at every presentation. Can't wait that long? Then head on over to [Amazon](#), or [Kent State University Press](#) and pre-order your own copy.

See you soon!



REVIEW: SEASON OF THE WITCH

BY TROY TAYLOR



Wendy

The Bell Witch is one of my favorite paranormal occurrences in American history. It was the forerunner to the Amherst haunting in Canada, which seemed to mimic the incidents that happened on the

Bell Farm in Adams County, Tennessee. It would be a good idea to read about both of these hauntings and then compare them side by side.

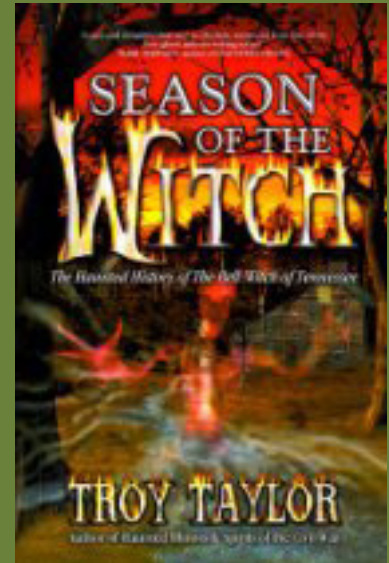
This is a great book for anyone who wants a solid case history of what actually happened to the Bell family at the start of 1800s America. But I must warn you, the editing is somewhat, shall we say, lacking? Misspelling, negligible punctuation, and some words that are completely wrong. This book needed to be read for context to catch this stuff before putting it to print. If I could find it all in one reading, then an editor should have. But if you can just set that aside and read the book for the enjoyment of learning a bit about American paranormal history, I think you will find this an easy and informative read.

Troy does a great job of really setting the scene in the Adams, Tennessee, area for what was about to occur. He spares no

detail talking about the fact that this was a farm that was worked by slaves and that they also suffered from the tortures inflicted by the Bell Witch. I also learned quite a bit about the investigating the Bell's did themselves, with the help of friends. I had not heard before that a group actually formed to look into what was happening, and that they were there almost every night, sleeping at the Bell house.

This case started out with some odd creatures being seen on the Bell property. Troy takes a look at the possibility that there was an Indian mound there, and that these occurrences always happened. After the odd animal sightings, the family began to hear scratching sounds in the house; not only on the walls, but on the frames of their beds. This was accompanied by an odd wheezing sound. As physical activity progressed to blanket pulling and slapping of the children, friends of the Bells began to stay overnight to try and catch who or what was causing this.

This group of John Bell's friends began to talk to it. They demanded it name itself and tell them why it was there. Over the weeks, the wheezing sound turned into mumbled words, and from there became a strong voice. The voice answered questions, read out bible passages, sang hymns, and just generally made a nuisance of itself. Even after John Bell's death, it hung around before disappearing, saying it



would return. And it did, this time spending time chatting with John Bell's eldest son, who lived on the property.

What I like about this book is that Troy goes a step further than other books I have read on the Bell witch. He discusses incidents that happened on the farm land throughout the 1900s, and gives a lot of information on the goings on in the famous Bell Witch Cave. He also talks a bit about the missing tombstones of certain Bell family members, and where one of them was found. I'm not going to tell you, you have to read the book!

REVIEW: THE BELL WITCH HAUNTING



Samantha

Robertson County, Tennessee, 1817. John and Lucy Bell are awakened in the night by mysterious growling and scratching sounds—sounds they've been hearing for months. They've never found a source, so they're reluctant to get out of bed this time. But this time,

something's different. Suddenly, there are screams coming from one of the bedrooms. They light candles and rush in, discovering that one of their daughters—Betsy—is floating above her bed.

So begins this motion picture reenactment of the terrifying Bell Witch haunting, one of the most infamous paranormal cases in U.S. history. This review contains information I gleaned from watching the film, and not any other details I may have learned elsewhere.

John and Lucy Bell lived in Tennessee with

their seven children, including a son named Drew, youngest daughter Mary, and their eldest daughter Betsy. John was considered to be an upstanding member of the community and a devout member of the Red River Baptist Church. When the paranormal activity began in the spring of 1817, it was the pastor, Reverend James Johnston, who stayed by the family's side throughout the four years the haunting took place. In the film, Johnston is telling the Bell Witch story to a couple of reporters who, in 1855, approached him regarding the facts of the case.

(continued on page 3.)

REVIEW: THE BELL WITCH HAUNTING CONT.

The activity began in the woods surrounding the house. While hunting, one of the Bells shot at a strange dog-like creature, only to discover that the body had disappeared. The family dog had a tendency to growl at seemingly nothing, and the youngest daughter, Mary, was terrified of what she called the "Tree Lady" outside her bedroom window. It wasn't long before strange things began to occur inside the house, too.

During the night—usually beginning around midnight—the family would be awakened by the sound of scratching, barking and growling. There were gurgling noises like someone was being strangled. They heard the smacking of lips, chains clinking, and the sound of furniture being moved. Upon investigation, there was never anything there to identify as a source of the activity. In fact, if a family member heard something and lit a candle, the sounds would move to another room; and if they left lamps lit, they would get blown out. And still the terror didn't end there.

The activity intensified dramatically. Blankets got yanked off of sleeping family members, drawers and cabinets opened on their own, Betsy began getting pinched by unseen hands, and John had been thrown to the floor and scratched. The family was so tormented by what was happening that they turned to Reverend Johnston for guidance. After spending a night with the family, Johnston determined that the entity was, in fact, intelligent and that they were "gonna need more help."

Reverend Johnston gathered a group of men together who agreed to help John and his family in any way they could. While in the house, they quickly discovered that the phenomena could not be explained with anything natural or man-made. The candles blew out, all of the doors slammed shut, furniture was moved, and they heard the sound of a girl laughing. Messages appeared in a mirror, claiming "I have been disturbed and made unhappy," and "I am looking for my tooth." Upon seeing this, John remembered that Indian mounds had been found nearby and that a jar of bones had been brought into the house. A tooth had fallen through a hole in the floor. The men immediately began digging in the basement to find it, but to no avail. Little did they know that this was only the first of many wild goose chases the playful spirit liked to send them on.

The next night, another priest by the name of Reverend Gunn attempted to cleanse the

house. During the ceremony, Betsy came downstairs and began convulsing, and laughter seemed to come from every corner of the home. After that the activity increased, presenting itself at all hours of the day or night, and it followed the family wherever they went.

With activity so intense and constant, it certainly wasn't long before people everywhere heard about the haunting at the Bell residence. Despite the fact that John Bell was excommunicated from his church for "misdealings," people came from far and wide to experience the Bell Witch for themselves. And the "witch" didn't disappoint!



The spirit had grown so powerful that it was able to communicate directly with people. It answered almost all questions and enjoyed the attention. However, it had many facets to its personality. At times it was childlike, teasing, and playing pranks. Other times it gossiped and called out the sins of various individuals, especially the ones it didn't like. If it felt like it, it would even attack people physically. But it could also be very kind, like when Lucy became ill with pleurisy. The spirit sang to her, produced food for her out of thin air, and told everyone how to care for her. There was no doubt that Lucy was its favorite. Not so, however, for Betsy and John. The spirit went out of its way to make their lives a living hell.

In the four years the activity took place, the one question the spirit wouldn't answer was why it was targeting the Bell family, in particular Betsy and John. It tormented Betsy until she finally agreed not to marry her fiancé Joshua Gardner. The spirit never revealed why it was against the marriage. And as for John, the spirit made it clear that its goal was to torment and torture him "until John Bell is good and dead." The spirit physically beat him, cursed him, made his face twitch uncontrollably, swelled his mouth and tongue so that he couldn't eat or drink, tripped him when he walked through the house, made him so ill that he was bedridden, and then ultimately poisoned him. At his funeral the spirit sang bawdy drinking songs over his open grave. All of this with no explanation.

After John Bell's death, the spirit came less and less often until it said a final farewell and left. To this day, no one knows why it was here in the first place or where it went. For all we know, it could still be out there somewhere, as depicted in the final scene of the film. As the reporters are leaving Reverend Johnston's house, one of them is attacked from above by an unseen entity. It was a pretty cheesy ending to an otherwise acceptable movie.

Notice that I didn't use the word "great." No, the movie isn't great. It's obviously produced on a budget and features actors who are probably all friends or friends-of-friends. However, it had some entertainment value, and it did an adequate job of conveying the story of the Bell Witch haunting. If I had to put my finger on the film's strength, it would be its ability to show both the horror and the humor that comprised the Jekyll & Hyde personalities of the spirit. For instance, while it could be exceptionally cruel, its treatment of Drew Bell in the movie was good-naturedly funny. Drew had been quite the prankster to his siblings in the beginning, but the spirit gave him a taste of his own medicine, particularly with his chamber pot. I'm sure the young man who played him had a good time filming those scenes, and they provided some comic relief to break up the intensity of the story.

All in all, this film is worth watching, especially if you'd like an overview of what the Bell Witch haunting is all about. It's one of the most mysterious paranormal events to ever have taken place in American history, and this movie will give you a good start into learning more about it.



AN AMERICAN HAUNTING



Rick

Title: An American Haunting
Genre: Horror/Thriller
Rating: UR
Release Date: 2006
Running Time: 1 hour 30 minutes
Available: Netflix—DVD only
 (not streaming)
Rating: 1.5 out of 5 skulls



Directed by Courtney Solomon (created the *After Dark Horrorfest aka 8 Films to Die For*) and stars Donald Sutherland (50+ year film career; highlights include *The Hunger Games*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and *M*A*S*H*), Sissy Spacek (40+ year film career; highlights include *Carrie*, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, and currently in the Netflix series *Bloodline*), and James D'Arcy (*Exorcist: The Beginning* and ABC's television series *Agent Carter*).

This film is based on the novel *The Bell Witch: An American Haunting*, by Brent Monahan. The story begins in modern times and features a subplot about a recently divorced mother and her daughter who uncovers a journal from the 19th century from the previous occupants of the house. The film switches to earlier times focusing on a village that used to stand around the house, and the story of the Bell Witch is told.

The story of the Bell Witch begins with the Bell family in 1818. John Bell (played by Donald Sutherland) and his wife (Sissy Spacek) are taken to church court and found guilty over stealing their neighbor's land. Their neighbor is a woman named Kate Batts, who is infamous in the village over claims of witchcraft. After the trial, Kate hints that she means ill will to John and his daughter Betsy Bell.

Soon, strange things start happening, such as Betsy's hair being pulled by an invisible force as well as her bed covers being pulled off in the middle of the night. Things begin to intensify as Betsy is violently attacked by the same invisible force. The family believes Kate Batts has used witchcraft to curse them. Betsy's teacher, Richard Powell (James D'Arcy),

notices the changes in her behavior but doesn't believe the events are caused by a spirit. He is proved wrong when he witnesses Betsy dangling off of the floor, as if someone is holding her up by her hair.

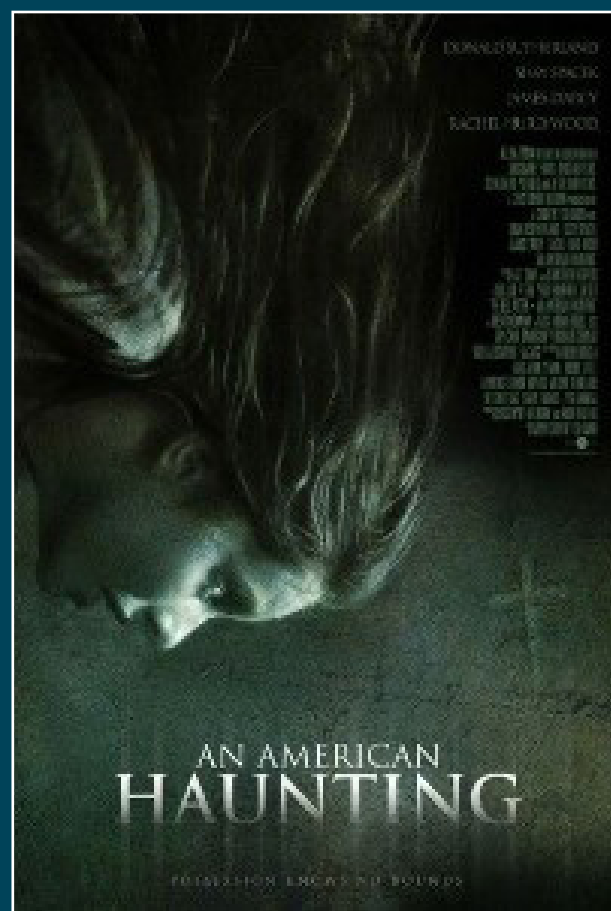
John Bell confronts Kate Batts and pleads with her to remove the curse.

Surprisingly, she states she never cursed John Bell or his family and it is himself that has brought all this torment upon him and his family.

The film takes an unexpected turn as Betsy finally has a revelation of the true cause of her pain—SPOILER ALERT—her father, John Bell was sexually abusing her! It appears both Betsy and her mother had repressed the incidents, which leads Betsy to poison her father with medicine while her mother watches. Betsy is then seen at her father's grave, and the narrator says that Betsy was never haunted from that point forward.

The story then returns to present day, where the mother has been reading the journal and suddenly realizes that Betsy is trying to warn her that something is amiss between her daughter and her ex-husband. The story ends with the mother running out of the house, only to catch a glimpse of her daughter's worried face out the back window of her ex-husband's car as he drives away.

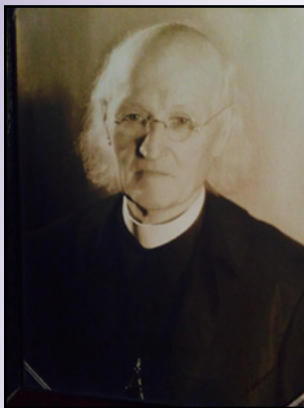
For me, the movie was very predictable (except for the twist with John Bell) and the "scares" missed the mark with any shock factor. The film moved very slowly and almost seemed to be going in circles.



Throughout the film, you constantly see a camera view point from the spirit which added no suspense and was even borderline comical at times. At the end of the film, a line appears that says, "This film is based on true events." We know the Bell Witch is the only documented case in history in which a "ghost" is responsible for the death of a person (the ghost is credited for the poisoning death of John Bell). So in the end, I am not sure what true events they are referring to, but there were definitely plenty of liberties taken in this film.

THE GHOSTS SPEND THE NIGHT AT BROWNELLA COTTAGE

On July 18th, The Ghosts Of Ohio spent the night inside Brownella Cottage in Galion, Ohio. It was a truly unique experience in that we were literally stepping inside Ohio history.



Built in the 1880s, Brownella Cottage was home to Bishop William Brown. Loved by many and hated by some, Brown would become known as the Bad Bishop when, in 1920, he authored and published the book, *Communism and Christianity*. The result was that the Episcopal Church accused Bishop Brown of heresy and put

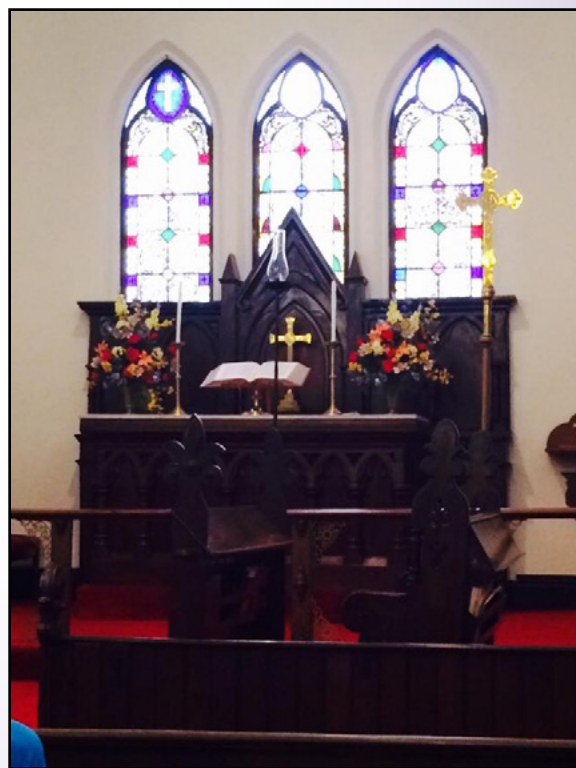
him on trial, making him the first person tried for heresy since the Middle Ages.

Although Brown would eventually be deposed and excommunicated, he managed to be consecrated as a bishop in the Old Catholic Church in a ceremony that was said to have taken place in his private study at Brownella Cottage. He would continue to live in Brownella Cottage until his death in 1937. Now cared for by the Galion Historical Society, there are some who believe that several ghosts, including that of Bishop Brown himself, continue to haunt Brownella Cottage.

Since part of the Brownella Cottage property contains a church where Bishop Brown once practiced and held mass, The Ghosts of Ohio decided to try something unique. One of our members, Neil Gaiser, is a seminarian studying at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio. So we decided to start the evening with having Neil lead us all in prayer, right up on the altar. Our collective thought was that if the spirit of Bishop Brown, or a member of his congregation, for that matter, was present, that perhaps hearing a mass of sorts taking place in the church would help to bring those spirits forward.

We did not have much luck, though, as the entire Cottage was quiet for most of the evening, paranormally speaking. There were a few things that left us scratching our heads, though, including one member of The Ghosts of Ohio seeing a bright ball of light move across the altar area, following the same path that previous investigators have reported the light moving.

But even without the ghosts, Brownella Cottage is a fascinating place that we highly recommend everyone visit!



The Ghosts of Ohio

JAMBOREE

Years ago, our fearless leader realized that while our bylaws, part of which forbid us from making information about our private investigations public, helped protect our clients, they also had the potential to alienate Ghosts of Ohio members from their family and loved ones. Put it this way: all of us who signed those bylaws have to tell our family, "Yeah, I'm going somewhere, but I can't tell you where. And I'll be there all night and can't tell you anything about it." It's times like these when you realize how much your family and loved ones really trust you! But it is also what led to Willis creating The Ghosts Of Ohio Jamboree, which has now become an annual event.

At the Jamboree, family and friends of every member of The Ghosts of Ohio are invited to come share good food, good drinks, and great companionship. Oh yeah, and the inevitable ghost story when it gets dark outside! But these aren't case-related ghost stories. More along the lines of Bloody Mary and Hookman tales; perfect for telling around the campfire.

This year, in addition to the plethora of hamburgers, hot dogs, and side dishes for miles, guests witnessed the resurrection of Willis' infamous party game, Spookified! A game that saw members of The Ghosts of Ohio and their friends and family members breaking into random teams and

attempting to outdo each other in a battle of wits involving meaningless trivia about horror movies, spooky music, urban legends, Ohio hauntings, and of course, The Ghosts of Ohio's history.

All in all, it was a wonderful evening that managed to bring everyone closer while kicking back and enjoying family and friends. Can't wait for next year's!





GET READY, OHIO, THE GHOSTS ARE COMING FOR YOU!

Last year, The Ghosts of Ohio decided to take time off from our usual schedule and just enjoy the October/Halloween season. And while we certainly did enjoy ourselves, one thing was clearly missing: all your smiling, happy faces!

So this year, we're back. Boy, are we ever! New presentations, new spooky "evidence" to share, special guests, and more spooky surprises than you could shake a skeletal stick at!

The following is a list of all CONFIRMED dates, meaning that while the specific time, etc., is still to come, you can go ahead and circle the date on your calendar! Additional information will be announced, as it becomes available, on Facebook and our other social media accounts, as well as our newsletter. And please note that dates marked with a "\$" are pay events and you will need to purchase a ticket. All the others are free!



So get ready, Ohio, because The Ghosts are coming for you!

If you're interested in booking The Ghosts of Ohio for a presentation/appearance, don't delay! Shoot an email to info@ghostsofohio.org and get the ball rolling today!

CONFIRMED APPEARANCES

Saturday, September 12, 2015

Meet James A. Willis & The Ghosts of Ohio
Eastlake Public Library
36706 Lake Shore Blvd.
Eastlake, Ohio 44095

Tuesday, September 15, 2015

Jim Harold Paranormal Podcast interview
<http://jimharold.com>

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

Fox Cities Paranormal Radio interview
<http://www.paramaniaradio.com/SHOW.php?showid=82>

Saturday, September 26, 2015

An Evening With Author James A. Willis \$
Farnam Manor
4223 Brecksville Road
Richfield, OH 44286
<http://farnammanorinn.com/home.html>

Saturday, October 3, 2015

Meet Author James A. Willis
Downtown Lima, Ohio
Details coming soon

Monday, October 5, 2015

An Evening With Author James A. Willis
Oliver House
27 Broadway
Toledo, OH 43604

Saturday, October 10, 2015

Meet James A. Willis & The Ghosts of Ohio
Piqua Public Library
116 W. High Street
Piqua, Ohio 45356

Tuesday, October 13, 2015

Bexley Public Library
2411 E. Main Street
Bexley, OH 43209
<http://bexleylibrary.org>

Wednesday, October 14, 2015 @ 6:00 pm

Warren-Trumbull County Public Library
444 Mahoning Avenue NW
Warren, Ohio 44483
<http://www.wtcpl.org>

Thursday, October 15, 2015

Westerville Public Library
126 South State Street
Westerville, Ohio 43081

Friday, October 16, 2015

An Evening With Author James A. Willis \$
Michael Anthony's At The Inn
21 W. Main Street
Versailles, Ohio 45380

Sunday, October 18, 2015

Dead Air Paranormal Talk Radio interview

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Meet James A. Willis and The Ghosts Of Ohio
Public Library of Steubenville and
Jefferson County
407 South Fourth Street
Steubenville, OH 43952

Thursday, October 22, 2015

An Evening With Author James A. Willis \$
The Warehouse
400 N. Whitewoman Street
Coshocton, Ohio 43812

Friday, October 23, 2015

An Evening With Author James A. Willis \$
Clay Haus
123 W. Main Street
Somerset, Ohio 43783

Saturday, October 24, 2015

Meet James A. Willis & The Ghosts Of Ohio
Defiance Public Library
320 Fort Street
Defiance, Ohio 43512

Tuesday, October 27, 2015

Meet James A. Willis & The Ghosts Of Ohio
Marysville Public Library
231 S. Plum Street
Marysville, Ohio 43040

Wednesday, October 28, 2015

Lorain Public Library
351 W. Sixth Street
Lorain, OH 44052
<http://www.lorainpubliclibrary.org/locations-hours/main-library>

Friday, October 30, 2015

Meet James A. Willis & The Ghosts Of Ohio
(Private Event)
Inventiv Health

Saturday, November 7, 2015

Buckeye Book Fair \$
Wooster, Ohio
<http://buckeyebookfair.com>

Saturday, November 14, 2015

Weird Ohio Presentation / Pawtographs For
Pooches Charity Event \$
Poasttown Elementary School
Middletown, OH
<http://pawtographsforpooches.weebly.com/events.html>

Saturday, November 21, 2015

An Evening With Author James A. Willis \$
Museum At The Friends Home
115 S. 4th Street
Waynesville, OH 45069

GOT A SCARY STORY TO TELL?

Have you had a ghostly encounter in Ohio? Want to see it featured in a future issue of The Ghosts of Ohio Newsletter? Then here's all you have to do:

Just write down your story and send it to info@ghostsofohio.org with the subject line "Newsletter Ghost Story." Be sure to also include your name as you'd like it to appear with the story. We'll take it from there and send you out an email letting you know which issue it is going to appear in. That way, you can get all your friends to sign up for the newsletter so they can see how famous you are!



COMING IN THE OCTOBER NEWSLETTER



Examining
The Amityville Horror



On The Road With
The Ghosts Of Ohio



Investigations & Consultations

The Ghosts of Ohio are continuing to schedule investigations for 2015. If you or someone you know is experiencing something unexplained in a home or place of business, contact us at info@ghostsofohio.org or visit our website to fill out an investigation request. All investigations are offered free of charge, and confidentiality and discretion are assured.

Not sure if you want or need an investigation? The Ghosts of Ohio also offers consultations. Let us sit down with you to discuss your current situation and what help we may be able to offer. For more information, please visit <http://ghostsofohio.org/services/investigations.html>.

Interact with The Ghosts of Ohio

In addition to our website, here are a couple of places where you can find The Ghosts of Ohio lurking online:

 FACEBOOK
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/pages/Columbus-OH/The-Ghosts-of-Ohio/60704381381?ref=mf>

 TWITTER
<http://twitter.com/ghostsofohio>

Administration

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