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Ghosts of Chatham-Kent Volume II

by Sheila Gibbs

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"That the dead are seen no more.... I will not undertake to maintain... That it is doubted by single cavilers can very little weaken the general evidence; and some who deny it with their tongues confess it by their fears"

Samuel Johnson in RASSELAS

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Sheila Gibbs

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Introduction to the Ghosts of Chatham-Kent Vol. II

In my first volume of ghost stories gathered throughout Chatham-Kent, I attempted to show another side to our homes and neighbourhoods, a mysterious, murky side that defied easy explanations where strange and startling things occurred. In this new volume, I have added to some of those previous stories as new information or background came to light and I have learned many new ones.

It continues to amaze me that these ghostly and odd tales share such similarities whether they happened last week or in the last century, in town or in a rural setting. While each and every ghostly encounter is unique, the pattern of visitations is remarkably alike. Most people mention hearing footsteps or seeing fleeting images; lights go on and off, radios play when they are not plugged in; doorbells ring but nobody's there; chairs rock, pictures go askew, objects appear then reappear in a different place; there are cold, prickly sensations in a room, cupboard doors pop open, televisions come on by themselves and sometimes there is the sound of keys jingling or the smell of a pipe or aftershave. The list goes on and on. On a lighter note, I have included a page of the top ten ways to tell whether your house is haunted.

What does all this mean? That is a very weighty question and one that I don't feel qualified to answer. I can only offer some insight as I relay the narratives but it is based solely on my own experiences of life. Since energy can neither be created nor destroyed (The First Law of Thermodynamics), it is not surprising to me how many of these disturbances involve action or activity as if the remaining energy, will or "spirit" of the departed is still being exercised. Writing on the subject and popular interpretations on television and in the media suggest that

a ghost hasn't crossed over into the light because of unresolved issues on earth. The experiences of those whom I've interviewed agree with this view and often it seems that these ghosts have personalities as well reflecting the character of the person when they were alive if it was known.

An Ipsos Reid survey published around Hallowe'en 2006 reported that of the representative sample of Canadians surveyed online,

- 50% of Canadians believe in ghosts
- 32% felt that ghosts are usually forces of good rather than forces of evil
- 18% have been in the presence of ghosts
- 9% have visited with the ghost of a dead relative
- 12% have had an out-of-body experience
- 15% knew someone else who has had an out-of-body experience.

In this volume, you will find much to wonder at and puzzle over: a solitary glass of wine sitting on a table in a room consumed by fire; a ghostly carriage; a soldier appearing in a uniform he hadn't worn in sixty years; a long dead child's face at a window; a hand creeping out from underneath a bed and a dark shadow trying to drag a child into a closet. Some are downright creepy, some are romantic and some are startling in the precision of their descriptions but all of these stories touch that secret part of us that thrills to the spooky and unexplained.

Once again, I have many people to thank and at the top of the list are those individuals who came forward with their stories and agreed to see them in print. Although there is a much greater public acceptance of paranormal investigation and ghostly activity in general, it still takes courage to take that step forward and share your experiences. I think people would be surprised at

just how many unusual things go on around us on a daily basis but simply go unreported. It has certainly been an eye-opener for me.

I would like to thank the following people for their encouragement and support throughout this project:

Scott Mercer for his inveterate newspaper reading which led me to the Whittle Hoodoo story; Maxine Gardiner for sharing her thoughts on the Tilbury area; Ron and Bonnie Vanrabaeyns for suggestions for the Thamesville area; Andrew Van Zelst for his patient and painstaking technical support and keen enthusiasm; to the step-on guests of our ghost bus tours who said a great deal by their presence alone; to all those who have taken part in our ghostly tour endeavours over the years and to those who bravely submitted their stories to our scrutiny without which there would be no book.

Finally, I owe a measureless debt to Jim Gilbert for his unselfish contribution of stories, guidance and unwavering belief in the value that history and especially local history—even of unseen entities—brings to our lives.

May the past continue to haunt you all!

Murder Scene Revisited

In my first book, I recounted the dark tale of a murder at a restaurant once known as Copperfield's or "Chopperfield's", as it was nicknamed once the gruesome facts of the murder became known. I have since learned more details about this sad story.

The murder victim, Tom (not his real name) worked for many years at a factory in Windsor. His sister worried about him living in a big city close to Detroit where there was a great deal more crime than in Chatham his home town. She could not have foreseen the irony of this position in light of the events that subsequently took place. When Tom was laid off from his job, his sister suggested he move back to Chatham and live with their mother who wasn't well. Tom could help care for her. This arrangement worked out well and things seemed to be looking up when his sister found him a job as a cleaner at Copperfield's restaurant on King St.

While Tom was a conscientious, hard worker, one of his co-workers whom he considered a friend was not. He would bring his girlfriend and other friends into the kitchen (against restaurant policy) and hang around. Looking for an easy way to make money, he plotted to rob the restaurant using his key to gain access in the early morning hours so that the robbery would be blamed on Tom. What he didn't plan on was that Tom would be on duty that night. Tom confronted his "friend" and tried to prevent him from carrying out the robbery. He was viciously stabbed twenty or thirty times and left to die. Employees who were on duty the next day said there was blood everywhere in the halls, change-rooms—everywhere.

This horrible outcome, the result of greed, treachery and betrayal left its mark on the area where the murder took place. It is not hard to imagine Tom's shock at discovering the robbery and then horror at the violent attack made by someone he

considered a friend. The killer must have panicked and lashed out to prevent discovery then fled the scene with a mind full of the horror of what had happened. The release of all of these powerful emotions of fear, anger and shock created an aura or atmosphere that came to haunt the premises.

It was this feeling of dread and coldness that affected the brawny cleaner assigned to take over Tom's duties in the natural course of things. This fellow needed to enter the area where the murder took place to get some supplies to do his job. Just as he was about to go in, he heard a strange sound and the door banged shut. Startled, he withdrew to look around him but no one was there. He and others remained unwilling to enter the area where they felt so uncomfortable and fearful.

Years later, people working out at Nautilus, a fitness club which took over the space after several other ventures, reported that weights would shift and clink against each other as if something or someone was trying to move them. The impact of an event many years before left an invisible mark, a reminder of one terrible night in Chatham.



Murder of Adeline McDonald

In 1939, the alley on Fifth St. opposite Sears in Chatham was occupied by Adeline's Beauty Shop. Adeline Lane became Miss Chatham in 1931 in a beauty contest staged by a firm of motion picture producers under the auspices of the Chatham firemen. She was given a screen test for Hollywood producers but never received an offer. *The Chatham Daily News* called her "a striking beauty with many friends who were charmed with her bright, cheery and optimistic disposition." Charles McDonald worked in the shipping department at Harvester and was known to be a jealous type. He would often lose his temper and strike her. Not long after their marriage in 1929, Charles pleaded guilty to a charge of assault and was given a suspended sentence. Her popularity as Miss Chatham intensified his insecurity and worry that Adeline might leave him and the feeling between them had deteriorated to the point that Adeline was seeking a separation in the spring of 1939. She went away for a week and sent Charles separation papers to sign along with a cryptic telegram that said, "If you don't sign the papers, I'll tell the real reason." There were rumours of a love triangle but none could ever be substantiated.

On May 1st, Adeline had made plans to meet up with her fellow beauticians who were also her friends to go to a movie. When she didn't show up, the friends delayed checking the shop at Charles' request because he said she was upset and crying but they returned momentarily, met Charles on his way back to the shop and together they unlocked the door of the beauty salon. As they entered the darkened premises, before the lights were turned on, Charles cried out, "Oh, my God, she shot herself!" There on the floor was Adeline shot through the heart with a bullet from a .22 calibre rifle which was laying beside here with the butt of the weapon under her arm at the shoulder. A wet towel was draped over her chest completely obscuring the fatal wound. The towel

McDonald was leaving the place, and told them not to go in as "Adeline was crying."

HUSBAND HAD COCA-COLA

They did leave, but returned shortly, and as they approached the door, they saw McDonald coming across the street with a couple of bottles of Coca-Cola. The door was locked. The girls opened the door and the three went in.

McDonald walked to the drying room, saw his wife lying on the floor, dead, and exclaimed, "Look what she has done"—or words to that effect.

NO "TRIANGLE"

There are rumors around the city that there was a "love triangle" connected with the unfortunate tragedy. Members of the family stoutly deny such stories. While McDonald and his wife were discussing separation proceedings, there was no suggestion of any other man being connected with their personal differences.

This seems to be the sum-total of information available today to cast light on the mysterious shooting in the Adeline Beauty Shop, which snuffed out the life of the pretty brunette proprietress.

The police are still keeping their counsel to them.

Turn to Page Two, First Section, Please.

Police Still Silent on Chatham Shooting



Charles McDonald, 32, left, husband of the former Chatham beauty queen, right, who was found shot to death in her Chatham beauty parlor, was remanded in jail for eight days on a charge of vagrancy. Police are still "silent" on the case, but such provincial authorities as Dr. Smirle Lawson, chief consulting coroner, and Dr. J. S. Erb, provincial analyst, have been called in.

NAZIS ACCUSED OF INTRIGUE IN THE POLES

WARSAW, May 2. — Polish news papers accused Germany today of investigating intrigue aimed at regaining Poland from the sea, a newspaper comment also indicated foreign minister Joseph Beck might categorically reject Hitler's demands for return of the Polish corridor and for an extrajurisdictional railway and road across the Polish corridor. These demands already had been countervailed by Polish suggestions which Hitler in his Reichstag speech construed as a rejection of the foreign office's desire for a return to the status quo in Danzig, at present a city under League of Nations administration. Whether he would go as far as to subscribe to demands for an opposition press for a Polish dictatorship over the free zone was another matter. The official Gazeta Polska, regarding Germany's desire for a return to the status quo, recalled in 1927 Alfred Rosenberg, the first chief theoretician of the regime, wrote that the main aim of German policy was to re-establish the existence of the Polish

Prisoner's Jury Visited Scene of the Shooting

Coroner Dr. C. C. White this morning opened an inquest into the death of Mrs. Adeline McDonald, beauty parlor proprietor who died from a bullet wound in her heart in her business establishment last night under mysterious circumstances. Impaneled by Constable Irvington, the jury viewed the remains of Mrs. McDonald at Campbell Funeral Home this afternoon, then visited the scene of the shooting and an autopsy was to be conducted by a pathologist who was sent here by the Attorney General's department. He investigated here some



—By Chatham Daily News Staff Photographer.

Chatham police today were investigating the mystery surrounding the death of Mrs. Adeline McDonald, 29, whose lifeless form was found lying in her beauty parlor on Fifth street last night. She had been shot through the heart with a bullet from a .25 calibre rifle, which was found by her side. The discovery was made by her estranged husband, Charles McDonald, 32, with three friends and associates of Mrs. McDonald. Police are holding McDonald on a nominal charge of vagrancy for a material witness, pending completion of the investigation. Inquest was opened this afternoon by Coroner Dr. C. C. White. The upper left picture was taken of McDonald as he was leaving the police station this morning in charge of Detective Sergeant Hugh Douglas following his removal to jail on the holding charge. Picture at the upper right shows the three women, friends of the dead beautician, who last night went to the beauty shop to meet her with the intention of going to the show. They are, from left to right: Mrs. Lily Main, a friend of Mrs. McDonald; Miss Pearl Hastings, assistant in the beauty parlor; and Miss Frances Bowen, another assistant in the beauty parlor. Below is a picture of Mrs. Adeline McDonald, a striking brunette who, in 1931, won the title of "Miss Chatham" in a beauty contest staged by a firm of motion picture producers under the auspices of Chatham Screen.

DIES IN TORONTO

TORONTO, May 2. — Edwin Dickie, 84, Toronto, for 20 years assistant organizer of the Ontario Liberal party and later secretary

AVERAGE MOVES

TORONTO, May 2. — City officials, transit companies and real estate dealers estimated that the

ROBBER IS CAUGHT IN THE ACT

Night constable finds thief at the vault.

ARREST MADE

The prisoner is brought to Chatham.

DRESDEN, May 2. — While making his rounds this morning, Night Constable Harry Doran, captured Wallace, colored, of North end, in the act of rifling a bank vault at the local office of the Dominion Bank St. St.

Upon discovering a rear door broken, the officer hurried to the apartment of Robert C. Doran, local pool room operator, whose address is in the same block as the bank. Campbell tel. Chief Archie Blackburn Doran returned to the bank to guard the building until Chief arrived. Doran notified bank caretaker, Kenneth T. who quickly arrived with a party of the building.

ROBBER CAUGHT

The constable handed over to Chief Blackburn and later covered the rear entrance the night constable entered front door and grappled a burglar and snapped the cuffs on Wallace, who was held behind an outer door vault. Manager E. W. Sloan being notified of the arrival of the constable, the arrest.

The prisoner was later taken to the local lock-up under charge of Special Officer Ranson, and later removed to Chatham, where he will face charges of templed bank robbery.

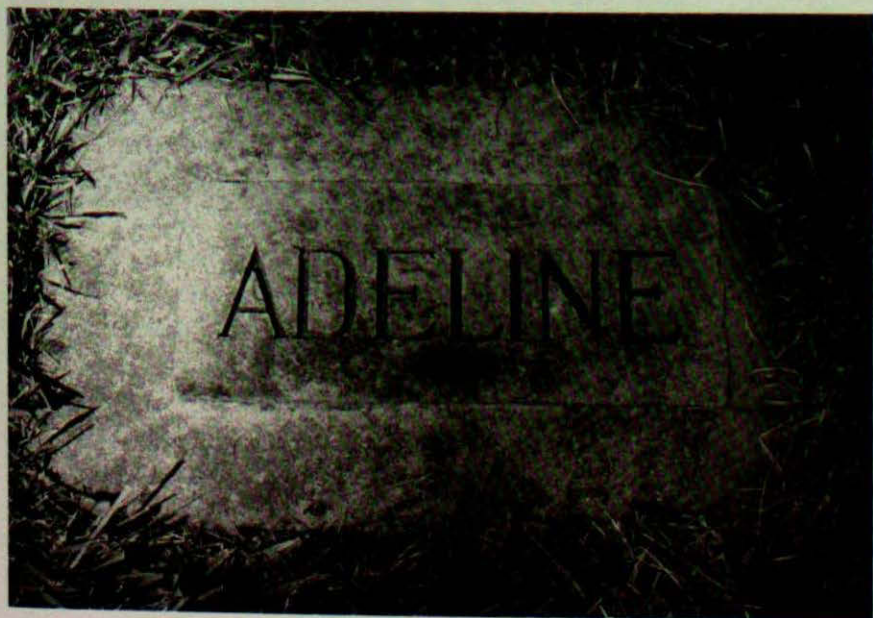
Adeline McDonald as Miss Chatham of 1931

however did not have a hole in it. Newspaper articles at the time speculated about the placement of the rifle and the possibility of suicide although an inquest later dismissed this idea. In the confusion that followed the grisly discovery, Charles staggered about the salon hysterically yelling out, "I didn't do it" to the doctor who was called and the police who arrived on the scene.

Despite these early denials which were then followed by silence, Charles was found guilty of murdering his young wife and sentenced to hang November 30, 1939. This sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment in Kingston Penitentiary. Charles served 13 years of his life sentence and was released in 1952. He died in 1980.

Adeline was buried in Dresden cemetery after a funeral held May 5, 1939 from the Campbell Funeral Home which later became the Kent Club.

There are a couple of conclusions that we may draw from this unhappy story. Whenever a life is violently ended, remnants of that person's spirit linger on because of unfinished business on earth. While there haven't been any known reports of ghostly activity in this vicinity, it would not be at all unexpected. It may simply be that nobody has come forward with something odd that they have experienced in the area.



The second interesting conclusion is that the Kent Club has reported some unusual activity in their lower room. Since this was the embalming area for the old funeral home, this isn't surprising either. And just perhaps one of the uneasy spirits that seeks to break out and stir up the air at the Kent Club when it's dark and the nights draw in is Adeline.



The Days of Wine and Roses

For 127 years, she had stood at the corner of King and Fourth Streets in Chatham welcoming visitors from around the world. She had provided shelter and warmth from the blustery storms of winter and cool relief from the scorching summer sun. She had offered food and refreshments, rest and entertainment and a place to discuss the affairs of the world and of the heart. Here gossip and rumour were exchanged, secrets were whispered and romantic passions were born or broken.

Located in the heart of Chatham, the Rankin's long history went up in flames in the early hours of August 11, 1999. Yet not all was destroyed. Amidst the dismay and the noise and confusion of spurting flames, crashing walls and collapsing bricks, one mysterious area remained untouched.

Deep in the farthest, darkest reaches of the old hotel, it was said a hidden cave or tunnel had been constructed long ago. Where the tunnel led or why it had been built, nobody knew. The proximity to the river and the possibility of smuggling were hinted at but nobody knew anything for sure. What they did know was that in the basement area of the hotel where equipment and supplies were stored in later years, the sobbing of a woman could be heard. This distressing sound frightened performers at the hotel to the extent that they didn't wish to come there. For more than half a century beginning in 1903, the hotel had been owned by John Adam "Irish Jack" Pleasence where it had developed its reputation for fine food and a welcoming atmosphere. Unfortunately, while Jack flourished in a financial sense he had bad luck where his family was concerned. According to a recent article in *Chatham This Week* by John Rhodes, none of his nine children lived beyond the age of fifty. In fact, his two youngest sons Jim and Mike were killed in the great 1908 streetcar wreck involving two C.W.&L.E. streetcars on Queen St. Mrs. Pleasence was so

overcome by grief at this awful loss that she became ill and died less than a year later at the age of forty-six. Is she the one sobbing in the basement over her two boys? Is it her ghost that haunts the present building?

Whatever it is, the hottest flames couldn't consume it. While the fire leveled the hotel, the room in which the sobbing was heard remained untouched. Alone amidst the wreckage, stood a single wineglass atop a night stand. In 127 years, a hotel of this stature would have seen many passions unleashed. Whatever sorrow lay upon this woman, the memory of that pain withstood time, change and ultimately even fire.



Jim and Mike Pleasence.

(Photo reprinted from 1904 edition of The Planet Souvenir)

A "Cold" Bed of Ghosts

In *The Ghosts of Chatham-Kent*, we visited the Edgar St area and learned about the experiences of a woman living in a home once occupied by the unhappy and nervous George Legue. In this story, George, father of six and employed as a blacksmith at the Gray-Campbell carriage works took his own life by shooting himself through the heart in the loft of the barn located behind his house. A later resident of the house reported that in the evening when things were quiet and her husband was absent that she could glimpse the shadow of a man wearing a peak cap with a short brim. He would look around and jingle his keys. He never bothered this lady and in fact she found his presence comforting. He never appeared to the lady's husband and as they began renovating the house, he appeared less and less often. She is convinced he is the ghost of George Legue come back to check on things and perhaps finding a respite in death from the noise of the trip-hammer, family life and all its problems.

The existence of the George Legue ghost prompted another resident of Edgar St. to wonder if the strange experiences she was having in her home a few doors down could mean a ghostly transference was taking place. While nothing can be ruled out in the spirit world, it does seem more likely that the freezing temperatures, knocking on the door and echoing footsteps have a different source.

The strange happenings in this house coincided with a visit the resident had made to the Donnelly homestead near Lucan, site of a violent massacre in the mid 1800's. Fran (not her real name) had come home with pictures and souvenirs of the visit but she found herself feeling very sad and bursting into tears for no reason at all. After these unhappy feelings persisted for a while, Fran asked a girlfriend to take the mementos away since she

suspected them of causing her depression. It was around this time that she started noticing odd things in her house.

Her two pets, a cat and a Jack Russell terrier began acting strangely. Her dog gave every impression that he had seen something unwelcome as his hackles would rise and he would bark frantically at the television set and stereo. He refused to pass in front of the Legue house when his owner took him out for a walk. The cat's fur would rise and it would act very nervous. Fran could hear the sound of footsteps and the animals would react as if they were alarmed but nothing was there. Out on the street walking along, she would also hear the sound of footsteps and the jingle of keys but when she turned around nothing was there. Then one day she saw something she would never forget. Kneeling in her front room was a little girl with long brown hair. Almost as soon as she saw her, the figure vanished leaving her to wonder if her eyes had deceived her. However, all of the other mysterious happenings told her she had seen something from another time and place.

Her husband didn't believe her and so when she complained about the freezing temperatures upstairs which she believed related to the ghost, he thought their daughter had simply left the window open. He didn't connect the coldness to anything but a practical cause. When he checked on the window though, he found it was firmly shut. He was puzzled but not persuaded a ghost was haunting the house. Even the sound of knocking when nobody was there couldn't change his mind.

His wife however became more convinced by another incident. She was downstairs doing laundry and thought she heard her daughter call out, "Mom!" She was in the middle of her task and didn't want to stop so she yelled back, "What do you want?" Her daughter came down the stairs and asked, "What do you mean? I didn't call you." Fran was sure she heard her daughter (or someone) say, "Mom." Since she had seen the figure of a little girl, this other untoward experience only strengthened her feeling that the house was haunted.

Another neighbour on Edgar St. confided to Fran that she too had heard footsteps and the sound of keys in the Legue vicinity of Edgar St. Could it be George out for a stroll? The variety of different people having the same experience certainly suggests he was making a return visit to the old neighbourhood.

Remarkably, our ghostly experiences of Edgar St. don't end here. Yet another former resident of this street had a strange encounter while living in a small one-bedroom house close to Queen St.

At night, she would be awakened by the sighing of the wind but when she checked outside, the air was still and calm. In a scary scenario reminiscent of the movie *Psycho*, she once saw a shower curtain move as if pushed from the inside by a stick. It was not like the outline of a body but rather a point and when she summoned the courage to shove back the curtain, nothing was there. She had trouble sleeping due to these disturbances and so is not entirely sure if what she saw one night was a dream or an appearance of a ghost. In a dream-like state, she saw a little girl standing in a field crying. She did some investigating and found that the house was built on land that was originally a farm where there had been a terrible fire. The parents living in the house at the time perished and their daughter was found in a field looking for them. It seems too much of a coincidence that another resident of Edgar St. further along the street would see the ghost of a little girl kneeling in her front room. The proximity of the appearances would suggest it was the same child and we know from the George Legue story that the area was surrounded by grassy areas early in the twentieth century. This is an older established neighbourhood so the likelihood of a history of strange things happening is not unexpected at all.

Some people are more sensitive to ghostly activity than others and returning to Fran and her experiences, we find that she had an earlier experience with something strange when she was a child.

She lived in an apartment on King St. above the bank that looked across to what was then the Rankin Hotel. Since she was small, she often played in the window. She said she saw a man

across the way in a window at the upper level of the Rankin who would see her and wave at her. Her grandmother, with whom she lived, would ask her whom she was waving at and would come to see. Every time she would come over and look out, she couldn't see anything at the window even though Fran did. She later heard that a woman had committed suicide in the basement of the Rankin and her husband had gone crazy with grief and started setting fires in buildings all around the downtown core.

Was the man at the window connected to this tragedy somehow? This story certainly echoes another tale about the Rankin, which is related in this book.

As we explore the "other side of Chatham-Kent" we continually find layer upon layer of unexplainable events occurring in the same places. Do ghosts make connections in death as in life?



Edgar St.



The Shining Ghost

Not far from the Lacroix St. bridge in Chatham on the north side of the Thames River sits a regency style cottage with a distinguished family history. It was built in 1890 for the famous Eberts family who played a pivotal role in developing commerce in Chatham's early days. Two of the best known members of the family were William and Walter Eberts early shipbuilders and captains who built Chatham's first "skyscraper" in 1855 on King St. at the corner of King and Fifth. This four storey building that the locals said would never last stood for 131 years until it was destroyed by fire in 1986.

Eventually the Eberts house was purchased by Isabel and William Hubbel who was Mayor of Chatham from 1940-42. When the home changed into the hands of Dr. and Edna Risebrough, our story begins to take root. In their younger days, the Risebroughs liked to entertain and travel especially since they didn't have any children. Mrs. Risebrough had expensive taste and surrounded herself with rich furnishings and decorations so that the house became a showplace. However, once her husband died and her health deteriorated, her comfortable existence altered so that she was obliged to hire a caregiver. Her choice was Mrs. Rachel Buck who was known in the neighbourhood but not part of the exclusive tea parties that had been so much a part of Mrs. Risebrough's past life. Rachel proved an ideal companion and nurse and gained the full confidence of her employer to the point that Mrs. Risebrough left her the house and contents upon her death. Rachel was a simple woman with simple tastes and she felt overwhelmed amidst the lavish surroundings of the house and she missed her employer whom she had come to care for a great deal. For these reasons and others we will never know of, Rachel grew depressed and took her own life in the front bedroom of the house by shooting herself in the head.

As we have seen in many instances, when tragedy strikes, spectral activity often follows. The next family to inhabit the house soon found this out and again as the pattern seems to show, it is usually children or younger people who experience the strange happenings. So it occurred at the Livingstones (not their real name).

One evening Louise, the older of two girls had been watching television at the back of the house when she got tired and decided to go to bed. As she headed down the hall to climb the stairs to her upstairs bedroom, she noticed a light coming from the front room. As she moved closer, she was stunned to see that the light emanated from the figure of an old woman sitting in a rocking chair near the front door. Terrified she ran upstairs to tell her younger sister Jodi what she had just seen. Then she received her second shock of the evening when Jodi informed her that the old woman had been upstairs in her room earlier in the evening talking to her!

Jodi seemed to be the more susceptible of the two girls as she had several other spooky incidents happen to her in the house. One of these occurred in her bedroom which was upstairs at the front of the house. She was laying in bed resting when she noticed the knob on her closed closet door slowly start to turn until suddenly it flung violently open, banged against the wall and just as suddenly slammed shut. A similar type of mysterious opening and closing happened at John Taylor's home at Rondeau, at the Kent Club and at the Waldens just down the street from the Livingstones. In fact this type of haunting activity seems quite common. Perhaps it represents something symbolic to ghosts trapped in their pasts—the opening and shutting of memories, an exertion of will as they could have exercised in the past or simply an expression of the desire to escape their earthbound destinies.

Odd sounds are another hallmark activity and Jodi experienced a bewildering crinkling, crackling sound under the foot of her bed one night as if someone was rustling cellophane or some other noisy material. At first she was more puzzled than alarmed and got down on her knees to thoroughly check under the

bed, around the end of the bed and everywhere in the general vicinity in the hopes that some stray breeze or draft had made the sound. But it persisted and she began to feel uneasy and then more and more frightened. She left the light on the entire night, didn't sleep a wink and yet had no clue what the crackling sounds meant. What was the ghost trying to communicate? Was it simply trying to let Jodi know that she was there?

If that was the case, this phantom who may have been the ghost of Rachel Buck had more visitations in store for Jodi. The rest of the family had gone away and Jodi was staying alone in her parents' bedroom at the back of the house. As she was trying to fall asleep, she was startled to hear the sounds of loud footsteps walking around in the front room. She could also hear what she thought was the sound of objects being picked up and replaced as if a burglar was casing the premises.

Frightened out of her wits at the thought that intruders were in the house and about to enter her room any second, she immediately called the police. The main police station is down the block from the house and within minutes the house was surrounded and searchlights lit up the neighbourhood. The police quickly entered the house and began to systematically search through all of the rooms ensuring first that Jodi was all right. Nothing turned up indoors or outdoors. Nothing had been taken; in fact nothing was even out of place. Yet the sound of footsteps had persisted until the very moment the police arrived. Nothing could have escaped their bright spotlights and fast-moving officers. Nothing earthly that is. Jodi refused to stay alone the rest of the time her family was away.

Just as mysteriously as the sounds and strange light appeared in the house, they disappeared. There hasn't been any ghostly activity for a number of years. Who was the old woman rocking in the chair by the front door? Was it Rachel Buck or perhaps Mrs. Risebrough? There is no real way to know for sure as both women were unhappy at the conclusion of their lives. Still it was Rachel who chose a desperate and violent end that most often heralds unfinished business on earth.



Apology from Beyond the Grave

In my previous book on ghosts, I related the story of the ghost of Colonel Weir and the experiences of one woman and her son in a house on the River Road Raleigh which is now in ashes having burned down in the spring of 2006 . I have since learned more of the history of Colonel Weir and it makes for fascinating reading.

It is really the story of two families, one that rose to wealth and power and one that faithfully served them over many years. It is also the story of a house lovingly built according to lofty standards of another time.

Our story begins early in the 20th century when Colonel Weir served in the cavalry in the First World War for the British Army. This is a significant fact in the ghost story which follows. Colonel Weir immigrated to Canada and became an accountant rising to the position of President of Union Gas. He gained a great deal of stock in this company and other multinational companies, which made him a very wealthy man. His wife Winifred was a nurse from Mississauga whose family had owned property later sold for the construction of a hospital. She came from a background of wealth and influence.

Both Colonel and Mrs. Weir were raised in a class structure common to their upbringings and the Edwardian age they were born into. Each person had a place in society dictated by birth and education and certain lines could not be crossed. They brought this attitude to the River Road Raleigh and their lives in a rural setting. Colonel Weir was used to the gracious homes of England with large gardens surrounding buildings of substance and style. The design of their house was based upon plans for a model home on the cover of House and Garden magazine of 1944. It featured copper eave troughs and a formal dining room with a buzzer on the floor to summon staff among other unusual features for the

day. Due to shortages created by the war, they were not able to complete this dream home until 1952. To maintain the grounds, they employed a gardener whom they introduced by his title and not his name when greeting visitors. Despite these characteristics, the gardener and his family remained loyal to the couple, who had no children, until Colonel Weir died in 1986.

Mr. Van Sickle (not his real name) emigrated from Holland in 1953 and at the age of eleven began to help his grandfather with the gardens. Eventually he took over this position and his wife would often help out. Their children would play on the grounds and were a familiar, if arm's length, sight to Colonel and Mrs. Weir for over twenty-five years.

As Colonel Weir advanced in age, he made no secret of the details of his will, which left the house to a nephew in Toronto. He made no mention of his faithful retainer who understandably would have appreciated a memento of his years of loyal service. At the end of his life when Colonel Weir was in his eighties and blind, Mr. Van Sickle would pick up groceries for Mrs. Weir and run other errands that allowed the couple to live in the house that they so loved. He acted as far more than a gardener.

When Colonel Weir died, Mr. Van Sickle's daughter who was fifteen at the time offered to stay with Mrs. Weir for a few nights so that she wouldn't be alone. Two nights after the Colonel's death, in the middle of the night Cory (not her real name) phoned home with a strange message. She had seen Colonel Weir in his World War I army uniform and he had spoken to her. He told her, "Tell your Dad, I'm sorry."

What did this news from beyond the grave mean? Could Cory have misunderstood what she saw? The remarkable thing about this ghostly appearance is that Cory had never seen Colonel Weir in his military uniform. She didn't really know what a cavalry uniform looked like but she certainly knew the man who had employed her father for so many years. There can be no mistake about that. The family believes that Colonel Weir regretted not leaving even a token of remembrance to Mr. Van Sickle when he had done so much for him all of his life. Perhaps

he wore his uniform from so many years ago because it represented authority or the glory of his youth that was no more.

For six months after the Colonel's death, the family visited the house daily and never met up with an apparition or heard anything else strange.

It was the next lady who moved into the house after Mrs. Weir sold it who felt uneasy and heard strange scraping sounds in the basement as if a chair was being dragged across the floor. Her dog grew very agitated on more than one occasion barking at some unseen disturbance with the hair rising on the back of its neck. On one memorable occasion, the front entrance door opened up on its own and the owner couldn't get it to close as something pressed against the door with a great deal of force or determination.

This lady had only updated the painting and wallpapering that hadn't been touched in thirty years but she did not undertake any major renovations. Usually it is the tearing down of walls or alteration of a space that is known and loved by the previous owners that prompts such animated ghostly displeasure. In this case, the lady in question made only minor changes. Perhaps she was more susceptible to the atmosphere of the house because the next owners who did do a great deal of renovating never experienced any odd happenings. There can never be a clear explanation as to why some people experience paranormal activity and others don't. It remains an intriguing mystery.

As for Colonel Weir perhaps he now rests in peace knowing that he demonstrated the strength of his regret by apologizing in what can only be described as the most unique and certainly unexpected way.



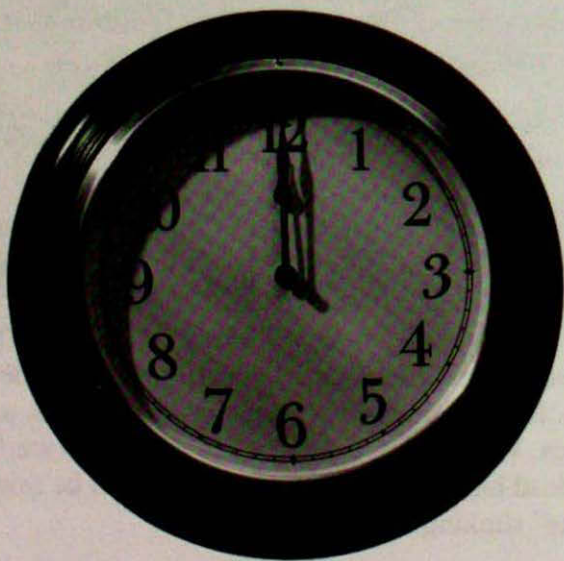
On the Midnight Shift

On a stretch of land in Wallaceburg, in the industrial area sits an innocuous looking factory that has produced more than its expected product. It would seem that where there is lots of modern activity and lines of workers focusing on getting their duties accomplished, there wouldn't be room for odd or disturbing occurrences. That is not the case. While the ground today is covered in cement and pavement, steel girders hold up walls and heavy equipment rolls around well-lit corridors, once according to local legend, this was a sacred burial ground for Native Canadians. The area was covered in grass and the wind swept over mounds protecting the remains of valued ancestors. Those people do not appear to appreciate progress as strange things have happened on the midnight shift.

As anyone can testify who has worked late at night, despite modern lighting and the presence of fellow employees, there is something inherently spooky and unsettling about arriving in the dark and entering an echoing building at its emptiest. Add to this atmosphere strange happenings and you can understand why an entire shift walked out on their supervisor. What could provoke such a radical move? Lights kept flicking on and off. There was a rhythmic banging on the radiators which some described as being like a drum. Huge sliding glass doors opened without warning or human hands. Women were in tears and refused to work this shift again. The lead hand who told me this story said he saw "lots of black shapes" slinking around the area.

Were the Natives displeased by the location of a factory on their land and out to make sure the interlopers knew they had better watch out?

The management of the factory was forced to deal with the situation and rework schedules to avoid midnight shifts. The ghosts had certainly made their presence known and reclaimed the night for their own particular brand of shift work!



All That Glitters...

A popular restaurant on King St. in downtown Chatham serves up more than food and drink when the living customers have gone home for the evening.

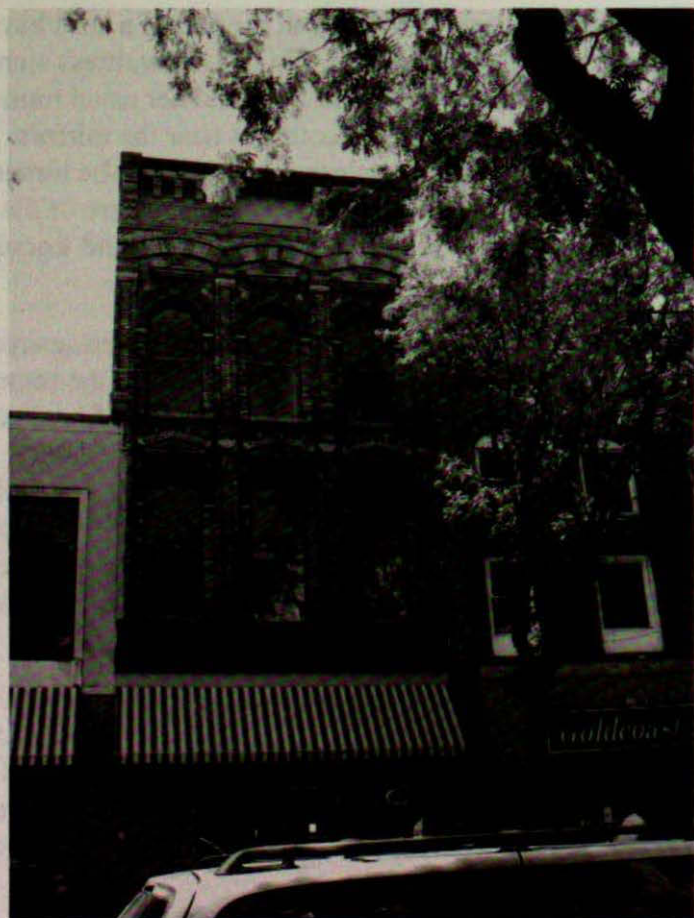
Staff working alone or in pairs at the end of a shift have seen and experienced some strange things. One waitress went upstairs to check the bathrooms and followed her usual routine of pushing the chairs underneath the counters near the mirrors. She turned her back to check the washrooms and when she turned around one of the chairs had been moved to the centre of the room. There was nobody on duty but this waitress and a cook who was downstairs.

This same waitress was working at the till entering credit card information into the computer with her back to the room when she felt a hand placed squarely in the middle of her back. It shoved her up against the edge of the counter. As she later remarked, "I'm pretty sturdy but this moved me right up against the counter so that my hips were jammed there." Nobody else was in the restaurant at the time. Many of the staff have seen the chandelier near the main staircase start to shake when there is no reason for the vibration.

On one occasion, some patrons were still seated at a table downstairs when they saw the food bill which had been left on an adjacent table rise up in the air, hang there for a moment and slowly float down to the table again like a feather. They were startled and asked the waitress if she had seen what happened. She did and said, "It's just the ghost."

Staff speculate that the ghost is a woman who died in a fire waiting for her husband to return from the war. A local psychic who is a regular patron of the restaurant says that she can feel a presence and that its desire is to protect the building. Evidently

the ghost feels most comfortable late at night when it is dark and there are few people around to disturb its wanderings or interfere with the return of her lost husband.



The Face at the Window

Over the past seven years, I have encountered many extraordinary tales that literally make your blood run cold. However this story is one of the most unusual and harrowing of any that I have been privileged to share so far. It has so many different aspects that it is breath-taking in its scope and variety. It is a tragic tale of a young boy and of a family that fell victim to not one but thirteen different ghosts.

Before our story began in Ridgetown, the young couple who are the key players were house hunting and had temporarily moved in with the girl's parents to the "biggest house in Highgate" as it's referred to. The husband had given his baby daughter a bath and was preparing to put her to bed. As he entered the bedroom, he saw the sheet on the bed come to a point in the middle as if someone was poking a stick into it. It came up nearly three feet. It was the weirdest thing he had ever seen and it shook him up mightily. Little did he know that this was just a prelude to the incredible set of events that would follow. Eventually he and his young family including two girls and a boy moved into a two storey home in Ridgetown at the corner of Albert and York St. which had been rented out for many years. They decided to restore the house to its former condition and embarked upon a series of major renovations. They replaced the roof, plumbing and furnace, renovated the kitchen and both bathrooms and added central air. These changes may have been part of the reason for what happened but Todd, the owner of the house at the time believes that it was the land that the house was built on that accounted for many of their subsequent troubles. That and the ouija board. Some friends brought one over one night to contact the spirits and may in fact have summoned far more than they meant to.

It wasn't long before strange things began to happen. Todd and his wife Nicole had been in the house about six months and were in bed at night when a terrible pounding erupted from the basement. It sounded like someone was dropping a 4'x 4' plank on the floor repeatedly. The whole house shook. Todd couldn't think what was wrong and headed downstairs to investigate. As he reached the landing of the stairs, the booming sound stopped. It was 3 am in the morning and he needed to get back to sleep. As soon as he got back into bed, the banging started up again. Once again he descended the stairs only to have the intrusive sound stop once he stepped on the landing. He was so frustrated that he decided to run down the stairs and race outside around to the back of the house to see if he could catch whoever it was banging on the walls. It took him no more than a minute to make it outside but nothing and nobody was there. But the banging continued all night long without a break. Fortunately this was the only time this particular torment happened. The inexplicable banging wasn't the only odd sound however; the family could hear footsteps at all hours of the day and night.

It wasn't too long before the family learned from his parents that their young son, Kevin had died in the house of a serious illness. He had been born in April and died in November and spookily the odd events only occurred between these two months and centred around the upstairs bedroom which belonged to the little boy.

One of the most bizarre and startling activities that the family experienced happened upstairs. Nicole described an "energy surge" in her bedroom that roared from one side of the room to the other tearing the curtains and the curtain rod off the window. It sounded "like a halogen lamp blowing." Out in the hallway, she saw a shimmering like heat on a road in summer all around the dead boy's bedroom. The house felt oppressive like "all the air and light were being sucked out of it" and Nicole felt compelled to escape to the outdoors to get away from the claustrophobic feeling. This weird occurrence seemed to presage an unhappy event in the family as her grandfather had a heart

attack shortly after this and later died. The energy surge and shimmering so upset the husband and wife that they considered moving out.

Their unease wasn't helped by former tenants of the house remarking on the strange things they had experienced in the house when it was rented out as they attended yard sales held on the lawn. As well, friends and relatives who had stayed over in the house had felt cold spots — a common indication of a ghostly presence. In this case, there was definitely more than one because each room that a person entered seemed like it was inhabited by something that was watching. The family didn't feel like they were being followed but rather as if each room had something in it.

The youngest daughter made a connection with Kevin and knew his name before her parents discovered it. She made friends with this ghost and chatted and played with him all the time and was not afraid of him at all. However, other more sinister things did happen like the contents of a shelf falling on her which seemed to indicate that there might also be an unfriendly presence in the house. This would later prove to be true. Todd and Nicole invited a psychic to come and do a clearing of the house. He told them that they had thirteen ghosts. He could identify that six were slaves and there was a little boy and a little girl. The little girl was the daughter of the man who employed the slaves and when she suddenly died, he suspected that they had something to do with it. She was buried in the backyard but her grave had since been moved. This story was later confirmed by neighbours who said they had heard that a little girl had been buried in the backyard where an ornamental fountain and pond now stand. Todd believes that it is this little girl who caused most of the major trouble and that Kevin may in fact have been afraid of her as he seemed to be crying when they saw him in the house. A couple of years ago, Todd's aunt took a picture of the house from the front and there in the upstairs bedroom window stands a little boy with his arms crossed who looks like he is crying.

The story doesn't end there however. While the visit from the psychic helped explain things, it was another gesture that settled things down. Underneath the sunroom, in the basement there is a room with thick cement walls. Into this room, they set a bouquet of roses and after that, everything stopped. It was a little too late for Todd and Nicole though. After they had lived in the house for seven years and gone through so much, they decided to separate. They found out that no family has lived in the house longer than seven years. The couple who had lived there before he and Nicole had separated after seven years and so had Kevin's parents who had been in the house before that. It seemed like the house was cursed.

Strange things continued to happen. Todd was on the phone one evening talking to a girlfriend when he fell asleep. The girl called him up the next day and demanded to know what had happened. He was rather taken aback at her tone and explained that he had simply fallen asleep after a tiring day at work. She said she had heard footsteps in the room and the sound of voices as if he had had friends over. He assured her that he had been alone.

Todd moved out of the house after Nicole and it sat vacant for a time. His friends had heard many of his stories about what went on in the house and asked him to let them go inside one day. As they were looking around, Todd felt a horrible taste in his throat that drove him out of the house. He looked for his buddies and found one of them outside sitting in his car and crying. This was the last thing in the world he expected. When he asked him what was wrong, he said, "It's that house. I can't explain. It made me feel awful." They went back to Todd's apartment and there discovered that his friend had as many as twenty wounds on his arms, legs and torso. They were deep cuts and burns and were obviously recent. This incredible attack occurred in a house empty of any furnishings but obviously still occupied by some malevolent force. Todd says that the little boy Kevin may still be seen standing at the window and crying. Perhaps he fears what else is in the house and is hoping that someone will come along and rescue him.

The Cold Hand of Dread

An elderly lady with a gift for prophecy and a sensitivity to feeling strange things experienced some phenomena as a young newly married woman that have haunted her ever since. Although more than half a century has passed, the terrifying memory of those events has never faded.

It began when the newlywed couple moved into a house in Louisville. Until that time, Jane (not her real name) had not experienced any of her mother's ability to sense things that didn't fit into life's usual patterns. In this ordinary looking house however, things were not normal. Both Jane and her husband could hear a sound like dozens of mice or other small creatures scratching about in the walls. She likened the sound to that of "chains rattling." They lived here only a short time and then moved out but circumstances forced their return, this time with a son and daughter as part of their family.

Right away the feelings of uneasiness and watchfulness returned. Jane felt like she was being watched anytime she entered the pantry and especially when she went into the small bedroom at the back of the house which felt cold and clammy. She always emerged chilled and uneasy.

In the evenings, Jane would dress her baby daughter in a bonnet to keep her warm during the night. In the morning she would find the bonnet on the floor. The child was too young to remove it herself so something else was inhabiting or at least visiting the room. One time, Jane got into a tug of war with this entity as she clutched her baby girl to her chest and felt her being tugged at by a force she couldn't see but felt all too well. "You can't have her!" she screamed over and over again until the presence left.

Her son later revealed that he had seen a bony hand like that of a skeleton coming out from underneath the bed in that room.

To add to the dark atmosphere, on evenings when her husband was working and she was left alone with very young children in the house, the lights would turn on and off including the seemingly inaccessible light near the barn which was mounted on a hydro pole. It seemed beyond the reach of anyone except someone on an extension ladder or a ghostly hand that wouldn't need any kind of support.

Jane's most frightening experience came a few years later not in this house which later burned down so that it doesn't exist today but rather in her aunt's rambling old brick farmhouse near Mull. Situated on 100 acres, the house was so large that her aunt and uncle who had no children lived downstairs and used the upper floor to store preserves such as peaches and apples and vegetables.

During one visit, Jane's aunt asked her to run upstairs and fetch down some peaches from the bedroom upstairs. She didn't want to go since she felt uncomfortable in the house and particularly uneasy upstairs. She complied however and felt a sense of dread come over her as she climbed the stairs and entered the room where the preserves were stored. After only a few moments in the room which felt cold and clammy, she came out shivering and miserable.

On another occasion while both she and her husband were visiting, a winter storm blew up and blocked the roads. They were forced to stay overnight and to sleep in the only extra room furnished with a bed which was on the upper floor. Feeling uneasy, she and her husband got into bed where Joe (not his real name) promptly fell asleep. Jane was scared but had realized that they had no choice in the matter and they were safer in the house than out on the snowy, treacherous roads with the wind howling around. That's what she thought until late into the night she was startled awake by an icy cold finger touching hers. She looked up into the face of a man who was standing by the bed staring straight at her. His right hand stretched out and touched the

middle finger of her left hand. His touch was cold as ice. She started up in bed and screamed and screamed until Joe jolted up awake beside her to ask what was wrong, what had happened. She clutched him and asked if he saw a man dressed in an old fashioned outfit of dark navy jacket, tight pants and hat with a broad brim. He had not seen anything but he didn't doubt for an instant that she had indeed witnessed something out of this world since she was frightened out of her wits .

Although she bathed the hand in warm water and put ointment on it, the cold spot stayed ice cold for a week. While the actual effects of this strange encounter were short-lived, the feeling of dread about these events has lasted a lifetime.

She did return to her aunt's house and while the mysterious frigid visitor did not touch her, he did lift her feather comforter off the bed in the middle of the night. Adding to her conviction that something otherworldly inhabits this house in the country is the fact that one of her brothers has had the same uncomfortable experience in the house.

More than fifty years later, Jane will not watch a television program about strange phenomena or read a book on the subject or anything like it. Her gift, she feels is a curse that she wouldn't wish on anyone.

As ever, the experiences that people have with ghosts and other strange things varies and yet they contain many similarities. One person reacts with fear while another feels comforted; one person is curious about this hidden world while another wishes to be rid of any association with it. Perhaps ghosts have personalities too and like living people fit better in some households than others.



A Tragic Trio

It seems that some families endure more pain and suffering than others as they go through life and one such family farmed for many years in an area on the River Road close to Chatham that has since been taken over by restaurants and commercial buildings. One death in particular has resulted in some haunted visitations in this vicinity.

The family consisted of a father, mother and four children. Tragically, the young daughter of the family drowned in Lake Erie forming the first loss in our sad trio. Our main story concerns the youngest son whom we will call Bobby here.

In the early 1950's, it was the practice on many farms to store gasoline in multiple five gallon cans rather than have gas pumps or larger containers. These were stored conveniently about the premises to fuel the machinery. One hot day in the summer, Bobby who was about six years old and unaware of the dangers of gas fumes decided to play around the gas cans. Unfortunately, he also had some matches with him which he proceeded to light. The gas cans quickly ignited in Bobby's face and he was badly burned. He was rushed to St. Joseph's Hospital which was close by. To add to the misery of the situation, the hospital wasn't air conditioned making the severity of the burns even more intolerable. Although everything that could be done was done for him, gangrene set in and he died shortly afterwards.

Staff at the former G.T.'s Roadhouse would say that late at night when they were closing up, they could see the ghost of a little boy near the road. Although it was a different road configuration in the 1950's than today, this is the approximate area where Bobby was playing. A variety of workers glimpsed the figure of a boy and they all agreed on what they saw which lends weight to the sightings.

The third tragic death which hasn't resulted in a phantom as far as we know involved the father of Bobby and Susie much later when he was in his eighties. Being elderly yet fancying himself still something of a lady's man, George regularly visited a female friend in the northwest part of the city. They would have supper together, watch some TV and then around 8 or 9 pm, he would go home. Each night, he would phone his friend to tell her that he had arrived home safely. One night he failed to call and she became worried about him and phoned the police. They drove out to the farmhouse on the River Road and discovered that George's home had been broken into and that he had been badly beaten. He ended up in the hospital with broken ribs and other severe injuries. Unfortunately, he developed pneumonia and died soon after. As we have seen in many other stories, violent or tragic death often leads to visitations from the other side by unquiet spirits still seeking relief from the terrible events that happened to them in life. While George was an elderly man and could be expected to die of natural causes in the normal course of events, this sudden, violent conclusion to his life is the sort of unnatural event that leads to ghostly activity. Perhaps he does haunt the area he farmed for so many years. His son certainly does.

Schoolhouse Ghost

In the early days of rural education, most students attended one-room schools. With the advance of time and “progress”, these schools were abandoned in favour of centralized, larger schools where students were bused in to class. The old one-room schools, mostly belonging to the public board were sold off and many more were converted into comfortable family homes.



Our next story involves one such former school but in this case, it was previously owned by the Catholic school board and known as SS. No. 5.

To begin with, it is not the current residents of this building who have experienced odd things. So far, it has been other family members and friends of the owners but not the owners themselves Diane and Matt (not their real names.)

The first and most dramatic encounter with something otherworldly occurred when Diane and Matt were moving in. The basement can be entered from a handy outside door and the family were using this access to get everything moved into the house. Diane's sister-in-law Katie (not her real name) suddenly felt a

presence behind her and when she turned she clearly saw a dark-haired man, stern-faced and wearing a high collared brown shirt with no buttons. In an instant, he was gone. The deed on the house is in the name of the Catholic school board and one Father Mahoney. Could this be the man whom Katie saw and described as an authority figure? Was he looking over the new owners to see if they met with his approval? As someone familiar with the school, did he wish to make sure it was in good hands?

Another strange encounter happened in the basement. Diane and Matt's son, Kevin had a friend over and they were relaxing in the basement. Kevin decided he was going upstairs to take a shower. His friend, Drew was engrossed in a video game and said he'd keep playing. When he felt a tug on his sleeve, he shook it off thinking it was Kevin teasing him and kept on playing the game. He felt a second tug and shrugged it off as well. However, when he felt a third tug at his shirt, he started to feel annoyed and looked up to tell Kevin leave him alone. There was nobody there. Drew was more than a little startled and raced upstairs to tell Kevin what had happened. Kevin didn't believe him then. However, another day they were working on their tans outside and Drew offered to go inside and get them each a drink to cool off. He went into the kitchen and found all the kitchen cupboard doors thrown open. They had been shut when they went outside and no other family members were around. This time Kevin wasn't sure what was going on but he was more inclined to believe it was not of this world. Adding to this general perception that the basement was the favourite spot of the ghost was a series of pictures taken which when processed revealed white orbs. White orbs traditionally indicate the presence of ghosts.

Diane has sometimes awakened in the middle of the night feeling as if someone has touched her. She has not felt threatened however and feels the ghost may be more curious than anything else. Diane's mother, Susan has had her share of "curious" experiences too.

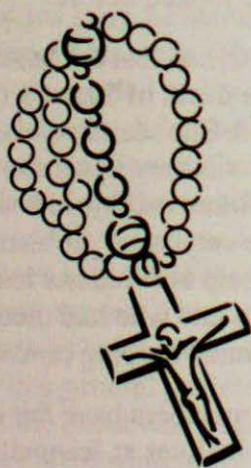
Two days after her father-in-law died, she saw him standing in their bedroom. She wasn't frightened but did wonder why

he hadn't appeared to his son, her husband instead. A few days later when a phone call came for her husband, she asked the caller to wait while she went outside to fetch him. She saw a figure in coveralls standing by the barn. She called out, "Oh John" but as she got closer she realized that it wasn't her husband but her father-in-law. He hasn't appeared to anyone since although he left a couple of mysteries behind him. He was a devoted Catholic, regularly attending mass and always kept his favourite rosary in his pocket or his hand. He had attended a Knights of Columbus meeting the day he died and as usual had his rosary with him. When his widow searched for the rosary, it wasn't anywhere to be found. She checked his other clothes but had no luck. Finally she gave up and bought a new rosary and a new suit for her husband to be buried in. Some time later, she was cleaning out the closet and in the pocket of his favourite suit, she found his rosary. It had not been there when she looked before.

Susan's sister, Beth had lost the band of her wedding ring many months before the death of Susan's father-in-law but she had not lost the diamond. She searched everywhere for the ring but couldn't find it and was very upset about the loss. One day, she was watching a well-known psychic on television who advised a woman with the very same problem to "pray to someone who has passed on" to help her find her lost ring. Beth decided to pray to Susan's father-in-law who had died two days previously. The next morning she found the ring on the floor by her bed.

Still other family members have felt the presence of spirits in their lives. A niece who lives at Jeannette's Creek moved into a house that was owned by the same couple for many years. When the husband died in a nursing home, his wife followed soon after. They had made few changes to the house so that when Jennifer and her husband moved in, they started on some major renovations. As we have seen before so many times, this type of change can trigger strange occurrences. In this instance, cupboard doors opened unexpectedly, pictures on the walls tipped over sideways and there were footsteps upstairs when no one was there. Their son saw a "gray-haired lady with glasses" which describes the former owner of the house very well. Even more

interesting, they could smell the fragrance of Old Spice in the bathroom. Old Spice was the aftershave that the old gentleman always wore. It would seem that the old couple wanted to see what changes were being made to the home they had shared for many years.

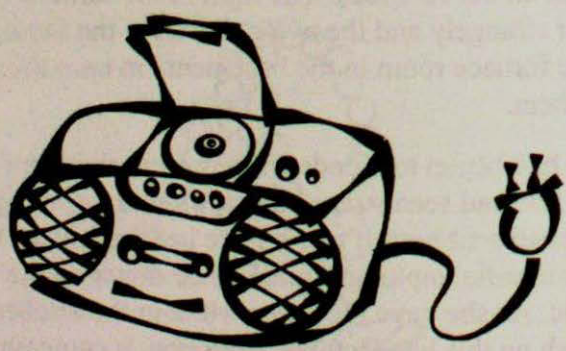


Kitchen Ghost

When the lights went off again in the middle of dinner preparations on a dark day in October, Donna (not her real name) wondered how long it would be before they came on again this time. She and her family had been coping with electrical disturbances like this for some time as well as other odd things. Toys and other objects would be moved from place to place in the house and their pet cats would hiss and arch their backs as if something was disturbing them but nothing was there. Donna had felt someone tugging on her hair as she lay in bed and felt a soothing hand on her forehead. The light in the furnace room would flicker strangely and the two children in the family refused to go into the furnace room in the basement "in case the ghost" were to get them.

Donna had begun to wonder if they were right and there was a ghost. She had seen strange shadows running along the walls of the basement herself and it gave her the creeps. One day, she found their radio unplugged and upside down on the floor and playing music. As she gave the light switch in the kitchen an impatient push on this late October afternoon, it came on revealing that she wasn't alone. As she turned, she saw the apparition of a man visible from his neck to his knees. She described him as wearing "a dirty undershirt over a big belly and dirty green workpants." She gasped and ran from the kitchen to the outdoors to get away from this horrible sight. Brad Pitt he wasn't. As she calmed down and thought more about this man and the other strange things going on, she realized that most of them had happened after they started making changes to the house. They had been painting and redecorating since the spring of 2006. Perhaps, they had stirred something up? Sometimes she felt as though she had a gentle ghost offering reassurance to her and sometimes one that seemed to be demanding attention and looking for something unknown. Certainly the appearance of the

man was unpleasant but he disappeared as quickly as he arrived and hasn't been back since. As long as the activity doesn't intensify or cause her children to become unduly fearful, Donna is content to see what happens next.



A Cornered Ghost

On King St. West in Chatham, in my last book, we learned about a faithful doctor who seemed to want to continue his rounds even after death as he donned his white lab coat and headed out the door across the road to what was then St. Joseph's Hospital.

In this new story, we encounter a member of another helping profession that of firefighter who also seemed to take his duties extremely seriously. Around the corner from the doctor's house, on Robertson Ave, there was a terrible house fire which left a great deal of damage that had to be cleaned up and repaired. A cleaning and restoration company was hired to clean up and fix the house which was still structurally sound. They were making good progress and had begun to tackle the basement where they were cleaning and painting. Suddenly one of the men looked up and saw something in the corner of the room. Instantly the basement cleared of the workers and the entire crew refused to return to the job. They believed they had seen a ghost. Hearing of this, a full-time firefighter by the name of Mel Dorner (not his real name) volunteered to continue with the work. He had witnessed many grisly scenes in his day and wasn't afraid to meet up with something he'd never seen before.

He was toiling away in the basement and got the same surprise as the other workers. Mel kept his head as he saw a figure from the waist up materializing in the corner of the room. What is so remarkable besides his presence of mind is the fact that he recognized the ghost but he couldn't place the person. For weeks, he struggled to recall who this was and where he might have seen the man for indeed it was the figure of a man.

A while later, Mel was assigned to Fire Hall No. 1 and one day he was cleaning in the museum attached to the station as part

of his regular duties when he came across a picture of the first firefighter who died in the line of duty. It was the ghost on Robertson Ave.

Did this devoted man hear the siren on the fire truck and feel a need to return to duty?



An Electrifying Experience

In this story, we have a perfect example of one of the most basic and mischievous interferences ghosts may play in our lives. On Witherspoon Ave. in Chatham, a new family moved into a house that had been owned by only one previous family. It needed a lot of updating and to add to the renovation confusion, the fluorescent lights which had been installed throughout the house started giving problems. The owners would flip the switches and the lights would flicker, take a while to light or not light at all. Then they would go off unexpectedly. There is something inherently spooky about being plunged into the dark and not being able to restore light immediately, about losing control even momentarily. The simplest solution to the problem was to replace all the fluorescent tubes and this the owners quickly did. The lights kept flickering. Finally, the owners' stepfather said they needed to replace the entire electrical system, all the wiring in the house. He offered to perform this work and for a time the lights worked normally. The respite was brief however, as the problem of "faulty" switches came back. The owner felt that since a practical solution didn't work then perhaps a more unusual approach might help. She thought the problem wasn't electrical but ghostly and decided she would get to know the ghost and treat it like a new neighbour. She introduced the family members by saying their names out loud and asking if they could be friends. This novel method worked. When the lights



Witherspoon Ave. Chatham

went out, the family would ask for them to come back on and sure enough, they did.

The Black Shadow

As children, most of us have experienced a fear of something. It might be of a stranger, or the dark or of the boogeyman, a mythic figure that would crawl out from under the bed late at night and leap out at us in the dark. Most of us have never met up with such a threatening figure, scaring us silly, consigning its fearsome shape and danger to the furthest recesses of our conscious minds. It couldn't exist, could it?

The following story comes with a warning. Do not read this late at night especially if you are alone.

The boogeyman might be a monster with two heads, red eyes that shoot fire and reeking breath. Or it might be a black shadow that haunts one of the darker areas of a house, a closet. And particularly a closet located in the bedroom of a young girl living in a house at the corner of Queen St and Alexandra Ave. in Chatham.

This young girl sleeping peacefully at night would be awakened by the closet doors opening and a black figure which appeared and tried to draw her toward the closet. She complained to her mother about the figure but her mother didn't believe her. The young girl would feel the bed moving and in the morning, the bed would be moved to the other side of the room. This fact didn't convince the mother perhaps because she didn't witness it with her own eyes. However, another incident did.

The house is open concept with the living room flowing into the dining room. One evening, the daughter Jackie (not her real name) was sitting at the dining room table having a snack before going to bed. Her mother was sitting in the living room where she could see Jackie. Suddenly, Jackie froze and started staring at a spot in the room. Without taking her eyes off the object, she began edging her way over to her mother and sat as

close to her on the couch as she could get. In a scared voice, she asked, "Who is that man over there?" Her mother was startled by her daughter's behaviour but determined to reassure her. She told Jackie, "Why, it's your guardian angel." Jackie replied, "That's no guardian angel." It was the black, shadowy figure from her bedroom.

Besides this disturbing figure, a loud knocking will occur at any time of the day but when the door is opened, nobody is there. Jackie's mother found it hard to keep a babysitter and even her mother refused to stay in the house.

One New Year's Eve, Jackie's mother returned home from a party and the cab driver exclaimed when he heard her address, "You live in that house?!" He told her the house had belonged to his grandparents who left it to his parents who then wanted him to have it. He refused because it was too spooky for him; too many odd things had happened.

One of them was the appearance of a black figure that tried to pull him into the closet and that moved his bed from one side of the bedroom to the other.

Blanche Venus Milner

Born September 8, 1882

Died March 16, 1896

Photo below is of Blanche who died in a fall down the back stairs at the Milner House in Chatham. She is said to turn on the lights in this stairwell so that nobody else ever falls. Ironically, her younger sister May lived to adulthood but she too also fell down a set of stairs in her home while carrying her child in her arms and died. The baby however, survived.



Bridget Revisited

One of the benefits of publishing a book is that sometimes the people who buy it or read it have additional information to add to some particular story. This is the case with one of the best documented ghosts in Chatham who haunts a home on Cross St. This is the story of Bridget and it is one that you might already be familiar with. However more background details have come to light and I am pleased to correct some of the facts and add some new twists to this intriguing tale. As I wrote previously, we have to go back to an earlier time in Chatham sometime around the First World War or perhaps earlier. Bridget was not an unmarried housekeeper however; she was the daughter of the house who looked after her two brothers. She had very long red hair and was engaged to a soldier who went off to war and never returned. He left behind a fiancé who discovered she was pregnant and suddenly alone with no support. Unwed mothers were frowned upon by society and Bridget could not cope with the public disgrace. It is not hard to imagine her grief and distress at what to do about her plight and in a fit of despair she hung herself in the small bedroom at the back of the house that is a sewing room today.

A latter day owner of the house has explained that the home was originally owned by the Soutar family who also owned the seed store of that name. They were followed by three families who lived in the house over the next five years. As we have seen, strong emotions and a tragic end are the ingredients for a ghost to appear and certainly all this activity of moving in and out may have made Bridget restless.

The next family to move in always had the sense that there was someone else in the house; it was never empty. The lady of the house felt extremely uncomfortable particularly in the back rooms and couldn't wait to leave it. Her daughter who was only a young child wanted a cat as a pet but not one of the eight cats

which they attempted to keep in the three years they lived there would stay in the house. They would hiss and act scared and eventually run away. The owner asked a priest to perform a cleansing of the house but to no avail. The situation came to a head one day in dramatic fashion. Mrs. Knight (not her real name) actually confronted Bridget who appeared to her at the top of the stairs dressed in a grey dress typical of the First World War. Her red hair was piled on top of her head. Mrs. Knight told her that it was her house now and that Bridget should leave. After that, she never had the sense of another presence and the antics stopped. The story doesn't end there though.

Another family moved in, One day the lady of the house discovered Bridget's love letters hidden in the ceiling and began to read them. From that time onward, the problems began. She would continually turn the lights on and off, constantly bang the heating registers and make other loud noises in the dead of the night. And there was always a coldness that accompanied her visits and the back sewing room. These tricks kept up and there was an instance where Bridget turned the lights off while the woman of the house was going down the stairs. This frightened her and she resolved to give up the battle with Bridget and move on.

In contrast, the next family to move in have not been intimidated by Bridget. Instead if she is up to her old tricks with the lights, they demand that she turn them back on and perhaps not surprisingly, she obeys. It does seem as if she respects a firm hand. These people have also made a startling discovery in one of the walls upstairs when they were doing some renovating. They found a long braid of hair. Could it have been Bridget's? There is really no way of knowing. In the past, people were known to put pieces of hair into walls to ward off evil spirits or for good luck. In an ironic twist, if the braid was Bridget's put there by her family to keep out bad spirits, it has had the opposite effect for many years as Bridget has returned to haunt the house not in a particularly evil way but certainly in a way to make her presence known.



A Capitol Ghost

This building on King St. West operated as a movie theatre for over 60 years until it closed in the early 1990's. Since that time, it has been taken over by the Chatham Capitol Theatre Association which is overseeing the complete renovation of the building. It was this building activity which first stirred up some supernatural activity that was noted in my first book. One of the earliest projectionists was one Charlie McGregor whose domain was the second floor which has now been completely gutted and redone. During the tearing down of walls and floors, various tools went missing only to turn up the next day and areas were tidied up so that the workers kept guessing about what was really going on. When Charlie's granddaughter visited from the west coast and toured the Capitol, she was convinced that there was a ghost and that it was most likely her close relative.

This theory was given added credence by the arrival of a new fundraiser for the theatre by the name of Grant Patterson. Grant had experienced paranormal activity in other places that he lived in Ontario and he wasn't frightened off by the odd reports coming from the people on the job. Instead he had every reason to believe them due to an odd encounter one evening.

He had been part of a group enjoying a social evening at the Capitol and had gone down into the lower area known as the Rotary Lounge to inspect the latest work. He thought he was accompanied by several members of the party especially when he felt a heavy pat on his shoulder that he heard as well as felt. He turned somewhat surprised and there was nobody there. He was completely alone. This incident caused him to ask questions of the work crew about anything unusual they had experienced. He soon found out that the supervising foreman (who no longer works there) had been closing up one night when everyone else but one other worker had gone home. It was dark and his fellow worker was at an entrance locking up. He glanced up at the stage



Charlie McGregor operating a camera at the Capitol Theatre in Chatham



The Capitol Theatre today

area and couldn't believe his eyes when he saw a figure moving across the stage. He was about to call out when the figure reached the edge of the stage and kept going through the air until it disappeared into a far wall. It was revealed after this that others had seen a shadowy figure in the upper area of the theatre but none so clear as this mysterious creature moving into thin air.

If the ghost is indeed Charlie McGregor he may simply be keeping watch over a theatre which he loved and worked in for many years. His antics are not malicious and certainly he brings an added cachet to the building.

Every self-respecting theatre has to have a ghost after all.

More on a Dedicated Doctor

A new round of ghost bus tours has produced a great deal of new detail about the dedicated doctor on King St. West we visited in my first book.

The doctor in question, Dr. Ferguson and his wife Grace lived in the house for sixty-one years with their three children (one daughter died). Dr. Ferguson operated a general practice from his home as well as maintaining privileges at St. Joseph's Hospital which was located across the street at the time.

Grace survived Dr. Ferguson for fifteen years after his death and lived in the house until she fell and had to enter a nursing home. After residing there for a time, she realized that she couldn't return to live in the house on King St. again.

The husband of a co-worker who sold real estate alerted Vicky and Jim Heyninck that the house was for sale. The transaction went through smoothly as Grace and her children were pleased that a family with children and pets were moving in.

Vicky felt comfortable in the house as soon as she moved in but her husband was a little concerned about some of the bills particularly the heating bill which was very high due to the cold winter. Therefore, when she first had an encounter with a ghostly shape she didn't want to tell him or any of her family about it. It happened this way.

Vicky was alone in the house watching television in the front room. From her vantage point, she could look into the front foyer and the closet which had a full-length mirror on it. As she sat there, she saw a figure pass by. It was a rather short man with dark hair dressed in a white coat. She thought she had an intruder in the house and called out, "Hello!" There was no answer so she began searching the rooms and checking the doors. The doors

were locked and there was nobody in the house. Vicky was rather taken aback by the experience but she wasn't afraid at all of the figure. She decided to keep the experience to herself for the time being however.

One evening, her son had some teenaged friends over and they started talking about old houses and the likelihood of them being haunted. Vicky mentioned that she knew there were several haunted homes in Chatham according to various reports. Her son surprised her by saying, "I've seen a ghost." His mother quickly asked, "Where?" She was even more surprised by his reply "Here." Things got even more interesting when her son began to describe a man with dark hair wearing a white coat. Vicky asked him what he did and how he felt and he told her that he wasn't afraid. He had checked the doors and windows and searched around the house without finding anything amiss. His friends were astonished and when Vicky announced, "Well, I've seen him too" they left the house in a hurry.

Some time later Vicky invited her softball team over for a social get-together and one of the team members, while touring the house with Vicky and the others froze while upstairs and said, "I've got to get out of here." She went downstairs and outside into the fresh air. The others followed soon after to make sure their friend was all right. She had recovered but said she had felt very strange. Vicky began to explain what she had experienced in the house and she could see that her husband who was on the outside fringe of the group was listening intently. When she finished, he chimed in with "I've seen it too." Vicky was relieved to hear this and all her family was amazed by the similarity of the vision.

She decided to phone her next door neighbour who had lived on King St. since the early 1970's to ask some questions about Dr. Ferguson. Had he kept his lab coats in the closet in the front hall? How tall was he? Her neighbour told her that it was indeed his habit to don a clean lab coat taken from the closet, check his appearance in the mirror and then head across the street to his duties. He was also on the short side. Then she asked why Vicky was asking so many questions. Vicky replied, "Because

I've seen him." There was a long pause but the neighbour was not at all surprised because she said Dr. Ferguson loved the house so much. He had been bedridden for many years and Grace looked after him so both of them were really tied to the house in more ways than one.

Her pets, two previous dogs and her current dog have all been caught leaning back with their heads cocked as they laid before the closet as if they were trying to catch what someone invisible was saying or trying to figure out just what they could sense.

Dr. Ferguson's appearances all ceased upon Grace's death as if Dr. Ferguson was simply carrying on his rounds until she could join him.

That doesn't explain why the family dog seems to sense a presence however. Maybe it is now Grace who has decided to visit the family since Vicky has made such a concerted effort to keep some of the Fergusons' furnishings in the house and flowers in the garden. Whatever the case, the home has a happy feeling that would seem to indicate that the Fergusons approve of their home's new owners and wish them as long and contented a residence as they had.



The Eerie Carriage

Once upon a time there lived a young girl who was ill-treated by her stepmother but who through a magical intervention rode in a carriage transformed from a pumpkin drawn by six white horses to the ball. That of course was Cinderella and while this story doesn't involve a prince or a glass slipper, it does have magical elements and a ghostly carriage that vanished just like the one in the fairy tale.

While our tale has a mundane beginning—unloading groceries from a car by a mother and her daughter— after this point, it takes on entirely another cast. As the mother reached for the groceries in an alley on Gray St, she heard the unmistakable clip clop clip of horses hooves. She was startled but didn't really register what she was hearing until she felt brushed back by the sight of an old-fashioned carriage passing by so closely that she dove into the car to escape being run down. Her daughter saw the image in the mirror and gasped, "Did you see what I saw?" They both described the carriage as huge with large wheels and running very close to their car.

Another time, while living in this same area, Karen saw the back of a woman dressed in Victorian clothes with long, curly tresses falling down her back as she descended her stairs. Maybe Cinderella was trying to catch up with her vanished carriage?



Our mother, Shannon (not her real name) used to live on Lansdowne Ave. where she and her children had some other unusual experiences. One of these took place around the Christmas season. While we are familiar with a jolly old elf making an appearance on Christmas Eve, her young son who had gotten up in the night to get a drink of water met someone or something quite different. He got a glimpse of a black shadow

hovering around the tree and he knew it wasn't Santa Claus. On Christmas morning, Shannon found toys that had been wrapped up as gifts and left under the tree for the children opened up and strewn around the floor. Naturally she thought her son was the culprit but when she chastised him, he protested that "it was the man with the long hair and glasses" that he had seen in the night who had opened the gifts. Shannon believed him because she had known other strange things to happen in the house.

Her daughter's make-up bag that she placed in the centre of her bed in her room, disappeared and then showed up in a different spot. Once when Shannon was alone in bed at night, she heard a rustling, crackling sound coming from some plastic bags she had in the room ready to give to a charity. Her first thought was that it was her kids but they were tucked up fast asleep. As the noise continued, she finally snapped out, "Stop that Lindsay Ryan." The name just came to her out of the blue and the rustling stopped instantly.



These two pictures taken in the alley between Gray St and Lorne Ave in Chatham were snapped seconds apart. It was a crystal clear night yet a gray mist appeared on the picture when the film was developed.

Silent Night

One of the most comforting thoughts we can have as humans is that our loved ones are resting at peace and are happy in whatever adventure awaits us beyond death. Receiving a sign of this sense of peace reassures us whether we have a religious view of the world or not.

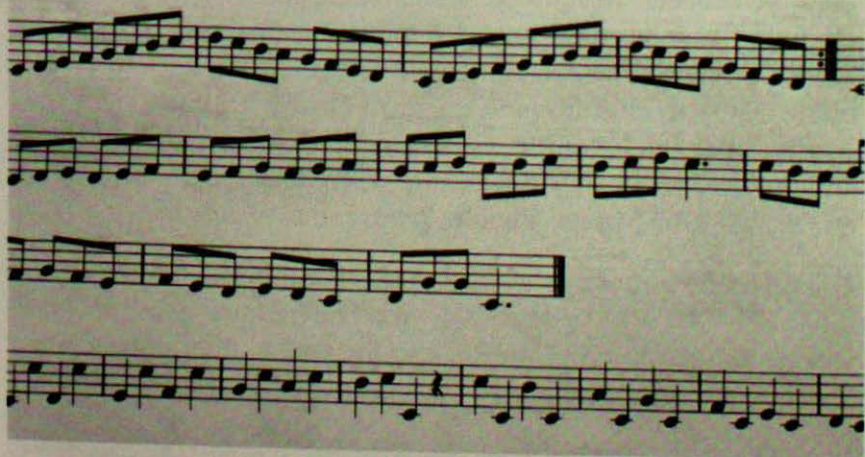
A one-time resident of Willowmac Ave was fortunate in this regard. Diane (not her real name) and her husband had moved into a new home in May 1992 and sadly Diane's mother passed away in July. As the Christmas season approached in December, Diane thought often about her mother who had loved this festive time of year. When Diane was cleaning out her mother's house after she had died, she came upon her favourite Christmas mug which was seasonally decorated and played "Silent Night" when picked up. When put back down, it stopped playing. She decided to put the mug on a shelf she had in the kitchen where she arranged other decorations.

One day, she was waxing the kitchen floor when she heard "Silent Night" begin to play. She didn't have the radio on or any kind of music playing. Surprised, she lifted up the mug and then put it back down. It stopped playing. Diane went back to her chore and was perplexed when the mug started to play "Silent Night" once more. Again, Diane picked up the mug and replaced it so that the carol stopped. Once more she bent down to finish her task and couldn't believe her ears when she once again heard the strains of "Silent Night" coming from the mug. With that, she said out loud. "OK, Mom I know you're here!" The music stopped immediately and didn't start up again. After that day, the mug never started up on its own. Diane is convinced it was her mother paying her a visit to let her know she was doing all right. When her husband returned from work that night and she told

him what had happened, he wasn't at all surprised and agreed that she had indeed received a welcome visit from beyond the pale.

Many years passed and Diane never received another sign from her mother until this past year. Her family was all in the kitchen preparing the traditional Christmas feast of turkey and trimmings when the mug sitting in its usual place of honour began to play "Silent Night". Diane and her husband exchanged surprised looks and her daughter and husband wondered what was going on. When Diane told them why she thought the mug was playing, they all chorused,

"We hear you Mom/Grandma!" and the music stopped.



The Ghost Ship

In the early days of settlement in Upper Canada, movement of people and supplies was most easily accomplished by boat. These were fearful times as the white man pushed into Indian territory to claim it as his own. Indian trails were everywhere connecting many villages including Rondeau Bay to the Thames at the Forks or Chatham. For the British defenders, sailing into these waters was fraught with danger. One unfortunate fleet carrying nearly 700 officers and men of the 60th and 80th Regiments met with a different sort of peril, the kind that still demands respect from sailors of these unpredictable waters.

The camping ground at the eastern end of Pointe aux Pins (Rondeau), at the mouth of Patterson Creek was the scene of a disaster on November 7, 1763. A violent storm blew up on the lake forcing some fifty "bateaux" of Major John Wilkins fleet onto the beaches. Several boats foundered and some twenty others full of supplies were pounded to pieces in the surf. Sixty-three British privates drowned along with several officers. They were on their way to lend aid in the siege of Detroit against Chief Pontiac after setting out from Niagara on October 19th. Wilkins and the survivors reached the shore where they buried the dead and camped for five days before returning to Niagara.

Throughout the following years, many stories have been told of bits of bone and scraps of wood being found washed ashore along Lake Erie's beaches in the area of Rondeau and a ghost ship is rumoured to have been seen at Terrace Beach.

On a stormy night, with the wind whipping the waves onto the shores, it's not hard to visualize a ghostly ship "tossed upon

cloudy seas" out on the treacherous lake "when the gales of November come early".

From "*Valley of the Lower Thames*" by Fred Coyne Hamil
and the plaque erected by the Ontario Archeological and Historical Sites Board



The (Dark) Lady Vanishes

All of us have mistaken shadows for figures in the dark but when one suddenly appears and as mysteriously vanishes, we suspect we have come across something beyond our everyday experiences.

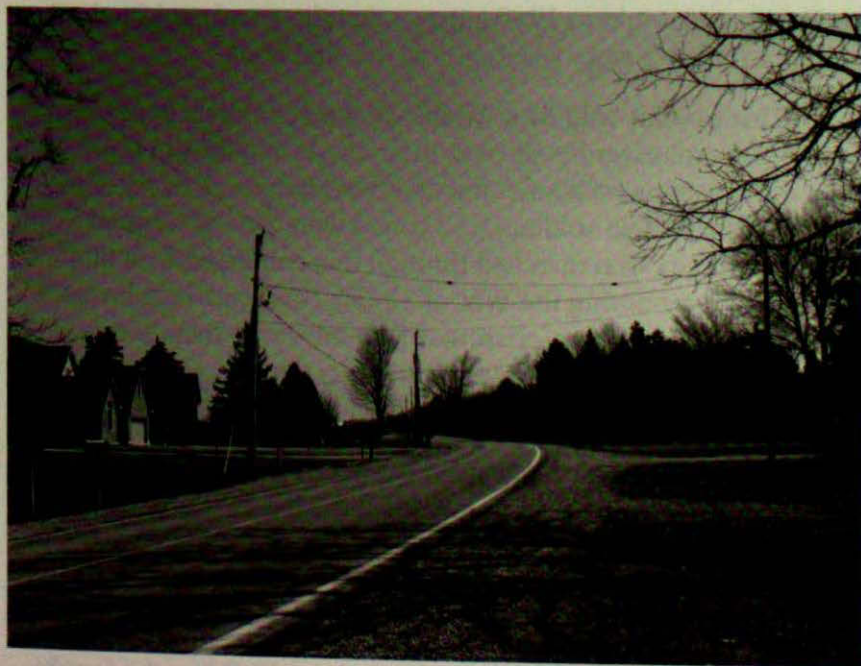
This situation happened to a couple of young corn crew leaders a number of years ago. They were attending a summer party at Berkshire Estates a subdivision located in the southern part of the city of Chatham. Their ride home to the River Road Dover was supposed to arrive at 1:00 am but didn't show up. Being young and fit, the men decided to walk home knowing it would take them well over two hours as they lived on the opposite side of the city.

It was a clear night with bright moonlight reflecting off the pavement. As they reached the final portion of their trip, well past St. Clair College, the sidewalk disappeared and they began walking facing traffic on the south side of the road. Both men had lived in the area all of their lives and were familiar with the houses and properties along the route. As they passed by familiar spots, they marked their progress and took note of their surroundings in a relaxed way as those used to the river road. The moonlight was shining brightly along their path helping them see the ground.

Suddenly the dark figure of a slight woman appeared in their path wrapped in a full-length coat with the collar up around her face. One minute she wasn't there and the next she was right in front of them. One of the men pushed the other out of the way thinking she would bump into him. They heard her high heels clicking on the pavement for a few steps and then there was no sound and she vanished from sight as suddenly and completely as

she had appeared. The young men exchanged startled looks and immediately blurted out "Did you see that?" They couldn't believe their eyes. Shortly after this, they were further rattled to run into a white mist close to the curve in the road near the Ward farmhouse. On no other part of the road had they seen any dew or mist because the night was so clear and fine.

The next morning came early and during the course of the working day, one of the men talked to a friend who told him her great aunt had died in the night. When he asked her where she had lived, he was stunned to hear that she lived in the exact vicinity of his encounter with the dark lady. Was the dark lady the ghost of this great aunt? Still later he heard a reluctant admission from a neighbour that he and his young son had also witnessed a strange, dark figure walking along the river road that night. Although, many years ago now, this encounter with "the other side" of Chatham-Kent is vivid in all of their memories.



On the March

On the River Road Dover, near the Jacob side road lives a couple who have had a number of haunting experiences at different addresses in the city lending strength to the notion that people are haunted not places. Whether this is true or not, their encounters with otherworldly things are fascinating.

Mrs. Withington (not her real name) has a natural affinity for sensing spirits and she has been interested in psychic phenomena for many years. Therefore, it is not surprising that she invited a psychic from London to come down and visit her home. This lady told Mrs. Withington that she had three ghosts who had not passed over living in her house. One of them was very unhappy. The proximity of their house to the location of the Jacob homestead and the spot where the murdered Mary Jacob was seen by Reverend Knight in 1900 suggest that the ghost could indeed be that of Mary a story recounted in my first book.

This psychic told Mrs. Withington that soldiers in red coats with white crossover bands over their chests and bayonets on their old weapons (muskets) march across her porch every night at 11:00 pm. British soldiers (red coats) were part of General Proctor's forces who marched through this countryside on this side of the river during the War of 1812. Their cartridge boxes and bayonets were worn crisscross fashion across their chests and the straps were white. This description fits the historical context very well.

Mrs. Withington's grandson has seen an older man in a checked hunting style shirt going down the River Road. The psychic feels that he is a spirit guide for one of the three ghosts and he must stay with them until they cross over into the light.

Mrs. Withington's daughter Lori is also sensitive to ghosts and has had a few intriguing encounters herself. When the family

was living on the river but right in town on Grand Ave. West , she would see a dark-haired woman, late twenties or early thirties dressed in a tiered long gown running through her bedroom every night as if she was being chased. Her mother had seen a British soldier in the house and even reported that he was still giving orders and telling her to do this or not to do that. He even instructed Mrs. Withington not to put anything over the front door. Lori has felt herself being lightly kissed close to but not on her lips by what she is sure is a man as she lay down for a nap before heading off to work. Could this be the British soldier and is it the same soldier chasing the dark-haired young woman?

Return to the Waldens

During our most recent round of ghost bus tours, we were fortunate to have Greg Walden come on board and tell us his family's latest experiences in the lovely white house on the corner of Lacroix St. and King St. West by the Lacroix St. bridge.

As we learned in my previous book, Greg and his family are very happy to co-habit with their ghosts. In fact, they feel like they are being embraced by the atmosphere of the house as if it were giving them a warm hug. They feel privileged to share this space with their otherworldly friends. And Greg thinks there are three of them.

The first of their ghosts is a large, broad shouldered man about six feet tall wearing a full-length overcoat and wide brimmed fedora of the type worn in the 1940's. This could be the ghost of R.S. "Smoke" Reynolds a local athlete who starred in football and hockey in the 1920's. He went on to found the hockey team that became the Chatham Maroons, served as building chairman for the Chatham Memorial Arena and was a member of the Board of Trustees for the Public General Hospital for 40 years among many other community interests. He died in 1983 at age 80 after a fall down the stairs in his residence on King St. W. While Smoke didn't die in the house but in the hospital, he did die of injuries suffered in the fall in the house and so it is not unreasonable to believe that this imposing presence only ever seen as a flash out of the side of an eye is that of the former hockey great.

The second ghost is far different from Smoke and has only been seen by the Waldens' daughter. She was upstairs collecting dirty laundry as part of her assigned chores and had entered her parents' bedroom when she saw the figure of a young woman sitting on the bed crying. She immediately thought it was her

brother's girlfriend although she wondered why she was dressed as if she was going to the prom. She had on a long dress with ruffles in tiers down to the bottom and her hair was swept up with a few loose tendrils trailing down her neck. She backed out of the room and went downstairs to tell her parents about what she had seen. She said they better go up and find out what was wrong. When they expressed surprise and asked her what was going on she named her brother's girlfriend and said she was upstairs crying. They replied that there was nobody in the house but the three of them there in the kitchen. She insisted they go upstairs to see and when they entered the bedroom, it was empty. Greg has tried to find out who this visitor from the past might have been but has had no luck so far. He doesn't doubt for a moment that his daughter did indeed see a woman from another time because of the details of dress and hairstyle that his daughter was able to provide.

The third ghost is by far the most active and has come to be known as "Kevin." He got this name one night when Greg and Marcia were sitting watching a video that they really wanted to see. Kevin was in a rambunctious mood and was banging on the walls. This was a habit that the family had come to associate with him as an attention-getting device. If they acknowledged his presence by saying something, the rapping and knocking and banging would stop. If they ignored him, he would bang harder and louder. This is what happened on this particular night. Kevin started rapping on the walls and the Waldens intent on their program ignored him. So he knocked harder. They turned up the volume on the VCR and Kevin responded in kind by pounding even more on the walls. They kept turning up the volume until the sound was blasting into the room. Finally, Marcia shouted "Kevin, stop that racket!" And the pounding stopped. Greg looked at her and asked where that had come from and she replied that the name just came naturally to her. This playful ghost has been Kevin ever since. He makes his presence felt in other ways too. He has been known to flip books off the shelf so that they tumble end over end in a spiral before falling to the floor. He runs

up and down the hallways and the steps are quick and light as though they belong to a young child. He likes to pull hair, to poke and to blow into ears. And he whispers. While some of these antics might strike apprehension in some people, the Waldens relish the hubbub and each time they begin another phase of renovation eagerly look forward to what might happen next.



R.S. "SMOKE" REYNOLDS

A Son's Message to his Parents

Often psychic ability runs in families with a child inheriting a parent's ability to sense things not of this world. This would seem to be the case in this tragic tale of premature loss that is surrounded by unusual and thought-provoking circumstances. To tell the tale of the son, we need to first explore the history of the father.

Called a "seer" by the Natives and descended from pirate Captain Henry Morgan, this retired bodybuilder, national Canadian skeet shooting champion, bronco buster, registered scuba diving instructor, former firefighter and current Tilbury resident has packed more living and extraordinary experiences into his lifetime to date than many people do in their entire lives. His encounters with paranormal events occurred from an early age and began in the Toronto area where he worked on a Clydesdale horse farm that supplied some members of the famous Budweiser Clydesdale team.

He and another farm hand had been assigned bunks in a room near the barns and were asleep one morning when the owner came rushing into the room and demanded that they get out immediately. Still half-asleep, they stumbled out of their bunks and watched in astonishment as the owner slammed the door shut and told them to stand back. Suddenly they heard a thunderous roar from inside the room. They fell flat on the ground in terror as the howling continued and thuds and bangs erupted against the walls. This lasted for about five minutes and then the owner said it was OK, they could go back in. Apprehensively, they opened the door only to discover that all was as they had left it. The owner reassured them that nothing would happen now. It seems a man went insane and hung himself from a light in the room. Periodically, the room would be visited by this hurricane-like force which left things untouched.

Another bizarre encounter involved a white washed wall that kept rebuilding itself. Our storyteller, Doug (not his real name) noticed the fresh cement on this whitewashed wall and like any young person decided to write his initials in it. However, the new cement would disappear and the wall would appear whitewashed again. This happened several times. Finally the wall was torn down and behind it, they found a dead body buried at the exact spot.

Years passed and Doug moved on to other pastimes and places. He and his wife and son Robbie moved to Cambridge and this is where this part of the story happened. Robbie predicted that he wouldn't see his nineteenth birthday and unfortunately this foretelling came true as he was killed in a car accident when he was eighteen in 1993.

The day after he had buried his son, Doug saw him in his bedroom. Their golden retriever went up to greet Robbie and after he had quieted the dog who lay down again, he spoke these extraordinary words. "I've been allowed to come and give you this message. I'm in a beautiful place and I'm not in any pain. That's all I can say." Then he left the room and went down the hall. In a daze, Doug followed him into the kitchen where his spirit repeated, "I'm in a beautiful place and I'm not in any pain. I can't say any more but when your time comes, I'll be waiting for you."

Shortly afterwards, Doug and his wife went up north to North Bay where they were staying when they got the phone call about the accident. Joan (not her real name) said she wished she'd had a chance to say good-bye to Robbie. As they got into bed, there was a huge flash of lightning that lit up the room. They got up and went outside to view the storm and all was clear. There were no clouds in the sky and no thunder. Robbie loved firecrackers in life, the bigger the better and his parents believe this was a message to them. This was not to be his only message however as a still more unusual communication was on the horizon.

In his role of firefighter Doug helped battle a fire that took the lives of a family of five. It was Doug who discovered the bodies. He developed a friendship with a woman related to the family who felt a strong connection to him for his efforts in trying to save her family members. They became good friends. After Robbie died, this woman had a dream in which she saw him and he gave her a poem. In the morning, she found that she had written out the poem but couldn't read her own writing. She typed it up as best she could and took it to Joan who was very upset but touched when she read it. The friend asked Joan if she should take it to Doug who was at home. Despite the fact that Doug and Joan's home was fifteen miles away, she agreed to deliver the poem entitled "A Message to My Parents." The poem is included in its entirety here.

When the friend explained that she couldn't read her own handwriting, Doug asked her if she kept the original. She said yes and when he asked her if she would go home and get it, she quickly agreed. Meanwhile, Doug searched his son's room to find a sample of his son's handwriting. When the friend returned after a thirty mile round trip, Doug saw at once that the handwriting was his son's. This poem describing the afterlife as a beautiful place without disease, crime or drugs was his son's reassuring message delivered through the hand of a sympathetic close friend of the family.

Doug and Joan are absolutely convinced that their son Robbie wanted them to know he was in a better place and that they shouldn't mourn his passing. It would seem that Robbie inherited his father's psychic ability in predicting his own death and that he was able to communicate afterwards in an amazing way.

A MESSAGE TO MY PARENTS

It's hard to know the ones you love
Will have to say good-bye
And that our parting brings such grief
And always makes you cry.
I ask instead of tears, you think of me and smile

Remember instead with fondness,
our times together
And know we will meet again in a while.
Also, know that I did not die
For now I live in a brand new beautiful place
Where everything is peaceful and bright
And a smile on every face.

There are no drugs, diseases, hatred or war
Just be happy for me Dad because I'm happy for ever more.

I'm sorry you have to go through such grief
And I hope your grieving will be brief.
Also know, that I still LOVE you
I'm never far away.
Not only is my home up above you
But also in your heart everyday.

YOUR LOVING SONROBB

Haunted House or Haunted Furniture?

In investigating ghostly phenomena, it quickly becomes apparent that any preconceptions a person might have about how things happen can be misleading and in fact maintaining an open mind is the best approach. We simply don't understand all that goes on in this world and can't use our rational minds to fathom some pretty strange things.

One clear instance of something inexplicable and intriguing is the case of what appears to be haunted furniture in a house in Ridgetown. A local couple acquired a beautiful bow front china cabinet while living in Belle River from the estate of a doctor who had died and proudly set up the cabinet in their front room to display their treasures. Shortly afterwards, they received an ornate clock that looked perfect sitting on top of the china cabinet. The only problem was that every time the clock was put on top of the cabinet, it wouldn't run unless the door was left open. The clock could be moved to another spot in the room and would run fine but placement atop the cabinet caused immediate problems. Don (not the owner's real name) checked the clock over thoroughly and couldn't find anything wrong with it. This peculiarity of timekeeping puzzled the family until they learned from friends who were visiting that the owners of the cabinet and the clock who were known to them couldn't stand each other in life. It would seem their animosity towards each other somehow transferred itself to their prized possessions.

The story doesn't end there however. Don has always wanted to have a few pieces of his family's furniture in his own home and was thrilled when he was eventually able to get a dresser that had belonged to his grandfather. He surveyed the piece carefully and decided it would make a handy telephone table. He proceeded to drill a hole in the back of the dresser to

feed telephone wires through and prepared to install a telephone jack in the wall. He brought in the telephone he intended to use and set it on the dresser. A few minutes later, the phone rang. The wires weren't connected and the jack wasn't even in the wall. Shocked he stared at it for a bit before tentatively picking up the phone to answer. Nobody was there. This happened a number of times before the phone was properly connected. Don likes to think that it was his grandfather getting in touch to say he was glad that he had a piece of his furniture.

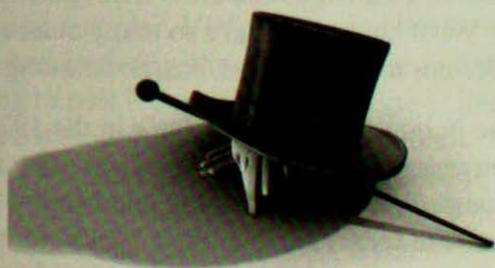
Topper

A 1937 movie by the same name starring Cary Grant as a well-dressed spirit gives the title to this startling but charming ghost tale.

In the early twentieth century, a new agricultural industry sprang up in Wallaceburg and then expanded to Chatham on land not yet included within the city limits. That industry, the Canada and Dominion Sugar Co. became the largest sugar beet plant in the British Empire according to author Victor Lauriston and was located north west of Chatham. Eventually, the factory closed and the land was used to build a nursing home called Canadianna.

In order not to disturb the residents at night, it was the practice in this nursing home to use flashlights to check on people during the regular evening rounds. As a result, the corridors were dark and empty and only subdued light illuminated the workstations of the staff. This story comes to me from a former employee who had just started working at the facility as a young woman rather nervous about making a good impression and doing a good job. The staff warned her that a man in a top hat and evening dress could be seen in the hallway when a patient was about to die. The newcomer thought it was a ploy intended to scare her and provide some amusement for the other staff who would be watching for her reaction to every slight sound or moving shadow. That was until she saw him. There he was an elegant figure dressed as described in a top hat and evening garb striding around the corner and vanishing as she hurried to catch him in her flashlight beam. She shone the light down the corridor but he was gone and nothing could be seen. It was with some trepidation that she learned from the other staff that indeed a resident had died and the appearance of the mystery man once again marked the passing of another soul. It was a phenomenon that she witnessed more than once.

While lacking the style and import of this phantom of the nursing home, a mischievous ghost has been noted by more than one resident of Meadowpark Nursing Home on Sandys St. The land the home is situated on used to belong to the Ursuline sisters who maintained an orchard there. It is said that a little boy named Michael fell out of an apple tree on the property and died. His ghost is supposed to haunt Meadowpark where he has been seen and felt by residents. He likes to blow puffs of breath on their cheeks or flick the lights on and off in their rooms. He seems like the same kind of prankster who visits the Waldens just up the road. It is not surprising that children who meet with an unexpected early death maintain their childish habits and energy. And it is not surprising that a location where death is a regular visitor today should bear the imprint of that earlier, sad loss of yesteryear.



On the Warpath

A few years ago, ancient remains were found in the Pain Court area north of the Thames River and on Walpole Island. Dr. Michael Spence a professor of anthropology at the University of Western Ontario was invited to examine the remains. He found that the Pain Court site revealed seven individuals had been buried in a single burial site. There were two men involved, one elderly and one teenaged along with five children who ranged in age from birth to about nine years old. They were put in the grave during different time periods and were all closely related. What is even more unusual is that the area does not appear to have been used as a home base but was rather a special place chosen to be a ceremonial burial site. The remains date back to the Younge Phase which ran from 800-1200 A.D.

The actual locations of both discoveries were kept private to prevent any kind of looting which would destroy valuable anthropological findings. The general vicinity of the Pain Court site is known however. Our present story doesn't take place on this property but isn't far off as the crow flies (particularly in Kent County!). What happened there so many eons ago may have repercussions for our tale of a rather hostile haunting.

The house in question had been built in the 1970's and stood for eleven years before the family of our story moved in. The family consisted of the parents Don and Martha Stokes (not their real names) and their baby daughter Vicky. Martha is a teacher and the move coincided with the summer break to give the family time to adjust to their new surroundings and get settled. The latter turned out to be the hardest thing to do as unsettling things began to happen almost immediately.

It started with footsteps going down the hall towards the baby's room. Martha would be awakened by the noise and rush to check on the baby who was always sleeping quietly. Her husband

Don was a sound sleeper and didn't hear anything in the night. However, the footsteps got louder and there was a cold feeling in the house. One night Martha found Vicky asleep on the floor after she had placed her safely in her crib. There was no way an infant could have managed to get out of her crib on her own and the implications were frightening. Martha couldn't sleep for worrying and feeling sick and it got to the point that she was ready to sell the house. Finally her husband admitted that he heard the footsteps too. They were so unhinged by the disturbances that they felt that the previous owners must have kept a key and were coming back into the house at night to poke about. To make matters worse, around this time a knocking inside their closet started. These sounds would escalate into pounding but when the door was opened, nothing was inside.

One night the noises got so bad that the couple was convinced they had intruders and phoned the police. The police told them to stay in the bedroom and not to answer the door until they got there. When they arrived, they checked the entire house over thoroughly looking in the closets, under the beds, in every nook and cranny but nobody was there. The Stokes felt foolish but the noises continued unabated and seemed to centre around their baby daughter.

One day, Martha found her daughter out in the backyard with her toy tape recorder. Vicky was a toddler now and she was rocking back and forth tugging on the tape recorder as if someone else was trying to pull it out of her grasp. She yelled to her mother, "Make it stop! Make it give it back to me!" When Martha asked her what was struggling with her, she said it was a big white bunny. Vicky moved out of her bedroom when she was about six and refused to go back inside. Even today, when she is a young woman, she refuses to go into this room which is now used for storage.

Another time she froze in place and pointed to a vacant space saying, "There's an old woman there in a gray dress." She was so scared that it took her mother hours to calm her down. One weekend when the family went away, the water in the swimming pool turned from blue to blood red.

The strange sounds, cold temperatures and sense of oppression in the house continued to unnerve Martha until in desperation, she decided to ask her mother, who is a practising Catholic, to try a cleansing of the house. She knew how upset her daughter and granddaughter had been and readily agreed to do what she could. She arrived with a statue of the Virgin Mary and a rosary. She prayed in all the rooms for peace in the house and for the spirit inhabiting it. In the morning, the rosary had been torn apart and was laying in pieces on the floor. The statue was untouched.

After that episode, things quieted down although a visit from an adult Vicky can still cause the door to her old bedroom to slam shut.

Although located a distance from the ceremonial burial ground noted at the beginning of this story, this house may still be located in an area once associated with Native peoples. One or more restless spirits may have been on the warpath to rid the area of intruders as they would see them. Echoes from the past certainly haunted this relatively new house and its occupants for a considerable time.



Dead Man's Curve

Some stories have classic elements that define the very essence of spookiness. This one has it all: a dark, winding road by a river in an isolated area, a crumbling old house, a graveyard, a tragedy and a jinx. How they come together makes for a spine-tingling tale.

If you drive north along the Sydenham River on Wallace St. Extension in Wallaceburg, past Riverview Cemetery out into the country, you will eventually come upon a tight "S" curve in the narrow road with a small, pioneer cemetery on the left. There are few dwellings in the area but a little further along on the right is a beautiful, modern house with a turret, a porch and many windows presenting an inviting aspect. In the late 1800's, a stately Victorian brick farmhouse stood here taking advantage of its view of the river. Unfortunately, tragedy struck and a woman and her eighteen-month-old baby died in a fire that razed the house. Perhaps this is when the local legend got started and events in the new house have added to the area's intrigue and bad fortune.

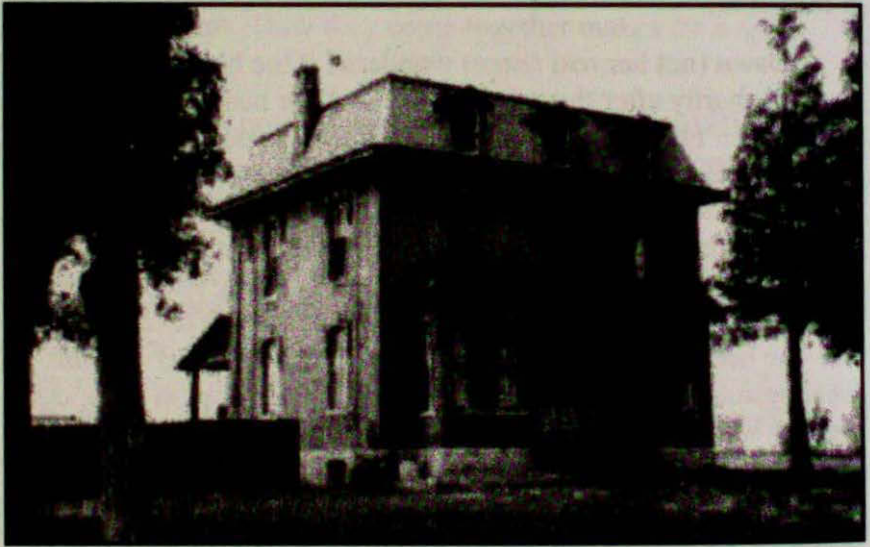
Local legend says that if you drive down this lonely stretch of road at midnight and glance back in your rear view mirror, you'll see a face. Some residents have been brave enough to visit the area in the dark of the witching hour but have been too spooked to look behind them for fear of what they would see. Is the face that of the poor, dead woman searching for her lost baby? One couple who once lived in the house may have something to add to this possibility.

The man of the house at the time, in the mid to late 1990's was a looming six feet four inches with no fear of ghosts and no belief in their existence. Although the house sat in a secluded place with nobody close by, he rarely felt worried by intruders. One night he awoke from a sound sleep to see a dark figure

standing by his side of the bed. Startled, he instinctively shook his wife awake and she too saw the dark shape. It was there before them one moment and then was gone the next. They searched the rooms for any evidence of a break-in but nothing had been disturbed. Had their eyes deceived them? They didn't believe so. It was the only time either one of them saw the figure but they never forgot it. Does this shadow wander down to the road drawn to the river and the cemetery searching for something or someone it can't find?

Dawn (not her real name) wondered if the house was jinxed because shortly after this episode, she and her husband separated. They weren't the first couple who lived here to do so. The people who built the house had experienced some trouble of their own and it wasn't just marital in nature. They were both truckers who were involved in some shady activities. They went on a trip to Florida in the man's truck leaving the woman's rig parked close to the house with the keys in the cab. The truck was torched along with the house and the couple split up afterwards. After a while, a local businessman bought the house and rented it out to strippers. Neither he nor his renters were concerned about taking care of things and the house suffered for lack of maintenance. It was after this, that Dawn and her husband at the time bought the house and began the process of restoring it to order. They spent a great deal of time and effort on adding outbuildings and garages and sprucing up the landscaping to turn the property back to its former glory.

With a murky history as a farmhouse that burned causing death, to a brothel in the 1920's with all of its turbulent emotions, to fire damaged wreck, to restored family home, this piece of land on the road to Dresden has had its share of mystery and disaster. The proximity to the river provides an added twist to the location because while it is a source of recreation and pleasure, it can also be a dangerous place so close to a winding road with a sharp, unexpected turn to entrap the unwary. Perhaps that is where our dark stranger ended up one night when he too missed the curve and with his death gave it its name.



Dead Man's Curve Victorian house



Moving Day Ghost

For many people, change is a necessary evil. It represents disruption of comfortable routines and makes demands that we might prefer to avoid. We cling to the familiar and fear the unknown. However, we learn to cope and often grow as individuals through making changes in our lives. The same does not really hold true for ghosts. Earthbound spirits may have many reasons for remaining behind instead of moving onwards into the light. It seems many resent any change in the surroundings they knew in life and they aren't shy about expressing their displeasure. That is the case in this moving day story from Chatham.

Marcy (not her real name) had agreed to help her sister clean out her old house after she had taken possession of a new place to live. They divided up the chores with her sister tackling the kitchen and Marcy heading upstairs with a vacuum cleaner to vacuum the rugs in the three bedrooms. Marcy wasn't all that familiar with the house although many of her relatives had visited. She started to work in the largest bedroom and completed it and one of the small bedrooms across the hall which only left the final small bedroom closest to the stairs. As she started up the vacuum cleaner again, she thought she heard a voice say, "Get out!" She looked over her shoulder and around the room but nothing was there and she figured she was just mistaken. She continued on until she heard the voice say more loudly, "Get out!" She was starting to get very nervous and intensified her efforts with the vacuum until she heard, "Get out!" even louder and more insistently. She fled the room and tore down the stairs two at a time until she hit the bottom where she immediately ran to the kitchen to find her sister.

Her sister was startled by Marcy's sudden appearance and asked her what was wrong. Marcy demanded, "Did somebody die in this house?" "I don't know" her sister replied, "Why?"

"Because someone just told me to get out of that bedroom and I am not going back up there for anything!" Her sister took her into the kitchen to calm her down and just then a neighbour dropped around to see how things were going. They told him what had just happened but he didn't think much of it. This didn't reassure Marcy one bit as she was certain she had heard a voice telling her to get out of the room not once but three times.

A brother-in-law who lived across the street at the time then came by and they told him what had happened. He laughed and said he would go upstairs and get the vacuum cleaner and a light fixture from the main bedroom closet. When he came back downstairs, he wasn't laughing as he said he felt weird and had goose bumps as soon as he went into the bedroom. Marcy and her sister were getting very spooked and gathered together a couple of boxes of remaining items along with the vacuum cleaner and prepared to leave. As they headed toward the front door, they heard a bang upstairs. They exchanged terrified looks and rushed out the door. As Marcy glanced back at the main bedroom window of the house, she had an eerie feeling.

Once the sisters were safe amongst their family, they related what had happened at the house. They were confounded to find out that many of their family members had experienced strange things in the house but they had never talked about them.

Years later, they learned that during the depression a man had hung himself in one of the bedrooms after he had lost his shoe store business.



The Whittle Hoodoo Farm

How does a local legend begin? How is it that certain tales which may seem too far-fetched to believe are told over and over again and with a great deal of relish? Take the case of Bruno the Rondeau amputee with a hook in place of an arm for example. This ghastly monster has raised goose bumps on many a camper around the fire in the provincial park over time. How did he come to be? Did someone just make him up? Or is this creepy tale tinged with a shred of reality from some grisly event in the area's past? It's hard to know.

What we do know is that we secretly thrill to hear such horrible tales exaggerated or not. One such story came to me from a local Tilbury historian. The story first appeared in written form in *The Tilbury Story: Celebration of a Century 1887-1987* published in 1987. As with many outlandish tales, this one comes from an oral tradition where many details have been embellished. While not strictly a ghost story, it is a marvelous tale set well back in the past.

Wills Houten of Quinn was reputedly a giant of a man, so big that ordinary clothes wouldn't fit him. He lived with his mother who fashioned a sort of suit for him made out of jute and fastened with rope for a belt. For whatever reason, Wills got into a violent argument with his mother and killed her by pushing her facedown into a barrel of flour.

A young couple moved into a house close by on the Middle Rd. south and the unneighbourly Wills disliked them being near by and decided to scare them off. He told them a Mr. Carr who was buried on the hill haunted their house. He went so far as to conceal himself under their bed in their bedroom and when they had settled for the night, proceeded to heave the bed up tossing them out onto the floor and scaring them with moaning sounds

into the bargain. They resolved to sell up and indeed packed their belongings that very night and moved away from the area.

He might have been unfriendly to people but apparently Wills was a horse "whisperer" who used his voice to calm the beasts as well as round up his horses. In the spring, he would set his horses loose to graze and then he would call them back in the fall. It was said that the roar of his voice commanding his steeds to return home could be heard from miles away.

Will's downfall was to sell some of his horses for gold and to brag about his profit. He was beset by thieves and murdered. He was buried in a thunderstorm where the lightning was said to strike sparks off the gravediggers' shovels.



This larger than life figure seems part myth part tall tale (literally) but evokes a colourfulness in Tilbury's history that can't be captured by bald facts.

Many a strange story is rooted in something real that happened many years before that has been lost to time. Graves get forgotten or ploughed under and there is no one left to remember where they were. Homes are built upon the foundations of other houses that burned down or were torn down. However, the imprint of any deaths that occurred in such fires or violence that took place on the property remains. Thus ghosts may arise from a time long past to haunt present day owners who may have no way to trace back what happened.

Newspaper reports from earlier times are one source of information and often provide very specific and graphic descriptions that make today's journalism seem tepid and dull. Reading the turn-of-the-century news coverage about the Mary Jacob murder (which I included in my first book) gives some idea of how attention-grabbing headlines and exaggerated vocabulary could grip and inform at the same time. The March 27th 1906

issue of the *Chatham Daily Planet* read "RESIDENTS DOWN THE RIVER CLAIM TO HAVE SEEN GHOSTS" and "WILD SHRIEKS ARE HEARD IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT." This type of coverage reminds us that print was the primary means of recording events as radio, television and modern communication methods had not yet been invented. How important then the printed word and how much better if it had a sensational quality to capture the attention of the reader.

Consider now a story dating back to 1882 in Tilbury and reported on in the July 6th, 1934 edition of the *Tilbury Times*.

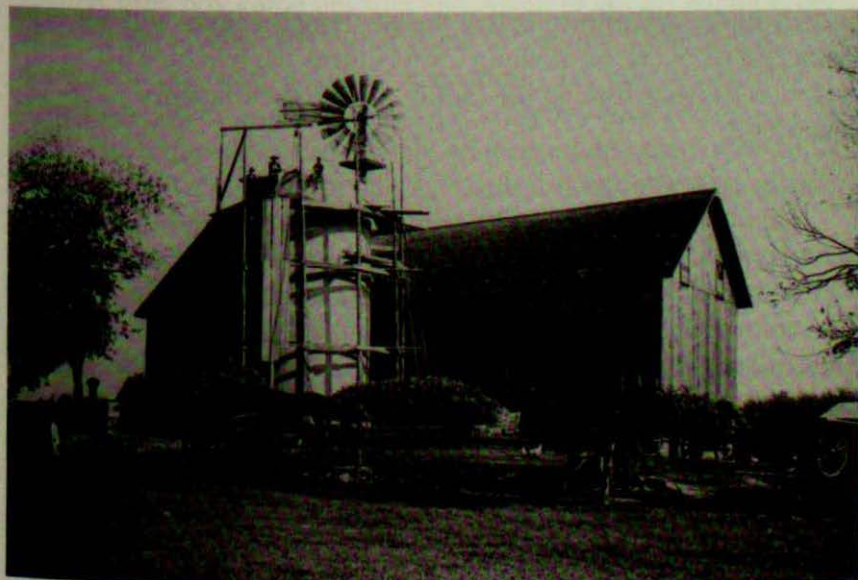
Thomas Vivian Whittle lived on a fifty acre farm about a mile east of the town which at the time was Concession 4 but is now Hwy. No. 2 or Queen's Line. When he died in 1882, he left the farm to his wife who leased out the land until she decided to move away. Wanting the farm to remain in the family, she willed it to a nephew, Thomas Whittle, provided he took up residence on the farm and continued to work the land. Thomas Whittle was far away in San Diego, California but he set sail on the *Lizzie Ireland* in 1887 in the hopes of achieving a new life in Canada. Unfortunately there was a violent storm and his ship sank in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

The farm then passed on to another nephew, Robert Whittle but he too died before he could take possession. Robert had two sons who lived in Ireland. They began the trip to Tilbury but never arrived. According to the Tilbury centennial book, "they simply vanished."

Four mysterious deaths of the heirs to the farm occurring in the space of as many years were enough to spark speculation on whether the farm was cursed. Then a man named Peter Stinger went into the woods on the Whittle farm and was chased and killed by a mad bull. What was possessing the land? No logical explanations could be found for the string of deaths. Add to this rumours that gold had been found on the property and it becomes understandable how this local legend began to take shape. People reportedly came from all over Canada in the early 1900's to strike

it rich but left empty-handed. The farm began to be called a "hoodoo" farm, a bad luck farm or "White Elephant." Soon children avoided passing by the farm on route to school and stories of "screeching ghosts, murderous bats and shining eyes" took hold of people's imaginations. For half a century, the stories continued. The farm was abandoned until the owners sold it to a man named R.F. Burgess, a cattle owner and religious skeptic who apparently did not believe in ghosts.

The exact location of the "Whittle Hoodoo Farm" has lately come to the attention of columnist Bob Odette of the *Tilbury Times* newspaper. A woman whose father or uncle used to own the farm wrote in to say that it was bounded by Wheeler Line, the railroad tracks and Baptiste Creek. Wheeler Line today runs behind the 18 Wheeler truck stop and the farmhouse would have fronted on this road that in the 1880's was the main road into Tilbury from the east. Businesses such as the truck stop, Nussey's truck business and Ducana Windows as well as others in that particular area now sit on land once considered cursed. Are there any people out there working or living in this area who have experienced anything odd? Perhaps now you know the reason!



Classic Cases

Elsewhere in this book, I list the ten top ways you'll know your house is haunted. The following sequence of stories graphically illustrates some of these common disturbances. They also show how ghosts can be found in every nook and cranny of Chatham-Kent. No place is exempt.

We begin on Duke St. South in Chatham in a house built in 1928 and inhabited for many years by an old couple who perhaps have never left. Doors open and close on their own including their sliding door. Things fly off the shelves and strange noises and bangs are often heard in the house without any reasonable cause. When the family added some kittens to their household, the odd activities intensified greatly. As they gave the kittens away, things settled down but didn't disappear totally. This aspect of the story reminds me of Bridget on Cross St who frightened the cats in that house so that they wouldn't stay. The most disturbing and inconvenient occurrence is that the washing machine will not complete its cycle. Something always turns the machine off before it finishes forcing the family to take their laundry elsewhere.

A former student at Chatham Collegiate Institute was coming from basketball practice and headed up to the third floor of the school where unused lockers were located in an "L" formation and all of them were shut. After he passed by and looked back, they were all open and they had opened without a sound. This same student used to live on Pitt St. When his mother was young, her father would wake her up in the morning by tapping her on the shoulder. One day, he was asleep in his bedroom when he felt a tap on his shoulder. He thought it was his brother waking him up and shrugged him off. That was until he heard his brother enter the room some five minutes later. He

believes it was the ghost of his grandfather tapping him on the shoulder. The grandfather used to play peek-a-boo with the boys when they were younger. He has seen a large, dark figure ducking around the corner near his mother's bedroom off of the living room. Once again, he thinks it was his grandfather.

In a large brick century home on Hwy. 40 near St. Paul's United Church, there were strange sounds, things would go missing and then turn up and the female resident felt she was being watched. Before she and her husband got married, they lived together in this house. One day she was having a bath and felt an unseen pair of eyes observing her. She was so sure that she was being watched that she rushed from the tub to the bedroom and said loudly, "I'm staying so you may as well get used to it but I promise to wear a towel!" Since that time the disturbances have lessened but not stopped. She and her husband feel that it's his uncle who died in an accident on the farm who is watching over them. From the woman's point of view, sometimes it's a little too closely.

A little boy came upstairs and began to get his pajamas out of his drawer. When the father came to ask him what he was doing (without being asked to at bedtime), the boy replied that, "The man downstairs told me to put away my toys and go to bed." His father was immediately concerned that there was an intruder and went down to check. There was nobody around and no evidence of any kind of disturbance or of anything missing. The father reassured himself that his son was fine and then put the incident out of his mind. A few weeks passed and nothing else happened. Then the father got the family album out which contained a picture of his father who had died before his grandson was born. The boy took one look at the picture and said, "That's the man who told me to put away my toys and go to bed." He must have seen the ghost of his grandfather.

The former owner of Lester's on the Bay restaurant in Rondeau had experienced odd things like furniture being moved

around at his place but had refused to admit to himself that it could relate to anything paranormal. Then he developed a roll of pictures with white orbs in them. These orbs are said to be ghosts. The next time you take a photo, have a look and see what's there. These won't be the first photos to reveal more than meets the eye.

A well-known local hairdresser heard this tale from one of his customers. She lives in a Victorian style home and was in the process of redecorating the house. She would find things moved around and the pages of decorating magazines opened to certain articles that featured Victorian décor. She was annoyed at first until one day it occurred to her that her unseen decorator had better taste than she did!

On the sixth concession of Merlin, a fifteen year old teenager slept in one half of the attic while the other side was used for storage. The door that connected her bedroom to the storage half would shake and fly open even though it was locked. She could see things moving around and hear footsteps running up and down the stairs.

In a house well over a century old in Ridgetown, the owner feels that a former owner who used to smoke heavily has been paying her home visits as she can smell the odour of cigarettes despite every attempt by this non-smoker to rid the house of the smell. This man eventually inherited the house after his parents and sister died. Mrs. Irwin's (not her real name) daughter smelled it too and thought it was fresh as if a cigarette had just been lit. In other stories, people have remarked that they have smelled anything from Old Spice after shave to cigar smoke to the more common cigarette smoke but it is by no means as frequent a sign as other indications of ghostly activity. Electrical disturbances or odd noises are more prevalent and Mrs. Irwin has also experienced something unexplained on that front. The television set in the den that she never watches has turned itself on three times by itself. Gail has gone away for the week-end and returned to find this particular set which she doesn't watch turned on and

blaring forth. Unlike the ghost on Ordon Blvd in Chatham, which favours Channel 6 at midnight, this ghost watches whatever it can get without cable!

It is rumoured that an unfortunate suicide by an Anglican minister's wife in the church rectory in Ridgetown many years ago has resulted in some strange occurrences there as witnessed by successive families who resided there. One female minister reported that wooden spoons would regularly go missing and then just as suddenly reappear. "Mrs. Smith" gets blamed for much of the "forgetfulness" that goes on which may in fact be playfulness on the part of the ghost.

At the former Park St. United Church now renamed the Historic Park St. House of Worship, the new owners have heard ghostly playing coming from this piano.



Readers of my first book may recall that in the past a tall man dressed in black has been seen running at night through the hall attached to the church. He actually triggered motion detectors located in the hall. It has also been reported that in a storage area near the gym, an intoxicating smell can sometimes be detected. This large, rambling former church has dozens of empty rooms and lots of memories. Perhaps it does house a ghost or two as well. While the owner is looking for new tenants to use the space, he no doubt prefers the kind still in the land of the living.

Spirited Ghosts

Until recently, there was an Irish pub on Richmond St that served up more than beer and fish and chips. Haunted visitations were also on the menu for those who could sense such things. While there were no cold spots in the house and no really creepy feeling according to owners Joanna and Kevin McCaughley, there were definitely some odd things that have happened. The house was in the Chrysler family for many years and a family reunion in the past year confirmed many details that the couple had suspected.

They were first made aware of the unusual nature of the century home they had purchased with the dream of turning it into an Irish pub when they started doing renovations. As we have noted, time and time again, these physical changes seem to trigger paranormal activity. In this case, Joanna and Kevin would be in the basement and hear the back door open and footsteps come into the kitchen then stop, always at a certain spot. When they went upstairs to check, nobody was around and the back door was still locked. The McCaughleys learned that an early resident of the house, Elizabeth went outside into the orchard to pick an apple, came back into the kitchen and choked to death. She was found by the parents of one of the families who came for the reunion and told the tragic story. An electrician who was working alone in the basement doing some rewiring suddenly felt the wire he was working with snaking upwards through the wall. When he got up to the second floor, there was the wire and he was still entirely alone. Lights flickered on and off at will, the stereo went up and down on its own, pictures taken showed white orbs in them and clocks placed on a wall behind the bar always stopped at 1:45.

Elizabeth is not alone. On the spot near the bottom of the staircase where several customers have stumbled for seemingly no reason, a family member named Ernie had a heart attack and died at the bottom of the same stairs. A visitor to the pub with

psychic abilities said she felt the presence of an older woman named Mary who is guarding a room upstairs. The room belonged to the McCaughley's daughter and once belonged to a young boy who drowned in the river. The woman feels guilty because she was supposed to be watching him. She was his grandmother and her picture is displayed upstairs. These four ghosts, Elizabeth, Ernie, Mary and the little boy are all present and there may be others.

One of the employees told Kevin that she heard a voice telling her "I want my gun back".

Unknown to the employee, Kevin had found a percussion cap muzzle-loader in the attic when they were doing renovations but he hadn't told anyone about it. Once again, the Chrysler family were able to confirm that a family member deserted from the Civil War and took his muzzle-loader with him.

Now that the house is empty (as of this writing), the ghosts will have the place to themselves.



Thamesville Tale

Joanne Humphrey had had a very busy time. She and her husband John had spent many months remodeling their home in Thamesville originally built by a man named McKay. They had built on all around the small house and were in the process of tackling the garage and breezeway area. Mr. McKay had added many unique features to the house and these were gradually being eliminated by the renovation work. Joanne had never met Mr. McKay in life but she was about to meet him in death. As she stood contemplating the proper location for a new patio door, she saw movement out of the corner of her eye. At first, she thought it was her husband John. However, that notion was quickly dispelled by the materialization of the figure of a man wearing a red plaid coat with short sleeves that revealed his skinny arms. He walked up to her, stared her right in the eye and scowled. He wasn't transparent but real-looking as was his evident disapproval. Joanne was startled but he disappeared as quickly as he came and he never re-appeared. She was in no doubt as to who he was. She feels he was expressing his frustration over the changes she had made to the design of his house. While they had made major additions to the original structure without any visitation, it was the loss of his special features that seemed to trigger this sudden confrontation.

There is an old saying that, "if the walls could speak, what tales would they tell?" In this case, it wasn't the walls but a former resident who lived inside them who silently but no less effectively made his opinion known.



Shades of Baldoon

While the Baldoon mystery remains the most famous of Wallaceburg ghost stories, it is by no means the only one. One Burg resident related to me a story told her by her grandparents that took place in the middle to late 1800's when Wallaceburg was a village of 1,526 and lumbering was a major industry. The houses, fences, and the occasional sidewalks were all made of wood. In *Romantic Kent* (p. 394) Victor Lauriston described the scene: "Booms of staves, millions of them, lay in the long reaches of the Sydenham; stacks of timber occupied every available spot along the banks; logs by thousands lined the roads and clearings." With this prosperity came rumours of people who had benefited from the trade hiding their wealth in various houses close to the river. Our story concerns such a house on Wallace St. which is near the Sydenham River. The family consisted of a husband, wife and several sons. The sons believed that their father knew where money was hidden in the house but he wouldn't talk about it. One day, when he was running logs in the river, he fell in. His sons were on the riverbank and saw the mishap but made no effort to save him and he drowned. They thought they would then have free rein to search the house which they did. They found nothing. But the house did hold a few surprises for them. After that time, they would hear heavy footsteps walking around the dining room table when nobody was there. One of the sons was tossed down the stairs. He wasn't killed but he was badly shaken up. To ward off the evil that the family felt was haunting them, this lady's grandfather drove spikes into the front door. His efforts were turned back on him however, when one night without warning, the spikes flew out of the door.

If the Baldoon mystery seems like a tale that benefited greatly from the Scottish penchant for mysticism and wonderful story-telling, another hair-raising tale has come to my attention from Wallaceburg that rivals that other wild story in intensity and

sheer variety. There are few ghost stories in my experience that match the amount of activity going on in this house on Main St. The house is well over a century old since it had already stood for twenty years when it was moved to its present location in 1913. Although there is only one current resident, her friends and family have all experienced some of the manifestations in the house to the point that many refuse to stay over. Things happen on a regular basis and include smashed objects that are not from the house, colourful Milkbones, a compelling fireplace, lights that misbehave, pictures that fly off walls and land undamaged, a missing goldfish and a Christmas tree that shakes. An old man owned the house previously and died here and perhaps he is one of the spirits haunting this house. Another could be Mimi's (not her real name) late boyfriend Jack who loved her dog and told her that one day, he would be back to see her.

Jack loved Mimi's dog and would feed him Milkbones which he would take from Jack and not Mimi. The night that Jack died in Windsor, the dog stood growling at the fireplace in the front room and he wouldn't stop no matter how much Mimi cajoled or threatened him. Just she gave up, the phone rang. Jack had died unexpectedly in the hospital. Since then, Milkbones have appeared for the dog on holidays. He found a red one for Christmas and a green one for St. Patrick's Day.

There is no one else in the house to play a trick such as producing a dog treat and Mimi knows perfectly well that she didn't leave them out on the floor. Jack also loved the Indian tacos that Mimi made and told her she could probably sell them to the public they were so good. She has a burnt out fluorescent tube light in the kitchen and every time she makes Indian tacos, the light comes on. Otherwise it doesn't work.

The fireplace proved fascinating to her baby grandson when he came to visit. He would stand in his crib and stare transfixed at something he saw on or near the fireplace when the crib was placed near it. His mother could wave a hand in front of his face and he wouldn't blink. As he grew older, he would come into the house and make a beeline for the fireplace where he would stand

and stare. Even now, he has an imaginary friend who rides on his shoulder. His mother discovered this when she tried to touch him on the shoulder and he moved away and said, "No, you'll hurt my friend." A few minutes later after this first experience, he smiled at her and said she could pick him now; his friend was gone. He likes this friend and isn't in the least frightened of him.

There is a large, heavy picture that hangs over the fireplace. Despite the bent spike used to anchor the picture in place, it has flown off the wall into the air and then landed undamaged on the floor. However, another picture split apart as Mimi and her son were sitting in the living room and the glass shattered. There is a lot of physical activity like this. Another time, Mimi heard something smash and she searched everywhere for whatever had fallen without success. Then when she turned back to her first place to look, there were glass shards all over her ceramic tiles at her front entranceway. She has had a three foot lamp situated on a table behind an open door somehow manage to come around the door which was standing open and smash itself against the screen door. The new tablecloth which she had just put on the end table holding the lamp was stretched out flat not crumpled up as you might expect. Electrical interference seems to be one of this house's many favourite pastimes. One night, Mimi went into her bedroom without turning on the light because she intended to watch television for a while. She picked up the remote from the bed and clicked it on. Only nothing happened. She turned on the overhead light to see what was going on and found that the television set had been turned backwards to face the wall. All of the photos on her dresser had also been turned around to face the wall. She has gone out to her son's to baby sit and left all of the lights off only to return home to find every light in the house ablaze even the ones in the basement which she rarely turns on as she avoids that part of the house.

One day she was talking on the phone to a friend and decided to make a cup of tea. She put the kettle on to boil and then forgot about it as she became engrossed in telling her friend some of the strange things that had been going on. After a while she realized that the kettle hadn't boiled. She checked the

electrical panel box but everything was fine. Later that night, she smelled something funny but after looking around, she couldn't see anything amiss and so rather uneasily she went to bed. In the morning, she discovered that the box the element clicks into on the stove had burned out. She notes that it happened a second time, again after she had been talking to someone else about her odd activity. At Christmas, her tree shook violently as if someone had brushed up against it and started it swaying. Of course, no one visible did. Before she died, her mother had given Mimi some money to buy each of her grandchildren something small to remember her by. Mimi chose music boxes and one of them was in the shape of a train. When wound up, it played a Christmas carol. She placed this music box on the fireplace mantel and it started playing on its own and continued to play for thirteen minutes. Mimi tried to do the same thing herself and the music box would only play for a minute but no longer. Her mother thought the number thirteen was lucky so perhaps in this case, it was her mother saying hello.

Objects continue to disappear and then reappear. A rocking horse decoration that Mimi had placed on top of a replica stove turned up on the fifth stair of the stairway going upstairs several feet away. She seems to have lost a goldfish that she kept in a bowl on a shelf in the bathroom and even phoned her daughter to see if she had somehow taken it with her when she was visiting.

If all of these really odd and varied happenings weren't enough, Mimi has also seen a man wearing a long coat and a top hat walking through her back room. One night a friend was over visiting and she too saw the figure of a man passing like a shadow through the back room. Could this be the ghost of the previous owner of the house? Mimi has made extensive renovations and that could have prompted his visits. Her other incidents are so wildly different that it would seem that there are a number of ghosts making their presence felt in this house. Except for the danger that could have come from the stove element and the smashed glass, Mimi has gotten used to other bizarre things happening. There is no doubt however that she wouldn't mind a rest from the more extreme elements that occur.

A more benevolent ghost inhabited a house on Dufferin Ave. which at the time was simply called RR#3 Wallaceburg in the 1950's. The Redfield (not their real name) family built the white rancher and shortly afterwards invited a grandmother to come and live with them. A number of years later in 1959, this lady died. She may have departed these earthly shores but she seemed to linger in spirit as various mysterious things began to happen. The house was designed with three bedrooms and a bathroom leading off of a central hallway that was located to the left of the front door. More than once, the family members would hear the front door open and footsteps proceeding down the hall to the bathroom where the door would open and close. However, with some trepidation the children would wait for someone to come out of the bathroom but no one was there. One boy felt there must be an intruder on one occasion and he tiptoed down the hall armed with a baseball bat to confront whoever was there. Luckily for him, the bathroom was empty. One of the children had been born after her grandmother died and for the first few months, her crib was located in the hallway beneath a wall sconce. Mysteriously, the light would often come on by itself no matter whether it was day or night. One of the children believes that it was her grandmother coming to have a look at her new grandchild. There was a particular print hanging on the living room wall that Granny wasn't very fond of. Several times the family noticed the picture shaking and rattling on the wall. And her rocking chair would often start rocking on its own. One time, Mrs. Redfield thought she saw her husband standing beside the bed in the middle of the week. Her husband worked in Detroit and only came home on week-ends. She followed the figure out to the living room where it disappeared. Was it really Granny?

Fix-it Ghost

In "*Garage Gremlin*" a story from my first book, I told of a ghost who helped out the homeowner who repaired foreign cars for a hobby by opening a repair manual to the exact page he needed to fix the problem.

In the Thamesville area, there is another handy ghost who likes to repair broken items.

Shelley Wood (not her real name) stood looking down in amazement at her washing machine. For weeks, the knob had been broken off and she had been operating the machine by attaching a pair of pliers to the spindle where the knob should have been. Her husband, John wasn't particularly good with tools so generally if something needed to be fixed, Shelley would attempt the repair herself or else hire it to be done. But this new twist perplexed her. There sat the washing machine with a brand new knob and the pliers nowhere to be seen. When she asked her husband John if he had miraculously done the deed, he shrugged and looked as baffled as she did. When she tried the knob, it turned the dial and the washing machine came on as it should.

What could have happened? Involuntarily, her mind strayed to the anniversary clock sitting on top of the roll top desk in the bedroom. That was another mystery. The clock had been given to the Woods as a gift for years of service and they had wanted to display it in a more prominent place in the house. However, every time they moved the clock from the bedroom where the previous owner of the house slept, it would stop. They had tried unsuccessfully to move the clock just about anywhere else in the house with the same unsatisfactory result. It refused to run. Three family members had passed away in the house and Shelley couldn't help but wonder if there was a connection. Could some strange heartbeat from the past keep it going?

Out Cold

One of the best known local ghost stories is that of Mary Jacob who lived on a farm on the River Road in Dover in the 1860's. Her father John Jacob was buried in the Immaculate Conception churchyard at Pain Court. Another strange tale has emerged from this general area and was told to me by a young girl whom I will call Melissa.

She and her family had recently moved into a house on the Jacob Sideroad. Her twelve year old niece Monique (not her real name) was staying over and the two girls were sharing a bed in a room which Melissa found to be cold all the time. Her niece wasn't known to talk in her sleep but suddenly she woke up Melissa by talking out loud and carrying on a complete conversation. As Melissa listened in bewilderment wondering whether she should wake up her niece, she watched, stunned as she floated a few inches up off the bed with both her arms crossed over her chest. Melissa was frightened so badly that she drew away and pulled the covers over her head . When she woke up in the morning, Monique was gone. Alarmed, she immediately began to search the house for her niece and soon had the entire family involved. They found her sound asleep in the basement on the tile floor. She was out cold and they couldn't rouse her for some three hours. Monique has no recollection of anything that happened on that peculiar night.

Message from the Other Side

As we read in "A Son's Message to His Parents" there have been communications from the dead that pass all understanding of human comprehension. It seems if the death is sudden or if there is an urgent need on the part of someone who has died to pass on one last bit of information, somehow that message will get through. The following story from Blenheim is a remarkable one of determination to express such a need and offer reassurance at the same time.

Mrs. Bleeker's (not her real name) daughter Abby died unexpectedly of an aneurysm at the age of twenty-five leaving behind a young daughter, Sarah. Three months after Abby died, her mother was sitting at home when her son phoned her in a greatly agitated state. Her son is a very skeptical person with his feet planted firmly on the ground but he was overwhelmed by the event that had just happened to him. Mrs. Bleeker's eyes grew wide as she listened to her son's story. This is what he told her. His phone rang in the middle of the night and as he picked up the receiver, he was stunned to hear his sister Abby's voice. After the first few seconds of disbelief, he managed to utter a few replies even though the whole situation felt surreal. Abby wanted to know how Sarah was doing. She told her brother that she was OK and that she was sorry for having to leave so quickly and especially for leaving her mother the responsibility of raising her daughter. Abby talked normally as if she was still alive and then said she had to go. Mrs. Bleeker could hardly take in this information but another extraordinary message was yet to come.

Three days later, Abby's best friend phoned Mrs. Bleeker and said, "You're going to think I'm really strange and you may not believe me but Abby visited me last night. She asked me about you and how you were handling your fibromyalgia. She asked me to look after you." After delivering this message,

according to her friend, Abby turned away and drifted through the front door. Surprisingly, Mrs. Bleeker's first reaction to these mind-boggling communications wasn't disbelief or even gratitude to hear that her daughter was telling her she was all right but rather dismay and a feeling of hurt that her daughter hadn't phoned her first. While, like any of us, she was astounded at what her son and her daughter's best friend were telling her, she was also still anxious to believe that all was really well with her young daughter in some afterlife that she could only imagine.

Then she began recalling the time just before Abby died and the unusual thing that had happened in her house. Her daughter had been diagnosed and had grown pale and tired looking. As she played with Sarah that day, she suddenly looked up at her mother and asked, "Mom, did you see that?" Mrs. Bleeker, who hadn't seen anything at all, kind of laughed and said, "Oh it was probably your guardian angel" seeking in some way to offer comfort to her daughter. Abby was very serious in response and said, "No, she didn't just touch me. She wrapped her arms around me and held me and told me, "Everything will be OK." For the three days that she lived after that, she had a glow about her and a peacefulness as if she knew what was coming and she was not afraid.



The Legend of the Curse of Tecumseh

While not a ghost story, the legend of the curse of Chief Tecumseh is a fascinating "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" as Churchill once wrote about Russia. When a powerful and strategic statesman, warrior and orator of the stature of Tecumseh could carve such a significant swath across North American history and capture people's imaginations, could not the power of his words bear some long-lasting mystical and influential properties?

He fought at the battle of Miamis Towns in 1791. He fought at the battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. He was instrumental in the surrender of Detroit in 1812 and he died at the Battle of the Thames or Moraviantown on October 5, 1813. He was Tecumseh and his name meant "Panther-Across-the-Sky" because on the night of his birth at Piqua on the banks of the Mad River, Ohio, a meteor streaked across the sky and lit up the darkness with a brilliant greenish-white flame. Native stories passed down from one generation to the next said that this shooting star was "The Panther," a great spirit passing over to the south where it would seek a deep hole for sleep. It meant a birth of great promise and it bore fruit as the child grew into a "daring, bold-looking fellow of noble bearing and in height five feet nine or ten inches but seemed taller because he walked proudly erect with a graceful, athletic stride" as he was described by one British colonel. Tecumseh distinguished himself as a mighty warrior in battle although he greatly objected to any form of torturing prisoners, an attitude that was unusual for the time. He was a gifted orator who believed that all Natives were one people and only with the consent of all could land rightly be ceded by or purchased from an individual tribe. "No one tribe has a right to sell even to one another much less to strangers who demand all and will take no less. Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the clouds, the great sea as well as the earth? Did not the Great Spirit make them all for

the use of his children?" This belief coupled with a burning hatred of the white man who thought he could take land as his own and who had killed his father fueled Tecumseh's dream to unite all of the Native tribes in a confederacy against their common enemy. When the United States government refused to recognize Tecumseh's unification principle, he responded by traveling from tribe to tribe exhorting the Native leaders to join together to fight back. His plan faltered with the defeat of his brother, the Shawnee Prophet, Tenkwatawa at the battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. Against Tecumseh's orders, The Prophet tangled with General William Henry Harrison who would later face Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames. Although history reports this battle as a draw, it was a huge setback for Tecumseh's dream. When Tecumseh returned to the area, he released prisoners with a prophetic message that came to be known as "Tecumseh's Curse."

"Brother, be of good cheer. Before one winter shall pass, the chance will yet come to build our nation and drive the Americans from our land. If this should fail, then a curse shall be upon the Great Chief of the Americans, if they shall ever pick Harrison to lead them. His days in power shall be cut short. And for every twenty winters following, the days in power of the Great Chief which they shall select shall be cut short. Our people shall not be the instrument to shorten their time. Either the Great Spirit shall shorten their days or their own people shall shoot them."

When Harrison campaigned for president in 1840, with John Tyler as his running mate, his campaign slogan was "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." He died at the age of 68 of pneumonia on April 4, 1861 after serving only 31 days in office. His election in a year ending with zero started off a string of deaths in office that seem to bear out the validity of Tecumseh's curse. Here is the other "evidence."

Abraham Lincoln, first elected in 1860, was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theatre on April 15th, 1865. He had

had a dream shortly before his death that he would be assassinated and his ghost is said to haunt the White House.

James Garfield won the 1880 election. He was shot in the back in a Washington railroad station waiting room in July 1881 and died of his wounds in September 1881.

William McKinley was re-elected in 1900. In September 1901, after giving a speech at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, he was shot while shaking hands with well-wishers. McKinley died of his wounds a little more than a week later.

William G. Harding, elected in 1920, died of a stroke or heart attack in 1923. It was long rumoured that his wife had poisoned him.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, re-elected in 1940 for a third term, suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage and died just after having started an unprecedented fourth term in 1945.

John F. Kennedy was elected in 1960 and assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald In Dallas Texas, on November 22, 1963.

Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980 and survived a 1981 assassination attempt by John Hinckley on March 30th. The bullet missed his heart by one-quarter of an inch. He is the only one to survive the "curse."

As early as 1934, a *Ripley's Believe it or Not* book noted the coincidental twenty-year pattern of presidential deaths between 1840 and 1920 with question marks marking the place for the upcoming 1940 entry indicating doubt about the outcome. Conspiracy theorists and astrologers alike have seized upon the pattern as more than coincidence and offered varying ideas as to what the deaths mean. According to astrologers, it is not Tecumseh from the grave causing all this mayhem but instead the deathly Jupiter-Saturn conjunct. Reagan's conjunct was in an Air Sign and that's what saved him. All the others, 1840 through 1960, were in an Earth Sign.

Statistics have been compiled on websites to support the curse. Counting all elections, they say, including Washington's first inauguration, but not Clinton's last, there were 46 elections out of which nine Vice Presidents inadvertently inherited the Presidency. Therefore, 19.5% had a chance of dying. Counting all inaugurations, the odds are even less of dying in office at 17.7%. However, for zero years of inaugurations, seven out of eight deaths raises the percentage to 87.5% of a death happening yet again. The implications for the next President in the United States are clear if he or she believes in the curse.

Remarkably though, whether it is mere coincidence or actually has some merit, more than any other battle during the War of 1812, the Battle of the Thames created more candidates for success in high public office in later years. Out of those invading American regiments emerged a president, (Harrison), a vice-president (Colonel Richard Mentor Johnson), three Kentucky state governors, three Kentucky state lieutenant-governors, four U.S. senators, and at least twenty members of the House of Representatives. Most claimed to have something to do with Tecumseh's death.

Along with the mystery of the curse, comes the mystery of Tecumseh's burial place. An entire book entitled *Tecumseh's Bones* by Guy St. Denis is devoted to examining the conflicting information on what happened to Tecumseh's body after the Battle of the Thames. Some believe his warriors carried him from the field when they retreated and he was later hastily buried. Others claim the body was left to be mutilated by American souvenir hunters who took the clothing and tore off strips of skin to be used as razor strops. St. Denis notes that the body of Tecumseh was identified by captured British officers the day of the battle. As well, Major Thomas Rowland an American described Tecumseh's corpse on the field. "He had such a countenance as I shall never forget. He did not appear to me so large a man as he was represented---I did not suppose his height exceeded 5' 10" but exceedingly well proportioned. The British say he compelled them to fight." The next day, however, General

William Henry Harrison could not identify the body which by then had been mutilated. As a result, he did not include notification about Tecumseh's death in his official dispatch back to his superiors and another legend was born. St. Denis thoroughly traces all the different claims that arose as to Tecumseh's burial site over the past 190 years or so and they involve places as disparate as London, Wallaceburg, St. Anne's Island and the battlefield itself. William Leonhardt, a farmer and former lake captain living near Wallaceburg was especially enamoured of the idea that bones unearthed in 1910 on St. Anne's Island belonged to Tecumseh because they brought to mind a strange incident that had occurred to him when he was younger. He was steering a steamer around the "dark bend" of the Chenal Ecarte one evening, "when a flame suddenly shot up from beyond the St. Anne's Island shoreline. This phenomenon occurred several times, accompanied by chanting and the beating of a tom-tom." Leonhardt never forgot these strange sights and sounds but was only able to determine their significance with the discovery of the buried bones. He came to believe that a Native by the name of Oshahwahnoo who claimed to have been a member of Tecumseh's burial party was responsible for the pagan rites he witnessed and that they were some kind of vigil over the grave. This was but one of many of the odd twists connected to this persistent legend surrounding Chief Tecumseh.

General Sir Isaac Brock, hero of the War of 1812 and brilliant soldier himself, described Tecumseh in this way, "A more sagacious or more gallant warrior does not exist." It is not surprising that someone of such influence in his time should generate such long-standing interest even today in his burial site and in the strange evidence that seems to support a curse on U.S. presidents. With the 200th anniversary of his death approaching in 2013, could it be that other peculiar and bizarre incidents will happen and strengthen the legend even more?



Back Seat Ghost

In 1999, a thriller called *Sixth Sense* which featured a young boy who could “see dead people” appeared in movie theatres. Its success derived from its sensitive treatment of an unusual and often taboo subject. Our culture doesn’t really dwell on death and suggestions that young children may be more receptive to visitations from ghostly strangers or past relatives can be a disturbing idea. Some of these visits may seem threatening but on the whole ghosts do no harm. In fact, the experiences that most people have related to me show that ghosts are trying to reassure or to communicate some bit of essential information that they couldn’t pass on in life.

So it is with our next remarkable story which has at its centre a very young and very amazing boy. It was told to me by his grandmother who has come to believe that “Tommy” can indeed see ghosts and talk to them. The story begins when Tommy (not his real name) was two years old. His grandfather rolled a ball for the little boy to chase and it went into the dining room. Tommy got scared and said “There is a small boy in there with sharp teeth.” He refused to go after the ball and his grandmother decided to put him to bed since he seemed so upset. She lay down with him and he put his lips very close to her face and said clearly so that there would be no mistaking his meaning, “It’s OK Grandma. I know Grandpa doesn’t believe me but I saw the boy and I’m really scared.” His grandmother Evelyn says that was the only time he ever showed fear about his unearthly encounters. In contrast, his next encounter provided some relief for a grieving family.

Evelyn was on the phone with her daughter, Tommy’s mother, Kim (not her real name) when Kim heard Tommy in his bedroom talking to someone. Hanging up the phone, she went to explore what was going on and found Tommy sitting with his arm extended as if he was holding someone. When she asked him who

he was talking to, he calmly responded, "Meredith." His mother gently said, "But you know Meredith's dead." He replied, "Yes I know but God let her come for a visit to tell us that she loves us and misses us and she's happy."

Evelyn's mother died in July 1999 before Tommy was born so he never met her. One day, while visiting, he asked Evelyn, "Who is that old woman in your bedroom?" Evelyn laughed and said she was the old lady in the bedroom; that's where she slept. He said, "No Grandma, the old woman with the gray hair?" Evelyn realized he must be talking about her own mother who had died in the bedroom. When she asked why he wanted to know, his answer was astonishing,

"Because she doesn't know where her grave is and she wants to." With this bit of information, Evelyn took Tommy to the cemetery and showed him her mother's grave. He was pleased and commented, "Now that's OK. She knows where she is now."

A year later, Evelyn's husband's father died. Tommy by this time is a mere three years old. One day he was driving around town with his grandmother and says, "Let's go see Grandpa's Dad." Still not prepared for her young grandson's ability, she replied, "But you know he's in the cemetery." Tommy was not at all perturbed by this and said yes he knew and furthermore he guided her to the location of the grave. When she exclaimed how could he know where to go, Tommy answered "Well, he's sitting right here beside me telling me how to get here."



A Christmas Presence

We all know the famous Victorian tale of Scrooge and his visitation by the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future. This Dresden story has a new twist on the Christmas theme that rivals the old Dickens tale for its elements of shock and surprise.

Christmas is a time of love and giving and Sarah (not her real name) was looking forward to her first Christmas with her new boyfriend Josh (not his real name either). He was driving over to her house in his truck that afternoon and she couldn't wait for him to get there. Little did she know how exciting their meeting up would be!

As Josh drove along, he was pleased with his choice of presents that he had stacked on the seat of the truck beside him. The road was clear, the day was bright and he thought he would impress Sarah and her family with his thoughtfulness. He wasn't in any way prepared for the events that followed.

Suddenly, he heard a rustling, crackling sound coming from the direction of the Christmas gifts piled on the seat. It was as if the gifts were shifting but his speed was steady and there weren't any bumps in the highway. He looked over and saw a white hand coming out of the stack of gifts. Startled, he grabbed tighter onto the steering wheel, checked his mirrors and the gear shift stick as if he might suddenly lose control. In the seconds his attention was diverted, an entire white arm extended from the centre of the presents on the seat. He started to sweat and in an instant without consciously realizing what he was doing decided to pull over to the side of the road. As he did so, the whole upper half of a white, ghostly figure of a man with a long white beard appeared for a second and then was gone.

He was still shaking from the experience when he arrived safely at his girlfriend's where he proceeded to tell her what had

just happened. Since she didn't know him all that well, she was rather taken aback by his story and wondered if she really wanted to get serious about him.

However, true love did win out in the end and Josh and Sarah were married. Sarah now says this is one of his favourite stories to tell.



Victor Lauriston mentions another ghost story from a much earlier Dresden in *Romantic Kent*. He describes the strange removal of the historic "Institution" grist mill from its regular location to a lot owned by "William Wright, nearly three quarters of a mile distant" in the middle of the night. As he tells it, the grist mill was believed to have been lifted off its foundations by spirits who then flew with it through the air to its new location. Lauriston continues, "Unlike the Baldoon spirits, the Dresden ghosts were content with this one manifestation. Henson and Wright doubtless knew what happened; but they seem never to have talked about it." (*Romantic Kent* p 382-3)

The Phantom Pony

We have all experienced coincidences in our life. We may be thinking we haven't seen someone in a long time and out of the blue, we run into them at the grocery store. Or we move into a house that a friend's family used to own. We usually smile at the way things work out and attribute the event to nothing more than mere coincidence. Some cultures believe however that there is no such thing as coincidence and that everything in life happens for a purpose.

Our following story occurred a number of years ago in the stretch of land between Wallaceburg and Tupperville in a brick home dating back to the 1860's.

The present owner, Bud (not his real name) was upstairs in a back room that had been converted into a rec room. He was just relaxing in a chair when suddenly he heard the distinctive clip clop clip sound of a horse's hooves walking across the floor. He went cold and looked all around him but nothing was there. Feeling startled and wondering what was going on, he went downstairs and told his wife what he had heard. She hadn't heard anything downstairs. The unusual nature of the sound stayed with him. He knew it wasn't the furnace or the wind. He knew exactly what he had heard but it seemed impossible to believe.

One day he mentioned to a friend what had occurred and was stunned to learn a strange coincidence. Not only did his friend believe him, he could offer an explanation of what he'd heard. His friend's grandmother had been born and raised in Bud's house. She told her grandson a marvelous tale of a pet horse that got sick in the winter time when it was cold and snowing outside. The children of the house were worried about their pet and since their parents were away, they decided to bring the small, sick pony into the house. Upstairs, there was a small stove where they could keep it cosy and warm and hopefully

where it would recover its health. Things didn't turn out as hoped, though and the pony's condition worsened and it died upstairs in the house. We can only imagine the dismay of the parents upon returning home and finding this unusual situation to deal with.

Coincidentally, the only person Bud had told the story to had an explanation for the sound of a horse's hooves in his house. Another odd coincidence is connected to this story. Bud owned a Shetland pony at the time and it died two months after he heard the horse's hooves upstairs.

While that is the most dramatic sound heard in the house, Bud and his dog have both heard footsteps outdoors when nobody was there and his cat in his younger days used to hiss and arch its back at some invisible intruder.

There is a ghost dog that barks at passers-by at the old Chatham Armouries at Tecumseh Park and a ghostly carriage pulled by phantom horses on Gray St. To this spirit stable, we can now add one small, invisible pony.



Home of the Phantom Pony

The Girl in the Trunk

At the turn of the twentieth century, on a farm near the Cedar Springs/Blenheim area, a little girl was born whose short life would bring both joy and pain to her young parents. Little Norah Louisa Carter (not her real name) had not yet learned the dangers of a deep well when she climbed up top to explore, lost her footing and fell in. The well was deep and poor Norah drowned. Fortunately, her grieving parents had had a sketch done of Norah not long before and it remained a fond reminder of their oldest daughter.

Many years later, a relative by marriage of Norah discovered the drawing in a trunk among her mother-in-law's possessions that were being distributed after her death. Something drew, Anna (not her real name) to the picture which she found tucked between some quilts and she claimed it as her own. She decided to have it framed and hung it at the foot of the staircase in her home. One of the first things she noticed about the portrait was that no matter where you moved in the room, Norah's eyes would follow. It bothered her at first and then she heard the footsteps. They would cross the floor and stop at the portrait. When Anna looked around, nobody was there but she has seen a white haze out of the corner of her eye.

Her husband is a champion snorer and on occasion rather than wake him up, Anna will go downstairs and curl up on the love seat. One night, she was lying there trying to fall asleep when she heard the knob on the outside door rattle as though someone were turning it trying to get in. She ran upstairs and into bed with her husband where she huddled under the covers hoping that whatever was there would go away. She now feels that it could have been Norah and rather than hiding she talks to her. It is as if Norah has been freed from her fate and found someone who wanted her likeness around. Anna feels like she has company in the house and that if anything, she now has a friendly companion who has found a place to stay.

Anna's receptivity to paranormal activity has been passed down to her daughter Olivia who has had a ghostly experience of her own.

As a teenager, she worked one summer for a nearby local restaurant run by a woman who grew very fond of her young employee. The restaurant business was rather hit and miss and the owner found herself in financial trouble. She also quarreled violently with her boyfriend of the time and he stormed out of the small living area attached to the restaurant leaving her alone. We will never know what dark and depressed thoughts took over her mind but with a chilling deliberation, this woman who considered herself alone in the world methodically and horribly took her own life. After swallowing an overdose of pills, she stripped naked and slashed her wrists and stomach. When the restaurant didn't open in the morning, a friend investigated the apartment and made a grisly discovery.

Olivia was much distressed by her employer's death and began to have nightmares every night. At first, she didn't want to talk about her disrupted sleep and her mother worried about what to do to help her. Finally, Olivia confessed that what was keeping her awake was the figure of her employer who came every night, sat on the end of her bed and stared at her. She was so unnerved by this apparition that she simply pretended that nothing was happening. This uneasy state of affairs lasted for a month when Olivia took her courage in hand and spoke to the ghost. "What is it you want from me?" she asked. The reply came immediately. "I just want you to know that I am in a better place now. I'm OK." With that utterance, she vanished and has not come back since.



Norah Louisa Carter

Transplanted Tombstone

On Kent Road 15, close to the 401, there is a large house that is actually made up of a former town hall and a family home. It operated as a bed and breakfast called Ridgeland for eleven or twelve years but is now strictly a home. The history of how the bed and breakfast came to be may account for the many disturbances that have gone on here for a long time.

The Ure family purchased the former town hall of Ridgeland and moved it to the present location. In the basement, they found the tombstone of Freddie Marr, the son of a local doctor. Dr. Marr had his practice in the building as well as a dispensary. Young Freddie wasn't supposed to play in the pharmacy but as young children will do, he went exploring one day and found something to drink with dire consequences. The substance was poison and poor Freddie died. He was buried in the local cemetery. This cemetery outgrew its location and the tombstones had to be moved. Freddie's tombstone ended up in the basement of the town hall to which the doctor's office was attached.

The building was moved beside the Ure's family home and eventually after extensive renovations, it opened as a bed and breakfast. The things that happened here are typical examples of a haunted home. One of the first problems was that the lights wouldn't come on. Mrs. Ure's husband was a trucker and often away from home. When he called home, she warned him that he would have to fix the lights when he got home. Of course, by the time he returned, the lights were fine and the ghost or ghosts had moved on to other tricks. Music was a favourite pastime of the Marr family and despite their departure from the scene, music still played on in the house even if nobody was there. The family could hear footsteps and once a door opened and closed on its own. Mrs. Ure's ninety-one year old mother saw it and said, "Hello, Dr. Marr."

Guests of the bed and breakfast sometimes complained that someone had been in their rooms. Mrs. Ure knew that neither she nor her husband would enter a room that was occupied but once she went upstairs to investigate taking along the family dog. The dog refused to enter the room so she knew that something was wrong and she had a good idea what the problem was. Her husband was a skeptic but she wasn't sure what to believe.

Besides the electrical interruptions, the music and the footsteps, Mrs. Ure has also heard noises in the night as if something was being smashed, yet in the morning, nothing would be broken. Despite all of these "bumps in the night," the Ure family feels comfortable in their surroundings as if the ghosts are happy with the renovations and with them.

Freddie's tombstone is now in British Columbia but Freddie's spirit may still be in Ontario.

Vengeful Spectre

In this book, I have referred to the notion, "the past will come back to haunt you" meaning that past actions may have repercussions at some time in the future. Usually those actions take place in the normal sphere of daily life. However, if we step outside of those limitations and venture into unknown regions where different parameters rule, we may unleash forces of a very disturbing nature beyond our control. This can happen when people play with ouija boards or when unsuspecting people decide to hold a séance. The following story illustrates very clearly the danger of meddling with things beyond our comprehension.

For Harold and his former wife, that night back in 1972 on Sylvester Ave. began in an ordinary way. They had dinner, watched a little television, did some chores and talked about names for their expected child. Everything was normal and routine. Little did they know how soon or how quickly that everyday world would disappear and become something frighteningly otherworldly.

It was late at night and they were both sound asleep when Harold was startled awake by a voice coming at him from the foot of the bed. His sudden movement awoke his wife Nancy who witnessed her husband riveted by the appearance of an invisible "something" in the room. Harold saw her clearly. She was wearing an old-fashioned, cream coloured, full-length dress with a flounce around the bottom. She was clutching a shawl and her hair was pulled back into a roll at the back. He could even see that the dress had a tear in it and the thought raced wildly through his brain that his wife could sew it for her. He heard her say, "They've taken my things and they have to put them back." Her manner was of a controlled malevolence threatening in its intensity. Harold reeled back and although he wasn't aware of

how this communication was taking place, he was in no doubt about her meaning or her fury. Somehow he managed to convey a reply whether in words or simply by some form of thought transfer, he can't say to this day. His reply did nothing to assuage her and he realized that although he had no idea what she was talking about, he had better indicate that he understood the urgency of the situation. The pressure in the room built as the fierce figure snarled that if what she asked were not done, that she "could change the sex of the child" he and his wife were expecting. Harold can't remember what he said or did next but he does recall feeling completely in the control of this dark spectre bent upon some mysterious purpose. She vanished as quickly as she had appeared leaving Harold and Nancy stunned and wondering why they had been targeted. They spent the rest of the night in restless speculation. In the morning, they remembered the séance.

As a prank, Nancy's teenaged brother and some of his friends had taken some items from an abandoned house near Kent Bridge to use them for a séance. Three siblings had lived in the house and when the last one died, it was shut up and left as it was with all the furniture and furnishings intact. Somehow, the teenagers discovered the house and raided it bringing home a Bible, jewellery, candlesticks and other personal items for the séance, which they conducted in the house that Harold and Nancy moved into. They were not present but they heard about the prank and the morning after their spooky night, they began to piece together what must have happened. Their unwelcome visitor was one of the siblings who had lived in the raided house and the Bible, jewellery and other possessions belonged to her and her family. Harold came to the conclusion that she had been pulled toward the last known place where her things were located. Since he has a sensitivity to the paranormal, he feels that he was the closest thing that the ghost could tap into that was susceptible to her energy.

All he and Nancy could think of was to drive the woman's spirit away before she could wreak any havoc on them or their house. They contacted a local priest who was skeptical about their

story but agreed to perform an exorcism anyway. As he passed down the hall on the main floor, all of the doors closed at the same time.

The next day, Harold heard a tapping sound all over the house as if someone was running around with a hammer. Nancy heard it too and they felt that the vengeful spirit was back and they had better call the priest back.

He returned and blessed the backyard that he had omitted the first time since he had concentrated on the house itself. The haunting stopped. Eventually, all of the "liberated" objects were returned to the house except for a necklace that one of the girls who had participated in the séance insisted on wearing. She started having nervous spells and had to seek treatment in Windsor. The real cure lay in the return of the necklace to its rightful owner. Once she had complied, the spells were broken and she was herself once more.

This powerful story clearly shows the danger of interfering with psychic energy by untrained people and what unholy terror might be unleashed. Harold has never forgotten that night or the angry ghost who sought the return of what was rightfully hers.

THE TOP TEN WAYS TO DETERMINE IF YOUR HOUSE IS HAUNTED:

- 10. A rocking chair rocks on its own with nobody there.**
- 9. Things go missing and then suddenly reappear.**
- 8. If you have children, one may have an invisible friend.**
- 7. You feel like you are being watched.**
- 6. There is a feeling of coldness and unease in the house.**
- 5. You see fleeting images out of the corner of your eye.**

4. There are loud sounds in the night sometimes banging and sometimes music.

3. There are electrical disturbances such as the doorbell ringing and nobody is there.

2. Lights turn themselves on and off.

And the NO. 1 way you can tell if your house is haunted?

You hear the sound
of footsteps.

Join ghost story author, Sheila Gibbs for a second foray into a mysterious world of echoing footsteps, flickering lights and unearthly appearances.

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What dark figure lurks in the back of this closet.

How messages from beyond the grave carry hope and regret and sometimes, a threat.

What surprise awaited this Bothwell grandmother in the back seat of her car.

How this Dresden woman nearly received an out-of-this-world Christmas gift.

Why reading the love letters of a ghost may be a bad idea.

How one street in Chatham seems to be a mecca for ghosts.

How a shadow on the River Road came to life one dark, moonlit night and the men who witnessed it have never been the same.

Learn about these and more startling, intriguing encounters with the hidden side of Chatham-Kent but keep the lights on.

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