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# The ghosts of Ohío® Newsletter

Volume 15 Issue 6

### FROM THE SPOOKY DESK OF JAMES WILLIS:

## I'M SKEPTICAL OF YOUR CLAIMS OF BEING A SKEPTIC

### "How can you say you're a skeptic when you believe in ghosts?"



James

At a recent presentation, I was asked that very question. Truth be told, it wasn't the first time that people seemed confused over

my statements concerning my belief in ghosts as well as being a skeptic.

For the record, I've been referring to myself as a "hopeful skeptic" for many years. And while I feel it's a pretty good description, albeit one that probably needs to be revisited due to changes regarding what people today think of when they hear the term "skeptic."

Years ago, calling yourself a skeptic meant simply that you were skeptical-someone who had

doubts. In other words, you needed convincing. Back then, being skeptical had nothing to do with one's belief system, only that you needed to be convinced before a decision was reached. When it comes to the paranormal in general (and ghosts, specifically), I can think of no better word to describe me than "skeptic." I added the "hopeful" bit as the years rolled by and more and more of these reality shows/TV ghost hunters started popping up. I felt it further clarified my stance: I was skeptical about things, but was hopeful that there were true ghost experiences out there and, if I kept at it long enough, I would have my own true experiences.

What I think is further confusing people is that "skeptic" has come to mean someone who doesn't believe

at all. In fact, it's getting harder and harder to find people who say they are skeptics yet still believe that paranormal occurrences do happen. It's as if skeptics have become the new non-believers.

As for me, I'm going to continue to seek out those true personal experiences, no matter what moniker I use to describe myself. But perhaps I do need to update what I choose to call myself to, you know, change with the times. Kind of like how Fox Mulder should update his "I want to believe" poster to "I STILL want to believe."

Cheers,

D. Xilli

James A. Willis Founder/Director



### Jami B., Delaware, OH

There is an old house (address redacted) in Delaware, Ohio, that everybody says is haunted. I am 24 now but this story happened when I was in high school and was 16. The house is still there and still abandoned, which is kind of weird to me since back then it was ready to fall over. But it still stands today.

I believe in ghosts and evil spirits, so people were always trying to get me to go out to the house, always in the middle of the night when it was good and scary. I never wanted to go since the first time I saw it in the middle of the day, I felt there was something bad inside.

But back when I was 16, I started dating a guy from the school football team. A guy that I really, really liked and really wanted to impress. So when he said a bunch of his teammates and their girlfriends were going to go check out the haunted house on Saturday night, I decided I needed to tag along. Big mistake!

We made our way out to the house around 10:00 pm. It was cloudy, so there was very little light from the moon to light our way. We had a couple of flashlights, but that was about it, so walking through the woods was sort of hard, even though there was a beaten path where people had been making the trip to and from the house over the years. We all sort of laughed and made lame attempts to scare each other and I can remember thinking maybe I had psyched myself out and that there was nothing to be scared of at the house. That feeling went away as soon as we caught our first glimpse of the house.

Once I saw it, those feelings came back and I didn't want to go inside. Sure, it looked like a broken down house with busted out windows, no doors, and some graffiti, but that wasn't it. I just felt like there was something, something I couldn't see, waiting inside the house for us and it wasn't happy we were there.

I didn't want to look bad in front of my new boyfriend, so I didn't say anything and just followed the gang inside. There was hardly any furniture, but what was there was old, dirty, and broken. There were only a couple of rooms to investigate, so it didn't take long for us to have been inside every one of them. Nothing creepy at all. But the feeling wouldn't go away. The feeling that something in the house wanted us gone. The feeling kept getting stronger.

All of a sudden, one of the football players said something about not feeling good. I thought I heard another of his friends say it must have been because of what he drank earlier. The guy said no and then ran outside to puke in the bushes. At almost the same time, I felt a really sharp pain on my back. I can remember turning around and thinking that maybe I had brushed against a nail or some broken glass from a window. But I was standing in the middle of the room and there was nothing there and no one around me. I tried to make like nothing happened, but then I felt the pain again, only stronger this time.

That was it. I had to get out of the house. I pretended that I was checking on the guy throwing up outside, but it was really just an excuse to get out because my back was starting to burn. Once I got outside, I pulled the back of my shirt up, but I couldn't see why it was burning. One of the other girlfriends was coming out of the house at that time and she yelled out something like what the heck happened to your back? Did something scratch you?

The rest of the group came outside and looked at my back. They said it looked like a bunch of deep scratches across my back. So deep that two of the scratches were bleeding a little bit. They took my hand and put it behind my back, so I could feel what they were talking about. I felt them and it did feel like scratches. We left right after that.

When I got home, the first thing I did was look at my back in a mirror. Believe it or not, the scratches were almost gone and only maybe an hour had passed. It made no sense to me. The only thing I could think was something in that house wanted me out and that once I was, the scratches started fading away.

I ended up only dating the football player for another month and we never spoke about what happened in the house. I always wanted to talk with the guy who suddenly threw up to see if maybe the house had made him sick, but I never did. Guess I was too scared about what he might have said.







Everywhere you travel, you're just a drive away from something historic and/or spooky. In 2015, my travels took me back to one of my favorite states—New Mexico.

For as long as I can remember, I've had a passion for desert landscapes and Old West history; and there's simply no place that encompasses those concepts better than the "Land of Enchantment." There is so much to see and do there. Over the years I've toured New Mexico's ancient ruins, hiked through slot canyons and lava beds, sand boarded down pristine white dunes, drifted high above Albuquerque in a hot air balloon, traced the footsteps of legendary Billy the Kid, attended a Day of the Dead festival, feasted on a plethora of red and green chile dishes, and yes, visited haunted locations.

On this particular occasion I was in New Mexico with my sister for the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. We decided to drive to Santa Fe for a day, and I told her I wanted to check out a haunted hotel I had read about in a fascinating memoir titled *American Ghost: A Family's Haunted Past in the Desert Southwest*. The book chronicled author Hannah Nordhaus's exhaustive efforts to delve into her family's history and find out why her great-great-grandmother's spirit would be lingering in her former home, which is now an iconic resort in the heart of Santa Fe called La Posada.

The ghost story began in 1975, when a janitor spotted a translucent woman in an empty downstairs room. She had dark eyes, a long black Victorian gown, white

hair swept into a bun, and an "aura of sadness" emanating from her. As time went on, the woman appeared in various places throughout the hotel, and more activity kicked up. Gas fireplaces turned themselves on and off. Chandeliers swayed, flower vases were moved, glasses fell from shelves at the bar, and waitresses felt like they were being pushed. Footsteps were heard from the now nonexistent third floor (it was destroyed by fire in 1924); and a woman's voice called the switchboard over and over saying, "Hallo? Hallo?" It wasn't until 1979 that the hotel staff gave their resident ghost a name-Julia Staab. Julia was Nordhaus's great-greatgrandmother and matriarch of the family.

#### In 1854, a German

immigrant named Abraham Staab came to America in pursuit of the American Dream. He settled in Santa Fe, where he spent years becoming a very successful (and extremely wealthy) merchant and businessman. He achieved U.S. citizenship in 1865, then four months later traveled back to Germany to marry Julia and bring her back to America with him. This is, perhaps, where her "sadness" began.

From the moment she left her small German village, traveled across the sea to America, and boarded a stagecoach to ride across the desolate desert landscape toward her new home, Julia felt completely out of place. To make her feel more at home, Abraham used his fortune



to build her a grand mansion that was nothing like the region's traditional mud and straw adobe. Instead, it was an elegant brick French Second Empire-style structure with molded ceilings, elaborate ironwork and lush gardens. It reflected the prominence of the Staab name in Santa Fe; and it became Julia's sanctuary. An oasis in the middle of the dusty desert. Somehow, though, it wasn't enough.

Over the years Julia found herself playing hostess to countless lavish parties as her husband sought a career in politics. She bore and raised seven children in the house, even experiencing the loss of one. And she still missed her family and her homeland. She regularly took trips to Germany; and she visited spas and doctors

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all over the world, all in an effort to dispel the depression she was feeling. But there didn't seem to be anything anyone could do. Ultimately, she sequestered herself in her room. She couldn't even bring herself to attend her youngest daughter's wedding, which took place downstairs. Julia died on May 14, 1896, at the age of 52 while Abraham was away in New York.

Author Hannah Nordhaus remembers the rumors about Julia she heard when she was growing up-that she was sickly and deeply depressed. Was she an unhappy bride? Was the loss of a child her undoing? How did she die? Was it suicide? Murder? Was Abraham abusive? "Her story had been remodeled, like the hotel in which she lived. Her life now conformed to the conventions of a ghost story: the sad woman in a high-necked dress, roaming the creaking passageways of a Victorian mansion." This is when Nordhaus decided to delve into her family's history to discover who the real Julia Staab was, and perhaps discover what happened to her. "I didn't think I believed in Julia's ghost, but she was nonetheless starting to haunt me."

Nordhaus spent years researching with the help of historians, family and friends, witnesses, tour guides, other writers on the subject, paranormal investigators, and even psychics. She searched archives and read countless historical documents, government records, newspaper articles, immigration rolls, letters, memoirs, journals and diaries. She visited Julia's homeland, subjected herself to DNA analysis, watched TV shows on the subject (including "Unsolved Mysteries"), and yes, she even stayed in Julia's room. She states, "I would set out on a ghost hunt—a metaphorical one, and a literal one, too. I would come to know the world in which Julia lived and died. I would disentangle the life from the legend, the flesh-andblood woman from the ghost, the history from the surmise, the facts from the fictions...I would try to rescue her from the prison of other people's reductions. I would make her real."

Her book certainly accomplished that goal, and I highly recommend reading it. It's an extraordinary work of love and understanding that you just don't find in other paranormal literature, and it's a stark reminder that the dead have stories to tell if we're willing to pay attention.

Today, Julia's home doesn't look like it once did, at least on the outside. The brick has been covered with stucco to match the rest of Santa Fe's architecture, and the gardens are gone. The interior, however, hasn't changed much and is still beautiful.

When my sister and I arrived at La Posada, it was obvious from the outside that it's a very upscale resort. We walked into the lobby to see what it looked like and received a glare from a man standing at a podium. I explained to him that I had read Nordhaus's book and that we just wanted to get a glimpse of this iconic historic landmark. After all, it played an important role in Santa Fe's history. He scowled at the mention of the book, and I found myself feeling (like Julia) that I didn't belong there. I decided not to engage him in any further conversation, and we left. In all my years of traveling to New Mexico, I hadn't met a grouch until I encountered him. I'm guessing he's seen his fair share of "ghost hunters" looking for Julia. Or he's just a jerk. Who knows?

If you find yourself in Santa Fe, La Posada is located just a few blocks off of the main plaza at 330 E. Palace Ave. I'm not sure I would recommend going inside unless you plan to be a guest there, but I suppose you can't base your opinion of a place on one crummy encounter. I'd love to hear from you if you go!

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

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

## MOVIE REVIEW: MY AMITYVILLE HORROR

Genre: Documentary Written and directed by Eric Walter Film Regions International / Distributed by IFC Midnight Streaming online and physical disc available for purchase Official web site: http://www.amityvillemovie.com/

As someone who

was a tween

when the

incident

Amityville

happened, spawning a book

that fascinated

I have always

been on the

and terrified me.





Wendy

search for the truth. What really happened? The Lutzes themselves have said it is all true, it is partially true, none of it is true...what's a person to believe? In a society of epic lying you really have no clue what the actuality of anything is. So I've read their side, and then also the side of debunkers like Dr. Stephen Kaplan, who spent over 20 years looking into the story. Then Jim handed me this documentary at our last meeting.

Created by IFC Midnight in 2012, this documentary opens with Daniel Lutz the oldest son who lived in the Ocean Avenue house as a child, shredding on the guitar, before going into introductions and interviews. No doubt about this, the man can play! The documentary follows him on a trip down memory lane that is chilling... not because of the subject matter (the house) but because of the victim...in this case Daniel. I am not going to spoil it for you, you need to watch this yourself. Daniel is interviewed throughout, and meets up and discusses the house with everyone from a reporter who was involved in the initial investigation, to relatives and friends, to the grand dame of the occult herself, Lorraine Warren. The scene in her basement that takes place around a cross she is holding is grim.

What I did take away from this is the continuing insistence that certain things happened, even when the players themselves say that they never occurred, and the overwhelming amount of psychological issues that Danny currently suffers from. Even a doctor in the film says she can't be sure if what Danny is saying is what happened, or what he has talked himself into believing AFTER the phenomenon of the book and movie. Danny has some heavy issues and a definite saddlebag of hate and anger just pouring out of him in many



of these scenes. And it isn't a house that caused this, it is a man. George Lutz, stepfather and fear inducer. This really is a tale about a family gone wrong, and watching Danny unravel as he is questioned about his life before, during and after those infamous 28 days is the truly sad and terrifying story.



### revisiting the teriling. CEPILING Sounds of CEPILDEJOOD



My 8-year-old daughter recently got into vinyl records. I've been collecting since I was around her age, so it was kind of cool to see her digging through

James

my collection and pulling out stuff she wanted to listen to. Or, in the case of my daughter, pulling out stuff she thought our parrot, Khashoggi, wanted to hear.

One day, while we were rifling through my records in search of some that I hadn't played in a while, I came across a forgotten treasure and the memories came rushing back: *Chilling*, *Thrilling Sounds of the Haunted House*.

Originally released in 1964 by Walt Disney Records, this album quickly became a staple of every home haunt and could be heard blaring from dimly lit front porches all across the United States on Halloween night. It was an interesting record, to be sure. Side one contains 10 tracks/stories, narrated by Laura Olsher. The second side is simply the same 10 tracks repeated, albeit with Olsher's narration removed.

*Chilling, Thrilling Sounds of the Haunted House* is perhaps best known for its opening track, The Haunted House. Anyone who had or has heard the record can probably recite Olsher's narration, which begins with these words:

YOU ARE A BOLD AND COURAGEOUS PERSON. AFRAID OF NOTHING.

Olsher quickly describes how there's a haunted house sitting up on a hilltop and that "one dark and stormy night," a light appears in the house. Laura explains that upon seeing the light, "you decide to investigate. And you never return."

Once Olsher utters those words, the sound effects begin. Howling wind is quickly joined by hissing cats and disembodied moans and groans. Soon, heavy rains enter this audio landscape, as does distant thunder. Things reach a feverish pitch as you draw nearer to the house until...I'm not telling. You have to listen for yourself.

Truth be told, while Laura Olsher narrates the remaining nine tracks, none of them come close to The Haunted *House*. In fact, none of the other tracks deal specifically with ghosts and instead involve dangerous and/or scary situations such as a tree falling on you, crossing an unsafe bridge, and even being attacked by your pet cat. That didn't stop me, though. For my Halloween haunted houses. I simply recorded *The Haunted House* track over and over again onto a cassette and then played that. It did always give me a chuckle, though, when I would go out trick-or-treating and come across a house where they had just let the record play, resulting in a bizarre scene of costumed ghosts and goblins parading around to the sounds of someone lighting a very long fuse.



All this aside, I deny anyone who had this record to not immediately get a chill up their spine and find their thoughts wandering back to simpler, spookier times. You might even catch a whiff of decaying leaves if you're not careful. MP3s of *Chilling, Thrilling Sounds of the Haunted House* can be found all over the Internet. Disney Records even recently re-issued the album on vinyl, which, for me, is the way to go as it gets one back as close as possible to that annual ritual so many of us performed long, long ago.

## the Ghosts Go to Houd View Manor



In May, The Ghosts of Ohio crossed state lines (apparently still legal without an interstate passport \*joking, or...) into Pennsylvania to investigate Hill View Manor. It

was a long miserable winter, so it was time to exercise our investigative wings.

We opted to go semi-old school, using handhelds, and split up into 4 groups. We set up a new experiment this time concerning audio recording. In the basement we set up a station with 10 or 11 different audio recorders, including old 1970s tape decks, old mini cassette recorders, and a battery of digital voice recorders. The goal was to see if a paranormal sound that was picked up was heard on all recorders or just some. It turns out that the mini cassette and large cassette squeaked and whined so much that even if something had been caught, it wasn't going to be hearable. Amazing how just 10 years ago the mini was the audio recorder of choice.

My group advanced through our assigned stations throughout the night, not really feeling anything odd per say. Sean had a bunch of cabinet doors start rattling when he walked into a room on the second floor. I thought it was the embalming room...but that was the room directly below. So we headed back downstairs. As we came through the door, I thought I heard people, so I state on the tape "someone is in our section again." We walked down to the embalming room, approximately 30 feet and...there was no one there. Upon review of my audio that night, as we were walking through the door stating someone was in our area, a voice chimes in saying, "People are back." It's official. The Ghosts of Ohio are people. And for the record, the only time I felt anything in the building

was in that area...
right outside the door
to the chapel room.
We had watched it
get darker in the
chapel room as we sat
there, but really
didn't feel anything other than
comfortable. So to catch this voice about

20 minutes later right at that spot was somewhat validating.

There were several more odd occurrences throughout the night. There is an odd pulsing energy source that is traced down to the generators in the basement. They cause an EMF field that goes from about a .8 to about 120. It goes up...then goes down. We have people in our group who work in construction and in physical sciences, and they could not figure out why a generator would be pulsing in that way. Paranormal? Most likely not; we just need to figure out why this was happening. And the oddest thing was that on the floor right above the generators we picked up that pulsing EMF field, but only when facing certain directions. This still has us scratching our heads.

Odd noises were heard by all the teams that could not be traced, but some of the more amazing things came from the basement bank of audio recorders. When investigating, it is good practice to always announce when you are walking in and out of a room, walking across the floor, kicking another member with your foot in the dark, etc. You need to be able to account for any noise that might be picked up on an audio recorder. And you should always be of the belief that you are either being heard or seen at all times. If your stomach growls, announce it!

So imagine our surprise to find that the audio recorders picked up the sound of people walking in the basement, sometimes 5 minutes after the last assigned group had left! (We investigate



areas in hour-long shifts.) You hear the groups say they are leaving. You hear them walk past the recorders. You hear the door close and the sound of them walking up the stairs. Several minutes later, you hear footsteps walking past the recorders, but no doors opening, no announcements. And the doors in the building close hard, almost slamming in most instances. This phenomena happened several times throughout the evening. I had gone down at one time during a break to switch sides of a cassette recorder, but you hear me announce myself on the recordings. Then I leave. Nothing until the next group comes down to investigate and leave. (We usually didn't last long, the temperature down there was 55 degrees.) But no sooner did they vacate the area when noises began to occur.

All in all, it was an interesting investigation and still leaves us with some questions as to what is truly going on there. Jim went back the next day to take some more pictures with a building, and had his own weird experience involving the pet of one of the workers. Not a story for me to tell...maybe you can persuade him to give you the skinny when you see him on his presentation tour this fall!

It was a very exciting and entertaining evening in a location we can finally say we've had the honor of spending some time inside of!

For more information on Hill View Manor, click here. And be sure to tell them The Ghosts of Ohio sent you!

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## THE GHOSTS THIS OCTOBER?

It's almost time to break out the leaf rakes, hooded sweatshirts, and all things pumpkin spice. All of which means The Ghosts of Ohio are packing up their spookiest audio, video, and photographs and hitting the road!

We'll be crisscrossing Ohio throughout the month of October, including visiting some towns and cities for the very first time! Except where noted, the events are FREE and open to the general public. Seating is limited at all presentations and appearances, so many of the locations require you to preregister, even some of the free events. So we encourage everyone to contact the venue just to make sure your seats are waiting for you the night of the event.

For all dates, books will be available for purchase before and after the event. And yes, we'll be more than happy to autograph them for you.

Wednesday, October 3rd @ 6:00 pm Meet James A. Willis & The Ghosts of Ohio presentation MLJ-Hardin Co. Library 325 E. Columbus Street Kenton, OH 43326

Saturday, October 6th Meet James A. Willis & The Ghosts of Ohio presentation Sycamore Park Branch / Pickerington Public Library 7861 Refugee Road Pickerington, OH

**Tuesday, October 9th @ 7:00 pm** Meet The Ghosts of Ohio presentation North Royalton Branch / Cuyahoga County Public Library 5071 Wallings Road North Royalton, OH

**Thursday, October 11th** The Strange & Spooky World of James A. Willis presentation Greenville Public Library 520 Sycamore Street Greenville, OH

Saturday, October 13th The Strange & Spooky World of James A. Willis presentation Chillicothe Halloween Festival Yoctangee Park Chillicothe, OH

**Tuesday, October 16th** Meet The Ghosts of Ohio presentation Portsmouth Public Library 1220 Gallia Street Portsmouth, OH

Friday, October 19th My Strange & Spooky World: An Evening with Author and Paranormal Researcher James A. Willis Gaslight Theater 301 S. Main Street Georgetown, OH **Monday, October 22nd** Meet The Ghosts of Ohio presentation Paulding County Carnegie Library 205 S. Main Street Paulding, OH

Wednesday, October 24th \$ The Strange & Spooky World of James A. Willis presentation Thurber House 77 Jefferson Avenue Columbus, OH

**Thursday, October 25th** Meet The Ghosts of Ohio presentation Bossard Memorial Library 7 Spruce Street Gallipolis, OH

Saturday, October 27th Meet The Ghosts of Ohio presentation Lorain Public Library 351 W. Sixth Street Lorain, OH 44052

### Saturday, November 3rd

My Strange & Spooky World: An Afternoon with Author and Paranormal Researcher James A. Willis Eaton Library 301 N. Barron Street Eaton, OH

### Saturday, November 17th

The Night The Ghost Got In Thurber House 77 Jefferson Avenue Columbus, OH This is a unique opportunity for one lucky winner and a guest to ghost hunt at Thurber House with me on the anniversary of the events in James Thurber's short story, *The Night the Ghost Got In.* All proceeds from the raffle will benefit Thurber House.

CLICK HERE

to purchase your raffle tickets

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## WANT TO SPEND THE NIGHT WITH THE GHOSTS OF OHIO IN 2018?

It's true: You can investigate with us as part of our Spend The Night With The Ghosts of Ohio program!

What's the Spend The Night program? Simply put, it's an opportunity for some of our fans to get locked inside of a haunted location with us on a private, overnight ghost hunt.

All you need to be is an active subscriber to this very newsletter. As long as you are, there's a chance your email address will be randomly pulled from the list. When that happens, you and a guest are headed to a haunted location with us for the night!



### **Investigations & Consultations**

The Ghosts of Ohio are continuing to schedule investigations for 2018, and, if you can believe it, some for 2019. If you or someone you know is experiencing something unexplained in a home or place of business, contact us at info@ghostsofohio.org or visit our website to fill out an investigation request. All investigations are offered free of charge, and confidentiality and discretion are assured.

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

### Interact with The Ghosts of Ohio

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



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### TWITTER http://twitter.com/ghostsofohio

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