



The ghosts of Ohio® Newsletter

www.ghostsofohio.org

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THIS YEAR, I'M GOING TO ENJOY OCTOBER



JAMES

For as long as I can remember, October has been my month. Growing up in New York State's Hudson Valley, once the leaves started turning and the apple cider started flowing, it was hard to shake the feeling that something was changing. The days were shorter. The nights were colder. And somewhere out

there in the darkness, the ghosts were coming. You had to be ready.

Somewhere along the way, though, I managed to turn my love of October, ghosts, and all things strange & spooky into a career. And while that has been wonderful, it has also meant that for many years now, October has become less about enjoying the season and more about surviving it.

Most Octobers, I spend the month traveling around Ohio, and sometimes across several states, giving presentations, signing books, making appearances, and talking about ghosts to anyone willing to listen. I love doing all of that. What I don't love is getting home afterward and disappearing into my office to work half the night on whatever book is under deadline.

This year, however, something very strange is going to happen: I am going to enjoy October.

The complete manuscript for Ohio's Historic Haunts II is due to Kent State University Press on October 1. Once I turn it in, the book enters their system and begins its way through editing and production. For

the first time in years, I will not be spending October traveling all day and writing all night. I will just be traveling all day. And compared to what I am used to, that practically sounds like a vacation. So, I intend to take full advantage of it. I have already started collecting obscure Halloween television specials, books, magazines, and anything else that might help set the mood. I am getting firewood ready for the fire pit out in the woods. There will be apple cider, an unreasonable amount of which will be hard. And every chance I get, I plan to drag my wife and daughter (if she'll let me) off to whatever fall festival, Halloween event, or pumpkin-filled roadside attraction I can find.

Because I have realized that I miss October. Not the October filled with appearances, hotel reservations, and deadlines. I miss the October that started all of this for me in the first place. The October where the air smells different, leaves scrape across the road at night, and a fire outside finally feels just right. The October where ghosts somehow seem possible.

I already have another book under contract that kicks into gear at the beginning of the year, but that's January's problem. For now, I'm looking at October. And this year, I plan to be ready when the ghosts come.

Cheers,

James A. Willis
Founder/Director



PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

The Old Hensley Place

Pearl F., Location withheld

My grandmother used to say there were some roads you ought not travel after dark, not because there was anything evil on them, exactly, but because some places got used to being left alone. Bent Ridge was one of those places.

Now, you won't find Bent Ridge on a map. Leastways, not under that name. It was just what everybody called that stretch of mountain road that ran up past the old Hensley place and disappeared into the timber. Back when I was a girl, there were still a few families living up there. By the time I married, there wasn't anybody. The houses fell in one by one. Roofs went first, then porches, then the woods came creeping back in and took the rest. But there was one light that never seemed to leave.

I saw it the first time when I was sixteen. My cousin Darlene and I had been down in town later than we had any business being. Her daddy had told us to be home before nine, and it was pushing ten-thirty when we finally started back. Darlene had borrowed her brother's old Ford, which wasn't much of a car even then. The heater worked when it felt like it, and one headlight pointed higher than the other, so you could see the tops of trees really well but not necessarily what was standing in the road. We were coming around the curve below the old Hensley place when Darlene slowed down.

"Do you see that?" she asked.

Up ahead, maybe a hundred yards or so, there was somebody walking along the side of the road carrying a lantern. That's what it looked like, anyway. A little yellow light swinging to the left, then to the right, just like somebody carrying it down by their knee.

There wasn't any reason for somebody to be walking up there at that hour, so Darlene laid on the horn. The light stopped and so did we. I remember that



plain as anything. It stopped swinging and just hung there in the road. Then it started moving toward us.

Darlene said, "Whoever that is, they're coming back." I told her to lock the doors.

The light kept coming closer, but even when it got near enough that we ought to have seen whoever was carrying it, there was nobody there. No legs. No coat. No face. Just that yellow light swinging back and forth about three feet off the ground. Then it went out.

Darlene screamed. I did too, though I denied that for probably thirty years. She hit the gas, and that old Ford took off up Bent Ridge throwing gravel every which way. We got maybe half a mile farther when the engine died. It didn't sputter or cough. It just quit. Darlene tried the key three times and got nothing. That's when I looked in the side mirror.

The light was behind us, far back down the road, swinging again and coming our way. Darlene could see it too. She started praying, though not very well. Darlene wasn't what you'd call a churchgoing girl.

(continued on page 3.)

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

The Old Hensley Place continued

She knew the Lord's Prayer up through "daily bread," and after that she more or less made up her own.

The light kept coming until I could see it reflected in the back window. Then somebody knocked on my side of the car three times. Neither one of us moved.

Then came three more, right beside my head.

I don't know how long we sat there. Couldn't have been more than a few seconds, but I remember thinking, Whoever's out there knows I'm in here. Then the car started.

Darlene didn't turn the key. Didn't touch anything. The engine just roared back to life. She put it in gear and drove, and neither one of us looked back.

When we got home, her daddy was standing on the porch waiting for us, mad enough to skin us both alive. But before he could get started, Darlene asked him if anybody ever walked Bent Ridge carrying a lantern.

His face changed. He didn't laugh or ask what we meant. He just said, "Where'd you see it?" We told him. He stood there for a minute looking past us toward the mountain, then said, "Girls, if you ever see that light again, you don't stop." That was all he'd tell us.

I found out the rest from my grandmother. She said years before I was born there was an old woman named Martha Hensley who lived up on the ridge. Her husband had died young, and her only boy worked at a sawmill down in the valley. One winter evening, he didn't come home. Martha took a lantern and went looking for him. A storm had come up, snow blowing sideways and cold enough to freeze water solid in a bucket overnight. They found the boy the next morning. A tree had come down across the road and killed him.

They didn't find Martha until two days later. She was sitting beside him in the snow. Her lantern had burned empty. My grandmother said folks started seeing the light the following winter, always on that same stretch of road, always moving uphill. Like somebody was still looking for a boy who never made it home.

Now, I don't know whether that's true. Mountain people can put a story around just about anything if you give us enough coffee and enough darkness.

But I will tell you this. I've seen that light three times in my life. Once when I was sixteen, again when I was thirty-eight, and once more about six years ago. That last time, I was driving home by myself. The old Hensley place is completely gone now. You can't even see the foundation unless you know where to look.

But when I rounded that curve, there it was. That little yellow light, swinging back and forth beside the road.

I didn't slow down or even look straight at it. I just said, "Evening, Martha," and kept on driving. Because when you get to be my age, you learn something. Not everything that haunts a place means you harm. Sometimes they're just doing the last thing they remember how to do. And if that poor woman has been walking Bent Ridge all these years looking for her boy, the least I can do is stay out of her way.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

WHAT DID I SEE?

Alexis D., Cambridge, Ohio

I know how this is going to sound once I describe what I saw, so I should probably start by saying I'm not somebody who scares easily in the woods. I solo hike at night pretty regularly. I know that sounds crazy to some people, but I like it. Trails feel different after dark. Quieter. You notice sounds and little movements you miss during the day.

This happened in late October, around eleven at night, on a trail I'd hiked probably twenty times before. It was mostly wooded ridge with a few rocky overlooks, nothing especially difficult. The moon was bright enough that I wasn't using my headlamp the whole time. I'd switch it on for rough spots, then turn it back off and let my eyes adjust.

I was maybe three miles in when I noticed something ahead of me. At first, I thought it was a tree or maybe a person standing just off the right side of the trail, forty or fifty yards away. Then I realized how big it was. It had to be seven feet tall, maybe a little more, and broad through the shoulders. Its arms hung down much farther than a person's should. If you drew the basic silhouette people associate with Bigfoot, that's pretty much what I was looking at. Except this thing was white.

I don't mean white fur, because I couldn't actually see fur or any other detail. It was just a solid pale shape, and the longer I stared at it, the more it seemed almost luminous. Not bright enough to light up the trees around it. More like it had its own faint glow.

I stopped walking and just stared at it for a few seconds. It didn't move. Finally, I said, "Okay," because apparently that's what comes out of my mouth when I see a giant glowing thing in the woods. Then I switched on my headlamp.

The beam lit up the trail, the trunks, the brush, everything around it, but the figure itself didn't really change. It didn't get brighter. I couldn't suddenly see



a face or hair or clothing. It didn't even seem to cast much of a shadow. It just stood there, completely silent. For maybe fifteen seconds, neither of us moved. The weird thing was that the woods sounded normal. I've heard people talk about everything going dead silent right before they see something strange, but that didn't happen. I could still hear leaves moving and insects in the brush. Somewhere down the ridge, something small was scratching around. There was nothing dramatic about the moment

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PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

WHAT DID I SEE? CONTINUED

except for the fact that this huge white thing was standing there watching me. Then it started to fade.

That's really the only word I have for it. It didn't run off or step behind a tree. It just became thinner, almost transparent. I could actually see the trees through it for a second or two, and then it was gone. I stood there for a while before walking over to the spot. Probably not the smartest thing I've ever done, but I wanted to know if there was something there that my eyes had turned into something else.

There wasn't.

No footprints that I could see. No broken branches. No smell. Nothing that suggested a large animal or a person had been standing there moments earlier.

I finished the hike, mostly because I didn't have much choice. I was already several miles in, and the fastest way back to my car was to keep going. I did leave my headlamp on the whole way after that.

I've tried to explain it ever since. A person in light-colored clothes doesn't make much sense. A bear doesn't really work either, especially one standing

perfectly still and then disappearing without making a sound. Could it have been moonlight and my eyes playing tricks on me? Sure. Low light can do strange things. But I remember the shape, shoulders, and size. If it had been dark and walked away into the trees, I probably would've come home saying I'd seen Bigfoot. If it had looked like a normal person and faded away, I probably would've called it a ghost. But it did both things wrong.

So, I don't really know what I saw. Sometimes I wonder if it wasn't a ghost or an animal at all. Maybe it was something that wasn't supposed to be there in that moment. Maybe two points in time just lined up for a few seconds and I happened to be standing in the right place to see through. That idea sounds crazy too, but honestly, so does everything else.

I still hike alone at night, and I've been back on that trail more than once. But there is one stretch of ridge where I always look off to the right as I pass, but I've never seen it again.

WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR GHOSTLY EXPERIENCES!

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 e-mail 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!



What About the Honeymoon Suite?

HOKUM REVIEW



JAMES

I'm finding that the older I get, the harder it is for a horror movie to really get under my skin. Maybe I've simply seen too many of them. Show me a dark hallway, a creepy basement, or something moving around in the shadows and chances are pretty good that I've seen some variation of it before. Which is one of the

reasons I enjoyed *Hokum* as much as I did.

The basic setup is fairly simple. Ohm Bauman, played brilliantly by Adam Scott, is a successful but somewhat jaded and thoroughly unpleasant novelist who travels to Ireland to scatter his parents' ashes. While there, he checks into an old inn, where one of the first things he encounters is the owner telling a couple of children a frightening local story about a witch who can take people away to another world. There's also the suggestion that perhaps the witch wasn't simply part of some old folktale. And that maybe she's still somewhere in the hotel.

That is about as much of the plot as I want to give away, because *Hokum* is one of those movies that works considerably better if you go into it not really knowing where it is headed. For a good portion of the film, I wasn't entirely sure myself.

And I mean that as a compliment.

Writer and director Damian McCarthy (*Oddity, Caveat*) has created something that isn't quite a traditional horror movie, although there are definitely a few moments that are genuinely scary. Instead, *Hokum* blends together a haunted-house story, Irish folklore, supernatural mystery and more than a little old-fashioned Gothic horror. Then it throws all those ingredients into a pot and lets them simmer until you begin wondering exactly what kind of story you're watching. I loved that about it.



There are also more than a few echoes of horror movies that I grew up loving. *The Shining* is probably the most obvious comparison, and there are nods that reminded me of both Stephen King's original novel and, of course, Stanley Kubrick's screen version. You have the isolated hotel, the troubled writer, long corridors, empty rooms, and that creeping suspicion that the building knows considerably more than it is letting on.

What About the Honeymoon Suite? **HOKUM REVIEW** continued

But *Hokum* never feels like it is simply copying *The Shining*. It knows those conventions and occasionally plays with them, but McCarthy ultimately takes the story somewhere very much his own.

A lot of that comes from the way the movie looks. The hotel isn't constantly buried in darkness. McCarthy doesn't fall into the trap of thinking that everything has to be so poorly lit that you can barely tell what you're looking at. Instead, once Ohm begins exploring the interior of the place, shadows become important. Doorways become important. Empty spaces become important. More than once I found myself staring into some dark corner of the screen because I was convinced something had moved back there. Sometimes something had. Sometimes it hadn't. At least I don't think it had.

The movie also does something particularly interesting whenever one of the characters begins relating a strange experience or telling a personal ghost story. Rather than simply having somebody sit there and describe what happened, McCarthy takes us into the recollection. Suddenly we've stepped out of the current story and into somebody else's memory, seeing events more or less the way that person remembers them.

As someone who has spent an awful lot of years listening to people tell me their ghost stories, I really enjoyed that approach. A good ghost story is rarely just about what supposedly happened. It is about the way the person remembers it, the details that stuck with them and the parts they still cannot explain. *Hokum* understands that.

And then there's Adam Scott. His Ohm Bauman is, to put it delicately, kind of an S.O.B. Actually, forget delicately. He's a complete S.O.B. He is angry, dismissive, rude and seemingly determined to make just about every interaction with another human being more difficult than it needs to be. Yet Scott somehow manages to keep you invested in him. You may not particularly like Ohm, but you still find yourself wanting him to figure out what is happening.

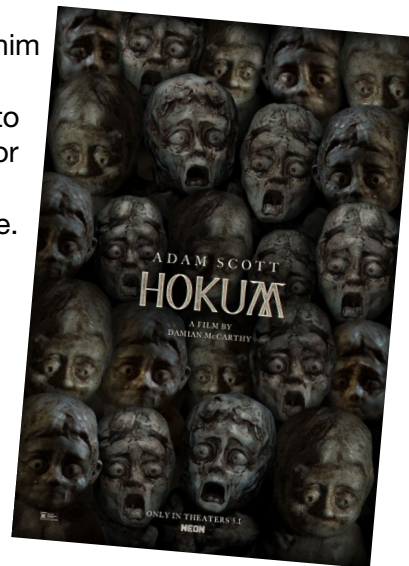
Perhaps I identified with him a little more than I should admit. There does seem to be something about horror stories and cranky, jaded writers that appeals to me. Jack Torrance in *The Shining*. Mike Enslin in *1408*. Now Ohm Bauman in *Hokum*. I have absolutely no idea why I would identify with characters like that.

Moving on.

Hokum isn't perfect. There are a couple of plot threads that I wish had been resolved a little more completely, and by the end I still had a few questions about exactly how certain pieces fit together. But strangely, that didn't bother me all that much. This is a movie built around folklore, memories, ghost stories and things that may or may not have happened exactly the way people remember them. Maybe having every last piece neatly explained would have worked against it.

What I do know is that *Hokum* gave me something I don't get nearly enough from modern horror movies: atmosphere. It felt like somebody had taken an old Gothic ghost story, mixed in Irish folklore, added some of the horror movies I grew up watching and then decided not to tell me exactly what I was supposed to believe. That works for me.

And for those of you already beginning to assemble your Halloween viewing list, you can go ahead and put *Hokum* on it. Halloween itself plays an important role in part of the story, making this feel like exactly the sort of movie that will play even better on a cold October night with the lights turned down. Just keep an eye on those dark corners of the room, because I'm still not entirely convinced nothing was moving back there.



OHIO'S HISTORIC HAUNTS II UPDATE

The biggest Ohio's Historic Haunts II update this month is a pretty exciting one: all 15 locations now have first drafts of their chapters in hand.

Calling them "first drafts" is actually a little misleading, since most are probably 85 to 90 percent finished. Right now, the locations are reviewing everything from dates and name spellings to the history and, perhaps most importantly, the evidence we collected during our investigations.

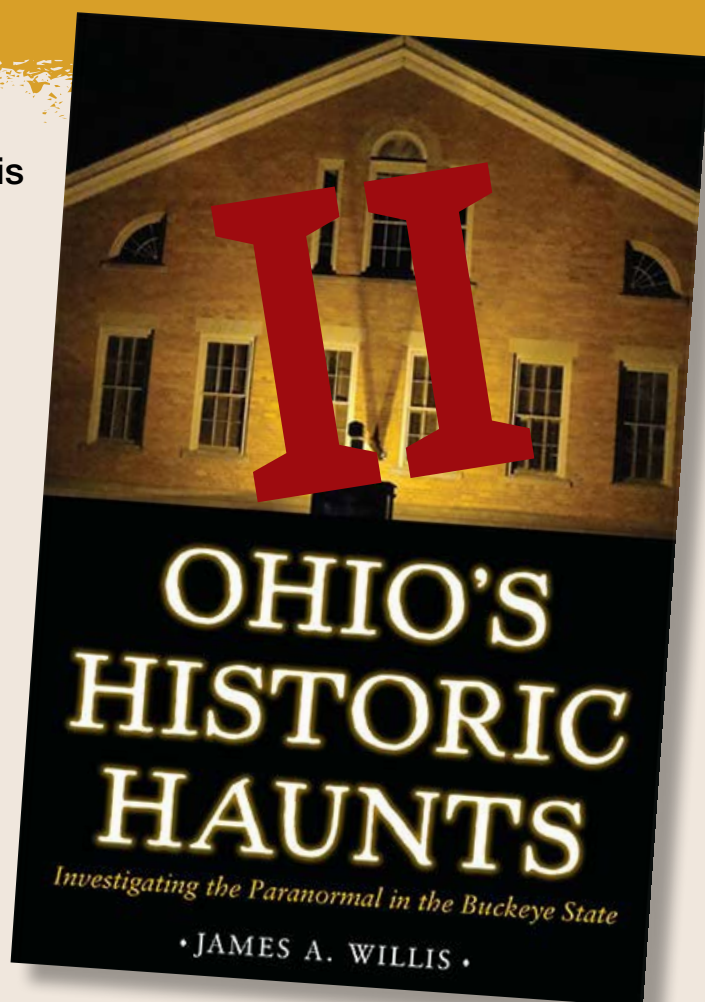
That collaboration has always been an important part of *Ohio's Historic Haunts II*, just as it was with the first book. We want to make sure we are telling each location's history correctly while also treating its ghost stories, reported activity, and our own findings seriously and responsibly. The goal has never been to exaggerate a story simply because it makes for a better ghost tale.

That same philosophy carries over into the research. At the moment, I have more than 185 works consulted and references on file for the book. I have always believed that if we want paranormal research to be taken seriously, we need to show where our information comes from and clearly separate documented history from folklore and claims.

While everyone is busy reviewing chapters, I'm also working through the photographs that will appear in the book, making sure each image actually helps tell the story rather than simply filling space.

And now the countdown is really on. By the time the October newsletter arrives, the completed manuscript will be in the hands of Kent State University Press, and I'll finally be able to officially reveal all 15 locations included in the book.

Of course, if you don't want to wait that long, we've already started "leaking" a few of the locations on social media. Follow along and you might get a few hints before the official October reveal.



PRESENTATION AND APPEARANCE CALENDAR

Yeah, we know it's not even Labor Day yet, but it's never too early to start making your plans to come out and see us!

The following are the only confirmed dates, but there are more in the works. And if you notice, we're already booking into 2027, so there's really no excuse to not stop by and say "boo" to us!

Monday, August 31st @ 5:30 pm

My Strangest & Spookiest Investigations presentation

Hillsboro Public Library
10 Willettsville Pike
Hillsboro, OH 45133

Thursday, September 3rd @ 6:00 pm

Bigfoot & The Ohio Grassman presentation

Dayton Metro Library: Miamisburg Branch
545 E. Linden Avenue
Miamisburg, OH 45402



Friday, September 25th

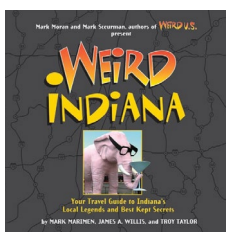
Meet The Ghosts of Ohio presentation

Institute for Learning in Retirement
(Oxford, Ohio / Miami University)
Presentation is part of their Fall Programming
[More information here](#)

Saturday, October 3rd @ 1:00 pm

The Strange & Spooky World of James A. Willis presentation

Greensburg-Decatur County
Public Library
1110 East Main Street
Greensburg, IN 47240
[More information here](#)



Monday, October 6th @ 6:30 pm

Ohio's Historic Haunts I & II presentation

Pickerington Public Library
201 Opportunity Way
Pickerington, OH 43147

Sunday, October 11th @ 2:00 pm

The Loveland Frogman Amalgam presentation

Main Library: Lorain Public Library System
351 W. 6th Street
Lorain, OH 44052

Wednesday, October 14th

Meet The Ghosts of Ohio presentation

Beavercreek Community Library
3618 Dayton-Xenia Road
Beavercreek, OH 45432



Saturday, October 17th @ 4:00 pm

Weird Events in Ohio History presentation

Dayton Metro Library:
New Lebanon Branch
715 West Main Street
New Lebanon, OH 45345

Monday, October 19th @ 7:00 pm

UFOs Over Ohio presentation

Bexley Public Library
2411 E. Main Street
Bexley, OH 43209

Monday, October 26th @ 5:30 pm

Ohio's Historic Haunts I & II presentation

Public Library of Youngstown & Mahoning County:
Struthers Branch
95 Poland Avenue
Struthers, OH 44471

Friday, October 30th: 5:00 pm – 11:59 pm

Ohio Monster Origins:

The First Howl presentation

The Night Market: Wolfman Origins

629 Arabella Street
Defiance, OH 43512-2856
[More information here](#)



Tuesday, November 17th @ 6:00 pm

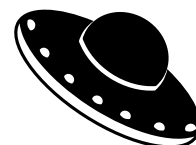
Merry Scary Christmas presentation

Pickaway County Library: Main Branch
1160 North Court Street
Circleville, OH 43113

Thursday, January 28th, 2027 @ 6:30 pm

UFOs Over Ohio presentation

Pickerington Public Library
201 Opportunity Way
Pickerington, OH 43147



Investigations & Consultations

The Ghosts Of Ohio continue to schedule investigations and consultations for 2026. So, 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.

Are you unsure if you want or need an investigation? The Ghosts of Ohio also offers consultations. Let us discuss your current situation and what help we can offer. For more information, please visit <http://ghostsofohio.org/services/investigations.html>

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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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