



# The ghosts of Ohio<sup>®</sup> Newsletter

www.ghostsofohio.org

Volume 23 Issue 3

## When Winter Storms Bring (More) Paranormal Drama



**JAMES**

Last month, like many of you, I found myself bracing for Winter Storm Fern, which proceeded to dump well over a foot of snow on Willis Woods. (Quick sidebar: when did we start naming winter storms? And who looked at a wall of white fury and said, “Yep. That’s a Fern.”?)

Being born and raised in the Catskills of New York, I was excited. Finally, a real snowstorm. The kind that buries the world and makes it feel quiet again. My daughter Courtney and I even made a pact the night it was supposed to hit we wouldn’t go to bed until we saw the first snowflakes fall. Around here, weather predictions can be a little...unpredictable. But this time, the forecasters nailed it. The snow came down. And it kept coming. When we woke up the next morning, Willis Woods looked like a postcard—pure winter wonderland. That part, I could handle.

What I wasn’t prepared for was the latest round of paranormal drama that blew in with it.

Traditionally, I’ve prided myself on ignoring paranormal drama. If it doesn’t involve me directly, I stay out of it and keep moving. That doesn’t mean it doesn’t weigh on me. It does. This latest episode—details not worth rehashing—involved wildly exaggerated claims, questionable “evidence,” and, as it so often does, people walking away with other folks’ hard-earned money.

That’s the part that gets to me. Not just the behavior itself, but the damage it does. Every time something like this happens, it reinforces the worst stereotypes about this field. Suddenly, anyone with an interest in the paranormal is lumped in with scam artists and con men. It sets us back. A lot. And if I’m being honest, it feels like we’ve been clawing uphill for decades just to earn a little credibility, only to watch it slide back down again. During Winter Storm Fern, it hit me harder than usual.

So, I did what I used to do as a kid in New York after a heavy snowfall. I walked out to my snow-covered driveway, laid down flat on my back, and just...stayed there. I let the snowflakes land on my face and melt. I stared up at that bright gray sky and decided, for a few minutes, to simply be.

And you know what? The frustration eased. The angst softened. The drama felt small compared to the quiet weight of fresh snow. I probably would’ve stayed there longer, but I figured it was best to get up before my wife looked out the window and assumed, in the words of my father, that I’d “took a hard attack while shoveling da snow.” When I went back inside, I left the drama out there in the driveway. And like the snow itself, it eventually melted away.

Sometimes, we all just need to lie still for a moment and let the noise fall around us, then disappear.

Cheers,

James A. Willis  
Founder/Director

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

## PAYING HIS RESPECTS

Rose K., location withheld by request

I'm not what you'd call a "ghost person."

I have a master's degree. I read peer-reviewed journals for fun. I believe in logic, weather patterns, and the fact that 90% of strange noises can be explained by plumbing. I don't jump to conclusions, and I certainly don't jump to the paranormal.

Which is why what happened to me three years ago still bothers me.

I had driven eight hours out of state to visit my grandparents' graves. They're buried in a sprawling cemetery in western Pennsylvania—rolling hills, old oaks, the kind of place where the headstones lean just slightly, as if they're tired. It was one of those deceptively cheerful spring days. Bright blue sky. Not a cloud. Birds chirping like they'd been hired by the tourism board.

The cemetery was enormous, but oddly empty. No other cars. No maintenance crew. No mourners clutching tissues. Just me and acres of marble and granite.

I found my grandparents without too much trouble. I'd been there once before as a child, though I didn't remember much. I placed the flowers I'd brought—yellow daisies, my grandmother's favorite—and stood there for a while. I'm not overly sentimental, but there's something about standing over the names of people who shaped you that makes time feel... layered. I was thinking about my grandmother's laugh, my grandfather's pipe smoke, the way adults always seem larger than life when you're small.

That's when I noticed him.

Off in the distance—maybe fifty yards away—was a man standing at another grave. He was completely still, head slightly bowed. I remember thinking how straight his posture was. Very upright. Hands folded in front of him.

I didn't think much of it at first. Cemeteries are, after all, for the living as much as the dead.



But after a minute or two, something tugged at my attention. His clothes. They looked... off. Not costume-party off. Not theatrical. Just dated.

He wore what looked like a light-colored suit, narrow through the shoulders, trousers with a higher waist than you'd see today. The jacket seemed structured in a way I associate with old photographs of my father in the early 1950s. His hair was neatly parted and slicked back. No hat. Polished shoes.

I remember squinting slightly, telling myself, Well, maybe he just likes vintage fashion. And then I glanced down at my phone. I had a text from my

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## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

**PAYING HIS RESPECTS** *continued*

daughter asking if I'd arrived safely. I typed back, looked up again—And he was gone. Not walking away. Not halfway across the grass. Gone.

Now, before you roll your eyes—and I would have rolled mine too—let me explain the layout.

The cemetery was open. No tall hedges. No mausoleums near him. Just rows of stones and trimmed lawn. To leave that section, he would have had to walk across at least thirty yards of completely unobstructed ground.

There was no movement. No receding figure. And when I turned in a slow circle, scanning for a parked car? Nothing. Mine was the only vehicle in sight.

I stood there longer than I'd care to admit, feeling that strange mix of curiosity and embarrassment. I actually muttered, "Well, that's odd," as if narrating my own documentary. Against my better judgment—or perhaps because of it—I walked over to the grave where he had been standing.

It was a single headstone. No matching spouse beside it. No cluster of family markers nearby. Just one woman. Her name was simple. Modest. The dates carved beneath it read:

March 14, 1928 – April 2, 1952.

I felt a small chill then. Not the theatrical kind, just the kind that runs along your arms when something

aligns too neatly. I looked at my phone again.

April 2. That day. That exact day. Seventy years to the date.

I stood there for a long time, staring at the stone, imagining the life that ended at twenty-four. A husband? A fiancé? A brother? The man I'd seen had stood with such quiet purpose. Such stillness. Had he been coming back to mark the anniversary? Or had I simply seen a living man who moved faster than my eyes could track? Perhaps he'd parked on the other side of the hill. Perhaps I'd built an entire narrative out of shadows and sunlight. I don't know.

What I do know is this: I saw him. I saw the cut of that suit. The careful part in his hair. The way he stood, as though grief had posture. And I know that when I looked away for no more than five seconds, he vanished from a wide, empty field in broad daylight.

I don't tell this story often. It doesn't fit with who I am. I don't collect ghost stories. I don't go hunting for them. But sometimes, when April 2 rolls around and the sky is especially blue, I think about that woman resting alone beneath her stone.

And I hope that whoever he was—ghost, memory, or trick of the light—he found her.

## 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](mailto: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!



# HERE COMES PETER COTTONTAIL (1971): BEWARE THE IDES OF IRONTAIL



I should probably begin with a confession. I was absolutely petrified of the Easter Bunny as a child. Santa? Fine. The Tooth Fairy? Questionable but manageable. A six-foot rabbit with oversized dead eyes, a wicker basket, and a vest? Hard pass. So,

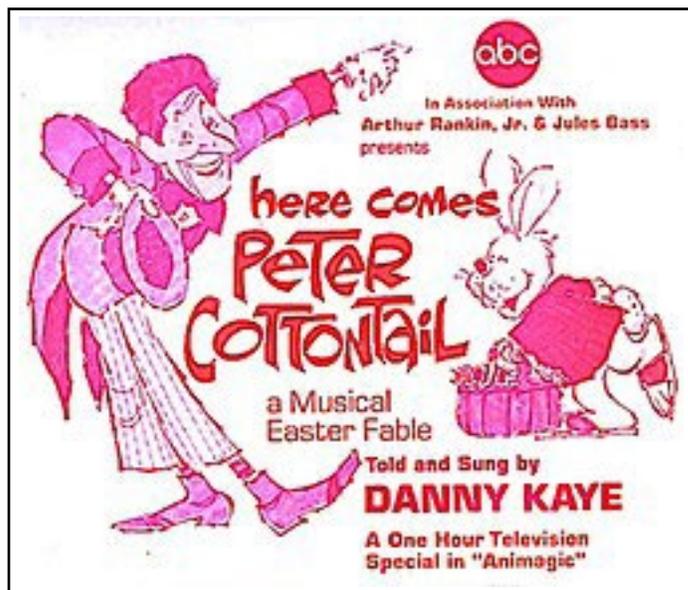
while my parents apparently thought it was perfectly acceptable to plop their wide-eyed, bunny-phobic four-year-old in front of the television to watch the 1971 “Animagic” special *Here Comes Peter Cottontail*, they could not have been more wrong. That special scarred me.

It took years—years, I tell you—before I could revisit it without breaking into a cold sweat. And yet, like any good origin story, trauma eventually turned into fascination. Today, I embrace *Here Comes Peter Cottontail* for the delightfully unhinged fever dream that it is.

On the surface, the plot is surprisingly inventive. The special is based on the 1957 novel *The Easter Bunny That Overslept* by Priscilla and Otto Friedrich, and it begins innocently enough. In April Valley (yes, that’s a real place in this universe), the Chief Easter Bunny is retiring and names Peter Rabbit as his successor—provided he can prove he’s worthy of the title. Simple enough, right?

## Wrong.

Enter the Yestermorrowbile—a time machine piloted by a French caterpillar named Antoine. Because obviously. Peter must travel back in time to deliver Easter eggs and redeem himself. Naturally, the time machine malfunctions and



they land during literally every holiday except Easter. Halloween. Christmas. You name it. It’s less a children’s special and more a seasonal hostage situation.

Tell me that doesn’t feel like something that lived in the back of Tim Burton’s brain while he was creating *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

The voice cast, however, is pure early-’70s gold. Danny Kaye narrates as Seymour S. Sassafras, lending a sort of whimsical gravitas to the chaos. Peter himself is voiced by Casey Kasem—a revelation that made so much sense once I grew up and realized that the voice unsettling me was the same one behind Shaggy from *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!*

*You’ve never heard of Peter Cottontail? Great chattering chick-chicks!*

—Seymour S. Sassafras

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## HERE COMES PETER COTTONTAIL (1971): BEWARE THE IDES OF IRONTAIL CONTINUED

Apparently, my young brain could not compute that the Easter Bunny and a sandwich-obsessed coward shared vocal cords.

And then there's Colonel Bunny's assistant, voiced by Paul Frees—better known to many as the Ghost Host from *Haunted Mansion* and the Burgermeister Meisterburger from *Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town*. No wonder I felt uneasy. My childhood was basically one long voice-actor crossover event. But let's not kid ourselves. The true star of *Here Comes Peter Cottontail* is January Q. Irontail, voiced by the immortal Vincent Price.

### Yes. That Vincent Price.

The man who would later send me creeping downstairs in the dark to watch him battle the Red Death, hunt witches, and invite strangers to spend the night in his house on Haunted Hill. I didn't know any of that yet. But I knew that voice. At the time, I recognized him as Egghead from the old *Batman* TV series. (For reasons I cannot explain, my four-year-old brain concluded that Vincent Price specialized in egg-related roles.)

January Q. Irontail is not your standard Saturday-morning villain. He is mean. He is vengeful. He holds grudges like a Victorian ghost with unfinished business. He seizes control of April Valley and forces everyone to paint eggs in drab shades of brown and gray. He bans chocolate rabbits and replaces them with octopuses and tarantulas.

### This was Easter?

It was disturbing. It was unsettling. And I could not look away.

Irontail frightened me. But he also fascinated me. He was theatrical, dramatic, deliciously over-the-top. January Q. Irontail was the first character I can remember who made me love



being scared. In hindsight, that bunny-eared tyrant was probably the moment *Weird Willis* was born.

So, this Easter, if you're tired of pastel-soaked sweetness and want something just a little... off... give *Here Comes Peter Cottontail* a whirl. Watch the stop-motion. Listen to those voices. Let Vincent Price purr his way through a rabbit dictatorship.

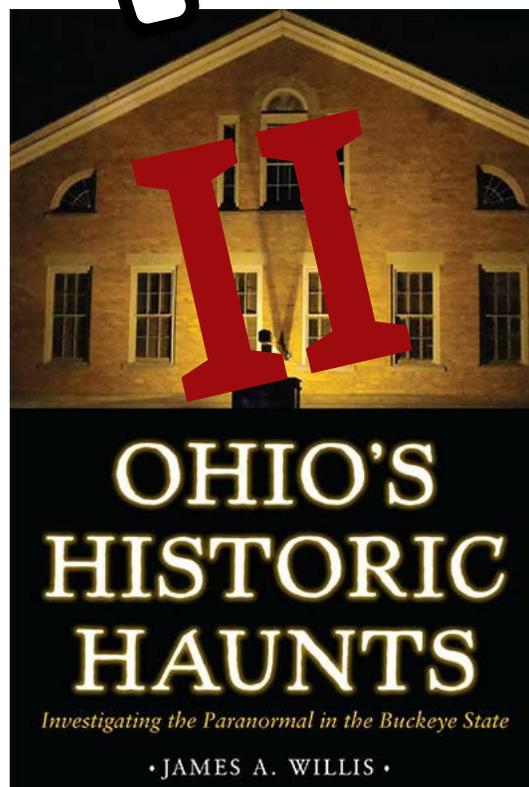
And when Irontail leans into the camera with that wicked grin, you might just find yourself pointing at the screen and saying, "See that? That's when *Weird Willis* happened."

### You've been warned.





# LAST CALL FOR HISTORICALLY HAUNTED OHIO LOCATIONS



Are you the owner—or part of the leadership—of a historically haunted location in Ohio? If so, this might be your moment.

We're well underway on the sequel to *Ohio's Historic Haunts*, tentatively titled *Ohio's Historic Haunts II*, and it will once again be published by Kent State University Press. The project is moving along nicely, but as sometimes happens with historic properties, a handful of previously planned locations have had to step away due to scheduling.

Which means we now have room for new locations.

If you've ever thought, "You know, people have been seeing things here for years..." — keep reading.

So what qualifies a location? Well, the requirements are refreshingly simple:

- The location must be **historically significant and located in Ohio**
- It should have a **longstanding reputation for being possibly haunted**
- You must be the **owner** or a **member of the acting board or leadership team**

That's it. No need to prove anything beyond that. We're interested in history, stories, and the experiences tied to places that matter.

If you think your location fits the bill, send an email to: [info@ghostsofohio.org](mailto:info@ghostsofohio.org)

With the subject line: *Ohio's Historic Haunts location*

Tell us a little about the site, its history, and why it belongs in the book. From there, we'll see what we can do. With a little luck, the next time we cross paths... it might be in print.

# WHEN GHOSTS BECAME REAL



WENDY

Everyone has stories about what got them interested in ghosts and other paranormal phenomenon. When I was a child, the book everyone was reading was Chariots of the Gods by Erik Von Daniken. From there it was curiosity about Bigfoot, Nessie, the Abominable Snowman (now known as the

Yeti). I guess when you are under a certain age, you really don't think about who, what, where when it comes to ghosts...it's just...Casper.

The only image I had of ghosts as a child was Casper and his family who ridiculed him for being nice and not scary. Ghosts to me were cartoons, even while I was experiencing ghostly phenomenon. But then I found pictures. I must have picked up a book at a library or a grandparent's house. I was maybe 8....so early 1970s, before Erik's book was out. These pictures freaked me the heck out, so I thought I would talk about them.

First is the Brown Lady. Raynham House in Norfolk, England has a reputation for several spirits; the female one was believed to be Dorothy Walpole, sister of Great Britain's first Prime Minister, and wife of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Townshend. Her death was noted as 'mysterious', (one rumor at the time was the Viscount killed her for adultery), and the marriage was described as very volatile.

The first documented sighting of her was by Colonel Loftus and another guest at a party in 1835. He described her as a woman in an old-fashioned brown brocade dress. This matched a portrait of Dorothy, so the spirit was thought to be her. The next year a visitor to Raynham, Captain Frederick Marryat, actually took a shot at the spirit when he and two boys encountered it in a hallway at night, leaving a bullet lodged in the panel of an inner doorframe. (He had been sleeping with a loaded revolver, hoping to catch the ghost, and had it with him at the time).

By 1921, the manor was in bad shape, and the Dowager Marchioness had the task of refurbishing it. Having heard all the stories about the ghosts



roaming Raynham, she decided to write a book about English hauntings, focusing on her own home. The money from that, along with the 1935 photograph which was given to Country Life Magazine to publish, gained her enough funds to get the manor looking like it does today.

The Brown Lady picture was taken in 1936 by Captain Hubert C. Provand, a photographer who came to Raynham to take photographs for an article in Country Life Magazine. As he was resetting up the camera for a shot up the staircase, his assistant saw a vapor form and move down the stairs toward

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## WHEN GHOSTS BECAME REAL continued



them. Provand quickly uncapped the camera, and the assistant squeezed the bulb. This is the result. It has never been verified, and after much examination, the most likely determination was that it was a picture of the Virgin Mary statue in the garden, superimposed on the picture of the stairs.

The Brown Lady wasn't the picture that raised the goose bumps on my arms. The Queen's House ghost was. This photograph was taken by a vacationing Canadian, Reverend Ralph Hardy, in 1966, in the Queen's House at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England. The Queen's House was built in the 1630s and was a retreat for Kings and Queens, while also being open as an art studio for those Artists who were patronized by the Royal Family. The photograph itself is of the Tulip Staircase, the first self-supporting spiral staircase in Britain.

Upon development of the negative, a hooded figure, clutching the railing on the way up the stairs is seen. The Reverend and Mrs. Hardy did not see anyone else there while they were photographing the staircase. Unlike the Brown Lady, this photograph and negative were verified by Kodak as being original and untampered with. Kodak could not find an explanation for what is seen in the photo. I am not ashamed to say that this photo scared the bejeebers out of me as a child, and I don't really know why.



Hardy's Original Image

Back then, the photo I saw said it showed three figures. I kept focusing on the lights, since there were three. I was so confused as to if that was the 'ghosts' or was it that creeping thing on the stairs? I now see it in two ways....3 arms on the staircase meaning three ghosts, or the one figure, its hooded head hunched down as it drags itself up the stairs with its arms. The Queen's House webpage still says there are 2 or 3 figures in the photo. Either way, yep, this one was the big scare for sure.

And the final picture I want to talk about was taken in 1944 at Borley Rectory in Essex, England. I found this photo years later when doing research, so it wasn't from my childhood at all. But I wanted to show it as another example of 'ghost' pictures that were circulating in England during the mid-1900s.

Harry Price was known for exposing fake mediums and spiritualists and had joined the SPR (Society for Psychical Research) in 1920. In 1925, he created the NLPR, (National Laboratory of Psychical Research). The fighting between these two groups went on for over 20 years, even after Price's death in 1948. Once he was dead, all bets were off, as SPR accused him of creating some of the

*(continued on page 9.)*

## WHEN GHOSTS BECAME REAL continued

phenomenon at Borley himself, including the throwing of rocks.

The phenomenon at Borley Rectory that drew Harry Price there seemed to have come to a head by 1935. Borley was occupied by Reverend Foyster and Mrs. Marianne Foyster from 1930-1935, and she recorded much of the activity in her diary. Mrs. Foyster did finally admit that the phenomenon in the house during her tenure was caused by natural elements, like wind and rain, and in some cases herself, in order to scare her husband. Harry Price took over Borley in May of 1937 and remained until May 1938. He published a book in 1940, calling Borley 'the most haunted house in England'.

Borley Rectory caught fire in February of 1939 when the new owner knocked over an oil lamp while unpacking. I chose a side-by-side example of before and after photos, taken by Price. Borley was finally demolished in 1944. The 'flying brick' photo was taken by David Scherman, who was there with Price on one of his last visits, taking photographs for Life Magazine. They could not get into the house due to the demolition, so he began taking pictures of the workers. The 'flying brick' photo was used by Price in his second Borley book as a possible example of levitation. Most likely it was a workman throwing the brick. The photo does not show any workers, but it was said (probably by SPR) that Price had one throw bricks specifically to see if he could get a picture of one looking like it was levitating. We will never know for sure.



So, to wrap up, it was the first 2 photos, the Brown Lady and the Tulip Stairs which turned my head from 'Casper' to something that seemed a little sinister, and a whole lot spookier. I have been searching ever since for my own 'tulip stairs' photo to excite the minds of the children that are wondering what a ghost is. Considering the plethora of TV shows, YouTube channels, Photoshop, and outright fakery, I fear that we of this era will never get the chance to excite a child's mind quite like these photos excited mine.



Borley Rectory before the fire, 12 June 1929, and (right) after the fire, 28 March 1939. Photographs from *The End of Borley Rectory* by Harry Price (1946)

# WILL WE SEE YOU AT FROGMAN IV?

It's happening *Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>* at the Oasis Conference Center in Loveland, Ohio. Speakers, over 50 unique vendors, live music, movie and documentary screenings, face painting, and fun for all ages!

This year, I will be giving 2 presentations: 1 on the entire Frogman timeline Saturday morning and then *Weird Willis Greatest Hits*-type presentation in the afternoon. Since this is my 4<sup>th</sup> year at Frogman, I wanted to do something different and mix things up. But of course, it wouldn't be Frogman without me rambling on and on about all my research while yelling out "Hot damn! It's the Loveland Frog!" So, if there were some newbies this year who hadn't been exposed to my froggy theatrics, it felt only right to give them a chance to see what all the fuss was about.

**For more information or to snag your tickets, hop on over to <https://frogmanfestival.org/>**

The image shows a promotional poster for the Frogman Festival 2026. At the top, it says "CRYPTID CAMP PRESENTS FROGMAN FESTIVAL presented by Cryptid Camp Sat. March 7, 2026 Oasis Conf. Ctr., Loveland, Ohio". A QR code is in the top right. The central graphic features a green frog wearing goggles and the text "FROGMAN FESTIVAL". Logos for "HOLLY WHOART" and "SHAKESPEARE COMPANY" are visible. Below the frog, it says "FrogmanFestival.org sponsors" with logos for "Paw Prints Studio" and "Shakespeare Company".

Below the poster is a program for "Frogman Festival 2026" featuring several speakers and activities:

- James A. Willis**: Author, Paranormal Researcher
- Sherwin Quiambao**: Artist
- Ashley Hill**: Fortean Investigator, Author
- Chad Lewis**: Author, Lecturer, Researcher
- Charlie Mewshaw**: Researcher, TV/podcast Host, Author
- Frogman (movie)**: screening, crew, actors
- Entertainment by**:
  - Debarry**
  - WUMP WUMPER**
  - Aaron Crany**
  - Creep TV Real**
- Erin Shaw**: Ohio Park Ranger
- Jeff Craig**: Festival Founder

## Investigations & Consultations

The Ghosts Of Ohio have begun scheduling 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](mailto: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>

## 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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