



The ghosts of Ohio® Newsletter

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FROM THE SPOOKY DESK OF JAMES WILLIS:

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT



James

You know, I had the above-mentioned title ready to go for the February newsletter for a few weeks now. We were going to be featuring some articles about poltergeist activity in the newsletter,

so I thought the title was somewhat appropriate. Plus, since Valentine's Day is in February and the month is generally looked upon as being one big ol' love fest, I thought I would have some fun with it and play off the idea that many things go "bump" in the night during the month of February. I know, gross, right? But then, just as I was getting ready to sit down and write my little intro, something weird happened in my very own house.

It was around 2:00 a.m. and I was sound asleep in my bedroom. I awoke to a very loud crashing noise. It appeared to have come from the kitchen, which is located on the same floor as my bedroom, but on the opposite side of the house.

Since I am the "man of the house," but also one who loves a nice, warm bed on cold winter nights, I have devised a two-step procedure which I use to determine if I am going to have to get out of said bed to investigate a strange noise. First, I check on the cats. Since all of my cats are fat and beyond lazy, they are usually snoring away at the bottom of the bed. If I hear a noise and find the cats are not at the bottom of the bed, that usually means they are off raising hell in the house and I can go back to sleep. However, if they are still at the bottom of the bed and they are sitting up, staring blankly in the

direction of the noise, that means I have to go investigate.

On the night in question, they were both sound asleep at the bottom of the bed. So that led me to the second step: quiz the wife. That always begins with me saying, "What was that?" This will inevitably lead to either a panicked, "I don't know!?!?", and means I must investigate (and quickly), or else some continuous heavy breathing, which means the noise is not worth checking out since it didn't even wake my wife up.

Well, when I asked Steph the question, she mumbled "I don't know," which I took to mean it couldn't be anything bad...or if it was, my wife was just too tired to care about it. Regardless, I rolled over and went back to sleep.



The next morning, we awoke to something a bit strange in our kitchen: a pot and one of our frying pans were lying on the floor, next to a wide-open cabinet door.

Here's the thing; while that pot is usually kept inside that particular cabinet (specifically, on the bottom shelf where the white space is), the frying pan is not. In fact, it's usually kept on the other side of the kitchen—although, to be fair, our cleaning people have been known to put things away in some strange places. Either way, those cabinet doors are heavy and also close on their own if they are left open less than halfway. My point being is that even if the frying pan and pot had been put back in the wrong place and stacked in an odd manner so as to cause them to fall, the weight of those two items alone are not enough to fling the cabinet door open. I know because I tried.

So am I going to tell you a ghost did that? Certainly not. To be honest, I'm not sure why a ghost would even do something as mundane as rearranging cookware on the kitchen floor. It is weird, though. And if nothing else, it has taught me that when one chooses to explore the strange and spooky (to the point where their house is home to numerous "haunted" items), they must be resigned to the fact that they need to be ready to go at a moment's notice, even to the point of leaving a nice, warm bed in the middle of a cold winter's night.

Hey, nobody said ghost hunting was pretty.

Cheers,

James A. Willis

Founder/Director



UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: BLACK HOPE CURSE



Samantha

I watched a lot of horror movies when I was a kid, and one of the most terrifying, at least for me, was *Poltergeist*. I especially remember the gruesome nighttime scene


where the mother, in the pouring rain, accidentally falls into the not-yet-completed swimming pool and finds herself struggling in mud, face-to-face with human corpses that had been unearthed by the excavation and the flooding rain. It turned out that the entire development was built over a Native American burial site, which was the cause of a whole host of paranormal phenomena.

While most people would assume that a plot like this was dreamed up in a Hollywood screenwriter's twisted imagination, in this case the story has roots in reality. The idea of a community built on an old gravesite with dire consequences was based on real events in a development near Houston, Texas, in the early 1980s. In fact, you can learn about it in an old episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* called "Black Hope Curse." Here's the story:

When Sam and Judith Haney bought their dream home in the community of Newport, they never imagined that there would be unmarked graves on their property. But when they started digging in their backyard to install a swimming pool, an elderly stranger arrived and pointed to the location of two graves. The Haney's, skeptical at the time, used a backhoe and soon discovered that the man told the truth. There were, indeed, two graves—side by side—in their backyard, just a short distance from the house.

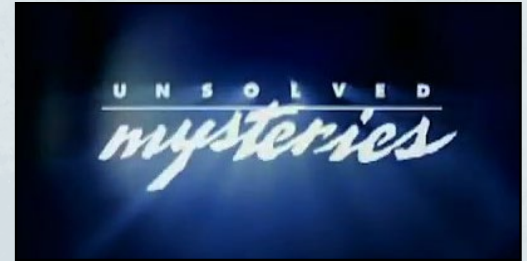
The Haney's soon learned that their housing development was built on top of an old African American cemetery called Black Hope. As many as 60 people were buried there, mostly former slaves. The two people buried in the Haney's backyard were Betty

and Charlie Thomas, freed slaves who died in the 1930s. Out of respect for the dead, the Haney's reburied the Thomases in their backyard, their final resting place. However, the spirits did not rest.

The Haney's began experiencing a variety of paranormal phenomena, including an unplugged clock that  glowed and sparked, hearing voices and doors opening and closing, and having a pair of women's shoes go missing, only to find them on top of Betty Thomas' grave. Other neighborhood residents reported unearthly sounds, seeing apparitions, and having lights, TVs, and water turning on and off by themselves. The Williams family, unfortunately, was one that was particularly hard hit by this phenomena—and by something more sinister.

Like the Haney's, Ben and Jean Williams were unaware of their area's history when they purchased their home. However, it didn't take long for them to feel that something wasn't right. They found it strange that all of their plants seemed to die, and rectangle-shaped sinkholes began appearing all over their yard. They also began experiencing cold spots throughout their home, feelings of foreboding and being watched, seeing shadows, hearing murmuring voices, and the sound of doors opening with footsteps coming down the hall. On one terrifying occasion, Ben followed an apparition through the house and into the bedroom where his wife was sleeping. To protect her, he jumped through the apparition and landed on top of Jean. The apparition disappeared. Soon thereafter, no less than six close family members were diagnosed with cancer, half of whom died.

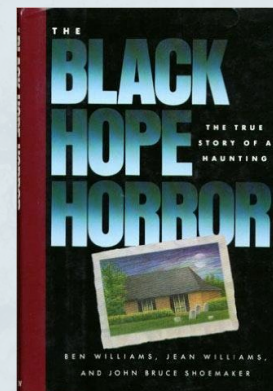
Both the Haney's and Williamses attempted to sue the developer for not disclosing that their homes were built over a cemetery. Unfortunately, the court ruled that the developer was not liable. The Haney's were ordered to pay \$50,000 for court costs, which forced them into bankruptcy. The Williamses



were told that without bodies to prove that there is a graveyard on their property, then they had no case. Out of desperation, Jean attempted to dig up one of the corpses herself, but almost immediately fell ill. Her daughter took up the shovel next, but she fell ill and died of a massive heart attack. She was only 30 years old.

Eventually, both the Haney's and Williamses left the area, and their lives improved dramatically, free of paranormal activity. Interestingly, subsequent residents of their former homes haven't reported anything out of the ordinary...at least by the time this story aired on *Unsolved Mysteries* in 2002.

I've often found that the truth is definitely stranger—and more fascinating—than fiction. I love the movie *Poltergeist* because it's a good story that scared the pants off of me when I was younger. Now that I'm older (and a paranormal investigator!), I don't scare as easily, and I enjoy looking for the facts behind the fiction. In this case, it makes me enjoy the movie even more!



The book chronicling the events that inspired *Poltergeist*



MY BLOODY VALENTINE



James

Genre: Horror/Mystery/Thriller

Rating: R

Release Date: 1981

Directed by: George Mihalka

Starring: Paul Kelman, Lori Hallier, and Neil Affleck

Running Time: 1 hour 30 minutes (Director's Cut adds 3 minutes of additional footage)

Available: Netflix (disc only) and for purchase online

As someone who absolutely loves watching movies, I have acquired quite a few guilty pleasures over the years. And every February, I make sure to reach back in my archives and re-watch one of my guiltiest pleasures: *My Bloody Valentine*. The 1981 original, mind you, not the 2009 remake (in 3-D, no less). That's a whole different kind of guilty pleasure.

Now before you begin mocking me for my taste in movies, let me come clean and admit that I don't consider *My Bloody Valentine* to be a great movie by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, there are cringe-worthy moments throughout the flick. But when you take a look at the movie and consider the time in which it was released, it stands out among the crowd as something truly unique and entertaining.

Put it this way—it's 1981 and for several years now, movie producers everywhere are showing what are being termed "slasher films" down the throats of American teenagers. Borrowing heavily from the hugely successful *Halloween* (1978), writers have gotten to the point where they simply take a knife-wielding maniac and set them loose on a group of unsuspecting teenagers during any given holiday or day of observance without any sort of back story required. I mean, seriously, why were all those movies called *Friday the 13th*?

That's where *My Bloody Valentine* really sets itself apart. It goes out of its way to not only create a deep backstory, but also connects it to the holiday at hand. Heck, they even set the movie in the fictional Valentine Bluffs, a coal mining town that sure knows how to party.

Or at least they did. That was until 20 years ago, when a couple of the miners couldn't wait to get to the annual Valentine's dance, so they left work a little early, leaving several miners still in the mine. As luck would have it, there was an explosion in the mine, which trapped the remaining miners. Days later, when they were able to dig down to where the miners were last seen, they found them all dead. All except for one miner, Harry Warden. Turns out Warden was able to survive by chowing down on the remains of the other miners. So naturally, Warden gets pulled from the mine and deposited in the local mental asylum, where he sits patiently until the next Valentine's Day. That's when he breaks out, hunts down the men responsible for leaving their posts prior to the fateful explosion, dispatches



Cover of Special Edition DVD



Original theatrical release poster

them, and then promptly vanishes. But not before issuing a dire warning to the entire town: Don't hold anymore Valentine's dances or else he would return.

Sure, that entire backstory is delivered by the local "crazy" who randomly blurts out the tale to a bunch of locals for no apparent reason. And of course, no one listens to him and they decide to have their first Valentine's dance in 20 years. But it does at least create an interesting and somewhat unique backstory from which to propel the movie forward. Is it cheesy? Yes. But does it work? Indeed it does.

Once the party gets started, literally, and the body count starts to rise, the movie manages to deliver some very creative means by which people shuffle off the mortal coil (hot dogs, anyone?) while also delivering some suspense and a genuine scare or two. Toward the end of

(continued on page 4.)

MY BLOODY VALENTINE CONT.

the movie, the scenes inside the mine manage to create not only a sense of dread, but also one of claustrophobia. But perhaps the best part of all is that the killer chooses to don a miner's gasmask, creating a truly chilling image.

Major props also have to be given to the makers of *My Bloody Valentine* for not going for a cash grab and immediately filming a sequel—something else all the early 80s slasher-type flicks did. Indeed,

while not giving anything away, the ending to *My Bloody Valentine* literally screams “sequel.” Literally. And yet, nothing ever came of it (2009's *MBV* was a remake, not a sequel, and as such stayed mostly true to the original's plot). So kudos for knowing when to stop.

Finally, one of the most endearing aspects of *My Bloody Valentine* is that as the credits roll, you get to hear *The Ballad of Harry Warden*—a folksy tune

that recounts the legend brought forth during the movie. The song somehow works, despite some cringe-worthy lyrics like the opening “once upon a time, on a sad Valentine's.” Just like the movie it's playing over, the song is silly, imperfect, and yet somehow perfect and a fitting end to a truly unique flick. Give it a shot. You won't be disappointed.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Grandpa Walkie's Goodbye

By: Olivia H.

My grandfather passed away a few years prior to this picture being taken. He was a farmer, and loved being outdoors. My grandmother was very controlling (among many other issues), and one of the biggest ways she controlled him was by limiting his time and space outside. After his passing, things escalated and we became estranged from my grandmother. She sold the house/farm to a stranger who was kind enough to let us in to gather personal items. When we entered the house, it felt completely empty. It was odd—like nothing was there at all. When I walked outside, I felt a presence. I was worried perhaps it was a snake or something, and started looking around, thinking I saw movement here or there—but no animals in sight. Something was definitely with me, though.

I returned to the house, and we finished our work. My grandparents' house was in southern Illinois, and we live in Michigan. We thought it would be good to have one last family photo with the house my dad grew up in. It was a very hard day. Once my dad turned his camera over to the stranger though, and we settled into our pose, a peace came over us all. It was going to be okay. Peace, happiness, and calm infused us all. We went on about our way, and felt better than we had that whole trip. When we had the film developed, this was the only unclear picture. We knew Grandpa Walkie was with us then for a final photo, saying goodbye.

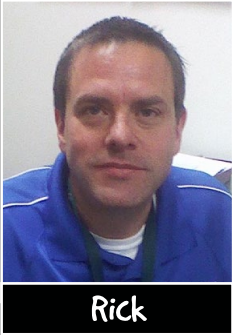


Photo property of Olivia H.
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MOVIE REVIEW:

POLTERGEIST (2015)



Rick

GENRE: Horror/Thriller

RATING: PG-13

RELEASE DATE: 2015

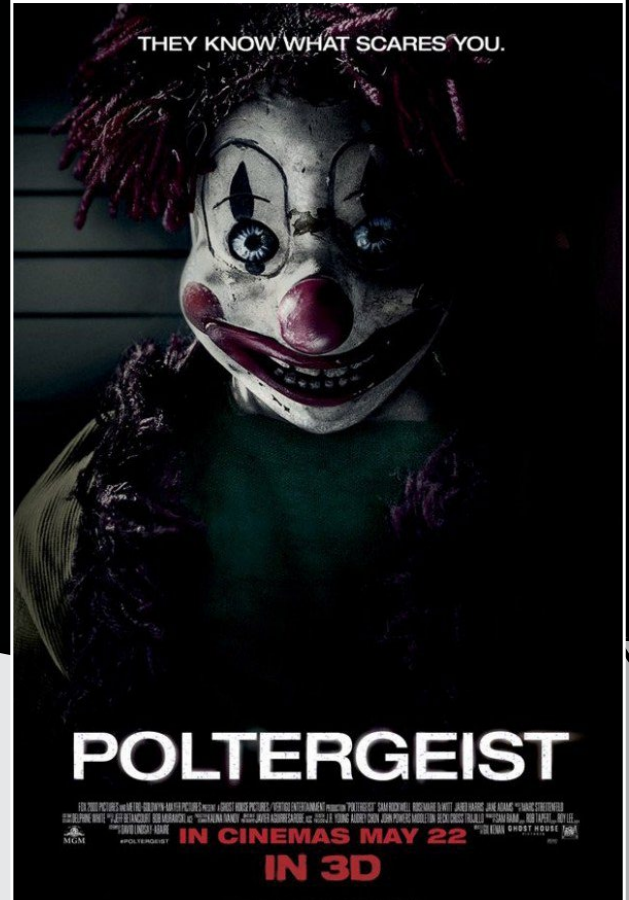
DIRECTED BY: Gil Kenan (Monster House)

STARRING: Sam Rockwell (Ironman 2, Galaxy Quest, Moon, and The Green Mile), Rosemarie DeWitt (the television series Mad Men, The Watch, and Promised Land) and Jared Harris (The Quiet Ones, Lincoln, and Mad Men)

PRODUCED BY: Sam Raimi (Spiderman, Evil Dead, and The Grudge)

RUNNING TIME: 93 minutes (the Extended Cut of the film adds an additional 8 minutes of footage)

AVAILABLE: Netflix, RedBox, and On-Demand



Eric and Amy Bowen (Sam Rockwell and Rosemarie DeWitt) are a young couple that have just bought their dream home for themselves and their three children. Or so it would seem. But the very first night in the house, they start hearing strange noises coming from inside the walls of the house. Then their son finds a box of creepy clown dolls and lights and electronic devices start turning on and off on their own. Oh yeah, and the Bowen's youngest daughter starts talking to an unknown presence that seems to make its home inside the family TV.

Rather than flee, the family stays in the house and tries to figure out what is going on. This results in the unseen forces getting stronger and doing things like causing cracks in the floors and inanimate objects coming to life and attacking the family. This all culminates in the disappearance of the youngest daughter, although they can still hear her crying out for help from somewhere inside the house.

At this point, the family decides to enlist the help of the local university's Paranormal Research department. They come out for a visit, discover a portal to

another dimension, and quickly ask occult specialist and television personality Carrigan Burke (Jared Harris) for help. Burke explains to the Bowens that their daughter is psychic and able to communicate with spirits. He further reveals that the ghosts are not only trapped in the house, but are angry about their final resting places having been desecrated. The spirits have pulled the Bowen's daughter through the portal and now, they must try to pull her back through or else run the risk that she will be gone forever.

When I first heard this movie was backed by Sam Raimi, I was very excited. That excitement soon turned to disappointment as I watched the film. Unlike the 1982 original Poltergeist, which was written and produced by Steven Spielberg, this version fell completely flat.

The movie starts out well enough, but before long, it appears to be doing nothing more than checking off and mimicking scenes from the original film. The result is dialogue that makes absolutely no sense

and over-the-top special effects that, instead of saving the film, ruined it instead.

The cast contained a group of talented actors (who I have enjoyed in the past), but the problem here is that you never really connect with a single character. In the original, you cared about the characters and what happened to them, which only served to up the terror levels. Not so here. Also, the original movie had a brilliant thread of humor running through it, which you must credit Spielberg for. With this film, while there were several attempts at humor, they all missed the mark.

The Rotten Tomatoes website gave the 2015 version of Poltergeist a 30% rating. I think that was way too generous.





GOT A SCARY STORY TO TELL?

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

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

Coming in the April Newsletter

- Digging Into Missing 411
- Werewolves in Ohio?
- Where Did All These April Fools Come From?



Investigations & Consultations

The Ghosts of Ohio are continuing to schedule investigations for 2016. 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>.

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