



The ghosts of Ohio® Newsletter

www.ghostsofohio.org

Volume 21 Issue 2



James

FAREWELL, 2023*

*FOR ENTERTAINMENT USE ONLY

I rarely devote much space in this newsletter to discuss my “normal” line of work, except in those rare instances when there’s a bit of crossover into my strange and spooky world. In a nutshell, I work

with lawyers, medical professionals, and even the FDA to ensure all claims made by pharmaceutical companies related to their products are both medically and legally accurate. That means I’m researching and then creating things like reference blocks, footnotes, and what is commonly known as fair balance.

One definition of fair balance is “a statement that denies something, especially responsibility”. Even if you’re not familiar with the term, chances are you have seen fair balance many times. You know all that tiny copy that pops up at the end of drug commercials on TV? That copy is a form of fair balance—statements telling you what the drug is for while also saying “hey, don’t blame us if you don’t use our drug the way your doctor tells you to.”

As I mentioned, my two worlds rarely collide, but they did way back in 2002. That’s when I first noticed a bit of fair balance at the bottom of an instruction manual for a new piece of equipment that had been created specifically for use in the paranormal field. At the bottom of every page in the manual was the phrase “for entertainment use only.” In other words, have fun with this device, but don’t take it seriously.

This particular piece of equipment is still available for purchase and has almost a dozen different variations and models to choose from. And all of them still have manuals with “for entertainment use only” on them. This is not an isolated instance, either, with 2023 being a banner year for fair balance being attached to paranormal equipment. In fact, I reviewed 37 different paranormal devices, including apps, and found that all but 1 had some sort of fair balance attached to it. Oddly enough, there were 2 specific lines that popped up on numerous devices, even though they had different manufacturers, which to me means people are “borrowing” paranormal fair balance from each other. The 2 most recurring phrases were:

- Sold for entertainment uses only
- We make no claims regarding the validity of the data from this device

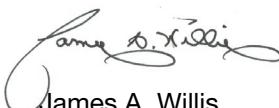
Taken together, the fair balance here is essentially saying this is all for fun and the manufacturer doesn’t want you misconstruing anything the device does (or says) as evidence of anything...because the manufacturer certainly doesn’t. You know what other types of devices carry fair balance like this? Novelty items—party favors and gags that are good for a laugh and not to be taken seriously. This, dear reader, is why it has become so easy for people to make fun of the paranormal field—we are attempting to prove the existence of ghosts using data from equipment their manufacturers won’t even stand behind.

Here’s another example: Say you are the proud owner of a new Ghost Speech Recorder with Multi-Colored Detection Lights (not a real thing). You bought it because the manufacturer stated the lights will detect a presence near it with the added ability to allow the ghosts to speak aloud using a pre-programmed dictionary. When you use it on an investigation, the lights start flashing and then you hear the device say “Hello. I am a ghost, and I am happy to make your acquaintance!” If your device has that “no claims” statement on it, that means the manufacturer is saying “we are not claiming that a ghost made those lights flash or was involved in those words being spoken. But hope you had fun using our device!”

This is what needs to stop if we are ever to truly start moving forward in the paranormal community. Equipment can be incredibly expensive. If your goal is to experience and capture irrefutable evidence of the paranormal, look before you leap into ghost-hunting equipment. And as with anything else, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. So when you hear about that cool new device that allows ghosts and spirits to text you, think twice before hitting that “add to cart” button.

And don’t forget to always look for that fair balance.

Cheers,


James A. Willis
Founder/Director

Happy
New Year

OHIO PENITENTIARY GROUNDS

VISUALIZING THEN AND NOW



Mark

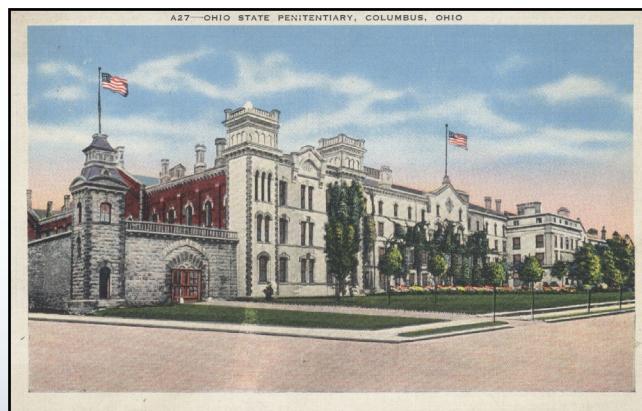
Just west of modern-day downtown Columbus, Ohio, there once stood a massive prison complex known as the Ohio Penitentiary. Construction on the prison began in 1834, and the last prisoners transferred out around 1984—a 150-year record filled with murder, mayhem, and history.

Housing many of the state's most hardened criminals, the Ohio Penitentiary saw the darkest sides of humanity and witnessed numerous prisoner riots, prisoner escapes, over 300 state executions, and a massive fire that killed 322 inmates in 1930.

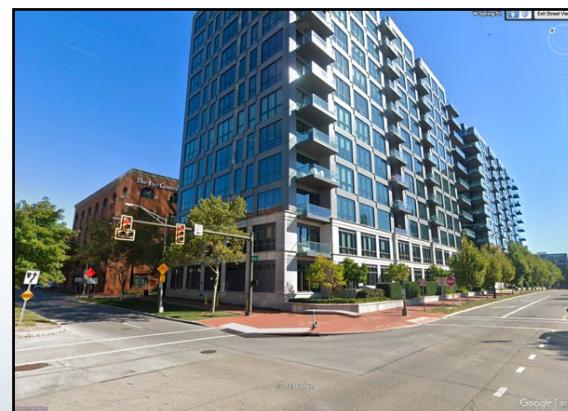
The focus of this article, though, is not history but rather the visualization of how the grounds of the Ohio Penitentiary intersect the modern city of Columbus. Nearly every physical trace of the original prison complex has been erased since its demolition in the mid 1990s. It has all been replaced by the Arena District filled with sports stadiums, apartments and condominiums, commercial buildings, and an oddly triangular-shaped McFerson Commons Park that once lay within the bounds of the old prison walls.

The journey that follows is both visual and interactive, allowing you, our dear Reader, to directly compare what once was to modern-day reality. It is quite possible that a younger generation may live, work, and play on these former prison grounds without knowing anything about its past. Both references and embedded hyperlinks can lead you to the historical research and the modern viewpoint based on the amazing virtual-world generation created by Internet-based Google Earth (earth.google.com). Have fun exploring!

Lastly, [this link](#) leads to a well-researched historical study of the grounds of the old Ohio Penitentiary compared to the modern city layout. If you study that team's building layout map quite closely, you will find that the Death House location, where over 300 executions took place, clearly falls within the now grass-covered public-accessible park bordered by West Street near Marconi Blvd. Though physically erased, one wonders how many innocent passers-by have walked through that park. How many people have walked through that very spot on the old prison grounds since it was razed? How many unknowing people have shuddered and quickly moved on from this icy touch of death that echoes through time from an indelible shadow of the past. A shadowy residual feeling still linked to the hanging gallows and the electric chair? Perhaps, you, dearest reader?



[1909 postcard of Ohio Penitentiary, facing the main entrance](#)



[2023 Google Earth Pro image from same location as the 1909 postcard—corner of Neil Avenue and W. Spring Street](#)

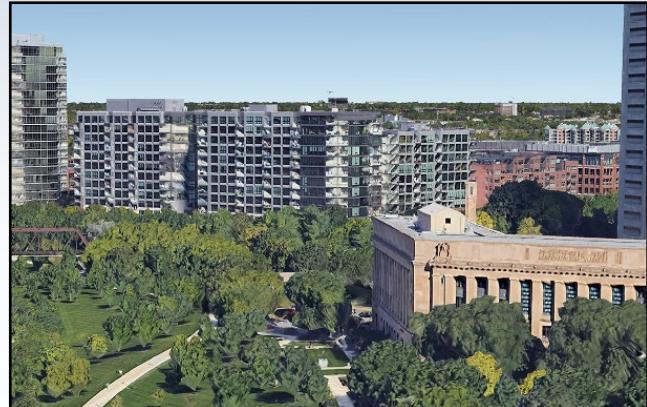
(continued on page 3.)

OHIO PENITENTIARY GROUNDS

VISUALIZING THEN AND NOW continued



[1989 elevated view of south face of Ohio Penitentiary](#)



[2023 Google Earth Pro image \(US District Courthouse in foreground\)](#)



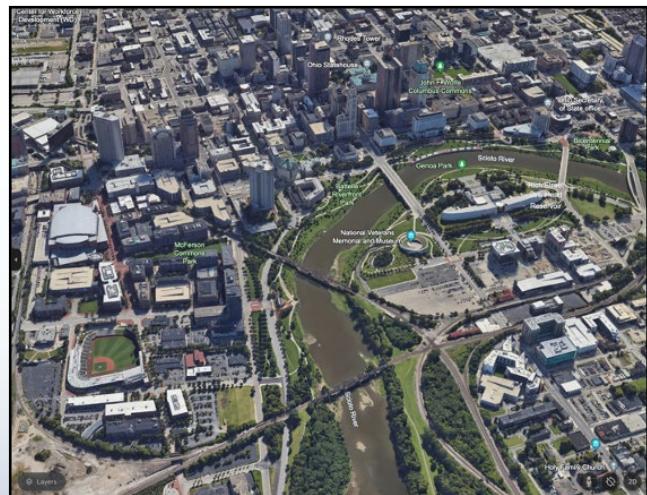
[1932 aerial view, taken after 1930 fire, looking north](#)



[2023 Google Earth Pro image of same area, including the Arena District and McFerson Commons Park Columbus, OH, USA](#)



[Undated aerial view of Columbus, looking east at ~1 mile altitude
\(date unknown\)](#)



[2023 Google Earth Pro image of same area](#)

YULETIDE BOOKS



James

In the 2003 VH-1 documentary, *Warren Zevon: Keep Me in Your Heart*, Warren Zevon paraphrases a quote from German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, and states:

We love to buy books because we believe we're buying the time to read them.

Boy, can I identify with that, especially around the holidays. Not only is there a steady influx of books from friends and loved ones who have pursued and made purchases from my Amazon Wish List, but there is usually a healthy stack of new tomes that I've hunted down since they deal with the topic of holiday ghosts and/or general Christmas creepiness.

Here's this year's haul of holiday books that are currently sitting on my bedside table, spines uncracked, eagerly awaiting their turn for a little nighttime reading...hopefully by Christmas 2024!



FRIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS: SURVIVING KRAMPUS AND OTHER YULETIDE MONSTERS

Jeff Belanger

New Age Books (September 2023)

[ORDER HERE](#)

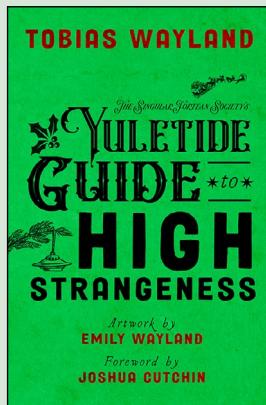


WINTER LEGENDS AND LORE

Chad Lewis

On The Road Publications
(January 2023)

[ORDER HERE](#)

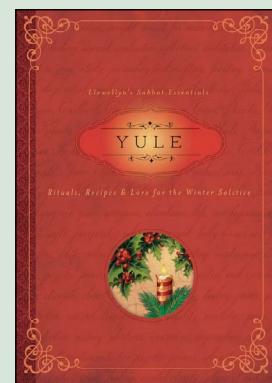


SINGULAR FORTÉAN SOCIETY'S GUIDE TO HIGH STRANGENESS

Tobias Wayland

Independently published
(November 2023)

[ORDER SIGNED
COPIES HERE](#)



YULE: RITUALS, RECIPES + LORE FOR THE WINTER SOLSTICE

Llewellyn

Llewellyn Publications (October 2015)

[ORDER HERE](#)

PEACE IN THE PARANORMAL COMMUNITY?



James

News flash: Not all is well within the paranormal community. There are claims of people fighting each other (mostly online, but physical altercations aren't out of the question), faking evidence, and swindling money from unsuspecting victims. But is this really a news flash or is it more of a case of the more things change, the more they stay the same?

Truth be told, there has always been unrest in the paranormal community, dating back hundreds of years—long before it was even referred to as a “community.” Back then, it was based around the desire to be the best in the field—the one who had all the answers. But as Mark Knopfler notes in the Dire Straits’ song *Industrial Disease*:

Two men say they're Jesus / One of them must be wrong

In other words, if 10 paranormal groups all claim their explanation as to what a ghost is and how the whole haunting gig works, at least 9 of those groups must be wrong. And in the case of the paranormal field where no one has all answers (i.e.: incontrovertible, validated, and dare I say it, repeatable data), there is a strong possibility that all 10 of the groups are wrong. Put 10 groups with differing options and stances on things together and it's only a matter of time before they start arguing and fighting.

When it comes to the faking of evidence, this is again something that has been going on for ages. IMHO, the tipping point happened with the rise of reality TV shows, which has since given birth to YouTube and various other streaming services. When *Ghost Hunters* since hit the airwaves almost 25 years ago, the main reasons people were tuning it were all about curiosity—from a general curiosity over what ghost hunting entails to those who wanted a peek inside some of the most haunted locations in the United States. Ratings were through the roof, and it was only a matter of time before

other television networks jumped into the fray and started producing their own paranormal reality shows. When you have multiple networks with similar shows, it all comes down to one thing: Ratings. It goes without saying that the paranormal shows with the most scares are going to get the highest ratings. Adding spooky music and some dramatic reenactments can certainly help, but what really gets viewers' blood pumping is evidence. So what is a network to do when ghost evidence becomes hard to come by, even after a multi-night investigation at a location? Well, you tweak the narrative and perhaps add a few “enhancements” for “dramatic purposes”. OK, I'll say it: They fake stuff. I don't condone it and it angers me more than I can ever express. But I also get where these networks are coming from. It took a long time for that to happen, and it was only after I stopped focusing on what these shows were not and more on what they are.

These shows are not showing anything that resembles actual research. They can't even really be considered reality. So now I recognize them for what they are: Entertainment. I don't have to like it, but as the saying goes “it is what it is.” It's been my experience that I just need to put my head down, keep my mouth shut, and go on about my business.

But a word of advice to all you para-celebrities out there. If you want to try and convince all of us that you really were dropkicked down a flight of stairs by a surly spirit or that a phantom somehow managed to give you a psychic kidney punch that sent you to a real-life emergency room, go for it. But you really can't be too surprised when people laugh at you or call BS on your antics.

Of course, individuals and networks aren't the only ones who are being accused of faking things. In some instances, it's the haunted locations themselves who find themselves under the microscope. When some of these locations are also thought to be charging exurbanite prices for people to investigate, things can turn quite ugly. Again, I don't condone any of this and I find it incredibly sad and frustrating at the same time. What helps me

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PEACE IN THE PARANORMAL COMMUNITY? CONTINUED

sort of dull the pain is to compartmentalize it all. When it comes to these haunted locations, let's look at what they really are; businesses. And the goal of any business is to make money. So if people are willing to pay \$50 a head to investigate a location with 1 ghost, perhaps they would be willing to pay double if 2 ghosts could be found lurking inside the location? Now, if we had 3 ghosts AND a couple of EVPs and perhaps a video, the sky's the limit.

Again, I keep my head down and move on. It's really the only thing I can do, which is why I keep suggesting you do the same. If I don't pick a side, I can remain neutral and don't get pulled into the para-drama, para-war, or whatever term you care to use.

In the Paranormal World, just call me Spooky Switzerland.

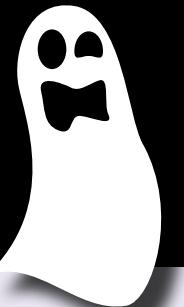
EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

Got a piece of paranormal equipment you've always wondered how it works? Does it really do what it's supposed to be doing? Or maybe you've created some paranormal equipment you'd like field tested? Either way, let us know because The Ghosts Of Ohio would love to help! Drop us a line at info@ghostsofohio.org with the subject line "Equipment" and we'll take it from there!



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!



ANOTHER AMAZING GALAXYCON!



For the second year in a row, I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of love, support, and miles of smiles that were waiting for me at GalaxyCon Columbus earlier this month.

I willingly admit that even after my successful first appearance at GalaxyCon in 2022, I was still quite nervous for this year: Would people still be interested in hearing me share my stories and personal experiences about all things strange & spooky, even though I would be doing all-new panels? The answer was a resounding “yes”, so much so that GalaxyCon has already asked me back for 2024 and have even floated out the idea of me leading 1-2 additional panels. So to those of you who were there with me the past two GalaxyCons, here’s your chance: What do YOU want to hear me talk about? Let me know!

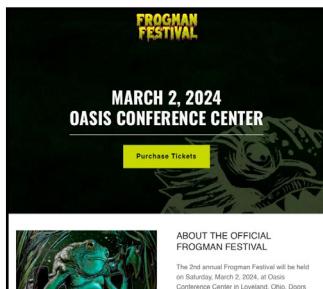


ALREADY FILLING THE 2024 CALENDAR



We don't normally start scheduling presentations and appearances until after we officially ring in the new year. But truth be told, we had so many requests we couldn't get to in 2023 that we had to start 2024 scheduling off a bit early. Right now, we just have some of the bigger conferences and conventions scheduled, but best assured, we will be adding a lot more as 2024 rolls on!

As always, unless an event is marked with a "\$", it is free and open to the public. But in all cases, seating may be limited, so it's always a good idea to check with the venue regarding the need to pre-register. Also, while the following dates, times, and topics were current when this newsletter went to press, it is all subject to change, so please check with the individual location to be on the safe side. Additionally, we post any changes to all our social media accounts, so give us a Follow/Like to stay in the loop.



Saturday, March 2nd: 9:30 am—6:00 pm Frogman Festival (\$)

Oasis Conference Center
902 Loveland-Miamiville Road
Loveland, OH 45140

[More information here](#)

Saturday, May 11th @ 11:00 am Weird Ohio Road Trips presentation

Public Library of Steubenville and Jefferson County—Main Library
407 South 4th Street
Steubenville, OH 43952

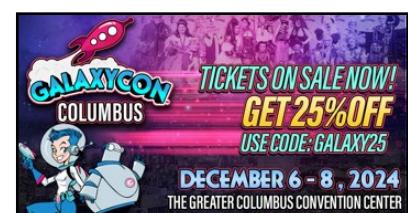
Thursday, May 23rd @ 6:30 pm Bigfoot In Ohio presentation

Dayton Metro Library—New Lebanon Branch
715 W. Main Street
New Lebanon, OH 45345

Thursday, June 20th—Sunday, June 23rd Haunted America Conference (\$)

Lewis And Clark College:
Benjamin Godfrey Campus
5800 Godfrey Road
Godfrey, IL 62035

[Tickets on sale January 8th](#)



Friday, December 6th—Sunday, December 8th GalaxyCon Columbus (\$)

Greater Columbus Convention Center
400 North High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

[Tickets on sale](#)

Investigations & Consultations

The Ghosts Of Ohio have begun scheduling investigations and consultations for 2024. 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.

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:

 [FACEBOOK](#)

 [TWITTER](#)

 [INSTAGRAM](#)

Administration

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