

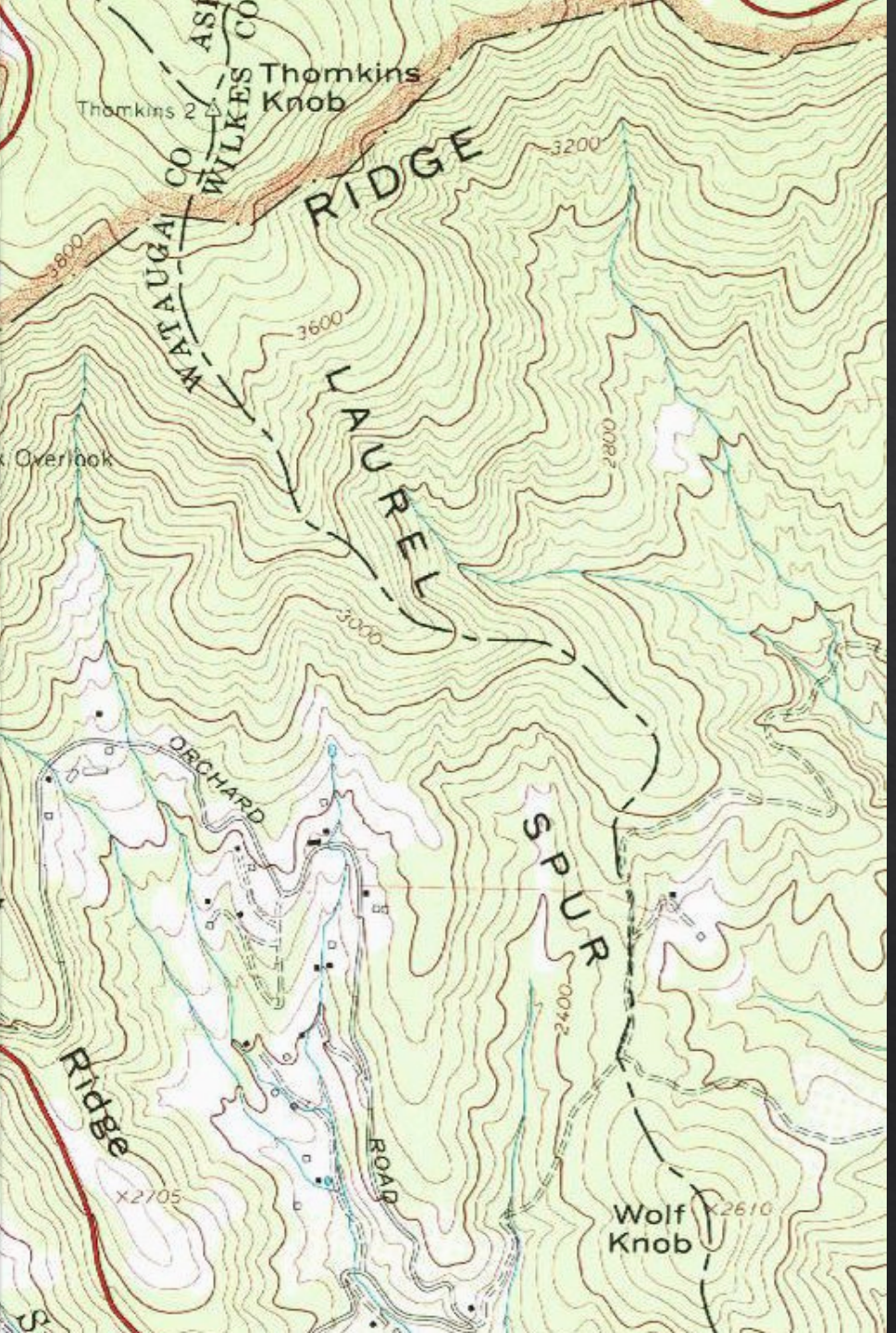
# Scary Tales Retold

Following are paranormal stories that I've collected from secondary sources and retold in my own words. All come from northwestern North Carolina and are associated with specific locations.

Kelly Coffey



# Haunted Buildings




## Reenactment of a Double Murder

A house on Laurel Mountain in western Wilkes County was the site of a double murder. A drunkard murdered his wife and threw her body in the nearby well. He then dropped his young child down the well alive, there to die a slow death.

A few years later, brothers Joe and Ab Johnson were logging in the area and spent several nights in the abandoned house without incident. But finally one night they were awakened by what seemed like the murder being reenacted in the next room- a man's enraged voice, a woman's scream, a child wailing, and the sound of footsteps going out the back door. The brothers hurried outside and were startled by the sound of a child crying, coming out of the well. Terrified, the Johnsons ran away from the house and didn't stop until they reached a friend's  house at the bottom of the mountain.

Source: *Ghosts & Their Haunts: The Legends & Lore of the Yadkin River Valley,* Frances H. Casstevens, 21-22

## There's Entities! There's Entities!

The building that is now the Happy Valley Filling Station (a brewery & pizzeria) has a haunted past. Located at the intersection of Hwy 268 and Yadkin River Road, not far from Hwy 321, the building was constructed in the 1950s and owned by Raby and Nell Woods. She operated a beauty salon there while he ran a service station. It later became a grocery then the Hill Billy Trading Post, "an antiques and collectibles flea market-type store."

Nona Oliver and Katie Letterman ran the Trading Post and were the first to report strange occurrences, such as things being moved around with no explanation. They frequently saw the apparition of Raby Woods (his son confirmed their description of him). Once, Nona left a pair of shoes in a chair and went away to help a customer. When she returned, the shoes were in the floor. They reported that once a couple entered the store and immediately the woman threw up her hands and cried, "There's entities! There's entities!"

An employee of the current business, the Happy Valley Filling Station, confirmed that paranormal activity is still taking place. He reports faucets turning on and off, flickering lights, and a dishwasher turning on and off- all with no explanation.



Source. *Haunted Historic Happy Valley*, Leila McMichael, 187-189

# Paranormal Incidents at the Coat House on Cone Estate

Daisy Teague Hollar tells of her family's experience living in the old Coat house on the Moses Cone estate (now Moses Cone Park on the Blue Ridge Parkway). She and her husband, William, moved in in 1945. She describes it as "a very big two-story house with eight rooms." Stains that resembled blood were all over the house. There was one in the hall that was particularly large. She and her young son tried to remove it with boiling water and lye, to no effect. It had an unusual, almost animate, property- when scraped up "the stuff would fall off the stick and smooth back into a ring."

A series of seemingly random paranormal incidents occurred. One evening around suppertime, they heard a baby crying for about 30 minutes. Another time she noticed Al, her four-year-old son staring at the stairs. She asked him what he saw, and he replied that there was a man on the stairs looking at him. This incident was repeated many times around the same time of day. Often after the family went to bed, they heard a commotion upstairs that sounded as if the second story was breaking apart and collapsing. Daisy was pregnant, and described herself as a nervous wreck. At one point, William went upstairs and found a door open. He nailed it shut with a 2x4. The noise returned the following night, and he went upstairs and found the door open as if it had never been nailed shut.

One day the family was in the garden, a location with a large rock outcropping nearby. Daisy "had a strange feeling" and asked William if he felt like someone was watching them. Without answering her question, he told her to take Al and go in the house. Later, after her baby was born, William told her that on that day there was a man standing against the rock watching the family.

Daisy concludes, "If I could sit down with you, I could tell you a lot more about that house."

Source: *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, p. 246.

# Knocks, Footsteps, & Chains

Carson Eggers told the story of living in a haunted house at the base of Rich Mountain in Watauga County near Hwy 421. They would hear knocks, footsteps, and chains in one of the bedrooms. One night they heard the front gate open and close but no one was there. Other people who lived there had similar experiences.

Source: *Outhouse Spiders & Tin Tub Baths*, Bob Lasley & Sallie Holt, editors, contributed by Sheila Mash, p. 21-22.



## Haunts of the Old Smithey Hotel



The Tory Oak Restaurant in downtown Wilkesboro was once a hotel owned by Nike and Hattie Smithey in the 1930s and 1940s. Nike died around 1940. A couple went to eat at the restaurant in the early 1990s and were seated in a section called the Blue Room. Suddenly they saw an ethereal man standing in the doorway holding a bunch of keys. The figure was so ghostly that they screamed. The couple later were looking at old photos downstairs and said a photo of Nike Smithey was the apparition they had seen.

A waitress was setting tables upstairs alone when she heard a voice say that she had forgot the spoons. The waitress shrieked and ran for the stairs, looking behind her to see a wraith-like woman. (Yes, she had forgotten the spoons.)
Source: *Wilkes Journal-Patriot*

## Ghostly Treasure

When Ray Hicks was a young man, he courted a girl in Boone. He would go to her parent's house to see her, and then leave after dark to walk home. The girl's father was impressed that Ray was brave enough to walk a long distance in the dark. Consequently he challenged Ray to spend the night in one of the bedrooms where the family had experienced strange occurrences. According to the father, his mother- and sister-in-law had spent the night in there and "something got on to 'em, and the mother said she saw the awfullest face looking in at the window."

Ray accepted the challenge. Lying in the bed, he felt the bed cover slip down his chest, but when he touched the cover with his hand, it was still at his neck; it just *felt* like it had slipped down. Then he felt the bed float over the hearth on the opposite side of the room. But he put out his hand and felt the wall, and realized that the bed had not moved, it only *felt* that way.

The wife of the man who built the house told that he had hidden $1,500 somewhere on the property, and she thought it was under an apple tree. Everyone who lived in the house grubbed around the apple trees in search of the money, but without success. Ray's host eventually sold the house. The new owner remodeled the haunted room and when he removed the hearth, he found a jar containing $1,500. According to Ray, the man's spirit was directing him to the money, but he failed to interpret the hint.



Source: *Snowbird Gravy & Dishpan Pie: Mountain People Recall* Patsy Moore Ginns, p. 189 ff.

# Paranormal Occurrences in a Country Store

A paranormal occurrence known as the Lineback ghost was told in 1940 by Brown Hughes and published in *North Carolina Folklore*. He begins the story by telling that during the Revolutionary War in wintertime, an old man and woman were on their way to Cranberry (Avery County) and stopped to spend the night with Zeb Franklin, which was probably in the Linville Falls community. They left the next morning. The man was carrying a heavy box, and required assistance to lift it on his back. After leaving, the couple disappeared; i.e. they never made it to Cranberry. The community speculated they were murdered, presumably for the contents of the heavy box. The storyteller implies that the following incidents had something to do with the old couple, but it is never explicitly stated and the incidents show no relationship to the supposed murder.

Several years afterward, a man named Taylor Burleson constructed a store building and rented it to Henry Lineback. Lineback stocked the building and went into business as a general store. Immediately, he experienced strange phenomenon. He would hear something falling from the loft to the floor. Items would appear on the scales as if being weighed. The door would rattle at night like something was trying to enter.

Lineback slept in the store. While in bed, the spirit (or whatever it was) would crawl on top of him and press down. He hired a clerk named Bill Key, who said it would whistle in the top of a tree.



He, too, witnessed it rattling the door and weighing things in the scales. One night Lineback came the store with Henry Holler and they saw a "big shaggy dog" walking between the counters. After entering, they tried to find it to turn it out, but it had disappeared.

Brown Hughes , who was a boy at the time, spent several nights in the store with Lum Smith. One evening Smith heard a noise and "saw something going up in the air like a balloon." Another night, Smith was kept awake by the sound of something that resembled "pulling raw hides down over the side of the house." Hughes eventually left to go to school, leaving Smith alone in the store at night. He barred the doors with iron bars but nevertheless, one night he awoke to find a man standing beside his bed with a lamp in his hand. Lum threw the covers over his head and the bed shook violently for a while. The man stood there for about an hour when Lum finally went to sleep. He dreamed that a woman and a little girl came to him and asked him to follow them into the woods near the store. They claimed they would show him where money was buried. The woman said, "Now I'll stick this little crooked stick up by this log and here's a tree, and you can find the place when you want to dig for it." When Smith woke the next morning, he went into the woods, following the woman's directions, where he had never been before and found the crooked stick inserted into the ground where she said it would be. But he refused to dig for the money because people would say he was crazy. He told Hughes that he had seen worse paranormal activity, but would give no details.

Mr. Hughes apparently spent a lot of time at the store, presumably as a clerk. One night when he was staying there alone, he had went to bed but wasn't asleep yet when something crawled on top of him and began pressing down. He was able to kick it off the lower end of the bed. Another night he slept there with his brother. They were in bed talking. The bed was located near a counter with a ledger on it. Hughes said, "Something picked that book up and commenced turning through it page by page and it had time to turn through a thousand page ledger then it pitched it down on the counter and then picked it up again and turned through it again two or three times and finally it quit. But I didn't ask how the account stood."

Brown Hughes grew up, married, and bought the store from Henry Lineback. He and his wife lived in a room at one end of the store. One night his wife got sick and asked him to get up and bring her some medicine. As soon as Brown got up, "something took hold of the door and shook the whole side of the house just like an earthquake almost." It had snowed that night, and he went outside looking for tracks, but he found none. The incident was repeated a few nights later.

William Daniels, who lived several miles from the store, heard about these incidents and became curious. He came to spend the night in the store in order to experience the phenomenon himself. According to Hughes, "It got on him that night and like to smothered him to death in the bed. He said when it got off it went like newspapers being torn up and went right down through the head of the bed."

Years later, a mine was dug near the old store building. The mine owners were working it with a whim and a horse, with a boy tending to it. The boy claimed that "something like a big shaggy dog" would try to grab the horse by the nose. Later, a man named Tom Love saw a dog by that description disappear down a mine hole.

After the store closed, all the fixtures and furnishings were moved out. A Mr. Grindstaff claimed "that he had heard many unnatural noises there." Miners at the nearby mine heard a clock strike eleven o'clock and banjos playing.



Source: Brown Hughes (age 78) Hughes, NC (Avery County) September 4, 1940
Frank C. Brown Folklore Collection

# Various Unexplained Incidents in an Abandoned House

Sometime around 1915, John Brooks and his son James went trapping for a week in the vicinity of Pond Mountain, where the boundaries of Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina converge. They came upon a dilapidated, abandoned house and barn, and decided to spend the night in the house. The weather was clear, with deep snow on the ground and bright moonlight. With boards they had gathered from the barn, the men built a large fire in the fireplace, which lit up the whole room.

Later in the night, they heard groans coming from below the hearth, which continued for a while, but eventually quit. Then John and James saw a man's head coming out of a wall. They remained calm and didn't say anything. John got up and looked out a hole in the wall, then suddenly jumped back and said, "Whew. it's cold out there!" James knew his father had seen something frightening, but John never told him what it was.

James looked out the door and clearly saw a man in black hat walking from the barn toward the house. But before he got to the house, he "disappeared behind a stump."

By then the fire had gone down and they decided to go to the barn to get more wood. On the way, they looked for the man's tracks in the snow, but none were to be found. The men got the wood and returned to the house. Later, they heard a sliding noise and a loud thump. James said the temperature must be rising and that was the sound of snow sliding off the roof. John disagreed, but didn't speculate on what it might be. They left after sunrise. Looking back, they saw that the snow was still on the roof.

A short time later, someone found money in the vicinity.

Clarcie Brooks Eller, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 78-79



# Haunted House on Sampson Road

During the Civil War, the Aho community was strongly Unionist. Cousins Beth and Lucy Storie acted on their political beliefs and did what they could to help Confederate deserters and those men who were trying to avoid being conscripted. They took food to men hiding out, and guided soldiers who were trying to reach the Union army in Tennessee. After the war, Beth married Avery Nelson, and they built a house on Sampson Road. Beth eventually had a stroke and became an invalid. Avery hired a young woman to look after Beth and keep house. We know her only by her last name, which was Hall. Soon Avery and the Hall woman began a romantic relationship. According to legend, they murdered Beth and buried her under the house, though the details are not known.

Interestingly, they soon moved out of the house and sold it to Sheriff John Hodges, who rented it to various families. The renters would stay only a short time. According to the renters, Beth Nelson was haunting the house. The family of Virgie Church Terry moved in in the 1920s, and she slept in the room where Beth died. One night she went to bed while her older sister Luner was up with her boyfriend, Lawrence Ford. Virgie said, "I went to bed back there and woke up suddenly. There was somebody or something dressed in white at the foot of the bed. I cried out. Luner and Lawrence came in and looked but there was nothing there. They said I was dreaming but I am sure I was awake. I refused to sleep in that room again."

Eventually, as the house's reputation grew, the sheriff could find no renters, He tore down the house after World War II.

Source: *Ghost Stories & Other Tales of Aho & Sampson*, by Roy Weaver
*People & Legends of Aho & Sampson*, by Roy Weaver



Site of the Beth Nelson house on Sampson Road

# Hospital Haunt

The ghost of a nurse named Pearl is seen at Caldwell Memorial Hospital in the infant delivery area, but only when an expectant mother is having a difficult delivery. She also turns down the sheets on the bed in the room where she died, as discovered by a couple of nurses. They told a security guard named Paul Murphy, who didn't believe it. The nurses took him to the room where they made up the bed and left. Paul checked the closet, closed the door, and walked backwards to the nurses station, keeping an eye on the door to make sure no one entered. He then followed the nurses back down the hall to the room. When they opened the door, the bed was turned down.



Source: *Haunted Historic Happy Valley*, Leila McMichael, 175-76



# Moses Cone Manor House Is Haunted

The Moses Cone manor house has served as office space, craft shop, and overnight accommodation for rangers and craftsmen since it was donated to the Blue Ridge Parkway in 1950. Various paranormal activities have been experienced by rangers and craftsmen who have utilized the mansion.

- A craftsman staying overnight in the master bedroom could not keep the door closed. He finally propped a chair against it and went to sleep. When he awoke in the morning, the door was open again and the chair was on the other side of the room.

- A ranger working late at night in a downstairs office got sleepy and went to bed upstairs, leaving unfinished paperwork behind. When he returned the next morning, he found that the paperwork had been completed.

- Another craftsman got up in the night to use the bathroom. On his way, he felt an invisible hand take hold of his. People have speculated that it could have been Bertha Cone's sister, a resident of the house who was disabled and required assistance to walk.

- Lights have been seen flickering inside the house when no one is there. Sometimes when rangers check the exterior doors at night they hear footsteps on the staircase. They open the door and the sound stops, but starts again once the door is shut.

- Moses Cone died in 1908 and was buried on the estate. In the early 1920s, his wife Bertha got a feeling that someone was robbing his grave. She rushed to the site and found that some digging had been taking place on the grave. The gravesite is surrounded by a copper fence that has been seen to erupt in fire during thunderstorms. Horse-drawn carriages have been heard rolling past the gravesite during a full moon.

- An older woman was seen looking out an upstairs window (Bertha Cone's bedroom) when no one was in the house. In a later incident, a woman was heard laughing at this window.

- A craft center employee was standing beside a rack of merchandise on pegs. Suddenly an entire peg of whimmy-diddle toys lifted up in the air.

- A group of people witnessed a curtain being pulled back in one of the windows. They could see the impression of a hand gripping the curtain, but no hand was visible.



Source: Watauga Democrat, October 30, 1989, by Edwin Powell & *Haunted Watauga County North Carolina* Tim Bullard, p. 111-113.

# House on Racket Creek Site of Mysterious Phenomena

Around the time of the Civil War, a family with three children lived on Racket Creek in Caldwell County, near the community of Carey's Flat. The man of the house was away fighting in the war. The family remaining at home ran out of food, and out of desperation the woman left the children in search of something to eat. She was never seen again. The children were found three weeks later by neighbors. The two oldest had starved to death and the baby, in a high chair, survived by eating her own hand. Rain had been heavy for several weeks, and Racket Creek was running high. The neighbors concluded that the woman had been swept away crossing the creek.

Margaret Townsend (1850-1942) inhabited a house that was built across the creek from this unfortunate incident sometime after the Civil War. Alice, one of her daughters, was looking out one of the upstairs windows and saw a girl moving down a path toward the house. She soon realized, however, that the girl was floating above the ground. The figure eventually faded away.

Alice also saw a woman crossing a footlog over Racket Creek and suddenly disappear. This woman has been seen walking near the creek by many people.

Alice's son, Edgar Coffey, was standing in the yard when he saw a light float out of an upstairs window and rise up into the sky.

The storyteller notes that other supernatural incidents have been reported around the house- apparitions, and unexplained noises and lights- but no further details are given. The narrative implies that these mysterious phenomena are related to the fate of the starving Civil War- era family, but the connection is not explicit. The storyteller says that the house "stood on the site of an old Indian village" and speculates a relationship between that occupation and the occurrences.

Source: Nita Curtis, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 118-119



## Alleghany County Haunted House

Charlie Royal of Alleghany County tells of a house his family lived in when he was a boy. It was located about five miles from Sparta on Highway 21. He and his siblings could not keep their bedroom door closed. They put a nail keg full of nails against it. “As soon as we got back in bed we would hear the keg sliding on the floor, and the door was open.” They had the same problem with another room in the house. They nailed it shut, but they would later find the nails pulled out and the door open. The family would hear footsteps going up and down the stairs all night long. When he was alone one night, Charlie’s father heard something heavy fall to the floor from upstairs, but nothing was there. When his mother was there alone one day, she heard the front door open, but no one was there. The door closed, then the dining room door opened, followed by the kitchen door opening, and the exterior kitchen door opening and closing. Charlie also notes that on still nights, the windows would rattle like the wind was blowing. Twenty years later Charlie learned from a barber that the current resident of the house reported the same experiences.

Source: *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O’C. Garvey, editor, 50

## Suicide Bed

Wilkes County resident Danny Reavis was engaged to marry a girl from Yancey County. One weekend they traveled to Burnsville to meet her mother (her father was dead). Danny slept in the guest bedroom. During the night, he was awakened several times by the door opening. No matter how many times he shut it, it would later open. The next morning, he told his hosts about it. They were not surprised and explained that the girl’s father had committed suicide on that bed by firing a gun into his mouth, which blew off part of his head. Bits of his skull remained embedded in the headboard of the bed. They attributed the opening door to the ghost of the man.

After they were married, they spent a night in the bedroom. They were awakened by a group of family photos on the dresser falling face down, as if pushed from behind. After the mother died, Danny and his wife inherited the bed, and moved it to the guest bedroom at their home in North Wilkesboro. The activities continued there- door opening, items falling to the floor, and unexplained noises.

Source: *Ghosts of the Yadkin Valley*, R.G. Absher, 103-104.



## Holy Rollers

Dan Ward and his friends were headed home after a night of drinking and playing cards. On their route was a church where a meeting had just concluded. The weather being cold and rainy, the men took shelter inside the church. The wood stove still had a fire in it, and the church was warm and comfortable. The drunks decided to spend the night there.

Later on in the night, the group was awakened by something that "sounded like a log rolling from the pulpit to the door, then back again." The men were so frightened they ran out the door and didn't slow down until they reached home. The event so impressed Dan that he gave up drinking and playing cards, and became a regular church goer.

Source: Mary Sue Rose, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 138.

A young man named Handy, according to Rosa E. Carpenter (b. 1893) in Alleghany County, was riding horseback home from seeing his girlfriend. As he was passing the Little Pine Church cemetery, where Ezerette Bowman was buried, he yelled, "Come on, Ezerette!" "Something" rose out of the graveyard and jumped on the horse behind him. He ran his horse home where "he just fell in the door."

Source: *Snowbird Gravy & Dishpan Pie: Mountain People Recall*, Patsy Moore Ginns, p. 193-94

## The Neighbor's Ghost

In 1931, John Joines became ill and was expected to die at any time. A neighbor named Bill McGrady spent the night with him every other night in order to take care of him. One afternoon at Bill's house, the family saw a man dressed in white walking toward the house. Bill hollered at the man, asking what he wanted, but he got no reply. Bill walked closer to him, and the man suddenly disappeared. It occurred to Bill that the man could have been John's ghost. He went to John's house, and discovered that he had died about the same time the family saw the strange man.

Source: Jean Miller, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 208.



Anna C. Church's grandfather was walking home one night on Old Highway 60 in Wilkes County when he heard a wagon drawn by horses pull up behind him and stopped. He lit a match to ask what the driver wanted, but there was nothing there.

Source: Anna C. Church, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 175.

# Haunting of Magnolia Place

Magnolia Place is a mansion in Burke County built in 1818 by Swiss native John Henry Stevelie. Originally a Federal style brick house, later owners enlarged it and added Greek Revival elements. The house is located on Hwy 64, facing the eastbound on-ramp to Interstate 40.

In an October 2002 article in *Voices of the Foothills*, the owners, Iverson and Marsha Riddle recount strange occurrences in the house, which include:

- A vase that fell from a mantle numerous times
- A pocket watch hanging from an eagle statue that swings on its own, sometimes for hours
- Music is heard, but the source cannot be located
- A triple locked door opening on its own
- The same door slamming shut with a bang with the locks engaging

After a new snow, the couple looked out the window and saw footprints coming from the woods behind the house to the side of the front porch (but not to the front steps), then away from the house where they abruptly stopped, as if the person had suddenly disappeared. Strangely, the prints were of only a right foot.

The Riddles later met a grandson of a former owner who said that his grandfather had lost his left leg in the Civil War. In addition, at the time the front porch had steps on the side.

A guest claimed to have seen an apparition of a woman in his bedroom late at night. She "walked across the room, stopped at the foot of his bed and looked at him for a few minutes, then walked through the closed bedroom door."

# Civil War Hauntings



# Hatton's Ghostly Friend

One day in the spring of 1890 near the headwaters of Joe's Fork Creek in Sampson, two men were plowing a field, a man named Hatton in the upper part and the other man (unnamed) some distance away in the lower part. While turning his mule team, Hatton noticed a man standing under a tree at the edge of the woods. He tied his mules and walked toward the man. Getting closer, Hatton realized that he knew the man. He was a soldier Hatton had served with in the Civil War. But the soldier had been killed in a battle. At the same time, Hatton recognized the ethereal quality of the soldier, and comprehended that he was looking at a ghost. Hatton was scared, but he felt an urge to speak to the soldier. The soldier responded, and they chatted briefly. The mules stirred, Hatton turned to see how they were doing, but when he looked back toward the soldier, the ghost was gone.

The plow man in the lower part of the field saw the soldier too, and heard the men talking. Walking closer, he also recognized the soldier, but his reaction was the opposite of Hatton's. Fear got the best of him, and he quickly removed the harness from his horses, mounted one, and rode off in a hurry.

Hatton never revealed the contents of his conversation with the ghost.

Source: *Ghost Stories & Other Tales of Aho & Sampson* by Roy Weaver



# The Haunted Spring

A spring located one mile east of Watauga River near a road is said to be haunted. Around 1895, Andrew Wilson was traveling along the road and stopped at the spring to let his horses drink. They refused, and acted spooked by something. Wilson looked down the road, and saw what appeared to be a soldier. He spoke to the man, but got no reply, he just stood there motionless. Wilson watched the man for several minutes and then he "seemed to fade away."

Others have reported seeing "seven possums cross the road and go into a laurel thicket near the spring, then seven dogs right after the possums, then seven men, then seven coffins."

Source: *North Carolina Folklore*, *Frank C. Brown Folklore Collection*, p. 678

# Civil War Ghost

During the Civil War, many men hid out in remote areas to avoid being conscripted into the Confederate army. One such man was named Hines, who hid near the White Rocks (in Sampson). One day he was out searching for food, when he was caught by John Hartley, a member of the Home Guard, near Bentley Gap. Hartley prepared to execute him, while he begged for his life. Showing no mercy, Hartley shot and killed him, and left him unburied.

The body was found by a boy who smelled the decomposing corpse. Beth and Lucy Storie went after the body with a sled. They took him to Middle Knob and buried him. Afterwards, people reported seeing a figure on the knob, which they said was the ghost of Hines. Fifty years after the murder, John Hartley was on his deathbed. He began calling out, "Go away Hines. Take Hines away. Go away Hines."

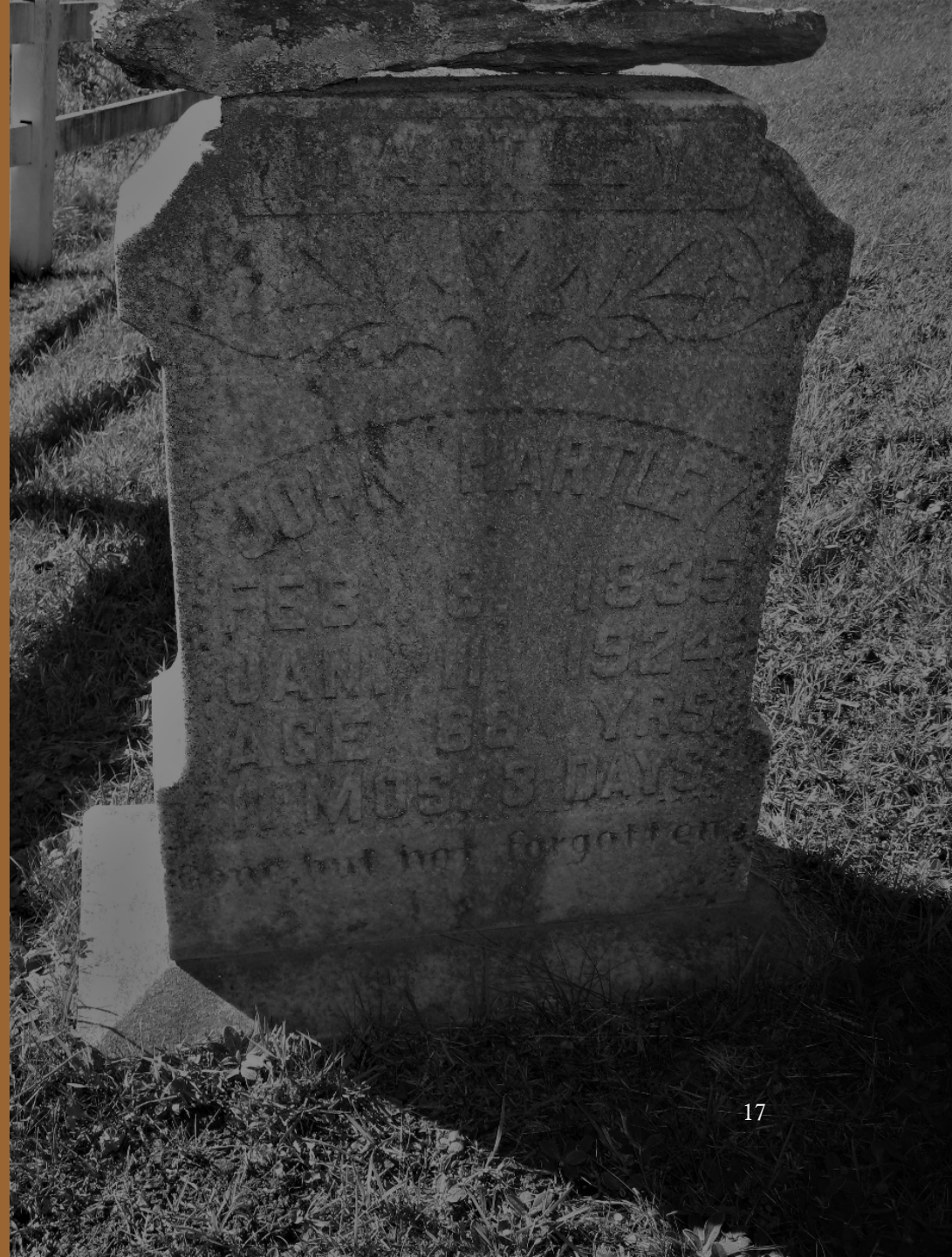
Source: *People & Legends of Aho & Sampson*, p. 65 *Ghost Stories & Other Tales of Aho & Sampson*, by Roy Weaver.

# The Todd Rock Ghost

During the Civil War, a man named Todd went through Aho taking horses for the use of the Confederacy. He then headed down Sampson Road. John Ford went after him and intercepted Todd at the intersection of the Sampson and Richlands Roads, where he had stopped to let the horses drink at Joes Fork Creek. Ford took aim and killed him with one shot beside what became known as the Todd Rock. A legend developed that his ghost can be seen riding down the road on a stolen horse. In the latter half of the 20th century on a foggy day, sisters Bernice and Callie Watson were cutting wood near the Todd Rock when they heard what sounded like a horse coming down the creek dragging a trace chain. Thinking of the Todd Rock legend, they became scared and hurried home.
Source: *Ghost Stories & Other Tales of Aho & Sampson*, by Roy Weaver

# The Unfortunate Confederate Soldier

During the Civil War, a Confederate soldier lost his life after riding his horse off a cliff near the home of Alice Atwood. Many years later, Alice witnessed a Confederate soldier walking toward her in a cornfield, but he vanished before reaching her. Alice's daughter, Carrie, had an identical experience in a different location. Alice's son was walking home one moonlit night and was passing a herd of sheep beside the road. He saw the Confederate soldier walk through the herd of sheep, but the sheep took no notice of the ghost, as if he wasn't even there. According to granddaughter Kathleen Atwood Miller, everyone in her grandmother's household has seen the ghost.
Source: Kathleen Atwood Miller, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 216.



## Dead Man's Hollow

Near the end of the Civil War, General Stoneman's army invaded western North Carolina. In Wilkes County, Harrison Tinsley, a Union sympathizer, told Stoneman of the location of the Confederate Home Guard, including the home of Lewis Absher. Absher and others ran away just before being captured. After the war, Absher discovered that Tinsley was responsible. He and other Confederates caught Tinsley and hung him in a hollow near Hwy 18 along Mulberry Creek. The hanging was especially brutal because they hoisted him only a few inches above the ground and let him dangle with his feet occasionally touching the ground long enough to keep him alive for a long period. It was a slow, painful death. The site became known as Dead Man's Hollow, a deep valley near Bumgarner's Country Store. The hollow has gained a reputation for being haunted, with the sound of a moaning man struggling for breath and the jeers of onlookers.

Source: *Ghosts of the Yadkin Valley*, R.G. Absher, 69-70.



# Soul Music

According to Ricky McGrady, an old family cemetery on Solomon Mountain in Wilkes County went for years without any new burials because the family had moved away or died out. Two men known by McGrady camped on the mountain one night. At 1:00 o'clock a.m., they heard singing. The location was so remote they knew it couldn't have come from any residents. Only after leaving their tent to investigate did they realize they had camped beside the old graveyard. Assuming it to be the source of the singing, the men were frightened and quickly left.

Source: *Wilkes Journal Patriot*, October 15, 2001, by Jule Hubbard

# Chased by an Invisible Ghost

Claudia L. Forte tells the story of her great uncle Tom who had a car breakdown at night in a remote location. Forced to walk, he proceeded toward home down the dirt road. Soon he heard the sound of something running toward him from behind. Not knowing what or who it was, Tom began running himself, but he couldn't get away from it. It kept getting closer and closer until it was right behind him. Tom turned his head to see what it was, but he could see nothing. The invisible thing ran past him and continued on in front of him. The running footsteps died away in the distance.

Source: *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 95.

# The Woman in the Cemetery

At the Howell Hill Cemetery in Ashe County in the 1950s, a man and his girlfriend saw a woman rise up out of the ground. She had long black hair that covered her face and a transparent dress that appeared to flow in a breeze, though there wasn't a wind. He cranked the car and drove away, but they felt a cold draft and found the woman sitting in the back seat. She disappeared a short time after that. The cemetery caretaker has seen the ghost as well as other people.

Source: https://www.newrivernotes.com/ The story was taken from an undated *Jefferson Post* article.

# Peak Creek Holler Ghost

Ashley Roten tells of two incidents that occurred in the holler where Peak Creek Church is located in Ashe County. He was spending the night at the home of Jim Sheets when something pulled the sheets off of him multiple times and he heard footsteps in the room. Walking home the next night, he heard footsteps behind him and then something tripped him. He heard laughter and footsteps running away. This occurred three times. It is reported that a Civil War skirmish happened in the vicinity and the spirit is one of the soldiers.

Source: https://www.newrivernotes.com

# Ghostly Figures Foretell Bad Luck

At a place called Tucker Holler in 1922, several people witnessed "two white figures, just forms, no features" in the yard of the storyteller's aunt, Molly Hughes. Molly saw them first and alerted the rest of the family. The figures floated above the ground, traveling along the yard for some distance, The yard was fenced, but the figures passed through the gate as if it wasn't there. The witnesses continued to watch them move along through a pasture until they disappeared. The moon was full and the air was still.

The family believed that such a supernatural incident was a portent of bad luck for the first person who saw it. Molly's infant son soon died, her husband left her for another woman, and she herself died within a short time.

Source: Louise S. Mayberry Turbyfill, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 159

## Old Man Finley

In the early 1900s in the Traphill community of Wilkes County, a man named Finley moved in and made a living repairing watches, clocks, and household utensils. No one knew his first name; he was just called "Old Man Finley." "He was a strange man who did not talk about himself; a mystery to the people in the community who did not know where he came from. One day he was seen walking up Two Mile Gap Hollow, and was never seen again. A search party was sent out, but they found no sign of him. Soon afterwards, people began seeing strange lights and hearing mysterious noises. About 75 years after Old Man Finley disappeared, a stranger stopped at a Traphill home and asked for directions "to the Holbrook place." The lady of the house said he looked exactly like the description she had heard of Old Man Finley. Later, a group of hikers saw a man of the same description, but he ran away before they could greet him. Years later, a couple moved a mobile home near Two Mile Gap Hollow, but they were scared away by unexplained lights and noises.

Source: *Ghosts & Their Haunts: The Legends & Lore of the Yadkin River Valley*, Frances H. Casstevens



Former garden area at Fort Defiance

## Fort Defiance Ghosts

- Sallie, the wife of William Lenoir's grandson Rufus Lenoir, would frequently see a little black girl in the garden next to the Fort Defiance house. When she would go investigate, she found nothing. Sallie referred to the garden as "haunted ground" and alluded to other ghosts seen there.

• More than one docent at Fort Defiance has reported seeing a woman in black in the cemetery and on the porch of the house. The Lenoir's youngest daughter Mira reportedly wore black every day after her mother died.

Source: *Haunted Historic Happy Valley*, Leila McMichael, 92-94



## CAUGHT ON TAPE

The following is an account of an investigation by the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory in the early 1970s, with the help of Appalachian State University communications professor Charlotte Ross.

Ross had visited an abandoned house in Watauga County that had been occupied in the early 1900s by an older man, his nephew, and his nephew's wife. The older man eventually died in the house. People who had lived in the house later didn't stay long because of mysterious noises and things moving around of their own accord. When Ross went in the house, she experienced cold spots and "felt unwanted and pushed out." She wrote down this information and told no one.

The Duke Lab brought staff and psychic Jean McArthur to Watauga County to investigate the old house and another site. Ross led a group of six cars to the house but she was kept away from McArthur. McArthur and her assistant, who carried audio recording equipment, entered the house and stayed for 25 minutes. Then they came rushing out, ran around the front yard. down a bank to a stream, then back to the cars. Again, the Duke team kept the women separate, so Ross did not know what they had experienced.

At another location in Watauga County a tragedy had occurred in the early 1900s in a grist mill. A small boy was sent by his mother to the mill with corn to grind. He wore a large coat with the cuffs folded back on his wrists and he was carrying a stick. While waiting for the corn to be ground, the boy rubbed the mill wheel with the stick. Suddenly, the stick caught in the mill wheel and got tangled in one of the boy's large cuffs, pulling him into the mill wheel and crushing him to death.

Ross suspected paranormal activity at this location. People living nearby reported hearing unexplained screams. Ross led the team to the site after leaving the old house. The site was nothing more than a vacant, open field, as the mill had been washed away in the infamous 1940 flood. McArthur, who had not been told anything about the incident, got out of the car, walked across the field, and began shrieking in terror, "Oh. oh, somebody stop him! The child, the child! Stop the little boy! His bones are crushed! I have to go. I have to get away from here!"

Ross was astonished by the accuracy of McArthur's experience. Her vision began when she walked to the exact location of the mill.

After visiting the sites, Ross mailed her research to the Duke Lab. The team found that McArthur's experiences confirmed Ross' findings. With one exception. The Duke team asked, "What about the murder in the front yard? These papers don't mention anything about it." McArthur had seen a murder when she exited the house. Ross was not aware of a killing, but she did some research and found that 50 years previous, the owner had indeed killed a man in the front yard in a drunken rage. He was sent to prison, eventually released, and returned to the house, where he died.

The Duke team would not give details about McArthur's experience inside the house. Sometime later, however, Ross read a magazine article titled, "Psychic History Made" which described the incident. McArthur also sensed cold spots and hostility like Ross, but she and her assistant had also heard three voices arguing- a man, a woman, and an older man- which matched the actual occupants. Not only that, the audio equipment had in fact recorded the voices, the first time that had happened, according to the article.

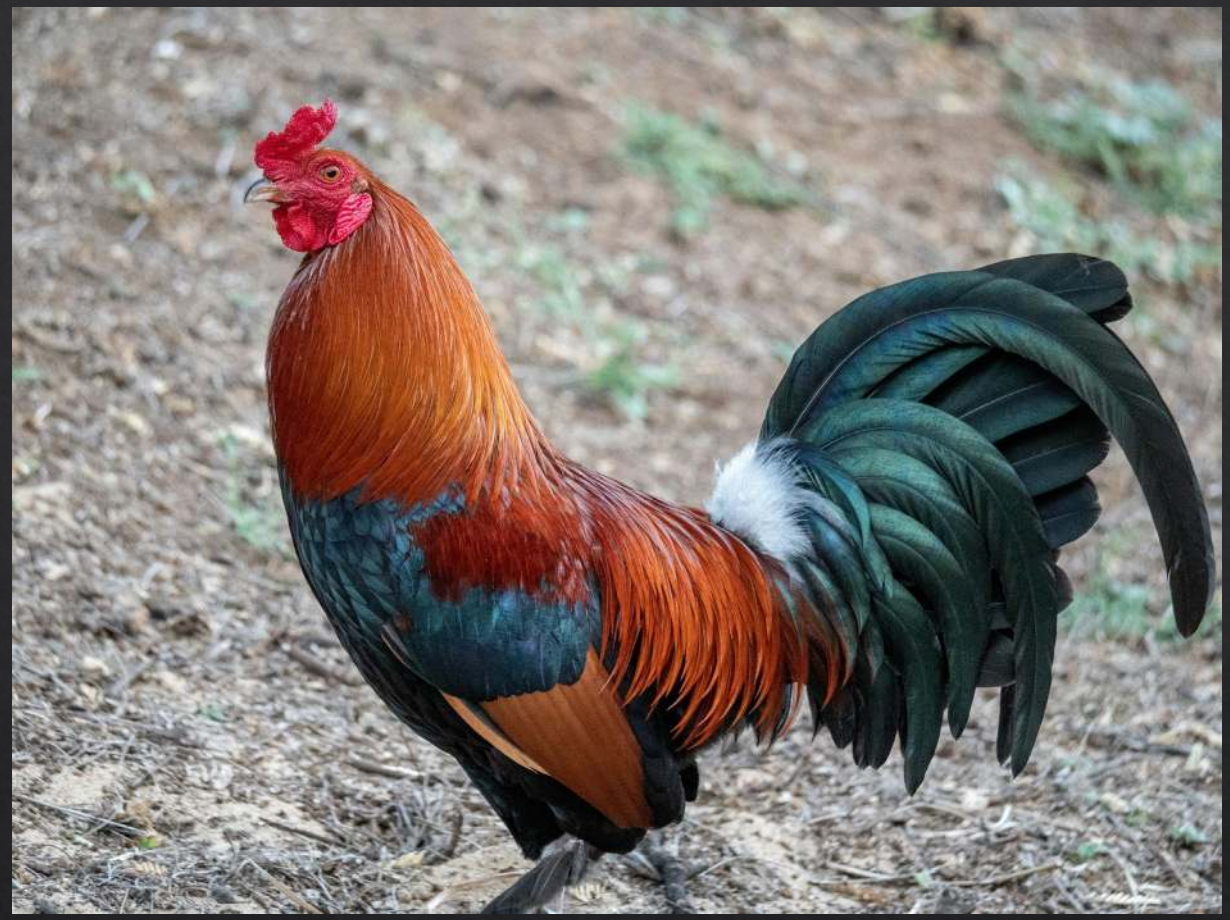


Source: *Watauga Democrat*, October 29, 1999, by Denise Luxton

# Witches



# The Weaver Witch



In the early 1800s in Ashe County about 12 miles from Jefferson lived a woman named Lyla Weaver who was known to be a witch. Her story was told by Russell H. Cawdill in 1922. He said that one time she walked by the house of his great-grandfather and saw an excellent rooster. She wanted it and asked the man to give it to her. He told her no. She said that the rooster "would never do him any good" and went on her way. She wasn't far down the road when the rooster fell over dead.

Lyla went to a store to buy some cloth and protested when told the price. She became so upset that she began moving her finger around in a circle on the counter. A large snake materialized behind her finger. The store owner was so scared that her gave her the whole bolt of cloth to leave.

Source: *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, 643-644

# The Secret to Ray's Success

Ray Hicks tells of going to pull galax on Stone Mountain (Watauga County) when he was a boy. He went with his father, another boy, and a mean dog that "would eat anybody up." They crossed over the top of the mountain to the Tennessee side and set about making a camp. The dog suddenly began barking furiously. Ray turned to look, and saw a woman around 60 years old. "Her hair was black as jet, hanging down, and her dress was in strings." Ray warned her to stay away from the dangerous dog, but she said, "poor puppy," and the dog rolled over on its back. She said she wasn't afraid of any animal because she just puts them to sleep. The woman asked for some of the food they were cooking, and they gave her some.

She said, "I put just a little spell on you. You won't be afeared to talk to nobody. I've fixed you for a good life." Ray credits this incident for his ability to tell tales to large audiences. His father said she was a witch, but obviously a good witch.



Source: *Snowbird Gravy and Dishpan Pie: Mountain People Recall*, Patsy Moore Ginns, 203-205

# Bewitched Animals

A resident of Burke County, in 1915, told the story of Vira Gilberts, an old woman said to be a witch. Vira was homeless, depending on various peoples' hospitality for places to stay. She was described as a stout woman, able to do hard physical labor. Once she was building fence near the woods for a man named Jones Gibson. Some squirrel hunters came along, and she hollered, "You needn't shoot at that squirrel; you can't kill it." The hunters left, concluding that she had witched herself into the squirrel. While away, they bored a hole in a bullet and filled it with silver. Returning, they found the squirrel again, and Vira continued to yell at them. The hunters shot the squirrel, and Vira squalled, "Oh, you've put my eye out with that limb!," claiming their shot knocked a limb off a tree. Finding the squirrel, they discovered that it had been hit in the eye.

At another farm, Vira wanted to milk the two cows, but Frances, the farm owner, wouldn't let her. Vira said the cows wouldn't give milk as a result. Sure enough, when Frances went to milk, she got only a spoonful from each one. She put that milk in a small bottle, and there was a space between the milk from each cow. No matter how she turned the bottle or shook it, the two spoonfuls of milk would not mix.

Frances knew a familiar formula for dealing with a witch. She stuck six new pins in a piece of paper and put it under a hearth rock. Vira moaned all night that pins were sticking her.

Source: *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*

In another Burke County incident, a man who had a big hog was confronted by a woman who implored him to kill it, possibly so that she could have some of the meat. He refused, and she became angry and said that he would be forced to kill it. That night, the man's baby became deathly sick, and the family was certain that the woman had witched the infant. They sought the help of the community witch doctor; i.e. a man who could break a witch's spell. The witch doctor said he would have to kill the hog and burn it. He posted his wife at the door and told her not to let anybody or anything in, because sometimes witches would send a family member to borrow something, which would break the power of the witch doctor.

While the man killed and burned the hog, a bird tried to get in the house, and the witch doctor's wife had to fight it furiously to keep it out. The spell was broken and the baby recovered.

Source: *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*





## Peggy the Witch

The legend of Peggy the Witch dates to the late 1800s. Peggy lived at Phillip's Gap. The earliest story involves a man who was walking by where she lived and saw her tossing corn shucks into a corn crib. Every so often she would say, "Pull them on back, little devil." The shucks were sliding to the back of the crib of their own accord.

One night in 1890, a man named John Church was walking home when he saw Peggy up ahead sitting on a bank beside the trail. He warily continued walking and when he reached where she was sitting, Peggy suddenly let out a loud, terrible scream. It startled John so bad that he whipped out a pistol that he was carrying and shot her five times. He was so upset that he ran home "shaking and crying." The next day, he and his family went to Peggy's place to look for the body, but when they got within sight of the house, they saw her out gathering firewood.

Another man, named Watson, went to visit Peggy. She was nowhere in sight, but suddenly he heard screaming from four surrounding mountains. The screams were so loud and penetrating that Watson found it almost unbearable. He rushed home, sure that his family and neighbors had heard the screaming, but no one had.

According to legend, if you go to Phillips Gap and call her name out loud, she will appear in some form, usually as two fireballs.

Source: Josh Beshears, as told to him by Ritz Beshears and Duel Phillips, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 64-65

## Old Henry

In the 1870s in Watauga County's Brushy Fork community there lived a man named Old Henry who everyone considered to be a witch. Polly Rayfield tells of the time when his daughter-in-law made him mad, and she was instantly sick with an ailment that no one could diagnose. She got worse when Henry came in the room. The family hung a bottle with a stopper above her bed to keep witches out. "If they didn't keep the bottle stopped up they said she'd get worse."

Source: *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, p. 646

# The Beneficial Witch

An unmarried woman named Betsy lived on a farm at the base of Peach Bottom Mountain on Dog Creek in Alleghany County. The incident occurred in 1870. Times were hard a few years after the Civil War, as the economy was wrecked, help was difficult to find, and outlaws had plundered the community. Making the farm productive and profitable was proving to be almost impossible. All she could afford for help was a single inexperienced farm hand. Betsy was physically able to work in the field herself, but to do that she had to leave behind house work and the care of her blind father and disabled mother. She was desperate for help, but had no one to turn to.

One day Betsy was hanging the laundry out to dry when she caught sight of a tiny woman making her way toward her on a footpath. When the woman reached Betsy, she asked for a drink of water, which Betsy promptly provided. As she drank, Betsy looked her over. The woman was ancient. Her face was wrinkled and grotesque, Yet, oddly, her hair wasn't gray, but black. And unkempt. Though the woman seemed harmless, Betsy felt there was something sinister about her.

"Where are you from?" asked Betsy, "I've never seen you around here before." "Doesn't matter," she said between gulps. The woman handed the drinking gourd back to Betsy, and as if reading her mind, said, "You need help, and I'm here to provide it." Betsy was taken aback by the woman's knowledge of her unfortunate situation and her offer to help. She didn't know what to say, as she was torn between her desire for any form of assistance and her repulsive feeling about this woman. Finally, she blurted out, "But I have no money to pay you." "Not a problem," said the old woman, "Room and board will be my pay. You can call me Miss Duncan and I'll start right away." Betsy could tell she wouldn't take no for an answer, and giving in to her extreme need, she invited Miss Duncan into the house.

As the days passed, Betsy soon realized that she had made the right decision. Miss Duncan kept the house neat and clean, cared for her parents, cooked meals, and did everything necessary to enable Betsy to tend to farming duties. Indeed, Miss Duncan's thoroughness and efficiency was almost magical for a woman who appeared to be so old and frail. She seemed to anticipate problems before they arose and always had a solution ready.

Not everyone was as pleased with Miss Duncan. "She's a witch," complained the farm hand, "I woke up last night to find cats running all over my bed, and she's the cause of it." But Betsy dismissed such talk. Just because she looked like a witch didn't mean she was one.

A widow woman who lived nearby became ill. Betsy became concerned and asked Miss Duncan to spend a few days with her and manage the household until she recovered. Miss Duncan resisted, but Betsy pleaded with her until she relented. After the widow began to feel better she kept hearing the dishes rattle in the kitchen cabinets at night. After several nights, she got up the courage to investigate. She flung open the cabinet door, and out jumped a cat-like creature, which landed at her feet. The widow kicked it and it ran away.

The next morning Miss Duncan said she was feeling sick, and returned to Betsy's farm. Word began to spread of the incident at the widow's house, and soon everyone was saying Miss Duncan was a witch. Any misfortune in the community was blamed on Miss Duncan. People pressured Betsy to make her leave. Betsy didn't believe the gossip, but she didn't know what to do. A few days later Betsy walked into the kitchen for breakfast. Miss Duncan had set the table and had prepared coffee, ready to pour. But the woman wasn't in the kitchen. Betsy went to her bedroom and found her dead.



Source: Jenny Richardson, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 100.; Daniel W. Barefoot, *Haints of the Hills*, 9-13

## How to Become a Witch

Eph Tucker, who lived in Ashe County, told of a man named Ferro who was a witch. Ferro told him about a neighbor who had offended him, "and he was going to make that man see some trouble that night." Ferro said to ask him in the morning how the night went. Eph met the neighbor the next day, and he said that his night was sleepless. The man saw a creature that looked something like a bear walking the joists over his bed. He tried to shoot it but his gun wouldn't work.

Eph decided that he wanted to be a witch too, so he asked Ferro how to do it. "They went out in the wagon road and Ferro took a stick and made a ring in the dirt. 'Now you get in that ring,' says Ferro. Eph squatted down. 'Now,' says Ferro, 'put one hand under your right foot and the other hand on top of your head and say after me, Devil take me ring and all." Eph did as he was told and the ground began to sink under him. Eph jumped out of the ring and ran from there as fast as he could.

Source: *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, p. 648-649

## Traphill Ghost

In the 1920s, two young men were traveling in a truck in the Traphill community of Wilkes County. They saw a white apparition cross the road and climb up the roadside bank. They couldn't agree on what it looked like. One "described it as a scrawny white horse walking on its hind legs" while the other one said it was a skeleton. When they got to their destination they told the people present and several went out to investigate. They could find no evidence of anything climbing the bank or other tracks.

Source: *Wilkes Journal Patriot*, October 27, 2000, Jim Moore

## Emerald Village Ghost

The Emerald Village is a tourist attraction in Little Switzerland that focuses on the area's mining heritage. The location is said to be haunted. The manager reported seeing the apparition of a teenage girl with long blonde hair wearing a pink blouse and a long dark skirt. She was carrying a kerosene lamp in her hand. The ghost is said to be that of Ellie Jo Crabtree, whose father Charles was a miner and disappeared in one of the mines.

Source: *Watauga Democrat*, October 2001

# Ghostly Dogs



## Shadow Dog

Dan Ward was hunting at night with his dog, Jack, in Matney (Watauga County). The night was clear, snow was on the ground, and the moon was shining brightly. As they were heading home, the dog was walking in front of Dan and his shadow was clearly visible in the snow. Then something strange occurred. Another dog's shadow appeared beside of Jack's, keeping pace as they moved along, but no other dog was there. The shadow stayed with them all the way home.

Mary Sue Rose, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 66.

## Murdered Dog

There was once a schoolhouse on the road between Cove Creek and Brushy Fork. It was eventually torn down, and all that was left was a pile of rocks from the chimney. Legend says that when the area was just beginning to be settled, a traveler and his dog were killed by robbers and buried at the site. One man told how he rode by the place on horseback one night under a full moon, and saw a large, black dog rise from the rock pile and follow him down the road. The man spurred his horse into a run, but the dog kept up and jumped on the horse behind the man. Turning around, the man saw that the dog had no head. The horse was unaware of the dog's presence, but the man was terrified. He rode for several miles before turning around again and saw that the dog was gone.

Three young men passed the site one moonlit night when they came to realize that the headless dog was following them. They noticed that it did not cast a shadow. The men picked up their pace, but the dog caught up with them and even ran ahead of them for a while. One of them hit at it with a stick, but the stick went through it and hit the ground. They finally reached a creek two miles from where they had noticed the dog, and the dog turned back. Besides these two incidents, many other people have reported seeing the headless dog.

Source: *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*



# The Ghost Dog of Bee Log

An old man who lived in the Yancey County community of Bee Log had a bad reputation. It stemmed from the fact that when he was younger, his wife ran off with another man. Rumor was that he hunted them down and killed them. After that he descended into drunkenness, anger, and meanness. His house and yard was a mess. When drunk, he would shoot at dogs, cats, and even people. His rage about his wife was taken out on anyone who came near him. As a result, people avoided him and stayed far away from his property. As he grew older, he took on a cadaverous look, with a "caved-in" face that resembled a skull.

He died alone in his house, but of course no one was aware of it. His body was discovered when a boy's dog ran into his yard and the boy pursued his pet for fear that he would get shot. Running onto the porch, he was overpowered by the rotting odor of the corpse.

Not long after his death, a man was near the rock school and noticed three horses on a nearby ridge, which was unusual because only two were normally in the field. A closer look revealed that one of the creatures was actually the size of a pony and covered with thick, black hair, but it wasn't a pony. The man walked out into the field and the two horses ran away. The mysterious creature turned toward the man, who realized that it was a headless dog. Then a horrible howl emanated from the hole where the head had been. The man ran to his truck, got in, and drove off. But he turned to see that the dog was on the seat beside him. The man heaved himself through the window and the truck ran off the road into a creek.

There was an elderly couple in the community who were related to the man who ran off with the mean man's wife. One night, they heard scratching on the front door. They opened it but nothing was there. Then they heard scratching at the back door. Again, nothing was there. They separated and stationed themselves each at a door. When the scratching was heard again, they opened both doors and this time at the back door was the headless dog. The dog scratched at their doors every night and began howling. People all over the community could hear that terrifying howl.

Residents began to speculate that the dog was the ghost of the mean old man, as it appeared soon after his death. But after a few weeks, the scratching and howling ceased, never to return again.

Source: *The Charlotte Observer,* October 31, 1998, by Gwenda Ledbetter

# Dog Omen

Somewhere along the Johns River in Caldwell County about 1840 lived a young man named Came Allen. He was on his way to a brick kiln which was being burned, when he discovered a dog following him. The dog had a white tail that was as thin as a piece of cloth. No matter how fast Came walked, the dog kept up with him. Once he turned and kicked it, but his foot went right through the dog. The dog finally left him as he approached the kiln. Came told his story to the men gathered there. In a few minutes, he fell dead. Many said that the dog was a sign of his death.

Source: *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, 684

# Mysterious Dog

Between Cranberry and Elk Park in the vicinity of the old Cranberry High School, pedestrians have encountered a large black dog walking behind them. The dog is not threatening; on the contrary, it has pitiful eyes that indicate some suffering. While the dog is clearly visible, it seems to be occupying an unreachable parallel dimension, as attempts to interact with it always fail. It never comes close when called and cannot be petted. Likewise, efforts to run it off are unsuccessful. It has even been shot with a pistol to no effect. At a particular location on the road, it suddenly disappears, whereupon the walker hears a faint voice whisper, "Rassie." If the walker repeats the word, the dog reappears for a few seconds and then is gone again. The dog appears only to solitary pedestrians, never to two or more people traveling together.

Before the end of the Civil War, an enslaved family occupied a brick house located on what is now the campus of old Cranberry High School. The family included a six year old boy named Rassie. Rassie heard that Lincoln had freed the slaves. He told everybody that he was going to work hard and earn enough money to buy the brick house for his daddy. Soon, however, Union troops came through the community, kidnapped Rassie, and took him away to Tennessee. No one ever heard from Rassie again. A legend developed that the black dog is the ghost of Rassie.

Source: *Avery Journal Times,* October 28, 2015, by Horton Cooper



# The Fanny Booger

A legend exists, dating to the 1800s, of a ghostly cryptid that haunts the area between Browns Chapel Road and Wilson Ridge Road in Watauga County. It is described as a cross between a dog and a panther, with the ability to shape-shift, and seen only during a full moon. It is called a fanny booger, though the origin of the name is unknown. It has appeared to people walking or on horseback or riding in horse drawn carriages. The fanny booger is an apparition, as anything thrown at it passes through it.

Source: *Watauga Democrat*, October 29, 1993

## Revolutionary War Ghost

The only occurrence of the Revolutionary War to happen in Watauga County was in 1781 when William Riddle, a Tory, came through the county with a group of captured patriots. They camped at Wolf's Den, now known as Riddle Knob. The prisoners were rescued by a raiding band of patriots. Riddle escaped, but was later caught and hung. His ghost has been seen riding on horseback in the vicinity.

## Haunted Mitchell County Courthouse

The old Mitchell County Courthouse is reported to be haunted. People have heard a disembodied voice, heard a door slam, and heard footsteps. One woman even saw an apparition. Witnesses include a judge, the sheriff, and the clerk of court.

Source: *Mitchell News Journal,* October 21, 2020



# Unexplained Happenings Near Lansing

The area near Silas Creek Baptist Church in Ashe County near Lansing has been the site of strange occurrences. In the early 1900s, a young man was walking the road near the church when he saw a black dog in his way. The dog refused to move no matter how hard he tried to shoo it away. The man shot the dog several times with a pistol he was carrying, the final time at point blank range. But it never moved. Finally, the dog walked off toward the cemetery apparently unharmed.

During World War II a soldier home on leave was walking in the area and met a fellow soldier with whom he served. Assuming that he too was on leave, they had a short conversation and parted. Soon he learned that his buddy was not home on leave, but neither was he dead. The soldier returned home and led a long life.

Source: *Outhouse Spiders & Tin Tub Baths: A Treasury of 20th Century Memories*, Bob Lasley, editor, contributed by Lowell Ward Sexton, p. 78.

# Phantom Dog of Purlear

Many years ago before automobiles were common, a man named Will Church was hauling a load of lumber pulled by mules. He was walking alongside the mules near New Hope Baptist Church in Purlear when he saw a large black dog running down the road toward him. It was acting very threatening, so Church grabbed a whip to hold it off. He noticed the eyes of the dog were deep red. But before the encounter turned violent, the dog vanished. Similar accounts of an encounter with a black dog in Purlear have been told "for several generations."

The backstory to the legend, which seems to be mere speculation, is that the dog was picked up as a pup at the Devil's Stairs in Ashe County by a Purlear resident who had delivered a load of moonshine to Lansing. It was reared to be a ferocious guard dog for a moonshine operation, and its spirit still haunts that location.

Source: *Ghosts of the Yadkin Valley*, R.G. Absher, 106-07.



Abandoned house near Silas Creek Baptist Church

## Phantom Horse Legend

About 1950, Polly Martin, who lived in Blowing Rock, was driving to Aho one night on the Blue Ridge Parkway when suddenly a bank of fog rolled in in the vicinity of Thunder Hill. She described it as the densest fog she had ever seen. She was creeping along when suddenly a white horse appeared directly in front of the car, causing her to slam on the brakes and stop. Polly said that although the horse was white, it had other colors as well (a breed known as a Paint horse). Her husband Charles, who was in the passenger seat, opened his door and saw that the car was on the edge of a precipice, and if she had not stopped, they were inches from going over the edge. She slowly turned the car the other way and they continued on to Aho. The next day they returned to the location where they stopped, but could find no tracks of a horse, and saw that the escarpment was so steep there, that a horse could not have successfully navigated down the bank without getting killed. After telling her story to people in the Aho community, several told her they had heard a legend about such a horse, and a few had even seen it.

Source: *Tales of Old Aho*, Roy Weaver, 61-63

## Horseback Rider

Finley Chester of Caldwell County told of riding a horse home when "something" (description not given) jumped on the back of the horse. The horse became unruly and Chester began swinging at whatever it was, trying to knock it off. Nothing was there, but yet he could feel it. It then jumped from his horse to the horse of his son Paul.
Source: *Outhouse Spiders & Tin Tub Baths A Treasury of 20th Century Memories*, Bob Lasley, editor, contributed by Nina Soots, p. 87

## Stolen Horse

During the Civil War, a man named Todd stole a horse in the Blue Ridge community (Aho) and headed off into the Samson area. A man named Ford took a short cut through Bentley Gap and intercepted Todd on Joe's Fork Creek. Ford shot him dead and returned the horse to its owner. Since that incident, people who pass by that location report hearing the sound of a horse coming down the road, but nothing is there.
Source: *People & Legends of Aho & Sampson*, by Roy Weaver, p. 63



## Dark Hollow Horse

The Dark Hollow area of Traphill in Wilkes County is reportedly haunted. In the 1930s, father and son Hardin and Rick Triplett were possum hunting in the hollow. They saw a light coming toward them and as it got closer, they could see that it was a white horse. The horse galloped past without making any sound or leaving hoofprints.
Source: *Ghosts & Their Haunts: The Legends & Lore of the Yadkin River Valley*, Frances Casstevens, p. 18-19

# Car Wrecks

## Paranormal Activity in Todd

Bessie Eldreth tells about a rainy night when the creek in front of her house was flowing full. She heard some activity outside and looked out to see a drowning victim being pulled from the creek by rescue workers. A few weeks later, she and her daughter were on their way back from church one night. As they crossed the creek, they heard a loud splash. They stopped and looked for the cause, but all they saw was a man standing where the drowning victim had been extracted from the creek. The man didn't move, and suddenly disappeared before their eyes.

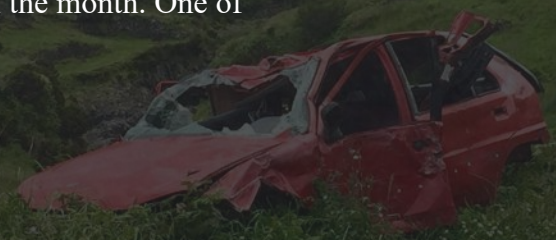
Bessie describes seeing a bright light about the size of a softball in her bedroom at night. It hovered over her bed, "and then when I turned the covers down, the light was going around under the covers." This appearance continued every night for a week, then only occasionally after that.

Source: *Watauga Democrat* October 28, 1987 by Edwin Powell

## 22nd of the Month

Ricky McGrady had rented a house in Wilkes County. Occasionally, he would hear a door slam and footsteps, but couldn't identify the source. He began to notice that it occurred only on the 22nd of each month. Finally, the owner of the house told him that about 20 years previous, a fatal car wreck happened nearby on the 22nd of the month. One of the occupants stumbled into the house, slammed the door, and died on the spot.

Source: *Wilkes Journal Patriot*, October 15, 2001, by Jule Hubbard



# Ghost Rider

In a legend that seemingly dates to the 1800s, a man was walking one night on old Hwy 90 between Collettsville and Mulberry when he heard a noise behind him, but couldn't see anything. The noise became clear enough for him to realize they were hoof beats. Feeling that he was in danger, he started running, and the hoof beats got faster too. He ran across a bridge, and turned to see a woman dressed in white on a white horse. They were on the bridge, but didn't cross all the way over. The apparition disappeared as he was looking at it.

A different source tells the following story, which is almost identical. A woman wishing to remain anonymous says that her father was walking the same route in the late 1940s when he too heard hoof beats. He also ran away from the noise, but turned around long enough to see a woman with long flowing hair on a white horse. His parents lived on the other side of the bridge and his mother was on the porch. She saw the horse and rider, and ran toward him because she felt he was in danger. The man crossed the bridge, and the apparition vanished.

Source: *Haunted Historic Happy Valley,* Leila McMichael, 183.

# Big Laurel

Big Laurel is an area on the Watauga/Ashe County boundary near Creston that had a reputation for being haunted. A few years after the Civil War, Dr, Rivers, a physician was traveling a road through the area on horseback. He came upon a fallen tree and saw on the other side a man on a horse like his own. Dr. Rivers turned his horse to go around the tree and when he got to the other side, the man was gone. Dr. Rivers died a short time later, and people speculated that the phantom portended his death. The author says, "There are several other tales of ghostly sights seen by persons traveling the road years ago but they are so much alike that it would be useless to retell them."

Source: *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore,* 678-685.



# Mysterious Lights



Addie Chester told of walking home from Cedar Rock Baptist Church in Caldwell County in 1941 with a group of other children. They lived where Cedar Rock Country Club is now. A "big ball of fire" materialized in the cemetery and came zooming down the road toward them. Their grandmother, Martha Chester, came running with a lantern, whereupon the ball of fire reversed and headed back toward the cemetery.

Source: *Outhouse Spiders & Tin Tub Baths: A Treasury of 20th Century Memories*, Bob Lasley, editor, contributed by Nina Soots, p. 87

In 1915, Abner Grogan told of seeing lights come out of Big Laurel, an area on the Watauga/Ashe County boundary near Creston, many times when someone in the community dies. He describes them as looking like candles, two or three in number, and moving randomly about. He says dozens of people have seen them.

Source: *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* 678-685

Mary Lyon Harless tells of an incident that occurred in Alleghany County at a community gathering for making molasses. While the juice was boiling at about 2:00 o'clock in the morning, the group saw a light on Bullhead Mountain. "It looked like an old fashioned bull's eye lantern being carried by hand, bobbing along with every step." The light, however, was not near the ground, but high in the air. It eventually disappeared.

The molasses-making concluded a couple of hours later. Mary and others boarded a wagon hitched to two horses and set off for home. Soon, the horses were startled for some unknown reason and started running down the road. When they reached their home, Mary and the other passengers felt something heavy lift off the back end of the wagon, at which point the horses right away calmed down.

Source: Mary Lyon Harless, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 137.



Cedar Rock Baptist Church

In 1959, Ken Price was walking home near Walnut Grove Baptist Church in the Pore's Knob community of Wilkes County. He was going up a mountain when he heard a whooshing sound and saw an illuminated form, like a wheel, rolling down the hill toward him. He dodged behind a tree to keep from being hit. In another incident at the same location in 1970 a woman named Sallie Davis was driving to work when she saw a "burning round object" hurtling toward her but somehow avoided hitting her car.

Source: *Wilkes Journal Patriot*, Jule Hubbard, "Strange Encounters on the Brushies," 10/31/24

## Ghost Wagon Train

France Blevins operated a grain mill on Helton Creek (Ashe County). After a day at the mill, he set off walking to his son's house. Upon reaching Lost Branch Road, he sat down on a log to rest. As he looked down Helton Creek, he saw a wagon train coming toward him, but it had an odd appearance. All the horses and all the wagons were white. The lead wagon stopped in front of him, and the following wagon drove inside of the first wagon. Each of the wagons in the train followed suit, rolling up and merging with the first wagon until only the first wagon was left. "Then it started shaking and disappeared into the ground."

Source: Etta Blevins Jones, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 37.

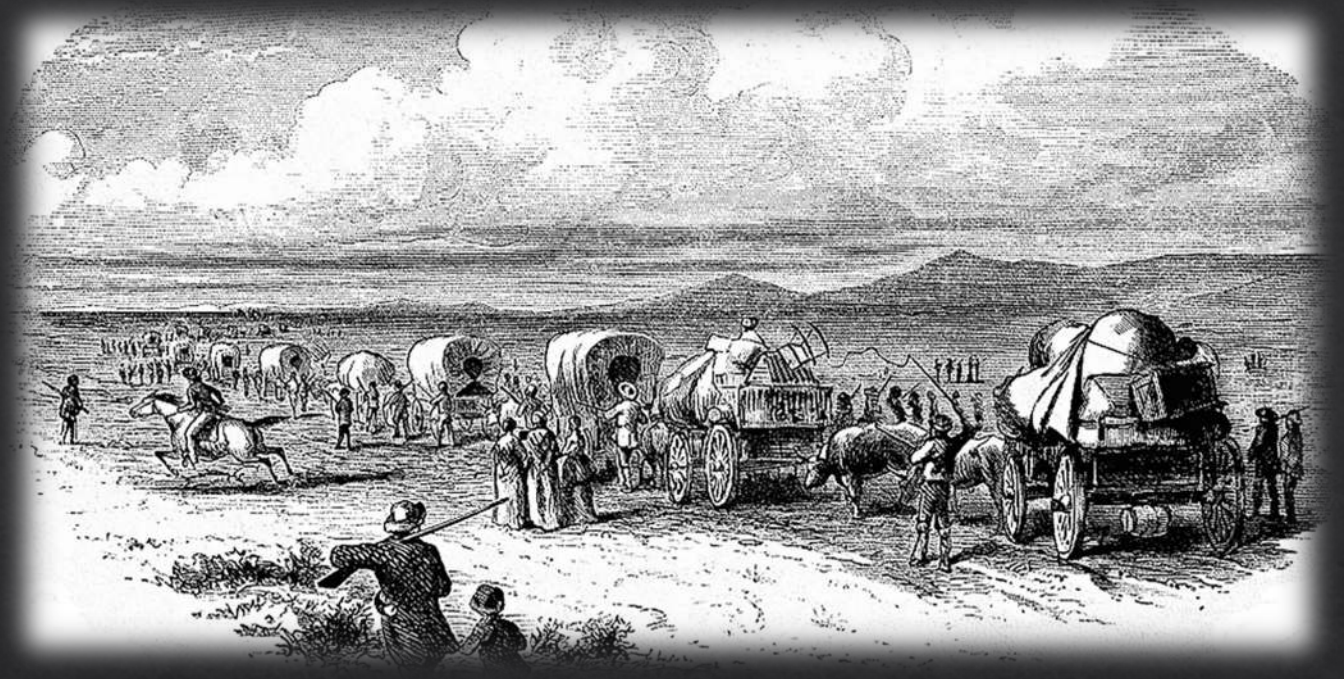
## Premonition Apparition

As a girl, the author's grandmother (unnamed) was riding on a wagon with her father on their way to a mill to have corn ground. The girl looked to her right, and saw a wagon beside them with a gray casket on it pulled by six white horses. She looked at her father and asked him if he saw that. He nodded, but made no comment. Later they heard that a family member had been shot and killed by her husband. The next morning, her body was carried away in a gray casket on a wagon pulled by six white horses. The girl's father would never talk about it nor listen when it was the topic of conversation.

Source: Linda Roten Smithey, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 119.

Ruth Sturgill (b. 1893) of Alleghany County told a ghostly story about her husband's uncle and his wife. The man had a heart condition and was setting in a rocking chair when his wife went outside to gather some firewood. On her way back to the house, she met her husband walking toward her. He rose from the ground and disappeared. When she entered the house, she found him dead.

Source: *Snowbird Gravy & Dishpan Pie, Mountain People Recall,* Patsy Moore Ginns, p. 193.



## The Mining Ridge Cryptid

In the 1920s, a man named Haynes lived in the Mining Ridge community of Wilkes County. A "horrible creature" became a regular visitor to the Haynes house. It was "animal-like in appearance and hairy [and] would come screaming and howling to a window" at night (it never appeared during the day). When it came, Mr. Haynes would order the doors and windows locked, but, in contradiction, would tell his family that it wouldn't hurt them, then he would proceed to go outside. The cryptid would grow quiet and leave. Mr. Haynes would stay outside for a long time, eventually returning in a peaceful manner. He would never answer any questions about the creature nor reveal what he did while outside. Haynes took the mystery to his grave. The cryptid returned after he died. His wife yelled that Haynes was dead and commanded it to leave. It did, and never returned.

Source: Mae Lowe Broyhill, *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 216.

# Ghostly Dancers

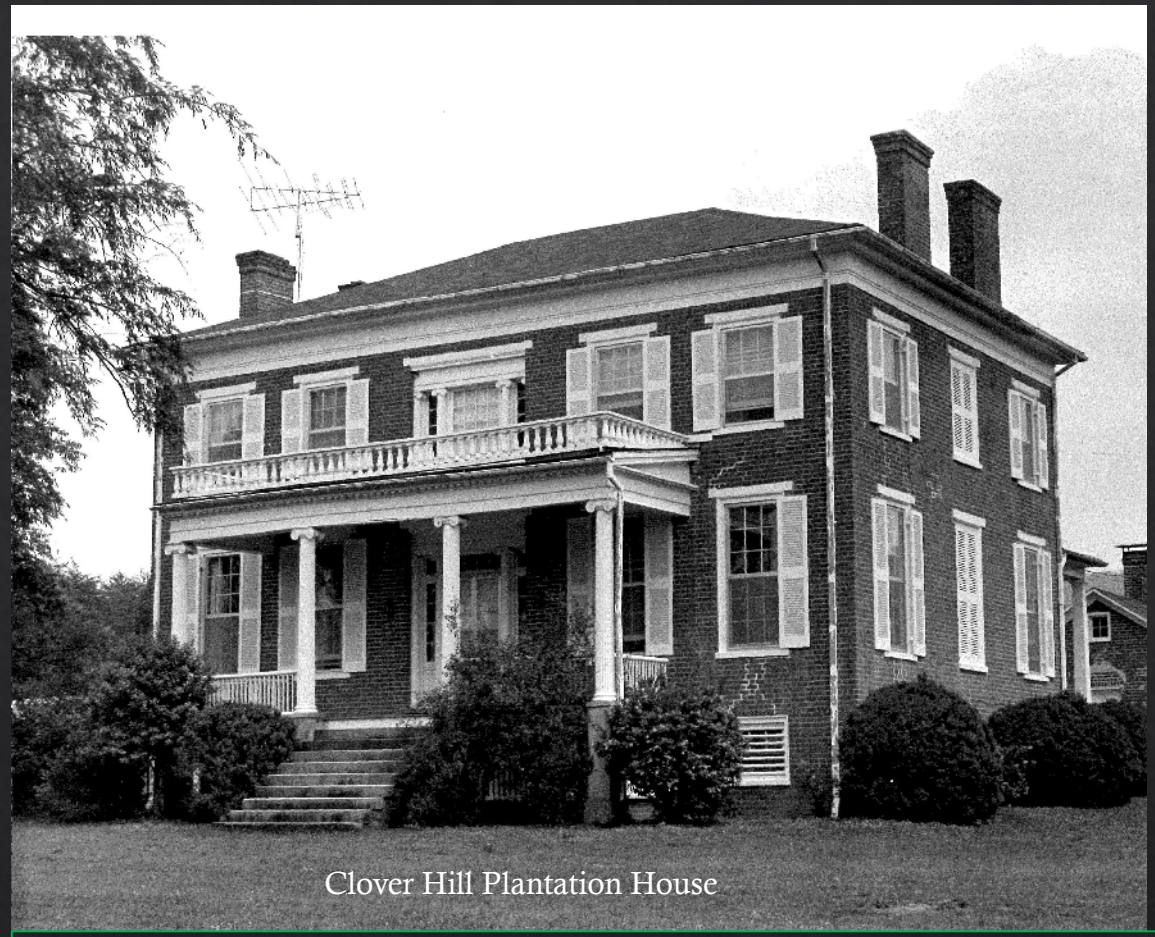
Ten-year-old Wesley Woods again saw the glow of firelight deep in the woods behind his house in Happy Valley. As before, he crept to the edge of the trees and saw dark figures rhythmically dancing. He had witnessed this phenomenon since he was five years old in 1953, and would continue to see it occasionally until he was 15. Wesley didn't see an actual fire, just what seemed like a glow from a fire. And he didn't see actual people, just shadows. He was always too afraid to plunge into the woods and get close enough to see if they were really there. There was no sound, only an apparition. His mother had told him that other people had seen the dance. This area on Pigtail Road had contained residences of slaves who worked for Revolutionary War veteran Edmund Jones and his son, Civil War veteran Colonel Edmund Walter Jones, Sr. on their nearby Clover Hill Plantation. Many were buried on that hill behind Wesley's house. Interestingly, he had also seen a similar sight in the opposite direction, on the other side of his house. But there was something different about the dancers; a different rhythm. He couldn't quite describe the difference, but he had the impression that these were Indian dancers, not African.

Source: *Haunted Historic Happy Valley*, Leila McMichael, 190-191

# Murder Revealed in a Dream

George and Kathy Feller lived on a farm in McDowell County. Kathy was almost completely disabled by asthma. One day in 1879, George appeared at a neighbor's house and said that Kathy had died. The neighbors prepared the body for burial, assuming that the cause of death was asthma. On the day of the funeral, the mourners made their way to the cemetery, which was some distance away. Before they got there, a stranger stopped the procession. He said that he had a dream the previous night that the woman in the casket had been murdered with a leather strap. After much questioning and deliberation, the decision was made to have a physician examine the body. Upon doing so, the doctor declared that Kathy had been strangled. A search of George's house produced a leather strap with strands of Kathy's hair on it. George was arrested, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged.

Source: *Haints of the Hills*, Daniel W. Barefoot, 89-91



Clover Hill Plantation House

In the Maple Springs community of Wilkes County some residents report a fog forming at dusk above an old cemetery and rolling in a ball down the hill, eventually taking the shape of a woman holding two infants. Buried in the cemetery is a young woman who died giving birth to twins, who also did not survive. A house was built on the cemetery in the late 1800s, leading to speculation that it disturbs the spirits of those buried there. Moans have been reported inside the house.



Source: *Ghosts of the Yadkin Valley*, R.G. Absher, 105.

# Strange Happenings on Rendezvous Mountain

Rendezvous Mountain, located in Wilkes County, was so named because Revolutionary War patriots gathered there in preparation for their march to Kings Mountain. In the 1930s, it was a camp for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Later, the North Carolina Forest Service established the Rendezvous Mountain State Educational Forest. Today it is a state park.

The CCC men built a cabin that is still in use by the forest service. Calvin Wheatley, a forest service employee, was staying in the cabin in the 1970s when one night he had a scary experience. He had gone to bed when suddenly he felt a ripple pass underneath him. He said, "The first thing I thought was that it was a snake…I pulled the mattress back, but nothing was there." Another employee later reported the same experience. Back in the 1930s, one of the CCC men was bitten in the face by a poisonous snake near the cabin when he was on his knees drinking from a spring. Is there some relationship between the two incidents?

A fire tower is located on the property, but it is no longer used. Wheatley and Aleck Hurt, director of the forest, often felt a mysterious presence in the vicinity. Both have seen what appears to be a person at the top of the tower. Wheatley said, "Aleck mentioned it to me first and I felt a chill when he said it because I had experienced it. It gives me a chill just to talk about it now." Some people below the mountain have told the rangers that they've seen a light in the tower, but there's no electricity there.

A rather common occurrence experienced by several rangers is hearing what sounds like a visitor arriving at the visitor's center, but no one is there. They report hearing the sound of a car door closing, footsteps in the gravel parking lot and on the deck, and the visitor center door opening. Bill Swartley, a supervisor in Raleigh, "scoffed at stories about unexplained sounds" until he heard them himself while visiting the site.

Sources: *Wilkes Journal-Patriot* by Jule Hubbard, October 29, 2008 and October 26, 2016.







Clockwise: fire tower, visitor center, CCC cabin

## Ghost of Deep Ford Road

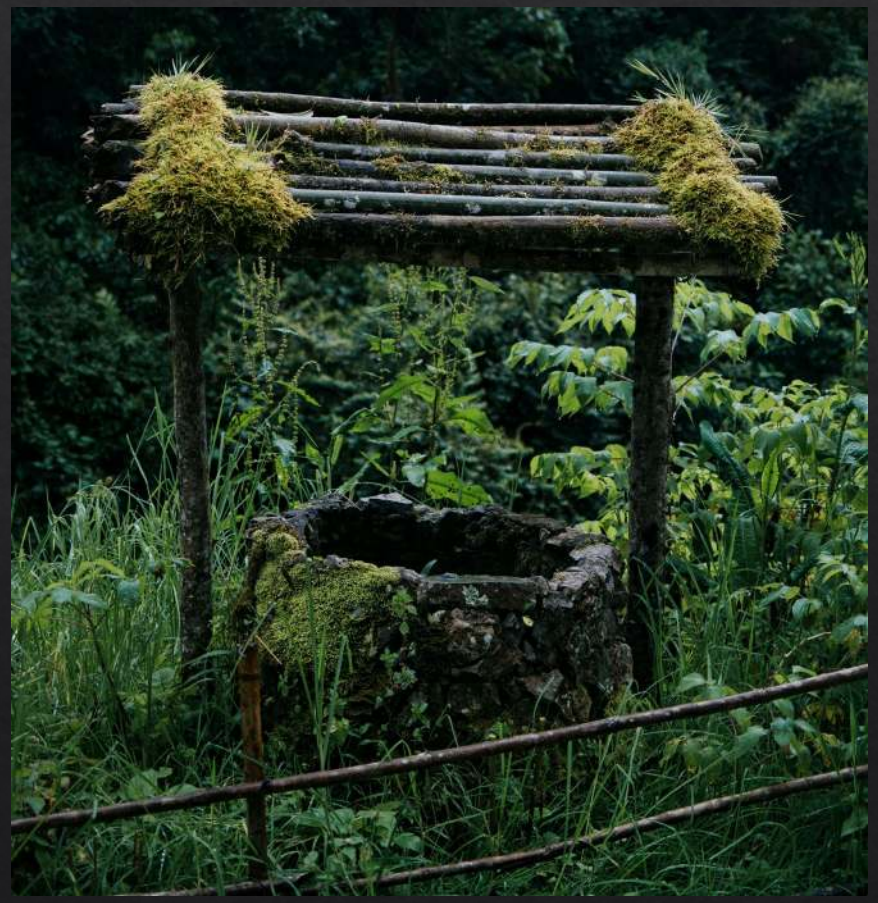
A ghost was seen frequently on Deep Ford Road in Ashe County between the 1920s and the 1950s. In the early 1940s, Orville Powers and Robert Hoosier were walking along the road one night when they saw a woman in white coming toward them. She passed between them, floating about six inches off the ground. In 1950, Robert Ham was driving the road when he saw the woman, who appeared to be in her 20s, walking along the road. She passed in front of his car and floated to a nearby creek, where she disappeared.

https://www.newrivernotes.com

## The Writing on the Wall

Around 1920 in Wilkes County, a couple moved into an old farmhouse where the previous owner had recently died. They began to hear mysterious noises that sounded like someone writing on a chalkboard. They left out a pen and paper for the spirit to write on, but to no effect. Then they had the idea to sprinkle flour on a wall. The next morning, there were letters in the flour that read, "Look in the well." The couple convinced a boy to allow himself to be lowered into the well. He discovered bones, which were later determined to be that of a woman. After questioning the neighbors, the couple found that the neighbors were unsure about the circumstances of the owner's wife's death. They said they had been told she was away, and no one knew for sure when she died. The bones were buried in a cemetery next to her husband. The incident remains a mystery, but the new owners never heard the noises again.

Source: *Ghosts and their Haunts: The Legends & Lore of the Yadkin River Valley*, by Frances H. Casstevens, 13-14.



Finley Chester's brother John was killed in a logging accident in 1939. After the accident but before Finley and his son Paul made it home to tell the family, Finley's wife Martha heard footsteps move across the porch and a knock on the door. She opened it, but no one was there. This happened several times that evening before she learned of John's death. After the funeral, Finley, Paul, and John's sons returned to work. They were "haunted at the campsite at night" (no details given). John's sons became so frightened that they quit their jobs and never went back to the logging site.

Source: *Outhouse Spiders & Tin Tub Baths: A Treasury of 20th Century Memories, Bob Lasley, editor* contributed by Nina Soots, p. 87

In the early 19th century, a farmer was driving his mule-drawn wagon on a bridge over a flood-stage creek at the base of Nettle Knob in Ashe County. He got too close to the edge, and the wagon flipped over into the water, pinning the man under it and holding the mule under water. They both drowned. Since then, the sound of a rolling wagon has been heard in the vicinity, while some people have reported seeing the specter of the farmer, wagon, and mule.

Source: *Mountain Times*, May 21, 2000, by Scott Nicholson

The old Wilkes County jailhouse is supposedly haunted, specifically by the ghosts of Tom Dula and Ann Melton, former inmates. Footsteps, voices, and rattling chains have been heard. According to Doc Watson's grandmother, who was acquainted with the Meltons, Ann Melton died a tortuous death, hallucinating about fire around her bed and cats crawling over her. Although never proven, she was widely suspected of having a hand in Laura Foster's death.

Source: *Haunted Historic Happy Valley*, Leila McMichael

Cheryl Williams reports living in a house in Jefferson as a child "that gave me the creeps." She was standing in front of a mirror when she saw reflected in the mirror a woman standing behind her. The woman wore black and was "old, wrinkled, stooped, with long scraggly black hair. She had an evil presence about her." Cheryl whirled around, but there was no one behind her.

Source: *Blue Ridge Tales*, Karen O'C. Garvey, editor, 72.

## An Angel Changes His Life

In the late 1800s, a young man named Lee Summerlin in Wilkes County had a reputation for being rowdy. One day he made plans to attend a corn shucking, where there would be plenty of whiskey and a boisterous crowd. His mother tried to talk him out of going, but he refused. She gave up and said, “I do hope that as you pass by that cemetery that something just rises right up and gets you!” He agreed, however, not to drink any whiskey.

The event was over about midnight, and he headed home on horseback. Upon reaching the cemetery, he saw something rise over the graves. He said, “It was the most beautiful angel that you could ever imagine. It was prettier than anything I have ever seen in a picture book.” The angel floated over to him and walked beside him. The horse seemed unaware that anything was there. He said, “I wasn’t exactly frightened. It was just a feeling of awe I had.”
The incident changed his life. He no longer felt the urge to hang out with a rowdy crowd.

Source: *Snowbird Gravy and Dishpan Pie: Mountain People Recall,* Patsy Moore Ginns, as told by Marie McNeil Hendrix, 195-96.

## Time Slip at Benton Hall

Benton Hall, an old school in North Wilkesboro, is now used for play performances. One of the plays that used to be performed there was the story of Tom Dooley. In 2002, after one of the rehearsals, the actors took turns recreating the hanging scene. An actor would put on a safety harness under their clothing, along with the noose around their neck, and when the trapdoor was dropped, the actor would hang by the safety harness, though appearing to be hung by the neck. A woman named Heather Osborne was one of those who volunteered for the experience. Her description of what happened appears to be a time slip. When the rope was lowered around her neck, she felt that she “was outdoors and could feel the wind and rays of sunshine. She could hear crowd noise and felt people push her as if a mob was rushing her toward the gallows. She remembered hearing a man’s voice: ”Do you have any last words?” The trapdoor was released and the sequence seemed to suddenly be in slow motion. Then all went black for a brief instant.” It was like she was in Tom Dula’s body. When the fake hanging was over, the other actors could tell something was wrong with her. While she was physically fine, the experience was mentally frightening.

Source: *Ghosts of the Yadkin Valley,* R.G. Absher

