



Dedication:

For Emilie, my "go-to" girl for all things scary. And for Dana and Tonya, who tell such frightfully fun tales. (Oinkpew!)

A special thank you to everyone who willingly shared their ghost stories and who allowed me to put their tales into this collection. I appreciate your time and patience. I would also like to thank the many people who gave me guidance and pointed me in the right direction during the process of researching this book.

In some instances, names and locations have been changed at the request of sources.

Content Warning: This book contains several references to suicide and may not be appropriate for all audiences.

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Ghostly Tales of Michigan

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Ryan Jacobson



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Preface

This chilling collection was put together through countless hours of research, interviews, and fact-checking. It includes many of Michigan's most famous haunts, some of the state's more obscure ghost stories, and even a few terrifying tales that have never before been recorded.

The narratives were written using the information gathered, but some of the details were provided to me as checklists of unexplainable occurrences rather than *Ghostly Tales*. Therefore, while the information remains accurate, some of the scenarios (and characters) were reinterpreted for dramatic effect.

I can neither verify the validity of each claim nor the existence of supernatural beings, but I can assure you that the portrayals of the spirits in this book are as accurate as possible.

Enjoy!



Poltergeist

When Victor Lincoln discovered his home's (usually locked) front door hanging wide open, he knew he'd find trouble inside. He stepped into the house, and his fears were confirmed: His family's Jackson, Michigan, house had been broken into and vandalized. Garbage, as well as food from the refrigerator, had been thrown about. Furniture was pushed around and flipped over. Light bulbs were smashed, and the water faucets in the kitchen and in the bathroom were running.

Standing behind Victor, his wife shook her head. "Why are they doing this to us? Even those new double locks won't keep them out!"

"I'll go and call the police again," Victor said, sounding defeated. "Not that it'll do any good."

And so it went for two full years. The Lincolns endured break-in after break-in. Nothing could keep the intruders out of their home, and no one could guess who might be targeting them—or why.

But then, in October of 1961, the family discovered a startling truth: The vandal wasn't a "who." It was a "what!"

"Victor," Mrs. Lincoln screamed. "Victor, come quickly. Please hurry!"

Responding to his wife's frantic cries, Victor raced into the kitchen. He arrived just in time to see a stack of dishes fly out of the cupboard and smash against the wall, one by one, shattering on impact.

Footsteps in the Basement

Thump.

Thump.

Thump.

Twenty-two-year-old John Lincoln looked up from his book and toward his mother. "Do you hear that?" he asked.

Mrs. Lincoln, sitting on a living room chair across from her son, nodded. "It sounds like someone's coming up the basement stairs."

They turned to look at the door, waiting in dreadful anticipation as the footfalls grew louder. At the top step, the noise ceased for a moment. It was soon followed by a thunderous *knock!*

John and his mother jumped out of their seats. Victor, who had heard the commotion from the next room, rushed past his family members with his shotgun in hand. He grabbed the door and flung it open; no one was standing behind it.

Victor cautiously led his dog downstairs, but his search for an intruder came up empty. The dog, however, seemed to find something. The Lincolns' pet began to whimper softly, and then it darted back up the steps. Following that frightful encounter, the Lincolns decided it was time to move out.

First Blood

In the weeks that followed, things went from bad to worse. While the house sat for sale, the spirit became more terrifying. Moaning sounds were heard in the basement. Phantom footsteps patrolled the premises. Books were moved and piled in various locations. And, in one instance, Mrs. Lincoln was attacked.

She was completely alone, lying on the living room couch, enjoying a rare moment of peace and quiet. *This is the life*, she thought.

Suddenly, out of the corner of her eye, Mrs. Lincoln noticed a blur of motion. She spied an object flying toward her. Before she could even flinch, a paring knife grazed her leg. As blood slowly formed atop her fresh scrape, the frightened woman mentally noted—with certainty—that the knife had been safely stowed in a kitchen drawer.

Not long thereafter, the holidays arrived. However, the ghost did not welcome the festivities. Two days after the Christmas tree was up and decorated in their living room, the Lincolns watched in horror as lights, ornaments, and tinsel were thrown across the room by an invisible force.

"That's it!" exclaimed Mrs. Lincoln. "We're taking this tree down!"

More Witnesses

Word began to spread about the strange happenings within the haunted home, and the Lincolns found themselves with several visitors—each wanting to experience the poltergeist firsthand.

Mr. and Mrs. Gingras, friends of the family, witnessed the home's gas and water inexplicably turning on. The Gingrases also heard a guest outside walking onto the porch and up to the house's front door. When no one knocked or rang the doorbell, the couple peeked through a window and found that not only was no one standing at the door—there were no footprints in the snow either.

Jackson County Police Officer Harry Kellar visited the house as a skeptic. But he, too, was present when the gas and water turned on by themselves.

Investigative reporter Raymond Meagher studied the home most extensively, spending 10 hours (over three separate trips) inside the place. Along with four other investigators, Meagher remained in the living room with the entire Lincoln family, waiting for something peculiar to occur.

It took a while, but eventually the bathroom water and the gas seemed to activate automatically, while everyone present was in the living room. The group moved through the house to get a closer look, when they heard the sound of glass shattering.

"It seems that a small bottle was thrown against this closet door," said one of the men. "There are shards of glass everywhere."

Suddenly, as the team examined the strange scene, all of the lights turned off!

Despite these bizarre incidents, the investigation yielded no conclusive evidence of a haunting, as each event could have been attributed (however unlikely) to an elaborate hoax.

Moving Out

At last, in the summer of 1962, the Lincoln family sold the house and moved away. By all accounts, the ghostly disturbances ceased as soon as the Lincolns were gone.

The home had been in the Lincoln family for several generations, dating back to 1912. This, coupled with the fact that the haunting grew most intense after the Lincolns decided to move, led some to speculate that the family was terrorized by a deceased relative who was protesting the sale of the property.



Scary Sleepovers

oanie Ferrell was not a psychic. She did not earn a living as a fortune teller or as a paranormal investigator. In 2006, she was a "typical" working mom and a proud new grandmother in her late forties. However, there was something special about Joanie that she kept a well-guarded secret: She saw ghosts from time to time. When her father had died nearly 30 years earlier, Joanie's "inner eye" had been awakened. Thus, she could perceive spirits attached to particular places and objects. But none of the specters were more disturbing than the one she encountered while visiting her grandchild, Joseph, and his parents, Ron and Lucy, in Flint.

Like most other grandparents, Joanie lived for her time shared with Joseph. She took an unpaid day off work every week, driving 40 minutes from her home to provide childcare for the beloved little boy.

Not surprisingly, winter brought forecasts of severe weather. The night before a predicted blizzard, Joanie packed a bag and drove to Flint ahead of the storm, rather than passing up a day with Joseph (and leaving her daughter in a daycare pinch).

"We don't have a spare bed," Lucy warned her mother. "But Ron can sleep on the couch, and you can sleep in bed with me."

"Don't be ridiculous," Joanie protested. "I'll be just fine on the couch."

And so it was decided. When Joanie arrived shortly before bedtime, the old plaid couch was made up for her. A brief conversation and a few "goodnights" later, Joanie was alone in the living room, nodding off to sleep.

The middle of the night brought a disturbing vision. It was almost like a bad dream—except Joanie was awake (and after 30 years of seeing ghosts, she could easily distinguish a dream from a vision).

She was visited by the spirit of an elderly woman. The ghost appeared as little more than skin and bones. Her white robe was stained and soiled. Her long, gray hair was matted and unkempt.

Joanie immediately understood that the specter had some connection to the couch. Before the elderly woman passed away, she had been placed upon it, and she had been neglected—abandoned by those who were supposed to care for her. She had died a miserable death.

Now, the old woman's soul was angry. She wanted to exact her revenge!

The spirit moved forward, threateningly. Joanie leapt off the couch, but as soon as she did so, the supernatural visitor vanished.

Joanie spent the rest of the night on the floor.

When morning came, she asked her daughter, "Can you remind me where you got that couch?"

"Ron picked it up at a garage sale last summer," said Lucy. "It's not very comfortable, is it?"

Joanie agreed, but she said nothing about her ghostly encounter. She didn't want to alarm her daughter, since she sensed that the ghost—while angry—was harmless.

A few weeks later, Joanie once again found herself spending the night. She decided to give the couch another try, but this time the ghost didn't wait. Even before Joanie fell asleep, the old woman appeared. Joanie could almost taste the woman's hatred and grew certain that the ghost would have attacked if she were able. The end result was another night on the floor.

Joanie never tried sleeping on that couch again. She also kept the ghost a secret from Ron and Lucy, until the following summer when the couch was discarded for a newer, more comfortable piece of furniture.

Upon hearing Joanie's account, Ron was able to recall the neighborhood—but not the exact house—where he had purchased the haunted sofa, although he believed it would not have mattered. He remembered that it had been a very large, multifamily sale.

As for Joanie, she found her sleepovers much more relaxing once the old couch was gone. She did not see the woman's ghost again. Yet she couldn't help but wonder if the sofa—and its angry spirit—ever found its way into another unsuspecting home.



The Lifesaving Specter

ora and Daniel Shopwell were weary from their farming struggles. They were eager for a fresh start. Fortunately, Cora's parents, Delilah and George Hepner, offered just such an opportunity.

"There's an empty lot across the street from us," Cora's mother explained. "The house that used to stand there burned to the ground years ago. Why don't you come live here, and we'll help you get back on your feet?"

Thus, it was decided. In 1903, the young couple moved to the small village of Lake Odessa. Daniel built their new house atop the stone foundation that stood near Tupper Lake Street and Sixth Avenue.

It seemed like a dream come true for the Shopwells. They had a beautiful place of their own, close to family. Their new life was set to begin. Unfortunately, the happy plans were derailed by an unexpected presence.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

"Who would be visiting at this hour?" Cora asked, about to lie down for the night.

Daniel shrugged. His only guess was Cora's parents. Knock! Knock! Knock!

The pounding grew louder, sounding more urgent. Daniel leapt out of bed and hurried to the front door.

When he flung it open, he found no one there.

"Who was it?" asked Cora, as Daniel returned to the bedroom.

Her husband shrugged again. "No one, I guess."

Suddenly, behind him, Daniel heard the creak of the front door being opened. It was instantly followed by a loud slam that seemed to shake the entire house.

For a second time, Daniel raced out of the bedroom. And once again, he found no one inside (or outside) the house. The instance was one of several curious happenings.

Loud banging noises seemed to emanate from all corners of the home. Windows and doors were frequently rattled by unexplained knocks. Even the sitting room's wood-burning stove acted peculiarly. Its door would swing open and closed, as if an invisible force were checking it. And perhaps strangest of all, the Shopwells sometimes heard a heavy ball rolling across their porch—a ball that could never be found.

Late one night, while Daniel was sitting in the living room, his chair suddenly lifted off the ground. It levitated for several seconds before falling back to the floor.

For the Shopwells, that was the last straw. They sold the property and moved back to their old farm.

A short time later, Anna and Gottlieb Kussmaul moved into the old Shopwell house with their only child, Hattie. The couple were hardworking, enthusiastic, first-generation Americans with a solid reputation within the community. However, the haunted home had plenty of tricks in store for them too.

At first, the Kussmauls believed all of the knocking, slamming doors and other strange noises were the work of their mischievous daughter. However, that opinion changed when, one day, Hattie ran to a neighbor's house. She was in a hysterical fright.

"I saw a ghost," she cried. "He was in our bathroom. He was shining his boots!" When the child calmed down, she described the scene in further detail. "I could see right through him," Hattie noted. "That's how I knew he was a real ghost."

A subsequent search of the house yielded no evidence that anyone else had been there. But Hattie's conviction, coupled with all of the other strange phenomena, led the girl's parents to believe her.

A few weeks later, neighbors claimed to hear two men violently fighting inside the house. It was such a disturbing ruckus that they contacted the police.

"We can hear them hitting and grunting," said one of the neighbors. "It sounds like they're pounding each other against the floor."

Another search of the home also came up empty. The cause of the noises was never determined.

Eventually, the Kussmauls learned to live with their ghostly guest. The family grew accustomed to the strange sounds and peculiar incidents within the home. The spirit seemed harmless. In fact, it turned out to be quite helpful. Late one night, Anna bolted upright in bed. She stared, aghast, as the ghost of a man appeared beside her. The gray specter gestured toward Anna's husband.

In that instant, Anna realized something was wrong with Gottlieb. "Wake up!" she shouted, shaking him.

Her husband did not stir.

"Gottlieb!" she screamed, slapping his face. Still, he did not respond.

Unable to rouse him, Anna did the only thing she could: she summoned medical help.

The woman later learned that Gottlieb had a seizure during the night. Fortunately, the doctor arrived in time to revive him. The ghost had likely saved Gottlieb's life.

As stories of this lifesaving specter got out, the Kussmauls became the subject of many interviews and much media exposure. It led some experts to trace the spirit back to a wealthy man who had once lived on the property. Rumors circulated that he was robbed and then murdered in his home, which was later torched to destroy evidence of the crime.

Regardless of whether this last report is true, those who knew of the old place certainly believed it to be haunted. The house has since been torn down, and no spirits have been reported in the building that replaced it.

Ghost Town

ubbed Sheldrake by early French settlers in the 1800s, the lumbering community housed more than 1,000 residents. Sheldrake thrived for nearly 40 years, but the land seemed cursed. One fire after another destroyed the town, and, at last, in the mid-1920s, the remaining population moved 4 miles south to a new village, called Paradise. They left behind a vacant town on the northeastern coast of the Upper Peninsula—one that truly seems to live up to the term "ghost town."

"That land is haunted," said Regan Petersen's uncle, as their boat skirted the Lake Superior shoreline on its way to Sault Ste. Marie. He gestured toward a cluster of old and abandoned shacks and buildings.

"Cool," said Regan's kid brother. "Can we go there?" Uncle Bob shook his head. "Nope. It's private property, off-limits."

"What makes you think it's haunted?" asked Regan.

Her uncle laughed. "People have been talking about that place for 100 years. Just about every roof you can see—and more—has a ghost living under it."

"What do you mean by that?" said Regan.

"Well, first, there's the old Hopkins House. It's most famous for a couple who was staying there and saw a ghost walk right through their bedroom. Then there's the Palmer House. I believe that one has lights turning on and off at all hours of the day and night—even though it's completely empty."

"You're making this up," Regan protested.

"No, I'm not," replied her uncle. "And those are just for starters. There's also the Smith House, which is haunted by the ghost of an old logger. The Strobel house is visited by the spirit of a teacher. And the Biehl house is said to be known for the ghost of a beautiful woman."

"Hey, look," exclaimed Regan's brother. "There's somebody over there!"

The passengers glanced toward a dock that jutted into the Great Lake. An old sea captain stood, wearing a cape and smoking a pipe.

The three relatives waved to him, and the captain lifted his arm to wave back. But as he did so, his image slowly faded away. He vanished before the passengers' very eyes!

Uncle Bob turned toward his stunned niece. He smiled triumphantly. "See? I told you so."

Bewitched Blaze

t was known as the Battenfield House, and residents of Fife Lake—a popular tourist spot southeast of LGrand Traverse Bay—knew its story well.

"The home once belonged to a notorious murderer," said an elderly townsman, eager to share his bizarre tale. "A disturbed woman who craved attention, she poisoned her family over the course of several years, reveling in the sympathy and affection that she received after each death. Many of her victims were relatives living in different places, but two of the deceased were immediate family, and their deaths occurred inside the Battenfield House-which now harbors a ghostly guest."

He hesitated, looking into the eyes of each of the seven tourists, ensuring that he had their undivided attention. Feeling certain that he did, the man continued.

"I've been inside the Battenfield House once—and only once," the old storyteller admitted. "I crept in there alone on a dare, and I saw the strangest sight I've ever laid my eyes upon."

He paused, and his audience collectively leaned forward in dreadful anticipation.

"I was sneaking upstairs when it happened. My friends were outside, and I was supposed to wave at them from a second-level window. It seemed easy enough, but I never thought . . ." The man stopped, acting as if the burden of sharing this strange story was too great.

"What?" exclaimed an attentive young man of about 20, whose excitement got the better of him.

The elderly townsman chuckled softly. He took a deep breath and pressed onward. "Well, like I said, I was on my way upstairs. Suddenly, the newel post in front of me burst into flame! My gut told me to get out of there as fast as I could. But I figured—even though I hadn't started the fire— if the house burned down, I'd be in a heap of trouble."

"What did you do?" a second listener asked.

"The flame wasn't too big, so I thought I could manage it. I pulled off my shirt and tried to smother it. I expected to end up with a bit of a burn on my hands too. But that fire, it didn't have any heat. And when that blaze went out—by itself, mind you—it didn't leave any burn marks. None at all. Not on my hands and not on my shirt."

His audience stared at the old man. Their expressions suggested they weren't sure whether or not to believe him.

"How is that possible?" someone asked.

"I don't know. I didn't stick around to see. I ran out of that house as fast as my legs would carry me, and I never looked back."

Supernatural Sightings

hosts were the last thing on the Reinke family's mind when they moved into their new home in the small, central-Michigan town of Harrison. They never could've guessed that they had taken residence in one of the state's most haunted houses.

Mrs. Reinke had just returned from the grocery store. She was filling the cupboards with food when she turned around—and gasped.

"What are you doing here?" she exclaimed, staring at the unfamiliar twin girls who stood before her. They must have been less than 6 years old.

Mrs. Reinke paused to ponder the strange scene, trying to imagine who the children were and how they came to be inside her home.

Suddenly, they started toward her, their hands clasped together as if playing a game of Red Rover.

Instinctively, Mrs. Reinke took a step back, but there was no room to maneuver. Before she fully realized what was happening, the girls were upon her. An instant later, they were behind her. The children had passed right *through* her!

A terrible chill swept over Mrs. Reinke. Her entire body shuddered as she spun around. The twins disappeared through the wall and into the backyard. Mrs. Reinke raced to the window, but the children had vanished.

In another instance, her husband was behind their home, tying his boat to the dock on Budd Lake. Finishing his task, he stood and turned toward the house. A blur of motion caught his eye in the upstairs bedroom window.

"What in the world?" Mr. Reinke muttered.

Standing in the room, looking down at him, was the ghostly figure of a large, heavyset man.

Mr. Reinke raced into the house and up to his bedroom. He burst inside. But as he looked around, no one could be found. Fearing that he had imagined the entire episode, he decided not to tell a soul.

A few nights later, one of the Reinkes' children, their daughter, was awakened by a strange light coming from within her closet. The scared young girl shrieked. She buried her head under the covers.

Hoping the light was gone, she slowly lowered her blanket. What she saw next was far worse than a spooky light. The frightful specter of a large, heavyset man was standing at the foot of her bed.

"Mom! Dad!" she screamed, trembling and crying.

Her parents rushed to her bedroom, but by the time they arrived, the spirit was gone.

When Mr. Reinke heard the description of what his daughter had seen, he realized that it matched his own

ghostly sighting. He later confided in his wife about his strange encounter.

The resident ghost, however, did not seem content just appearing to household members. The next day, when the Reinkes' daughter returned home from playing, she made a startling discovery.

"My room!" the girl screamed. "What happened to my room?"

She stood frozen in place, staring bewilderedly at her belongings. They had been emptied from her closet and scattered across the bedroom floor.

The Reinkes' son also had an encounter with the spirit. One evening, while playing in his bedroom, he heard a disturbing noise in the attic above. The sound could only be described as a bouncing rubber ball.

Its incessant *thump*, *thump*, *thump* annoyed the boy, and at last, he'd heard enough.

"Stop!" he hollered upward.

It worked. The sound came to an abrupt end.

Paranormal activity in the home slowed after that. The encounters were fewer and much less intense. The family eventually grew accustomed to their ghost. However, for friends and relatives, the Reinke house remained a frightful place to visit.

Bedeviled Businesses & Public Places



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About the Author



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Embrace Your Fears with Michigan's Spookiest Stories

A heroic specter saves a dying man's life. An April Fool's joke reveals the presence of a dog-like monster. One place, so haunted that it's been featured on national television. Michigan is among the most haunted states in America, and this collection of stories presents the creepiest, most surprising of them all.

Horror fans and history buffs will delight in 27 chilling tales about haunted locations. They're based on reportedly true accounts, proving that Michigan is the setting for some of the most compelling ghostly tales ever told. The short stories are ideal for quick reading, and they're sure to captivate anyone who enjoys a good scare. Share them with friends around a campfire, or try them alone—if you dare!



For more from the Hauntings, Horrors & Scary Ghost Stories series, read *Monsters of the Midwest*.



