

THE WORLD'S MOST HAUNTED HOUSE: THE TRUE STORY OF THE BRIDGEPORT POLTER-GEIST ON LINDLEY STREET by William J. Hall. Pompton Plains, NJ: New Page Books, a Division of Career Press, 2014. Pp. 251. \$15.99 (paperback). ISBN 978-1601633378.

Every year, especially since the advent of the paranormal-focused TV shows, a small number of books are published centering on a single case of haunting or ghostly attack. Most are written (or cowritten) by one of the people experiencing the ostensibly paranormal activity. Some few are written by someone investigating the situation. Rarely are they of cases where there are a range of witnesses in and out of the family (or investigative team), and even more rarely are they of cases investigated even partially by someone within our field. Hall's retelling of the Bridgeport poltergeist case is relatively unique in the spread of haunting books available today.

The case of the Goodin family of Bridgeport, Connecticut took place over several weeks in late 1974. Jerry (Gerald) Goodin, his wife Laura, and adopted daughter Marcia were beset by extensive movement and breakage of seemingly everything in their home that wasn't tied down. The case got considerable publicity at the time and attracted investigators—many of whom became eye-witnesses—from the local police and fire department as well as from Ed and Lorraine Warren. Eventually Boyce Batey of the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship, and Keith Harary and Jerry Solfvin, who at the time were with the Psychical Research Foundation, visited the home.

Writing about a case that's decades old in an accurate way is difficult to say the least. The author pieced together the happenings at the house on Lindley Street through recordings provided by Batey of many interviews of eye-witnesses conducted in 1974 and 1975 including tapes of interviews recorded at the Bridgeport Police Department, as well as more recent interviews conducted by (the reader assumes) the author in 2013 and 2014. Additionally, documentation, such as newspaper accounts and documents referenced as being included with the recordings, was consulted.

The story begins with some background on the Goodins, including their struggles with a son with cerebral palsy who passed away early in life in 1967, and their adoption of a little girl named Marcia in 1968. As a result of an apparently overprotective mother (Laura) who was used to taking care of their late son's every needs, Marcia was beset with social problems in school and lacked friends. Additional issues arose because Marcia, a full blooded Seneca, was beset by bullying at school, which culminated in a physical attack on her by a fellow student. This led to her having to wear a back brace and to leaving school in favor of home schooling by a tutor in October, 1974.

Although the activity that is the main focus of the book took place in late 1974, the author reports

that occasional inexplicable physical movement of objects took place as early as 1968 shortly after 4-year-old Marcia was adopted.

The Goodins first reported activity to the local police in 1972. They reported rhythmic pounding noises that they'd been hearing since November 1971 and that continued on and off into November of 1974. They also began experiencing other phenomena, including seeing a disembodied hand and doors opening and closing on their own, and finding chairs moved from previous locations.

The night of November 22, 1974 marked the start of several days of intense physical activity. The observed activity included large pieces of furniture, including chairs, moving about wildly and even leaving the floor, knickknacks and wall hangings coming down and smashing, the TV moving on its own, and more. Policemen called to the home witnessed the refrigerator moving and even floating above the floor.

Police and fire fighters investigated and witnessed events. A local priest was called, and others including the Warrens came in and observed the intense activity. Unfortunately for the Goodins, the press was alerted and hundreds of people began visiting the home in hopes of catching the activity. The apparent psychic phenomena continued past that weekend, with the Goodin family reaching their wits' end. The activity continued unabated through the end of December, 1974.

As mentioned above, Boyce Batey, Jerry Solfvin, and Keith Harary also became involved in the case in December, 1974. Hall provides basic background of the investigation, discusses whether Marcia was the poltergeist agent, and includes a lengthy transcript of a meeting between Batey, Laura and Jerry Goodin, and Father William Charbonneau. From the conversation, it became clear that Laura had some major resistance to even considering that she was possibly affecting Marcia's development by being over-protective.

Hall gives some idea of what happened with the family after the activity halted, including attempts to sell the home. He goes further in describing what went on with Jerry and Laura Goodin, and he attempted to track down Marcia, even going so far as to hire a private investigation service, to no avail.

Hall includes two chapters of quoted testimony and recollections from numerous individuals. The second of these includes a tantalizing statement that there were "three additional homes that experienced incidents as a result of the Goodins' poltergeist activity" (p. 198). Another chapter, by Boyce Batey, provides reflections on preliminary findings of the investigative team. Batey's perspective is one of RSPK, although it's unclear whether the "preliminary evaluation" was written at or shortly after the actual investigation, or more recently.

Also included is a chapter entitled "Other Theories," with speculation as to what was going on. It includes comments by Father Charbonneau, Paul Eno, Jerry Solfvin, and the late Ed Warren. Eno, at the time of the case a student for the priesthood who had worked with the Warrens, provided his speculations looking back from 2014, which are further afield than those of Warren and Father Charbonneau.

Eno's perspective has to do with the theory of the multiverse and entities he calls "parasites." He claims that his experience "in the trenches" of looking at a variety of experiences of the unexplained led him to be convinced that it's the overlap of worlds and dimensions of the multiverse that account for everything from ghosts to UFOs to cryptids. He then goes on to point to the parasites as responsible for much of the activity, although the movements we would label psychokinesis he explains as "the result of cross-world interaction that disrupts the physical laws we know" (p. 176). Solfvin provides a much, sometimes needed, question, raising the issue of why we can't simply take something unexplained as just that: "unexplained phenomena" (p. 178).

Also included in the book are police reports, a log of individual incidents, and copies of the actual data sheets with the floor plan and indicated incidents. A final appendix provides references to press coverage of the case.

Hall states that he started out with an opinion that the case was most likely a hoax, and after investigating the case, going through the recorded testimony of so many credible witnesses and other evidence, and piecing together the timeline and activity, he states, "I have a belief. I now realize it really happened" (p. 202).

So what is one supposed to make of this book and the case it covers?

Over the 35 years of my own field investigations, I've been witness to the aftermath of incidents in poltergeist cases, as well as actual object movements by ostensible apparitions and RSPK cases. None have been as intensely physically disruptive as the Goodins' case, nor had as many witnesses to unexplained physical activity. Finding a case in the literature with the same degree of both would be a task I'm not sure would have a positive result.

Though certainly more violent and chaotic than the vast majority of reported poltergeist cases, this case does generally seem to follow the general description of RSPK cases. This includes Marcia faking some activity, claiming later she was trying to get the attention off the family. However, there are some glaringly different elements, especially if Marcia is identified as the agent.

First, considering that the initial activity happened in 1968 shortly after Marcia was adopted at the age of 4, the timeline for this case is quite a bit longer than for the majority of reported RSPK cases. Additionally, a 4-year-old RSPK agent would be yet another extremely unusual element. This would even be the case with Marcia at age 10, during the height of the activity. Naturally, we could look to another, perhaps Laura Goodin, as the potential agent.

Second, there were incidents witnessed while Marcia was not present, including apparent movements of objects when the entire family was out of the house. Consequently, it's difficult to be sure one of them was the RSPK agent even though there are cases in the parapsychological literature in which the assigned agent was rather far away from the activity on more than a single occasion.

Overall, I found the book to be a very interesting read. The author is a decent storyteller, and he provides a very straightforward account and chronology of events. The inclusion of quoted witness testimony, the police reports and incident logs, and additional material helps underscore the research Hall conducted to piece together the main narrative.

One paragraph in the book did give me pause. In recounting a conversation between Ed Warren, Batey, Harary, and Solfvin when he met with them to brief them on the family and what he had gathered so far, Hall states that they, "chatted about several obstacles . . . including one major obstacle: parapsychologists." Given who was involved in that conversation, this is odd to say the least. Hall goes on to say, "They [parapsychologists] go in there believing in the supernatural right off the bat. The problem is that the only people who research these occurrences are psychic investigators" (p. 122).

Whether you believe PK is caused by the living, discarnate entities, or even multiversal forces, *The World's Most Haunted House* certainly is well researched. Given the support of the witnesses, including those Hall was able to talk with as he researched the case, the Lindley Street poltergeist case offers an exciting example of a true paranormal mystery. That it happened seems to be well supported. What was causing the activity is the mystery.

LOYD AUERBACH

2518 Fern Leaf Lane
Martinez, CA 94553, USA
profparanormal@gmail.com