

Hampton House Haunting

The sources for this story are a personal interview I had with Carl Taylor, and Roy Weaver's account of it in his book [Ghost Stories and Other Tales of Aho and Sampson](#).

In the mid-1900s, the Hampton house gained a reputation as the most haunted spot in Aho. It had been built a few years after the Civil War on Friendship Church Road a short distance from the church, and was owned for most of its existence by Tom and Belle Hampton. When they got old, they moved out of the house around 1940 to live with their daughter. The house was rented over the next 20 years.

Renters never stayed long. Strange occurrences in the house kept them on edge and they soon moved out.

Kermit Storie's family lived there for a while. His son Nelson reported waking up one night and seeing a white light coming down the hill behind the house and entering the dwelling. It terrified him and he "still gets chills when thinking about it."

Carl Taylor told of strange incidents in the house when his family lived there in the late 1950s. The front door was secured with two locks, which Carl fastened every night when they went to bed. Occasionally when they were in bed, the family would hear footsteps on the front porch, the two locks fly loose, the door open, and footsteps walking into the house. It would walk through the house, down the hall, and stop. Carl would get out of bed, open the door, and nobody would be there. He would go downstairs and find the two locks unlatched and the door open.

One of their sons worked late and did not get home until 11:00 pm. Carl and his wife Mabel were in bed when, about that time, they saw car headlights come through their bedroom window. Mabel decided to get up and scare their son when he came in. She went downstairs, hid under the stairs, and waited. She heard footsteps on the front porch, the locks come unlatched, the door open, and somebody walk down the hall. Just as the footsteps were in front of where she was hiding, she jumped out to grab him; but no one was there.

A crying baby woke the family one night. They determined that it was coming from a fireplace, but seemed to be outside. When they went outside to check the chimney, the crying seemed to be coming from inside. When they went inside, the sound was coming from the outside. It eventually stopped suddenly.

A significant feature of this haunting is that there is no backstory that attempts to explain the strange occurrences. The house had no history of murder, suicide, insanity, etc. that usually accompanies such stories. The original owner was a Methodist minister and the Hamptons were an ordinary couple who raised a large family seemingly without incident. Tom was a leader in the community. (Incidentally, the families who experienced the hauntings were well-respected, normal, and not the type to imagine paranormal happenings.) Perhaps the lack of an explanation ironically gives credence to the inexplicable incidents, as the renters would not have expected anything unusual to occur in such an ordinary house.



Site of the old Hampton House on Friendship Church Road. The old hydrangea bush is the only reminder of the ghostly dwelling.

Apparition



A legend in my family concerns a ghost seen by my great grandmother, Mamie Moody Hodges, when she was less than ten years old. The event occurred in the community where Mamie grew up, just west of Boone near Oak Grove Baptist Church, around the turn of the century. The story goes that there was an old woman in the community who had no use for children. Mamie described her as mean and heartless. The woman eventually died, and the children in the community saw an opportunity to use her vacant home as a playhouse. They relished the fact that they were getting so much pleasure in the house of the woman who had been so malicious to them. My great-grandmother said they heard a knock on the front door. Someone opened it, and there stood the white, translucent figure of the woman with a horrible scowl on her face. The children were terrified and wanted to run away, but there was no other door in the house. Their only means of escape was through a window. They dived through it, one by one. The last child to get through the window was Mamie.

Photo of Mamie Moody taken about the time of the incident in the late 1890s.

A Horrible Scream

Carnie Storie was walking on the George Hayes Road in Watauga County one night in the 1920s when he heard something that sounded “just like a woman screaming”. It came from a cemetery on a hill, traveling down through a field to the road. Carnie says, “I went out there with Mama when one of Marion and Lydia’s babies was sick and I went out there with her and she stayed all night with Lydia and helped tend to that baby and I come back home. I was just taking my time til that screaming started down through that field and [I took off running]. I’m telling you that scared me. I didn’t see anything, I just heard it.” His wife Lena says, “We’ve wondered if it wasn’t a panther or - didn’t that baby die? And I thought that it could have been some kind of sign that that baby was going to die.”

Interestingly, there is a ghostly entity in Celtic folklore called the banshee, which utters horrible shrieks. Hearing a banshee is said to foretell the death of someone.



Location on George Hayes Road where Carnie heard the terrible scream.

Ghost Coffin

Before the Blue Ridge Parkway was built in Watauga County, there was a road that followed generally the same route from Aho to Green Hill, and intersected Blackberry Road where the overpass is now located. Traveling from Aho toward Blowing Rock, the road climbs a hill, where the Storie Cemetery is located on top immediately to the right. A few steps down the hill, one can see the Ford Cemetery to the left across a hollow and behind an old farmhouse. The Blackberry Road intersection is visible a couple hundred feet distance at the bottom of the hill.

According to legend (as Roy Weaver tells in his book *Tales of Old Aho*), a man who lived on Blackberry Road was walking home on the old Green Hill Road after visiting a friend. It was in October after midnight, but the moon was full, so he had no trouble finding his way. As he crested the hill by the cemetery within sight of Blackberry Road, he saw four men at the crossroads walking up the road toward him. They were carrying something between them- two on each side. As they got closer, he could see that it was a coffin. Were they headed to the cemetery at the top of the hill? He was not aware that anyone in the community had died. And why would they be burying someone this late in the night? He was anxious to meet them and get the story behind this strange occurrence. But when they got within speaking distance, the men and the coffin disappeared.

The story has been passed down without a “meaning.” In other words, was the sight of the coffin a sign that something bad would happen, maybe the man or someone else would die soon? We are not told. An interesting feature of this story that is not pointed out or explained is that the pallbearers appeared at the crossroads of Blackberry and Green Hill Roads and then began their walk up the hill. There is a lot of folklore that identifies crossroads as liminal locations; i.e. places where this world and the spiritual world intersect. Many cathedrals in Europe were built on pagan worship sites, which were in turn built at crossroads. A person wanting to become a witch or make a deal with the devil was instructed to perform a ritual at a crossroad. Another intriguing element is that the ghostly sight was seen between two cemeteries. So it might have been more than a coincidence that the man saw the funeral procession begin where it did.



Ghostly crossroads where Blackberry Road intersects the Blue Ridge Parkway (formerly Green Hill Road) below this overpass.

Open Grave

Source: Tales of Old Aho, by Roy Weaver

George Storie was a community celebrity in Aho, Watauga County, around the turn of the 20th century. He owned and ran the Aho Store, located at the intersection of today's Blue Ridge Parkway, Friendship Church Road, and Aho Road. He lived in a house at that site that stood for decades after his death in 1927. George was an advocate for building and maintaining good roads.

The day after George Storie died, his grave was dug at Laurel Fork Baptist Church. His body was prepared and laid-out in his home. As was the custom, friends and relatives came to sit up with the body all night. At one point that night, some of the young men decided to visit his grave, probably out of boredom and/or the need to move around to stay awake. They walked the short distance from the house to the church. When they got close to the cemetery, they saw a red hot chain rise out of his grave and float up into the sky.

There's no interpretation given in the legend as to the meaning of the sight. Was it his ghost? Was it a sign he was going to heaven, or to hell? I know of no folk traditions that explain the meaning of a rising red hot chain. George was a respectable man in the community, though he was vehemently against the prohibition of alcohol, which might have diminished his reputation in the eyes of some people. It was said that he and his wife often had loud and fierce quarrels. Yet, overall, evidence suggests that he was a good man, undeserving of some sinister fate after death.



George Storie's grave in Laurel Fork Baptist Church cemetery.



View of Laurel fork Baptist Church cemetery as it would have appeared to the men walking to George Storie's grave.

Various Short Ghost Stories

A few of these are rather common folk motifs. A folk motif is a basic storyline that reappears in different communities with maybe a few details changed, but the overall narrative intact.



- **The Zombie-** “[When this happened] Otis was little and Tommie was a baby. I sold chestnuts and went up there to the store to buy me a whole load of stuff. Well, I get up around the corner of the bend and there stood a man in his stocking feet, and no hat; just like he'd come out of the casket! Well, I walked up to him, it scared me pretty bad, I spoke to him and he backed up and went through a bush and stepped off down below the road! I went on up to the store and told them and they said "Ah, he won' t bother you. He's been seen there for years and years." So I went back and I was about scared to death and Otis wasn't but about 2 years old. He seen him and went to screaming and there he stood and he walked out like he was going to come right through me! - Zettie Greene
- “Some man he just kept drunk all the time, I did know his name but I forgot it. One night he was going in drunk and there was a big ol mud hole in the road. Said that thing caught him and wallered him a little in the mud and told him that if he ever got drunk again he'd kill him, tear him up, and put him in that mud hole. And so on the next weekend he got drunk and he didn't come in and they went and hunted him and some of ‘em said "Well, maybe that thing did put him in that mud hole." And they went and he was tore up and put in pieces in that mud hole!” -Zettie Greene

- Carl Taylor said that his father experienced a strange occurrence as a teenager (this would have been in the late 1800s). One night he and several other boys were walking home from Avery County. When they reached the Avery-Watauga line in Foscoe, they saw a small white light that looked like a dog. This was nothing new because they had seen this dog several times previous. However, this time they tried to catch it. They circled it and dived at it but they would go straight through it and never feel anything solid. The boys noted that when they "touched" the dog, it was extremely cold. After a few minutes, it disappeared.



- "There's a cemetery down at Bailey's Camp. There was a man down there who said he didn't believe in no God and no nothing. And when he died they told him they'd be snakes in his grave. And they say you can go there in the coldest weather and there'll be snakes coming out. Well a dog come out there from somebody's grave. There used to be a campground down there at Bailey's Camp and a little dog come with a chain on it where they was cooking, it was just a shadow you know, It'd run all over. Some of them boys run it, and it went back and went down in that man's grave. Never left a hole nor nothing." *-Zettie Greene*
- "There was the Hagaman house way back yonder, and it was haunted and nobody could live there, It was just a log house. They offered an old drunk man that whole farm if he'd stay all night there. And they knowed he wouldn't, you know. Well, he went in there drunk and built him up a fire in the fireplace, He was setting there and a ghost comes down the stairs. And the drunk said, "Well hello there, come on down, I'm glad to have the company!" The ghost says, "If you'll do what I'll tell you, I'll let you know where a whole pot of money's at." He said he was murdered there for his pot of money. The ghost told him he was buried in the barn stable, way deep. He told the drunk to get up the bones, bury them proper, and he could find the money good. And he did. The drunk dug up a whole pot of money and he got that Hagaman farm; All that big farm! *- Zettie Greene*

- ◆ Carl Taylor tells of a man who lived in the Toe River Valley between Elk Park and Spruce Pine. Every night the man would see a strange, white light in the valley. It would float all around the valley. He decided to investigate one night, when he could not sleep, and see what it was. When he got close to the light, he heard a voice that said, "Follow me" He followed the light until it stopped and he heard the voice again say, "Dig here" He had no digging tools, but he started digging with his hands. The light stayed nearby apparently so he could see how to dig. Eventually, he hit something that turned out to be an old metal box full of money. The light was never seen again.



- “Georgia Hayes over here owned a house and she told me that a little girl comes downstairs in that house. The girl told them that somebody'd killed her on the hill beside a big log and if they'd bury her bones proper she never would come back. Said they dug and never found her. We moved into that house and most all the young'uns slept upstairs. Well, somebody came downstairs every night like they didn't have no shoes on. And it'd come through the house and I'd get up and go up there and they'd all be asleep. One night it come and went out the window. And it'd been there all the time. It went like an ol big wooly something. The windows were raised and no screen. It looked dark to me, whether it was a little girl or something else, I don't know.” -Zettie Greene



- My great-grandmother, Cora Hartley, claimed that she opened a door at her house after the death of her father, Eli Tester, in 1923, and saw his ghost standing there. The house is in Upton, Caldwell County, North Carolina.



Several of my sources mentioned the headless ghost at the White Rocks. Roy Weaver tells the whole story in his book *Tales of Old Aho*:

If you ask someone from the Aho area about the haunted places in the area, the first answer will probably always be the White Rocks on the Sampson Road...The story goes that sometime in the distant past two lovers met at these rocks. The young man lived in Sampson and the girl lived in Aho...After a while the romance cooled as the girl met another man and broke it off with the young man from Sampson. On the night of the full August moon, the young man from Sampson was passing by the White Rocks and saw his former lover there with her new lover. He pulled his hunting knife and attacked the man, cutting off his head. The severed head rolled off the rocks and across the road into the deep ravine below. The old people of Aho and Sampson believe that on the night of the full moon in August the head of a man can be seen rolling off the white rocks into the ravine below.



The White Rocks area as seen from Sampson Road, not far from the Blue Ridge Parkway. The rocks themselves are farther into the woods.