

Sharing ghost stories: An Owen County tradition

"Night comes, and from the dying embers of the fire, the crooked shadows creep along the wall." They traveled with immigrants to America. Families kept them for a special evening at the fireplace or around a campfire; and many were passed on through families for generations.

They have been around since ancient times and have played a prominent role in the folklore of many cultures around the world.

They are the ghost stories that are only for the stout-hearted; and even though they may cause nightmares, kids anticipate the times they can gather around granddad, grammy or a neighborhood storyteller and listen wide-eyed to tales of the unknown.

What is it about ghost stories with their spine-chilling narratives that appeal to so many of us? Do we recall childhood days when we savored the times our vivid imaginations took hold of our common sense, and we saw spooks in every corner of the room?

Imagined or real, these shadowy figures served as unforgettable characters in family stories passed on from one generation to

another. Owen County ghosts, goblins and ghouls have appeared and reappeared as they traveled from one year to the next; and it seems each generation added a bit of embellishment to these hair-raising tales.

Several ghost stories from No Head Hollow have lingered in Owen County for many years. Even the name "No Head Hol-

low" conjures up an eerie image of a possible headless apparition searching for its former body part. One favorite No Head Hollow ghost story about a headless specter involved a black dog. It seems years ago a large black dog was attacking livestock on several farms in the area; and after several unsuccessful attempts to capture the animal, one farmer was able to shoot him. The farmer then proceeded to cut off the dog's head to guarantee there would be no more attacks on livestock.

For years afterwards, local residents claimed that many a dark night they would see a huge black headless dog roaming the area frantically searching for its head.

Another No Head Hollow story was told by Robert L. Smith, but instead of a

specter, Robert's tale featured a human ghost. "A bunch of fellows were making moonshine whiskey one night in No Head Hollow. Knowing of the goings on, a friendly neighbor got out a white sheet, wrapped it around himself and proceeded to the still carrying a lantern. As the story goes, several prominent Owen County men swore off strong drink that night."

There were many in the community of Greenup who claimed that a "mystery light" would follow people traveling through the area, but the strange light would vanish as it entered the gates of the Greenup Cemetery.

Former Owen County teacher Mary Kenney Shipp confirmed this tale as she related a story told by her father:

"My Daddy said when he was a young man was riding horseback one night when this great light came on and followed him as his horse galloped homeward. As the horse and rider passed the Greenup Cemetery, the great light suddenly disappeared."

Doris Riley, who passed away several years ago, recounted another tale about an eerie light in the community of Beechwood.

Many years ago, a young boy whose family lived in this community died, and he was buried in the Beech-

wood Church Cemetery. Overcome with grief, his father would light a lantern every night and set it beside his son's grave, for the little one had always feared the dark.

When the lad's father passed away, he was buried next to his little boy; and it is reported that for many years a mysterious light would appear at night near the graves of this Beechwood father and son.

Year after year a rather eerie tale of Dick Shuck's hanging hood was told and perhaps elaborated upon; but anyone who has experienced a hair-raising incident in the middle of the night can relate to this mysterious, spine-chilling tale of the Owen County sheriff who officiated at the Shuck hanging.

Owen Countian Richard Shuck was a member of a notorious gang who terrorized the area along the Kentucky river from Frankfort to Carrollton; and on July 27, 1877, he was hanged for killing his father-in-law.

This story was told by Mrs. Rena Yancey from Poplar Grove as it was related to her by the sheriff's widow, Mrs. Thomas Gray.

"As was the custom at legal hangings, they cut Shuck down and laid him in the coffin he had ridden on to the scaffold. Sheriff Gray took the hood off Shuck's

face and, not knowing exactly what to do with it, dropped it into the pocket of his raincoat and forgot all about it.

"A few weeks later, urgent business called the sheriff to an isolated section of the county. He donned his raincoat, mounted his horse, and started out around midnight.

"By the wee hours of the morning Sheriff Gray reached a strip of woods near Hallam, noted as a nesting place of hoot owls. The darkness was so intense he had to trust the instinct of his horse for guidance.

"Suddenly a big tree loomed directly ahead. The horse stopped as an old hoot owl hooted defiantly, 'hoo, hoo,' as if asking the identity of the trespasser.

"Ordinarily Mr. Gray was not afraid of men or beast. But, as he confessed later, the situation seemed too supernatural to suit him. He felt his spine tingle, and his hair rise on end.

"At that moment Mr. Gray reached instinctively for a weapon. As his hand slid into the pocket of his raincoat, he felt the death hood of the man he had hanged. The unexpected shock set him in motion, and he spurred his horse forward and stopped directly under where the old owl was perched beside a hole in the tree.

"Standing in the stirrups, Sheriff Gray reached up and dropped Shuck's death hood into the hole."

Other stories told by Owen Countians recall catching a glimpse of a loved one after he or she had passed away.

Whether these occurrences were the result of an active mind or a longing to spend just a few more moments with a relative, they seemed to defy reason and gave comfort to those who grieved.

Stories of ghosts, goblins, fairies and other ethereal apparitions accompanied early immigrants to this country. These stories then blended with America's own tales of the unknown; and as they were passed down from one generation to the next, they left an indelible imprint upon our American history, culture and traditions.

Join us on Thursday, October 30, 5:30 p.m., at the Odd Fellows Hall when the Historical Society will hold our last meeting this year with a potluck dinner.

Share your favorite tales of strange happenings and Halloween trickery; or just tell your favorite stories of Owen County; all of which create a patchwork of unforgettable memories of the past.

LOOKING BACK

1925 COUNTY SCHOOL NEWS

The Board of Education meets in the superintendent's office Monday the 26th.

The following schools have been visited and inspected by Supt. Clara A. Jones:

Teresita Hawkins, Elk Ridge, Lusby Central, Fortner, Canby, Pleasant Grove, Fairview, Brick, Moxley, South Fork, Bethel, Ephesus, Squiresville, Balls Landing, Mints Spring, Pleasant Home, Cedar Hill, Carter, Pond Branch, Monterey, Beechgrove, El Bethel, Hesler, East Eagle, Hammonds, Maddox, Bromler, Agee, Waldrop, Harris.

NEEDMORE

Mr. and Mrs. F.M. Obanion spent from Friday till Sunday with the farmer's brother, Jasper Obanion, at Georgetown.

Ura Lawrence of Dry Ridge visited Mr. and Mrs. Ed Braden the past week.

NEW COLUMBUS

Mr. and Mrs. Oakley Wynn were callers in Corinth Sunday.

Mrs. Arnold true is visiting relatives and friends near here.

PERSONAL

Miss Mariam Sidebottom, who is attending Georgetown College, spent the week-end at her home near Lusby.

Misses Beulah Watson of Beechwood and Rachal Gaines of Stamping Ground are the guests of Miss Carrie Belle Judy.

JONESVILLE

Mr. Thomas Poe and Mr. Noble Kemper spent last Thursday in Owenton.

Everett Cammack and wife and Mr. Dave Baldwin spent a few days in Covington last week.

1975 WOMEN ON BALLOT

Two women will serve for the first time as city officials in Owen county. Lenora B. Spicer and Lela Ballard are slated as Board of Trustees members for Monterey.

Two years ago, a large write-in vote resulted in the election of Robert Derringer, Marvin Perry, Foster Smith Sr., Paul Grisham, and Gerald Kemper. The previous election, five trustees were elected by a single write-in vote.

This time Derringer and Smith are the only two up for re-election. Joe Peters is the third new name on the ballot.

BUSINESSWOMAN OF THE WEEK

Owenton native Thelma Pearl Lusby has been secretary for Ransdell Insurance agency



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for 20 years. A member of Owenton Christian church, she is also a big sports fan. She has three children, Mrs. Jeanette Dempsey, L.c. and Melody, and four grandchildren.

FOUND DECEASED

Lester Cobb Dunavent, 71, resident of Thomas Trailer Court, Owenton, was found dead in his yard Monday morning. Owen County Corner tom McDonald ruled death of an apparent heart attack.

PERFORMS

Jerry Ray Edens, son of News-Herald correspondent Mrs. Helen G. Edens and the late Ray D. Edens of Sanders, is again a member of

Georgetown College's Cappella choir.

Jerry is also featured as the male lead in the college's latest theatrical production, "The Skin of Our Teeth," showing last week at Giddings Hall.

2015

CEASE OPERATIONS

Senior Services of Northern Kentucky, which provides partial funding for Owen County Public Transit and the Owen County Senior Center, announced Monday it would be discontinuing services.

VOLUNTEERS RESPOND

Owen County volunteer firefighters responded to smoke at 905 Hwy. 127 N., Owenton Center, Monday.

Owenton Fire Chief J.O. Powers said the motor to an HVAC unit was frozen

when the unit came on.

NEW OFFICE

Triad Health Systems will be opening their new Owen County office located in the Three Rivers District Health Department's Owen Co. Health Center, 1005 Hwy. 22 East, Owenton.

BOYS SOCCER FALLS

The Owen County boys entered the 31st District Tournament last week looking to do something they had not done since 2012. A win over Gallatin County last Tuesday night would mean a trip to the district finals and a spot in the 8th Region Tournament this week. Goals by Ricardo Perez and Christian Trejo gave the team a 2-0 win over the Wildcats and kept their season alive for at least two more games.



LEGAL NOTICE

ESTATE TO BE ADMINISTERED: Michele Anne Gray, 1075 Royce Ln Owenton, KY 40359
ADMINISTRATOR: Shawn Gray, 7544 Owenton Rd Frankfort, KY 40601
DATE OF ADMINISTRATION: 10/2/2025
6 MONTH DEADLINE FOR CLAIMS: 4/2/2026
ATTORNEY: Todd M. Spurgeon, PO Box 37 Owenton, KY 40359

ESTATE TO BE ADMINISTERED: Billie Huff, 204 W. Perry St Owenton, KY 40359
ADMINISTRATOR: Patricia Thomas, 3831 Glenn Ave Covington, KY 41015
DATE OF ADMINISTRATION: 10/16/2025
6 MONTH DEADLINE FOR CLAIMS: 4/16/2026
ATTORNEY: Charles E. Carter, PO Box 307 Owenton, KY 40359



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22 Ac. Owen Co., Greenup Road, open ridge top to build on, woods and hills to play on, city water, \$141,900, \$8,000 down.

6 Ac. Near Long Ridge, Hwy. 36, pasture, scattered trees, double wides welcome, view, city water, \$52,900, \$2,500 down, \$520 per mo.

8-1/2 Ac. Owen Co., gently rolling pasture, large pond, restricted homesite, on paved dead end road, \$86,900, \$3,000 down.

5 Ac. New Liberty, rolling pasture, single wides welcome, approved for septic, city water available, \$51,900, \$2,500 down.

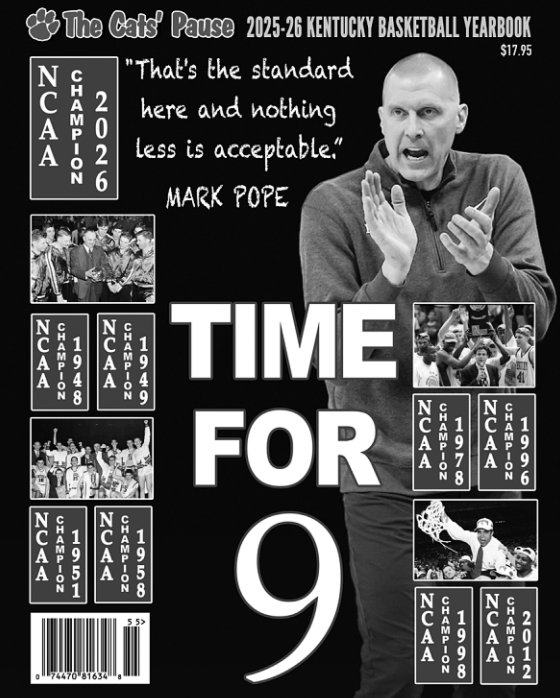
2-1/2 Ac. Glencoe area, just off Hwy. 127, mostly open, some woods, 5 miles off I-71, city water, \$2,500 down, \$275 per mo.

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