

Amherst Haunting

October 2, 2010 By [ParaNikki](#)



A classic case of a late 19th-century poltergeist in Amherst, Nova Scotia that was so mean-spirited that it directed its nasty activities not only toward its young victim, but to all other persons who tried to help her. Even the family cat did not go unscathed.

The troublesome spirit, which gave itself the name 'Bob' when leaving written messages on walls, confounded observers with strange, frightening noises and happenings, and even started fires. The case began in 1878 and attracted the notice of the public; people often gathered at the house in such great numbers that the police had to be summoned.



The victims were the Teed family of Amherst, headed by Daniel Teed, a foreman in a shoe factory, and including his wife Olive, and their two young sons; Olive's two sisters, Jennie, 22 years old, and Esther, 19 years old; Olive's brother, William; and Daniel's brother John. They lived in a crowded two-story cottage.

The family's travails began one night when Esther jumped out of the bed she shared with Jennie and screamed that there was a mouse in it. Finding no such thing, the two went back to sleep. The next night, they heard rustling sounds in a bandbox which was rising and falling in the air. An examination by the frightened women revealed an empty box.

On the following night, the spirit turned ugly, setting the tone for its future activities. Esther, who had gone to bed feeling ill, suddenly awoke and declared that she was dying. Her cries alarmed family members, who rushed into her room, whereupon they were greeted with a hideous sight. Esther's short hair was almost standing on end, her face was blood-red and her eyes popping. Two family members proclaimed her mad, but their accusations turned to concern

as Esther's body swelled to nearly double its normal size. Esther's pitiful cries of pain were accompanied by booming sounds of rolling thunder – although there was not a cloud to be seen in the sky.



Esther's swelling subsided, but four nights later when she and Jennie were once again asleep, their bedclothes were suddenly torn away and thrown into a heap in the corner of the room. Again, frightened family members rushed into the girls' room, saw a swollen Esther and heard the rolling thunder. Jennie replaced the bedclothes only to have a pillow fly off the bed and strike John Teed in the face. John fled the room, but the others remained, sitting on the bedclothes to hold them fast while Esther fell back to sleep.

The next day the family called the local physician, Dr. Carritte, to check Esther. He became the poltergeist's next victim. While examining Esther, the bolster beneath her head rose up and violently hit him on the head before returning to its former spot. The astonished doctor took a few moments to restore his equilibrium and sat down in a chair. He heard a metallic scratching sound coming from the wall behind him. Turning to see its source, he saw written upon the wall, "Esther Cox! You are mind to kill." At the same time, the doctor heard peals of thunder and saw pieces of plaster fall from the ceiling and swirl around the room.



To the terrified Dr. Carritte's credit, he returned the next day to examine his patient. As he was bending over Esther, he was hit with a barrage of potatoes which sent him flying across the room. Nevertheless, the doctor continued his ministrations by giving Esther a sedative. She fell fitfully asleep; meanwhile, the doctor heard loud, pounding sounds coming from the ceiling.

The next day, Esther complained of feeling as though electricity were passing through her body. Dr. Carritte administered more sedatives in the evening. As he put her to bed, loud raps sounded, as though someone were pounding on the roof of the house. Dr. Carritte went outside, where strong moonlight enabled him to see that no one was upon the roof. Yet, when he returned inside, the family said that while he had been out, it had sounded as though someone were pounding on the roof with a sledgehammer. The poundings repeated intermittently, but eventually they went on all day long and were heard by passersby. The noises were written up in the local Gazette newspaper and other papers throughout Canada.



About three weeks after Dr. Carritte's initial visit, Jennie stated that she thought the ghost could hear and see everything the family did. Immediately, three clear reports were heard in response. Further questions put to the spirit were answered with loud reports: one knock for a negative answer and three knocks for an affirmative one. The family began to converse with the unseen spirit.

Word had now begun to spread throughout the community about these happenings. The clergy became interested, but they attributed the phenomena to the newly commercialized electricity rather than to supernatural or diabolical agents. A well-known Baptist clergyman, Rev. Dr. Edwin Clay, began to visit regularly. Rev. Clay agreed with Dr. Carritte that Esther was not producing the noises herself. He opined that her nerves had received some sort of electric shock, thus turning her into a living battery. He believed that her body was emitting tiny flashes of lightning, and the noises were actually small claps of thunder. This theory proved to be popular and Rev. Clay began to give numerous lectures on it, always defending Esther against any accusations of fraud. The publicity caused throngs of people to gather outside the Teed cottage daily.



Rev. Clay quit visiting Esther when she contracted diphtheria months later. When she recovered, she left the Teed home to stay temporarily with her married sister in New Brunswick. For the first time, peace and quiet descended on the cottage.

But when Esther returned home, so did the spirit, with an even greater desire for destruction and disruption. One night, Esther told Jennie that she could hear a voice saying that it would burn the house down. The voice also stated that it had once lived on earth, had died, and now was only a ghost.



The girls called in family members to relay the message, and while all were laughing at the preposterousness of such a thing happening, lighted matches began falling from the ceiling onto Esther's bed. Communication with the spirit was then initiated, and when asked if it would really set the house afire, it answered in the affirmative. As apparent

proof, one of Esther's dresses, hanging on a nail on the wall, was rolled up by invisible hands, stuffed beneath the bed and lighted afire. Daniel Teed pulled the dress out and snuffed the fire before it could do serious damage.

"Bob" set olive Teed's skirts on fire and allegedly set several small fires in different parts of the house, which again caused more fright than damage. During one fire emanating from a bucket of cedar shavings in the basement, Esther ran into the street screaming for help and neighbors came to her aid. The local fire department, however, suspected arson, perhaps by Esther. However, she was within view of Olive when the fire started and could not have been responsible.

Members of the public suggested that Esther should be flogged in order to beat the evil out of her. Instead, Daniel Teed sent her to the house of a Mr. White for safety but the spirit apparently was having too much fun and continued setting fires in her absence.



Around this time, **Walter Hubbell**, an actor in a strolling company based in Amherst, became interested in the case as a possible moneymaker. He decided to exhibit Esther on a platform in the hopes that the ghost would thrill the audience with strange activities. Unfortunately, the spirit wasn't interested in working on cue and irate spectators hissed and booed the couple off the stage, demanding the return of their money.

Esther returned to live in the Teed home, accompanied by the **undaunted Hubbell**, who moved into the house to learn more about the spirit. His efforts were rewarded by assaults upon him by his umbrella and by a large carving knife that flew briskly through the air in his direction. Being young and nimble, he was able to duck in time, only to see a huge armchair come marching across the room toward him.



Hoping to put an end to the family's torment, the local clergyman, Rev. R.A. Temple, held a meeting of prayer and exorcism in the house. When the reverend asked the spirit to speak, it responded with loud trumpet-playing. The reverend fled the house, but the spirit became enamored of its own playing and continued to blast on the instrument. The musical finale was accompanied by a display of lighted matches.

Mischief continued to plague other members of the household. George Cox, Esther's brother, was humiliated when he was mysteriously undressed three times in public. One day **Walter Hubbell** observed that the cat was the only resident that had not been tormented. The cat instantly was levitated about five feet into the air and set down upon Esther's shoulders. The terrified animal ran out of the house, where it remained for the rest of the day.

The fire-starting also continued. **Hubbell, who in 1888 wrote his account of the case.** "The Great Amherst Mystery" described his first encounter with the spirit's fire tricks:

"... I say, candidly, that until I had had that experience I never fully realized what an awful calamity it was to have an invisible monster, somewhere within the atmosphere, going from place to place about the house, gathering up old newspapers into a bundle and hiding it in the basket of soiled linen or in the closet, then go and steal matches out of the match-box in the kitchen, or somebody's pocket, as he did out of mine; and after kindling a fire in the bundle, tell Esther that he had started a fire, but would not tell where; or perhaps not tell her at all, in which case the first intimation we would have was the smell of smoke pouring through the house, and then the most intense excitement, everybody running with buckets of water. I say it was the most truly awful calamity that could possibly befall any family, infidel or Christian, that could be conceived in the mind of man or ghost and how much more terrible did it seem in this little cottage, where we were all strict members of the church, prayed, sang hymns, and read the Bible. Poor Mrs. Teed!"

Finally, the landlord of the Teed home, Mr. Bliss, distressed at the potential for damage to his cottage, requested that Esther leave his property. Reluctantly, the family agreed to let Esther go to the home of a Mr. Van Amburgh. The Teed home then once again returned to normal.



The hapless Esther was to be harassed by the spirit one last time. "Bob" followed her into a barn and set it afire. She was arrested for arson and sentenced to four months' imprisonment, but appeals from persons who knew her sad history led to her release. The story ended happily, however as Esther ultimately married and was finally rid of the ghost.

Members of the Teed family were convinced that the events were indeed caused by the evil ghost of a man who had decided to torment Esther. Some of the local townsfolk believed Esther had perpetrated everything. **Wrote Hubbell**, "Dr. Nathan Tupper, who had never witnessed a single manifestation, suggested that if a strong raw-hide whip were laid across Esther's bare shoulders by a powerful arm, the tricks of the girl would cease at once." Dr. Carritte believed in the ghost, as **did Hubbell**. The case was never solved.



In considering the case in light of modern theories of the origin and nature of poltergeists, it is likely that Esther was the unwitting focus of psychokinetic energy, which caused the phenomena and was due to repressed emotions. She was within the age range of common poltergeist disturbances believed to be caused by human agents. She may have suffered repressed hostility and tension, perhaps from living in very close quarters with a large family. She also may have suffered repressed sexual feelings. The fact that the disturbance stopped, first when she left the crowded Teed household for temporary stays elsewhere, and finally to marry and have her own household, support this explanation.

Further Reading:

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Cohen, Daniel. *The Encyclopedia of Ghosts*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1984.

Sitwell, Sacheverell. *Poltergeists: Fact or Fancy*. New York: Dorsett Press, 1988. First published 1959.

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Adapted from *The Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits*, 3rd ed., Facts On File, 2008

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The Amherst Poltergeist

By [Javier Ortega](#) · November 5, 2011 ·



Amherst house

The Amherst Poltergeist

The year was 1878. A young Esther Cox, barely eighteen years old, is brutally attacked and almost raped by a friend of the family. Shortly after, the beginning of a cruel and dangerous poltergeist attack was witnessed and recorded by many. This is the Amherst Poltergeist case.

The Esther Cox case is a very peculiar case. It's a case filled with mysterious paranormal phenomena, deep psychological trauma and what a person's state of mind under severe duress and mental instability can do.

Esther shared a house with her sister Olive. Olive was married to Daniel Teed and lived together with their two children, Esther's two siblings and Daniel's brother. A crowded home to say the least. Although it had plenty of rooms, the house would at times become even more crowded, as Olive and Daniel rented out some of the rooms for extra cash. It wasn't until after the attempted rape of Esther, that the residents of the house began to see and hear strange phenomena.

Esther had suffered minor cuts and bruises from the attack, but this was nothing compared to the psychological scarring it had left. And these were some deep scars. Shortly after her attack, she began developing severe fevers which at times were accompanied by strong seizures. This was unusual for Esther, as she was always a healthy child. One night, Esther was getting in bed, a bed she'd share with her sister Jennie. It was late at night and Olive and Daniel were in the living room, talking away into the night. A sudden deafening scream made them jump to their feet. Busting into the room, they encountered the terrified sisters cowering in the corner. Apparently, both were witnesses to strange movements underneath the blankets.

The girls told how there seemed to be something crawling underneath the blankets. It was big enough to scare them out of the bed. Everyone assumed that it was a mouse that was trapped in the sheets, but thorough searches revealed nothing.

The same deafening scream was heard the following night. When Olive and Daniel bust into the room again, they saw an old box, which was full of strips of fabric, strewn across the floor. Apparently there was a strange noise emanating from the box. A loud noise which had awoken the girls. When Esther reached underneath their bed to pull out the box, it jumped by itself and landed in the middle of the room. Taken aback, the girls saw the box take a second leap up in the air and spilling its contents. The frightened girls were certain that something had tossed the box up in the air. It was the same thing that had been making the sounds from underneath the bed.

By the third night in the chain of events; Esther decides to turn in for the night. She had been feeling a little under-the-weather that day and needed the rest. Hours after laying down, her sister also decides to turn in for the night. She gets in bed and within minutes, Esther jumps out of bed screaming bloody murder. Jennie snaps out of drowsiness and finds Esther in the middle of the room, eyes bulging out and skin swollen and red-hot. Esther is screaming:

“Why is this happening to me? I'm dying!”

Esther is hit with a wave of convulsions that drop her to the floor. Again, Olive and Daniel come into the room and find Esther convulsing on the floor. While attempting to help her, four thunderous claps resonate throughout the house. Shaking and rattling everything in it. Everyone is paralyzed with fear. Immediately after the sounds stopped, Esther stops shaking and falls into a deep, deep sleep. They all stand around the bed. Confused and terrified. Esther's skin is returning to its regular color. The swelling stopped.

Esther remains in bed for the next three days. Recuperating from the fever that had severely affected her a few nights ago. During this time, it was noted that no strange outbursts were seen or heard throughout the house. A day later, the exact same of events occurred. The four thunderous claps had once again, made everyone jump.

Confused and concerned, Olive and Daniel contacted Dr. Carritte. A local and trusted doctor. Upon his arrival, the events surrounding Esther begin to escalate.

Dr. Carritte made it a point to document the case from the beginning. His first night there, he witnessed things that would be indicative of high-strangeness. That night in the Teed residence, Dr. Carritte jotted down in his journal, a strange incident in which Esther's pillow moved from underneath her head. Pulled by an unseen force. In his notes, Dr. Carritte mentions that Esther's

hands where in plain sight and that there was no visible form of trickery that could have moved the pillow from under the girl's head. As the night gets darker, so do the events.

Dr. Carritte wrote down of loud sounds and banging emanating from underneath her bed. Again, checking for any signs of trickery, Dr. Carritte was at a loss for an explanation. Moments later, he heard a sound which sounded to him like a metal piece scraping plaster. What he wrote down next changes the tone of the case. A few feet above Esther's bed, on the plastered wall, he watched as letters begin etching themselves. Forming letters that are a foot long, the message was clear and ominous:

ESTHER COX YOU ARE MINE

While the doctor stands in disbelief, Esther lays motionless, in a deep sleep.

The frightening ordeal wasn't enough to keep the doctor away. He had returned the very next day, only to fill his journal with all kinds of random unexplained events. Potatoes being hurled across the room by unseen hands, spontaneous fires erupting throughout the house and even the thunderous claps had returned. This time, they were heard coming from the roof of the house. As the days pass, the paranormal events continued. Knives and forks suddenly flew across the room at high speeds. Jamming themselves into the walls at times. Lit matches were said to materialize out of thin air and land on the beds. Furniture was moved and tossed around when no one was in the room. Often times, heavy drawers slamming up against the walls. For Esther, the poltergeist activity turned from annoying, to life-threatening.

Witnesses claim to have heard the sound of a heavy slap, only to see welts rising from Esther's face. Turning her whole side of a cheek red in seconds. Something was now physically harming Esther. Feeling guilt, Esther decided to move out of the crowded house and into a more comfortable one by asking her eldest sister permission to move in. While staying miles away, no strange phenomena was reported at either location. It seemed that whatever was frightening the Teed's, it had vanished as quickly as it had manifested.

After feeling that everything was OK, that everything had returned to normalcy, Esther Cox returns to Amherst. One Sunday, Esther decided to attend mass. Loud knocks and rappings kept interrupting the otherwise peaceful Sunday sermon. As the preacher continued to carry a higher-pitched sermon over the noises, Esther began to feel more and more embarrassed. All eyes were on her. Everyone in town knew about the strange goings-on inside the Teed house. Esther trying to save face, gets up and excuses herself from the mass. Soon after, the noises ceased and the mass continued in peace.

Esther's welcoming back into the Teed house was a bitter one. The activities continued and even escalated to a more sinister level. One of the neighbors had gone over to the Teed's to hang out. The neighbor, a young man, was playing with a pocket-knife when it was suddenly ripped-off his hands and flew straight into Esther's back. Piercing its blade deep into her back. This was the last straw. The family knew that whatever this force was, it wanted Esther to itself. Just like the message the Dr. Carritte saw manifesting before him.

Esther moved out the house –since she believed that it was the source of her troubles– and moved into the home of a friend of the family. Not long after moving in, the barn caught fire and was destroyed. The friend, believed that Esther was behind the arson and had her arrested. Esther was convicted of Arson and sentenced to four months in prison. She ended up serving only 30 days.

After she was released from prison, Esther's life returned to normal. The poltergeist seemed to have vanished for good.

A great deal of what is known about Esther Cox, comes from the book “An Amherst Mystery” by Walter Hubbell. A man who was so intrigued by the case, so much so, that he rented one of the Teed’s vacant rooms. What Hubbell did for the following weeks, was document and observe the phenomena as it presented itself. Hubbell claims that no form of trickery was ever observed when the phenomena appeared. In fact, in “An Amherst Mystery”, Hubbell printed a signed affidavit with sixteen people who swore to have witnessed the paranormal events that surrounded Esther Cox.

Esther married twice. In 1912, she dies. She was fifty three.

The Amherst Poltergeist. Such an interesting case. A case of a young and hormonal teenager suffering from post-traumatic stress attributed by a violent crime. This young girl lives in a home that obviously is not the best place for someone who needs constant reassurance and psychiatric help. If we were to skeptically analyze the story, we could assume that the Teed’s, and other unfortunate individuals, were victims to a cruel hoax. Or cry-out for attention.

The only strong evidence is the word of Walter Hubbell. He meticulously wrote down the events that were said to have happened at the residence. Publishing a book on the incident. Let us not forget the signed affidavit printed in the book. As an symbol of authenticity of some sorts. Of course, he made a good profit from the book, but there were those that didn’t have anything to gain, rather had everything to lose.

Dr. Carritte also recorded the supernatural phenomena that –in his eyes– could not have been faked.

What if we were to assume that this case, was not what it appeared to be. Not a hoax, not a haunting, but a case in which extraordinary powers of psychokinesis are displayed. Esther’s angst and confusion is manifested through her subconscious mind and projected in bouts of ominous displays. But as world renown skeptic James Randi often likes to say:

“Extraordinary claims, require extraordinary evidence.” A famous quote by scientist Carl Sagan.

Extraordinary evidence is obviously required. Most of us are skeptics and are always ready for a good challenge. We want to explore and analyze the evidence that is said to prove that ghosts exists. Therein lies the problem with the study of the paranormal. The grand paradox that haunts, excuse the pun, most parapsychologists, is the inability for the scientifically trained researchers to capture proof of something so bizarre like the claims of spiritual apparitions? How can they prove the existence of something they cannot see? Or a more interesting question would be: What about when they can see it?

The famous case involving Doris Bither is a case forever shrouded with mystery. The Bither case is something that most skeptics find difficult to refute. Doris Bither is said to have been raped by a “ghost”. Trust me, when I blurt those words aloud at a dinner party or some social event, people tend to scoff but instantly become intrigued. When they learn of the amount of scientists, photographers and other researchers that were present when Doris’ “attacker” decided to manifest itself, in what many described to resemble some holographic figure, the listeners’ attention is drawn to your every word.

Why?

A good reason could be because when you hear that the case involved scientists observing and documenting a phenomena which is best described as “ghostly” in nature, then you start to question what was really observed that night inside Doris’ home. Why didn’t the the photographers capture any of the activity, including the holographic-like image of a man’s upper torso? They did manage to capture some luminous globs of light, darting across the room. But so what?

What proof could these photographs, of what appears to be a comet whizzing through darkness, actually bring to the scientific community? They all claimed to have been witnesses to extraordinary events, but where was the extraordinary evidence?

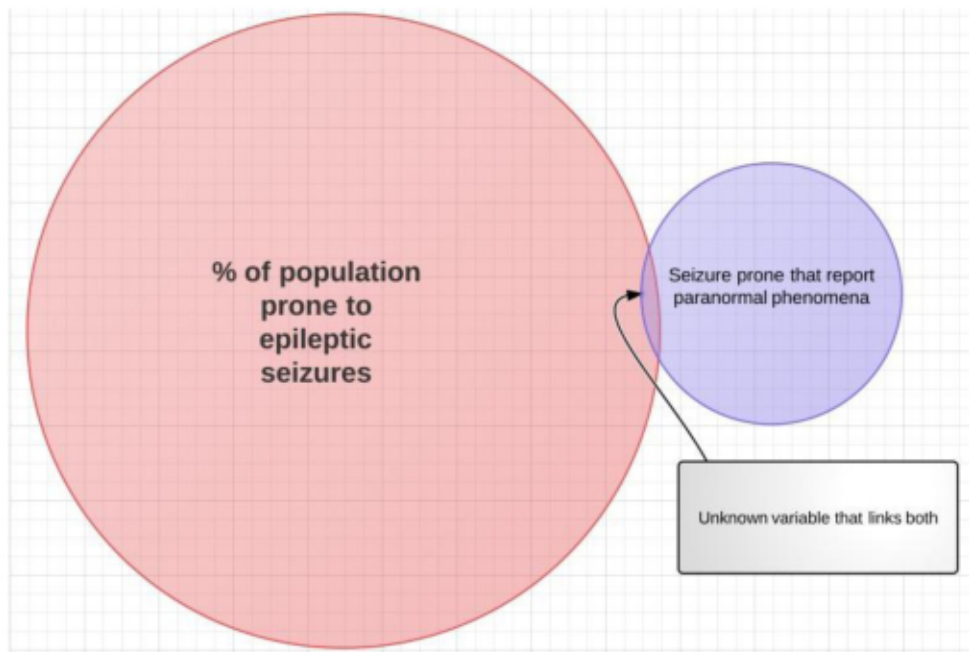
Their scientific equipment, film cameras and microphones failed to record almost all of the phenomena that went on inside the house. They were left with no proof. Except what they personally saw and experienced that night.

One thing is certain, both the Amherst and Bither case bear some resemblance.

For both women, the phenomena focused entirely on harming them. In both cases, there were successful attempts in communicating with the supposed poltergeist. It showed intelligence and the ability to communicate. Esther and Doris both were under severe stress, and from what we know, only Doris suffered from childhood abuse. We can't be certain, but Esther's unstable home-life can be indicative of parental neglect. A form of abuse. If such a thing like psychokinesis exists, can it be possible for someone to possess so much PK power to be able to subconsciously manifest an intelligent poltergeist?

Dr. Barry Taff, doctorate in psychophysiology with a minor in biomedical engineering, once told me that in his 4,000+ cases that he's investigated throughout the decades, a great majority of cases that displayed signs of poltergeist phenomena, usually focused on a single member of a household. Those people were almost always prone to epileptic seizures. Yet, a very minute number of people who suffer from epileptic seizure report paranormal activities. So if we were to draw a venn diagram in our head, a gigantic circle would represent people who suffer from seizures, and a diminutive circle, laying on the outer edge of the first circle, would represent those who have reported paranormal activity at one point or another.

The intersection between those two circles is the key to understanding the paranormal



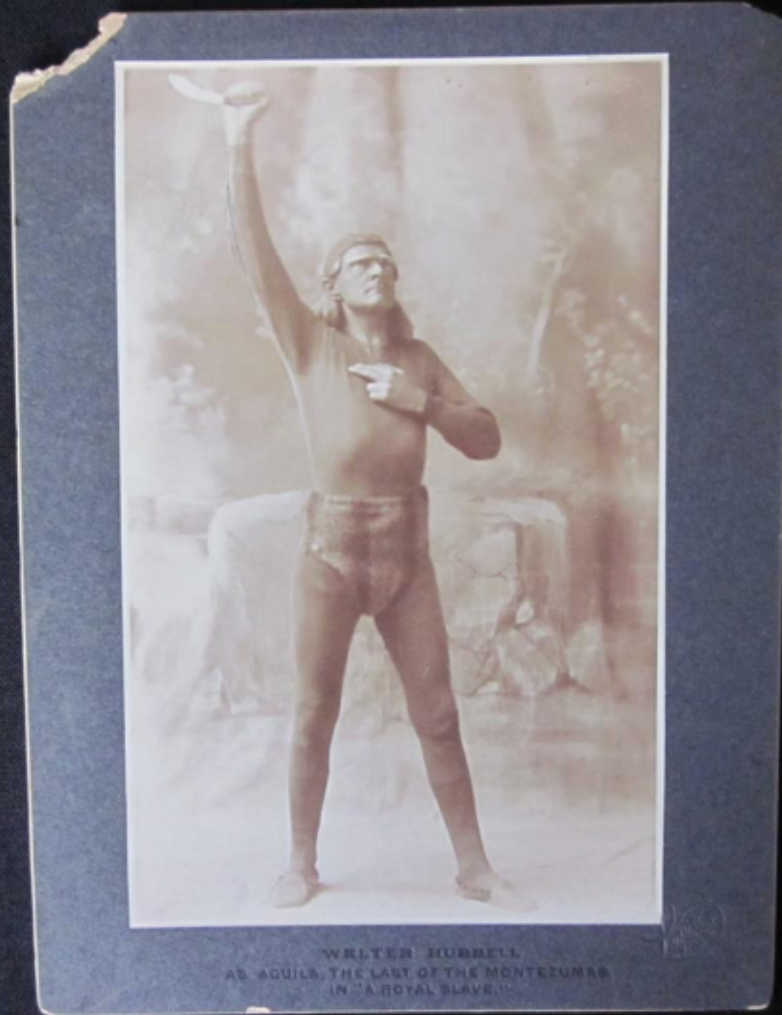
Esther Cox had suffered extreme fevers and seizures before the poltergeist began. If we were to take the word of the witnesses and that of Esther herself, we can say that Esther's case was not a case of ghostly activities, but the case of a young woman with extraordinary psychokinetic abilities.

About the author



I started GhostTheory back in 2008, when I discovered I had some talent as a writer. I began this website as a two purpose project. To sharpen my skills as a writer and to write about one of my passions, the paranormal. My focus is on making GhostTheory an unbiased website that reports and examines the paranormal. Welcome!

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Walter as Aquila: The Last of the Montezumas in "A Royal Slave"



WALTER HUBBELL.

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