

Local author explores mystery of Mulmur Hills Poltergeist in new book

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A nearly century-old mystery from the hills of Mulmur is being brought back into the spotlight with the release of a new book exploring one of Dufferin County's strangest paranormal stories.

Author Christopher Dodd releases *Unseen Thing: The Mulmur Hills Poltergeist* on Sept. 29, which takes a deep dive into the strange events reported by the Dobson family on their Mulmur Township farm in 1930.

Dodd first discovered the story after he and his wife purchased a property in Mulmur in 2014.

"I've always been fascinated with unsolved mysteries," he said. "It's like a real-world puzzle that you can spend a lot of time playing around with in your mind, theorizing and talking to people about possible explanations."

Dodd added, "During my first March break there at the Mulmur house, I Googled 'Mulmur' and the word 'haunted,' and just threw it out there to see what Google could find. Google came back with a book called *Strange but True*. There was a section in it about something that he called the Mulmur Hills Poltergeist. I was struck by the location because our place is on the Fourth Line of Mulmur, and it turns out this farm was just 12 kilometres south of us."

Dodd visited the Museum of Dufferin archives, where he discovered additional newspaper reports about the family. From there, what started as curiosity developed into years of research.

He searched community newspapers, Toronto newspaper archives, and historical documents while tracking the people connected to the case through land and tax records, voter lists, and birth, death, and marriage certificates.

As he pieced together a timeline, Dodd began noticing similarities between the events in Mulmur and other reported Canadian poltergeist cases. Those similarities ultimately helped shape the book, which he describes as part folklore study and part paranormal investigation.

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The book is divided into three sections, with Dodd first placing the events in Mulmur within the broader history of reported poltergeist activity in Canada.

The first section takes readers through six historical cases involving alleged poltergeist activity on Canadian farms, beginning with the Baldoon Poltergeist of 1829 and working forward to 1930. Rather than simply recounting the stories, Dodd looks for recurring features, themes and similarities between cases that occurred decades apart and in different parts of the country. Those patterns provide a framework for examining what later happened in Mulmur.

The second section turns entirely to the Mulmur Hills Poltergeist and the Dobson family. Dodd reconstructs who the family members were, how they came to live in Mulmur and what they reported experiencing on their farm. The section follows the story through the growing attention surrounding the property, the family's eventual loss of the farm and what became of them afterward.

With the historical groundwork established, the third section tackles the question at the centre of the book – what actually happened? Dodd examines what he calls the "case for strange," considering paranormal and supernatural explanations, before turning to the "case for a mundane solution." There, he considers whether the events could have resulted from a hoax or deception, misperceptions

or psychological factors affecting members of the family.

Dodd sees the book as an opportunity to re-examine how the Dobson family was treated at the time. Contemporary newspaper coverage often presented their experiences as entertainment, and the family expressed frustration with how their story was portrayed.

“The Dobson family got frustrated with what was happening in the papers at the time,” Dodd said. “When it first hit the front page of the Toronto Evening Telegram, the Daily Star, even the Orangeville Sun, it was just wrong. The one son, Ross Dobson, was very upset with how the family was being portrayed and the twisting of what they had said. He wrote letters to the editors of the newspaper saying, like, this isn't funny. You're messing up what happened. People think this is all a joke now.”

“I think this book is sort of a rebalancing of history. No one has ever done a deep dive into this story, and I think the family was not treated fairly. So this book, I think, is a way to maybe re-examine the case and, by comparing it to other stories, I think people might reevaluate what happened in Mulmur and maybe ask the question: maybe this wasn't a big hoax and a joke. Maybe there is something that happens sometimes to people that can't be explained, and we shouldn't write it off immediately,” Dodd added.

Rather than claiming to definitively solve a mystery that has endured for nearly a century, Dodd presents the competing possibilities and allows readers to weigh the evidence and decide for themselves which explanation they find most convincing.

“There's no clean, clear solution to this mystery,” he said. “You have to ask the questions: Well, if it's a hoax, what was the motivation, and you explore those lines of thought. Was there someone in the family playing tricks and mind games on everybody else, let's follow that theory. Or was there a paranormal element at play here?”

“I end the book with the theory that I tend to lean towards as being probably the best answer to what happened, but it's by no means definitive. I don't rule out a paranormal solution to this,” Dodd added.

More broadly, he hopes *Unseen Thing* leaves readers with a greater appreciation for the folklore and forgotten stories that form part of local history, and a sense of wonder about the mysteries still hidden throughout the Mulmur Hills and Dufferin County.

Unseen Thing: The Mulmur Hills Poltergeist is Dodd's debut nonfiction book releasing Sept. 29 and will be available for pre-order at Booklore in Orangeville. There is a meet the author book launch at Shelburne Library on Oct. 1 at 7 p.m. Registration is encouraged.