

PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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HYDESVILLE – FOX SPECIAL

- 02 - Looking Back over Psypioneer – Paul J. Gaunt**
- 05 - Singular Revelations - *Jeffersonian Republican***
- 11 - Modern Spiritualism - *Oswego Daily Times*, Tuesday Evening, April 1 1879**
- 13 - The Rochester Knockings - *The Medium and Daybreak***
- 16 The Fox Sisters: Some Unsolved Problems - Leonard J. Hodson**
- 19 - The Fox Sisters - Some Further Comparisons - Percy Wilson**
- 22 - In Memoriam - Kate Fox Jencken – James Burns**
- 28 - The Birthplace of Spiritualism - *The Decatur Daily Republican***
- 29 - A Foe to Spiritualism - *Chicago Daily Tribune***
- 30 - Spiritualism Exposed by the Fox Sisters - *Daily Democratic Times***
- 30 - Leah Fox Underhill and her Traducers - New York.—*Religio***
- 33 - Summing Up – Paul J. Gaunt**
- 36 - Photographs/images and End note details**
- 37 - Psypioneer Fox References**
- 38 - A Note in Passing - The 600th anniversary of the birth of Joan of Arc – G. Willey**
- 38 - Leslie's Christmas Quiz Answers**
- 40 - Some books we have reviewed**
- 41 - How to obtain this Journal by email**

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Looking Back over Psypioneer:



[Note: A checklist, *Psypioneer Fox Reference*, which details all our Hydesville/Fox articles/research to date, can be found at the end of this article. Details of the photographs published also added]

The Hydesville story, two young sisters communicating with the spirit of a peddler, is the most famous story told in Spiritualism, and is generally accepted as the foundation stone of the birth of Modern Spiritualism in 1848. We have become familiar with such phrases:

“Here, Old Splitfoot, do as I do!” (1.9, 5.6)

“Katie and Margaret Fox are the first people on modern record to hold a form of conversation with Spirit. It is a fact, that they devised a code whereby questions could be answered, that made the phenomena taking place in their home so interesting”. (1.9)

“An alphabetical code was established, including one rap for ‘no’ and two raps for ‘yes’, and the instigator of the raps was able to tell them that he was a peddler named Charles B. Rosna who had, in 1843, been murdered by a man called John C. Bell, who was a former tenant of the house, and his body had been hidden in the cellar”. (1.9)

These and other claims have remained vibrant for well over 150 years. But during the last six years Psypioneer has shown that many of these sweeping statements are incorrect. Fragments have been misplaced or recorded well after the event, which generally may have no historic referenced footing.

Why so many errors and contradictions?

Detailed signed statements were collected towards the end of The Hydesville phenomena in April 1848 by Mr. E.E. Lewis.¹ Lewis's booklet soon become rare although Capron, in his book *Modern Spiritualism* published in 1855,² would quote heavily upon it as did other publications of this period. In 2004 I obtained a photocopy of the original E.E. Lewis report (1.12): and found that the published statements did not actually name the two young sisters, and that they devised



Fox House, North of Newark, where Spiritualism Originated.

no code whereby questions could be answered. Although an alphabetical code was established by a neighbour/former resident of the house Mr. William Duesler, the peddler's name was not spelled out on March 31st, just two initials C.B.

“... I then tried to ascertain the first letters of its name, by calling over, the different letters of the alphabet. I commenced with A, and asked if that was the initial of its first name? there was no rapping. When I came to C, the rapping was heard, and at no other letter in the alphabet. I then asked in the same way, in regard to the initial of its sir-name; and when I asked if it was B? the rapping commenced. We then tried all the other letters, but could get no answer by the usual rapping. I then asked if we could find out the whole name by reading over all the letters of the alphabet? And there was no rapping.”

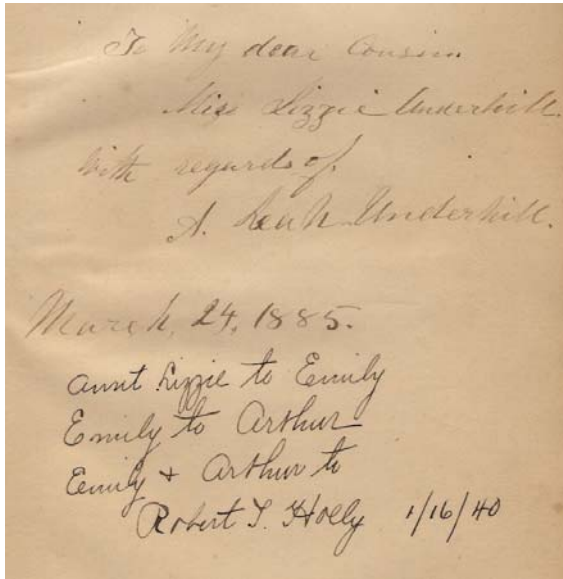
The first major changes to the story occur in Robert Dale Owen's book, *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World*, 1860. Research to date shows the name Charles B. Rosma (not Rosna)³ and Splitfoot were introduced at this time by Owen (1.9, 5.6).

¹ *Mysterious Noises, Heard in the House of Mr. John D. Fox, in Hydesville, Arcadia, Wayne County, Authenticated by the Certificates, and Confirmed by the Statements of the Citizens of that Place and Vicinity*, published April 1848. Marc Demarest has also published an original copy see:—
http://www.iapsop.com/archive/materials/lewis_noises/ee_lewis_mysterious_noises_1848.pdf

² *Modern Spiritualism: Its Facts And Fanaticisms, Its Consistencies and Contradictions*, E. W. Capron published by Bela Marsh, New York & Partridge and Brittan, Philadelphia 1855.

³ The name Rosna came in after Rosma. It may seem that the name Charles B Rosna came into being in 1870 by Emma Hardinge in her *Modern American Spiritualism* pages 36 & 39. It would appear that this is possibly a spelling / publisher's error; I would doubt that Hardinge would bring in another name for the peddler without some explanation for contradicting Owen's Rosma.

See end note



In 1885, the eldest Fox sister then called Ann Leah Underhill published *The Missing Link*,⁴ re-printing some of the *original* statements as recorded by Lewis in April 1848. What went unnoticed, no doubt due to the rarity of the original documentation by Lewis, is the fact Underhill changed the statements—adding to, and editing the original contents (5.9). These would later, with Dale Owen's *Footfalls*, become the blue prints for the *official* Hydesville story, used in major works and Spiritualist organisations worldwide.

For example *The History of Spiritualism* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1926), a book recommended in the Spiritualists' National

Union's education scheme, supposedly published the signed statement by Mrs. Margaret Fox dated April 11, 1848 as originally recorded by Lewis. In fact Doyle had unwittingly republished the Underhill version.⁵ However, the peddler's name Rosma is not given by Leah Underhill and belongs to Dale Owen.

In our first article: *What is known of the Hydesville peddler?* (1.9) we noted that the peddler's name was not given at the time of the Hydesville hauntings, but later by David Fox (1.9, 5.9). Since then various names have emerged, from Charles Rayn to Charles B. Rosma. Following in the same issue, the late Dr. Coleman even asked: *Did the Peddler Exist?* Also in issue 5.9: *Fox News*, more serious attention was given to Charles Rayn as the possible name of the Hydesville Peddler.

Below is published the latest material which has come to light, which unfortunately does little to better our understanding. One of the biggest hurdles is the Fox sisters themselves, continuously lying about their ages (4.8, 4.9) and *often* changing their story and contradicting themselves.

This latest material does not confirm the name of Rosma or Rosna, but brings another peddler's name into the equation. This significant early material was found by Jim and Lis Warwood, Lis has already substantially contributed to the Hydesville/Fox story with her painstaking article (which followed on from my: *Are the ages of the Fox Sisters important?* (4.8) with detailed census records: *The Fox Sisters: Riddle of the records* (4.9). The account published in full below was recorded in 1849 by Eliab Capron and George Willets. Capron, the first Spiritualist historian, was the principal speaker at the first Spiritualist

⁴ *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*, by A. Leah Underhill published Thomas R. Knox & Co, New York 1885. Available to read on line:—<http://www.archive.org/details/missinglinkinmo00undegoog>

⁵ Leah was at first unaware of the Hydesville affair, arriving there after the family had moved to David (brother) Fox's farm house. David Fox died in 1902.

meeting held at the Corinthian Hall, Rochester on November 14th, 1849.⁶ We can note (to date) in Capron's other published works that he mentions no peddler's name. As noted above he generally relies on the signed Lewis statements where only the initials CB were given, although Capron gives C.R (1.9, 5.9):⁷

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SINGULAR REVELATIONS

Communications with Spirits in Western New-York

Jeffersonian Republican:—⁸

For some time the Rochester and other papers in western N.Y. have made occasional references to mysterious noises, that were producing considerable excitement in that quarter: and the following grave history of the affair was published in the Tribune of the 1st instant, by which it would appear that intelligent and prominent citizens have thought it worthy of serious attention. The case furnishes another illustration of the effect of mystery on human mind, on which account alone we copy it.

From The New-York Tribune

Knowing that the public mind, in various locations in Western New-York, has been somewhat agitated on account of certain sounds, called by some "mysterious," we shall offer no apology for making the following plain statement of facts in regard to our knowledge of the matter.

The sounds were first heard about two years since, and have not yet ceased, but seem to be spreading from one place to another and gradually claiming the attention of the public mind.⁹ When first heard, they were manifested by a simple hollow sounding rap upon the

⁶ Eliab Wilkinson Capron died in 1892, obituary published in Emma Hardinge Britten's *The Unseen Universe*, Volume 1, No.4 July 1892 pages 196-199 (this site: The International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals (IAPSOP) which has numerous major publications available for downloading, is run by Marc Demarest of www.ehbritten.org):—
http://www.iapsop.com/archive/materials/unseen_universe/unseen_universe_v1_i4.pdf

⁷ This can be noted and compared with the original Lewis statement (quoted above) by Duesler. Available on line Henry D. Barron and Eliab W. Capron – *Singular Revelations: Explanation and History of the Mysterious Communication with Spirits: Comprehending the Rise and Progress of the Mysterious Noises*. See page 17:—http://www.iapsop.com/archive/materials/capron_explanation/capron_singular_revelations_1850.pdf

⁸ *Jeffersonian Republican*, Stroudsburg, Monroe County, PA., Thursday, December 13, 1849

⁹ For the early spread of the phenomena after the Corinthian Hall demonstrations, see *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.11:—*The Physical Phenomena of the Past An Historical Survey The Rap—"God's Telegraph"* By W. Leslie Curnow, B.A., pages 349-335 especially footnote 12:—
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.11November2011.pdf>

floor of a house. This rapping was continued every night, for a long time and finally commenced in the day-time. It was at first entirely unintelligible to the inhabitants of the house.

At length a little girl said “Now do as I do,” and snapped her finger three times.¹⁰ She was answered by three raps. On repeating it she found that it invariably repeated the number she made herself. Another person said, “Now count ten,” and it was done. “Now count the age of”—(one of the children.) It was done correctly.—Another was tried with like success. As it began to display signs of intelligence the family became alarmed and the females all left the house at night. The neighbours were called in but there was no cessation of the sounds. The excitement became intense, and at one time, it is said, nearly or quite 300 persons assembled to discover from whence the sounds proceeded. The house was thoroughly examined from garret to cellar, but, while the sounds continued, no one ever discovered the operator. At length it was discovered that every time a question was put that required an affirmative, a rap was heard—for a negative—no sound.

The question was put, “Are you a spirit?” The answer was by rapping—three raps. By this means they found that it purported to be the spirit of a man. Many expedients were resorted to by which to find out the name of the man whose spirit was making these manifestations. At length a stranger asked “If I will call the Alphabet, beginning with A. will you rap when I come to the first letter of his name.” The answer was affirmative. He then commenced “A, B, C,” when he came to C, there was a rap. Again he went on, and it rapped at H, and in that way he spelled out the name of Charles Rasme. As before stated, these sounds have, from that time been heard in various families in that place and the cities of Auburn and Rochester and various places in the country. Although confined to this rapping sound, the mode of communication has gradually improved so that many very curious and astonishing sentences have been spelled by the use of the Alphabet. It no longer purports to be the spirit of one man or person, but when an individual makes the inquiry “who is it that wishes to communicate with me,” they will generally get the name

¹⁰ It is interesting to note how the identification of the children appears to be unimportant or maybe uncertain e.g., “a little girl said”. We could consider the quote from: *The wrong Fox sister?* (6.3): “A granddaughter of Mrs. Fox (Elizabeth Fish, aged eleven years) was at that time staying with the grandparents. This older niece was the questioner with whom the early conversations were carried on with the unseen communicants, little Katie merely responding by clasping her tiny fingers together.”

Mrs. Fox stated in her original Lewis statement:—“There was four of our family, and sometimes five” - it is likely that she was referring to her granddaughter called Lizzie. The other Fox sisters would have been much older, Elizabeth Fox-Osterhout lived in Canada, and Maria lived close by and was married to Stephen Smith. Maria Fox-Smith died at Nyack, New York on November 4th, 1902 age 85.

Capron and Barron also reference another person in *Singular Revelations*, which states on page 12:—“At the time these occurrences first took place in the family, there were living with the parents three daughters, the youngest about twelve years of age.” According to Mrs. Fox’s statement (Lewis) the occurrences (with the Fox family) first took place around mid March: “We first heard this noise about a fortnight ago” Could this other person really be the granddaughter Lizzie and was she in fact present at the height of the communications as told by Margaret and Kate at the thirtieth Anniversary of Hydesville? (6.3 page 59)

of some friend or relative a—Mother, Father, Sister or Brother who has passed from visible existence.—Many persons have made the trial and have had name spelled out to them of their friends, unknown to any person present. Strangers have tried the experiment and had their names spelled out before any person present knew it or where they came from.

In each family where the sounds appear, there seems to be some *one* or *two*, whose presence is necessary to insure communications freely. *Generally* we find that these persons are susceptible to magnetic influences and Clairvoyant, although we have heard it where there were none that had ever been magnetized or were known to be Clairvoyant. In the family of Mr. Granger of Rochester—a citizen well known there—the communications could be had with any two of the family previous to any of them being placed under the magnetic influence, but after a daughter was magnetized and became Clairvoyant, no communication could be had without her presence. No person had ever been magnetized in the family where it first appeared.

We first became acquainted with these manifestations about one year since, and we have taken every opportunity to discover, if possible what it is. We have become convinced that these three facts there is no disputing. Viz: The sounds,—the intelligence and the absence of any collusion or deception in the matter.

Some two weeks since, we were in company with some persons who were getting communications from this invisible communicator when a message was spelled out to us to the import that the matter should be made more public—that the time had arrived for the people to investigate the whole affair—that it was a thing which will ultimately become known to all men, and that we should immediately take measures to have it investigated. The directions were then minutely given by these spirits, as they purport to be, and which we are willing to believe, are until we have as much proof to the contrary as it required to bring us to this conclusion. These directions will appear in the following history, as they were fully and strictly followed. The great object was to start investigation and clear those who had been hearing it for the last two years from the imputation of fraud and deception.¹¹

Accordingly on the evening of November 14, a lecture was delivered in Corinthian Hall in the City of Rochester, and a full history of the rise and progress of these strange

¹¹ Capron records in his book *Modern Spiritualism*, 1855 page 90: “The first message on this subject was given through the alphabet thus: “You all have a duty to perform. We want you to make this matter more public.” We urged the awkwardness of the position we should be placed in, the ridicule that would be heaped upon us or any one who should attempt to lecture on this subject. The answer to this was: “That will be so much the better,—your triumph will be so much the greater.”

“The plan proposed by the spirits was as follows: Corinthian Hall should be hired; Mrs. Fish and Margaretta should go there; E. W. Capron should deliver the lecture, explaining the commencement of the sounds at Hydesville, and their progress up to that time, and George Willets should act as the business man, doorkeeper, &c. At each meeting there must be a committee of five persons, appointed by the audience, to investigate the matter and report at the next meeting. The spirits promised to make sounds so loud as to be heard in all parts of the hall. The names of several persons were given to accompany Mrs. Fish and her sister on the platform. Among these were Amy Post, and one or two other ladies, Rev. A. H. Jervis, N. Draper, Esq., Lyman Granger, and other well-known citizens. The charge for admission was to be twenty-five cents. All these directions were given by using the alphabet, without a suggestion on our parts.”

manifestations given. During the relation of these facts the sounds were distinctly heard by the persons in the hall.

After the lecture, a Committee was chosen by the audience, composed of the following persons—A. J. Combs, Daniel Marsh, Nathaniel Clark, Esq., A. Judson and Edwin Jones.

On the following evening the Committee reported in substance, as follows: That without the knowledge of the persons in whose presence the manifestations are made, the Committee selected the Hall of the Sons of Temperance for the investigation—that the sound on the floor near where the two ladies stood was heard as distinctly as at other places, and that part of the Committee heard the rapping on the wall behind them—that a number of questions were asked which were answered not altogether right nor altogether wrong—that in the afternoon they went to the house of a private citizen, and while there, the sounds were heard on the outside (apparently) of the front door, after they had entered and on the door of a closet. By placing the hand upon the door, there, was a sensible jar felt when the rapping was heard. One of the Committee placed one of his hands upon the feet of the ladies and the other on the floor, and though the feet were not moved, there was a distinct jar on the floor. On the pavement and on the ground the same sound was heard;—a kind of double rap as if a stroke and a rebound were distinguishable. When the ladies were separated at a distance no sound, was heard; but when third person was interposed between them the sounds were heard. The ladies seemed ready to give every opportunity to the Committee to investigate the cause fully, and would submit to a thorough investigation by a committee of ladies if desired. They all agreed that the sounds were heard, *but they entirely failed to discover any means by which it could be done.*¹²

After this report and some discussion on the subject, the audience selected another Committee composed of the following persons Doctor H. H. Langworthy, Hon. Frederick Whittlesey, D. C. McCallum, William Fisher, of Rochester, and Hon. A. P. Hascall, of Leroy. At the next lecture this Committee reported that they went into the investigation at the office of Chancellor Whittlesey, and they heard the sound on the floor, on the wall and door,—that the ladies were placed in different positions and, like the other Committee, they were wholly unable to tell from what the sounds proceeded or how it was made,—that Dr. Langworthy made observations with a stethoscope to ascertain whether there was any movement of the lungs, and found not the least difference when the sounds were made; and that there was no kind of probability or possibility of their being made by ventriloquism as some had supposed—and they could not have been made by machinery.

Again, after this report, another Committee was formed, from persons who had opposed in the meeting all pretensions to there being anything but a trick.

This Committee was composed of Dr. E. P. Langworthy, Dr. J. Gales, Wm. Fitzhugh, Esq., W. L. Burtis and L. Kenyon. This Committee met at the rooms of Dr. Gates at the Rochester House, and appointed a Committee of Ladies who took the young women into a room, disrobed them and examined their persons and clothing to be sure that there was no

¹² Note the claim of fraud made against Kate in particular by Mrs. Norman Culver: *The raps are produced with the toes*, See *Mrs. Norman Culver, and Kate Fox* (7.9).

fixtures about them that could produce the sounds. When satisfied on this point the Committee of Ladies tried some other experiments, and gave the young ladies following certificate:

“When they were standing on pillows with a handkerchief tied around the bottom of their dress, tight to the ankles we all heard the rapping on the wall and floor distinctly.”
(Signed)

MRS. STONE, MRS. J. GATES,
MISS M. P. LAWRENCE

In the evening the Committee, through their Chairman, Dr. Langworthy, made a very full report of their examination during the day. They reported that they had excluded all friends of the two ladies from the Committee room and had the examination only in presence of the Committee of gentlemen, and ladies chosen by them. Notwithstanding all this precaution, these sounds were heard when the ladies stood on large feather pillows, without shoes, and in various other positions, both on the floor and on the wall,—that a number of questions were asked which, when answered, were generally correct. Each member of the Committee reported separately agreeing with and corroborating the first statements.

Thus, by three days of the strictest scrutiny by means of intelligence, candor and science, were the persons in whose presence these sounds are heard, acquitted of all fraud.

On Friday evening, after the lecture, three of the Committee, viz : Hon. A. P. Hascall, D. C. McCallum and William Fisher, repaired to the house of a citizen and pursued their investigations still farther. There were nearly a score of persons present. The members of the committee wrote many questions on paper, which no person present knew the purport of, and they were answered correctly. At times they would ask *mentally* and would receive the answers with equal correctness and they were fully satisfied that there was *something* present manifesting an intelligence beyond the persons *visible*.

One of the committee tried the experiment of standing the ladies on glass and failed to get any sounds; but the same was subsequently tried in presence of a large number of persons, and the sounds were as loud and distinct as before, on the floor as usual.

Such are the facts so far as the public proceedings are concerned, (which is but a small part of these strange occurrences) with the Committee's reports greatly condensed.

Thus the matter stands at present, and whether it is only a remarkable phenomena which will pass away with the present generation, or with the persons who seem now to be the medium of this extraordinary communication; or whether it be the commencement of a new era of spiritual influx into the world; it is certainly something worthy the attention of men of candor and philosophy.

E. W. CAPRON, Auburn.
GEORGE WILLETS, Rochester.

Rochester, Nov. 22, 1849.

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We note the title of the above article: *Singular Revelations*, dated December 13th, 1849. This title would shortly be used for the first substantive publication since the Lewis report; its full title being; *Singular Revelations: Explanation and History of the Mysterious Communication with Spirits: Comprehending the Rise and Progress of the Mysterious Noises*.¹³ We also note that a substantial part of this article is re-published in *Singular Revelations*, for example Chapter VI; *The Public Investigation at Corinthian Hall in the City of Rochester*, page 45. The download link given is to the second edition (revised and enlarged), March 1850. In Barbara Weisberg's *Talking to the Dead*, 2004 (1.2) page 91, we have February 1850 given as the first printing; this is referenced to Horace Greeley's review for the *New York Tribune* published January 26th, 1850.

Possibly the first printing may have included the communicator's name Charles Rasme. If not, one can only speculate as to why Barron/Capron used only the Lewis report as reference, showing that no name was given at Hydesville during the height of the phenomena, only the initials which Capron also used (Lewis initials CB, Capron gives CR) in his book *Modern Spiritualism*, five years later? However, in Chapter V of *Singular Revelations*, page 37 we may have an important clue as to why historians like Capron, later omitted any names, if the names rapped out, were in fact *inconclusive* and *unreliable*:

“WE have heretofore spoken only of the progress of the sounds at Hydesville, in Arcadia. We left them after they had just learned enough of the matter to converse, by getting raps for an affirmative, and no sound for a negative, and a name or two spelled out by the use of the alphabet.

“Like all new discoveries, this has become more perfect as it has been investigated and studied into. The mode of communication has gradually improved, until those who are most familiar with it, can without difficulty get long, and *correct* communications spelled out by the alphabet.”

One could consider that, as the new Spiritualist movement progressed, the peddler's name was never fully established and not even deemed important.¹⁴ It is only in more recent times the peddler's name has come to the forefront, and been sought.

¹³ <http://www.nasm.org.au/pdf/Explanation%20of%20the%20Mysterious%20Noises%20Capron%201850.pdf>

¹⁴ We can note in the above Capron/Willets article that when the name Charles Rasme was rapped out, there was no reference to a murdered peddler just a *Spirit of a man*.

On the 31st anniversary of Hydesville in 1879 we come across yet another peddler's name:

MODERN SPIRITUALISM

Oswego Daily Times, Tuesday Evening, April 1 1879

Celebrations of the Thirty-first Anniversary

A large number of the Spiritualists of this city gathered at the residence of A. M. Richards, East 6th street, last evening, to commemorate in a suitable manner the thirty-first anniversary of modern Spiritualism.

After a time spent in social intercourse Mr. J. L. Pool was introduced and made an address, giving a brief history of modern spiritualism, which dates from the Hydesville rappings. It may be interesting at this time to give the history as it is understood by Spiritualists, some of the incidents of which were given in Mr. Pool's address:

Thirty-one years ago a man named Weekman lived in a house at Hydesville, Wayne County. He heard rappings about the house, which he could not account for. He moved away and a family named Fox took possession. On the night of March 31, 1848, the rapping noises occurred in the bedroom where the Fox sisters, Katie and Margaret, aged respectively seven and ten years, slept. At the request of the girls the invisible power rapped a certain number of times in succession. The family assembled, and the spirit rapped the ages of each, rapping once for each year. It was told to rap twice if it was a spirit, and immediately it rapped twice. A week after the spirit by rapping the letters of the alphabet, gave its name as Charles B Rosemond, the spirit of a peddler who had been murdered in the house. The family were Methodists, and they moved to Rochester to escape the annoyance of the rappings, but the spirit followed them. In November, 1849 a meeting was called at Corinthian Hall, Rochester, at which the manifestations were fully tested. After several days the committee reported that they were unable to trace the rappings to any earthly power.

Mr. Pool referred to the wonderful spread and growth of Spiritualism, which from a small and feeble beginning had grown to be a sect of commanding proportions, whose adherents number tens of thousands and even millions in all parts of the world. He also gave an interesting account of the growth of Spiritualism in Oswego, with all the various stages of which the speaker was familiar, having taken a leading part in many of the movements connected with it. There were several persons present who attended the first "circles" and the first meetings ever held by Spiritualists in Oswego County.

Dr. Lester followed Mr. Pool, giving a clear and succinct statement of the philosophy of Spiritualism. Remarks were also made by J. P. M. Peck and others. The exercises were interspersed with music, readings and recitations. An elegant vase and a handsome bouquet were presented to Mrs. Richards. During the evening a substantial collation was served.

The following was composed and read by Mrs. Oliver Peek:

... followed by a poem

IN OTHER CITIES

There were celebrations in Utica, Rochester and other cities yesterday.

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We can now reference five names; some modern writers have introduced more names, but their origin is un-referenced.

1849: Charles Rasme (Capron)
1953: Charles Rayn (Spicer)
1860: Charles B Rosma (Owen)
1870: Charles B. Rosna (Britten)
1879: Charles B Rosemond (Pool)

No references to date have shown or indicated the Fox sisters ever gave any name for the peddler, although it is *generally* claimed today that Katie and Margaret Fox devised a code whereby a peddler named Charles B. Rosma/Rosna communicated on the celebrated night! The reason for this being, it did not actually happen! This part of the story has developed without foundation. As stated in the first Hydesville article:

“Taking a step back from the 1848 Hydesville phenomena, one could almost remove the Fox sisters! In reality Katie and Margaret had very little participation in the unfolding events, and their names rarely appear in the original story.”

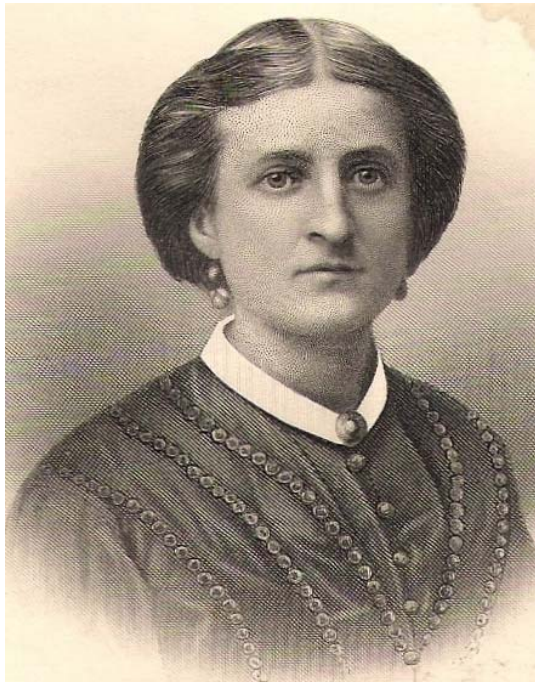
It is in what happens a year or so later that the real foundations of modern Spiritualism are more firmly placed, and the Fox sisters including the eldest Ann Leah become the pioneers, the “Rochester Rappers”: for example the demonstration at Corinthian Hall in November 1849, with the subsequent investigations, and the establishment of public séances, etc (7.3, 5.4).

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Just prior to the 1879 article published above, Katie Fox-Jencken writes to James Burns, editor of the *Medium and Daybreak*:

THE ROCHESTER KNOCKINGS

The Medium and Daybreak:—¹⁵



To the Editor.—Dear Sir,—Will you allow me to contradict in your paper, a statement made in the *Spiritualist*, of Jan. 24, in an article headed “Haunting and Apparitions,” by Mr. William H. Harrison?

In this article is stated as follows:—“The little known documentary evidence that the house at Hydesville was haunted long before the Fox family took it, thus the phenomena which now follow Katie Fox (Mrs. Jencken) everywhere in London began in a haunted house in America before she went to live in it.”

Spiritualism had its origin in 1848, through my sister Margaret and myself, then scarcely five and seven years old, in the little village of Hydesville, where my father rented a small house during the completion of a house he was building. There was no such thing ever heard of as the house being haunted before my father took possession of it. During the great public excitement, my dear father and mother removed with their two young children, to the farm of my brother, two miles from Hydesville, still retaining the former house. Thousands flocked to hear the knockings, and crowded the house to overflowing. Many leading people of Rochester would go in little groups to the house, and patiently wait for hours in the hopes of obtaining rappings, but *not one* sound was ever heard in that house, without either my sister Margaret or myself. From the time my dear parents left Hydesville, to the present day, there has never been a rap or echo heard within the walls of that dwelling, although repeated efforts have been made from time to time to call them forth.

The historical fact that Spiritualism commenced with my sister Margaret and myself, in the little village of Hydesville, should silence such erroneous statements.

¹⁵ *The Medium and Daybreak* February 7, 1879 page 89.

At the time the manifestations first made their appearance in our family, all sorts of rumours were circulated. Everyone who had occupied the house before had heard or seen something mysterious.

I hope to publish my autobiography very soon, when all these facts will be laid before the public. I send your paper every week to an editor of one of the most popular papers in New York, and he expresses himself highly pleased with the straightforward way you conduct it.

I hope you will pardon me for trespassing so long on your time, but let me add that which you already know, that these “Rochester knockings” have stood the test of thirty of years careful, and often hostile, investigation, without question or doubt as to their reality, when all other manifestations have been questioned, and in many instances, I fear, not without reason.

For my part, I have always objected to dark seances, so also has Mrs. Kane (Margaret Fox), and I am glad to say that consequently she has for some time past refused to give dark sittings.

London, W.

KATIE FOX JENCKEN.

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Firstly it should be noted: Kate Fox-Jencken had on several occasions alluded to her forthcoming autobiography, *about to publish her autobiography*, this was in July 1878, and it was never published to our knowledge. (1.17)

This statement brings into dispute other issues which would go further to disrupt the surrounding story,

“... but *not one* sound was ever heard in that house, without either my sister Margaret or myself.”

Capron states in *Singular Revelations* ..., page 37:

“For some time the rapping was confined to that house, although, as stated in a former chapter, the family of Mr. Fox all left the house at times. While the neighbors were testing the floor and the walls of the house, and the family entirely away from it, the sounds were heard as distinctly as ever. We wish this to be distinctly remembered, as it as often been asserted by persons ignorant of the facts, or willfully malicious, that the sounds were never heard, unless in the presence of two of the daughters of Mr. Fox. *The facts already stated and proved, show that they commenced before that family occupied the house or lived in the neighborhood.*”

Mrs. Fox's statement states (1.12, p5):

"Many called in that night, who were out fishing in the creek, and they all heard the same noise. The same questions were frequently repeated as others came in, and the same answers were obtained. Some of them staid here all night. I and my family all left the house but my husband. I went to Mrs. Redfield's and staid all night: my children staid at some of the other neighbors. My husband and Mr. Redfield staid in the house all that night."

As previously pointed out, the Fox sisters appear only briefly and unnamed in the Lewis report. The statements that make up the Lewis report are in part—the ghostly claims of a murdered peddler and his return which predates the eventful evening of March 31st. It is this alleged history that helped to formulate the story of the peddler's murder and possible return to previous tenants/staff, as given for example in Miss Lucretia Pulver and Jane C. Lape's statements. Below are a few quotes but the full statements should be read to place this in the correct and full context.

Quotes from Lucretia Pulver statement April 11th, 1848, start page 29 (1.12):

... "It sounded as if the person walked through the buttery, down cellar, and part way across the cellar bottom, and there the noise ceased."

... "A few days before the time when I first heard these noises, or any thing of this kind had ever occurred, a foot pedler called there, about two o'clock in the afternoon."

... "I should think this pedler, of whom I have spoken, was about 30 years old. I heard him conversing with Mrs.—[Bell] about his family: he told how many children he had, in answer to her inquiries. I do not recollect now how many he said he had."

... "This pedler carried a trunk, and a basket, I think, with vials of essence in it. He wore a black frock coat, and light colored pants. I am willing to swear to the above statement, if it is necessary."

Quote from Jane C. Lape statement April 17th, 1848, page 28 (1.12):

... "One day, about two o'clock P. M., while I was doing my work in the kitchen, I saw a man in the bed-room joining the kitchen.¹⁶ The bed-room door was open, and I saw the man distinctly. I was much frightened. I had been in the kitchen some time at work, and knew that no one had gone into that room. There was only one door to the bed-room, and that opened into the kitchen. The man stood facing me when I saw him. He did not speak, nor did I hear any noise at any time, like a person walking or moving about in the room. He had on grey

¹⁶ Layout of Fox house see: — 1. 18 *The Mystery of Fox Cottage*

pants, black frock coat and black cap. He was about middling size, I should think. I knew of no person in that vicinity who wore a similar dress.”

It was just a year earlier at the thirtieth anniversary, we were told by the two sisters this rather astonishing claim as previously published (6.3):

“Maggie and Kate, as named, were only four and six years old respectively on the 31st March, 1848, and at that time resided with their parents in a small wooden house temporarily occupied by the Fox family until the dwelling on the old family estate of Mrs. Fox’s father had been completed. A granddaughter of Mrs. Fox (Elizabeth Fish, aged eleven years) was at that time staying with the grandparents. This older niece was the questioner with whom the early conversations were carried on with the unseen communicants, little Katie merely responding by clasping her tiny fingers together.

“The error of the ages of these children arose no doubt by confounding the age of the niece, Elizabeth Fish, with that of either Maggie or Katie.”

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Psypioneer authors were not the first historians to tackle the complex problem of the various ages which all three sisters used throughout their lives. We have previously noted that former Spiritualists’ National Union president (1950-1953) Percy Wilson¹⁷ had attempted to understand the formation of the Seven Principles.¹⁸ Below, Percy attempts his hand on the question of the Fox sisters’ ages. The discussion had started with an article by Leonard Hodson, which was found by my colleague Leslie Price:

THE FOX SISTERS: SOME UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

Light:—¹⁹

By LEONARD J. HODSON, LL.B. (Lond.)

THE fact that in less than five years’ time spiritualists will be celebrating the centenary of the historic events of March 31, 1848, prompts the reflection that it is surely time some attempt should be made to clear up the discrepancies in the early accounts of the Hydesville phenomena and to fill in the *lacunae* of such narratives.

It is curious, when one considers the flood of Spiritualist literature which has come from the Press since 1848, that there appears to be no really comprehensive and authoritative

¹⁷ Psypioneer Volume 6, No.1:—*Our new president, Percy Wilson – The Two Worlds*, pages 17-22:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.1January2010.pdf>

¹⁸ Psypioneer Volume 2, No.5:—*The error that changed history – Paul J. Gaunt*, pages 17-22:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/2.5%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

¹⁹ *LIGHT* Thursday June 24, 1943 front page.

“Life” of the Fox sisters to which the judicially minded student can turn with any prospect of finding an impartial and properly documented review of the part which the two sisters played in the chequered history of the Movement. Those writers on the beginnings of Spiritualism who regard the sisters as the harbingers of a “New Revelation” have too often displayed an extraordinary indifference to the importance of dates and details concerning their careers, while those who take the view that they were merely two naughty little girls whose successful “leg-pulling” of a their parents and neighbours led them into a career of fraud have, for the most part, been content to support their case by quoting, with little or no attempt to investigate their truth, statements of no higher historical value than those of contemporary newspapers of the baser sort.

This is the more regrettable on account of the wide and interesting field which the lives of the sisters offer to a biographer prepared to embark on the arduous task of ascertaining, so far as may be possible at this distance of time, the actual facts concerning controverted points in their careers.

AGE DISCREPANCIES

One of the many points as to which there is a singular unanimity is that of the age of the two girls at the time of the events at Hydesville—a matter by no means without interest and significance from a psychological standpoint. For instance, T. O. Todd (*Hydesville:—The Story of the Rochester Rappings*) gives the respective ages of Margaret and Kate as 12 and 9. This accords with Appleton’s *Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, which states that Margaret was born in 1836 (at Bath, Canada), and Kate in 1839. Emma Hardinge Britten (*Modern American Spiritualism*), on the other hand, quotes a statement said to have been made by Mrs. Fox herself as authority for giving their ages as 15 and 12. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle describes them as being 14 and 11; while according to J. B. Campbell’s account “at the time these occurrences first took place in the family, there were living with the parents three daughters, the youngest about 12.” (Here, incidentally, is another discrepancy, as other accounts imply that only Margaret and Kate were living at home.)

To make confusion worse confounded one finds in *The Love Life of Dr. Kane* (1866) a reference to Margaret being “scarcely thirteen years of age” in the late autumn of 1852 when she first met Elisha K. Kane, the Arctic explorer. This would mean, if correct, that, the *elder* of the two girls was only nine in March, 1848.

One may presume that there was no general system of registration of births at the time the Fox girls were born, but it would be of interest to learn from some American or Canadian reader of *LIGHT* whether there is any likelihood of any other records being in existence that might elucidate these discrepancies.

In view of the possible influence of heredity on the development of psychic gifts, spiritualists with a taste for genealogical pursuits might also usefully employ their talents in trying to amplify the tantalizingly vague statements of Todd as to the ancestry of the Fox family. “In Mrs. Fox’s family,” he writes, “French by origin and Rutan by name, several individuals had evinced the power of second sight—her maternal grandmother (Margaret

Ackerman) who resided at Long Island, had frequent perception of coming events. . . . Mrs. Fox's sister also, Mrs. Elizabeth Higgins, had similar powers." *The Love Life of Dr. Kane* provides a few more crumbs of genealogical interest with a view, apparently, to showing that the family was formerly in less humble circumstances than in 1848. "Her (Margaret Fox) father," we are told, "was a reputable and well-to-do farmer who owned a fine estate in Canada, where Margaret was born, and considerable property in the western part of the State of New York. His ancestors were highly respectable Germans, the name being originally Voss. Mrs. Fox was of the Rutan family, of French origin, and of ancient and honourable lineage. Some of her relations of that name still reside near Montreal, possessors of a magnificent estate, and esteemed among the wealthy aristocracy of the country. Mr. Fox, unfortunately, lost his excellent Canadian property but retained a small farm in New York."

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Another problem which seems never to have been definitely settled is as to whether Margaret was ever actually married, as she subsequently maintained, to Kane before he left for England only four months before his death on February 16, 1857.

We lack, moreover, any consecutive and detailed account (though there are numerous references to her in the Press and in contemporary memoirs) of the period Kate spent in England. Her marriage to H. D. Jencken, a member of the Chancery Bar, in 1872, was followed by the birth of a child who was reported more or less credibly to have displayed astounding psychic powers at a very tender age. If *The Death Blow to Spiritualism* (1888), by Reuben Briggs Davenport, is to be credited, she must have had at least one other child; for it is alleged that shortly before she returned to America in October, 1888, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children had endeavoured to deprive her of the custody of "her two boys." (H. D. Jencken died at 16 St. James's Street,²⁰ Notting Hill, on November 26, 1881, but *Boase's Modern Biography* makes no mention of his wife or children.)

It seems clear that both sisters succumbed during their later years to over-indulgence in drink and that they quarrelled violently with their elder sister, Mrs. Underhill. The Latter's husband is quoted in the *Death Blow* as being of the opinion that Margaret, at least, was not in her right mind in 1888, or accountable for what she said. Whether she was or not is a matter which is obviously of the first importance in estimating what weight should be attached to the statements which both sisters are alleged to have made in October, 1888, as to the manifestations at Hydesville having been "All humbuggery from beginning to end" and "an absolute falsehood."

Spiritualism does not, of course, stand or fall by the genuineness or otherwise of the Hydesville phenomena, but it cannot be denied that the cloud of uncertainty which veils the closing years of the Fox sisters tends to create scepticism in the minds of inquirers into the Movement as to much else in its history. For this reason, as well as in the interests of historical accuracy, it is clearly desirable that all possible light should be shed on the

²⁰ The date of his death depends which account is consulted 20th, or 26th, November 1881 see (5.9)

disputed facts in the lives of two women who—whatever view one takes of them—have admittedly influenced profoundly the beliefs of thousands.

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Percy Wilson takes up the challenge:

THE FOX SISTERS

*Light:—*²¹

SOME FURTHER COMPARISONS

By PERCY WILSON

I AM not surprised that Mr. Hodson is puzzled about some of the matters to which he refers in his article of 24th June. There has indeed been much confusion in various published accounts, largely due to the fact that in their later years neither Margaret nor Katie could be relied upon to tell the truth. It is necessary therefore to give greater weight to earlier records and to contemporary writers, like Mrs. Britten, who knew the family intimately.

At the risk of making confusion worse confounded, may I draw your attention to the following references to the ages of the children on that fateful 31st March, 1848.

Nandor Fodor: *Encyclopedia*.²²

There is a reference to a letter stated to have been sent by Mrs. Fox to the President of the anniversary meeting held in New York in 1868. According to this, the ages of the children were incorrectly rendered in the first printed report, Kate being 7 and Margaret 10 years old at the time.

One would like to know more about this letter; since according, to Mrs. Leah Underhill, “our dear mother passed from this life to the next on the 3rd August, 1865.” (See *The Missing Link*, page 95.)²³

²¹ *LIGHT* July 29, 1943 page 238.

²² *Encyclopædia of Psychic Science* by Nandor Fodor, LL.D, prefaced by Sir Oliver Lodge. Published in 1934, by Arthurs Press Limited, London. This was later updated in 1966 (The Citadel Press, Secaucus, New Jersey) with the involvement of Leslie Shepard, thanks were due to Maurice Barbanell and the staff of *Psychic News* for providing research material for the compilation of its Foreword February 1966 by Shepard. Today it's called: *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*, and is based on both the *Encyclopedia of Occultism* by Lewis Spence, London, 1920 and Fodor's *Encyclopædia of Psychic Science* substantially revised and supplemented by new material written by Leslie Shepard.

Leslie Alan Shepard: Born June 21st, 1917 London. Died Blackrock, Co Dublin August 20th, 2004.

²³ This report was previously published in Emma Hardinge's *Modern American Spiritualism*, 1870 page 562. This was not published in all editions see: *Psypioneer* Volume 4, No.7:—*Modern American Spiritualism 1870 – Emma Hardinge*, pages 167-173:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.7July08.pdf> “Since the earlier

2. Hudson Tuttle: *Arcana of Spiritualism* (1867).

Amplifies Mrs. Fox's own certified statement of April 11th, 1848, indicating that when Mrs. Fox tested the peddler who gave the first raps by asking the ages of her daughters, the reply was 12 raps for Margaret and 9 raps for Katie.²⁴

3. *Medium and Daybreak*, May 3rd, 1878.

In the account of the 30th anniversary meeting in London, at which both Margaret and Katie were present on the platform, it is stated, "At that period the two young Mediums were aged 4 and 6 years and not 9 and 11, as usually reported." This correction was the subject of editorial comment the following week.

4. *Medium and Daybreak*; February 7th, 1879.

Letter from Katie Fox-Jencken states; "Spiritualism had its origin in 1848 through my sister Margaret and myself then scarcely 5 and 7 years old . . ." (The chiasmus is pardonable.)²⁵

5. *Two Worlds*; November 23rd, 1888.

The Editor, Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, comments on the "confession" of Margaret Fox, as reported in the *Chicago Herald* of October 24th, 1888, and lifts the veil from some of the later history. "This wretched woman states herself to have been 8 years old and her sister 6 at the time of the Rochester knockings. Both the mother and father of these girls in their published statements again and again repeat, that Margaret was 15 and Kate 12 years of age at the time of the knockings." Mrs. Britten also says that contemporary records,

chapters of this volume were in type; the author has been requested to correct the statements made by the witnesses at Hydesville, respecting, the ages of Catherine and Margaretta Fox at the time of the first disturbances. The mother of the ladies, Mrs. Fox, addressed a letter to the President of the anniversary meeting held in New York City in 1868, in which she stated that, at the time of the first "Rochester knockings," her daughter Kate was seven years old, and Margaretta ten. The ages of the children being as the family allege, "incorrectly rendered in the first printed report, have been erroneously represented in all subsequent accounts."

²⁴ This appears to be a made up version, it does not state it was Mrs. Fox's signed statement, and assumed by Wilson:—"In March, 1848, they assumed a new character. The children's bed had been moved into the room of their parents; but scarcely had Mrs. Fox lain down when the noises became as violent as before. The children shouted, "Here they are again." [a new version!] Their father shook the sashes to see if they were not moved by the wind, when the lively Kate observed that the sounds were imitated. She then snapped her fingers, and asked it to repeat, which was done. She then simply made motions with her thumb and finger, and the rap followed. The invisible power, whatever it was, could see and hear. Mrs. Fox's attention was arrested. She asked it to count ten, which it did. "How old is my daughter Margaret?" Twelve raps. "And Kate?" Nine. "How many children have I?" Seven. "Ah ! you blunder," she thought: "try again." Seven. Then she suddenly thought. "Are they all alive?" No answer. "How many are living?" Six raps. "How many dead?" One rap. She had lost one child. [Emily] She then asked if it was a man. No answer. Was it a spirit? Raps." (pages 18-19, *Two Worlds* edition 1900)

²⁵ The full article is published above in this issue.

copies of which he had before her at the time, show that nearly every statement made in the confession was false: and that the whole affair of the confessions, as well as the earlier dipsomania of the two sisters in the years round 1870, had been deliberately engineered by *Jesuitical* influences.

Mrs. Britten's account is supported by the account in the (American) *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, dated October 20th, 1888. This also says that "Kate was only 12 and Maggie 15 when the knockings first began."

6. Mrs. Leah (Fox) Underhill: *The Missing Link* (1885).

The most fully documented account of the early years is contained in this somewhat rare book. Leah, of course, was the eldest sister, who was not actually with the family at Hydesville on the 31st March, 1848, but joined up early in May, and became the greatest Medium of them all. Unfortunately, Leah does not give the actual ages of Katie and Maggie, but letters are quoted verbatim which seem to confirm Mrs. Britten's statement, and are certainly inconsistent with the 1879 statement of Katie and with that of 1888 by Maggie.

Thus, George Willets, relating his experiences with the sisters, in a letter sent to E. W. Capron at the end of 1848, refers to "a little girl (presumably Katie) thirteen years old," as the Medium for the raps.

TIRED OF LIFE

Moreover, Katie herself, writing from Washington in 1850, says:

"I am tired of my life. . . . Only imagine Maggie and me, and dear mother, before a crowd of drunken Senators. One very fine-looking man stood up before the crowd and addressed them thus: I wish to be heard, gentlemen. This is all a humbug, but it is worth a dollar to sit in the sunlight of Miss Kate's eyes."

Is this the language of a girl of 6 or 7? It might be of a girl of 15.

Again, the testimonial to Katie, dated July 9th, 1851, from a number of New York people, which is quoted in full on page 227, could hardly have been addressed to a child of under 10.

Summing up, we have the following discrepancies:

ANSWERS GIVEN

The other problems mentioned by Mr. Hodson are, fortunately less difficult. There are two chapters in *The Missing Link* about the ancestry of the Foxes. Moreover, answers to the "further questions" are provided by the accounts in the spiritualist journals (including LIGHT) of the seventies and eighties.

The one thing that stands out of all these accounts is a sense of tragedy. No wonder Mrs. Britten commented in 1888 that the young children, for whom many spiritualists would have given all they had, were dead.

Spiritualism survived that dread testing-time, as it survived the spate of alleged exposures of physical Mediums in the seventies, and as it will survive, and indeed thrive upon, any other persecution that may come upon us.

Postscript: Since the above was in type it has occurred to me to look up Robert Dale Owen's *Footfalls* (1860). I find that the account there (pp. 204-210) confirms and amplifies that of Hudson Tuttle. Reference is also made to E. W. Capron's *Modern Spiritualism: Facts and Fanaticisms* (1855) but this I have not been able to consult as yet.

P. W.

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We have previously published an overview of the tragic demise and downfall of Margaret Fox-Kane in James Burns' Memorial lecture in his reception address at the Spiritual Institution, 15, Southampton Row, London, April 24, 1893: *The last of the celebrated "Fox girls."* (2.6). Margaret died on March 8th, 1893.

Just eight months prior to Margaret's death, the youngest sister Catherine Fox-Jencken, died on July 2nd, 1892. Later that year Stainton Moses, then editor of *Light* died on September 5th. Burns gave a joint Memorial lecture.

Below is the full account of Kate Fox Jencken:

IN MEMORIAM

*The Medium and Daybreak:—*²⁶

KATE FOX JENCKEN

Address by J. Burns, at 15, Southampton Row, Sep. 11, 1892

It has been reported that on July 2, 1892, Mrs. Kate Fox Jencken relinquished that body, through the instrumentality of which such remarkable manifestations of spirit power were given for over forty years. She was the primary medium through whom communication with the spirit-world was instituted through rappings, on March, 31, 1848. Mr. Fox's family lived in a haunted cottage, and were greatly disturbed by nocturnal noises, which occurred with greatest force in proximity to the bed occupied by little Kate (the youngest) and her sister. On the night in question, this child in a playful way asked "it" to imitate her by giving the same number of raps as the sounds she made by slapping her hands together. The experiment proved successful, and the child exclaimed, "It can hear: it did as I bade it." From this small beginning it was established that "it" could hear, that it could

²⁶ *The Medium and Daybreak*, September 16, 1892. Front page and page 596

understand, that it could respond; in short, that it was an intelligent being, possessing powers similar to those characteristic of the human mind. This is really the only genuine discovery that has been made during the whole career of Spiritualism.

Then “spirit-rapping” took a methodical form, and began to spread. Little Kate and her family had to withstand much persecution. They were regarded by many as impostors. They were most cruelly tested and tried in public meetings, but with the result that the facts claimed were triumphantly established. The children then were not only pestered with sitters, but the “power” followed them everywhere, so that they were literally haunted. Thus they were led into the work of public mediumship. These steps in their history here so briefly summarised, are fully given the “Missing Link,” a goodly volume by Mrs. Underhill, the elder sister, who pathetically states that many who came from the very first, did not do so for spiritual purposes at all, but to see if the spirits could help them out in their worldly affairs. Is it any wonder that mediums and mediumship have suffered so terribly from the abuses to which they have been subject?

It is not the purpose at present to give an outline of this remarkable woman’s life. For many years she gave sittings to the most distinguished investigators in America, and then she came to this country. Her most permanent work here resulted from the experiments with Mr. Crookes, so interestingly recorded in his work entitled “Experiences in Spiritualism.” But she did not appear to make great headway as a professional medium, and became the wife of Mr. H. D. Jencken, a barrister-at-law.

Mr. Jencken was a friend of Mr. D. D. Home. His first writings on Spiritualism appeared in *Human Nature* under the signature of “Honestus,” near the end of the “sixties.” His father, Dr. Jencken, was a profound spiritual philosopher, and had gone far deeper into spiritual science, long before the advent of Modern Spiritualism, than any one has done since, showing that a true Spiritualism is not dependent on phenomena. Mr. Jencken represented the intellectual side of the subject, and his wife the phenomenal; a remarkable conjunction it must be admitted, but it produced nothing to the individuals involved or to humanity at large.

Soon after their marriage,²⁷ I was present at a private I given by Mrs. Jencken in their apartments in York Street, Portman Square. The rappings were very loud, and took place freely in the light, but other manifestations occurred in darkness. Mrs. Burns, clairvoyant, sat beside me, opposite to the medium and her husband, and saw all that the spirits were doing. To her spiritual vision was given a view of the spiritual powers attendant upon Mrs. Jencken; they appeared in distinct planes, group above group, those of more human

²⁷ Kate married Henry Jencken in London on December 14th, 1872 (5.9). Her obituary published in *The New York Times* July 3rd, 1892 suggests a rather grand wedding:—“In 1873 Kate was married to Henry D Jencken, an English barrister. The ceremony took place in St Paul’s Cathedral, London, Canon Irons officiating. Mr Jencken died eight years ago.” Wrong year and church, her husband died (November, 1881) just over ten years previously not eight. Also we can see in Emma Hardinge Britten’s *The Unseen Universe*, September 1892, Volume 1, No.6, pages 298-304 makes similar errors See:—
<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F20716F73E5C17738DDDA0894DF405B8285F0D3>
http://www.iapsop.com/archive/materials/unseen_universe/unseen_universe_v1_i6.pdf

characteristics nearest the medium, while reaching upward those of angelic light and glory were so dazzling as to be unbearable to the clairvoyant's sight. Close to Mrs. Jencken sat a medical gentleman, who had some affection in one of his ears that medical skill could not remove. Mrs. Burns saw a spirit of an intellectual character, like some distinguished surgeon, stand behind the doctor who had the afflicted ear. In the hands of this spirit was a bright, sharp instrument, which shone like polished metal; with this instrument the doctor's ear was operated on. He declared that he felt the prick, and that he was benefited thereby. Some account of this sitting may be found in *Human Nature*.

Dr. Jencken was a gentleman, with the genuine instincts of a distinguished family. He said to me that seeing the unprotected state of Miss Kate Fox he married her out of pure chivalric sympathy. Whether he thought he might be able to turn her mediumship to account or not, did not transpire, but if he did so, an insurmountable barrier stood in the way. There was something extremely unworkable in Mrs. Jencken's constitution. Mr. Jencken does not seem to have been successful in his profession, but after his marriage, he was even less so. It was a life of difficulty and struggle, and with retrogression as a reward. He became feverish, debilitated, and his health completely broke down; his gentlemanly elasticity of spirit left him. He was a true Spiritualist, and we were very intimate. Last time I saw him he was a prematurely old man, limping sadly along by the aid of a stick; I soon after heard of his death. Why are these facts introduced? To illustrate that which I have observed in so many instances, namely, that those who marry physical mediums either lose health or leave their partners, be they of either sex. In some instances the other partner may have the constitution to bear up; but the cases are numerous of separations and deaths. The late Mrs. Herne saw four husbands in the grave,²⁸ and she even separated from Mr. Herne before his death.²⁹ Why is this? Because the drain of vitality made upon the resources of a physical medium in full work, so exhausts the system that such a medium robs the partner in life, husband or wife as the case may be. A medium can give far more sittings if thus supplied than if left entirely to his or her own resources.

This drain upon the psychoplasm of the medium, so lowers the vital spirits, and creates such a void in the animal nature, that there is great temptation to resort to intoxicants. And as "refreshment," the "drunkard's drink" is too frequently exhibited after seances in private houses. The unfortunate medium is forced into the habit, and it becomes a most tyrannical and relentless master. Such was the sad case with poor Mrs. Jencken, and also with her sister Margaret. These things are not named in the accents of reproach, but as lessons of warning, which no honest Spiritualist dares to overlook; for, alas! We are making drunkards amongst mediums daily, and the habit of intemperance is one of the most scandalous things that can be thrown at our movement. Here is room for reform. Let all Spiritualists obey the divine law of nutrition, and abstain from narcotics of all sorts. "Touch not, taste not, handle not," that accursed thing that "controls" mediums to disgrace, to disease, and to death!

²⁸ Catherine Bassett-Herne died October 1891, details as below.

²⁹ Frank Herne died December 8th, 1887: See Herne and Williams – *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.1:—*The Beginnings of Full Form Materialisations in England* – P. J. Gaunt, pages 19-30:—
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.1January2011.pdf>

From first to last, Kate Fox was a powerful medium. At one period recently, she got driven to such desperation with her state, that she turned round in bitterness, and for a short time affected to “recant,” and say that her mediumship was all trickery. But none except fools would believe her, and as she did not mend her conditions by the attempt; she soon returned to her old allegiance. But her word for or against the phenomena would not count in either direction. These manifestations are not accepted on the word of any medium. The records of them are the work of independent observers. Genuine spiritual phenomena are of such a character that no medium can affect them in any way. Kate Fox’s forty years’ record rests on the testimony of thousands of most competent observers, who can or could testify that she of herself could take no fraudulent part in the matter.

Kate Fox, that first medium, the apostle of the phenomenal, has gone from earth; and in looking over her career most valuable lessons can be gathered from the shadows as well as the lights of her life. She died a martyr; for as surely was she a victim of the evil methods of human society, as any martyr ever was of that church which led him or her to the stake or the gibbet. There are many ways of doing human beings to death besides actual violence; and those mistaken kindnesses and false social methods are far more degrading, much more insidious, and serve their purpose too certainly.

Let us lay the lesson to heart; learn to live aright, and how to treat mediums properly. A kindly thought, and sincere aspiration on behalf of the gifted sister who did such a widespread work in the world. May she be enabled to overcome all her spiritual impediments, and be attracted towards those bright ones who never can cease their yearning love for mankind, however thickly the dark clouds of earth-life may intervene between their brightness and their wandering loved ones in mortality.

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The last public acts of the Fox sisters was the falling out of the younger sisters with their older sister Ann Leah, who had married well and had not followed her younger sisters into alcoholism. This was followed by their confessions that they were total frauds; some would say they did this to destroy the reputation of Leah who by many was regarded as the best medium. It was said that Leah reported her sister Kate for child abuse,³⁰ which resulted in the removal of her children.³¹ Some would say because they desperately needed the money, and of course maybe they were in fact frauds. Throughout our researches over the years, as listed at the end of this issue, we can note for and against. What is apparent and must be

³⁰ *The New York Times*, May 5th, 1888, the eldest son is referred to as Purdy, he was called Ferdie short for Ferdinand:— <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F70D17FF3F5E15738DDDAC0894DD405B8884F0D3>

³¹ Ferdinand Dietrich Lowenstein Jencken born September 19th, 1873 (*The Spiritualist* October 1st, 1873 page 346):—Last Survivor of Famous Spiritualist Family Is Dead:—*Reno Evening Gazette*, Reno, Nevada, Wednesday Evening, April 22, 1908. NEW YORK. April 22.— Fifty members of the First Spiritualist Society of New York gathered last evening to attend the funeral services of Ferdinand Fox Jencken, who died Sunday. Mr. Jencken who was 38 years old, died of consumption. He was the last surviving member of the Fox family, who founded spiritualism in Rochester about sixty years ago. We can note his age of 38 years does not fit with the given dates! The younger son, Henry Jr, was born at Leah’s home in 1875; his life was short and he died in his teens.



considered is the fact that Margaret in particular could demonstrate fraud so easily as will be noted in previous and the following articles. It can be noted in the previous issues listed the improbability and difficulties which would face Margaret to learn when young the technique of being able to snap her toes, or other limbs, to fraudulently produce the raps which she did so well in 1888!

In October 1888 the two youngest Fox sisters; primarily led by Margareta (Maggie or Margaret) Fox-Kane, and her younger sister Catherine (Cathie or Kate) Fox-Jencken; publicly confessed they were frauds. They claimed, and Maggie demonstrated at the Academy of Music, New York on October 21st,³² that the raps were not made by the spirit world:

Quote taken from *Talking to the Dead*.³³

“At last Maggie ascended the stage, described by one reporter “as a little compact woman, dark-eyed and dark-haired.” Kate was seated in a box in the audience, lending silent approval to what her sister was about to do.

“Maggie was wearing a black dress and flowered hat. She was far more nervous even than Dr. Richmond³⁴ and kept taking her eyeglasses on and off as she alternately read from her statement, then glanced up at the audience to repeat each sentence. Different contingents cheered and booed her as she spoke in an excited voice, denouncing Spiritualism.

“When she (Maggie) finished her statement Dr. Richmond called several physicians onto the stage. Maggie slipped off one of her shoes and placed her stocking-clad foot on a small pine table. Sharp raps were heard resounding throughout the theater. The reporter for the *New York Tribune* wrote that the

³² Various paper headlines:—Spiritualism Exposed by the Fox Sisters: *Daily Democratic Times*, Lima. Ohio. Monday Oct 22, 1888, “By the Big Toe Joint”: *The Galveston Daily News*, Tuesday, October, 23 1888 (Margaret was called ‘Mrs. Mary Gertha Fox Kane’; Kate, as ‘Miss Kate Fox’), Exposing Spiritualism: *Syracuse Daily Standard*, Syracuse, N.Y., Monday, October 22, 1888, Spiritualism Exposed by the Fox Sisters: *Newark Daily Advocate*, Monday Oct 22, 88, Exposing Spiritualism: *The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, Monday, October 22, 1888.

³³ *Talking to the Dead*, by Barbara Weisberg pages 244-245. (1.2)

³⁴ One of the event’s promoters, Dr. C. M. Richmond, a portly dentist whose avocation was magic, also served as the evening’s lecturer, assigned to speak on Spiritualism’s evils, to expose common tricks of the trade, and to introduce Maggie.

noises increased from faint to loud, “traveling up the wall and along the roof of the Academy.”

“While the raps continued, the doctors solemnly examined Maggie’s feet, a procedure that the audience met with suggestive laughter and ribald remarks. Then Maggie stood on the table for another examination, after which the doctors pronounced that the raps were indeed made by her big toe.

“Nobody seemed to question whether the raps produced by Maggie’s toe were supplemented by other means: whether Dr. Richmond himself might have had confederates in the audience willing to mount the kind of symphony for which the spirits had become famous.”

In our article *Mrs. Norman Culver, and Kate Fox* (7.9), Culver claims both the younger sisters, including Leah’s daughter Lizzie were able to produce raps.³⁵ Quotes below from the article:

...“Elizabeth Fish (Mrs. Fish’s daughter), who now lives with her father, was the first one who produced these raps. She accidentally discovered the way to make them by playing with her toes against the foot-board while in bed.”

...“The raps are produced with the toes. All the toes are used. After nearly a week’s practice, with Catharine showing me how, I could produce them perfectly myself. At first it was very hard work to do it. Catharine told me to warm my feet, or put them in warm water, and it would then be easier work to rap; she said that she sometimes had to warm her feet three or four times in the course of an evening. I found that heating my feet did enable me to rap a great deal easier.”

“... last January, Margaretta told me that when people insisted on seeing her feet and toes, she could produce a few raps with her knees and ankles.”

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³⁵ As previously stated and published in this issue: In 1878 Kate and Maggie claimed:—“This older niece was the questioner with whom the early conversations were carried on with the unseen communicants, little Katie merely responding by clasping her tiny fingers together. (6.3)

Below is a sequence of newspaper articles in order of the final events:

THE BIRTHPLACE OF SPIRITUALISM

The Decatur Daily Republican, Decatur, Illinois, Wednesday, May 12, 1886:

The Little House Wherein the Rochester Rappings Originated

[Special Correspondence]

NEW YORK, May 10.—I met Mrs. Margaret Fox Kane recently. She is the widow of Dr. Kane, the Arctic explorer, and was one of the Fox sisters, so much talked of nearly forty years ago in connection with what was called the “Rochester rappings.” She lives in New York, and is still a professional medium, though one who apparently takes little pride in her profession. Indeed, she doesn’t hesitate to say that she has found it an almost intolerable life. After the death of her husband she became a member of the church of Rome, and gave up all professional work for years. Necessity drove her to it again, and she spends her summers in filling engagements in the smaller towns and her winters in giving private and public seances in New York.

Her sister, Katie, who also grew famous when she was an infant on account of the rappings, is married and resides in this city,³⁶ and is still a professional medium. The house where the rappings originated, and which is now honored by Spiritualists as the “birthplace of modern Spiritualism,” is still standing, though unoccupied. Its owner, Artemas W. Hyde, a respected and wealthy citizen and stanch believer in the spiritual faith, keeps it as a historic treasure. It bears this inscription: “Here Spiritualism originated in 1848.” It is not, as is generally supposed, in Rochester, but in Hydesville, a small village, thirty miles from Rochester, this state. The accompanying picture is an accurate representation of this famous house.

A humble place, surely, to have been the starting point of all spiritual phenomena the world has been treated to for the last thirty-eight years. Perhaps nothing ever tore up simple-minded people more than the “Rochester Knockings.” There were more simple-minded people then than now, too, and newspapers, though neither so numerous or exciting, were more closely read and more firmly believed in. The news of the “Rochester Knockings” traveled and was much discussed. Newspapers containing accounts of those strange noises, supposed to come from denizens of a fleshless world, were borrowed and thumbed until completely worn out. Country folk talked wonderingly of them in their quiet homes, and men with a reputation for learning took them up as a subject to hang some of their conversational and presumably logical acquirements on.

Mrs. Kane talked of the days when the rappings began, somewhat reluctantly. The whole subject seems to be distasteful to her, and doubtless she has suffered much from curiosity and impudence of the public.

³⁶ Widow

“We were mere babies,” she said, “Katey and I, when the raps began to be heard near us. One of our neighbors who was much interested in them, used to carry me in his arms until I went to sleep and the raps would go on all the same. They made numerous experiments with us to find out whether we made the noises. When they took us both out of a room no more raps were heard there; but when they took one of us only raps would be heard near each of us.”

Mrs. Kane is a good looking, intelligent lady, who speaks in a voice indicative of great nervousness. She is short in stature, dresses modestly in black, and spends her time giving séances. Her mediumship still consists in raps, which she doesn’t care for, considering them rudimentary, and in writing. Very emphatic raps they are, too. The writing is done by means of a pencil held in her hand, and written backward in an ex-aggerate and angular hand. It can only be read by the aid of a mirror, or by turning the under side of the paper toward one and the written side toward the light. All sorts of names are signed to the communications, Epictetus or Socrates quite as likely as John and Harry.

Mrs. Kane spent eight years in England, the pleasantest part of her professional life, she said. Once she said, when she accompanied an aristocratic lady to church, the raps began to be heard around her, much to her mortification. The minister, who had heard them in the house of her hostess, and been much interested, called the attention of his congregation to “angelic presences.” She impresses me as a woman who has found life difficult and unsatisfactory, and who will not regret the leaving of it.

MAX ELTON.³⁷

A FOE TO SPIRITUALISM

Chicago Daily Tribune, Oct 10th, 1888

NEW YORK, Oct. 9.—[Special]. Katy Fox Jencken arrived today from England on the Persian Monarch, and she intends to cooperate with her sister—Margaretta Fox Kane—in her proposed exposé of the fraudulent methods of so-called Spiritualism. Mrs. Jencken’s coming was unexpected to her sister, and it will surprise the enemies of both of them.

“I care nothing for Spiritualism itself,” she said. “So far as I am concerned I am done with it. I will say this, I regard it as one of the greatest curses that the world has ever known. Spiritualism is a humbug from beginning to end. It is the biggest humbug of the century. I don’t know whether she has told you this, but Maggie and I started it as little children, too young, too innocent to know just what we were about. Our sister Leah was twenty-three years older than either of us. We got started in the way of deception and were encouraged in it. We went on, of course. Others old enough to have been ashamed of the infamy took us out into the world. My sister Leah has published a book called ‘The Missing Link of Spiritualism.’ It professes to give the true history of the movement, so

³⁷ Also published: *Decatur Weekly Republican*, Thursday May 13, 1886

far as it originated with us. Now, there's nothing but falsehood in that book from beginning to end, except the fact that Horace Greeley educated me. The rest is a string of lies"

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED BY THE FOX SISTERS

Daily Democratic Times, Lima Ohio Monday Oct 22, 1888

NEW YORK, Oct. 22.— The once celebrated Fox Sisters, who are the patentees of medium spiritualism, appeared last night before a large audience at the academy of music to expose the frauds of spiritualism. Both Miss Kate Fox and Mrs. Margeretta Fox-Kane appeared on the stage. Mrs. Kane read a lecture in a faltering voice, almost inaudible to the audience. She produced the famous rappings so that they were plainly audible by the movement of the big toe joint. Mrs. Kane said she thanked God that she was able to expose spiritualism.

LEAH FOX UNDERHILL AND HER TRADUCERS

New York.—*Religio*, Dec. 15 1888³⁸

I have just had a long and interesting interview with Mrs. Leah Fox Underhill,³⁹ and will state very briefly but fully, her feelings in regard to her erring sisters. She regards it of very little consequence, what they say concerning her to any who know the history of Spiritualism and the connection of their family with it. She fully recognises the fact that there are others besides herself in the family, who are as much interested as she is, who do not wish to be brought before the public by a controversy. She feels, too, and that very deeply, that she cannot be brought into any public controversy with her own mother's children, that mother who guarded them all so carefully, and who was, as all who know her recognised, a guardian to them all.

She has, as I very well know, tried in vain to redeem them, and they have made most solemn promises to reform, but all her efforts were as vain as their promises. She has, to my own knowledge, paid largely for their support; has furnished their rooms, under their promise to reform, at great expense. I have, many and many a night, carried Margaret supplies of the best her sister's house afforded, which she could not, or did not, provide for herself. She has spent a small fortune in trying to keep them up, but all in vain. Since they have chosen, from whatever cause, to behave as they have, she has concluded to take no further notice of them; nor will she interest herself further in their behalf. She and all her friends here feel that it is worth all that it has cost her and all good Spiritualists, to be rid of them, so long as they continue on their downward and irredeemable course. Their reputation is such that Spiritualists cannot afford to harbour them at all, and she believes that it would be no benefit to Spiritualism to get up a controversy with them in their present state of living.

³⁸ Published in the *Medium and Daybreak* December 28, 1888 page 820:

³⁹ Ann Leah died on November 1st, 1890 at her home in New York, Daniel followed her the following summer. Buried in the Underhill plot at Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York.



Old Spiritualists are in no way disturbed by the present position of the two sisters. They, of course, regret their downfall, but every one of them who has read the history of the transactions, from the first pamphlet published by Capron and Barron, at Auburn, N.Y., immediately after the first investigation at Rochester, or the old history by E. W. Capron, published in 1853,⁴⁰ or the still more complete work by Mrs. A. Leah Underhill, in 1885, have abundance of proof of the honesty of all the then girls, and there is no question on that point whatever with them. It is, you are aware, stated in those early histories, that the rappings were frequently heard while all the family were out of the house, staying with neighbours through the night to avoid the crowd and excitement.

It was the same at the early manifestations in the house of Dr. Phelps, at Stratford, Conn. There was no person in the house when they came home from church and found the outside doors all open, although the Doctor had locked

them and had the key in his pocket. The manifestations were also frequent in the rooms of the house, distant from any person.

When the Buffalo Doctors held the feet of Margaret and Leah, they declared that the sounds were not made by the feet, but must be made by the displacement of bones of the legs. In Rochester, when we had the great investigation, the ladies stood the girls on pillows, on a table, with their dresses tied tight about their feet, and they certified to hearing the rappings on the table, the floor and the walls distinctly. Besides these rapping sounds, the sounds of carpenter work and of shipwrecks, so real as to remind Charles Partridge, then a sceptic, of his wreck on Fire Island, and the loss of a niece who made the manifestation. An abundance of such demonstrations were certified to by the best people of the country.

Who told J. Fennimore Cooper the exact facts about the death of his sister fifty years before, from a fall from a horse? At this interview, Mrs. Fox and her three daughters were present. The remarkable things recorded on that evening were certified to by such names as the following: Mr. Cooper, Mr. George Bancroft (the historian), Rev. Dr. Hawkes, Dr. J. W. Francis, Dr. Marcy, N. P. Willis, Wm. Cullen Bryant, and several others. Hon. H. P.

⁴⁰ This is presumably his book "*Modern Spiritualism*", published in 1855 not 1853.

Haskell, member of Congress, certified to being present after the investigating committee, of which he was a member at Rochester, with a number of legal gentlemen from Le Roy, all strangers, when a band of music was called for, and of hearing the most exquisite music, together with the firing of cannon, so real as hardly to be doubted as a reality. Did Margaret and Kate make all these demonstrations, and hundreds of others, with their toes?

One thing more: the two unfortunates have tried to deceive the public in regard to their ages. Their mother certifies in the original history of the rappings, published in 1848: “The youngest girl is about twelve years old; the other girl is in her fifteenth year.” It is probable that no one better remembered the events of these girls’ appearance in the world than the mother.

E. W. CAPRON.

New York.—*Religio*, Dec. 15.

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We have previously published Emma Hardinge Britten’s summing up of 1888 in her journal *The Two Worlds* December 28th, page 78 (3.12):

“We may not pretend even to present a retrospect of the past eventful year without once more alluding to the unhappy pit of evil into which the two first well-known mediums of the spiritual cause have fallen, and into which, with the insanity of vice, they hoped to have dragged their cause. We allude, of course, to the unfortunate Fox sisters. We have already in three previous numbers shown first—that their pretended confession is the worst fraud of their lives, and that the only question to be addressed to them now is, “Which was your greatest lie? That, which for forty years, you uttered when you claimed that your manifestations were all the work of spirits, or, that which you now say when you declare them to have been the work of fraud?” To judge these hapless women truly, we must remind our readers that they are besotted drunkards, hence insane, and unworthy of credit; Roman Catholics by profession,⁴¹ hence taught by *profession*, to “lie for the honour and glory of their church,” the worst enemy of which is SPIRITUALISM. As far as the cause of spiritualism is now, or has been, connected with these women, it is enough to say there have been and are, at least, a hundred thousand better and more forcible spirit mediums in the world than them; the cause can therefore well afford to let them go.”

⁴¹ This is partly incorrect as only Maggie was involved at this point in Catholicism. Taken from ‘*Talking to the Dead*’ by Barbara Weisberg page 256:—“*Asked whether her motive for recanting was to take revenge on those who had promised her a profit for exposing Spiritualism, Maggie insisted that she only wanted to set the record straight. She vaguely attributed part of the blame for the original expose to powerful Catholics who had pressured her into rejecting Spiritualism. It’s likely that, since she claimed to have converted to Catholicism, the church indeed frowned on her continued practice of holding seances. Talking to the dead in the Catholic Church was considered a matter more suited to exorcism than to celebration.*”

Stainton Moses also reacted harshly against them in numerous statements in *Light*, whereas James Burns was more sympathetic. The Fox Confessions did not at the time make the desired impact that may have been expected by the sisters and anti-Spiritualists generally.

Later in 1889 both sisters recanted their confessions.

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SUMMING UP:

Just after the confessions Reuben Briggs Davenport published *The Death-Blow To Spiritualism* (G. W. Dillingham, New York 1888). Professing to “absolute truthfulness and a reverent regard for justice” it contains a signed statement:

“We hereby approve of Mr. Reuben B. Davenport’s design to write a true account of the origin of spiritualism and of our connection therewith, and we authorize him to make proper use of the data and material that we furnish him.

New York, 15th Oct., 1888.

[Signed] Margaret Fox Kane & Catherine Fox Jencken

This book published around late October/November 1888, sharply attacks their sister Leah calling her the *old woman*, claiming that Leah used them in her exhibitions and they made her money; the book can be read on-line.⁴² It is interesting to note on page 82 that their sister Elizabeth, who was possibly still living in Canada, is missed out of the family tree. They give their ages at the Hydesville disturbances as eight years and six and a half, the elder being Margaret.

It is interesting and possibly significant that Leah’s daughter Elizabeth (Lizzie) is again, part of the story as related on page 84-85 as quoted below:

... “One of their frequent amusements was to plague their niece, Elizabeth, who slept in the same bed with them, by kicking and tickling her, and by frightening her at almost any hour of the night out of sound sleep.

“Their riotous fancy soon hit upon the plan of bobbing apples up and down on the floor in their bedchamber, as a means of scaring Elizabeth and of puzzling their mother without much risk of detection. They tied strings to the stems of the apples, and thus let them hang down beside the bed. The noise of dropping them more or less quickly upon the floor resembled almost anything that the imagination chose to liken it to, from raps on the front door to slipped foot-falls on the narrow stairway. Whenever a search was made for the cause of the noises, the apples were easily hauled up into the bed and hidden in the

⁴² <http://www.archive.org/details/deathblowtospiri00daverich>

bedclothes, where no one would think of looking for them, at least at that stage of the investigation.

“The plan had everything in it to charm a juvenile mischief-maker. It succeeded admirably. It was not till the wonder which was caused by these strange “knockings” had extended beyond the humble Fox household, that the suggestion of any other means of affording to that growing feeling its daily food of seeming evidence came to the roguish youngsters.”

It is this apple example that has been frequently used in books and anti-Spiritualist T.V. programmes for example featuring Ruth Brandon, author of *The Spiritualists* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson London 1983). As the Reuben B. Davenport book is available on-line and due to space, I will quote just Margaret’s comments on the E.E. Lewis report page 90-91:

...“Of course, I was so young then that many incidents have escaped my memory. I assert positive, however, that much of the effect of the ‘rappings’ is greatly exaggerated in this statement which my mother was made to write. I say that she was *made* to write it, because the wording of the statement, if not largely dictated by others in the first place—men who desired to make public the details of the ‘rappings’ and to make money by the sale of a pamphlet describing them—was afterwards grossly garbled, that it might be used to suit the dishonest purposes of professional spiritualists. I am not even certain that mother ever signed the document, of which Mrs. Underhill makes such great parade. ...”

Only by new research can the story be retold and put into a better prospective. We can note throughout the various articles, they continually show contradictions even by those who knew them best and of course by the sisters themselves. With the rediscovery of the E.E. Lewis report, published again for the first time in April 2005 (1.12) we can clearly see how the *original* story has become distorted, added to, and misrepresented.⁴³ It is clear that early writers like Burns, or more recent historians like Percy Wilson had no reason to suspect that the eldest Fox sister had changed some of the original key information contained in the signed statements taken in 1848 by Lewis. It must also be considered that the Lewis report may not also be correct; it was produced on commercial lines with monetary benefits. It would be unwise to dismiss all what is published in the Davenport book. Our research over the years in Psypioneer has gone some way in so much as the various quotes and claims can be identified and traced to their origins, for example the apple dropping, “Here, Old Splitfoot, do as I do”, etc.

⁴³ We should like to call attention to Alan Gauld’s classic work “*The Founders of Psychical Research*” (1968). Dr Gauld obtained and studied a copy of the Lewis pamphlet, and his discussion of the Hydesville events was the first to take account of Lewis for many years; he noted that the Underhill version was different. Unfortunately, later historians did not (like Dr Gauld) make Lewis their starting point, and it was left to Barbara Weisberg in her 2004 biography to remind believers and sceptics alike of the significance of Lewis.

Nothing in the Hydesville story appears to be as it seems. Caution and responsibility should be uppermost before relating this as a factual record for the foundation of Modern Spiritualism. The positive *factual* quotes used by major Spiritualist organisations, some that head this article, have, as the evidence shows, no firm standing or consistency. We can however clearly see there is a solid base line story, told at different times, by different persons.

Lewis is the only writer who was actually on the scene just after the time the events were unfolding. Capron later was in close contact with the family, but only after they had moved from Hydesville via David Fox's farm then on to Rochester, meeting in late November 1848. Capron had moved from Auburn to Rochester. George Willets became involved with the Fox family via his friend and relative Isaac Post, resulting in sitting with the three sisters in the summer of 1848. Isaac and Amy Post were acquainted with the Fox family prior to Hydesville, but like Capron and Willets meet the Fox family again in Rochester in 1848. Henry D. Barron appears to come into contact with the sisters in January 1849. All had received and witnessed remarkable evidence from the Rochester Rappers. Mary and Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune* were soon to follow. These were the early custodians of the founding of Modern Spiritualism.

If we break this down we have:

E.E. Lewis, who took statements by those persons present and/or who had previous history with the house, but Lewis himself made no independent report or further inquiry into the phenomena that were witnessed.

Capron, Willets (after the Corinthian Hall reports he faded away), Barron and soon after Greeley. None of the writers/researchers experienced the events of 1848, but all wrote about it. Except for Mrs Fox,⁴⁴ to my knowledge none of the key witnesses were again interviewed e.g., Mrs. Redfield the first neighbour on the scene, William Duesler who devised and used the *first* alphabet code, previous tenants who could perhaps have imparted more information about the alleged peddler etc.

With so much material now freely available on-line, there is little excuse for major Spiritualist organisations, writers and speakers representing the Spiritualist Movement to continually make unfounded claims of a *factual* nature regarding Hydesville.

Paul J. Gaunt.

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⁴⁴ A second interview was given by Mrs. Fox, on the 1st May, 1851. *Fox News* (5.9)

Photographs:

1). – *Advent of Spiritualism 1848*: This has been published in various publications, once used as notelets and sold at the Arthur Findlay College/S.N.U. No credits however, are given as to its origin; it appears this was first published by James Burns in his *Medium and Daybreak*.

“Supplement to “The Medium and Daybreak,” June 22, 1888. London: J. Burns, 15 Southampton Row, W.C. Maclure Macdonald & Co., Litho., Glasgow.”

2). – *Fox House*: Old postcard (Pspioneer archives), according to *The Two Worlds* May 14th, 1948 this image is “*Fox Cottage in the year 1852*”

3). – *Mrs. Katie Fox Jencken*: Published on page 465 *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism* by A. Leah Underhill, 1885. Image engraved by H.B. Halls Sons, New York.

4). – *Mrs. Margaretta Fox Kane*: Published on page 122 *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism* by A. Leah Underhill, 1885. Image engraved by H.B. Halls Sons, New York.

5). – *Leah and Daniel Underhill*: Old postcard (Pspioneer archives); this is possibly the first publication of this photograph of them both together in later life. I believe this was taken at a Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp.⁴⁵

End note:

Inscription reads:

To my dear cousin Miss Lizzie Underhill with regards of A. Leah Underhill March 24, 1885.

*Aunt Lizzie to Emily
Emily to Arthur
Emily & Arthur to
Robert J Holly 1/16/40*

This is taken from my personal copy of *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*, if this is as stated (not by marriage) by Leah: *To my dear cousin* it gives an interesting insight of her family tree as far as her parents bloodline entering the Underhill family.

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⁴⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassadaga,_Florida

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1. 9: What is known of the Hydesville peddler? - http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP9.pdf
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1. 17: What Happened to the Autobiography by Kate Fox Jencken? -
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1. 18: The Mystery of Fox Cottage:-
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/18.PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>
2. 6: In memoriam – Margaret Fox-Kane - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.6June06.pdf>
2. 6: Margaret Fox’s Poverty: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.6June06.pdf>
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<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.12December07.pdf>
4. 8: Are the ages of the Fox Sisters important? - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.8August08.pdf>
4. 9: The Fox Sisters: Riddle of the records: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.9September08.pdf>
4. 9: Hydesville text reprinted: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.9September08.pdf>
5. 4: James Stanley Grimes: – Fox séance: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>
5. 6: How old Splitfoot infiltrated Spiritualism: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>
5. 9: Fox News: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.9September09.pdf>
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7. 3: Hydesville 106 Years Ago: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.3March2011.pdf>
7. 3: Miss Fox’s Seances Twenty Years Ago: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.3March2011.pdf>
7. 9: Mrs. Norman Culver, and Kate Fox: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.9September2011.pdf>

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A Note in Passing, The 600th anniversary of the birth of Joan of Arc:

‘The Maid of Orléans’ – Joan of Arc was born on January 6th, 1412. A book, *La Verite sur Jeanne d'Arc (The Truth about Joan of Arc)*, 1911 by Leon Denis, founder of Spiritism, examines her life, mediumship and mission. It was translated into English by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and published in 1924 as *The Mystery of Joan of Arc*.

In his Translator’s Note, Sir Arthur observed that the maid in shining armour is one of the visions which has been reported by Spiritualists at various séances. One such report may be found on the Spiritist Society of Florida’s website⁴⁶ under the Messages From the Spirit World button.

Garth Willey (with thanks to Yvonne Limoges, Director of the Spiritist Society of Florida)

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Leslie’s Christmas Quiz Answers

Here are the answers to the quiz which appeared in our December 2011 issue.

1). – Who saw in the same vision Harry Edwards, Gordon Higginson, Harold Vigurs, and his own father?

Eric Hatton, during a near-fatal heart attack in 2001. He was told “Not yet” and lived on to play an important part in the 2011 survival of Psychic News, as will be reported soon in our February 2012 issue.

2). – Who, numbers of times before he was ten years old, sat on his little stool considering what eternity for the “lost” meant?

Alfred Kitson. After this trauma he became a formidable opponent of Christian influence, especially in the Lyceum Movement.

3). – Who attributed the possible bones of a peddler to a chicken?

The American SPR Journal in 1909, in a dismissive account of the finding of bones at the Fox Cottage. It was also implied that a young person had put the bones there as a joke.

4). – Why did Mrs Britten forbear to comment on certain portions of the life and conduct of A. J. Davis, and that of the late Mrs. Anna Kingsford?

Because “The Unseen Universe” journal which she was editing in 1892, normally dealt with principles rather than personalities. The reader of course is left to speculate about the portions, which might have included Davis replacing his second wife with a younger third wife, and Kingsford travelling about with a man not her husband.

⁴⁶ <http://www.spiritistsocietyfl.com/>

5). – What was the real name of Bill Silver?

Bill Silver was better known as William Roy. But Egon Larsen, quoted on p.136 of the May issue wrote “Investigations had shown that his original name was William George Holroyd, which he later changed to Plowright”.

6). – Who said “We possess to-day valuable assets of historical value and interest, and there are many people who are anxious to place valuable records of spirit activity, books, slates, apports, photographs, signed affidavits, etc., etc., in the Union’s custody if only suitable provision were made to keep and exhibit them. I have just had some 40 volumes handed me for the Union. I do not know where to put them, without making them inaccessible. There is the valuable library of Mrs. Britten lying idle.”

This was Ernest Oaten in his 1919 presidential address to the SNU. The situation was to deteriorate as the century progressed.

7). – Why did two young women in Newcastle receive “some trifling remuneration”?

Miss Wood and Miss Fairlamb were not able to follow their normal occupation, because they were giving séances.

8). – What made Merthyr Tydfil a strong centre of Spiritualism?

Evan Powell the physical medium, was resident pastor.

9). – Who was the MP for Spiritualism?

A nickname given by *Two Worlds* to Tom Brooks, who played an important part in the legalisation of mediumship in 1951.

10). – Who asked a man possessed by a demon to come back a week later?

Cardinal Vaughan. It is a moot point why he did this when asked to help by Godfrey Raupert. Perhaps he wished to refresh his memory on the rite of exorcism.

11). – What was the relationship between Mrs Marshall – and the other Mrs Marshall?

The younger Mrs Marshall married the son of the older Mrs Marshall. Both were mediums and some authors confuse them, and their relationship.

12). – Why did Sir Arthur Conan Doyle not immediately rest in peace?

In 1955 he was exhumed by his family and was moved from the garden at Windlesham to Minstead churchyard. His second wife was also moved.

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SOME BOOKS WE HAVE REVIEWED

If you have any problems locating a copy we can contact the author

An Extraordinary Journey:—The Memoirs of a Physical Medium, by Stewart Alexander, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England, 2010. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9557050-6-9., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 294-296:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.11November2010.pdf>

Helen Duncan The Mystery Show Trial, by Robert Hartley published by H Pr (Publishing), London 2007. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9553420-8-0. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 244-247:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.11November07..pdf>

Aquarian Evangelist: The Age of Aquarius as It Dawned in the Mind of Levi Dowling, by John Benedict Buescher Theosophical History Volume XI available at:—<http://www.theohistory.org> then—Occasional Papers. Psypioneer references by Leslie Price page 7:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08.pdf>

Dead Men's Embers, by Gerald O'Hara, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2006. Large Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9514534-6-9., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 1-2:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.1January07..pdf>

Mrs Miller's Gift' - a Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library, by Gerald O'Hara & Ann Harrison, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2007. Paperback ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 1-4:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08..pdf>

Mrs Miller's Gift CD:—Helen Duncan Séance, Ernest Oaten and Harry Edwards, Written and produced by Gerald O'Hara B.Sc. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 106-107:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>

The Indescribable Phenomena – The Life and Mysteries of Anna Eva Fay, by Barry H. Wiley published by Hermetic Press, Inc., Seattle Washington 2005. ISBN: 0-945296-50-9., available at:—http://www.hermeticpress.com/product_info.php?products_id=45 Psypioneer references by Leslie Price pages 39-42:— <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.2February09.pdf>

Immortal Longings – FWH Myers and the Victorian Search for Life After Death, by Trevor Hamilton published by Imprint Academic in Exeter, U.K (also VA, U.S.A) 2009. ISBN: 9-781845- 401238 H.B, 9-781845-402488 PB, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 157-148:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

Talking to the Dead – Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism, by Barbara Weisberg published by HarperSanFrancisco New York 2004. Hardback ISBN: 0-06-056667-1., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 9-10:—http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP2.pdf

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Paul J. Gaunt

