



# **A History of Ghosts: The True Story of Séances, Mediums, Ghosts, and Ghostbusters**

*Peter H. Aykroyd , Angela Narth , Dan Aykroyd (Introduction)*

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**A History of Ghosts: The True Story of Séances, Mediums, Ghosts, and Ghostbusters** Peter H. Aykroyd , Angela Narth , Dan Aykroyd (Introduction)

Peter Aykroyd spent his childhood watching his family's parlor séance through the crack of a basement door. Here, for the first time, Aykroyd tells the strange and delightful story that inspired his son, Dan, to make the mega-hit, *Ghostbusters*. Part history, part family legend, *A History of Ghosts* starts in 1848 in upstate New York, where the spiritualist craze first began. Aykroyd introduces the reader to notable mediums while telling the story of the development of spiritualism, interweaving a personal history marked by a fascination with ghosts and spirits with the larger narrative about the role the paranormal has played in our culture. Such legendary figures as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini appear and vanish. Everyone loves a good ghost story. Successful TV shows such as *Medium* and *Ghost Hunters* are proof that our national obsession with ghosts is here to stay. Millions of Americans believe in the paranormal—and even skeptics have heard a bump in the night and suspected it might be something supernatural.

## A History of Ghosts: The True Story of Séances, Mediums, Ghosts, and Ghostbusters Details

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# From Reader Review A History of Ghosts: The True Story of Seances, Mediums, Ghosts, and Ghostbusters for online ebook

## Janet says

I enjoyed this book and the contributions of the writer and his two famous sons regarding spiritualism but mostly this book dealt with the history of mediums and seances. Good information but would have enjoyed more personal anecdotes about their experiences.

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## Joshua Vine says

A very good read if you like the topic of ghosts and Dan Aykroyd's dad!

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## Carolina says

I was hoping for campfire type ghost stories, based on true events that Aykroyd witnessed. But this book was just a history of spiritualism (90% of mediums suspected as frauds), and most circumstances are debunked in Mary Roach's Spook. If you are looking for a more fun ghost book, I recommend Ghost Hunting: True Stories of Unexplained Phenomena from The Atlantic Paranormal Society (SciFi's Ghosthunters).

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## Barbm1020 says

This is a fascinating story of several generations of a well-known and respected Canadian family's connection to the world of seances and otherworldly things. The origins of "Ghostbusters" is revealed. The author also gives a timeline of personalities and trends in the search for the unseen, along with notes, remarks, and an excellent bibliography on paranormal subjects. It's also quite entertaining. I was enthralled throughout a week of hot sticky summer nights, and recommend it highly.

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## Brandon DeSousa says

Once again I picked a paranormal book and was deceived, albeit my own fault for not reading further into what the book was about. I wanted a good book filled with recollections of local ghost stories, myths, and legends.

I am not unhappy though, and once I continued to read through, learned more than I thought I would on the subject of seances and mediums and using the paranormal and spirit world within the entertainment industry.

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## **Nancy Ellis says**

Interesting summary of the author's father's journals from 10+ years of hosting seances at his home in the 1920s-30s. There are also some sections on current day activities involving mediums and ghosts, including, of course, interviews with his sons, Dan and Peter, who are both active in the field of the paranormal. I felt it became rather tedious after awhile, because I couldn't really see the point of the seances. They were trying to become "advanced" enough to make a ghost materialize, but they spent most of their time communicating with "spirit guides" who were rather ridiculous in my opinion and gave no useful information. At least it convinced me that I do not wish to waste my time on such pursuits.

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## **Amy L. Campbell says**

This book was a great overview of the history of Spiritualism, it's movers and shakes, it's skeptics and supports, and some of it's techniques and practices. There was a loose narrative surrounding the grandfather of author Peter Aykroyd as well as means of also providing anecdotal information and perceptions from a Spiritualist who lived during the time it was at it's peak. While I think this is a great resource for someone who is mildly interested in the movement, I would not call it particularly authoritative, but it is a good place to start for those interested in pursuing more indepth research, but who do not know exactly what aspect or personalities of Spiritualism to pursue.

Note on the reviewer: I hold a B.A. in history from Antioch College and a Master's in Library and Informaton Science from Kent State University. I am currently seeking to begin my professional career and am currently the author of a blog titled, "A Librarian's Life in Books" which can be found at <http://librarianslifeinbooks.blogspot....>

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## **Martin says**

The large and longstanding Aykroyd family, many of whom still reside close to their old homestead near Peterborough Ontario, have been responsible for bringing us much wisdom and entertainment over the years, though so many are unaware of the extent to which this family of reasonable and astute observers has impacted the paranormal community at large.

Peter H. Aykroyd's newest book, *A History of Ghosts; The True Story of Séances, Mediums, Ghosts and Ghostbusters* (With a foreword by Dan Aykroyd) is one that should be read by anyone who considers themselves informed on, interested in, or otherwise occupied by the business of ghosts.

While not an exhaustive history, this book brings the unique insight of nearly 80 years of personal exploration and investigation into the ideas of ghosts, séances, mediums and the general idea of human survivalism, into the foray of speculation and assumption that permeates the wittedly evolved spiritualist movement of the 19th and 20th centuries and to today's paranormal community.

Beginning with an introduction to and examination of Peter Aykroyd's venerated Grandfather, Samuel Augustus Aykroyd D.D.S., and his vast and varied experiences with early spiritualist practises, including private (or home) séances, and all of the acumen that went along with that spectacle. Peter then injects and weaves a factual and historical examination of many of the highlights of the spiritualist movement from the

early to mid 1800's, through to the mid to late 1900's and beyond.

Peter's familiarity with the players and issues of turn of the century mediums is impressive, and offers an insight not available through the writings of any modern spiritualist. All of the names you would expect to see in a discussion of this type are present, along side many lesser known psychics and more infamous frauds, hoaxers and even investigators of mediumistic practice.

Considering myself to be somewhat informed on this history and tradition, I found that I was reading this book with my jaw agape in amazement at some of the reported results achieved by both Dr. Aykroyd (whom Peter affectionately refers to as 'Dr. A.' throughout the book), as well as through the efforts of like-minded people very much the world over. For the most part Peter refrains from drawing conclusion at the proclamation of 'proof' brought forward to the present day by so-called psychics, and even by their own critics of the time.

He appears equally weary of the true-believer and of the ardently sceptic, though I did find myself questioning his own impartiality at the retelling of his own experiences at 'Lily Dale', wondering how such a learned man could have been taken so far in by such obvious trickery. But no harm was done in the end, so it bears little impact to the weight of the book.

I find myself now, having completed this journey with Peter as my guide, wondering how and why we've all strayed so far from the original ideas that spurred on the spiritualist movement. This book should be heralded by many as a catalyst for bringing back the more reasonable notion that ghosts (and their many, many various incarnations) are nothing at all to fear. This pursuit is, as it should be, the pursuit of physical, psychical, scientific and religious truth and knowledge, as is embodied by the following quote from the Progressive Thinker of June 28, 1928:

"...we have talked to one who has said he has been a spirit for 600 years and he has never seen 'God'." –  
Mary J. Langley

This idea fascinates me, and brings to mind so many questions, ideas, problems and conundrums, but in the spirit, emboldens me to ask each one in honesty and with a genuine desire to know the truth. Hidden below the vernacular of Peters literary voice is an underlying message that is as poignant now as it might have been to the Aykroyd family sitters some eight decades ago:

"People these days can't seem to tolerate one moment without entertainment." – Samuel Augustus Aykroyd

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## **Courtney says**

This was actually a pretty good read. Inspired by a long-dead Aykroyd relative's interest in the paranormal (that was sustained through multiple generations of the family), this contains lots of good information about the spiritualist movement both in America and overseas. The only complaint I really have is the use of the word "Ghostbusters" in the title. Obviously, with the last name of "Aykroyd," we are meant to understand that this is a relative (it's his father, btw) of Dan Aykroyd of Ghostbusters fame. I can only assume that the use of that word in the title was meant to draw in readers who might not pick up the book had the title been merely *A History of Ghosts: The True Story of Seances, Mediums, and Ghosts*. The only "ghostbusters" in the book would be the 19th century skeptics who set out to (and in most cases DID) debunk the practicing mediums and spiritualists. Even with the mild disappointment of not getting much at all about the

Ghostbusters most associated with the name Aykroyd, I'm glad I read it. I think it's a good addition to my "true paranormal" collection.

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### **Dustin says**

So it's a mostly history book by Dan Aykroyd's dad, based mostly on the journals of Dan Aykroyd's great-grandfather. So there's that.

This book is firmly on the 'ghosts are real' side of things, validating claims and downplaying skepticism. It's a fair position to take (especially when several generations of your own family have grown up under the particular belief system.) It's also a pretty dry read, with a few interesting personal anecdotes sprinkled throughout what is basically a light history text.

Personally I'd skip this.

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### **Eden says**

I would say that the past 15 years or so, all things paranormal have become really popular. There have been so many shows about ghost hunting, aliens, Bigfoot and other strange creatures. And let's not forget all the movies, books (fiction and non-fiction) that are about the paranormal.

Personally, I love it. I love there is so much paranormal stuff to read or watch.

And of course, some my favorite movies are the two *Ghostbusters* movies.

This book was originally released in 2009 and I became interested in reading it then. When I found out it was by Dan Aykroyd's family, I became even more interested in reading it.

I received it as a Christmas gift from my boyfriend in 2011. And this year I decided to start my Halloween reading early. This is the first book I chose to read and I'm glad I did.

There are some stories about when the author was growing up, about seances he witnessed as a child. Those parts were so fascinating, and I felt, so few.

The author goes into detail about the Spiritualist Movement of the 1800s/1900s. Lots of information about Mediums and seances from those times. He even talks a little about other countries, like how the Spiritualist Movement caught on in the UK.

Brazil is another country he writes about some and how Spiritism is different from the Spiritualist Movement, which was quite interesting.

I learned about some people I've never heard of before, like Chico Xavier. There were also information about some of today's Mediums, like James Van Praagh.

There are parts about Lily Dale in this book as well, which I really enjoyed reading. I'd love to visit there one day and was happy the author included his story of going to Lily Dale.

This was a good book, so information packed into a book that is less than 300 pages. My only complaint is that I would have loved to read more about the seances he saw as a child and what experiences he has had with the paranormal. I hope that one day the author will decide to write a book that details more of that.

If you're interested in a history of ghosts, Mediums and the Spiritualist Movement, then I recommend this book.

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### **Laura says**

Very good book written by someone who grew up in a household where his parents and their peers practiced spiritualism, holding regular seances. This is a somewhat unusual point of view, and provides some understanding about the inspiration behind Ghostbusters. A respectful look at certain beliefs about the spirit world that doesn't dismiss them as "woo-woo" but doesn't take them as gospel either.

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### **Lord Beardsley says**

The Aykroyd family is a fascinating bunch of really sweet Canadian Spiritualists and paranormal enthusiasts. If you're interested in the fields of paranormal research, Spiritualism, and different methodologies of communicating with the beyond from a historical perspective, I definitely recommend this. This is a very comprehensive overview of the late 19th/20th century draw to communication with the dead, told in a conversational, humorous adorable dad way from Dan Aykroyd's dad! Awww!

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### **Jeannie and Louis Rigod says**

Peter H. Aykroyd, Father of actor/author Dan Aykroyd takes us on a journey through time regarding the popular craze of Spiritualism.

This book was a blend of tales of his family and actual historical facts. I have to admit that this book was very difficult reading. The reason being, you are in the chapter and then are referred to 'end notes' or 'comments.' I ended up with three page markers trying to just read the chapter.

So, I decided to just read the chapters and then the end notes, and finally the comments. That made the book more manageable. I personally wish that the book had been full of just the Ackroyd family experiences. That is what I thought the book was about.

I give it four stars as this book is a very complete book of persons involved, techniques used, and the historical dates of Spiritualism in the World. It covers, England, Brazil, and the United States mainly. Very complete and can be utilized as a reference book. The book also has a small amount of pictures.

Mr. Ackroyd I just wish you had written more of your own personal experiences. That was my favorite part.

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## **Kate says**

I had no idea until I read the preface that this is written by Dan Aykroyd's dad and tells the story of their family's long-time obsession with Spiritualism. Being such a big fan of Ghostbusters, I should have already been all over this...damn.

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