

THE WIZARD CLIP HAUNTING

A Historical Case File

CLASSIFICATION: HISTORICAL - DOCUMENTED

Location: Smithfield (Wizard Clip/Clip Town), Virginia

Time Period: 1794 - 1797 (Primary Activity)

Investigation Period: 1797

Compiled from the manuscripts of:

Rev. Prince Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin

Fr. Denis Cahill

Bishop John Carroll

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wizard Clip Haunting represents one of the most thoroughly documented supernatural events in early American history. Beginning in May 1794 and continuing for approximately three years, the Livingston farmstead near Smithfield, Virginia experienced persistent paranormal disturbances following the death of a Catholic stranger and the property owner's refusal to procure a priest for Last Rites.

The manifestations included:

- Invisible shears cutting linens into crescent moon shapes
- Persistent auditory phenomena (clipping sounds, wagon wheels, galloping horses)
- Physical manifestations (objects thrown, house vibrations, black vapor formations)
- Property destruction (barn fire, livestock deaths, material loss)
- Human casualties (death of two Livingston children from toxic vapor)

Multiple Protestant ministers failed to mitigate the disturbances. The case was resolved through the intervention of Catholic priests, specifically Fr. Denis Cahill and Fr. Demetrius Gallitzin, who performed blessings, exorcisms, and the celebration of Mass in the dwelling. The successful resolution led to the conversion and baptism of Adam Livingston and his family.

The location subsequently became known as 'Wizard Clip' or 'Clip Town,' names that persist to this day.

CASE OVERVIEW

Location

Primary Site: Livingston Farmstead ("Flax Haven"), Smithfield, Virginia (near Opequon Creek, approximately 35 acres)

Jurisdiction: Jefferson County, Virginia (later Berkeley County, West Virginia)

Current Name: Area known as Wizard Clip or Clip Town

Time Period

- Initial Incident: May 28, 1794 (death of the Stranger)
- First Manifestations: Late May 1794
- Peak Activity: June 1794 - August 1797
- Official Investigation: 1797 (Fr. Gallitzin, commissioned by Bishop Carroll)
- Resolution: September 17, 1797 (Exorcism Mass)
- Aftermath: Benevolent "Voice" phenomena continued for 17 years

Principal Subject

Adam Livingston - Pennsylvania-born farmer of German-Dutch descent, Lutheran background, age approximately 40 at time of initial incident. Married to Mary Ann Livingston (née Babbitt), Revolutionary War widow. Father to children including Henry, Eve, and twins George and Martha.

KEY PERSONS INVOLVED

Primary Witnesses

Adam Livingston

Property owner, principal witness. Experienced most manifestations directly. Initially anti-Catholic, later converted following resolution of haunting.

Mary Ann Livingston (née Babbitt)

Second wife of Adam, Revolutionary War widow. Suffered nervous breakdown due to manifestations. Reluctant convert; described herself as 'Judas.'

Eve Livingston

Adam's daughter. Possessed apparent ability to perceive the entity visually. Maintained communication with deceased mother Esther.

Sam and Bethany

Formerly enslaved couple, manumitted by Livingston. Household staff who witnessed multiple manifestations.

Investigators and Clergy

Rev. Prince Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin (Fr. Smith)

(1770-1840) Russian prince, first U.S.-educated Catholic priest. Commissioned by Bishop Carroll to investigate. Initial attempt at exorcism failed due to overwhelming manifestations. Documented case extensively. Known for founding Loretto, Pennsylvania.

Rev. Denis Cahill

(c. 1766-1817) Irish missionary priest. Successfully blessed the property, performed exorcism Mass. Described as 'bluff and hearty, a man of powerful nerve and strong faith.' Founded multiple parishes in Western Maryland and Virginia.

Bishop John Carroll, S.J.

(1735-1815) First U.S. Catholic Bishop. Authorized investigations and granted permission for exorcism.

Richard and Anastasia McSherry

Local Catholic family near Leetown. Provided crucial connection to Fr. Cahill. Witnessed manifestations and supported investigation.

Failed Interventions

Multiple Protestant ministers attempted and failed to address the disturbances:

- Rev. Christian Streit - Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Winchester
- Three Lutheran deacons from Winchester
- Rev. Alexander Balmain - Episcopal minister, former Revolutionary Army chaplain
- Hoover Horace Hhoats - Spiritualist/conjurer (refused to attend after sensing the entity)

The Stranger (Incognito Priest)

Identity: Believed to be 'Fr. Xavier' - French Jesuit missionary to the Yazoo and Choctaw peoples in North Louisiana. Remained in the New World after Jesuit Suppression. Died May 28, 1794 at Livingston farmstead without receiving Last Rites after Livingstons refused to procure a Catholic priest. His death and unfulfilled final request initiated the curse.

DETAILED TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	EVENT
Pre-1794	Adam Livingston moves from Pennsylvania to Smithfield, Virginia. Establishes 'Flax Haven' farm. Marries Mary Ann Babbitt (Revolutionary War widow). Both hold strong anti-Catholic sentiments.
May 28, 1794	THE CATALYST EVENT: Elderly traveling stranger falls ill at Livingston home. Reveals himself as French Jesuit missionary (Fr. Xavier). Requests Catholic priest for Last Rites. Livingstons refuse due to anti-Catholic prejudice. Stranger dies without sacraments. Before death, stranger curses the property and all Livingston owns.
Late May 1794	FIRST MANIFESTATIONS: Mysterious clipping/snipping sounds begin. Linens throughout property systematically cut into ribbons or crescent moon shapes by invisible force. No physical shears ever observed.
June 1794	Manifestations intensify. Phenomena include: house vibrations, objects thrown by invisible hands, pottery destroyed, sounds of galloping horses and wagons circling property, fireplace stones dislodged and thrown at visitors. Family members and guests flee in terror. George and Martha (twins) die from inhaling toxic black vapor in their bedroom.
July 1794	Adam repairs damaged loom for daughter Eve. Manifestations related to crescent moon phases observed. Activity strongest during new moon periods.
August 1794	Rev. Christian Streit (Lutheran) visits at Livingston's request. Claims he has no power to cast out demons (believes such power ceased with apostles). Attempts prayer anyway. Manifestations intensify during his presence. Streit flees, embarrassed and ineffective.
Mid-1794	Mary Ann Livingston suffers nervous breakdown. Spends months recovering at friends' quarters away from property. Multiple failed intervention attempts by various Protestant ministers and spiritualists.
1795-1796	Property destruction escalates: barn burns down (cause unknown), livestock die mysteriously, massive material losses. Three Lutheran deacons from Winchester attempt intervention - large stone flies from fireplace at them, rolls around floor attacking them. They flee. Rev. Alexander Balmain (Episcopal) attempts exorcism - his prayer book is found in chamber pot, mocked by entity.

DATE	EVENT
1796-1797	Adam Livingston begins having prophetic dreams of a priest who can help. Dreams recur multiple times, showing same individual. On advice of neighbor, visits McSherry family near Leetown seeking Catholic priest.
Sunday, July 1797	FIRST CATHOLIC CONTACT: Livingston attends Mass at St. Agnes Chapel, Shepherd's Town. Recognizes Fr. Denis Cahill as priest from his dreams. Cries out 'The very man I saw in my dream!' Approaches Fr. Cahill after Mass with Richard McSherry and Gabriel Menghini. Fr. Cahill initially skeptical, laughs at account, but agrees to visit under pressure from prominent parishioners.
July 1797	FIRST BLESSING: Fr. Cahill visits property with McSherry family and Menghini. Upon approaching with Holy Water, porch violently shakes. Fr. Cahill aggressively blesses house with Holy Water and Latin prayers. Witnesses black vapor coalescing into semi-transparent male torso. Sounds of wagons and horses encircle house. Manifestations cease temporarily after aggressive blessing. Purse of missing money appears between Fr. Cahill's feet as he leaves. Warns Livingston: family must convert, be baptized, attend Mass regularly, and house must be properly exorcised or spirit will return 'with a vengeance.'
Late July 1797	SPIRIT RETURNS: After one month of peace, manifestations resume with increased violence. Livingston family realizes Fr. Cahill's warning was accurate. Fr. Cahill travels to Baltimore to seek Bishop Carroll's permission for formal exorcism.
August 1797	BISHOP'S INVESTIGATION: Bishop John Carroll commissions Fr. Demetrius Gallitzin (Fr. Smith) to investigate from Conewago, Pennsylvania. Fr. Gallitzin arrives, manifestations intensify dramatically in presence of priest. He attempts exorcism but rattling/rumbling overwhelms his nerves. Unable to command himself sufficiently to complete ritual. Reports back to Bishop that manifestations are genuine and supernatural.
Sept 1797	PREPARATION: Fr. Cahill instructs Livingston family in Catholic faith over several weeks. Prepares them for baptism and exorcism.
Sept 17, 1797	BAPTISMS: Fr. Cahill and Fr. Gallitzin baptize Adam Livingston, Henry, Eve, Sam, Bethany, and others at Opequon Creek ford near Shepherd's Town. Mary Ann refuses baptism. Nine catechumens total baptized. (Note: One more than Noah's eight, as Fr. Cahill joked)
Sept 17, 1797	THE EXORCISM MASS: Fr. Cahill (with Fr. Gallitzin assisting) celebrates Mass in Livingston home. Witnesses: Adam, Eve, Sam, Rev. Jeremiah Williams, Gabriel Menghini. During Mass: violent manifestations, black vapor forms

DATE	EVENT
	<p>humanoid specter, dishes fly from cabinet and shatter, cold winds circulate room, demonic voice mocks prayers, entity attacks with thrown objects. Fr. Cahill persists without faltering. At moment of Communion (Host touches Adam's tongue), entity forced to confess in otherworldly voice revealing: Stranger's curse, murder of previous landowner (Alexander Mayfield) whose bones buried under cairn, demand for land sanctification. Entity declares 'I go' and dissipates. Manifestations cease immediately and permanently.</p>
Sept 18, 1797	<p>AFTERMATH: Adam and team locate cairn, discover skeletal remains of Alexander Mayfield (previous deed holder, murdered victim). Fr. Gallitzin blesses ground with Holy Water. Remains reverently reburied next to Stranger in woods. Brief burial rite performed.</p>
1797-1814	<p>THE VOICE: Benevolent disembodied Voice (accompanied by bright light) visits family for 17 years. Voice catechizes family in Catholic faith, predicts future events, warns of neighbors' illnesses/deaths, identifies souls in purgatory needing prayers, instructs family in charity. Believed by some to be Fr. Xavier returned. Voice teaches: 'All sighs and tears of whole world not worth one Mass.' Mary Ann attempts to falsify Voice's predictions but fails. Voice correctly predicts Mary Ann will die in her own house (despite her attempts to avoid this).</p>
1798	<p>PUBLIC CONTROVERSY: Rev. Lawrence Sylvester Phelan (Catholic priest, Hagerstown) visits out of 'curiosity,' publishes letter in Potowmack Guardian (Aug 29) claiming Mary Ann orchestrated hoax. Mary Ann responds (Sept 12) defending reality of manifestations, accusing priestcraft of trying to steal her property rights. Public debate ensues.</p>
Post-1797	<p>LEGACY: Area renamed 'Wizard Clip' or 'Clip Town' (names persist to present day). Fr. Gallitzin takes trunk of clipped clothing samples back to Conewago - seen by 'eminent priests' for years (later burned by superior as 'distraction'). Adam Livingston donates 35 acres for Catholic church. Fourteen persons converted in one winter due to accounts. Fr. Gallitzin writes comprehensive account to Bishop (later lost, rewritten in 1821). Adam Livingston dies c. 1820.</p>

DOCUMENTED MANIFESTATIONS

Physical Phenomena

- **Linen Destruction:** Systematic cutting of all linen materials into ribbons or precise crescent moon shapes. Cutting impossibly precise - sharper than scissors or razors could achieve without fabric unraveling.
- **Structural Disturbances:** House vibrations ranging from subtle floor tremors to violent shaking capable of dislodging cemented fireplace stones.
- **Object Manipulation:** Pottery thrown from shelves and shattered. Stones removed from fireplace and hurled at visitors (catching clothing on fire). Furniture moved or banged about.
- **Black Vapor:** Coalescing smoke with no burnt smell, capable of forming semi-transparent humanoid shapes. Toxic when concentrated - caused deaths of two children.
- **Temperature Anomalies:** Cold winds manifesting indoors regardless of window status. Sharp, bitter-edged breezes during exorcism.
- **Property Destruction:** Barn fire (unexplained origin), livestock deaths, massive material losses over three-year period.

Auditory Phenomena

- **Clipping Sounds:** Constant sound of invisible shears/scissors. Intensity varied, sometimes stuttering. Primary identifying characteristic of haunting.
- **Wagon and Horse Sounds:** Loud rumbling of multiple wagons and stampeding horses circling property, particularly at night. Described as 'like an Indian war drum.'
- **Demonic Voice:** During exorcism, otherworldly voice mocked prayers, ridiculed sacraments. Forced confession revealed curse details.

Pattern Analysis

- **Lunar Correlation:** Manifestations strongest during new moon phases. Activity peaked around crescent moon periods.
- **Priest Sensitivity:** Presence of Catholic priests (especially those attempting interventions) dramatically intensified manifestations. Entity appeared to 'sense' priestly presence and respond defensively.
- **Holy Water Reaction:** Aggressive response to blessed water and sacramentals. Manifestations temporarily ceased after Fr. Cahill's blessing but returned 'with vengeance' as warned.
- **Symbolic Elements:** Crescent moon shapes suggest connection to ancient moon deity worship. Fr. Cahill noted similarity to New Orleans spiritualist symbols.

Witness Consistency

Multiple independent witnesses corroborated manifestations:

- Livingston family members (5+)
- Household staff (Sam, Bethany)
- Multiple clergy (Cahill, Gallitzin, Streit, Balmain, others)
- Local prominent citizens (McSherry family, Menghini, Lutheran deacons)
- Visiting investigators (Fr. Gallitzin's three-month investigation)

INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION

Initial Response (1794-1796)

Protestant Ministers - Multiple Failed Attempts:

Rev. Christian Streit (Lutheran):

Claimed no power to cast out demons (believed such ceased with apostles). Attempted prayers anyway. Manifestations intensified. Fled premises.

Three Lutheran Deacons:

Came from Winchester to 'free the house from Devil himself.' Stone flew from fireplace, rolled around floor attacking them. Examined chimney afterward - no stone missing. Fled without explanation.

Rev. Alexander Balmain (Episcopal):

Revolutionary Army chaplain, tutor to Lee family. Attempted exorcism using Episcopal Sacred Liturgy. His prayer book subsequently found in chamber pot - entity's mockery of Episcopal rites.

Spiritualist/Conjurer (Hoover Horace Hhoats):

Refused to attend after sensing nature of entity. Told Livingston he needed 'true Christian minister.'

Catholic Investigation (1797)

Phase 1: Fr. Denis Cahill's Initial Blessing

Approach: Aggressive use of Holy Water, salt of exorcism, Latin prayers of blessing. Confronted manifestations head-on without retreat. Result: Temporary cessation of activity (approximately one month peace). Warning: Predicted return 'with vengeance' unless proper exorcism performed and family converted.

Phase 2: Bishop Carroll's Commission

Fr. Cahill traveled to Baltimore seeking exorcism authority. Bishop John Carroll (First U.S. Catholic Bishop) commissioned investigation. Fr. Demetrius Gallitzin assigned from Conewago, Pennsylvania. Three-month comprehensive investigation conducted.

Phase 3: Fr. Gallitzin's Investigation

Russian prince, highly educated, first U.S.-trained Catholic priest. Approached with scholarly skepticism. Documented extensive witness testimonies. Experienced

manifestations personally. Attempted exorcism but overwhelmed by intensity (rattling/rumbling 'worked so upon his nerves'). Unable to command himself sufficiently. Confirmed supernatural nature to Bishop Carroll. Recommended Fr. Cahill for actual exorcism (acknowledging Cahill's superior 'powerful nerve and hearty faith').

Phase 4: Preparation for Exorcism

Fr. Cahill instructed Livingston family in Catholic faith over several weeks. Prepared catechumens for baptism. Coordinated with Fr. Gallitzin for joint ritual. Bishop Carroll granted formal permission for exorcism rites.

The Exorcism Mass (September 17, 1797)

Preparation:

- Morning baptisms at Opequon Creek ford (9 catechumens including Adam, Henry, Eve, Sam, Bethany)
- Altar established in Livingston gathering hall
- Incense, Holy Water, blessed salt, sacramentals prepared
- Six candles lit (after initial resistance from entity)

Celebrant: Fr. Denis Cahill

Assisting: Fr. Demetrius Gallitzin

Witnesses: Adam Livingston, Eve Livingston, Sam, Rev. Jeremiah Williams (Methodist), Gabriel Menghini

Manifestations During Mass:

- Black vapor formed chains around priests' ankles
- Cold winds circulated despite closed windows
- All pottery/dishes flew from cabinet and shattered
- Whirlwind of debris around altar
- Demonic voice mocked prayers: 'Yes, papist scum. Bless this cursed sacrifice...'
- Candles flickered violently but never extinguished
- Adam Livingston fought physical attacks with shillelagh

Critical Moment:

At instant of Holy Communion (consecrated Host touched Adam's tongue), entity forced to manifest and confess in verse form. Revealed: Stranger's curse, murder of Alexander Mayfield (previous landowner), Mayfield's bones buried under cairn on property, demand for land sanctification. Declared 'I go' - specter exploded silently, manifestations ceased immediately and permanently.

Post-Resolution Activities

- Located cairn and excavated Mayfield's skeletal remains
- Fr. Gallitzin blessed ground with Holy Water
- Remains reverently reburied next to Stranger's grave in woods
- Burial rite performed for Mayfield
- Fr. Gallitzin collected trunk of clipped linen samples for documentation
- Samples viewed by 'eminent priests' for years (later burned by superior as 'distraction')

AFTERMATH AND LEGACY

Immediate Aftermath (1797-1814)

The Voice Phenomena:

Following exorcism, benevolent disembodied Voice visited family for 17 years (1797-1814).

Characteristics:

- Accompanied by bright light
- Gentle, kind, instructive tone
- Would wake family at night to pray together
- Led prayers for hours at a time
- Catechized family in Catholic doctrine
- Explained mysteries of faith in clear, eloquent manner
- Predicted future events with accuracy
- Warned of neighbors' illnesses or deaths before they occurred
- Identified souls suffering in purgatory, requested prayers
- Directed family to assist those in need
- Claimed to have once been 'in the flesh like Adam'

Notable Teachings:

'All the sighs and tears of the whole world put together were not worth so much as one Mass'

'One Mass was more acceptable to God than if the whole world was in sackcloth and ashes'

Speculation: Many believed Voice belonged to Fr. Xavier (the Stranger) returned from purgatory as consolation for family's hospitality, or possibly as penance. Voice described as coming from 'soul suffering in purgatory, for some reason permitted to visit, console, and instruct the family.'

Mary Ann Livingston

Remained conflicted. Present at instruction and baptisms but refused her own baptism initially. Witnessed blessing, exorcism, heard Voice. Called herself 'Judas.' Attempted to falsify Voice's predictions repeatedly - all attempts failed. Voice predicted she would die in her own house. Mary Ann refused to stay home when ill, went to Quaker family's house. Eventually begged to be taken home, died there as predicted.

Public Recognition and Controversy

Geographic Legacy:

- Smithfield renamed 'Wizard Clip' or 'Clip Town'
- Names persist to present day

Conversions:

- Fourteen persons converted in one winter following events
- Others influenced toward serious practice of virtue

Property Dedication:

- Adam Livingston donated 35 acres (the disputed parcel) for Catholic church establishment

Newspaper Controversy (1798):

Potowmack Guardian published competing accounts. Rev. Lawrence Sylvester Phelan (Catholic priest, Hagerstown) visited 'out of curiosity,' declared events were imposture orchestrated by Mary Ann and 'knavish hussies.' Mary Ann responded defending reality of manifestations, accusing priests of property-grabbing scheme. Public debate ensued but did not diminish local belief in events.

Documentation

Primary Sources:

- Fr. Gallitzin's original report to Bishop Carroll (1797) - subsequently lost
- Fr. Gallitzin's rewritten account (1821) to Archbishop Maréchal
- Letters between Fr. Cahill and Bishop Carroll (documented as real correspondence)
- Rev. Joseph M. Finotti, S.J. monograph (1870): 'The Mystery of the Wizard Clip' - 143 pages compiling witness accounts
- Physical evidence: Trunk of clipped linen samples (viewed by multiple clergy, later destroyed)
- Newspaper articles in Potowmack Guardian (1798)

Later Accounts:

- Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin Prince and Priest by Sara Brownson (1873)
- Gallitzin's Letters, Angelmodde Press (1940)
- Multiple 20th century historical treatments and church records

Historical Significance

Religious Context:

- Occurred during formative period of American Catholic Church
- Demonstrated Catholic sacramental efficacy in Protestant-dominated region
- Contributed to establishment of Catholic presence in Western Virginia/Maryland

- Occurred post-Jesuit Suppression, during period of Catholic reconstruction in Americas

Supernatural Investigation:

- One of earliest documented supernatural investigations in United States
- Multiple credible witnesses across social classes
- Extensive documentation by educated clergy
- Physical evidence preserved (for time) and examined by multiple parties
- Demonstrates early American openness to supernatural explanations

Cultural Impact:

- Permanent geographic naming (Wizard Clip/Clip Town)
- Local oral tradition maintained through generations
- Influenced regional attitudes toward Catholic Church
- Demonstrates intersection of frontier life, religious prejudice, and supernatural belief in early America

INVESTIGATIVE ANALYSIS

Strengths of Documentation

- Multiple independent witnesses from different social classes and religious backgrounds
- Investigators included highly educated individuals (Russian prince, bishop, multiple clergy)
- Three-month systematic investigation by Fr. Gallitzin
- Physical evidence collected and examined (linen samples)
- Consistent manifestation patterns over three-year period
- Contemporary newspaper coverage (provides third-party verification)
- Resolution followed logical progression with permanent cessation of phenomena

Limitations and Considerations

- Primary documentation compiled years after events (Fr. Gallitzin's 1821 rewrite)
- Original 1797 report lost - rewritten from memory 24 years later
- Physical evidence (linen samples) later destroyed
- Some accounts diverge in details (acknowledged by Fr. Gallitzin and Fr. Finotti)
- Religious bias potential (Catholic clergy as primary documentarians)
- Contemporary skeptic (Fr. Phelan) dismissed as imposture without thorough investigation

Comparison to Other Cases

Unique Elements:

- Physical alterations (linen cutting) with consistent pattern over extended period
- Clear trigger event (refusal of Last Rites to dying priest)
- Benevolent aftermath phenomena (Voice) following malevolent activity resolution
- Documented failed interventions by multiple denominations before successful resolution
- Permanent geographic naming after events

Common Elements with Other Historical Cases:

- Escalating phenomena pattern
- Property destruction
- Auditory and visual manifestations
- Resolution through religious ritual
- Psychological toll on witnesses

CONCLUSION

The Wizard Clip Haunting represents a remarkable intersection of early American frontier life, religious conflict, and supernatural phenomena. The case is distinguished by:

- Extensive documentation by credible witnesses
- Systematic three-month investigation by educated clergy
- Multiple failed intervention attempts before successful resolution
- Permanent cessation of malevolent phenomena following exorcism
- Lasting cultural and geographic impact
- Documented conversions and religious transformations

The case occurred during a pivotal period in American Catholic Church history, when the church was establishing itself in a predominantly Protestant nation still harboring significant anti-Catholic prejudice. The manifestations and their resolution through Catholic rites contributed to the church's growing acceptance and establishment in the region.

From an investigative standpoint, the case benefits from multiple corroborating witnesses, systematic documentation, and consistent phenomena patterns. However, limitations include the loss of original documentation, destruction of physical evidence, and the passage of time between events and final written accounts.

The permanence of the 'Wizard Clip' geographic designation testifies to the profound impact these events had on the local community. The case remains one of the most thoroughly documented supernatural events in early American history.

~ END OF CASE FILE ~

Compiled from historical manuscripts

Wizard Clip Haunting Books 1-3

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