

The Brown Lady



The legend of The Brown Lady of Raynham Hall dates back centuries. Lady Dorothy Walpole (1686-1726), a distant relative of my daughter-in-law, was the second wife of Charles Townshend. Upon learning of her prior extra-marital affair with Lord Thomas Wharton, the temperamental Townshend had her locked into her room at the family estate and forbade her to see any of her seven children. She remained there until she died. Her cause of death is still debated. She either succumbed to smallpox or suffered a broken neck from being pushed down the Grand Staircase.

However she perished, the reports of her ghost appearing in the halls of her family home are well documented. The first sighting was in 1835 by Colonel Loftus, a Christmas guest of Viscount Townshend, who allegedly saw a female image clad in a brown brocade dress, as he was retiring for the evening. He recognized her from her portrait that hung in the hallway. He chose not to remain in the house.

The next year, Captain Fredrick Marryat, a friend of Charles Dickens and a popular author of sea novels, specifically requested to spend the night in the "haunted room." He claims to have come face to face with The Brown Lady. Startled, he discharged his firearm point blank at the image which immediately vanished. His bullet lodged in the door across the

corridor.

In 1936, a photographer for Country Life magazine was taking pictures for an article on Raynham Hall. He captured an image (pictured above) that some believe to be proof of the spectre. It has been largely discredited. There have been no further sightings since that time.

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