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October 27, 1989

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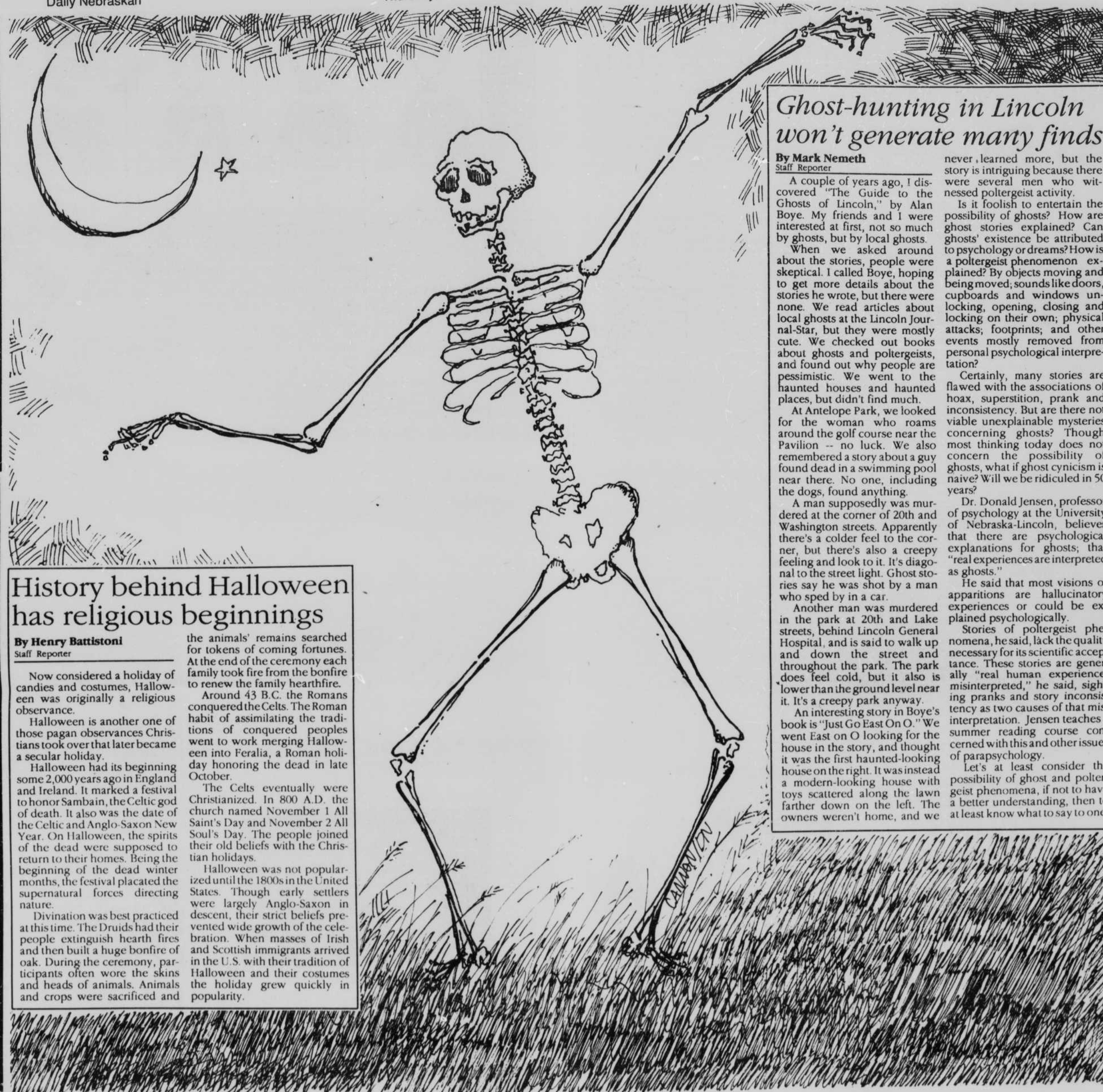
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KIMBALL HALL 11th & R STREETS



## Ghost-hunting in Lincoln won't generate many finds

By Mark Nemeth  
Staff Reporter

A couple of years ago, I discovered "The Guide to the Ghosts of Lincoln," by Alan Boye. My friends and I were interested at first, not so much by ghosts, but by local ghosts.

When we asked around about the stories, people were skeptical. I called Boye, hoping to get more details about the stories he wrote, but there were none. We read articles about local ghosts at the Lincoln Journal-Star, but they were mostly cute. We checked out books about ghosts and poltergeists, and found out why people are pessimistic. We went to the haunted houses and haunted places, but didn't find much.

At Antelope Park, we looked for the woman who roams around the golf course near the Pavilion -- no luck. We also remembered a story about a guy found dead in a swimming pool near there. No one, including the dogs, found anything.

A man supposedly was murdered at the corner of 20th and Washington streets. Apparently there's a colder feel to the corner, but there's also a creepy feeling and look to it. It's diagonal to the street light. Ghost stories say he was shot by a man who sped by in a car.

Another man was murdered in the park at 20th and Lake streets, behind Lincoln General Hospital, and is said to walk up and down the street and throughout the park. The park does feel cold, but it also is lower than the ground level near it. It's a creepy park anyway.

An interesting story in Boye's book is "Just Go East On O." We went East on O looking for the house in the story, and thought it was the first haunted-looking house on the right. It was instead a modern-looking house with toys scattered along the lawn farther down on the left. The owners weren't home, and we

never learned more, but the story is intriguing because there were several men who witnessed poltergeist activity.

Is it foolish to entertain the possibility of ghosts? How are ghost stories explained? Can ghosts' existence be attributed to psychology or dreams? How is a poltergeist phenomenon explained? By objects moving and being moved; sounds like doors, cupboards and windows unlocking, opening, closing and locking on their own; physical attacks; footprints; and other events mostly removed from personal psychological interpretation?

Certainly, many stories are flawed with the associations of hoax, superstition, prank and inconsistency. But are there not viable unexplainable mysteries concerning ghosts? Though most thinking today does not concern the possibility of ghosts, what if ghost cynicism is naive? Will we be ridiculed in 50 years?

Dr. Donald Jensen, professor of psychology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, believes that there are psychological explanations for ghosts; that "real experiences are interpreted as ghosts."

He said that most visions of apparitions are hallucinatory experiences or could be explained psychologically. Stories of poltergeist phenomena, he said, lack the quality necessary for its scientific acceptance. These stories are generally "real human experiences misinterpreted," he said, sighting pranks and story inconsistency as two causes of that misinterpretation. Jensen teaches a summer reading course concerned with this and other issues of parapsychology.

Let's at least consider the possibility of ghost and poltergeist phenomena, if not to have a better understanding, then to at least know what to say to one.

## History behind Halloween has religious beginnings

By Henry Battistoni  
Staff Reporter

Now considered a holiday of candies and costumes, Halloween was originally a religious observance.

Halloween is another one of those pagan observances Christians took over that later became a secular holiday.

Halloween had its beginning some 2,000 years ago in England and Ireland. It marked a festival to honor Samhain, the Celtic god of death. It also was the date of the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon New Year. On Halloween, the spirits of the dead were supposed to return to their homes. Being the beginning of the dead winter months, the festival placated the supernatural forces directing nature.

Divination was best practiced at this time. The Druids had their people extinguish hearth fires and then built a huge bonfire of oak. During the ceremony, participants often wore the skins and heads of animals. Animals and crops were sacrificed and

the animals' remains searched for tokens of coming fortunes. At the end of the ceremony each family took fire from the bonfire to renew the family hearthfire.

Around 43 B.C. the Romans conquered the Celts. The Roman habit of assimilating the traditions of conquered peoples went to work merging Halloween into Feralia, a Roman holiday honoring the dead in late October.

The Celts eventually were Christianized. In 800 A.D. the church named November 1 All Saint's Day and November 2 All Soul's Day. The people joined their old beliefs with the Christian holidays.

Halloween was not popularized until the 1800s in the United States. Though early settlers were largely Anglo-Saxon in descent, their strict beliefs prevented wide growth of the celebration. When masses of Irish and Scottish immigrants arrived in the U.S. with their tradition of Halloween and their costumes the holiday grew quickly in popularity.

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