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Don't Call Them Ghosts: The Spirit Children of Fontaine Manse, A True Story

Kathleen McConnell
Llewellyn Publications (August 2004)
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Little did the author know when she moved her family into Fontaine Manse in the early 1970s that she'd find herself mothering three spirit children in addition to her own. She realized that the house in Louisville, Kentucky was haunted when she was awakened by doors slammed by unseen hands, but was surprised to realize that the spirits wandering the old Victorian were children. Horrified once she realized their plight, she determined to find out who they were.

During the five years that the family lived in the house, McConnell came to know and love the children as welcome additions to her family. But as circumstances dictated a move, Kathleen found herself overwrought, wondering what would become of the spirit children of Fontaine Manse. Could her love for them help the children find eternal peace?

In her book, McConnell writes with an honesty that's immediately engaging. Upon climbing the stairs to investigate the sounds of a basketball being thrown against the wall, she writes, "My burst of courage or curiosity was not as fortified at the top of the steps as it had been at the bottom of the steps." She readily shares her hopes, fears and concerns about the well being of all of her children, and tenderly describes the development of her relationship with the spirits of the children in her house. Her descriptions of the children-a toddler, a girl about eleven, and a young teenage boy-are heartbreaking. For example, when she finally sees the children, she describes the eyes of "Angel Girl": they "revealed not the sunny exuberance of an eleven-year-old, but a sorrow that lingered inside way too long."

While some of the narrative meanders a bit, and it isn't always clear where McConnell is going with a tangent, she does ultimately tie every digression back to her story in a meaningful way. It would have been wonderful if the author had ever been able to verify the identities of the children beyond their being members of the Fontaine family, but not knowing doesn't really detract from the value of the book: it's not so much about the children as about McConnell and the maternal relationship she had with them.

Ultimately uplifting, Don't Call Them Ghosts will be appreciated by fans of "gentle" paranormal books and those seeking a testament to the power of love. These spirits aren't frightening ghosts but merely children, and to Kathleen McConnell, they are affectionately known as her "other" children.
AMY BROZIO-ANDREWS (November / December 2004)

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