Upbeat cello theme plays.

**Mary Wesley:** Welcome to VT Untapped, a podcast from the Vermont Folklife Center that explores the state through the voices of its own residents. I’m Mary Wesley. It’s Halloween, and that means it’s time for another VT Untapped Spooky Halloween Special!

**Mysterious Deep Voice:** SPOOKY HALLOWEEN SPECIAL. MWAHAHAHA.

Upbeat cello theme plays, looping over itself, fading out as Mary begins speaking.

**Mary Wesley:** In search of TERRORS UNIMAGINABLE to share with you folks this year, I corralled my courage, grabbed a flashlight, pushed away the cobwebs and descended the creaking stairs down to the VFC Archive.

Stairs creak.

In the fetid depths below, across cavernous vaults teeming with bats and vermin,

*Bats squeak and fly past.*

I found what I sought: the Keeper of Arcane Knowledge, he whose name we at VFC utter only in furtive whispers--The Archivist--asleep in his mouldering coffin.

Snoring continues under narration.

I silently, cautiously approached his place of unholy repose. Step by tentative step I drew myself closer and closer to the ghastly oblong box, and as I peered over its crumbling sides…

Floorboards creak. The Archivist grunts.

His palid eyelids snapped suddenly open! Without a sound he rose from his blasphemous slumber, turned toward me and, in a voice that resonated with the noxious echoes of ancient tombs and barrows, spoke forth the anticipated, accursed riddle:

**Andy Kolovos:** “Hey, Mary--what’s up?”

Organ notes play discordantly.

**Mary:** I recoiled in terror and revulsion. This abomination, this ARCHIVIST--it was almost more than I could endure. But for you, dear listeners, I steeled my resolve and found my words.
“Oh Archivist! The time is upon us! Halloween! I come in search of stories from the VFC Archive to send our listeners into paroxysms of terror!”

He raised aloft a silent finger, nodded and glided toward the sarcophagus that served him as a desk where he reached for the bright red, rotary phone that squatted forlornly upon it.

Andy: “Mary,”

Mary: He croaked in a voice redolent of the nocturnal cries of secret, hidden abominations,

Andy: “Let's call Jane and see if she can remember anything good.”

Chimes tinkle.

Mary: Jane! VFC Founder Jane Beck! As wise as Athena! As learned as all the Ancient Scholars and Scribes of Yore!

Old phone rings.

Andy: “Hey, Jane”

Narrator: He extolled into the receiver in a voice that carried with it the affect of foul winds shrieking through the barren places abhorred by those that walk in the light of day,

Winds howl.

Andy: “Mary’s here and she’s looking for some material for this year's Spooky Halloween Special--can you think of anything?

Muffled talking on the other end of the phone line.

Andy: Haunted house story, you say? Floyd Cowdrey...1994. Wait, wait, hang on a sec, let me grab a pen.”

Mary: He reached for a tattered shard of fragile parchment, grasped a crow feather quill pen in his claw-like hand and dipped it into a bottle of deep red ink--or at least it appeared to be ink.

Andy: Okay, I'm ready. “Floyd Cowdrey”

Mary: He hissed in a voice that rasped like fingernails frantically clawing against the inside of a sealed coffin,

Andy: “Interviewed by you in 1994. Gotcha. We'll give it a listen. Thanks.”
The phone is placed back.

**Mary:** He replaced the telephone receiver and delicately set the pen and quill upon the cold, damp stone.

*Long, drawn out creak.*

The cover of his laptop creaked open like a rusted cemetery gate and his filth caked talons began a hideous tattoo upon the grime encrusted keys.

*Fingers tapping on a keyboard.*

**Andy:** “Whoo! Mary--found it. Let’s check it out…”

**Jane Beck:** Now you said you grew up in West Windsor?

**Floyd Cowdery:** In where?

**Jane Beck:** In West Windsor?

**Floyd Cowdery:** Til I was about fifteen years old. Then we moved higher up in Heartland, lived there about a year and a half, and, Jesus, we were damn glad to get out of that place. It had been vacant for about ten, twelve years before we moved in, and if anybody ever lived in a haunted house, we did in that one.

**Jane Beck:** Tell me about it.

**Floyd Cowdery:** Well, you’d go to bed at night. There were four bedrooms upstairs that were all occupied. Well perhaps at night, you’d hear somebody knocking on the door to one bedroom. Perhaps the next night they’d be inside of that room, rapping on the wall. And it would change over, onto the other side. My dad wouldn’t believe it! God, we’d been there for over a year. I was telling mother one day about my hearing it in my bedroom. My old man says, “I don’t believe it.” He says, “I’m going in, I’m going to sleep with you tonight,” he says “we’ll see what there is to it.”

Well, he did. Along about half past ten, between my room and my grandmother’s room, you can hear someone knock knock knock knock knock knock, knock knock knock knock knock. Well my brother Ed was little at that time, and he had a cot bed in my grandmother’s room.

Dad, he roused up, he says, he says “what is that?” God, I said “we don’t know, dad.” I said “that’s what we’ve been hearing.” Him he says, “that’s Ed. The little guy can’t go to sleep, so he’s knocking on the wall.” I said “I don’t believe it, it’s not Ed.”
So he spoke up, he says “you quiet down in there now,” he says “go to sleep.” Just right about that time, right on the headboard on my bed: knock knock knock knock knock knock!

*Floyd claps once.*

Dad went down under the bed covers just like that. But just before he’s smothered he came up. “What in the hell,” he says, “is that?” I says “I don’t know, dad, and the rest of us don’t know. But I says ‘that’s what we’ve been hearing right along.’”

Well. My dad, he says “we’ll see.”

Telling mother about it at breakfast time, she says “do you believe it now Frank?” And by God, he says “Not so,” he says “we ain’t gonna put up with that kind of stuff much longer.” Well and he went at it, and we found a place down in South Woodstock village and we lived there for about five years and then he bought the place right beside it, where I built my little house up there. At last we moved up there to open up a reindeer farm, they called it.

My mother’s uncle, uncle Bert Rodgers, moved in. He’d been there about a year and a half. We had a family reunion up there one Sunday. I got little, well, in fact, I wasn’t fed up with it, I just wanted to read my Sunday Papers, so I went out into my car to read em and my Uncle Bert came out. He says, “can you tell me,” he says, “what there is about this place?” I says “I don’t know,” I says “why,” I says, “what’s the problem?” Well he says “well since we’ve lived here” he says “I’ve tried living and sleeping,” he says, “in every damn room in this house,” he said, “including the kitchen” Said “I set up a cot bed in the kitchen, sleep there.” And he said, “wake right up in the middle of the night,” and he says “sweat pouring right off of ya.” And he says, you feel just as if you’re freezing after that.” He says “I got up,” he said, “changed my clothes, put on my clothes,” and he says, “walked to here,” he says, “damn near down to Jennyville and back.” He says “before I can get into bed and get some sleep.” And he said “I haven’t had a decent night’s sleep,” he says “since we’ve been here.”

Well my uncle Bert moved out, and there was a fellow of the name of Valimar Jaques, lived up the next house above there, his father’s name was Ralph Jaques. Well anyway, Val and his wife moved in. They stayed there about three weeks and they moved out.

In all the times I’ve worked with Val Jaques, he and I’d visit along, he’d let me mention Reindeer, jaws come together just like that, couldn’t get a word out of him. Oh no, you wouldn’t.

Well I’m talking to his father one day, I says “you gotta tell uncle Ralph.” I says, “why is it,” I says, “Val and I have been talkin right along” and I says “well I’ll say something about Reindeer”

*Floyd claps once.*

And I says “his jaws will come together and you won’t get a damn word out of him.” By God Uncle Ralph says “you won’t either.” He says “I’ve tried it.” He says “you can’t get a word out of
him.” But he says “I can tell you something, boy.” He says “there’s something damn funny about that place.” I say “you don’t have to tell me Uncle Ralph.” “No” he says “I don’t,” by God, he says “you lived there!” And I say “yes,” I says “I never so damn happy to get out of a place in my life as I was out of there.”

I told uncle Ralph, I says “by God” I says “I’ll tell you one thing,” I says, “I wouldn’t go in that house alone, even in the day time.” I says, “if you paid me for it.” By God Ralph says “if I’m being paid for it” he says “I’d probably go in, but” he says “I’d do a damn lot of thinking” he says, “when I pass through the door.” And his brother, Vin Jaques, lives the next house over from him, said he never knew what it was, never was able to find out. But he said there was something damn funny about that place.

We had a man there in South Woodstock, his name was Anson Shove, S-H-O-V-E, Shove. Well anyway, he had a brother that lived up on that place for several years, Herb Shove his name was. There was this fellow named Roy Colston. I used to work with him up there at a, and [unintelligible] the horse woman, and I told Roy one day, we were talkin’, eatin’ a lunch, and I say “you think that Roy,” I said, “that I am a damn fool or a damn liar,” but I went on and told him about the old Reindeer farm and Roy says “you’re not a damn fool,” and he says “you’re not a liar.” He says “I worked up there,” he says “the Shoves” and he says that “every night,” he says “we’d all be sittin’ there in the dining room eatin’ supper,” and he says “you’d hear somebody walking back and forth, back and forth,” he says. “Upstairs.” Alright, he says “I’d finally got the courage up,” he says “i’d go tip-toe,” he says, “up those stairs,” he says “and not make a damn sound,” but he says he’d get to the top of the stairs and there wouldn’t be a damn thing. Not a sound. Not a whisper.

_Cello theme plays and continues as the narration begins._

**Mary Wesley:** You’ve been listening to the voices of Floyd Cowdery and Jane Beck, recorded by Jane in 1994. The events described by Floyd took place in the mid 1920s in Hartland VT. Spooky, huh? Speaking of spooky—did you catch last year’s Halloween Special featuring Kim Chase recounting two spooky Franco-American folktales? If not, we’ve posted it in the show notes for this episode. Turn off the lights and tune in.

_Upbeat cello plays under narration._

From all of us here at the VFC we hope you have a safe and happy Halloween. Over the next several months we will be sharing more stories from our archive and Listening in Place project through this podcast and also on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. You can follow us @vermontfolklife.

This fall we’re offering several free, virtual workshops via Zoom that introduce the _Listening in Place_ project and its many activities, including one coming up on Nov. 14 that offers training on how to record interviews with your family and loved ones as a way to stay connected during the upcoming holidays when we may not be able to gather as much as we’d like.
If you liked listening to this show please tell others to look us up and subscribe. You can find VT Untapped on Apple podcasts, Google Play, Stitcher, Spotify and TuneIn Radio.

VT Untapped is produced by me, Mary Wesley. Abra Clawson is an assistant producer. Our executive producer, who also happens to be The Archivist, is Andy Kolovos. Maniacal laughter by Thalia Kolovos. Thunder and wind sound effects from freesoundeffects.com. The cello music in this show was recorded by Dave Haughey. Thanks for listening.

**Mysterious Deep Voice:** SPOOKY HALLOWEEN SPECIAL. MWAHAHAHA.

_Thunder crashes._