

10 X ONE-HOUR DOCUMENTARY TV SERIES

GRAVEYARD DETECTIVE

HISTORY
TRUE CRIME
BIOGRAPHY
SCIENCE

**NO SECRET
STAYS BURIED
FOREVER...**

Craig Ferguson is the *Graveyard Detective*, digging in beyond what's etched in stone to unearth secrets hidden beneath the surface: scandals, true crime and disasters buried in the boneyard.

Graveyard Detective uses first-person investigation, hands-on experiments, expert interviews, film-noir-style reenactments, and narration inflected with the smoke and grit of a detective novel.

The settings are spooky, but the stories are grounded in cold, hard facts.

In each episode a new story is unearthed in a different city, bringing history to life through the secrets of the dead. Craig takes a journey into the city's past, meeting historians and experts along the way who help him carry out practical experiments and hands-on investigations to dig up the truth.

GRAVEYARD DETECTIVE

EPISODES



LAST MAN HANGING

An investigation into the grave of the last man hanged in Halifax, Nova Scotia digs up a wrongful conviction, a racist trial and a miscarriage of justice. Was Daniel Percy Sampson executed for a crime...that never even happened?

THE BLACK WIDOW

Serial killer Belle Gunness killed at least 14 people—her husbands, lovers and their children. Did she die in a fire in 1908? Or fake her own death to escape punishment for her crimes? A forensic team opens up Belle's grave in Chicago to find out.

THE LOST PRISON CEMETERY

A hiker in British Columbia stumbles into a field full of brambles and discovers stones marked only with the numbers of the prisoners buried below. Graveyard Detective unearths the tale of a prison break gone wrong - and the fate the convicts couldn't escape.

THE BLUESMAN'S BONES

"The King Of The Delta Blues," Robert Johnson's life, death and music are the stuff of legend. Some say he sold his soul for skills on the guitar - and the Devil called in his claim when Johnson was poisoned by a romantic rival. But the location of the bluesman's grave is the final mystery. Where is the most-influential guitar player of the 20th Century buried? Three Mississippi cemeteries claim they hold Johnson's bones.



GRAVEYARD DETECTIVE

EPISODES



THE BLACK DONNELLYS' GRAVE

The original gravestone for the Donnelly Family in Lucan Ontario repeated the word "murdered" five times. The massacre of the Donnellys in 1880 is the small-town's dirtiest secret. It is officially unsolved - but another mystery endures. The old gravestone - replaced after souvenir hunters and vandals chipped away at its morbid inscription - has gone missing. Where is it today?

THE PAINTER'S SKULL

Group of Seven painter Thom Thompson was found dead on Canoe Lake Ontario and buried in a local cemetery. His family had his body exhumed and shipped to his hometown. But local legend says the casket sent home was empty. A judge dug up what he believed to be Thomson's skull from the cemetery on the lake. Modern forensic artists have rebuilt the face on the skull. Could it really be the man called "Canada's Van Gogh?"

THE BLACK WALL STREET MASSACRE

Tulsa Oklahoma tried to bury the memory of a bloody riot that destroyed a thriving African American business district. But the discovery of a mass grave just outside a local cemetery is revealing the truth at last. How many of Tulsa's Black citizens were really killed? And how has the story been kept quiet for so long?

EPISODES

THE PRINCESS'S LOST SISTER

An urban legend says a royal baby is buried in a downtown cemetery. But the truth is even stranger - a story of poverty, protocols and pandemics that leads straight to Buckingham Palace. Restella Jane Ratsey's mother was a wet nurse in Queen Victoria's nursery. But how did the little girl wind up dead and buried in a cemetery in Canada?

THE DEADLY DUELS OF SAVANNAH GEORGIA

From 1730 to 1870 duels by pistol were a legal way of settling arguments. And no cemetery holds more dead duelists than Savannah Georgia's Colonial Cemetery. Some of the duels took place in the cemetery. What happened when southern gentlemen turned their pistols on each other? How did a man who signed the Declaration of Independence end up on the losing end of a deadly quarrel?

THE TITANIC'S UNNAMED BODIES

When the Titanic sank on April 14, 1912 more than 1500 people died. Ships sailing out of Halifax, Nova Scotia had the grim job of claiming the dead, and of identifying their bodies. There are 43 unidentified bodies lying under granite tombstones in Halifax's cemeteries. Who are the lost dead of the Titanic? After more than 100 years, can forensic technology solve the Titanic's final mystery?

SAMPLE STORY



LAST MAN HANGING

Daniel Perry Sampson
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Camp Hill Cemetery is a sprawling nine acres of broken gravestones and gnarled Camperdown elms in the middle of a seaside city on Canada's East Coast. It's the municipal graveyard, where the town's business elite and civic leaders lay side-by-side with its paupers, villains and scoundrels. All the city's old prejudices and problems still haunt Camp Hill, just beneath the surface.

A slow drone shot pushes in on one grave in a sparse section of gravestones. You can tell a lot about Daniel Perry Sampson's grave even from a distance. It's in the historically-segregated area of Camp Hill. Sampson was Black. It's a soldier's grave. And as we get closer we see he was a member of the No. Construction Battalion, Canada's only all-Black unit in the first World War.

But what the words inscribed in cold granite don't tell you is that Daniel Perry Sampson was also the last man hanged in Halifax, March 7 1935.



GRAVEYARD DETECTIVE

SAMPLE STORY



There is no mention of the two little boys Sampson was convicted of murdering, or of the openly racist jury that convicted him. When he digs in, the Graveyard Detective discovers a miscarriage of justice that's kept Sampson from resting in peace - even 85 years later..

Sampson was convicted of killing brother Edwin and Bramwell Heffernan. Craig follows the boy's path, picking berries along the railroad tracks. They never came home. Their father found them dead and horribly mutilated. Sampson, an unemployed labourer, was only arrested months later. An eyewitness identified him from a police lineup and said he was near the tracks that day. Sampson was the only Black man in the lineup.

Craig tracks down the surviving family of the Heffernan boys. We reunite them with Sampson's granddaughters, bringing together two families still searching for the truth. This is a chance for closure for two families haunted by this old crime.

We see the final footsteps of the boys through gritty, dark, cinematic reenactments. We watch Sampson take his final steps onto the gallows behind Halifax's provincial courthouse.

Craig climbs up into the attic of the Halifax courthouse in search of the actual gallows Sampson hanged from. How does a hanging work? We rebuild the scaffold and test it out on the exact location of Sampson's execution. CGI and a simulated hanging give the audience a new understanding of an old means of execution.

Legal Historian David Steeves takes Craig into the actual courtroom where Sampson was sentenced to die. Steeves lays out the racism in the system - that only white property owners could be jurors and that many admitted prejudice against Black men. They dig through the archives to find the actual written confession Sampson - who couldn't read - signed with an X. As the Graveyard Detective's investigation continues, Craig discovers that Sampson may have "hanged by the neck until dead," for a crime...that never even happened. The Heffernan boys probably weren't murdered at all.

Forensic Nurse and Nova Scotia's Coordinator of Death Investigations, Darlene MacLellan puts fresh eyes on the dusty documents and concludes the boys could have been the victims of a horrific accident instead. Using medical reports and a dummy made of ballistic gel over a medical-grade skeleton, we illustrate that the boys' injuries were probably caused by impact from a train.

What really happened?

A community struggling to make sense of an unimaginable tragedy found a scapegoat in Sampson, a quiet Black man in the wrong place at the wrong time. Their despair demanded retribution. Sampson paid the price. And the city buried its dirty secret in a pauper's grave in Camp Hill.

GRAVEYARD DETECTIVE

CRAIG FERGUSON

HOST / PRODUCER

Craig is a former crime reporter, television writer and the creator of @deadinhalifax, an online project telling stories of the dead in his hometown of Halifax, Nova Scotia. The best stories are being compiled in a forthcoming book. Craig has written and produced more than 200 hours of factual TV, including programs that have won two Canadian Screen Awards and received nominations for a Gemini and an Emmy.

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DONNA DAVIES

PRODUCER

Donna Davies is a writer, producer, director and owner of Ruby Tree Films in Halifax. Her credits include the multi award-winning feature documentaries Fanarchy and Nightmare Factory, along with numerous documentaries and series that have screened at festivals internationally and aired on networks across North America and Europe. Donna is the recipient of a 2018 Women in Film and Television Award for Best Director and a 2017 WAVE award for outstanding leadership and vision in the Atlantic Canadian Film industry.

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