

Revisiting the Birth of Spiritualism Through its Mediums

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- **The Fox Sisters**
- **The Davenport Brothers**
- **Madame d'Esperance**
- **Leonora Piper**
- **Eusepia Palladino**
- **Daniel D. Home**

The Fox Sisters



Kate Fox (1837-1892)

Margaret Fox (1833-1893)

Born in the state of New York

**In December 1847 the Fox Family
moves to Hydesville, New York**

The Fox Sisters

**The house had mysterious noises,
but never caused any serious
discomfort to the family**

**... until the following spring when
sounds of raps and knocks
increased in intensity**

**On March 31, 1848, there was a
very loud and continued outbreak
of inexplicable sounds**



The Fox Sisters

Katie decided to converse with the source of the sounds:

“Mr. Splitfoot, do as I do”

She clapped her hands once: came one knock

She clapped twice: two knocks were heard

Katie and Maggie devised a simple code:

Two knocks = Yes; Silence = No

The Fox Sisters

The rapper said to be the spirit of a peddler who was murdered there 5 years earlier by a previous tenant and his body was buried in the cellar of that house

The phenomena that occurred that night and in the following days were witnessed by many neighbors and the local press

The Fox Sisters gained notoriety

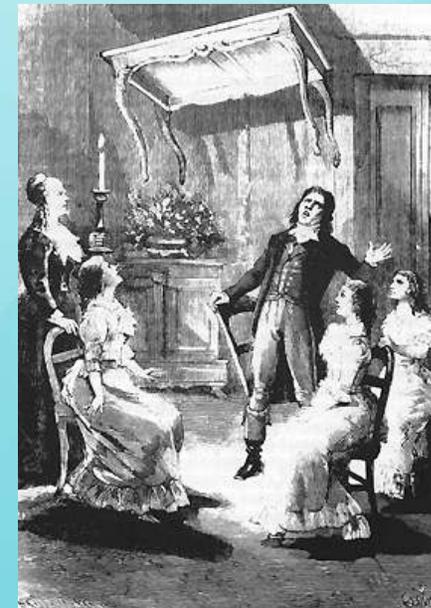
The Fox Sisters

Those events lead to the birth of Modern Spiritualism



The sisters participated in many public séances and were studied by many scholars

In these séances raps were produced, tables levitated, sitters were touched by invisible hands



The Fox Sisters

The older sister, Leah, decided to profit from her sisters' mediumistic faculties and under her management, Maggie and Katie's career as professional mediums began



For many years they performed in the USA and England

The sisters paid a heavy toll for years of frequent public sittings in a hostile atmosphere, heavy scrutiny by those against Spiritualism, being object of scientific studies and accusations of fraud

The Fox Sisters

They started to drink and the relationship with Leah deteriorated

In need of money, in 1888 Maggie sold a confession stating that the raps were caused by their rare ability to pop their toe joints.

A year later she retracted her confession blaming her financial difficulties and the strong influence by those attacking Spiritualism

But what about the peddler's body buried in the cellar?

The Fox Sisters

In 1904, 56 years after the Hydesville episode, after the collapse of a wall built a yard from the exterior wall in the house's cellar, excavations were made and the skeleton of an almost entire human body was found

... along with it a peddler's trunk



The Davenport Brothers



Ira Davenport (1839-1911)
William Davenport (1841-1877)

Born in Buffalo, New York

In 1846 (2 years before the outbreak in the Fox family) raps, thumps, loud noises, snaps and crack noises were heard at their home

A few years later the two boys and their youngest sister experimented by placing their hands on a table. The table soon moved and raps were heard. The news spread out and hundreds of people flocked to the house

The Davenport Brothers

Séances were held regularly, lights began to appear and musical instruments floated and played by themselves

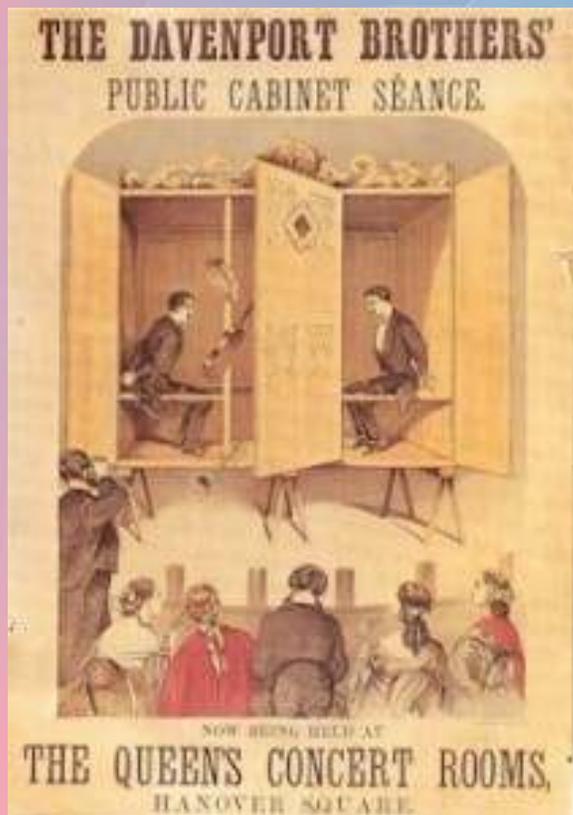
The boys started to conduct public séances where they were tied to their chairs. The same physical effects continued to occur. Not only that, but in many occasions the knots were untied by themselves

In 1857 they were investigated by a team of professors from Harvard University. The investigation was concluded but no report has ever been published

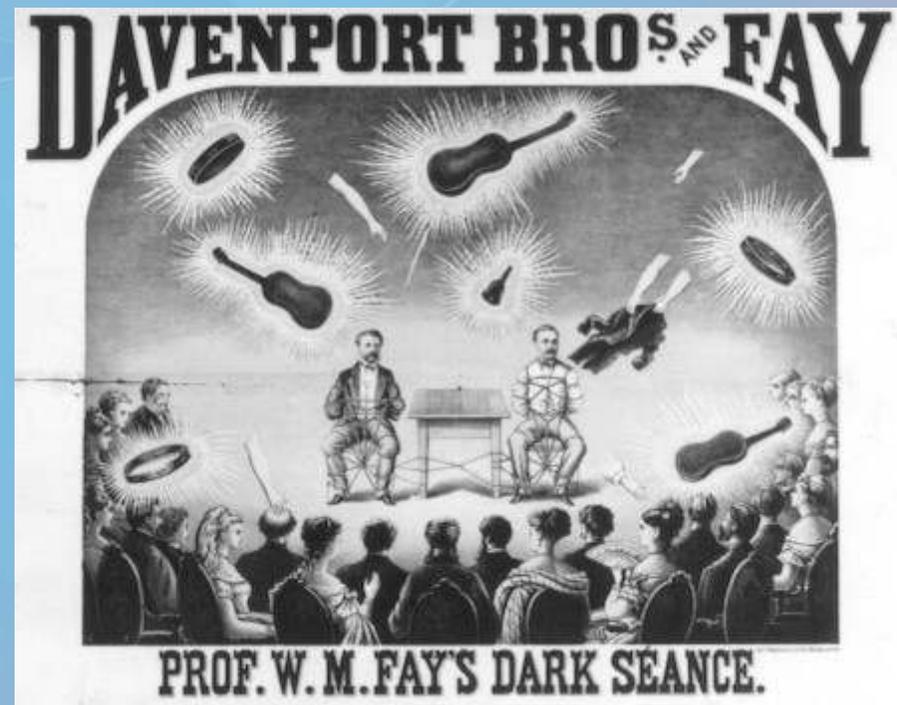
The Davenport Brothers

The public séances developed into a performance in two acts:

Light séance



Dark séance



The Davenport Brothers



The brothers performed in the USA, and from 1864 through 1876, also in England, France, Belgium, Russia, and Australia

In their career they have always been accused of fraud, but they never claimed to know how the phenomena actually occurred.

The Davenports never publicly affirmed their belief in Spiritualism

Madame d'Esperance (1855-1919)

Born Elizabeth Hope, in England.



Spending her early childhood in London, she claimed to see “shadow people” that no one else could see, and consequently, she was viewed as mentally ill

When she was about 19 years old she heard of Spiritualism from a friend

Her exposure to Spiritualism helped her to understand her clairvoyance. As a result she became motivated to learn more about the subject

Madame d'Esperance

The next stage in Elizabeth's development was automatic writing, and then the ability to draw very quickly refined pictures of communicators in the darkness.



Continuing the attempt to develop her mediumship, she produced materializations. Walter was the first spirit to materialize. Then came Yolande, a young Arab girl

Madame d'Esperance



In many occasions magnificent flowers and plants materialized in the meetings. In one occasion Yolande brought a seven-foot Golden Lily.

An intriguing aspect of Elizabeth's mediumship is that during the materialization her body partially or completely dematerialized, which gave room for suspicion of fraud.

Elizabeth wrote an autobiography in the book ***Shadow Land***, revealing the distress she confronted so many times, and the outrage to which young female mediums were subjected

Leonora Piper (1859-1950)

Born in Nashua, New Hampshire



Mrs. Piper's mediumship started to flourish in her 20's, after a visit to a clairvoyant and healer. In the second visit she entered a trance and wrote a message to a person also attending the meeting. It was from the person's deceased son.

Piper soon began to give private séances at home and eventually got acquainted with Dr. William James, a professor of psychology at Harvard University.

Leonora Piper



Dr. James was so impressed with her psychic abilities that he started a scientific investigation of her faculties.

Dr. James' studies attracted the attention of the Society for Psychical Research, recently created (1882) in England.

Leonora Piper



Many other prominent SPR scientists devoted their time and resources to study Mrs. Piper's psychic talents, among others,

- Dr. Richard Hodgson, professor of philosophy at the University of Cambridge
- Sir Oliver Lodge, professor of mathematics and physics at the University College, Liverpool (knighted in 1902 by King Edward VII)
- Dr. James Hyslop, professor of logic and ethics at Columbia University, New York

For over 40 years Mrs. Piper were tested and studied to a degree which no other medium had approximated. Her work cannot be sufficiently appreciated

Eusapia Palladino (1854-1918)

Born in Bari, Italy.



Orphaned at age 12, she moved to a foster family in Naples, where séances were held. At age 14 she attended one and her mediumistic abilities became evident. Her interest in Spiritualism, however, only grew when she was on her 20's

News of her mediumship attracted the attention of Prof. Cesare Lombroso, an enthusiastic skeptic and a professor of psychiatry at the University of Pavia.

Eusapia Palladino

Prof. Lombroso arranged a series of séances in Milan with a team of researchers. During these séances the researchers witnessed partial materializations, levitation of objects, and were touched by human hands



Abb. 20. Telekinetische Erhebung einer Mandoline durch Eusapia Paladino.
(Münchener Sitzung am 13. März 1903.)



Eusapia Palladino



In the period from 1892 through 1901 Eusapia was extensively studied by many researchers in Italy, France, England (including Sir Oliver Lodge and Prof. Richard Hodgson from SPR), and Switzerland

She also used her mediumship to provide comfort and reassurance to others through evidence of survival

Eusapia Palladino

In some séances Eusapia was caught resorting to trickery (which she did not deny). This behavior strengthened the arguments against Spiritualism and caused a division among the researchers that were investigating her faculties

Eusapia delighted, enlightened, confused and disappointed many investigators. But she was surely one of the most studied mediums of her time



Daniel D. Home (1833-1886)

Born in Currie, Scotland.



At age 9, he was adopted by his aunt and moved to the USA (New England)

As a teenager he began to show signs of his psychic faculties.

After raps started to disturb the quiet household his aunt, being very religious, thought that Daniel had brought Devil into their house. She asked him to leave

Daniel D. Home

Soon his faculties were being studied by a number of scholars. In the séances, strains of music were heard with no instruments around and Daniel was able to levitate



The most important phase in the history of Home's mediumship began when Sir William Crookes decided to debunk him. His investigations were highly acclaimed by the press and the scientific community.

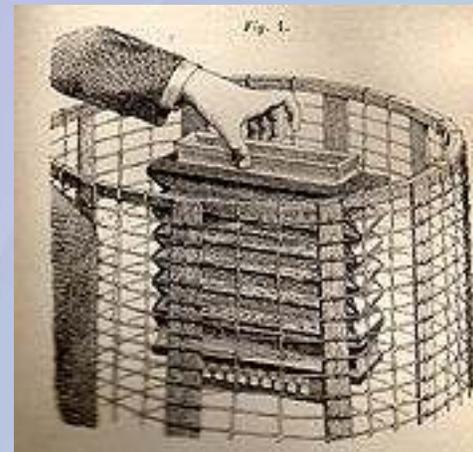
Daniel D. Home

Sir William Crookes was a member of the Royal Society and among many scientific achievements he:

- Discovered and named the chemical element Thallium*
- Discovered the cathode rays*

He was knighted in 1897 and received the Order of Merit in 1910

William Crookes investigated Home and other mediums (including Kate Fox) for several years and published the results in the *Quarterly Journal of Science*



Conclusions

The described mediums were among the pioneers who contributed significantly to raise the awareness of our true spiritual nature, which had been neglected or suppressed in the western world for so many centuries

Conclusions

Besides having to deal with a totally unknown faculty, they were constantly caught in the crossfire between those who embraced the spiritualistic view of the phenomena and those who could only accept the possibility of fraud

Conclusions

Much has been learned since then about mediumship and our interaction with the spiritual realm, but our knowledge is still fragmented and incomplete. Our understanding will enhance as we continue to engage in different research programs and in the study of spiritual teachings from different schools of thought and philosophies

Conclusions

In the meantime we should practice mediumship solely guided by our commitment to promote our inner transformation and our genuine intention to serve and comfort our incarnated and discarnated brother in sisters in need of guidance and fraternal love