

# 'Tall Betsy' on camera

**L**ove her or hate her, few Cleveland and Bradley County hometown residents can say they've never heard of the local Halloween legend known as "Tall Betsy."

Until her spooky retirement several years back, the 7-foot-tall witch ... goblin — or whatever the gnarled figure calls herself — once ruled the Centenary Avenue roost every Halloween night by wowing the youngsters, entertaining their parents and creating quite a caned eyesore on crowded candy-lined sidewalks.

Credited with her creation is Cleveland businessman, entrepreneur and philanthropist Allan Jones who eventually tucked away her spirit for safekeeping. The same Halloween advocate, who is always a staunch supporter of the downtown Block Party, is now reviving her memory; at least, on film.

As recently announced in our newspaper, the Check Into Cash founder has contracted with Zac Adams, the award-winning owner of Nashville-based Skydive Films to put together a documentary on the life and times of Tall Betsy. The detailed work will be months in the making, but planners are hoping to have it ready for viewing by this time next year.

But here's a key.

In her frightening prime, Tall Betsy was one of the most photographed attractions of Halloween night and the Halloween Block Party whose community support has grown and grown and grown by the year to the point that it is now as much a regional Spook Night attraction as it is a local favorite.

Because Jones and Adams realize the community is one of Tall Betsy's greatest resources, they have opened an opportunity for area residents to submit old photographs of the towering, robed fright so that they may be considered for use in what likely will become a popular and well-viewed documentary. Obviously, the film-making crew already has an assortment of materials from Jones' personal treasure trove of Tall Betsy mementos, but pho-

tographers — amateur, professional or otherwise — from Halloweens past obviously have snapshots of their own that can be beneficial to the film's making.

The documentary's undertaking, though a fun experience, is a serious endeavor as evidenced by Jones' selection of production companies.

Skydive Films is no stranger to Halloween.

Adams previously was credited with developing "The Bell Witch Legend" film, a documentary that investigated the chilling accounts of the world-famous 19th century haunting of a Tennessee family. The documentary aired last year on WTCL, the Chattanooga-based PBS affiliate. The Bell Witch documentary has received national attention.

The award winner's additional fame came from "Southern Haunts: Ghosts of the Low Country" in 2009; and in 2007 he filmed "Southern Haunts: Ghosts of Savannah."

Adams has a long reference sheet of celebrity clients including Kid Rock, Billy Bob Thornton and Charlie Daniels.

Production crews are deep into the Tall Betsy planning. The documentary will be narrated by Lynn Hoffman, host of A&E's popular "Private Sessions" which has featured past celebrities as Ringo Starr, Anthony Hopkins, Carly Simon and Dustin Hoffman.

The Tall Betsy film will include exclusive footage from the 2011 Downtown Block Party; hence, the reason for delays in a public viewing or TV broadcasts.

In spite of her retirement, a Halloween in Cleveland cannot pass without a mention, and a scary recollection, of Tall Betsy. It is appropriate that residents have the opportunity to give her life again.

For those wanting to share photos or other items, call 423-473-4227 or send an email or images to [pix@tallbetsy.com](mailto:pix@tallbetsy.com). All contributed items will be returned.

Tall Betsy was no doll.

But her legend is well worth remembering.