



# The Tradition of Household Spirits: Ancestral Lore and Practices

*Claude Lecouteux*

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# The Tradition of Household Spirits: Ancestral Lore and Practices

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## **The Tradition of Household Spirits: Ancestral Lore and Practices** Claude Lecouteux

Examines how the ancient customs of constructing and keeping a house formed a sacred bond between homes and their inhabitants

- Shares many tales of house spirits, from cajoling the local land spirit into becoming one's house spirit to the good and bad luck bestowed by mischievous house elves
- Explains the meaning behind door and window placement, house orientation, horsehead gables, the fireplace or hearth, and the threshold
- Reveals the charms, chants, prayers, and building practices used by our ancestors to bestow happiness and prosperity upon their homes and their occupants

Why do we hang horseshoes for good luck or place wreaths on our doors? Why does the groom carry his new bride over the threshold? These customs represent the last vestiges from a long, rich history of honoring the spirits of our homes. They show that a house is more than a building: it is a living being with a body and soul.

Examining the extensive traditions surrounding houses from medieval times to the present, Claude Lecouteux reveals that, before we entered the current era of frequent moves and modular housing, moving largely from the countryside into cities, humanity had an extremely sacred relationship with their homes and all the spirits who lived there alongside them--from the spirit of the house itself to the mischievous elves, fairies, and imps who visited, invited or not. He shows how every aspect of constructing and keeping a house involved rites, ceremony, customs, and taboos to appease the spirits, including the choice of a building lot and the very materials with which it was built. Uncovering the lost meaning behind door and window placement, the hearth, and the threshold, Lecouteux shares many tales of house spirits, from the offerings used to cajole the local land spirit into becoming the domestic house spirit to the good and bad luck bestowed upon those who seek the help of the "Little Money Man." He draws on studies and classic literature from old Europe--from Celtic lands and Scandinavia to France and Germany to the far eastern borders of Europe and into Russia--to explain the pagan roots behind many of these traditions.

Revealing our ancestors' charms, prayers, and practices to bestow happiness and prosperity upon their homes, Lecouteux shows that we can invite the spirits back into our houses, old or new, and restore the sacred bond between home and inhabitant.

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