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Autumn's Light

Haunts &
Shadows

*tar heel
ghost stories*



Reenactors breathe life into many of the stories shared through Historic Hauntings: A Ghastly Ghost Tour, which includes a stop at Cross Creek Cemetery.

Boo to You

Former Fayetteville residents are still making their presence felt in old homes and offices, as their modern-day counterparts can well attest.

UNEXPLAINED IMAGES, sounds with no obvious source, a brush of cold air as you walk across a room: Could it be ghosts having some fun or just old houses and buildings settling and creaking? No one knows for sure, but Fayetteville — with its rich past and historic buildings — has seen more than its share of mysterious incidents.

A job well done

Ghostly images have frequented the Sanford House for decades. Built in the late 1700s, it was once a bank and later a boarding house for young women during World War II. Through the 1800s and early 1900s, it was owned by several Fayetteville families, including the Sanford family. Some believe Mrs. Sanford's ghost occasionally shows up in the house, now owned by the Woman's Club of Fayetteville.

Ginny Powers, past president and current trustee of the Woman's Club, first learned of Mrs. Sanford in the mid-1980s when, as a young club member, she heard tales of the former homeowner's appearances, sometimes from women who lived there during the war years. Curious, she and fellow member Pinky Jackson decided to spend a night in the house. "It was our whole ambition to see her that night," Powers says, laughing.

By **DIANE SILCOX-JARRETT**
Photography by **SCOTT TAYLOR**



Strange lights and unidentified noises at the Poe House (left and below) and the Sanford House (below left) have frightened skeptics and believers alike, keeping alive paranormal paranoia.

The ghost seekers got their wish when Powers went to get coffee. As she came around the corner from the kitchen, Powers saw an odd expression on Jackson's face. "I looked up the stairway, and there was a large, bright ball of light on the stair landing. We were both shocked and amazed," says Powers.

Powers spent another night in the house with a ghost-hunting team. As the hours passed, the team repeatedly discovered that some of their equipment had been unplugged.

Over the years, Powers has encountered the orb many times. "The form only comes down to the fourth step on the staircase," she says, "as though she's descending the stairs to make sure everything is being done right."

Just checking

Another lady of Fayetteville's past may be checking on her home at the Poe House, located near the Museum of the Cape Fear Historical Complex. Built for Edgar Allen Poe (no relation to the writer), the Poe House is a treasure to visit and one of the finest examples of turn-of-the-20th-century architecture and design



in the area. Poe was a brickmaker and prominent businessman who built the home for his family. One daughter, Elizabeth, never married and lived in the house until she was 95 years old.

The state bought the house prior to her death and spent 10 years restoring it to its original glory. Enter on a bright, sunny day, and the home seems normal. A gray winter day, however, creates a different impression.

"I can honestly say I've never seen a ghost in this house," says Heidi Bleazey, education coordinator for the Poe House, "but some strange things have happened when I've been here by myself."

At one time Bleazey was the only person with an office in the historic home. "I had come to my office to get something and could see into the girls'



bedroom. I saw the armoire door open slowly with a creaking noise and then all of a sudden slam shut." Bleazey stood frozen in terror before she shot down the stairs and out of the house.

Another time, she heard something that sounded like marbles being rolled back and forth across the floor in the boys' room. "I called the museum and told them they had to send someone over to stay with me," she says.

She was once coming down the servants' staircase with another person, and they heard a man utter several words. Others have heard piano music coming from upstairs and children's laughter.

One rainy day when she was in the house alone taking inventory, Bleazey sensed someone standing behind her. She felt a brush of air that made the hair on the back of her neck stand up and caused her heart to start pounding. Deciding to be proactive this time, she lowered her notebook and told Mrs. Poe she was doing good things for the house and her family. "It seemed to work," says Bleazey.

"I was able to get the inventory done without anymore strange sensations."

If visitors come to the Poe House to encounter the ghost, they'll probably be disappointed, and the tour interpretations don't include stories of ghostly encounters. "We've had hundreds of tours, and no one has mentioned seeing a ghost," Bleazey says. "I have to think this is an old house, which was loved by its family, with old floors, walls, and furniture, and at times it groans its own story."



Cold shoulder

James Kyle was known to be very proud of the Italianate and Greek Revival-style home he had built in 1855. His descendants say he was unhappy when his widowed daughter, Anne, began taking in boarders, and his spirit began wandering up and down the stairs.

James Kyle III recalls stories his father told him about growing up in the house. "My father never told me these stories when I was a young boy, and I'm glad," Kyle says. "Dad spoke of nights when he could lie in bed and hear footsteps going from the upstairs rear porch to the upstairs front porch." Kyle's father also told of a time when the downstairs living area was being painted and in the middle of the night a huge crash awakened the whole family. Thinking the scaffolding had collapsed, the family ran downstairs but found nothing out of place. Kyle's father never admitted to seeing anything but at times could feel cold presences.

Others have experienced the coldness over the years. When the house served as office space for the City of Fayetteville,



Historic Hauntings: A Ghastly Ghost Tour gives visitors a chance to step inside some of Fayetteville's most notorious locations, like the James Kyle House (above and left), which chills inhabitants with cold air and odd occurrences.

former city manager Roger Stancil felt it. "It would feel like entering a cool pocket, much like if you are swimming in a river and hit a very cool area," he says.

As beautiful as the home and grounds are, the unexplained events were unnerving. "There were several times when I was working late at night when a calculator would just start working by itself," Stancil says. "I have to admit I amended my work schedule so I wouldn't have to be there late."

Eerie and unexplained

Fayetteville's public buildings haven't been immune to strange occurrences. What was once the post office and then the library is now home to the Arts Council of Fayetteville/Cumberland County. Built around 1910, it's said to be haunted by the old postmaster and by an employee of the library.

Carrie King, executive director of the Fayetteville Dogwood Festival, says when she had her office in the building's basement, unexplained phenomena weren't unusual.

In one of her first odd experiences, her radio's volume would lower itself. "At first I thought there was something

wrong with it, but I checked it out," King says. She even moved the radio to another outlet, but the volume continued to decrease for no reason. "When it happened, sometimes I would just have to go outside and sit for a few minutes; it would make my spine tingle."

She also witnessed her door being closed slowly at random times, especially if she was working late. "I would call my husband and tell him if I didn't call back in 30 minutes to come look for me," she says. "I am a person of logic, but I couldn't help thinking someone was trying to tell me something."

Deborah Mintz, executive director of the Arts Council, was once being filmed by Debbie Tanna, then a reporter with News 14. Tanna was doing a story on building renovations, and the two women were filming in the attic. Mintz stood at the bottom of the attic stairs for the segment, "and that was all there was to it," explains Mintz.

Tanna took the film back to the station for editing. "I was editing the film and noticed a quick splash of an unfamiliar face. I kept moving the video back a few frames, and there it was, a woman peeking around the edge of the staircase.

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She had dark hair and a fair complexion. Since both Mintz and I have blond hair, I knew it wasn't us. She was wearing what appeared to be a black mourning dress. I didn't notice her at the time I was actually shooting the segment."

The woman seemed to see something suddenly, back up quickly, and disappear. "I called Deborah to make sure I wasn't wrong, and she confirmed we were the only two there." Twice, Tanna delivered to Mintz a copy of the tape with the ghostly image, but both tapes disappeared before they made it to her. "That only adds to the strangeness of the incident," Tanna says. "I have to say, I don't want to go back up there. Sometimes ignorance is bliss."

Sounds with no explanation, doors shutting with no one behind them, office equipment turning itself on and off: "Some things just can't or aren't meant to be explained," says Bleazey of her Poe House encounters.

Maybe that's the way Fayetteville's ghosts want it. 

Diane Silcox-Jarrett admits to being scared in a ghostly encounter on her visit to Historic Hauntings.

if you're going

If these stories of Fayetteville ghosts leave your spine tingling and curiosity piqued, you can experience some of the supernatural firsthand. Each year the Fayetteville Dogwood Festival produces Historic Hauntings: A Ghastly Ghost Tour. Now in its sixth year, the hayride tour stops at different locations throughout the downtown area, where reenactors and storytellers recount stories of Fayetteville ghosts.

Historic Hauntings
October 16-18, 23-25

For more information, call the Dogwood Festival at (910) 323-1934, or for a link to its website, go to www.ourstate.com, and click on "This Month's Issue."

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