

The Old Commander's House

Almost a month after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Office of the Chief of the Army Air Corps approved the construction of an air base north of Syracuse, in an area originally occupied by farms.

In 1839 an Irish immigrant, named James Lynch, built a house on 100 acres of fertile land that he used for farming. His wife died shortly after their arrival. He then hired two Irish girls as house servants and a few years later remarried. Lynch died in 1868 and left the farm to his wife to keep it up, but after seven years she gave up and sold it to the Bausinger family, who owned it until the military bought the land during World War II.

Once the house changed hands, strange events started to occur, or at least were talked about. Rodney, a fuel truck driver at the base in 1943-44, would often see a woman peering out the window. This may sound like nothing out of the ordinary, but the woman would be in a dress, and the only people that inhabited the house wore uniforms. He also remembered when people would spend the night in the peculiar house they would comment on the sounds of a woman crying.

The wife of the last base commander who resided in the spooky quarters, Marilyn Chambers, also testified to bizarre occurrences that took place from the very beginning of their move into the home. When she entered for the first time, the phone company was in the house hooking up their phone lines. The technician said that a woman called and placed the order. The unusual thing is she never ordered the installation of the phone service and that the Commander's wife is the only one who could sign an order form. Another time, when they were having work done on their home, the Chambers came home to find the workers toiling away, when in fact they were expecting to have to let them in. The workers actually found the cellar door open when they got there, which was never left open because of the snakes that slithered in, and thought that Mrs. Chambers had done it since they heard footsteps upstairs. They also recalled missing items that would magically reappear, and radios that would turn on mysteriously in the middle of the night.

Colonel David Ewing and his wife Gerry were also inhabitants of the home in the 1970's, and remember the hauntings that spooked them. They never really felt alone. On their way up to bed every night they would turn off the stairway light, and often in the morning they would find it turned on. Shadows would often dart through the den, and once the Colonel looked up to find a man dressed in an Inverness coat and heard the creak on the floor boards as he walked away. When he got up to observe the man no one was there.

Though the house seemed to possess a strong spirit, the rumor of the hauntings has ended. The current resident assures there are no ghosts.

"I have not seen the ghost myself, but I have heard the stories that float around about the house being haunted," said Charles Everett, the City's Director of Operations and former Commissioner of Aviation at the airport.

The Landmark Ghost

In downtown Syracuse, on South Salina Street, sits the Landmark Theater, built as Loew's State Theater in 1928 for the showing of talking pictures. The theater is well known for its beautiful features and has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1977.

During the Depression crowds flocked into the theater, but in the 1950's attendance began to decline. In 1975, the theater was almost lost, until citizens of Syracuse joined together to save the building. Their efforts worked and restoration began.

As preservation work began, crewmembers surprisingly discovered that the theater was haunted! The discovery of a pale woman dressed in white, moving through the balcony and near

the restrooms, spooked the staff when they would see her traveling around the building. People working on the structure felt icy cold drafts, and heard human voices coming from other areas of the building. Though they could never understand what the voice was saying or find where it was coming from.

Accounts state that the voice would echo throughout the theater and stagehands have testified to a female voice calling them by their first names. When they tried to locate where the voice was coming from, their searches always came up empty. It is said that in 1983 a woman rehearsing for a Halloween program, looked up and saw a woman weaving through the balcony seats.

A psychic was brought in to see if she could answer questions people had about this apparition.



Ghost Stories

The seer sensed the ghost's name was "Claire." The psychic inquired about the spirit's visits to the theater. According to this psychic, "Claire" said that she was once married to a Loew's employee and desired to become an actress, but died before she had a chance to achieve stardom.

It seems that "Claire" never gave up her dream. Although she is not on center stage some believe she now oversees all the productions at the Landmark Theater from the balcony.

Old Engine Co. 18

Built in 1927, the Engine Company 18 Firehouse, at 176 West Seneca Turnpike, has had its share of odd and ghostly events. The first instance on record is the story of firefighter John Shirley. He woke in the middle of the night to the sound of footsteps in the hallway. John believed that



he saw a man in the doorway and when he moved toward the apparition, the man was no longer there. Shirley said the ghost paced down the halls as if it were inspecting the building.

Another instance occurred a couple decades ago when a firefighter found a young girl's tombstone in the bottom of Onondaga Creek that runs near the firehouse. After retrieving the headstone, he placed it near the doorstep of the station. One day it disappeared. Nobody knew where it had gone or who had stolen it, but legend says that the firefighters believed the young girl's spirit reclaimed her belonging.

Other ghostly incidents in the Firehouse include the unknown cause of doors opening and closing randomly without anyone nearby. At the time, members were convinced that it was caused by two deceased firefighters who had come back to watch over the members.

A similar case recalls accounts from Captain Larison, who one day witnessed a ghost near the Officer's Room. While he was filling out reports he heard footsteps behind him as he worked. When he turned, he saw something moving that lacked the solidity of a leg.

In the eight decades since the erection of the old Engine Company 18 Firehouse, the Fire Company moved and the site is now home to Bob Cecile Senior Center. The seniors that inherited the building have not encountered any similar instances, possibly because they only inhabit the first floor of firehouse, and they are not there during the overnight hours. However, the numerous ghostly occurrences still remain real in the minds of those who witnessed them and some firefighters still believe that the building is haunted.

A Ghost in City Hall?

Though not a lot of people have seen the ghost or even heard of the ghost at all, there is a night haunter that visits City Hall after dark. Maybe this nocturnal disturber is an ex-prisoner, since City Hall was once the City's jail and housed prisoners in its cells in the basement, or maybe the spirit is an annoyed mayor that did not want to give up his seat, or possibly the ghost is an old employee who for some reason, does not want to retire from work.

City Hall is equipped with two elevators, one in the front of the building and one in the rear and both are in public use. In 1978, City Hall completed major renovations and the elevators switched from being human operated pulleys to the electronic push button method.

Elke Young has been working in the maintenance department in City Hall for 26 years, which has its



City Hall workers Mark Connelly, Elke Young and Charles Cassidy checking the elevator for the City Hall ghost.

office in the basement. She remembers when she would work until midnight and unexpectedly hear the rear elevator just start going on its own, "No one would be in the building, because I would have just finished checking it, and then suddenly the elevator would start running," she said.

"The elevator goes on the fritz", said Charles Cassidy, the Maintenance Crew leader, who has also noticed the visits from the phantom. Hitting the button to the floor a rider wishes to go does not always mean that is the floor to which the elevator will travel. The technicians have been in many times to check out the problem, and they can never find anything wrong with the system. As soon as the mechanics leave, the elevator will inexplicably act wacky again.

Elke has also heard someone at night, open the door and come down the stairs, but when she would look to see who it was no one would be there. At least once a week this mystery person would creep down the flight of stairs, but never show his/her face. Maybe he would get lost in the rooms that are filled with years of city information, or maybe he wanted to get on the elevator, or maybe he just wanted to roam the building and make a stop in the basement. But, whatever the purpose, the unidentified spirit would send a cold chill through anyone sitting alone at night in the basement room.

Elke mentioned also, that others who have temporarily worked with her have also had the eerie feeling that there was another presence in the basement. Whoever it is the ghost seems to be keeping his or her memory alive.

Information with the exception of "A Ghost in City Hall?" from *Ghosts of the Northeast*, by David J. Pitkin. Salem, New York: Aurora Publications, 2002.