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ASHEVILLE *haunted*

By Courtney Metz
STAFF WRITER

Christopher McCollum devotes his career to studying the paranormal. As both the owner of the Haunted Asheville Ghost Tour and a member of the League of Energy Materialization and Unexplained Phenomena Research, much of his life involves the abnormal. "It's just a blast being a paranormal investigator and running this ghost tour," said McCollum. "I get to call my greatest hobby my job."

Asheville has a large documented history dealing with the paranormal.

There are several books written on the topic, the most famous being Haunted Asheville by Josh P. Warren. Warren's book, which is the inspiration behind the Haunted Asheville Ghost Tour, is a

regional bestseller, according to McCollum.

"I've heard that there are a lot of ghost stories that are associated with Asheville," said Katie Goodman, sophomore student. "But, I don't really know what many of them are."

McCollum, through his tour, hopes to change this.

"All the stories that we talk about are on the tour are all true," said McCollum. "They have all been reported by at least three to ten different people with no relation to each other. And these stories go back over 120 years with

reportings going well back into the 1800s, and some of these sightings happening only a few months ago."

A street once lined completely with churches gives life to the story of a ghost

Another supposedly haunted area of Asheville is Church Street. It was constructed in the early 1870s, and has a long history of ghost reports.

"Church street is unique because, as there are many Church Streets

around the country, this is one of the few, if not the only one, that was actually lined from beginning to end with actual churches," said McCollum.

Today, there are only three main churches remaining on the street.

Trinity Episcopal Church, the First Presbyterian Church, and the Central Methodist Church. The true story that sparks many of the

most popular ghost stories on Church Street, involved a nun in the Episcopal Church and a minister from the Methodist Church.

The nun and minister were having an affair and the nun became



MEGAN WILDMAN - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Church Street is supposedly one of the only streets by the name that was actually lined only with churches some time in the past, according to Christopher McCollum, creator of the Asheville Haunted Ghost tour.

pregnant, according to McCollum. The minister thought the only way to protect his reputation, and the church's, was to kill her. However, during this time, Church Street was being widened and many of the graves in the

cemeteries were being moved to different locations. During this expansion, they found the body of the nun and the mystery was solved.

According to the stories, the nun can still be seen. McCollum said,

while he is uncertain why she has no eyes, there is a good reason why she walks on her ankles.

"The simplest way to explain it is that her feet are underground because the sidewalk was not there in 1903," said McCollum.



MEGAN WILDMAN - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Several suicides and ghost sightings account for eerie stories.

Architect of Grove Arcade dies before completion, years of solitude follow

Additionally, two of the buildings built by E. W. Grove are also supposedly haunted. Both the Grove Arcade and the adjacent Battery Park Hotel have had ghost sightings.

The Grove Arcade, which began construction 1926, was never finished because Grove died in 1927. The building was abandoned and used for various purposes, including an FBI warehouse and to house important historical documents including the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence during World War II. People have reported hearing the sounds of construction in the building and finding mysterious construction materials around the build-

ing. "There has not been a single reported haunting since the building was turned back into an indoor-outdoor shopping mall, which is what it was intended to be," said McCollum.

The Battery Park Hotel, which was built between 1923 and 1924, has had 10 reported suicides from the ledge on the 13th floor.

"The building has always been associated with the paranormal," McCollum said. "Even the trees lean away from it."

Mother's ghost still haunts visitors of Helen's Bridge

The most widespread ghost story in Asheville, according to McCollum, is the story of Helen's Bridge. This story, which takes place at a small bridge on Beaucatcher Mountain, is also one of the most misconstrued ghost stories about Asheville, according to McCollum.

"There are lots and lots of stories surrounding this bridge, and none of them are true except the one about Helen," said McCollum.

Helen, a native a Beaucatcher Mountain, was married to a man

who had acquired a vast fortune in New Zealand. The couple lives in a castle on the mountain with their 8-year-old daughter. While Helen and her husband were in town one day, their daughter was playing in the stables when she knocked over a lantern. The fire consumed the stables, taking the young girl's life.

Upon hearing of the death of her daughter, Helen, overcome with grief, went to the local walking bridge and hung herself.

"Popular local legend says that

if you drive your car up to that bridge and say three times 'Helen come forth' the car will stall out or Helen will put her handprint somewhere on your vehicle," said McCollum. "But, I have tried this about 317 thousand times and never got a result."

However, Goodman says that this story seems to popular to believe.

"I have heard of tons of stories like this," said Goodman. "You always hear about a bridge and some kind of accident or suicide."

Man executed after committing mass murder at popular bar

The story that both starts and finishes McCollum's tour is based on one of the most gruesome mass murder sprees to have ever taken place in Asheville. This event took place in front of present-day Barley's Taproom on Broadway on Nov. 13, 1906 when Will Harris, a convict who had recently escaped from prison, came to Asheville.

"Will Harris was one of the regions most notorious criminals," McCollum said. "And he did not feel sorry for one bit of it."

Harris came to Asheville looking for his girlfriend, Molly Maxwell. However, when Harris questioned her sister, Pearl Maxwell, he was told that

she left town, according to McCollum. Pearl Maxwell was actually trying to protect her sister, and Harris knew it. He became enraged and



MEGAN WILDMAN - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Barley's Taproom sits on the site of a mass murder, according to McCollum. Five people were killed at once in the early 1900s.

she began beating Maxwell in her apartment.

Loud noises coming from the apartment drew police attention and started Harris' killing spree, resulting in the deaths of five people where Barley's currently sits.

Harris was captured by law

enforcement the next day and his body was hung in Asheville to be viewed by the public.

"I had no idea that we had that kind of crime take place in Asheville," said freshman Neal Beckett. "The history part of the story was really interesting."

Inside pages

Page 2:

West Asheville celebrates old and new

Plan passed to control tuition coasts

Green Game results

Page 3:

Alumnus lives on mountaintop

Taylor takes heat over ad

Crime update