

A Story in Haunts

True stories: Salem students tell of their encounters with campus ghosts

Compiled by Anna Mansfield

Several students who currently attend Salem have seen, heard, or otherwise been affected by strange occurrences that seem to be ghost-related. The following tales were told by the actual witness:

"I was standing with (another girl on the hall) in the laundry room on third floor Gramley. Suddenly, the door just slammed shut—the windows were closed. We went out into the hall. The door to the front stairs opened and shut, and all the door knobs down that side of the hall were turned one after another. My room was unlocked and the door opened, as did several other doors that were unlocked. We heard the noise of doorknobs turning down the L-shaped side of the hall and the back stairs door opened and closed." (name withheld by request) '95

"I was in third floor Gramley in room 324 playing poker with some friends. It was late at night. I was looking out the window when a curtain moved on the right hand window of the second floor of the infirmary. A young face looked out at me. I asked Sue (Perkins) if anyone had been staying there, and she told me no, that no one had been there all week." (Name withheld by request) '95

"I was in the attic (of Gramley) and the lights went out. I yelled down to second floor 'Quit screwing around!' and they came back on. I went downstairs and Eve Neuhoff was waiting for her ride (at the front window.) I asked her if she'd seen anyone walk by, and she said no one had been there. She also said the power had not gone out; I checked my clock and stuff and there hadn't been a power surge." Meredith Snellings, '95

"At weird hours of the night I'll hear furniture moving around (in Clewell attic)—other people have justified what I'm hearing. I've also heard running around up there. I haven't heard it in a while, though." Lisa Findlay, '94

"[There is a]...ten-year-old who makes noises in my common room (in third floor Clewell) as she looks for her doll. She has pestered people by calling on the hall phone, and she is an aspiring gymnast who practices at four a.m. almost every morning (in the attic). She doesn't bother me, she just cries." Yolanda Hairston, '96

"I was coming back from studying one night and walked into my room (226 Gramley) to get something. It was dark, but I saw someone sleeping on my roommate's (Mary Catherine Crouch) bed. I thought it was Kim (Caver) because the person had really short, curly hair and was sleeping on their side. Anyway, I left. When I talked to Mary Catherine the next

day, she said that she had been asleep in her bed—and Mary Catherine's hair doesn't look like Kim's—and that Kim had been doing homework or something in her room all night." Alix Sankowski, '96

• Before the renovation, the bathrooms in Clewell had full-length mirrors between the windows. Kristen Miller ('92) was coming from the last stall and passed the mirror when she saw a girl with long blonde hair standing behind her. When she turned around, no one was there. Miller also tells of a blonde ghost in Sisters who consistently hung around a girl who allegedly looked just like the ghost.

Many people on second floor Gramley last year had trouble with doors that would unlock and open themselves while the inhabitants were away. It seemed to occur repetitively in select rooms, rather than random ones, as would be the case if Public Safety or Maintenance staff had opened the doors for some reason.

Students living on third floor Babcock say that if they're not quiet by 10:30, the ghost upstairs starts beating on the floor and won't let up the racket until everyone has dispersed more or less into their separate rooms. Third floor Gramley inhabitants have had similar problem in the past, and the noises have started up some this year, too.

Babcock freshmen will also swear that the portrait in the lobby will smile or frown at you depending on how you've treated the ghost. One has even apologized for greeting her with "Hey, Mer!", and act which brought an instant frown.

Several stories have survived over the past few years and have been passed down to current students. The following are presented as they were told to Gwen Brennan ('94):

• Ivy Clontz ('93) and Barbara Acker ('92) were up at dawn walking from Clewell to the FAC down the main path looking into the unlit Ronthaler-Gramley house. They were walking with their heads down, and happened to look up through the front door of the house at the same time. They saw a woman standing at the foot of the stairs with her hand on the post of the stairs, looking at them. They looked away, then looked back, realizing that they could see through the woman into the house behind. They looked away again and she disappeared. The woman wore her hair in a bun, had on a brown dress, and had very severe features.

• Key Whalie ('92) was studying on second floor Babcock in 1990 when she suddenly heard all the doors in both bathrooms slam, though all the windows were closed and there

couldn't have been a draft. A white figure ran out of the bathroom opposite the end of the hall where she was sitting, and went up both flights of steps to the attic. Whalie went to her room on third floor and got into her bunk bed in an attempt to sleep, but she heard the ghost going up and down the attic. She called public safety but they found nothing.

• Nancy Lloyd ('92), who suffered from insomnia, was living on second floor Strong when she happened to look out late at night and see a blonde girl looking out of a window of the then-closed Clewell. The ghost was leaning on a window sill with her head in her hands.

****Interesting note: The ghost in Clewell has traditionally appeared to girls with long blonde hair—both Lloyd and Miller were long-haired blondes.****

• Karen Lewis and Amy Williamson (both '92) were haunted for a whole weekend in Sisters during their senior year. Williamson's roommate was out of town, so she was spending the night alone. She sleeps facing the wall, and heard noises of people walking around in her room. When she turned around, of course, no one was there, so she faced the wall again. The noises resumed. Finally she turned around and said "Good NIGHT, Patsy!" and the noises stopped. Saturday night she didn't want to sleep alone, so she stayed with Lewis, who was also without roommates for the weekend. Williamson woke Lewis up that night talking in her sleep—she was yelling "Get out, get out!" Lewis groggily noticed someone standing in the door of the room, but rolled back over to sleep, dismissing the figure as Williamson's dream. She immediately shot up in bed upon realizing that she shouldn't be able to see someone else's dream, and found the girl in a white dress still standing by the door—and Williamson still yelling. She turned on the light and woke Amy up, at which point the girl in the door disappeared. When they compared notes, the women found that one had been dreaming that a girl in a white dress had been standing by the window, while the other had seen the identical girl standing by the door.

Erin Garden, who graduated last year and is currently RHD of Clewell, heard this story about sisters:

• Cat Palumbo ('90) was making a tape. No one else was around, but she kept hearing someone say her name. She checked everywhere but couldn't find anyone, so thinking she was simply going crazy, she finished her tape. When she listened to it much later she heard the same voice recorded on the tape.

Kristen Lewis ('92) has a story about her friends in Clewell:

• Liz Smith, Ann Baird, and Debbie Huddleston (all '92) lived on third floor on the Church Street end of Clewell in 1987-88. Ann lost her keys one afternoon and tore up the whole room looking for them. She finally gave up and went to dinner, leaving the door unlocked. When she returned, the door was locked and the keys were placed neatly on her notebook. The roommates presumed that the ghost of a dorm mother was looking after them, for they often found their radio turned off and windows closed.

Public Safety has had to deal with some odd problems, too. Although no names can be released for security reasons, all stories came from a reliable source who testifies to the trustworthiness and mental health of the officers involved.

• An officer was in third floor Main hall one night locking up for the evening and thought she heard students on the second floor talking and laughing. She hurried down to tell them to leave, but found no one. The voices now seemed to be coming from first floor, so she went down another flight of stairs to check. Once again she found no one, and she abruptly ended her search when she heard what seemed to be a lion roaring.

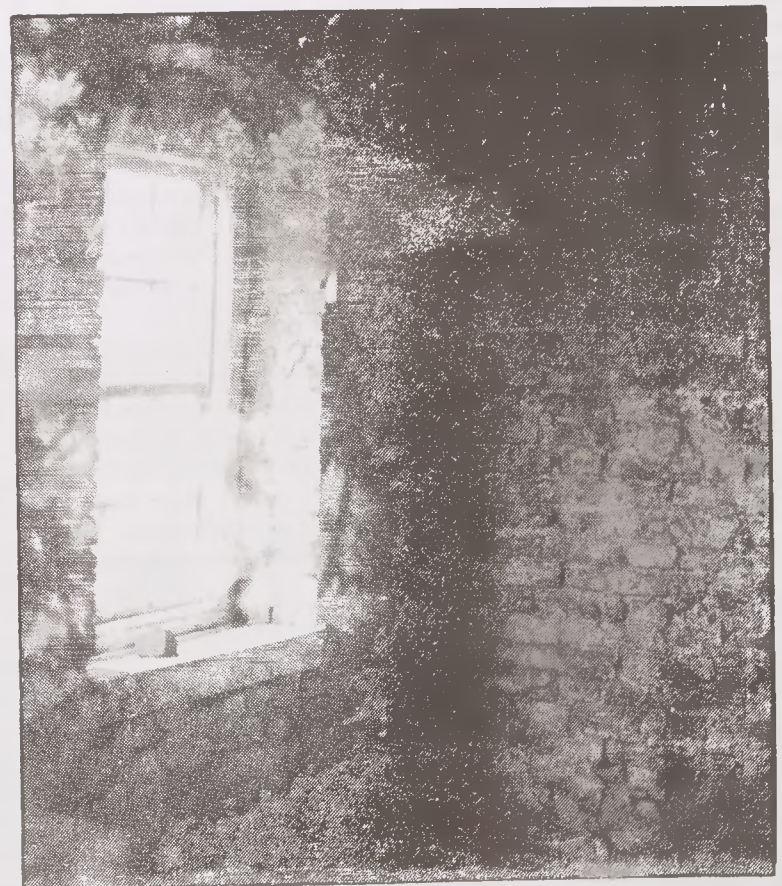
• An officer of good standing who had been at Salem a number of years was in the Academy during a break several years ago. He heard the sounds of

several students talking and moving around when he knew he should be the only person in the building. He was so frightened he wouldn't return to the Academy under any circumstances for the duration of his employment at Salem.

• An officer was in Lehman Hall working one night and kept hearing a person or people walking up and down the stairs. When he went to check, he heard the noises grow louder and noticed that the window at the top of the stair case was rattling from the force whatever was causing the noise. He went to get someone else to verify the occurrence, but upon returning the commotion had stopped.

• The Governor's School nurse stays in the infirmary each summer. One night she was awakened around four in the morning by the smell of Old Spice cologne—she thought Public Safety had come in for some reason. She found no one, however, and checked the door. The chain lock that she had put on when she went to bed was still in place, so she called public safety.

Public safety regularly answers calls about noises in the attic of Gramley—one occasion last year was particularly memorable because the noises heard were extremely loud and apparently without cause. And, an officer reports, there's light that 's been coming on in the top floor of the Inspector's House so regularly and for so long that no one even bothers to check it any more.



A view of a back room of Sisters, Salem's oldest and most haunted dorm. Photo by Anna Mansfield.