

# History told through haunts

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Feature Editor

New Jersey is the country's most densely populated state. and, (as if the congestion isn't bad enough) according to historical legend, published articles and word-of-mouth stories from residents who have been scared out of their wits, it is also quite populated with the ghosts of past inhabitants.

Whether or not you are a believer, the stories behind New Jersey's lingering guests, are fascinating accounts of colorful times in our history and their haunts undoubtedly have a Halloween atmosphere.

Of the extensive list of places known to be, or thought to be haunted, Hobart Manor is the closest to home, located on campus behind Raubinger Hall. The 19th century castle was once the home of Garrett Hobart, vice-president of the United States under McKinley.

According to Agnes Garrett and Barbara Stefanic, secretaries in Hobart Manor, there have been no recent reports of ghostly activities there. However, several years ago, a spiritualist said she detected the presence of something supernatural in the old building.

Director of Admissions Dennis Seale, whose office used to be located in Hobart Manor, recalled his experiences there. He

said that he often worked late, and explained that from his office he couldn't see past the hallway to the outer office. "I would hear footsteps in the hall. And I would say, 'May I help you?'...Many times real people were there. But other times," he added, "there was no-one there."

During an occult week at WPC, Seale invited one of the speakers, Lorraine Warren, a sensitive, to Hobart Manor. She concluded that the spirits of a woman and a baby were present in a room in the cellar of the Manor. The area originally was part of the servants' quarters, so it is speculated that the spirits roaming Hobart Manor were not members of the Hobart family.

Seale said "I never saw anything," but added that a woman who worked there at the time, was very frightened by something ghostly she said she saw.

## Ringwood Manor

Less than an hour's drive away from campus at Ringwood State Park, in Ringwood, rests a nearly 200-year-old, 51-room spook's delight. The Ringwood Manor, now a museum, is a showcase of area history, art, china, antiques and the original Victorian furniture of one of the owners. It became state property in 1934.

Perhaps the tales of alleged strange disappearances, noises and poltergeist activity in the mansion, made it less than

desirable for private family life.

Though assistant curator of the museum, Doreen Dragoni, pointed out that no-one has ever died in the mansion, three ghosts are said to frequent it.

The only identified apparition is Robert Erskin, who was a map-maker for George Washington during the Revolution. He ran the nearby iron works, and is buried on the property. Years ago, workers on their way home from the foundry, according to the tale, were haunted along the roadway by Erskin's ghost come out from the grave.

The spirit of a woman, perhaps Mrs. Erskin, is a second apparition, said to have been seen "coming in the front door, drifting up the staircase and disappearing."

Dragoni said she has never seen or heard anything unusual at Ringwood Manor and speaks lightly of the haunting.

She speculates that the rumors were started by Abram Hewitt, a well-known politician who was an early owner of the Manor. The one-time New York City mayor and candidate for U.S. presidency used it as a summer home. Dragoni said he may have spread the stories to afford protection for the home during the winter months.

## Haunted Library

More history is uncovered when the background of the ghost story connected with the Bernardsville Public Library is

delled into.

The library, the oldest existing structure in Somerset County, was originally the Vealtown Tavern when it was built in 1777. Now residents in the quaint colonial town expect an occasional mournful revisitation of the tavern owner's daughter, Phyllis Parker.

She had fallen in love with Dr. Byram, who was staying at her father's inn. She committed suicide after she found his dead body in a crate at the tavern. According to the librarian Diane Grace, General Anthony Wayne, while stopping by at the Vealtown, recognized Byram as a Tory spy Aaron Wild. Wild was hanged.

Books mysteriously hurtling to the ground, and sounds shattering the library's quiet, have lent some credence to the legend. Past librarians reportedly have experienced frights, but Grace has noticed nothing unusual.

October's issue of N.J. Monthly magazine, lists several other Halloween haunts in the state. These include: Perri's Restaurant on Plainfield Road in Metuchen; Wedgewood Inn, South Street, Morristown; Leed's Point, the South Jersey home of the legendary Jersey Devil; Dark Moon Cemetery in Johnsonburg; and Old Mill, Pleasant Mills Road, near Batsto State Park.

*flowing ink that forms words*

*—Heather Osinga*

*and exposes me naked to the world....*

**barely noticed now—my eyes locked to their corners, the shop door always in sight.**

**Jingling, it opened revealing a jagged nest of hair atop pale white face, hollowed by junk. Maybe horns should have blared, announcing your arrival—the cold rush of air just didn't do you justice.**

**Moving mechanically, heart in mouth, I ventured over to the oldies,**

**following your silent procession. A timid greeting, a quick compliment—didn't seem enough—yet it was already too much for you. Turning to face me, with those yellow wolf-eyes, like a psychopath and I the helpless victim. Then it hit me—a stinging mist, I reached to wipe your spit from my cheek, and wondered if my makeup was still intact.**

**—Darlene Diver**

*(continued from page 4)*

their eye sockets light up like headlights on an old 1956 Chevie I see in State Museums.

After I caught this clicker cheating I said I was going to put his head in a

me a doze of about five rads of radiation to the left side of my face. The next day I decided to make sure the robot had something to drink too so it wouldn't take the game so seriously, and I

## The Sex Life of Sisyphus

Rolling up and down highways inside my metallic shell, carelessly tracking the white lines, whether homeward or not, I drive a blind-drunk vehicle through the long, darken'd streets. Passing billboards, erected with pictures of girls smiling, ever-excited towers of electric advertisement, pulse thru tired forms which never fully relax. A model's image lingers, a salespitch, stepping in at an open door: "C'mon, enjoy," she says, "Eat, drink." Her painted, patented glance, offering unknown loves, has sold its instant to a sign.

It recalls the time she and I, by chance, in a pick-up hangout, saw each other, turned, and attacked, having grown nightly cravings to hound the scent of fresh blood and abort all past pursuits. (Ah, here's a familiar turn—the street reels around my car, off-center in a spiral scene: I cross my car's threshold, wandering

embrace, as dancing images leer and nod, peddling their products beyond the borders of the commercial screen. She moves in studied dance-steps, plays her lines with a practiced giggle, throws a quick kiss at the camera, and pulls out at the last second—trick climax, everytime, makes my grip on the waking world slip...

What? RING (suddenly shattered, the dream's silence's broken by the ringing phone beside me). Could be her, calling me to cry, playing her roundabout games. Better not answer too soon. "Hello?" My ears search the hum of a mindless dial tone, meaning another hang-up to deal with. I turn from the riddling phone to climb my stairway, shrugging, up towards the empty bedroom. She stretches across a page, arched up, filling the paper with hot flowing milk and blood, lying out