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Extraordinary Maine

Tales of the strange and supernatural from the mysterious shores of Maine.

BY LOREN & JENNY COLEMAN

When you’re in Maine, you expect to feel cold. However, some shivers are not the result of Maine’s well-known chilly weather, but the insidious, icy fingers of paranormal Maine: ghosts, gothic cemeteries, and granite fortresses full of creaky spirits.

LIBBEY MAUSOLEUM, RIVERSIDE CEMETERY, LEWISTON

In Strange Maine, Michelle Souliere recounts a friend’s experience at “Well-guarded Libbey Mausoleum” while walking in Lewiston’s Riverside Cemetery with two companions. Witnessing the kicked-in windows and other forms of vandalism around the Libbey Mausoleum, and lamenting the abandoned beer cans and malodorous evidence of irresponsible pet owners, these folks felt a chill, a baleful, unseen stare, and an overall feeling of hostility. A woman in the group attempted to “communicate” with the presence she felt, then lit up a cigarette; seconds later, the “top half of a large birch tree snapped off and landed where they had just been standing.” Other examples of the “Unseen Guard” include strange cramps, cold spots, and a general feeling of ghostly hatred.

In 2011, the East Coast Ghost Tracers were leading an investigation into supernatural activity at Fort Knox when they captured something spooky on camera. “We were picking up our equipment at about 2 a.m., when one of our investigators caught this image,” says ghost tracker Jamie Dube. According to Dube, the photo above shows the famous Ghost Family of Fort Knox.
MT. HOPE CEMETERY, BANGOR

The second oldest garden cemetery in the United States was established in 1834 by the Bangor Horticultural Society, in response to the influx of activity and settlement along the Penobscot River Valley. Its rolling 300 acres are the final “home” of over 30,000 individuals. The film version of Bangor resident Stephen King’s book Pet Sematary features chilling glimpses of the grounds. The cemetery’s official website lists the unmarked grave of gangster Al Brady among the tombstones, and an article in The Examiner from March 2012 states that “something eerie” skulks along the rows between the graves. Al Brady’s ghost? You decide.

FORT KNOX, PROSPECT

On the west bank of the Penobscot River, 172-year-old Fort Knox is a monument to haunted history. Although the massive granite structure was manned in times of war, it never saw actual battle. Its drafty interiors are perfect for two annual events, October’s Fright at the Fort and the summer’s Paranormal Fair. “Fright at the Fort has been scaring the heck out of people for the past seventeen years. Visitors are led through the dark passageways of the old Fort, where they are surrounded by lights, fog, sound, and creatures of nightmarish dimension,” says Leon Seymour, Executive Director of Friends at Ft. Knox. Local volunteers line up to terrify people of all ages, from New England, Canada, and beyond. The Fort itself was declared the site of a “residual haunting” in 2011 by SyFy’s Ghost Hunters team, following a thorough investigation. The team heard “breathing” and “footsteps,” saw strange images on their thermal camera, and heard dragging sounds and ghostly exhalations on their audio recordings. It seems Fort Knox is bursting with paranormal activity.

TIME AND TEMPERATURE BUILDING; DR. DEATH HOUSE; CASCO BAY, PORTLAND

Maine’s Forest City holds its fair share of spectres too. In the Time and Temperature Building on Congress Street, a red-haired female spirit reportedly rides the elevators and sends visitors to the wrong floors. Workers there report seeing an unknown woman strolling the halls, then disappearing into thin air. In 2007, Portland Magazine interviewed security guard Nick Jules, who’d had more than one run-in with the flame-haired spectre. “The first night I saw her she was coming across the lobby toward me. As she reached the exit, she just passes through without the doors moving an inch.” On another occasion, Jules attempted to make contact with the woman. “I lurched across the hallway to grab her, but got an armful of air.”

Rachel Crawford, co-owner of the vintage store Little Ghost on the first floor, has also felt the presence. “On Sundays, when the building’s quiet, it’s very creepy. You can hear the elevators moving of their own accord.” She says she had no idea about the spirit when she named the shop.

With the recent announcement for foreclosure, who will inherit the Time and Temperature Building’s flame-haired phantom?

Further downtown, the William E. Gould House on State Street is supposedly haunted by the patients of a physician nicknamed Dr. Death, who “used unusual treatments on some patients,” according to Haunted Portland: From Pirates to Ghost Brides, by Roxie Zwicker. She also mentions how residents have heard “phantom footfalls” in the basement, one felt “tapping on her shoulder,” and “a presence has been known to brush past people.” A ghostly figure is often seen in the Gould House’s windows. One rumor is that the building was built on top of an ancient Native American burial ground, accounting for all the spirit activity.

The waters of Casco Bay hold their own...
secrets. “After lobsters, Sea Serpents might be Mainer’s very favorite thing in the sea,” historian Herb Adams told MPBN in 2014. Portland’s very own Sea Monster was first spotted in 1780 by Captain George Little of Boston, Massachusetts. The nickname “Cassie” was coined 20 years ago [by the design department of Portland Magazine while laying out a story] by Loren Coleman, owner of the International Cryptozoology Museum and curator of all things supernatural. Coleman spoke with two Scandinavian fishermen, who reported a run-in with an 100 foot-long creature while on a fishing trip in 1958. “We saw an object coming toward us out of a haze; we took it to be a submarine, but as it came near we discovered it was some live thing.” This live thing was claimed by them to be 100 feet long with a striped tail like a mackerel. Rumor would have us believe this denizen of the deep still lurks beneath the surface of Casco Bay.

Loren Coleman owns the International Cryptozoology museum. Open 11:30-6 p.m. daily at 11 Avon Street