

According to local lore, a woman's ghost haunts the center upstairs room of the Heart of Occoquan store on Mill Street. The woman is thought to have lived in the room when the building served as a boarding house back in the late 1800s. It is also said that she may have been unlucky when it came to men.

Haunted history

Local places delve into their supernatural past

By CHRISTIAN CZERWINSKI
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Mark Joyner spent the first night in his new two-story house on Halloween in 1999. Nestled quietly off U.S. 29 in the town of Buckland Hills, the house captivated Joyner the first time he saw it. The three chimneys and the original two-room log cabin part of the house — built in 1791 — all lent to the certain antique feel he was looking for.

When he bought the place, the realtor told him the place was “rumored” to be haunted — further piquing Joyner’s interest. But the rumblings about bumps, creaks and strange noises in the house didn’t phase him.

On moving day he told the movers about the rumors, which they took seriously. Supposedly, one of the previous owners about 40 years ago came home drunk and passed out on the front lawn. A neighbor found the man in the evening and took him to the house’s upstairs bedroom. And sometime during the night, the man passed away. There was also a story of a Confederate sharpshooter who ran from the upstairs bedroom to the ground floor and picked off Union troops as they crossed a nearby bridge.

“When we were moving in there was this 17-year-old kid who thought he was the baddest thing on earth. He walked around like he was big, but when we brought the boxes to the house, he would only go as far as the front porch,” Joyner said.

“After we moved everything in, I asked my friend to stay with me the first night, but he didn’t. I was left all alone with a sleeping bag and a TV in the front room. So, I put my pictures against the wall in the dining room and I



Dave Ellis/News & Messenger

This Buckland Hills home was originally built in 1791. The current owners, Mark and Karen Joyner, believe the house is haunted by a ghost who walks up the stairs to their bedroom around 10:30 p.m. every night.

plugged in the TV.”

Joyner vowed to stay up until around midnight, but it didn’t take that long for whatever was in the house to introduce itself.

“Around 10:30 [p.m.] I heard this huge shattering of glass, and I thought was of my pictures had fallen. I looked in the dining room and everything was still in place. So I looked around and I yelled ‘OK, you just tell me what picture you don’t want me to hang up and I won’t,’” he said.

A few nights later, Joyner heard something else. Right around 10:30 again he was laying in bed upstairs and heard a “thump, thump, squeak, squeak” on the stairs — which sounded like footsteps. Quickly, he ran to the top of the stairs and found no one.

Three years later, Joyner still won’t go to bed before 10:30 because at exactly the same time every night, he

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hears the sounds on the stairs. Regardless of who's visiting the house, they hear it. Joyner has even taken pictures of the stairs around 10:30 and what appears doesn't appear to the naked eye.

On two photos Joyner took, there are images of what looks like blue swirling smoke over the third and fourth step. Professional ghost hunters call such swirls "ectoplasm." According to Ghost Hunters Online, the ectoplasm is a form of spiritual energy that appears as mist or vapor. Sorry, it's not the thick slime from the movie "Ghostbusters."

Other folks in Joyner's house have not only heard the footsteps but seen an actual ghost. His wife, Karen, said last winter she was sitting on the couch watching TV between 10 to 11 p.m., and caught a glimpse of a soldier standing in the doorway between the living and dining room.

"He looked like a Civil War soldier standing there, leaning against the door. And he was looking right past me into the kitchen," she said. "He had blond hair and blue eyes and he just looked tired. It lasted about a second or two and when I blinked he was gone."

Mark Joyner said he's gotten used to the sounds and anything else his resident "ghost" might do. During his first year in the house, he would close the curtains in the dining room only to find them open when he got home from work. After removing the pins that held them shut, he said the problems stopped.

"I've gotten used to everything. I hear the steps every night, but it's never doing anything wrong or bad," he said. "They don't do anything harassing. Maybe it has to do with the way I've decorated the place with Civil War and old pictures on the walls."

By appointment, Joyner gladly leads tours through Buckland Hills

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KAREN JOYNER
BUCKLAND HILLS

and tells about the town's rich and sometimes ghostly history.

GHOSTLY LORE

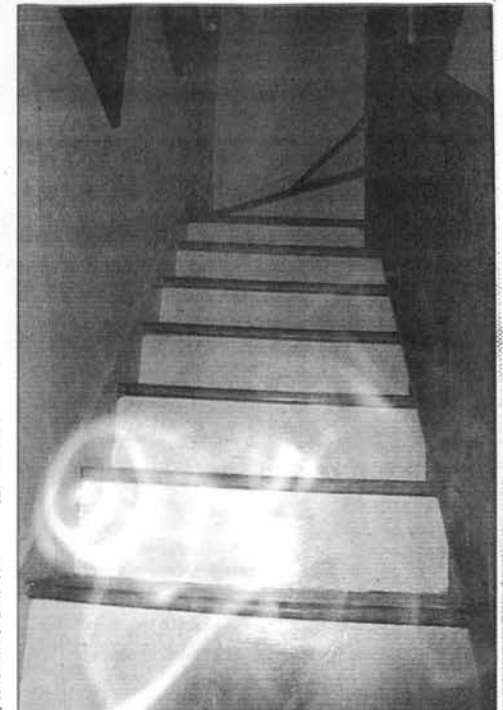
The Buckland Hills area isn't the only place in the county where a ghost or two have been known to appear. Anyone hankering for something to look at on Halloween should take a trip to historic Occoquan. Local business owners will gladly tell visitors of their buildings' eerie history.

Carol Hogan, owner of Heart of Occoquan, 406 Mill St., said her building is the oldest house in town. Built around 1750, it was once a boarding house — and that's where the most interesting story comes from.

"There's a story about a woman who lived in the middle room upstairs in the late 1800s, and she was jilted by her lover," Hogan said. "And I think that's why she doesn't like men."

Hogan said the unnamed "ghost" turns the heat on upstairs and has been known to move things around, and a male worker even reported hands on his shoulders once and nudged him down the hall.

"She'll take things off walls and they'll end up on the other side of the room. We've even had rugs taken off racks and be on the



Courtesy photo

Spectral lights appear at the bottom of the staircase in this photo taken by Mark Joyner in his Buckland Hills home. Joyner and his wife believe that this is evidence of the ghost that ascends the staircase every night at 10:30 p.m.

floor in the morning. ... She's a bit mischievous," Hogan said. "Some people who come in the front door know there's a presence here."

Luckily, no one's seen this woman, Hogan said, but she's got an eye out.

Further down the road at Artists' Undertaking Gallery, 309 Mill St., artist Jan Bender is compiling a history of the building, which was a funeral parlor from about 1930 to 1972.

Bender said people have heard footsteps around the old part of the building and smelled a foul odor, and one artist even saw a blue glow and the face of a man

looking in the door. She surmises it may be the ghost of former funeral parlor owner Robert Hall.

"Pictures have fallen off the wall, but nothing would be damaged where they fell. People hear footsteps sometimes and the doors in the office would open and close," she said.

• For information on tours of Buckland call Mark Joyner at (703) 754-9104. And for more information about Occoquan, call the visitor's center (703) 494-4045.

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