

HISTORIC SITE FILE: Rockledge Mansion
WILLIAM PUBLIC LIBRARY
RURNEY, Manassas, Va.

Someone fired at least 10 shots into the high glass ceiling of the National Museum of the Marine

Corps in Triangle. Two days later, six bullets from the same gun shattered windows at the Pentagon, startling police officers assigned to protect the heart of the nation's defense.

Though ballistics tests have yet to link the latest shooting to the museum and Pentagon shootings, the obvious connection has prompted the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force to open an investigation into the three incidents.

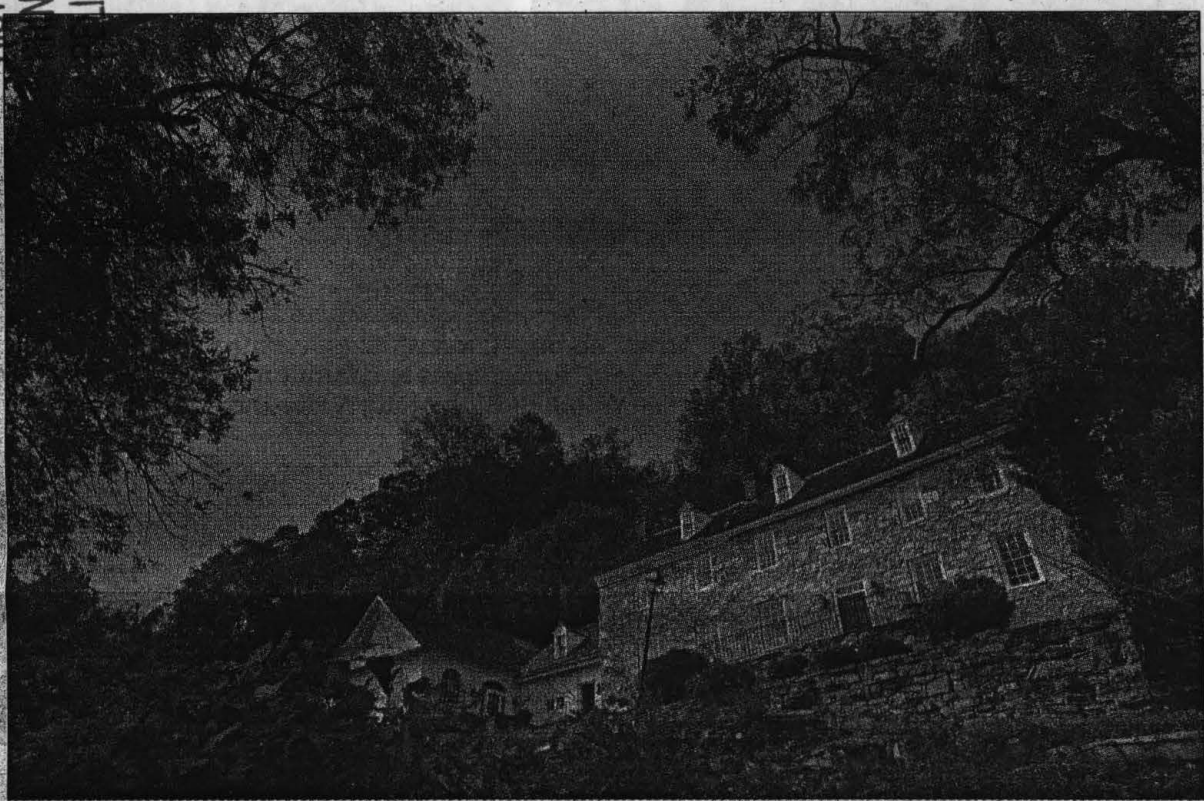
adjacent business, Fairfax County police said. As in the other two no one was hurt. Late Tuesday afternoon, it confirmed that ballistics link

See SHOOTINGS, Page

News + Messenger (Manassas, Va.) Wed, Oct. 27, 2010 p. A1

HAUNTED?

Rockledge to be included in Occoquan ghost tour



Rockledge Mansion has been known for unusual sounds and occurrences over the years in Occoquan. Now the property has been added to Sunday's ghost tour lineup — a one-time-only chance, the organizers say. [Jeff Mankie/News & Messenger]

By AILEEN M. STRENG
astreng@insidenova.com

The sound of footsteps on the stairs when no one else is around and swirling candle flames are among the unusual occurrences Gloria Rouse has experienced at Rockledge Mansion in Occoquan. For the first time — and for one day only — Rockledge will be included Sunday in the town's ghost tours so others have the opportunity to experience the unexplainable. While Rouse has not seen the Confederate soldier believed to haunt the 250-year-old building that looms over Mill Street, she believes he — or something — is there and means no harm. "I never feel scared when I'm

INSIDE: More on the history of Occoquan's Rockledge Mansion. **Page A7**

alone in here," Rouse said. "I get a warm feeling." Rouse, along with her husband, Tyler, own Georgetown Caterers. They have catered events in the portion of Rockledge that includes a ballroom for years. That, and the rest of the mansion, had been the residence of Ron and Joy Houghton. But when Joy Houghton died last summer, her husband moved. Now the Rouses lease the historic building. During a recent visit to Rockledge, Rouse lit some candles in a candelabra in the winter kitchen. "There is no forced air heat in here," she said. "Sometimes the flames will swirl."

While they didn't do more than flicker during that visit, they have at other times. Paranormal investigators recently spent quite a bit of time at Rockledge. While the results of their investigation, which involved scientific equipment designed to pick up sounds and thermal images and changes in magnetic fields, have not been finalized, they weren't disappointed. "We sat and watched the candle flames rotate for about two minutes," Rouse said. "We are still reviewing our data [about 20 hours of video and 20 hours of audio]," said Tara Ryan, who along with his husband, Max, founded the paranormal group PEPPR in Alexandria in 2005.

See ROCKLEDGE, Page A7»

Baby c board during crime

LAKE RIDGE » P discover infant a car after robb car chase on I-

By KARI PUGH
kpugh@insidenova.com

Police said a Du man robbed a Lake grocery store Monday then led authorities chase into Stafford (all with his 2-month son in the car. Marquise Antw Cody faces 10 charge chase and robbery, happened at 9:53 p.m. Bloom store in Dilli Square, said Prince police spokesman Jo Perok.

A man walked in, displayed a gun and demanded money. He fled with an undisclosed amount of cash, driven in a red Dodge Neon near Nugent Dumfries a short time. Officers tried to stop driver, but he ignored lights and sirens. Pursuit ensued on Interstate 95 and into Stafford County. Stafford sheriff's office and state troopers rolled roadblock to stop the Neon. At one point, the driver swerved his car to stop the deputy's cruiser, said sheriff's spokesman Kennedy. The driver was

See CHASE, Page



Gloria Rouse talks on Monday about the mysterious noises she has heard in Rockledge Mansion during the years she and her husband have worked there as caterers. {Jeff Mankie/News & Messenger}

ROCKLEDGE

» From Page A1

"So far, we have heard several disembodied voices answering questions and a lot of disembodied footsteps coming from the upper level of the house," she said.

The footsteps are something Rouse knows well.

While the Houghtons were still living at Rockledge, they invited Rouse to spend the night if she had an event there that ran late.

She remembers one night when she was asleep in a second-floor bedroom. "I heard footsteps on the stairs, and it woke me up," she said.

The next morning she ran into the Houghtons outside and told them she heard them come home the night before.

But they were just then returning to Rockledge. The footsteps were not theirs.

Rouse said she also has heard the steps during the day, but they do not frighten her.

"How can you be afraid

of a noise?" she asked.

"If I had to guess who was going up and down the stairs, I would guess it was a man," Rouse said.

And that "man" may well be the ghost of the Confederate soldier.

Rouse also recalled a story of a woman who was walking along the driveway in front of Rockledge and saw what she believed to be a Confederate soldier. Later, an examination of the front steps revealed what looked like wet hobnail boot prints, from the type of footwear a soldier would have worn at that time.

"When I'm here by myself sometimes I will hear someone knocking at the door, but when I go to answer it, there is no one there," Rouse said. "Now I just look out the window."

On Sunday, those attending the Occoquan Merchants Association's ghost walks will have a chance to do more than look into the windows of Rockledge. It will be included on the tours given at 2, 4, 6 and 8 p.m.

"I believe it's time for a

new beginning for Rockledge," Rouse said. "Let it be what it really is — an institution — and people should be able to see it."

"Rockledge is one of Occoquan's oldest buildings, and one that is inextricably linked to the town's founding," said Occoquan Mayor Earnie Porta. "It's not often open to the public, so we're all especially grateful for this rare opportunity."

Kristyn Gleason, president of the Occoquan Merchants Association, said the group has had "constant bookings" for the Halloween tours.

"For people to have an opportunity to go inside the house for the first time is huge," she said. "People want to learn more about the history of Occoquan."

For more information about the tours and to make reservations, call the Polka Dot Divas shop at 703-910-7058. The cost is \$15 for adults, and \$10 for children.

Staff writer Aileen M. Steng can be reached at 703-530-3907.

A brief history of Rockledge

In 1755, with backing from the Tayloe family, John Ballendine established an iron manufacturing complex along the banks of the Occoquan River. Three years later, in 1758, he built this house on a rock ledge above the river.

William Buckland, the indentured architect, joiner, and builder who worked for George Mason on Gunston Hall, supplied plans and workmen for Rockledge.

Several prominent families in Occoquan history have owned and lived in the structure, including the Ellicotts and the Janneys. Over the centuries, the mansion has pre-

sented a varying façade to the public. At times, for example, owners covered exterior stone with paint and wood.

Builders used rock from across the river in constructing Rockledge, the mansion's relationship with nearby quarrying operations has not always been so constructive.

Laurence Barnes and wife left Rockledge in 1811, asserting that work at a quarry across the river damaged the house so severely that it could no longer be safely occupied. By the late 1960s, vandals had stripped away part of the interior, and broken windows left the structure open to the elements.

An Au



SEA
Please visit our s

Complete Building Stone and Landscaping

ROCK-TOBER

*** 10% OFF ALL PRICES ***

From September 1st through
Receive 15% off all Eastern
Highland Stone Retaining Wall and Gravel

Manassas: 10405 Nokesville Road Manassas, VA
Fredericksburg: 8241 Jeff Davis Hwy, Fredericksburg, VA

www.StoneCenterofVA.com

Restrictions apply.

InsideNOVA.com
More than 1.5 million products

www.insidenova.com

More than 1.5 million products

www.insidenova.com

I wanted to f



out the mysterious noises she has heard years she and her husband have worked & Messenger}

“e?” she asked. “I’d like to guess who is up and down there, I would guess it’s a man,” Rouse said. “That ‘man’ may be the ghost of the rate soldier. I also recalled a woman who was walking along the river in front of Rockledge. I saw what she was to be a Confederate. Later, an enemy of the front revealed what she looked like: a wet hobnail boot, from the type worn by a soldier who had been worn at that

“I’m here by myself. Sometimes I will hear knocking at the door when I go to answer. There is no one here,” Rouse said. “Now I look out the window.” Today, those at the Occoquan Merchants Association’s tours will have a chance to do more than look out the windows of the house. It will be in the tours given from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. We’ve it’s time for a

new beginning for Rockledge,” Rouse said. “Let it be what it really is — an institution — and people should be able to see it.” “Rockledge is one of Occoquan’s oldest buildings, and one that is inextricably linked to the town’s founding,” said Occoquan Mayor Earnie Porta. “It’s not often open to the public, so we’re all especially grateful for this rare opportunity.”

Kristyn Gleason, president of the Occoquan Merchants Association, said the group has had “constant bookings” for the Halloween tours.

“For people to have an opportunity to go inside the house for the first time is huge,” she said. “People want to learn more about the history of Occoquan.”

For more information about the tours and to make reservations, call the Polka Dot Divas shop at 703-910-7058. The cost is \$15 for adults, and \$10 for children.

Staff writer Aileen M. Streng can be reached at 703-530-3907.

A brief history of Rockledge Mansion

In 1755, with backing from the Tayloe family, John Ballendine established an iron manufacturing complex along the banks of the Occoquan River. Three years later, in 1758, he built this house on a rock ledge above the river.

William Buckland, the indentured architect, joiner, and builder who worked for George Mason on Gunston Hall, supplied plans and workmen for Rockledge.

Several prominent families in Occoquan history have owned and lived in the structure, including the Ellicotts and the Janneys. Over the centuries, the mansion has pre-

sented a varying façade to the public. At times, for example, owners covered its exterior stone with painted wood.

Builders used rock from across the river in constructing Rockledge, but the mansion’s relationship with nearby quarrying operations has not always been so constructive.

Laurence Barnes and his wife left Rockledge in 1960, asserting that work at the quarry across the river had damaged the house so severely that it could no longer be safely occupied. By the late 1960s, vandals had stripped away parts of the interior, and broken windows left the structure open to the elements.

A publication in the early 1970s predicted that Rockledge was doomed, with no hope of restoration.

Eventually, Donald Sonner purchased Occoquan’s oldest landmark and worked to restore it to its former glory. Unfortunately, his efforts were not fully rewarded; in January 1980 an arsonist set fire to the mansion, causing \$250,000 in damage.

The fire-scarred structure again became a target for vandals. Only the perseverance of successive owners has prevented its demise.

— Submitted by Occoquan Mayor Earnie Porta

An Authorized Distributor of




Please visit our showroom and outdoor displays.

Complete Building Stone and Landscape Stone Supplier

ROCK-TOBER FEST!!!

*** 10% OFF ALL PRODUCTS! ***



From September 1st through October 31st.
 Receive 15% off all EAGLE BAY
 Highland Stone Retaining Wall and GrandCay pavers Products.

Manassas: 10405 Nokesville Road Manassas, VA 20110 703.393.2828
 Fredericksburg: 8241 Jeff Davis Hwy, Fredericksburg, VA 22407 540.891.7866

Restrictions apply. www.StoneCenterofVA.com

InsideNoVA.com

More than 1.5 million hits every month

WWW.INSIDENOVA.COM YOUR ONLINE SOURCE FOR LOCAL NEWS