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Carroll
County
Public
Library

GHOST WALK

in Carroll County



A "spirited" self-guided walking tour of Westminister, Maryland

Carroll County is a land rich in tradition and folk-lore. Its countryside and bustling towns have drawn settlers and opportunists since before the Civil War. This wide variety of people, from traveling actors to Civil War soldiers and rich plantation owners, have left their mark upon the land. Some, they say, still make their presence known. But who believes in ghosts? Even the most skeptical must pause at the cracked grave of Legh Master, an evil furnace owner who used his fire to melt more than iron ore. Kind or evil, bewildered or mischievous, seldom has one area played host to such a diverse and interesting array of local ghosts and specters. And even if your tastes and inclinations run more toward the enjoyment of the architecture and quaint shops along the Ghost Walk, don't be surprised if a whispered Shakespearean phrase or falling picture sends the hair on your arms standing. Its just the wind...Isn't it.....

1. The Kimmey House *The Patient Patient*

210 East Main Street

Dr. George Collgate expanded his Main Street home to create office space for his medical practice. This small town doctor had many a loyal patient, and it was not uncommon for his waiting room to be full to overflowing. Perhaps a few patients waited too long....

The Carroll County Historical Society now occupies Dr. Collgate's house. Many people visit the administrative offices and library at the Historical Society. The Carroll County Visitor Center, housed in the front of the building, greets thousands of visitors each year. Among those visitors is said to be one of Dr. George Collgate's patients, still waiting to see the doctor after more than 150 years!

2. Opera House Printing Company *An Odd Fellows Comedian*

140 East Main Street

In the 1800s the Odd Fellows Hall provided respite and relaxation for the town's business people, farmers, and their families. All would gather on a Saturday night to enjoy an evening of comedy, music, or drama graciously presented by visiting comedians, minstrels, musicians, and actors.

One such performer was Marshall Buell of Alabama. Dressed in a carpetbagger's outfit, Buell kept the audience laughing with his jokes about President Grant and other government officials. Some folks, however, were not amused. Before long, a rock was thrown onto the stage. A second rock caught Buell in the neck. Shaken, Buell quickly finished his performance and exited the stage. Refusing the sheriff's offer of protection in the jail overnight, Buell explained he'd be on his way to Hagerstown for his next performance. As he saddled his horse behind Odd Fellows Hall, Marshall Buell was attacked. He was discovered, lifeless, in the backyard of the Hall, his throat cut ear to ear.

Soon after the murder, the town drunk reported seeing a spirited figure gesturing with his hand and mouthing wordless monologues in the backyard of the hall. No one believed him—except those who visited the theater that Saturday night. The mime show they experienced was no laughing matter!

3. The Ascension Church *Legh Master's Soul*

23 North Court Street

Legh Master was a rich man, but a cruel one. After the death of his wife, Master left England, eventually settling in Carroll County. He made his fortune mining iron ore and establishing one of the best iron furnaces in the area. He worked his slaves hard and was quick with punishment. Needless to say, he was not well-liked amongst the slaves.

Master built a fine mansion and named it after his furnaces: Furnace Hills. Rambling around the large house, he longed for his dead wife. He turned his attention to a young slave girl, who was horrified by his advances. She was betrothed to another slave, Sam. Enraged by her rejection, Master had Sam bound and thrown into the fiery furnace. The young slave girl was not seen again, but rumors quickly spread that she had been bricked up, alive, in the kitchen oven.

Despised by the townspeople and feared by his slaves, Legh Master finally died at the age of 80. No one mourned when his body was buried under six feet of earth, but even the ground would not accept him. On three occasions his bones rose to the top of the ground. Finally his remains were moved to Ascension Church and placed under a large stone slab.

Legh Master, still may be seeking forgiveness for his lost soul. The large stone in the cemetery is split as if the tormented spirit is trying to break free. It is said that on dark, windy nights, his ghost rides the hills between New Windsor and Westminster. Residents of this area watch for a dark grey horse, breathing fire, led by an imp carrying a lantern and dancing madly before him, as Legh Master roams endlessly, crying out and searching for his lost soul at Furnace Hills.

4. Courthouse Cook's Night Out "Old Courthouse", Court Street

In 1838, the Carroll County Courthouse was built to allow circuit court judges to conduct trials for thieves, murderers, and other criminals of the day. While justice was carried out in the courtrooms above, the poor and homeless took shelter in the basement, protected from the heat and humidity of Maryland's summers, and the chill and snow of her winters.

Many a trial was interrupted by the smell of food cooking over small fires in the basement. The aroma would permeate the courtroom, and the lunch or dinner recess would be called sooner than planned. Today, a ghostly remnant of an earlier age manifests itself at trials - the smell of food cooking fills courtrooms and hallways. Who's cooking?

5. Old Jail Headless Jailbird 98 North Court Street

The jail on Christmas Eve 1844 was quite dismal. Families visited their incarcerated loved ones bringing tears and arguments. All the visitors shied away from the corner cell where Big Tom Parkes was held.

Big Tom was no stranger to the jail, this being his fourth trip in as many months. Arrested for disturbing the peace, Big Tom put up a considerable struggle, and it took the sheriff and two deputies to restrain the large man. While the jail was built well and considered safe, the sheriff worried that it could not hold Big Tom for any length of time. Perhaps he should be sent to the Baltimore Penitentiary, the sheriff mused. Big Tom overheard the sheriff's conversation and became distraught. On Christmas Day, Big Tom took his own life, slitting his throat.

The well-known Dr. Zollickhoffer was summoned to the jail. Dr. Zollickhoffer was studying Phrenology (the study of

bumps on the head in comparison to character). He truly had a real find in Big Tom. He asked to take the head to do research on it and permission was given. Tom was laid to rest, without his head, in a local cemetery while the doctor conducted his research elsewhere.

Could it be Big Tom many residents have seen wandering in the vicinity of the old jail? It is hard to know who the large, headless man is that's been seen roaming the area with both arms outstretched in wonderment and pain.

6. City Hotel/Main Court Hotel The Musical Barber Corner of Main & Court Street

At the corner of Main and Court Streets stood the City Hotel. A garage stands there today. The grand structure housed a wonderful restaurant and a unique barber shop. The barber, Jim Hopes, was a small, thin man, whose impeccable appearance always included a crisp white smock. Hopes had dreams of being an entertainer and filled his shop with excerpts from classical dramas. Amidst the patrons, scissors, combs, and hair clippings, Hopes would transform himself into Macbeth, Hamlet, or Falstaff, and play the character throughout the day.

Residents of Westminster were in agreement that Hopes was a trifle odd, but he gave a good haircut for a fair price nonetheless. Jim Hopes' business thrived until, scissors in hand and quoting Shakespeare, he died of a heart attack. His widow tried to run the business, but without Jim's talent with scissors and the now-accustomed entertainment, she eventually had to close the shop.

Talk amongst the old men in town was that, in passing, one could hear Jim quoting the Bard, and if you looked carefully in the window of the old barber shop, you could catch a glimpse of Jim Hopes' crisp white smock.

7. Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House God's Well 206 East Main Street

In the heat of the summer long ago, a tremendous drought fell on Westminster drying up well after well in and around the town. Residents panicked, locking wells and refusing water to parched travelers or thirsty animals.

Near the eastern end of the town lived two maiden ladies, aged and greatly respected by the town's people. They believed that God would not forsake them and, unlike their neighbors, didn't refuse a cool drink to any traveler or beast. They opened their gate and placed a sign by the well: "Free admittance to all, water belongs to God!" Everyone soon flocked to "God's Well", and the old women were gratified by the smiles and thanks bestowed on them by adults and children.

In due time the drought passed and the ladies' kindness was counted as they passed on. Their house was torn down and a new house built, but the well remained, providing an unending supply of sparkling pure water for its new residents. The Shriver family wondered, as we do now, who the little blond girl is that they periodically saw near the well. She's always happy and can be seen smiling from time to time. Perhaps she was an early visitor to "God's Well".

8. Cockey's Tavern The Decorating Ghost 216 East Main Street

J.E.B. Stuart, Confederate cavalryman, set up headquarters at a residence on the main street in Westminster, as troops made their way towards the Pennsylvania line. It appears one of Stuart's men may have stayed behind!

The Ghost of Cockey's Tavern is sometimes heard climbing the stairs at night. When shouted at to stop, the loud boot steps promptly cease. He's been known to rattle the glasses and bottles in the bar when no one is around. The ghost's real affinity seems to be with pictures. When a visitor from Baltimore joined a friend for lunch in 1981, she proclaimed, "I don't believe in ghosts!" Much to her dismay, a picture hanging on the wall behind her fell, striking her on the head. The hanging wire on the picture was not broken, nor was the glass. In response to this incident, the lady replied, "I believe, I believe!"

Another eerie connection with spirited pictures occurred when a waitress found a picture on the floor one morning, the glass unbroken and the hanging wire intact. The picture portrayed a school teacher lecturing her class. Upon inquiry, it was found that a prominent schoolteacher had died that morning. The woman once lived in this building!

A well-known elderly lawyer, Mr. Walsh, ate at Cockey's Tavern every day. A table was reserved for him for both

lunch and dinner. One morning, as staff came in to open up, a picture of Grant that hung over the fireplace was found face down at Walsh's place. The wire was not broken, nor the glass. The place setting underneath wasn't chipped. It was learned that night that Mr. Walsh had passed away.

The waitresses here love the ghost and treat him with respect. Late at night they sometimes feel an eerie prickle as if something is about to happen. One night about midnight, as they were closing up, the waitresses went from room to room and put out all the candles. A few minutes later, they turned in the hall to leave, and looking back, the candles on the mantel were lit again.

Did you say you don't believe in ghosts?

Credits:
Carroll County Public Library, Staff
Ghosts and Legends of Carroll County, Maryland
by Jesse Glass
Copies are available from the Carroll County Public Library

Front cover photograph, Cockey's, by Cathy Baty

Carroll County Public Library offers
guided "Ghost Walks" in the fall.
Call 410-386-4488 for information.

Brochure developed and designed by
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Carroll County Visitor Center
210 East Main Street, Westminster, Maryland 21157
410-848-1388 or 1-800-272-1933
www.carrollcountytourism.org
cctourism@ccg.carr.org

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Sundays and most Holidays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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