

modern living



News-Times photo by Diane McTeas

Tonight's the night for "ghoules and ghosties . . . and things that go bump in the night."
For a tour of their haunts, see pages E-2, 3.

The News-Times

Section



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News-Times photo by Diane McNees

An itinerary of the area's haunted places would have to include the old Danbury Jail. According to demonologist Ed Warren, who participated in a seance there, the building is the haunt of two ghosts: A boy who was

mentally ill when he died and a black prisoner who says he was murdered by guards and buried in the cemetery behind the jail.

Visiting old haunts . . .

By Susan Guerrero
Modern Living staff

Every neighborhood has one. The house is set a little apart from all the others on the street, and it's not in very good shape. The shutters hang at crazy angles and the old porch is

beginning to sag. Tall, funereal-looking pines shade the overgrown lawn and people cross the street to avoid having to go too near the place, which is said to be haunted . . .

Of course, the house probably belongs to a sweet little old lady who has just called an aluminum siding company to

restore her home to its former Victorian splendor.

Though locally reputed to be the wickedest of witches, she is really a doting grandmother with a special talent for making chocolate chip cookies. And her black cat, "Fluffy," is the most spoiled creature on earth, preferring a warm lap to rides on the back of a broomstick any day.

On the other hand . . .

Most people do not believe in haunted houses, although they'd rather not spend the night in that dilapidated wreck down the road.

But those who do have plenty of streets to cross in the Danbury area, which is "loaded with them," according to Ed Warren of Monroe, a professional demonologist who with his wife Lorraine has investigated quite a few reputed 'haunts.'

The local ghost — some prefer "spirit" — population includes two former inmates of the old Danbury Jail, said to be still in residence; a "sobbing ghost" in Newtown, and the inhabitants of a cemetery which demonologists believe to be one of the evillest places around and certainly no place to visit tonight.

"It's very, very haunted," says Warren. "Necromancy, witchcraft or satanic rituals must have been performed there. If you went there (tonight) you'd probably see two or three groups performing witchcraft rituals . . ."

Warren adds that most cemeteries

are usually, contrary to general belief, quite unspooky places — ghosts haunt locales they were emotionally attached to in life, and few living persons get that involved with their local graveyard before death.

Most area ghosts are, like Casper, friendly, or at least harmless.

A family in Washington, Conn., has gotten quite used to theirs, even though he or she disturbs their slumber by practicing the piano in the middle of the night.

And C. Burgess Ayres, headmaster of The Gunnery, also in Washington, is quite cheerful about living with the ghost of a murdered barmaid, perhaps because he has never seen her. She's supposedly buried in the cellar and met her unfortunate end during the French and Indian Wars, when Ayres' cottage was a tavern.

"People who have lived here have felt manifestations or emanations or whatever you feel," says Ayres, who admits to a belief in "the Loch Ness monster, the Yeti and 'things that go bump in the night.'"

Anthony Golembeske, head math instructor at The Gunnery, lived in the house for 10 or 12 years and thinks there may be something to the legend. He recalls a battery-powered lamp that flickered on and off strangely for more than an hour one night, and anecdotes related to him by another tenant who

Life with a ghost

It doesn't bother him any more, but when he moved into a very old house in Brookfield — some say the oldest — he was considerably unnerved to wake one night to the sound of someone clomping around.

He's become used to it, and is pretty sure the noise is "just the old boards or something." But on the other hand . . .

Well, once he was introduced to an elderly woman, a life-long resident of the town.

"Oh," she said, "You live in the old _____ place!" And then she related the tale of a hair-raising night she'd spent in the house as a young girl and how she'd been unable to sleep because of the racket made by someone or something going up and down the stairs.

"My friends laughed at me when I told them about the noise," confesses the house's current tenant. "So I tape recorded the noise and played it for them."

"Oh my God!" screamed one of his friends, "I hear breathing!"

"I had to tell him it was I," he says ruefully.

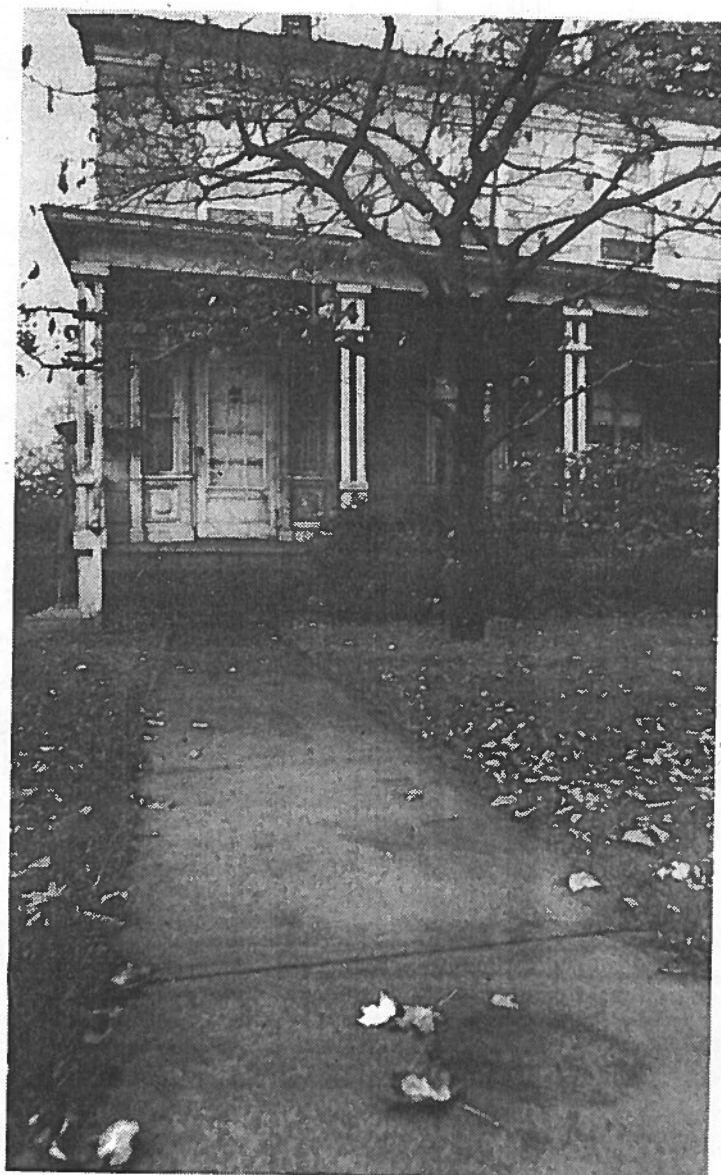
Another time a house guest confronted him angrily at breakfast and demanded to know what he'd been doing upstairs the night before.

"You made an incredible racket!" snarled the weary guest as he buttered his toast.

"I had to tell him it wasn't I," sighs the Brookfield man, who has lived in the house for about four years.

"I haven't seen anything," he adds. "If I did, I'd move out."

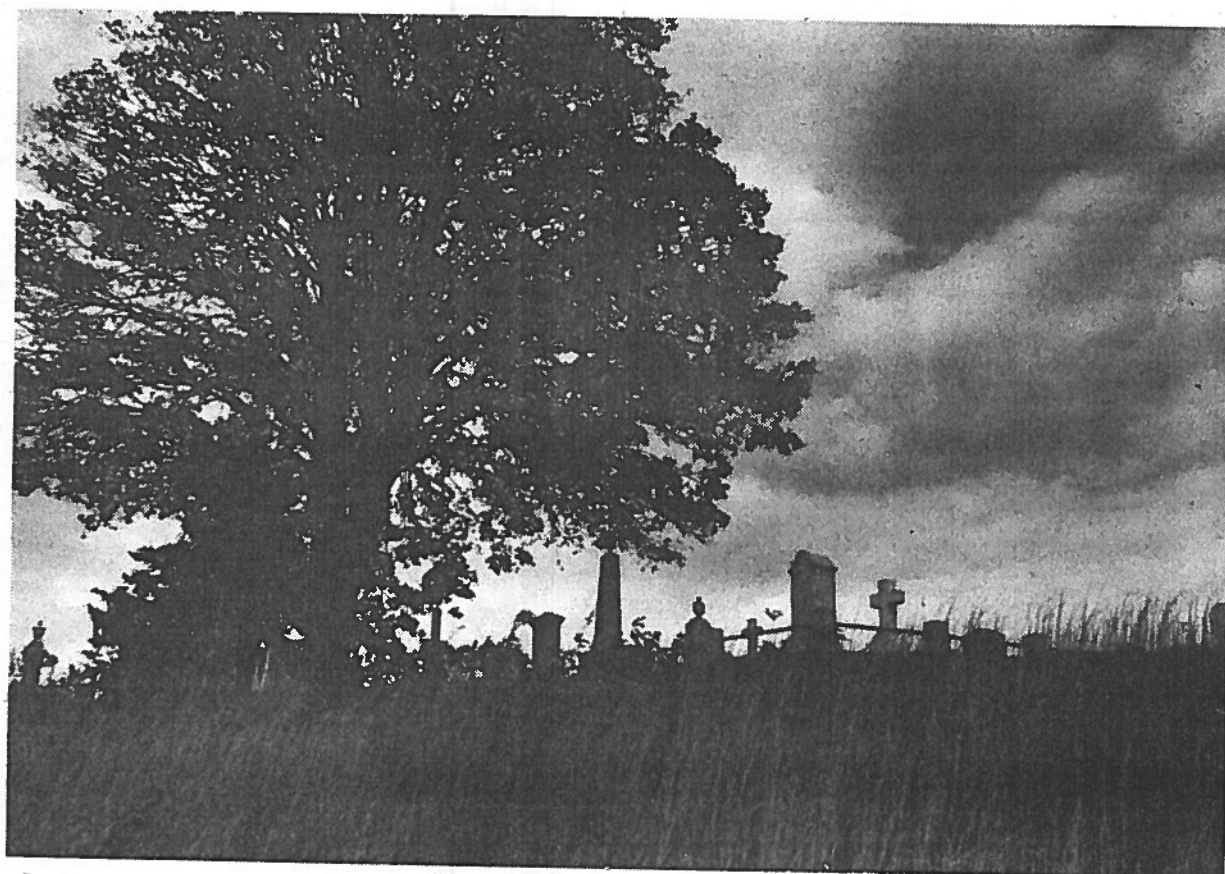
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News-Times photo by Joseph Kugielsky



Photos by Diana McNees



Above left: Years ago, this Ridgefield home was known locally as the "haunted house." In those days it was twice as big and stood just south of St. Stephen's Church. At the turn of the century, the owner of the house had it cut in half preparatory to moving it, and the carpenters found a skeleton in a closet.

Above right: The Bonus house in Kent, Conn., is in ruins now, but demonologists say the place is still haunted. Local legend has it that even before white men came to the area, Indians avoided the mountain behind the property, believing it to be evil.

Below: Most cemeteries, ghost hunters say, aren't haunted. One of the exceptions is said to be Newtown cemetery, where many "psychic photos" have been taken.

Visiting old haunts . . .

Continued from E-2

heard footsteps and "things of that kind."

In Redding, there's talk of a house where "a little girl floats across the lawn at night."

"It's for sale so I can't tell you where it is," confides a local town official, who wishes to remain anonymous. "Of course it may be just a story . . ."

Oldtimers in Ridgefield remember two haunted houses, one of which has been torn down and the other sawed in half.

Years ago, it seems, there were tales of strange goings-on at a house that stood on the site of Fox Hill condominiums.

"Nobody could live in it," recalls Francis D. Martin, a life-time resident. "They said it was haunted."

Consequently the fine old colonial stood vacant for 15 years.

But although people couldn't live in it fulltime, apparently whatever lurked in the venerable dwelling didn't mind if they rented rooms by the night. After the late Col. Louis D. Conley bought it in 1925, the extensively remodeled house was turned into the Outpost Inn and reportedly became not so much the haunt of ghosts as of "the Cadillac and Pierce Arrow trade."

It's another house, however, that was The Haunted House of Martin's boyhood. The Paddock house stood on the south side of St. Stephen's Church and in 1888 was the scene of a terrible tragedy: Dr. Archibald A. Paddock, a man described by The Press as "a man in comfortable circumstances" and "an influential member of his church," went outside with his son one day for some target practice. Then, in a moment of madness he shot the boy and turned the gun on himself.

Thirteen years later — Martin was a small child — the house was sold to a man who decided to move it. Since it was a large building, carpenters were hired to saw the house — by then alleged to be quite haunted, in two. To the horror of the entire town, the house's sinister reputation soon proved to be quite justified, for the workmen found a skeleton in a narrow closet. People began to wonder if Dr. Paddock had had more than one attack of "temporary insanity" in his time. Half of the house still stands on the north side of Casagmo.

The ruins of the Bomus house in Kent, Conn., stand in what Warren describes as "a very desolate section of town." Even before the old mansion was built, the local Indians considered the mountain in, back to be an evil place "and would not, under any

circumstances," set foot on it, according to Warren.

The "terrible haunting" began in the 1930s after one of the Bomus daughters, a girl of 17, drowned in Europe. One day, the terrified family "simply walked out," Warren says, leaving thousands of dollars worth of furniture behind.

The Warrens had been hearing about the house for years, but were reluctant to walk into a place full of valuable furniture uninvited. But one day in 1963 they just happened to be driving by and decided to drop in "just for the heck of it."

"I saw a materialization — half of a young girl," says Warren, describing how the apparition ascended the stairs and then disappeared in a bedroom.

"To make a long story short," says Warren, "even though it burned down, the house still haunts the area." In fact, he adds, because so many demonologists have visited the site, the Bomus place is, if anything, more haunted than ever.

"They've called in numerous types of spirits that weren't there before," he explains.

But while every town in the Danbury area appears to have its ghosts, or like New Fairfield with its "unlucky house," spirits seem to prefer a Newtown address. Perhaps they like its cemetery, an excellent place, Warren says, to take psychic photographs, although it doesn't boast the ghost of a witch, as nearby Stepney's does.

At least one Newtown family wishes its real estate agent had apprised it of this ghostly situation. At any rate, no one told them the house was haunted when they bought it.

So they've had to become accustomed to their ghost, who sometimes appears at their well and sometimes moves

indoors to send "things flying through the air by themselves" or crashes about when people are trying to sleep.

Possibly whatever it is was upset when the family remodeled the place, which is very old. "Haunting will often start after heavy renovations," explains J.F. Sawyer of Fairfield, an associate of the Warrens who says he grew up in a house haunted by one of his grandparents. "Whatever entity is there becomes confused."

The ghost of Capt. Richard Stanton must be very confused, for his old home and, some say, haunt, is now the Time Out Sporting Goods Store on Newtown's Main Street.

The captain built the house as a "port in a storm" and was adamant in life that no one should ever live in it except members of his family.

The old man threatened to haunt them if they defied his wishes, and when his granddaughter, Marie Bell, sold the home, he apparently did. Cups and saucers flew around a corner to smash against the kitchen door, knives and other objects went sailing through the air, and the ghost of the old man was seen by the family, it is claimed.

The Warrens were called in and conducted a seance attended by, among other people, Western Connecticut State College professors. Lorraine, acting as medium, communicated with the old salt, who appeared in a picture over her shoulder. He repeated his decree "very, very firmly," remembers Ed Warren.

"I'd like to say I've seen him," says a spokesman for the store. "But I can't."

"That's because he's not there during the 'psychic hours' of the night," explains Warren.

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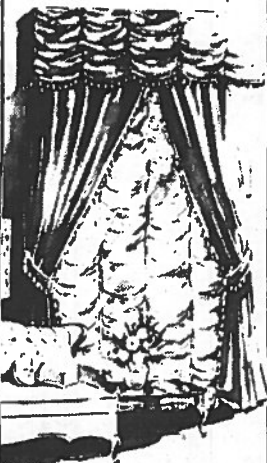
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