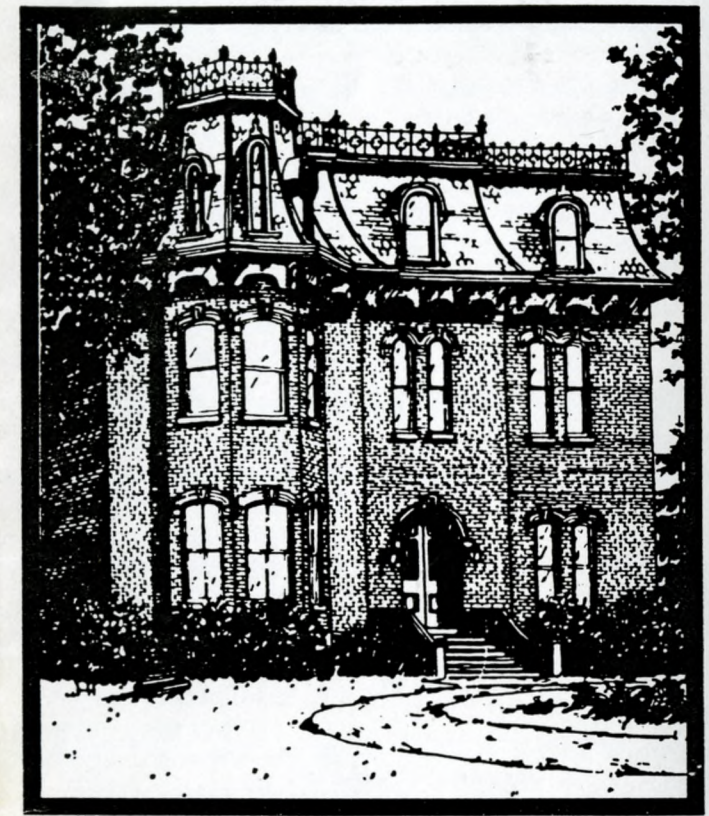


GHOST STORIES and Unusual Happenings in Belleville



Drawing Courtesy Glanmore National Historic Site

Often strange things happen and no one knows why. They could be strange noises, objects moving on their own, bright lights in the night sky, or the outline of a person in the shadows. When odd things happen, "rational" people dismiss them - "It must have been the wind". Others might explain it as apparitions, ghosts, or poltergeists. What really causes these unexplained events? Are they simply hallucinations? Day dreams? Figments of overactive imaginations?

Is it uncontrolled psychokinetic energy of living people that causes the rapping sounds during seances known as 'spirit-rapping' or is it the wind? Are stories of the afterlife simply created by people to ease their fears concerning death? Are ghosts really the spirits of the dead earthbound because they have some unfinished business to attend to? Is it all just a fraud? A hoax? Did these people have any reason to lie?

These questions are left to your imaginations. It is not our job to answer them. Our job is just to report the legends and stories about unusual happenings in the City of Belleville...

Thurlow Ward

In August, 1982, a bright, steady light was seen slowly travelling east, two miles north of Belleville. It suddenly made a right turn southward and instantly accelerated to an extremely high speed, disappearing over the Bay of Quinte. The whole occurrence took less than a minute and there was no sound or other lights. If it was an aircraft, the light would not have been visible after the turn as the craft travelled away from the witness. Was it a UFO?

Elmwood Cemetery (North of Corbyville on River Road)

The gravestone for Thomas Jessop is inscribed with the following: "In memory of Thomas Jessop who was MURDERED at Glen Ross Mills on the 9th of July 1870, aged 33 years and 11 months." Was he indeed murdered? Also in the Elmwood Cemetery is a telephone booth to display information about the cemetery. Who ya' gonna' call?

Victoria Cemetery (East of Plainfield)

Arthur Hoskin has his name on two different gravestones with two different wives. How can this be? His first wife died, then he remarried and had another family. So where is he buried?

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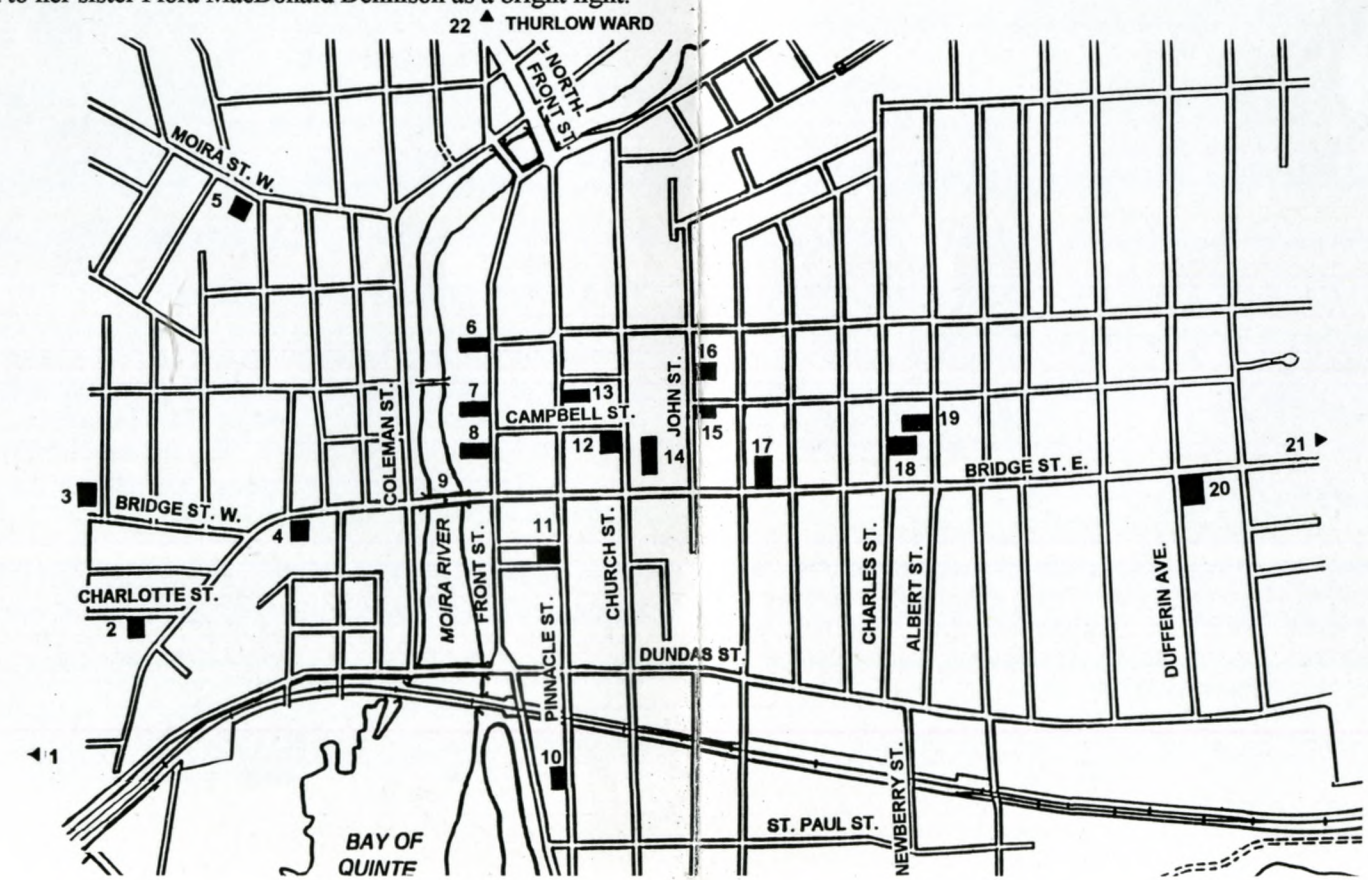
20. 257 Bridge Street East - Glanmore National Historic Site
(Pictured on front) This house was built circa 1883 for John P.C. Phillips, a wealthy banker, and his wife Harriet. Philippa Faulkner, the Phillips' granddaughter, was the last to live in the home before it became a museum. Many strange things have happened in this house. The Phillips reportedly saw an old soldier by the bed, and grandmother Phillips once appeared to Philippa and told her to clean the silver. A psychic visited the house and exclaimed, "You didn't tell me there were ghosts here!" because she sensed one. In the 1950's, the piano started to play, doors opened, there were unexplainable sounds and black sheets floated around the bedroom. According to the owner, a priest performed a rite of exorcism.

21. Elizabeth Crescent

An Elizabeth Crescent resident awoke one night in 1958 to a "whirring" sound. She had left her bedroom window open and the sound was coming from the field behind her house. She looked outside and saw a large round object with bright lights and a lot of steam. She called to her husband and he too saw the object, just as it took off. The next day in the field a circle of 50 feet in diameter was burned into the ground. It had perfectly even edges, "not one blade of grass out of place". The couple decided to keep their story quiet over the years for fear that people would think them crazy.

22. North Front Street (North of the Railway Bridge)

When Mary Melville was 12 a pine chair followed her around the room and answered her questions by tapping its leg. This was the first sign of her psychic ability. Mary died of convulsions in her early twenties, in bed in her father's home. There were reports that although she was not breathing, she still had a faint heart beat. Medical doctors debated the death and kept the body for several days. One doctor said the cause of death was a "cataleptic fit which threw the patient into a trance, in which she died." Did she die on April 8, 1880 or was she in a trance? There is no official record of her death and no marker in any Belleville graveyard. Mary later appeared to her sister Flora MacDonald Dennison as a bright light.



16. 231 John Street - O'Hare-Chant House
In 1855, this house was purchased for Mayor John O'Hare and his wife Delia by her father, Andrew Buell of Brockville, who first consulted his dead wife. She answered him through spirit rapping. "Do the best you can for the children. Goodnight." Both Delia and her father were interested in the occult. Delia held seances in the house which were attended by prominent citizens such as the Moodies.



17. 128 Bridge Street East - The Thompson House
This house was built in 1875 For Uriah Thompson and his wife Matilda, daughter of Henry Corby Senior. The Thompsons were wealthy and had a maid. Since her death, people claim to have seen the maid in the front window in the morning with a duster in hand.



18. 215 Charles Street - Randolph Place
This house is the former residence of J.J.B. Flint, a distinguished Belleville lawyer and 1872 Mayor, who in 1892 claimed to have seen two spectres in his drawing room. Recent owners of this house also had unusual experiences. One night, two candles fell off the mantle and were found lying neatly on the floor several feet away, unbroken. One owner awoke to find the inside storm windows were falling in. The windows were normally held in by pins, but the pins were found carefully lined up on the floor a few feet away. In recent years, residents of the house complained of an attic light that kept turning itself on.



19. 222 Albert Street
Percy Bell lived with his wife Mary, and a boarder. On the evening of January 1, 1954, Percy was feeling ill, so the boarder brought him a liver pill. After midnight, Percy became violently ill and died. One month earlier, Mary's fortune-teller had predicted he would die in 6 to 8 weeks. Mary had told her daughter he was ill "and might die at any time like the snap of a finger". Mary's sister was suspicious and alerted the O.P.P. The body was exhumed. Strychnine poisoning was the cause of death. Mary admitted to having purchased strychnine to kill rats. She was arrested and charged with murder. Although through the investigation Mary told many untruths, she was found "not guilty". Was Mary guilty of poisoning her husband? Was it the boarder? Or did Percy take the poison himself "for spite" as Mrs. Bell once suggested? No one else has ever been charged with the crime and the house is no longer there.

1. 293 Dundas Street West - Wilmot House

This house was once the residence of Eardley Wilmot, Belleville Mayor in 1927. Mr. Wilmot was the first man in Canada to hold a pilot's licence, an instructor at the Royal Flying Corps, and a major in the airforce during W.W. II. In October, 1941, he was walking out to his plane. Another pilot did not see him and his propeller took Mr. Wilmot's head off.



Rumour has it that Eardley Wilmot still haunts this house.

2. 11 Charlotte Street

J.W. Tate, a civil engineer in the railroad, once occupied this house. He was sceptical of seances, so one day, after seeing a table spin around, he sat on the table. The medium, Susanna Moodie, continued to turn the table around. One of the Tates' servants, Mary, once saw a bright light in the corner of her room and a man. The man matched the description of Mr. Reid, a prior occupant of the house, who had died a few months earlier, and whom Mary had never met. Later, through spirit raps, Reid affirmed that it had been him that night. Mary twice had premonitions that large funerals would pass the house, and within two weeks they did.



3. 114 Bridge Street West - Susanna Moodie Cottage

Susanna Moodie, famous for her books on pioneer life in Canada, and her husband, J.W. Dunbar Moodie, the first sheriff of Hastings County, once lived in this cottage. Though they were prominent citizens, the Moodies were excommunicated in 1845 from the Congregational Church, which they had helped to start, for "disorderly walk and neglect of church fellowship". The Moodies were interested in the occult and Dunbar recorded many seances the family held in this house.



It is rumoured that Susanna's ghost still visits her parlour occasionally. A federal monument in commemoration of Susanna Moodie is at this site.

4. 45 Bridge Street West - Riverboat House

Captain James McNabb began to build this home in 1832, but soon after its completion, he came to an untimely death. He commanded a detachment of the First Hastings Rifles during the Mackenzie Rebellion of 1837. His detachment was billeted in a local hotel. He was accidentally killed during an alarm when, in a dark hallway, he ran upon the bayonet of one of his own militiamen, and it pierced his abdomen. James McNabb was the only Belleville casualty of the Rebellion. The house is presently being renovated.



5. 93 West Moira Street - The Fahey House

Peter Fahey, an Irish stone mason built this house between 1847 and 1851. The present owners wonder if it is the ghost of Fahey that pushes them to continue improving the cottage. They feel that they are finishing it the way that Fahey would have wanted. One past resident of the house claims to have seen wispy figures in a doorway. Could Peter Fahey be looking for his clay pipe which was found in a wall during renovations? The present owners say that their house is haunted by a "good Irish ghost".



6. 302 Front Street - Scalliwag Toys



In 1885, Alderman Lewis Wallbridge Yeomans moved his drug store to this location. In the basement, Mr. Yeomans manufactured Scott's Emulsion & Cod Liver Oil. In 1887, there was a fire and the building was rebuilt, again with the Cod Liver Oil factory in the basement. In 1896, the building was hit by fire again. This time, Alderman Yeoman's body was found in the basement. His lantern may have caused fumes to explode into a fire. Investigators believed that he had tried to escape through a cellar window but was overcome with smoke before he could escape.

7. 258 Front Street - Greenley Building

In 1873, E.J. Castree, a travelling salesman for wire toasters went into Hambly's Saloon at 258 Front Street, had a few drinks, and slumped over his table. At 7 p.m. (closing time), the owner was unable to wake him. Hambly and an employee, believing him drunk, put him in a wheelbarrow out back, expecting him to awaken and be on his way. The next morning he had not moved. A witness testified that Castree was probably dead when he was put in the wheelbarrow but a doctor was uncertain.



8. 228 Front Street

In 1925, this was Lattimer's Drug Store. At that time Arthur Moon, a messenger for the Bank of Commerce, discovered that Clayton McWilliam was having an affair with his wife. Moon went to Lattimer's, where McWilliam worked, and shot him dead. Another employee, John McGie, tried to stop him, and he too was shot dead. Moon was sentenced to 25 years but served only 12.

9. Front Street - Lower Bridge

Alexander Oliphant Petrie had a ferry service across the Bay to Ameliasburgh Township in the 1830's. He had been hired to transport a circus. For three days he showed up but the circus was not there. When the stage dancers and wild animals in the circus did arrive, they took a competitor's ferry. A few days later, Mr. Petrie met the circus agent near the lower bridge. With a pistol aimed at the man's heart, he demanded three dollars for his time. He took the man's money and wrote him a receipt. Charged with armed robbery and sentenced to death, he was eventually pardoned, due to community support, and became the president of the Board of Police (Mayor) of Belleville in 1841. He was buried in St. Thomas' Cemetery with a pillow of soil from his native Scotland tied in a piece of the black pall from General Isaac Brock's coffin.

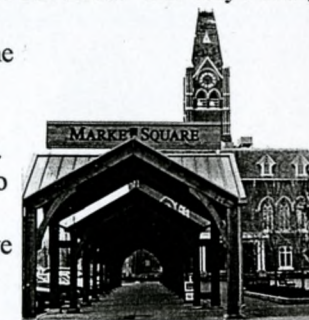
10. 45 South Front Street - McIntosh-Ridley House

During the renovations of this house a student, working there on a research grant, had many strange experiences. Things would fall near him for no reason, and his personal possessions would disappear and reappear somewhere else. A psychic who visited the house sensed a ghost. She said it was the ghost of a sailor who had killed someone. It is interesting to note that the original owner, John McIntosh, died by drowning a few miles east of Belleville in 1815.



11. Market Square

In April of 1878, there were raids on "houses of ill-fame" in Belleville. Trials were held in the court room on the second floor of the market building at the east end of Market Square. The people charged with keeping the houses were fined \$20 and costs; the women were fined \$10 each plus costs. However, the male frequenters found in the house were not fined. One lady's charges were dropped when she indicated that she wished to be married to the man. The lady and the alleged "john" were escorted from their cells to the clerk's office to be wed. Many spectators arrived wishing to witness the event, but the magistrate allowed the pair to leave by a back door.



12. 49 Campbell Street - Boyle Building

The west section of this residence was once occupied by Benjamin Fairfield Davy, a grain merchant, and the first mayor of the town of Belleville in 1850. His wife and daughters were mediums and conducted seances, involving rappings, tables being lifted, spelling on a Ouija-type board, and spirits writing and drawing through a medium. Both of Mr. Davy's daughters could play the piano with spirit influence much better than they could on their own, without sheet music, or in darkness. At the Davy home, Dunbar Moodie received a message from his son who had drowned in the Moira River at the age of six.

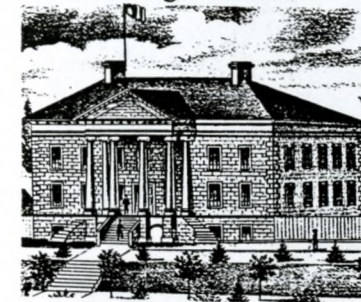


13. Courthouse - 235 Pinnacle Street

The first Belleville execution took place in 1854. Mr. T. Barnhardt had cleared land and claimed it. Later Mr. Dafeo purchased the land and attempted to evict Mr. Barnhardt. Mr. Barnhardt shot Mr. Dafeo through the heart. He was found guilty of murder and hanged.

In 1859, Samuel Peter Rock, was caught stealing money from his employer, Robert Dickie. Mr. Rock shot Mr. Dickie in the head, killing him instantly. Rock was convicted of murder and executed.

Mr. and Mrs. Aylward were convicted of murdering a neighbour in 1862. People came from Belleville and nearby villages to view the husband and wife hanged side by side. Business was great for the merchants that day but many of the spectators were "unruly and drunk". After the hanging, the ropes were cut into segments which were sold to observers as souvenirs.



In 1934, Harold Vermilyea killed his mother with a hatchet on the sidewalk. It is said that he had a strained relationship with his mother and sister. His was the first hanging in 44 years and the last one in Belleville.

14. 201 Church Street - St. Thomas' Cemetery

Allan Taylor, an Ensign in Captain Simon McNabb's Company of the Hastings Militia, had his tender to build St. Thomas' Church accepted in 1818.

Unfortunately, he died two months later, just after the walls were erected. Mr. Taylor was buried in the centre of the church. When the church was completed, his mother had a pew directly over his grave.

In 1989, archaeologist excavated many of the graves of St. Thomas' Cemetery. They uncovered 573 bodies, studied them at McMaster University, and reburied them.



15. 245 John Street

When this house was purchased in 1965, mysterious sounds were often heard by the family, usually in the upstairs. Most prevalent were unexplainable rapping noises and ticking sounds, similar to those of a clock, coming from the walls. The owner often saw a man and two women in their early twenties. They would stand just inside the door of the master bedroom but disappear if he said anything to them or approached. These happenings stopped after the family had been living in the house for a year.

