

Nuggets of History

Cottage Grove Ghost Stories

Editor's note: This is the first part in a two-part history series on local ghost stories.

*By Holli Turpin
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While some vehemently deny the existence of ghosts, others just as strongly believe. Many sit firmly on the fence, ac-

ghosts, the truth is simple: a good ghost story is often based on some bit of tragic historical fact. If you dive into most legends and lore, peel away the many layers of speculation, as-

Lea House
Built in the early 1890s by George Lea and his sons, this home boasts intricate woodwork lovingly constructed by the Lea's gifted hands.

George and Lucy Lea, as well as three of their four children, lived the final years of their life in the house. George Lea died in 1927, his wife died in 1949, daughter Elsie died in 1953, son Edwin died in 1954, and daughter Mertie May died in 1955. While three children dying so close together may seem eerie, they were in their seventies at the time.

The house has since been used as an office building, an antique shop, restaurant, bed and breakfast, coffee shop and rental.

The Seven Gables moniker was given in the 1960s when Ed and Alice Noel owned the house and operated a restaurant on the first floor. Alice was clear in an interview during the time she lived in the house that there were no ghosts about.

However, several tenants over the years have reported hearing footsteps on the stairs and other strange unexplained noises as well as light orbs floating in doorways. The belief is that the house is haunted by George's son Erwin. Local lore claims Edwin dies by suicide in the upstairs bedroom.

With a quick look at the records, we learn that the lore

has slightly altered some of the facts. Edwin died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound while in the shed next to the house. Preliminary research does not clarify if this was intentional or accidental, but this clearly tragic death has become a solid foundation on which a local ghost story is created.

We are left to wonder, does one or more of the Lea family remain at the home to watch over the ornate home they build and clearly loved?

The Armory

Heavy footsteps down the long hall, spoken commands given by an unseen drill sergeant, cold breezes sending chills down the spine, wispy visions of men marching past row by row. These are all tales told of the old Armory Building.

One specific story is based on the belief that a commander died in the commander's suite. No record of such a death has been located. Yet over the years rumors of ghosts continue to haunt the old building.

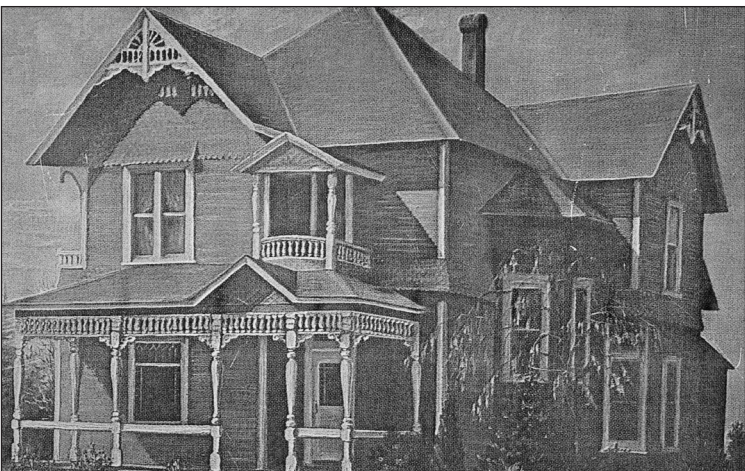
Built in 1931, this building housed national guard troops during World War II and many actions and campaigns since. Many young men, and in later years women, would pass through those doors in the defense of our country. Local residents also used the building for community events including dances and fairs.

De-commissioned in 2009, it sat idle for several years.

The City of Cottage Grove purchased the deteriorating building, dedicated to saving this striking landmark. Breathing new life into the building the city has raised funds to re-roof, fix windows, add heating,

and update restrooms. Each year we see more events being held in the building as the community makes use of this large, impressive resource. With increased use it may come to pass that the stories of apparitions will decrease as new life is lived and enjoyed within the walls of this landmark.

Part two of this series will appear in the Oct. 28 edition of The Sentinel.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF COTTAGE GROVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Top, the Lea House on South Hwy 99 in an undated photograph. Bottom, the house today has been used as an office building, antique shop and more.

knowledging that there are unexplained happenings but not convinced they are spectral in nature.

Whether you believe, reject, or question the existence of

sumption, and exaggeration, at its base a local ghost story can keep history alive.

Here are a few spooky tales told right here in Cottage Grove.

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