***The Ghosts of the Monocacy***

By Rande Davis

Halloween is upon us, and it seems that every town from Harper’s Ferry to Ellicott City offers ghost tours, so we began to wonder: What about our area? Do we have ghosts?

The Monocacy area has so much history but, unfortunately, much of it covers the violent history of the Civil War. With so many historic homes and buildings, we wondered why there were not more legendary ghost tales to tell about our area. At least that is what we thought until we started asking around. Then the stories, sometimes reluctantly, came forward. Here are just a few:

**Annington Estate – White’s Ferry Road**

Our first ghost story is about the Annington Estate on White’s Ferry Road. Annington is situated on the hillside about a mile east of the entrance to White’s Ferry. This proud and stately residence has a great heritage and is one of Montgomery County’s grand homes. We were directed to talk to Carol Caywood who moved there in 1972.

The reputed ghost who is said to reside at the estate is Col. Edward Baker, a Union officer, who died in the Battle of Balls Bluff just across the Potomac River from the house. On the night before the battle, Colonel Baker dined at Annington and boasted, “Tomorrow I will dine in Leesburg or dine in hell.” Well, things didn’t go so well for the colonel, and he certainly did not dine in Leesburg. Whether he dined in hell, we cannot say, but, during a time of major restoration of the home, some contractor employees were startled to hear the sound of horse hooves racing across the front yard. The sound was there, but no horse or rider was visible. At other times, doors would shut and open without any cause.

One time there came a very loud sound of “oooooooooohhhhhhhhhhhhhh.” While this was one of the more scary events, it was one of the few times an investigation proved successful. In this case, it turned out to be the wind going through an outside drainpipe.

Carol Caywood tells us that there were other incidents involving a young lady ghost who had the habit of hiding female clothes about the house. Missing items would often be found completely out of place. Most of the ghost stories occurred prior to the restoration of the home. After the restoration was completed, the ghostly visits ceased. Could it be that the ghosts were just unhappy that the home was not cared for and once the house was restored their visits were no longer necessary?

**The Nessul Civil War Home across from St. Peter’s Parish**

Linda and Henry Nessul own the seven-bedroom Civil War house directly across the street from St. Peter’s Church in Poolesville. Linda reports a number of incidences that have no explanation. Here are just a few of her ghost stories:

*Before we settled on the house, the person who did the restoration work told us the story of the Gray Lady. It seems a work crew was behind schedule, and they had arranged to work on the attic unit one Saturday morning. Two of the crewmembers arrived early, went up to the attic, and hid behind some equipment. The third crew member, the youngest of the three, arrived a short time later and went to the attic to start work. Soon after his arrival, he began to hear strange noises—moaning and metallic clanking. He fled the attic, never to return, but told all who would listen that he had seen a Gray Lady in the attic. As the story goes, his two crewmates were the pranksters behind the noises. We laughed when we heard the story and didn't think anything more about it.*

*Then a few months after we moved in, Henry's mom became bed bound and we moved her into the house with us. One evening, we heard her talking to someone. We went to check on her and asked with whom she had been speaking. She told us she was talking to the Gray Lady.*

*“The Gray Lady?” we asked.*

*“Yes,” she replied.*

*We asked her who the Gray Lady was, and she said she did not know, but the lady was dressed all in gray clothing. We asked her what the Gray Lady was doing, and she said "waiting.” She added that the Gray Lady didn't talk, but just stood at the foot of the bed and when her feet got tired, the Gray Lady would float a few inches off the floor at the foot of the bed.*

*Henry's mom died a few weeks later, and we've always wondered if the Gray Lady was standing watch, waiting for Henry's mom to pass on to the next world.*

*In a sort of related story, when my dad was very ill and living with us, a few weeks before he died he told me he saw young men in uniform standing outside his window. I asked if they said anything or if they frightened him, but he said no to both questions. Dad was in the navy in World War II and was attached to the U.S. Marines during the bloody battle of Guadalcanal. Again, I wonder if the young men Dad saw were sailors and marines waiting to bring him home.*

**The Friendly Ghosts of Gabriel’s Inn – Ijamsville**

The inn is what remains of an old sanitarium for women. Oddly, there was one patient who was male. He had a protective nature and each evening, he would walk along the upstairs corridor and say good night and check on the safety of each of the female patients. Why he was there is not really known, but a number of employees at the inn have reported seeing a gentleman with a warm smile and friendly nature in the hallways late in the evening about the time lights would be going out for the day.

There are a number of other reports of ghosts in the upstairs area of the building. Most of them are women who seem friendly but lost. The stories go back a long time in the building and the current innkeepers tell many of the stories during the ghost dinners that are very popular on Fridays and Sundays during October.

**Potomac Golf Course and Lodge**

Our last ghost report doesn’t involve a home at all. It has been reported that a strange man appears unexplained at an upstairs window at the Potomac Lodge in Poolesville. The building used to house the clubhouse of one of the area’s first private country clubs. When the country club finally went under, the owner committed suicide, and not long after, reports of ghostly appearances began.

Something tells us that we have just scratched the surface on ghost stories from our area. If you have a story or unusual event that cannot be explained, we invite you to contact the Monocle.

*A similar version of this story ran in our October 24, 2004 issue.*