

University of Maine

From the Selected Works of Kimberly J. Sawtelle

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A real ghost story

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Editor's Note: The following stories were related on the condition that the identities of the individuals and family would remain anonymous.

by Kimberly Sawtelle

The era was the early-1930's. The setting, a large country farm house typical of rural Maine country side. Sounds of a slow, constant drip in a corner of the rustic kitchen baffled the family of five in residence. Though the rhythm of the drip remained constant and audible to every member of the family, no traces of a physical leak could be located despite several extensive searches.

In the years to come the sound of dripping would recur. Sometimes it would last for an hour at a time, occurring at random intervals throughout a single day. It followed the mother and father to two different homes as their family grew up and moved on. The steady pat of water would take place mostly in the kitchen area but occasionally moved to the bedroom as well. Sometimes the drip would not be heard for months or even years but shortly following each occurrence of the phenomenon, the death of a relative or close friend would be recorded.

Can spiritualistic sensitivity be traced through heredity? Since the first day an invisible droplet seeped from the phantom leak, family members spanning at least four generations have reported experiencing paranormal phenomena, according to those interviewed.

Apparently the most sensitive family member currently is an 87-year-old woman, who first noticed the dripping in her kitchen nearly 50 years ago. Over time she has sighted apparitions, heard curious crashes and bangs and lived in a home which she said was temporarily haunted by the spirit of her late husband.

A niece in the family has also experienced hearing sounds created by immediate relatives who have departed the physical life. From the fourth generation, a young female has reported having some type of "psychic flash" which is said to hold warnings similar to the slow tattoo of unseen water.

According to the eldest family member, her first experiences with the paranormal came before the dripping sounds, when she repeatedly heard her youngest daughter jump out of bed at night and thump on quick, bare heels over wooden floors, stopping just outside the master bedroom door. The three year-old child, however, was never found anywhere but sleeping, snugly tucked into her own bed.

These occurrences, said the woman, were taken as signs that someone was coming to the home and that a change was going to take place. Following the second instance of a child's mysterious running footsteps, the woman's parents moved into the farm house.

The reason for her parent's move was due in part to her father's poor health, she explained. One night in the months to follow she heard the sound of her father's heavy steps and cane making a labored trip down the staircase and travel through the dining room as far as the kitchen door before halting. The sounds never made a return trip.

In the days to follow the dripping began. A short time later her mother was working about the kitchen when



Local witch

she heard children playing with a harmonica. Not realizing that her three grandchildren had been present in the house, she began to hunt for them. Though the noise continued throughout her search, she was unable to locate the youngsters. When asked about the matter later in the day the children claimed they had neither been in or near the house nor had they been playing with the instrument. By the next morning the woman's father had died.

During her 87 years the woman has also seen two apparitions, her brother and a woman dressed in a long, dark robe. The cloaked woman made a single appearance in the master bedroom of the farm house one twilight night. The wife woke to find the dark figure standing on her husband's side of the bed, staring out a window into the fields.

"I opened my eyes and there was a person with a dark robe right down over them," she said relating the experience. "I could see her just side to. Just her profile, but not plain because this robe seemed to cover some. It was no one I knew. I kept still because I knew if I moved that she would disappear. Pretty soon...she turned around and looked at me and the minute she saw my eyes were open, poof. She was gone," the woman said. When the cloaked woman turned to look at the occupants of the bed she appeared to have a pale, round face but was still unknown to the interviewee.

Several decades later the wife was seated in her living room when she looked up from her work to find an apparition of her brother's face floating in a corner of the room. At the same moment her brother's life slipped away in a hospital some 15 miles from her home.

Years prior to his death, her brother had reported a similar sighting. Near midnight one night, he was wakened from sleep by someone who spoke his name twice. Upon opening his eyes he found his oldest sister standing at his bedside, appearing as she had in her youth. With the single word, "Good bye" she faded into the darkness.

Upon rising the next morning he told the family that his sister had passed on during the night and described his experience. Before noon that day a phone call was received announcing that the

sister had died at approximately midnight.

Although the interviewee reported having no paranormal experiences in past months, weeks of haunting by the spirit of her late husband a few years ago more than make up for the recent lull. Though he never appeared in the form of an apparition, she said her husband's spirit remained in their home for several weeks following his death. Walking the floors, rustling papers and knocking about in drawers the spirit kept his wife awake night after night, she said.

She explained that he could be heard moving about the bedroom, bath, kitchen and living room as he might have during his life. Rather than soothed by the thought her husband would return to his home after death, she started to become more and more unsettled as unseen hands rattled papers about in draws which never opened and footsteps ranged throughout the house.

Eventually the spirit made such constant noise that she quietly spoke out, explaining that his activities were keeping her awake at night and disturbed her days. "I hated awful to say anything, you know. I miss him terribly," she said. Immediately upon her request the noises ceased.

The spirit of the husband roaming his former home has been the only long term haunting reported to have been experienced by members of the family aside from a rocking chair once owned by a niece. The origin of the chair was unknown to her, she said in a brief telephone interview. The haunted chair came into her possession only because it was already present in a house into which she and her growing family had moved.

According to the niece, the chair would rock by itself for long periods of time. There appeared to be no set time of day when the chair would move, she said. Often the family would return home from an outing to find the rocker moving back and forth slowly. Other times the chair would begin rocking when the family was in the next room or when she was working around the kitchen.

She said though she had no particular aversion to the chair and had actually begun to refer to the old rocker and its phantom occupant affectionately. She returned home from work on day to find the chair missing from the living room and discovered that her husband had sold the haunted rocker sometime during the day.

Though she frequently attended spiritualist meetings, her most notable experience with an occupant of the spirit plane would not occur until shortly after her mother's death in the 1970's. According to the woman, sometime after the funeral she was awakened at night by the sound of her mother's footsteps and cane moving through her home. The shuffled steps and dull thud of the cane moved from the living room through the front room. The woman was sitting straight up in bed by the time the footsteps reached her door. She listened in the darkness as the door was unsteadily pushed open with a scraping sound.

Her mother's gait continued across the room to a trunk located at the side of the bed. The woman heard her mother's cane tap on the trunk before the presence faded. Though she had not seen a figure, the woman was certain it was her mother trying to give her a

message. Immediately she searched through the yarns, knitting needles and other contents of the trunk which had belonged to her mother but found nothing which she considered significant.

Interpretations of the phenomenon differ depending on the family member relating the tale, but according to one explanation, the experience took place at approximately the time of year the mother would have begun knitting Christmas mittens. The woman herself felt the visit may have been forwarning of a fire which destroyed her

sister's home two or three days later. The younger generations of the family have reported various experiences of déjà vu and possible psychic visions. "I'm a little hesitant to classify any of the things that have happened to me," said one woman in her 20's. "Let's just say strange things and sometimes frightening things have happened to me."

According to the young woman, she is just beginning to attempt to unravel the possible meanings of some of her recurring paranormal experiences. Unlike other members of the family, who apparently express no fear of the strange occurrences, the young woman said experiences with the psychic and spirit world tend to make her edgy. "On one hand I have the feeling I would like to experience seeing a three-dimensional apparition. On the other hand, I have a feeling I'd probably run screaming from the room," she said.

"It's not so much a fear of flirting spiritualism," the woman said. "It's more a fear of encountering something menacing or evil." Her fears, though of long standing, were given a boost of encouragement earlier this year when she woke one winter night to find her solid pine board bed shaking. Laying motionless in the bed she sensed a hostile female presence standing at the foot of the bed, she said.

"It was like every nerve ending had come alive with an intense coldness," she said. Movement of the bed ended when the woman gathered courage to roll over to look toward the front of the room where, she said, the night time shadows were deeper than usual. The experience ended and the shadows returned to normal after the woman received what she felt had been a malevolent warning.

According to family members, it is unknown if earlier ancestors experienced similar paranormal experiences but in a matter-of-fact rural Yankee community of the late 1800's one could be certain that such events would be kept tightly under wraps, thus ending up lost to descendants.

Whether or not the theory of spiritualism is a valid concept is for each individual to decide. But if such possibilities exist it would appear as if the fabric of some unknown dimension has torn allowing that which is contained on the other side to seep slowly through and drip into the physical lives of one quiet country family.



Halloween Candy Hotline

DOVER-FOXCROFT — With the cooperation of the National Confectioners Association, the Piscataquis County Sheriff's Department will utilize the voluntary professional services of candy manufacturers to help identify alleged reports of candy tampering this Halloween.

County residents are requested to immediately notify the sheriff's office at 564-3304 or 1-800-432-7372, in the event they suspect candy, or any other treat, has been tampered with. The complainant should make every effort to save candy product in question so that it can be analyzed.

Sheriff Frank Murch urges county residents to instruct their children to accept only wrapped or packaged candy and not to eat anything until the treats have been examined by their parents.

Tampering with any consumer product in commerce is a federal crime with penalties that range from a fine of \$25,000 or imprisonment for attempted tampering to a fine of \$100,000 and life imprisonment where tampering leads to death.

Let's have a safe and happy Halloween in Piscataquis County.

Parties planned for Halloween

Greenville

GREENVILLE — On Oct. 30, a Halloween concert will be put on by the Greenville Elementary school at 10 a.m. K through grade three will be singing Halloween songs and grade four will present a musical play called "Witches Brew". The public is invited.

Also, at 2 p.m., on Oct. 30, the annual Halloween parade will start from the school to the Union Church and return to the school, scaring people all the way. In costumes, will be grades K-4 marching with the Senior Band.

Sangerville

SANGERVILLE - The members of the Sangerville Vol. Fire Dept. will sponsor their annual Halloween party, for the fifth year in a row, on Oct. 31. The party will be held from 6-8 p.m., on the second floor of the Town Hall.

According to Chief, Dennis Pearl, the firemen have logged over 10 hours of work, preparing the popular Haunted House. Wives have also been busy decorating the hall and making various Halloween treats.

The party is for children 12 and under and will feature Magician Ron Ormsby, of Etna, plus bobbing for apples and trips through the Haunted House. Other types of entertainment will also be provided, according to Pearl.

Children interested in participating in a small parade around the Oakes Manor Senior Citizen complex for the benefit of residents there may meeting at the Sangerville Fire Station at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 31. Chief Dennis Pearl said transportation to and from the complex will be arranged. He asked children to come in costume.

Dexter

DEXTER - The Dexter Parks and Recreation Department with the ghoulish assistance of the Dexter Regional High School Class of 1988, will be sponsoring a Halloween Event for children, up through and including fourth grade, at the DRHS cafetorium Friday night, Oct. 30. The party will last from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Included during the evening will be a costume contest, games, refreshments and a haunted house. Admission to the event will be \$1 per child with all proceeds to benefit Operation Graduation.

Parkman

PARKMAN - The Support Our School group, (SOS), will sponsor a

Halloween party for children in the Parkman area, on Oct. 31. According to group spokesman, Debbie Ball, the party will be held at the Parkman Grange Hall from 6-8 p.m. and will feature games, refreshments, a haunted house and a surprise visitor.

The group will also sponsor a get acquainted meeting, to be held at the school on Nov. 3, at 7 p.m. Ball said members of the group will be on hand to greet parents and other interested members of the public.

The group has also invited the K-4 superintendent and Parkman members of the SAD 4 board of directors. Residents are encouraged to attend this meeting and learn what the group is involved with and meet their representatives.

Hunter's supper set Nov. 11 in Abbot

ABBOT — Lorraine Leeman, publicity chairman for the Abbot Town Hall Kitchen Committee, said a Hunter's supper will be held on Nov. 11, at the Town Hall, from 5 to 7 p.m.

Leeman said the turkey pie supper will include mashed potato, squash, carrots, cole slaw, tea coffee and cocoa and ginger bread with cream for dessert. She said there will be two seatings and the prices will be \$5 for adults, \$1.50 for children under twelve and pre-schoolers will be admitted free.

All proceeds will benefit the Kitchen Committee fund. Its members and people from the community will provide the food and the service. Committee members include Leeman, Marion Kallgren, Janice McAllister, Nola Hayden, Vivian Trafton, Carlene Scales and Zelda Richards.

Older Americans

DOVER-FOXCROFT - The Dover-Foxcroft Older Americans met at the Wagon Wheel Restaurant in Abbot Oct. 14. Twenty-one members and guests attended the Dutch treat dinner.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, Nov. 4 with a business meeting at 11 a.m. followed by a pot luck dinner. Members are asked to bring hand work to do after lunch.