

College ghost lore essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

If one were to take the beltway to I-270 north, about an hour north of Washington, DC one would arrive at a town called Emmitsburg, Maryland. Is the town haunted? I collected several stories from a senior in college who is from Emmitsburg. This senior is a white female. The stories I collected, many of which have to do with the small Catholic college indicate a rich ghost lore in the town.

There are several stories that this woman told me concerning her hometown. The first is one that most people who live in the town know. In the mid 1800s, a man by the name Larry was born. Larry was the son of a famous composer and musician and came to teach music at the college. His father wanted Larry to be a musician like himself; however Larry was not as skilled. Larry became popular with the college students who would come to his grocery store where he would sing songs for the pretty girls. In the late 1800s, his father died, and Larry was quite sad. The following Christmas, Larry took his flute and went to the cemetery at Mount Saint Mary's College to play one of his father's most famous pieces, "When the Glory Lit the Midnight Air". The town folk thought he finally mastered the ability to play the flute to honor his father. So the town folk went up to the gravesite by the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes on the campus. The event became a tradition, and Larry would lead the people up to the gravesite each Christmas to play the flute. In the 1920s Larry died. Older residents say that if you listen very carefully on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning you can still hear the ghostly strains of beautiful flute music coming from the cemetery. A little while later, the music is gone, not to be heard again for another year.

Another story the storyteller told me is that about Father Brute. One of the earliest presidents of the school was Reverend Simon Brute. He died in the mid 1800s. Brute still glides about the campus wearing long black robes. People who have seen his ghost describe the same sunken cheeks and other particular features. He usually smiles and nods and moves on. In Brute Hall is the room that Brute once lived in. Room 252 is supposedly still haunted by his ghost. Several priests have lived in the room and have said strange things occur, such as the lights and television flashing off and on at random times. Even in the last ten years, the room has appeared to be haunted. Several students who lived in the room said that the television changed from channel to channel one night by itself.

The storyteller also told me of another ghost. There was a slave who worked for the college in the mid 1800's and lived on the first floor of McCaffrey Hall. He was accused of stealing and as punishment his left hand was cut off and buried in the quadrangle. Residents of the hall claim to have seen a severed hand, or heard fingers scratching on dorm windows. It is believed that the ghostly hand might be looking for reconciliation with the rest of the man's body, which is buried in the cemetery.

After comparing these stories with information on the internet, I determined that the storyteller accurately recounted local lore. I even was able to find another ghost story on Mount Saint Mary's College. One of the college's most famous ghosts is a Civil War soldier who promised his lover that he would think of her while in battle. The two lovers looked to the heavens and agreed to gaze upon the same star every night. When the soldier was killed at Gettysburg, he was buried face down in an old well. Now his spirit roams

Mount Saint Mary's, tapping folks on their shoulders and asking them to "turn me over," probably in order to see the star.

I found it interesting that the school was founded in an interesting way. In 1805, there was a preacher who was riding on a path between Frederick and Emmitsburg. It was dark and he saw a light in the distance that he thought was a farmhouse. When he couldn't find the house, he lay down and went to sleep. When he woke, he discovered a spectacular view of rolling hills and fields. He decided to stay there and build a church and a school. The school, founded on a "ghostly" light, was Mount Saint Mary's College (emmitsburg.net).

There are a few social implications from these stories. First, is that the town of Emmitsburg has come to embrace these stories and make them a tradition. The stories are a part of the town's history. It is unique, and the people embrace it. People do not let these stories scare them.

In terms of the way the storyteller presented the stories, she did a good job. The tone was appropriate for telling a story. She emphasized certain words and talked at length about the stories. It was convincing to hear them and it helped that she knew the facts. She was able to tell me a "story" when she told me. I asked her afterwards how she knew so much detail and she said everybody in her town does. They hear it in school, from friends and family. It is who they are as a town. I think that if somebody had just told me something along the lines of "well there was a priest who lived here and room 252 is haunted," it would not have been as effective.