

# Ghost Stories of The Past

## The Haunted History of Tarboro

Written by JENNIFER HINES

Like any other town over 250-years-old, Tarboro has a colorful history. Home to several well-known soldiers and politicians, Tarboro has been the stomping grounds to notable figures during many significant periods of time. But what if not all of Tarboro's past residents have left?

Monika Fleming, local historian and history professor at Edgecombe Community College, has collected a several stories of hauntings. Two in particular have been well documented and even published in collections of folktales and newspapers.

The first of these documented hauntings in Tarboro is that of the Tar River Banshee. It is said that during the Revolutionary War, three British scouts killed a patriot mill owner when he refused to give them grain.

The mill owner told the British soldiers that if they killed him, they would be cursed and the banshee would come after them. Not believing him, the British threw the patriot into the river.

"When they threw the body into the river, there was this really pitiful, loud, disturbing wail which was supposed to be the banshee," said Fleming.

When their commanding officer found out what they had done, they were ordered to stay at the mill and take care of it. During their time at the mill, all three men went crazy or died.

When the first soldier starting hearing noises outside, he went to investigate and mysteriously fell into the river and died. The second soldier tried to run away out of fright, but ended up falling into the river himself.

"The third one basically went crazy when he refused to leave the mill because he knew the banshee would get him," said Fleming. "He would stand there at night and hear the banshee wailing through the wind."

To this day, it is still said that the Tar River Banshee haunts the banks of the Tar River.

A more recent haunting in Tarboro occurred in the late 1800's.

In a two story house on Main St., which is no longer standing, it is said that a young girl started hearing a strange rapping on the exterior walls of her second story room. After looking for source of the noise and finding nothing, her father called neighbors

and police officers to help him investigate.

The noise persisted, always coming at different times of the night. They had people standing outside and on the roof trying to find out who was playing tricks on them.

"Finally, either her father or one of the police officers who were investigating tried to figure out if there was a message to this tapping because it only happened when this girl was around," said Fleming.



After trying to communicate with the spirits, asking questions with one knock for "yes" or two for "no," they finally determined what was behind the noise.

"It was a young boy," said Fleming. "He was in love with the girl and had wanted to marry her, but he was killed in an accident. So, he just wanted to make sure she was looked after and for her to know that he was always around."

The family was so spooked that they moved out of the house. The tapping on the walls ended after the girl moved away.

Fleming said there are even more stories circulating Tarboro that don't have as much documentation surrounding them.

"There's one house on Wilson St. that was right near what used to be the hospital during the civil war and people have supposedly seen a civil war soldier come down the steps," she said.

Another house on Main St. is said to be haunted by the ghost of a bride. Multiple families that have lived in the home have

claimed to seen the bride. Fleming said she has not come across a story of anything bad happening in the house.

The Blount-Bridgers House is also said to be haunted by the ghost of Miss Minerva. Miss Minerva lived at the Blount-Bridgers House and had gotten evicted due to all of her cats. It is said that she had close to 40 cats.

Whenever something strange happens at the Blount-Bridgers House like lights turning on when nobody's there or things falling off the walls, it is often attributed to Miss Minerva, said Fleming.

"The kids [at the time] would talk about her and they were afraid of her because she always wore black and was always surrounded by cats," said Fleming. "The perfect story."

Whether it's from the Tar River or on Main St., Tarboro's history of residents have inspired great stories, even the ones still hanging around.