

A Haunting We Will Go in North Royalton

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Sara Macho, Sun News

Rather than watching scary movies and telling ghost stories, turn instead to your own backyard this Halloween weekend.

North Royalton, founded in 1818, is filled with eerie places and faces.

From shadowy gravesites to residents who share their homes with cranky spirits, this town contains a spooky past and present.

John Shepard's grave

This Royalton Road burial place was created in the late 1800s. While many graves are the sites of recent residents, the cemetery also contains plots of names best known for the roads named after them, including the Sprague and York families.

The cemetery also contains two Revolutionary War soldiers. One is John Shepard, whose tombstone indicates he was 118-years-old when he died in 1847. Though he actually died at 117-years and 9-months.

His tombstone may be faded, but a colorful American flag marks his plot.

Rumor has it that Shepard farmed until he was 117 years old, said Historical Society president Carole Kennat.

City Green and Gazebo

When the community was first founded, a small cemetery was located at the City Green. Many residents contracted Typhoid Fever in the 1800s, and were buried on this land. Years later, those buried there, who did not die from Typhoid were moved to the City Cemetery. Those who did perish from the bacterial disease still remain buried on the green.

Pritchard Cemetery

This fenced-in burial place on Edgerton Road is site to the earliest settlers. It began as the Pritchard Family cemetery, but later buried residents outside the clan.

The oldest grave is dated 1818. Taller tombstones mark the burial place of adults, and small gravestones, merely 12 inches tall, house skeletons of children.

A Boy Scout troop recently worked to restore the decrepit site, but falling down tombstones and overgrown brush still set the mood.

Local rumor states that in the early morning hours of Halloween, ghostly shadows can be seen moving in the fog-filled hills of the property, said Human Resources Director Patrick Jones.

"Reports of people singing over the graves have also been told," Jones said. "Luckily for us, the ghosts are friendly."

A Ridge Road haunt

When Sandra Malusky moved into her Ridge Road home 43 years ago, "strange things happened."

The swaying light fixtures, creaking floorboards and shaking bed frames used to scare the family, but now it is strangely comforting, Malusky said.

The Porter family built the home in 1891, but it's the Taylors who currently reside.

As the owner of a Tremont holistic healing shop, Malusky said she is open to the spiritual world, but when her husband, son and grandchildren refused to enter an upstairs room or sleep on the second floor, Malusky grew frightened.

Since then, she's called local paranormal investigators to cleanse the home, but the spirits of a man, child and two older women remain.

"There is something disturbing about a large upstairs room," Malusky said. "It was used to hang meats and blood stains still line the floor. There are also cubby holes that I believe were used to punish the child when he was bad."

Over the years, Malusky said she has grown used to the haunting.

"I didn't want it to end. The ghosts never bothered us. They just let us know they are there," she said.

"But the spirits bothered the children. They would run down the stairs claiming to have seen shadows. Ghosts need energy and get it from electricity or even people. If they want you to know they are there, they will show you."

Also of note

Lights flicking? Dog barking at the ceiling and refusing to go into a room? Seeing shadows out of the corner of your eye?

Call Mary Ann Winkowski, a resident who can see and talk to spirits who have not crossed over. CBS's "The Ghost Whisperer" is also based on Winkowski and her unique gift.

Since she was a small child, Winkowski said ghosts have appeared to her. Some have unfinished business with the living, and some simply want to keep an eye on family members and friends.

Winkowski said she can also create the white light which serves as the portal between this world and the next.

She has written two books, "When Ghosts Speak," which serves as an introductory, go-to guide for dealing with the dead, and the recently released, "The Book of Illumination."

The Smith/Retledge House built in 1856, is now home to the North Royalton Historical Society.

When current president Carole Kennat took office in 1999, she worked diligently to restore the disheveled little white house with new windows, paint and period furniture.

Though reports of ghostly activity are scarce, patrons will surely feel the historical mood of the structure. Appliances from the 1800s line the kitchen and bedrooms are modeled with antique make-up tables and clothing racks.

Tours are available Friday to Sunday. Society membership is \$15 per person and \$20 per family. Call Kennat at (440) 237-9866 for information.