

In My Home Town

Ashland Museum Members Bulletin
Fall 2014



The Ashland Museum's exhibits, "Antebellum Resort to Civil War Town" and "Ashland Reborn" document Ashland, Virginia's growth, challenges, and changes from 1836 to 1900. Visit the Ashland Museum in person or via our website to learn more about how Ashland grew from a resort along the tracks called Slash Cottage to the town we know today. Our new mini-exhibit on **Historic Homes of Ashland** describes some signature residences in the Historic District of our town.

In this issue, we share a spine-tingling story from the campus of Randolph-Macon College. Visit the Museum and learn what other stories the people & buildings of Ashland have to tell.

Some Ghostly Experiences in Washington-Franklin Hall

James E. Scanlon, Ph.D., D.H.L.
Professor Emeritus

Washington-Franklin Hall dates from 1872, built four years after Randolph-Macon College moved to Ashland. Students, led by Jordan Wheat Lambert, started the building in order to house their Literary Societies. They acted as incubators for full participation in civic life, introducing the students to formal meetings, motions, minutes, and all the other tedious but necessary details of social and political organizations. With the decline of the Literary Societies as a vital force in the College, the building was used for classrooms and administrative offices. The President's Office occupied the southeast corner of the second floor. Ill-advised internal structural changes, caused Washington-Franklin Hall to deteriorate and it was condemned in 1953. In the 1980s, after narrowly escaping demolition, the building was restored by a grant from the Gerard B. Lambert Memorial Foundation.

After the history department moved into the building in 1987, I had numerous occasions to be in my office on the northwest corner of the building on Sunday afternoons. From my reading chair, I had a glimpse of the hall way running east and west on the second floor. Once in the summer of 1988, I thought I saw



In My Home Town is a Bulletin for Members of the Ashland Museum. Our focus is interesting or notable people, places, events or things, and memories related to Ashland, Virginia.

We hope you will enjoy receiving this Bulletin, but if not, please call, write or send us an email to unsubscribe.

Editors: Nancy Kackley and Susan Tucker. This issue's article was written by James E. Scanlon, Ph.D., D.H.L., Professor Emeritus of History, Randolph-Macon College.



Washington-Franklin Hall on the Randolph-Macon College campus. Photo provided courtesy of the Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives at the McGraw-Page Library, Randolph-Macon College.

motion in the hall, but dismissed it as a trick of the eye. On another occasion, I saw motion, went out into the hall, and went half way down the stairs to see if some visitors had dropped in: no one was there. On a third occasion, I saw a parabolic, gray, misty, but transparent shape about five foot six moving very rapidly towards what was once the president's office. These episodes were in the middle of sunny afternoons, and after I had been to church. The thing, whatever it was, was real, and not to be explained as a cloud of dust (edges were too precise) or a passing cloud (no outside window at that spot).

In the fall of 1988, students began buzzing about a student seeing a ghost on the first floor. That student, a stout member of the football team, later told me his story: he was playing the piano in the Franklin Room, when he felt a tingling on his arm, looked up, and there on the sofa was a man he described as about 30, wearing a white shirt, black jacket, and black pants. The student looked away and looked back and the figure was gone. He fled white as a sheet across the street to his fraternity house.

The campus telephone operator and receptionist at the time, Mrs. Rickie Fain, had developed an ability to communicate with ghosts. She confirmed to me that there was something in the building and offered to get rid of it. I was with her, and she walked around the second floor of the building until she came to the classroom and said, "Oh James, I've got goose bumps ten feet high. It's here." She told me, "You won't see anything." She sat there for about ten minutes, then turned to me and said, "That's interesting. There are two of them. One upstairs: an old

Upcoming Events

Train Day

Sat., Nov. 1, 10 am - 5 pm

Holiday Home & Walking Tour

Sun., Dec. 14, 2:30 pm and 4:30 pm

Docent Training

By appointment. Contact us.

Your continued support keeps the doors open and the lights on at the Ashland Museum and the Red Caboose. Please donate at our website or by US mail.

We always need volunteers to staff the Museum and for special projects. Contact us if you are interested in getting involved.

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Museum Hours:

Saturdays: 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Sundays: 12:30 to 2:30 pm

man who always wanted to go to Randolph-Macon and could not afford it. The other is downstairs and likes the parties and activities." The old man she got to move "into the light." On second occasion, she sat in the Franklin Room for a longer period of time, and finally got him to leave, but, she said, he didn't want to. When asked to describe him, she said "he was around 29 or 30, with black hair, and wearing white tie and tails." This matched very closely the student's description and the two had not then met.

As to my reactions when I concluded I had seen a ghost, I can say that I felt awe, but not fear. There is a sadness about such spirits, a life they found unfulfilled. One can only wish them well and pray for them.
