

A Ghost Story

Often, in the month of October, someone will ask if a certain building or area in town is haunted, especially if it's been vacant for a while. Thus it was in October 2000 that Stan Munro, news reporter for WHAM Channel 13, decided to spend the night at 1341 Westfall Road to experience the ghost that was said to reside there. Stan made a habit of staying overnight in "haunted houses" in the Rochester area. In the morning, he would invite a local psychic to discuss the phenomena Stan had experienced in the night. A cameraman, also a morning arrival, sent the live transmission to Channel 13 for the morning news program. The psychic asked Stan to describe what had happened in the night then provided an evaluation of what Stan had experienced. In his blue pajamas, Stan expounded about the noises he heard and the sensations he felt. The psychic then told him that he was lucky to be standing up and speaking, that the ghost was a mean and spiteful man who could have done him harm.

The house on Westfall Road, now called the Buckland house, had been vacant for many years before the town purchased the property from the estate of Max Gonsenhauser in 1997.

Max Gonsenhauser's farm manager and his family lived in the house from about 1956 to 1980 and they often experienced manifestations that they described as a female ghost who cared about children. While reading in bed one night, the farm manager's wife saw someone walk by her bedroom door. When she got up to check on the children, she discovered that her daughter was having a heart attack and needed immediate medical care.

A few months later, another one of her daughters saw the ghost. This presaged the death of a favorite uncle.

One time a woman who didn't know about the ghost was visiting the family. During the conversation, the woman suddenly asked if there was a ghost in the room with them. When told that there was, the woman asked to use the phone to call home. She learned that her apartment was on fire and her son was there alone. She hurried home in time to save him.

Who is this benevolent ghost? According to folklore, she was a wife and mother who died young, leaving five young children. Her husband remarried a woman who had children of her own. When the husband died, the second wife took her own children and returned to her family, leaving the first wife's children on their own. The ghost is thought to be caring for her children.

A former Brighton town historian whose tenure included the time period when the house was private property shared the origins of the ghost with her successor, cautioning that the information must never be shared lest the owners find it difficult to sell a property associated with a ghost. No longer in private hands, the legend of the Buckland ghost may now become part of the history of the house along with the iron fireplace crane and the log beams in the basement.

Mary Jo Lanphear
Town of Brighton Historian
6 September 2024