



Bullet'n Backstory

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No. 100 Special Edition Ammunition and Apparitions: Potentially Haunted Military Installations

The *Bullet'n Backstory* is 100 issues old! Our thanks go out to the workforce for the positive reactions and support we have received over the years. For this special edition we have chosen to recognize being halfway to Halloween by highlighting some of what are reported to be the most haunted Army installations in the United States.

Rock Island Arsenal

The home of the Joint Munitions Command's headquarters has a long history of haunting stories. As the former home of a Confederate POW camp and the current site of both a large veterans cemetery and a small Confederate cemetery, this should come as no surprise. The site of the former prison has largely been occupied by a golf course for many years. During that time, members have reported seeing the ghost of a Confederate soldier across the street from the first tee, near the entrance to the grounds of Quarters One.



Quarters One — Rock Island Arsenal — Rock Island, IL

Designed by Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Rodman, Quarters One was the home of the senior officer assigned to Rock Island Arsenal between 1871 and 2008. While it was occupied, it was the second largest private residence in the Federal inventory after the White House. Since 2008, the former residence has been the site of special events and tours of both the historical and ghost hunting variety. The home's first public gathering was the June 1871 funeral of Brig. Gen. Rodman, who died before he could fully occupy the house. In succeeding years, two commanders would die in the home: Col. LeRoy Hillman in 1918 and Col. David King in 1932. The most frequent eerie reports from Quarters One are those of heavy boot steps coming from the closed off third floor. Former residents have also reported phantom knocking, and doors and windows opening and closing by themselves. Reports have come from elsewhere on the island, as well. Former staff of the Rock Island Arsenal Museum recall many instances of doors opening and toilets flushing when no one else was in the building. In addition, a JMC employee tells a curious tale from February 2007, not long after he started working on the Arsenal. It was a foggy pre-dawn morning as he drove to work. As he rounded a bend, he was surprised to see a man standing on a strip of grass at that hour, lit up by the misty streetlights. He thought "Why is he smoking pipe at 5:30 a.m. ... and why is he wearing a Civil War uniform?" The employee did a double-take, only to find the man was gone. When he got to his office, he did an internet search for 19th century military uniforms and learned that the style he had seen dated from the post-Civil War period. One week later, in the course of his duties, he encountered a photograph of the man he had seen: Brig. Gen.

Thomas Rodman. The location of the apparition? On the site of the original entrance to the installation.

West Point

West Point Military Academy is considered one of the most haunted places in the state of New York. Most notably, in 1972, several first-year cadets were terrified by an apparition wearing an old academy uniform and floating in and out of Room 4714. They also reported an unseen force messing with their bedding and belongings. The incident caused such concern on the grounds that the superintendent brought in renowned paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren (of Amityville Horror fame) to try to contact the ghosts. The Warrens would later lecture on the subject at the academy.



West Point Military Academy — New York

Fort Leavenworth

Fort Leavenworth might be the most haunted military base in America. The Frontier Army Museum has documented 36 haunted buildings at the installation, with hundreds of reported sightings and experiences throughout the grounds. One active location is the Old Disciplinary Barracks. While much of the structure was torn down in the early 2000s, one of the guardhouses still stands - Tower 8. According to witnesses, a deceased soldier occasionally calls the guard control room from Tower 8.

Another hot spot is the administration building. Following a prison uprising during World War II, the guards had the task of hanging the perpetrators. When they ran out of room on the gallows, they used the administration building elevator for the purpose. Since then, soldiers have reported hearing screams coming from the elevator when no one is around.

The most infamous location of paranormal activity at Fort Leavenworth is the Rookery. This building started as the commander's quarters and later became family housing. It is reputedly the home of multiple ghosts. The senior ghost is said to be Maj. Edmund Ogden (d.1855), who walks the halls in spurred boots. Another famous specter is "The Lady in White," who is said to be the wife of a cavalry soldier. According to legend she fell victim

of a Native American attack. Witnesses report seeing her grey-haired form in a white dress, screaming and chasing anyone she finds awake at night. Other ghosts include a man named Robert, a nanny, and her charge Rose, with the latter known for whistling throughout the house.



Thomas Custer House — Fort Leavenworth — Kansas



Grant Hall — Fort McNair — Washington, D.C.

Fort McNair

When President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865, authorities worked quickly to find the killer. John Wilkes Booth was cornered and shot after a 12 day manhunt. Then six accomplices were rounded up and imprisoned at Fort Washington (now Fort McNair). Four of them were sentenced to death; two received life sentences. Among the condemned was Mary Surratt, who ran the boarding house in which Booth and his confederates planned Lincoln's

assassination. Though she protested her innocence until the end, she became the first woman executed by the U.S. government. Witnesses say her spirit still roams the grounds, wearing a black dress and bonnet.

The Alamo

The Battle of the Alamo (February and March 1838) was a critical event in the Texas Revolution, during which nearly 260 Texans defended the mission during a 13 day seize by 2,000 Mexican soldiers. The result was a slaughter, as nearly all of the defenders were killed, though they managed to cause 600 Mexican casualties in the process. Stories of ghosts on the site started almost immediately with the report of six Franciscan monks appearing in the chapel only days after the battle, apparently to protect the site from being torn down. Some also have reported seeing a lone sentry silently walking the battlements, while others claim to hear the echoes of battle, accompanied by the screams of the dying.



The Fall of the Alamo (1903) — Robert J. Onderdonk



Station Hospital — Jefferson Barracks — Missouri

Jefferson Barracks

Established in 1826, Jefferson Barracks served for over 100 years as a western post and military hospital. One of the earliest paranormal stories from the site comes from the 1920s. During a private Halloween party at the hospital, the host of the gathering saw a man in a Civil War uniform sitting on a wall on the grounds. The host approached the man and attempted to engage him in conversation, only to be rudely dismissed. As the host turned to leave, he glanced back over his shoulder to find that the man had vanished. He later learned that no one at the party had attended in a Civil War uniform. Another story emerged in World War II, when several soldiers standing guard were confronted by an angry sentry. As he approached, they could see that he had a bleeding bullet hole in the head. However, in a flash, the ghostly soldier vanished.

Fort Monroe

Fort Monroe, Virginia, occupies a site that has housed fortifications since the early 1600s. Over the centuries, the location has reportedly been surveyed, inspected, served, or occupied by many famous Americans, including colonist John Smith, West Point cadet and artilleryman Edgar Allen Poe, Napoleonic aide Gen. Simon Bernard, the Marquis de Lafayette, Robert E. Lee, Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant, Chief Black Hawk, and Booker T. Washington. Over the years, the ghosts of nearly all of them have supposedly been seen on the grounds, though that sounds a bit like spiritual overreach to me. ~ P.T.F.

Sources: *Military Spouse*, *We Are the Mighty*, *Travel Channel*

JMC Historical Document Collection

The JMC Public and Congressional Affairs Office (PCA) maintains the JMC Archives, which collects and maintains historically significant records, including: emails, manuscripts, letters, reports, studies, images, videos, films, photographs, oral history interviews, briefings, SOPs, policies, decision papers, memoranda, statistics, newspapers, newsletters, brochures, maps, blue prints, drawings, artifacts, and more. Such records are pertinent to the Army’s institutional knowledge of active and predecessor installations, the ammunition industrial base, and JMC missions. JMC regularly uses these materials to research command history, and to answer research queries. When JMC workers leave positions or make physical moves, it is vital that their records be assessed before disposal. If employees are uncertain about the historical value of materials, the best policy is to make the items available to Command Historian Keri Pleasant (keri.j.pleasant.civ@army.mil) or Archivist Paul Ferguson

This Month in Strange History

- April 1, 1693:** A full year into the Salem Witch Trials, Puritan Minister Cotton Mather — whose writings heavily influence the persecution of suspected witches in new England — loses his four-day-old son. He blames witchcraft.
- April 5, 1242:** Alexander Nevsky, Prince of Novgorod, defeating a force of crusading invaders — made up of German knights and Estonian cavalry — by outmaneuvering them on the frozen surface of Lake Peipus in the Battle on the Ice.
- April 9, 817:** Carolingian emperor Louis the Pious (r.814-840) narrowly escapes death when a wooden walkway collapses at his palace at Aachen. As a result, Louis issues the *Ordinatio imperii*, establishing rules for an orderly succession.
- April 12, 1862:** Union Army volunteers, led by civilian scout James Andrews, steal confederate train near Atlanta and run it 87 miles toward Chattanooga, destroying telegraph and rail lines along the way.
- April 15, 1912:** The RMS *Titanic* sinks off the Newfoundland coast, resulting in the deaths of more than 1,500 people, including John Jacob Astor IV (Waldorf-Astoria), Benjamin Guggenheim (businessman), and Isidor and Ida Straus (Macy’s).
- April 19, 1906:** One day after the Great San Francisco Earthquake, residents struggle to contain dozens of fires. Over 80% of the city will be destroyed in the combined disaster, mostly by fire, with 3,000 deaths.
- April 23, 1516:** Duke Wilhelm IV of Bavaria supports the German Beer Purity Law, which includes standards for the sale of beer in Bavaria. In particular, it orders that beer can only contain three ingredients: hops, malt, and water. Yeast is not mentioned because it was considered a fixture of the brewing process.
- April 26, 1392:** Korean Confucian scholar and politician Jeong Mong-Ju — the last great figure in the Goryeo Period (918-1392) — is assassinated on the Sonjuk Bridge in Gaeseong (North Korea). Legend states that a brown spot still on the bridge is his blood.
- April 30, 711:** Moorish troops led by Tariq ibn-Ziyad land at Gibraltar and begin the Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula (Portugal and Spain) on behalf of the Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus. The conquest will continue through 718, after which Muslim rulers will maintain a foothold on the peninsula until their expulsion in 1492.