

THE NORTH BUILDING



Austin groups for the elderly purchased a city block of land and buildings in 1985. The oldest structure on the site was the North building, which opened to the public in 1907 as the Confederate Woman's home. For decades, the elderly and disabled widows of Civil War soldiers lived in the building. They spent summer afternoons on cool verandahs, sang holiday carols in the hallway, and dreamt of a world that was quickly slipping away. When they were sick, they were nursed back to health in the infirmary, and when they died, their bodies were stored in the morgue. Whole lives were lived within these walls, and on these grounds.

UNUSUAL EXPERIENCES

Responding to rumors and fears that the building was haunted, two psychics and an A.G.E. board member toured the building on October 14, 1987. The psychics Rhonie Robin and Diana Greene, agreed that there were spirits of several residents of the Confederate Woman's home still in the building.

"But they are not harmful and mean no one any harm," Greene said. "They are troubled, afraid, and confused by all the changes and comings and goings in the building. But most of all, they angry at the indignities suffered by them while in the Confederate home and want justice."

Greene and Robin began the tour by circling the outside of the building. They said they felt nothing in the building proper, but did feel something negative or ominous in the yellow brick outbuilding at the rear of the property. Robin felt very strongly that ground between the old building and the yellow brick outbuilding had special significance. Greene felt this less strongly and thought the ground's significance was that the residents formerly used this ground for a garden and had spent many fulfilling hours digging and working there.

When touring the old building itself, they felt some, but few, presences on the first floor. On the second floor corridor, however, they sensed the spirits of several women ducking and hiding and wondering what was going on. For the next twenty minutes the psychics toured the corridors and some rooms of the building.

Eventually the three entered the southern turret on the second floor. The psychics said they could feel all the women gathering there ahead of them as if they knew there was going to be a meeting. Robin got a headache as soon as she entered the room. She soon found out why.

The assembled spirits were angry. They wanted someone to listen to them. No one had listened to them in a long, long time. At one point the spirits said, "We demand justice." Greene insisted that their dignity had been striped away from them at the home, and that the worst abuses took place in the yellow brick outbuilding.

Greene, Robin, and the A.G.E board member assured the assembled spirits that meant no harm. That they would try to find justice for them, that they want to understand the confederate women. Greene and Robin said they could see some of the assembled spirits, particularly a woman in a dark green dress who had been seen by others before. The A.G.E. board member never saw or heard any of the spirits.

Greene explained that spirits might not leave a place if they have grown accustomed to it, or they didn't realize that had and needed to move on to another realm. She said that while she, Robin and other psychics could be pretty sure of the overall, that any given details could be incorrect. "We are just humans. We have emotions and can get carried away in this direction or that direction. And that the spirits themselves are not all wise just because they are spirits. They can have the same blindness and misunderstandings that the living have."

THE REAR BUILDING

The psychics asked to go out back to the yellow brick outbuilding. The trio stood outside. Greene put her hand to window briefly, then drew back shaking. Asked about going inside she said "No, not tonight. Maybe in daytime." Robin put her hand against the window. Robin too quickly withdrew her hand from the window and shook it to the ground, as if casting off some contamination. Both women felt that in this building something bad had happened to the former residents.

They suspected that this building had been a hospital or treatment room for women who were considered out of their senses. They could see an attendant in a starched white uniform giving women "treatments" sometime in the 1920's or 1930's. The treatments might have been cold showers, being strapped down, or forced enemas. The residents felt tremendous rage and violation at what took place. They felt they never received justice for these affronts, though the psychics had a hint that they might have attacked the attendant in revenge at some point.

The tour ended. Before leaving that night, Robin and Greene made these recommendations for the current tenants of the property.

There is nothing evil or negative in the building. The spirits are as afraid of the living people as we are of them. The spirits were older women whose last years were not easy.

The spirits are not at peace they are troubled. Asking or praying that they find peace should be helpful. Spirits find white candles made of beeswax and frankincense to be soothing.

The spirits from time to time might have enough energy to unlock doors, throw light switches or alarms, or turn on typewriters, but the psychics said such disturbances were more likely to be the work of the living than the dead.

The psychics would like to know much more about the grounds, especially as they were used in the 1920's and 1930's. And the women would like to know exactly what is troubling the spirits. They'd like to speak with the people who have felt the spirits.

The psychics said removing the spirits seemed cruel and unnecessary since the ghost meant no harm. Robin and Greene recommended learning more about the women, helping them find "justice" and allowing them to naturally to another realm.

CREATING A DOOR

The two women helped prepare the spirit for the journey to next realm. A week later Greene and Robin met between the two buildings and concentrated to create a doorway through which the spirits could pass from the world. Robin said seven spirits assembled in front of the rear building and moved toward the north building, through the psychic door. She said the Confederate ladies had polished shoes and carried little boxes with handles. Some of the cases were wooden and others were intricately embroidered. "They dressed and ready to go"

Neither Robin nor Greene would accept payment for their work.

"The Ghost Report" is adapted from a 1987 report by Joseph Wiseman, a former A.G.E. board member, to Sue Towery, formerly the A.G.E. executive director



REPORTS FROM OUR TENANTS

DANA

I was working on a Sunday. To my knowledge the rest of the the building was empty. There had been some tenants in and out earlier, but I hadn't heard anyone for some time. I stepped outside to get some fresh air and take a break, then I let myself back in. As usual on the weekends, the hall lights were dimmed, with only every other fixture on. As I approached my office door, I stopped, startled, because I could hear a child screaming in pain or fear... mostly terror, I think. The sound was very faint, like something just out of reach, and I couldn't tell from what direction it was coming. It was almost like it was in the air itself, or in the walls. I did not know at that time that the AGE building was once a home for disabled children, and that rumor had it they were not treated particularly well when they were here. The sound faded, and I have never heard it again. The whole experience, though, was unnerving.

CELIA

"I had left my office one day and was pulling away in my car when my passenger side window started to roll up and down on its own accord. It was an electric window and I had never had any problems with it before. I kept trying to keep the window rolled up but after a few minutes it would roll back down on its own and then up, as if a child was playing with it, or someone who had never seen an electric window before. This went on for several weeks, as I took the car from mechanic to mechanic. Soon the problem began to escalate when my door began locking and unlocking.

I thought that maybe I had picked up a passenger from the building, so I turned around and went back to the office. I parked the car and told whoever might be in there that they could not come home with me and that they had to return back to AGE. I then walked back to my office hoping that I was being followed. I waited a few minutes and returned to my car. I had no further problems with the window after that."



PHYLLIS

"I had just moved into the AGE building and had indeed heard rumors of the ghosts found here. I was curious to see if I would encounter anything supernatural. It hadn't even been a month after I moved in when I discovered something not quite right about my office. The door would always close behind me no matter how I tried to prop it open. I also felt as though there were other people in the office when I was alone. This feeling would follow me down to the elevator and leave me once I exited the building."

HYDE PARK FOOTBALL TEAM

The Hyde Park High School had for a brief period rented the small two story building right next to the main AGE building.

We would often come back to our building after a night game in order to change. There would be a dozen or so of us all hanging out upstairs making noise and watching highlights of the game on the television. Every so often no matter how loud we were, we would hear even louder banging, as if someone was stomping up the stair case that leads to the second floor. Often we would turn off the television and sit quietly as the banging continued. As soon as one of us would make the move to walk over to the stairway and look down, the banging would cease."

TAMMY

I was working late one night in my office on the second floor when I heard what sounded like a bunch of women talking and laughing outside of my door. I walked out several times and as soon as I opened my door the talking stopped, but once I closed the door and returned back to my desk the talking and laughing would start up again.



SANDY

Late last year, we kept noticing that the Xerox machine was getting turned off early. A check with the AGE staff said “No, not us”. I thought it might be some pre-programmed time within the machine, so I asked the technician when he was out one day, and he told me that there wasn’t a timer switch on the machine.

Here’s what would happen: the machine would be on, and then the next minute the switch would be in the off position. One afternoon I was in a hurry I literally turned around to do some sorting when I heard a “click”. Sure enough, the machine had been turned off, except there wasn’t anybody else there!

NANCY

About 9:00 a.m., Iris from Cancer Connection went into the kitchen upstairs and every single cabinet door was standing wide open. She thought maybe there was a reason so just closed up one side of the kitchen cupboards, leaving one side standing open, in case management wanted them open for some reason. But, Iris went back into the kitchen a few minutes later and did close the one kitchen cupboard right over the sink because it was in her way. She then headed down to the bathroom. On the way back from the bathroom she glanced into the kitchen and noted that every cupboard door was standing wide open, including those she had previously shut. This corresponds to Gail (from my office) coming in at about that time - about 9:10 a.m. , and she noted all the cupboard doors were standing wide open, but didn’t think about closing them because she thought that management was fumigating.

I came into the kitchen at about 9:45 and at this point, one side of the kitchen cupboards were wide open and one side of the cupboards were closed up. I kinda had the same thought that Gail did - that management had them open for some reason, but I got a weird feeling. I didn’t mention it to anyone.

About 10:30 a.m. Ronnie, from Cancer Connection and doggie Acorn came down to our office. Ronnie said that all of the kitchen cupboards were open so she had just closed up every single kitchen cupboard. We all had a short conversation about this so Ronnie wasn’t down here very long. Ronnie left to head back to her office when we all heard this loud scream. It was Ronnie. Lots of folks on this floor came running down to the kitchen to see that every single kitchen cupboard door was standing wide open. Several of us noticed we had the chills and the air seemed a little cool. We then closed up all the cupboards and they have remained closed.

Go figure!

