

1-1-2001

Ghost of Mary Hawkins (from 'Haunted Illinois')

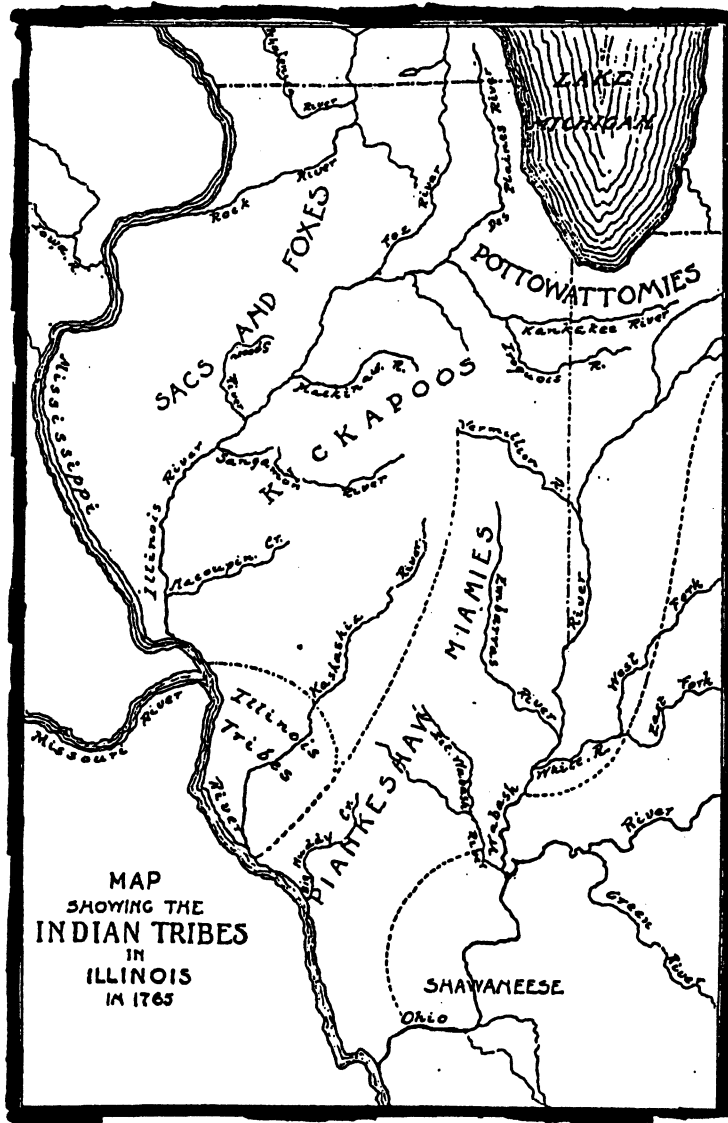
Haunted Illinois

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/pemberton_hall_ghost

Recommended Citation

Haunted Illinois, "Ghost of Mary Hawkins (from 'Haunted Illinois')" (2001). *The Pemberton Hall Ghost*. 13.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/pemberton_hall_ghost/13

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Pemberton Hall at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Pemberton Hall Ghost by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.



HAUNTED ILLINOIS

HISTORY & HAUNTINGS FROM LITTLE EGYPT TO THE WINDY CITY

- a Whitechapel Productions Press Publication -

EIU Lib Charleston IL 61920

⑫ Pemberton Hall Ghost packet copy 2

This Second Edition of "Haunted Illinois" is dedicated again (with much thanks) to my friends in the ghostly field, without whom this book could not have been written.. especially the members of the "American Ghost Society", Dale Kaczmarek, Ursula Bielski, Loren Coleman and many others.

And this book, like all the others, is also dedicated with much love and admiration to my wife, Amy, who continues to have my support, respect, admiration and love. Without her, this book, and nothing else would be possible.

Copyright © 2001 by Troy Taylor

All Rights Reserved, including the right to copy or reproduce this book, or portions thereof, in any form, without express permission of the author and publisher

**Original Cover Artwork Designed by
Michael Schwab, M & S Graphics & Troy Taylor
Visit M & S Graphics at www.manyhorses.com**

**This Book is Published by
- Whitechapel Productions Press -
A Division of the History & Hauntings Book Co.
515 East Third Street - Alton, Illinois -62002
(618) 465-1086 / 1-888-GHOSTLY
Visit us on the Internet at www.prairieghosts.com**

**First Printing (Second Edition) - March 2001
ISBN: 1-892523-01-9**

Printed in the United States of America

leaving a Pi Fi Rho party one night and had to retrieve something from the Alpha Phi Omega hall. She had been drinking (but later insisted that she was not drunk) before she started climbing the curved staircase. As she reached the middle of the curve of the stairs, she looked up to the top landing and saw a man standing there. He was dressed all in gray and she quickly realized that he was not a security officer. As she peered a little closer into the shadows, she also realized something else... that he had no face! She began screaming and ran back down the staircase and out of the building. Due to the noise of the party, no one heard her though and the revelers wouldn't learn of the strange experience until later.

The triple room that is located on the third floor of Illinois College's Ellis Hall is also rumored to be infested with ghosts. According to reports, no one lives there if they don't have to. Rumor has it that a girl hanged herself in the closet there around 1986 after not getting a bid from a Literary Society. It is said that doors open and close on their own here, appliances and radios turn on and off and that windows have a habit of going up and down under their own power.

There are other places too, but stories from some of these sites are much sketchier. One of them is Fayerweather House, a residence hall for women. It has been said that windows and doors operate on their own here and that lights turn on and off without explanation. Perhaps most strange are the stories of "grave-shaped" depressions that sometimes appear in the dirt floor of the basement. Some have suggested that perhaps the building may have been constructed over a burial ground, but no one really knows for sure.

Another site is Sturtevant Hall, one of the most famous spots on campus. Recent stories say that a ghostly young man in a Civil War era uniform is sometimes seen here. Rammelkamp Chapel allegedly has a haunted basement as well. Some of the students tell stories of classroom doors that open and then slam shut, sometimes in the middle of lectures.

As mentioned already, the events of the past at Illinois College have certainly left their mark on the college of today. Many of these events still come back to "haunt" students and faculty members today and there are many who have encountered these ghosts of yesterday face-to-face.

THE GHOST OF MARY HAWKINS

The most famous school spirit in Central Illinois is undoubtedly the phantom who haunts the women's dorm known as Pemberton Hall at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston. This building has a long and rich history that is filled with tradition... and tales of ghosts.

Pemberton Hall, or "Pem" as it is sometimes referred to by its residents, was the first college building in Illinois to provide housing for women on campus. It may also be the first such building to become haunted. The past decades have provided literally hundreds of tales of strange events, ghostly apparitions, and frightening tales about the dorm. For more than 80 years, women living in the hall claim to have encountered the ghost, or ghosts, here and have reported her playing the piano and scratching on the walls of the building's abandoned fourth floor.

But how did the tale begin? As with every chilling tale, it started with a series of terrifying events. In this case, they took place on a cold winter's night around 1916....

It was a bitterly cold night in January and one of the residents of Pemberton Hall went upstairs to the fourth floor of the building to play the piano. It was very late but the young woman had been unable to sleep. She hoped that some soft music might ease her mind and help her to relax.

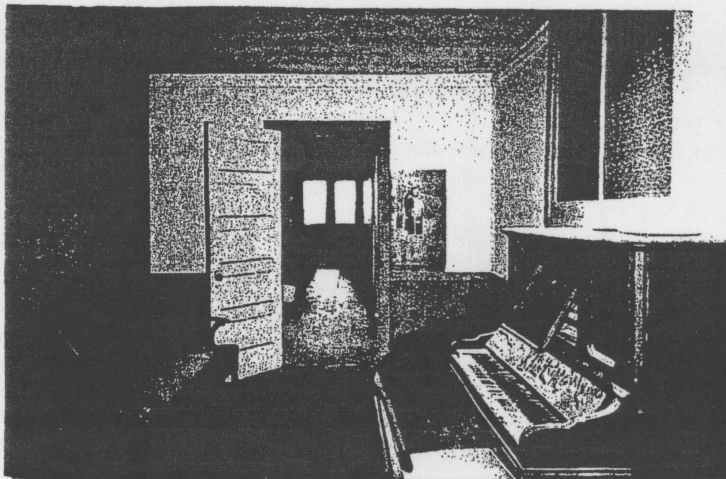
The story goes that a janitor who worked on campus somehow managed to gain access to the women's hall that night. He may have been watching the young women here for some time and may have even slipped into the building on previous occasions. It isn't hard to imagine this deviant sneaking into the women's rooms, perhaps watching them sleep and perhaps imagining the events that would later come. Regardless of what he may have done in the past, on this night, he found one of the girls isolated and alone in the upstairs music room. She was far away from the other girls and with the wind howling outside.... no one would hear her scream.

The janitor cautiously made his way through the dark building to the upper floor. Here, he found

his victim with her back turned to the open doorway, lost in her thoughts and in the simply melody that she played on the piano. Before she realized what was happening, the man was upon her. He grabbed her savagely and pummeled her with his fists. Then, tearing and pulling, he tore away her nightgown and attacked her, raping her, beating her and then leaving her for dead. Soon after, he made his escape and vanished into the cold winter's night.

The young woman, however, was not dead. She managed to drag herself to the stairs, leaving a bloody trail in her wake, and crawled down the steps. She pulled her battered body along the hallways, feebly scratching on doors and trying to awaken someone to help her. Finally, she made it to a counselor's door and managed to rouse her from her sleep. When the counselor came to the door, she found the young woman in a pool of blood, her body bruised, torn and now lifeless.

As the years have passed, residents of Pemberton Hall say they have heard this event from the past repeating itself in the building. They recall the dragging sounds heard near the stairs that lead to the upper floor and the sounds of scratching on doors and walls. Most disconcerting though are the bloody footprints that have appeared in the corridor, only to vanish moments later. Many believe the ghost of the murdered young woman has returned to haunt Pemberton Hall. But if she has, she does not walk in this building alone!



The Legendary piano room on Pemberton Hall's Fourth Floor

The counselor who discovered the murdered girl was named Mary Hawkins. She was a young woman herself, barely older than the ladies she had been hired to assist were. She was a very attractive woman with long, blond hair and a bright disposition that quickly made her a favorite among the residents of Pemberton Hall. However, the effect of the murder on Mary's personality was devastating. She became haunted by the death of the young woman and students spoke of seeing her pacing the hallways at all hours of the night, unable to sleep and tormented by horrible visions and guilt. Finally, unable to cope with her depression, and the nightmares that accompanied it, Mary was institutionalized and later committed suicide.

Shortly after her death, the residents of Pemberton Hall started to report some rather strange occurrences in the building, and these spooky events continue today. They believe the incidents can be explained as the ghost of Mary Hawkins, still making her rounds and checking in on the young women who live in the building. Perhaps her spirit is unable to rest after losing one of the women in her care and she still roams the hall, watching out for them and protecting them from harm. Her ghost is said to glide through the rooms, locking and unlocking doors, turning off radios and televisions and generally keeping track of things that go on here.

For many years, students have spoken of the odd happenings in the building and events that would convince even the most skeptical of residents that perhaps the hall was truly haunted. On many occasions, students that I have spoke with have told me of late night door knocking and inexplicable sounds in the hallways. Once the door is opened to see who might be there, the hallway is discovered to be empty. On other occasions, residents have reported finding that clothing had been removed from their

locked rooms at night and would later find the articles of clothes to be thrown haphazardly up and down the hall. In most instances, the clothing in question would be undergarments or revealing sleep wear. Could Mary have been sending them a message? Perhaps the strait-laced counselor was silently disapproving of what she considered unsuitable attire for young ladies?

And these are recent accounts that I have heard first-hand from some of the former residents... the original stories date back even further than this!

According to one former resident, there was a string of strange incidents in the fall of 1952 when she was living in the dorm. She explained that the girls were being awakened at all hours of the night by banging on the doors and from knocks that seemed to be coming from inside of the walls. No cause was ever determined for the incidents, but most just assumed that it was Mary, trying to make her presence known.

Throughout the 1960's and 1970's, residents reported hearing the sounds of whispers in the building, especially on the fourth floor, and there were a number of reports of apparitions on the stairwell. These figures appeared very briefly and then vanished. One student, who lived in Pemberton Hall in 1976, recalled the problems that the resident advisors had with the furniture in one of the lounges. It seemed that all of the furniture in this room was often found to be overturned or at the very least, rearranged. It would often happen during the overnight hours, but sometimes it happened much faster than that... and was cleaned up instead of moved about! Apparently, an RA walked into the room one morning and discovered the furniture had all been moved around. She went to get some help to straighten the room up again and when she and another resident came back, they found everything had been restored to order! After that, the RA always just left the room the way she found it and yet somehow, it would later be cleaned up again. The students on the floor all denied knowing how this continued to take place.

One former resident of the hall, Patty O'Neill, later came forward and told of an encounter she had with Mary herself in the spring of 1981. She had been up very late one evening, studying in one of the lounges, and came back to her room to go to sleep. Her roommate was already sleeping when she came in and rather than slam the door closed to lock it, she just decided to pull it closed and leave it unlocked for the night. This was a common occurrence as the old door was slightly wider than the frame and the only way to lock it securely was to pull it very hard into place. Besides that, many of the residents knew one another quite well and thought little about leaving doors unlocked at night.

Patty climbed into bed and drifted off to a light sleep. A short time later, she suddenly came awake. She wasn't sure why at first and then realized that her room was freezing! A terrible chill had come over her and she reached for her blankets, then stopped abruptly. She noticed a woman in a long, white gown standing at the end of her bed. The woman stood there for several seconds, then turned and walked toward the door.

"She opened the door and started to leave and then she turned, with one hand on the door, and looked backed at me for several seconds. She then left, closing the door behind her..." Patty later recalled in an interview.

Apparently, Patty's room was not the only one the strange specter had visited that night. As the apparition had departed the room, she had locked the door behind her. Strangely, a number of other students, who distinctly recalled leaving their doors open, also found them to be mysteriously locked the next morning as well. It was as if someone was checking up on them and was worried about their safety. Could it have been Mary Hawkins?

Most students don't actually see Mary, or the other ghosts, but few doubt the spirit exists. Many have had their own odd encounters, even without the benefit of actually seeing anything. My wife, Amy Taylor, is an alumna of Eastern Illinois University and lived in Pemberton Hall for several years. She has recounted many stories about Mary Hawkins and the strange activity here. While she never came face to face with Mary Hawkins, she did have a few disconcerting experiences. One recurring incident involved the lights on the fourth of the building, where the music room is located and where the attack on the young woman took place many years ago. Even though this floor is now locked and off-limits to residents,

many of the students reported seeing the windows open and close and the lights turn on and off. There was never any logical explanation for why this might be taking place.

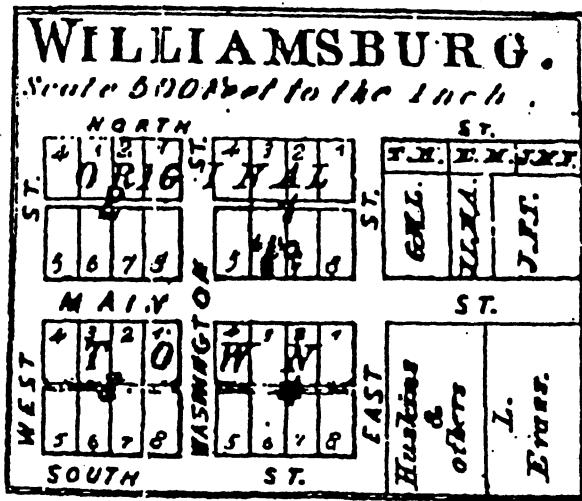
In addition, Amy tells of another unexplained incident that took place one morning after she and a number of other residents left a communal shower room. When they closed the door behind them, they were sure that all of the curtains to the individual showers had been closed. When they entered the hallway, they heard a loud sound like something monstrous was sliding across the floor of the empty room behind them. They ran back in to find that all of the shower curtains were now open and a heavy wooden chair had somehow traveled across the room under its own power. It was now sitting directly in front of the door! No one else had entered or had left the room since Amy and the others had departed.

In recent years, the majority of weird reports have centered on the fourth floor. Even though no one ever goes up there, this has not stopped residents from reporting the sound of footsteps pacing overhead and the strains of faint piano music filtering down from the upper floor. The floor remains darkened and closed off and is empty save for old furniture and the dust of decades. It has been abandoned by students and visitors alike, although there is still a piano stored in the music room. Is this where the music comes from? If so, one has to wonder is the music that comes from it these days is of our world or the next.....?

MYSTERIES OF WILLIAMSBURG HILL

One of the strangest mystery spots in Central Illinois is undoubtedly Williamsburg Hill. It is located in the south central part of the region, near the small communities of Tower Hill and Shelbyville. The hill is not hard to find, for it rises to its highest point at 810 feet, making it the highest elevation in that part of the state. To drive across the hill today, you would see no evidence of the history that is hidden in this remote spot. Williamsburg Hill just seems to rise out of nowhere on the prairie and is covered by a heavy stand of trees.

The village of Williamsburg, which was also called Cold Spring for a time, was laid out in 1839 by Dr. Thomas Williams and William Horsman. It was located on the south side of the large hill and for about 40 years, was a bustling community of about four square blocks. At one time, there were two churches, a doctor's office, a saloon, a post office, a blacksmith shop and a number of modest homes. The Main Street of the community was once part of the "Old Anglin' Road", a stage route that ran from Shelbyville to Vandalia. It was this stage line that brought prosperity to the village for many years. Some say the community died out when the Beardstown, Shawneetown and Southeastern Railroad bypassed the village in 1880. However, others believe that the town was abandoned for much darker reasons, attributed to the strangeness of Williamsburg Hill itself.



An Original Plat Map for the Village of Williamsburg

Today, there is nothing left of the village, save for a few old gravel pits. The land where it once stood has long been plowed under and trees have covered the area where homes once stood. It has become another of Illinois' lost towns although to look back with a critical eye, it's hard to believe a settlement ever existed here anyway. Life would have not have been easy on the hills and ridges of this strange place, although a scattering of people do live here today.