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THE HAUNTINGS OF LEAVENWORTH

October is a month where the days are noticeably much shorter, there begins to be a chill in the air, and everything starts to have that pumpkin spice flavor to it. We often find ourselves drawn to stories of science fiction, supernatural, and horror this time of year far removed from the worldly incarnations of such that we see on the day to day. In the “spirit” of this, we at the ASC History Office wanted to take you on a brief journey to one of the most paranormal places in America. No, we don’t mean the “aliens” hiding in the bunkers of the Tonopah Test Range, or the weather balloons of Roswell, it’s a bit closer to home – Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Fort Leavenworth is known for a multitude of things, ranging from the detention barracks to the Command & General Staff College (CGSC). But it is also well-known for its long-lived occupants and their sometimes-frightened co-inhabitants. One of the oldest military posts, Leavenworth has seen its share of history, lore, and tale enough to fill at least two anthologies of texts. Specifically, among these are the ghost of a young priest known as “Father Fred”, a nurturing nanny-like specter known as “the Lady in Black”, and a distressed mother searching for her children purported to be Catherine Sutler.

The ghost of “Father Fred” is supposedly roaming the attic of the quarters at 632 Thomas Avenue. The grounds were the site of a Catholic rectory in 1875 when a fire claimed the life of the young priest. Timbers that were in good enough condition were repurposed in the building that replaced the rectory. Supposedly, not long after, many began to report strange happenings on the grounds and in the building. This ranged from sewing machines running with no one present to operate them to sharp drops in temperature around the premises. Perhaps, as many writers have said, it is simply the good Father repairing his priestly garb.

The “Lady in Black” is discussed in depth in multiple sources and – at least according to the tale – is the source of the only exorcism to have taken place at Fort Leavenworth. The historian within the author of this article would like to clarify that there are no records of this, and it is unlikely such a thing occurred. Nevertheless, the story of the “Lady in Black” is a profound one. This specter supposedly wanders the residence of 18 Sumner Place, but previously occupied 16 Sumner Place prior to being cast out. She is often cited as having appeared to children, recounting tales of the frontier, or even doing dishes for worn out mothers. Certainly, a helpful ghost befitting of the term “nanny.”

The sad tale of a woman referred to as Catherine Sutler is the source for the hauntings in the Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery. It is here that Catherine is purportedly seen at various times holding a lantern calling out for her children. According to Catherine’s legend, she and her husband weathered at Fort Leavenworth on their way to Oregon. One day the children went out to fetch firewood but did not return. After searching for them for some time, the search was called off. Her husband pressed on to Oregon, but Catherine stayed behind and died later in the winter. Natives of the Meskwaki had found the children and turned them over to the authorities later in the year, but Catherine did not live to learn of this news. Supposedly, she is found wandering the cemetery looking for them still to this day.

There are many other stories that originate at Fort Leavenworth, including stories surrounding Generals Custer, MacArthur, and Sheridan. They also encompass a fireplace where a face is always seen within the embers, a house where there’s always a tea party with no attendees, and a residence where toilets always flush when they’re unoccupied. This doesn’t even begin to talk about some of the more notorious haunts within the Rookery, Root Hall, and the Fitz Lee House. It appears that while Leavenworth may be known as the place one sits in detention for wrong doings, such a stay may also last onward into the afterlife.

Meanwhile, we all know that the real horror of the season is that it is the beginning of the Fiscal Year. Obviously, we mean that we have to do our training again...the horror!

HAPPY
HALLOWEEN

KADENA: A GATEWAY TO MORE THAN THE EAST

There are numerous stories of military posts around the world that come with their own set of haunts. Ranging from some of the ghastly and perplexing in Europe to the “jinn” in the CENTCOM domain, there’s absolutely no shortage of stories to be shared across branches and generations. One of the more notable locations happens to be Kadena Air Force Base on the island of Okinawa. No more than a month or so after a small air field was constructed for the Japanese in 1945, the Americans captured it and almost immediately Seventh Air Force was controlling the field. Since that time, Kadena has become the gateway for U.S. military forces in the Asiatic Theater of Operations and a major logistics hub. However, Kadena holds more than just the worldly brand of force.

Among the stories at Kadena are those of a specter of a samurai warrior who occasionally can be seen haunting building 2283. Accompanying this warrior are bloodstains on carpets and curtains in the single-family home. And who may let you onto the post at Kadena late at night? Why, of course it’s a World War II-era soldier trying to bum a light from passers by at Gate 3. Maybe don’t try to use Gate 3, though—since the Air Force closed it sometime in the 2010s. Probably because its haunted. There are a number of other fantastical “rumors” that circulate Kadena—just like any other military installation—but they’re just rumors.



OCTOBER TRIVIA

1. What was the role of Kadena meant to be during the execution of Operation *DOWNFALL* in World War II?
2. In what year was Fort Leavenworth constructed?
3. What famous African-American unit was formed at Fort Leavenworth in 1866?

LAST MONTH’S ANSWERS

1. Who was identified as the “Angel of the Battlefield” during the battle of Antietam?
Nurse Clara Barton
2. The battle was deadly for General Officers of both sides. How many died as a result of the battle?
6 BG and MGs died. 3 Federal, 3 Confederate.
3. How many times would Harpers Ferry change hands during the Civil War?
14 times.



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