

Mantorville is known as one of the most haunted towns in the Midwest per capita. There is even a book that describes a lot of the findings written by Christopher S. Larsen, titled "Haunted Mantorville: Trailing the Ghosts of Old Minnesota." Some of these stories have been confirmed by the Twin Cities Paranormal Society and After Hours Paranormal Investigations. Some are stories told by the home owners or workers of those buildings.

There have always been ghosts, spirits, presences in Mantorville. Lots of things have happened here over the past 160+ years as Mantorville and Minnesota grew from a bend in the road to the Dodge County seat and home to over 1,200 people. Some say it is the history and the stories that keeps the ghosts here. Some say it is the limestone that built this town that attracts spirits. You will have to decide that yourself

### **1918 Opera House**

Originally built in 1895, the three attached storefronts of this business block, all looked like Memorabilia Antiques. Kundert's Mercantile occupied the space the Opera House is in today. That building was destroyed by fire in the early 1900's. The building was rebuilt in 1917-18 as a movie theater. Since then, the Opera House has been a theater for silent & talkie movies, a basketball gym, a disco (complete with glitter ball on the ceiling) and a polling place on election days. Rumor has it was also a speakeasy during Prohibition.

Kundert's Mercantile was owned by a man named Ben. Ben and two children still seem to be around. During one investigation the children were heard upstairs. A cat was felt rubbing itself against the investigator's feet. The AFPI team has investigated the Opera House just under 40 times. They have numerous audio recordings of a cat meowing during their investigations. In addition, they believe a young girl named Violet, approximately 6-7 years old, haunts the basement, but also moves throughout the building. They believe her to be the daughter of the mercantile owner.

Harold also stays in the basement. The AHPI team had an experience during which one of their investigators was touched on her bottom. She asked, "Harold, did you just touch my butt?" The team reports getting an immediate male voice on their recorder that said, "YEAH".

Ellen prefers the balcony and the area backstage. She is known to move props around and play with the spotlight during plays. TCPS has been a frequent seeker of Ellen's ghost. In the six times they have been here to investigate the Opera House, they have been able to take pictures of a tall female shape in the green room. They also have had problems with their audio equipment until they *asked* Ellen for permission to record her activities. On some recordings they hear a woman, presumed to be Ellen, asking people to come down from the balcony. The AHPI team recorded Ellen saying "Goodbye" in response to an actor's voice. On another investigation, a man clearly answered "No," when investigators asked if he wanted to leave.

Robert, also in the balcony, has strong opinions about music. Actors and Accompanists while playing the piano, will suddenly hear someone else in the building. If they continue to play the noise increases until pianists give up and leave. During an investigation last Christmas, the spirits were extremely

active, winding up toys and playing with lights. One visiting investigator also clearly felt a hand on the back of his neck even though no one was behind him.

Many different things have happened during the years. Ellen has said good bye in response to an investigator's good bye. Doors swing open when there is no draft. Piano music is heard when there is no one at the piano. A fog machine only blowing smoke for a foot rather than filling the stage during a performance.

## **The Restoration House**

This house was built as a private residence circa 1856 and purchased immediately after its construction by Dodge County to serve as the first court house in Dodge County. The Court House, to the North, was started in 1865 and finished in 1871 and the house then returned to being a private residence. In the Restoration house basement is the first jail cell in Dodge County. It is also the only remaining jail cell in the county.

The TCPS has visited this building four times. They had similar experiences on all their visits. In the basement, they noticed the presence of a woman near the laundry tubs. In investigating who this might be, they have come to the conclusion that it is a Mrs. Boggs. Mrs. Boggs was a black woman who escaped slavery in Louisiana in the mid 1800's. She fled with two sons, one quite young the other, one an infant. Somewhere in her journey to Minnesota fatigue overcame her. Unable to carry the baby any further, she abandoned him in a corn field and staggered onward. Even as the distance between them grew she heard him cry. This gave her new strength. She retraced her steps, picked up the baby and continued on with both children. She came to Mantorville, was employed by Dr. Edgerton. She later married his valet, Mr. Boggs.

AHPI has investigated this building nine times. They concur with the belief that Mrs. Boggs seems to be in the basement. In addition, they have encountered what appears to be a prisoner in the jail cell waiting for his trial. They even played poker with him one night!

The AHPI team has also (confirmed that) the front door was locked as they left, only to return and find it unlocked. The same thing has happened with lights in the Restoration House. The house was dark as the team left but lights were on when they returned.

A second presence was *heard* around the old camera that is set up in the upstairs hall. The house was at one time a photographer's studio. TCPS also reports seeing a man watching them from the top of the staircase.

In the upstairs sewing room, the AHPI team caught a very strange photo on their infrared camera. It appears to be a large white mass with a hand hanging down. The hand has three fingers and one thumb. They had paranormal expert, Ben Hansen (from TV shows *Fact or Faked* and *The Ghosts of Morgan City*) take a look at the photo and he was unable to debunk it.

One of the rooms on the second floor has had several experiences suggesting the presence of children. From laughter to seeing small butt impressions on the freshly tidied bed, it is apparent that the children like having people around and watching activity in the side yard from the bed in their room.

Through the years, tour guides have reported strange happenings. They have been locked out of the house, while (strangely) the next person found the door unlocked. They smell food cooking in the kitchen and in the corner of the basement. These volunteers talk of an overwhelming need to leave an area or the building that fades as soon as they do leave. A man who lived in this house as a child recently returned for a tour and related to the tour guide that as a child, he often had experiences he could not

explain and knew that there were times he just needed to be quiet. He stated that he never felt threatened, just knew something or someone was with him.

## **The Log House**

The Log House, behind the Restoration House, was built in the late 1850's as the cooper's house and workshop. The cooper built barrels for the first Mantorville brewery. Two tour guides have reported seeing the shadow of a pinwheel on a wall opposite a window that is on the second floor. They watched the shadow for several minutes before it faded away. It was a quiet afternoon, not many visitors in town, certainly no one tall enough to hold a pinwheel up to the second floor window. Two separate tour guides have also been on the third floor dusting and heard a man say "Hello". When they went downstairs, expecting a tourist, no one was there. As they started up the stairs to the third floor, again they heard "Hello". This bothered them both enough that they refused to ever dust on the third floor again! Another lone person was decorating for a haunted house and suddenly felt a presence so strongly that she could not stay on the second floor of the house.

The AHPI team has investigated this site on 9 occasions. They have heard the sound of children laughing, and caught video of a flashlight rolling across a table, seemingly all by itself. They captured a violin twang on their voice recorder as well. In June 2021 two team members were playing checkers in the upstairs living room when the table suddenly moved under their arms. The team recorded the sound of the table on both audio and video. During this instance, one of the investigators felt a cold presence near her. Was a ghostly presence standing there watching the checker's game and perhaps bumped the table?

The Greek Revival House was investigated in September 2021. AHPI states they found "much activity" in the house. They are still sorting through their findings.

The Carriage House has been studied and paranormal activity was found and a "shadow" was videotaped during their nocturnal investigations.

The Normal School has yet to be investigated.

## **Sources:**

**Haunted Mantorville: Trailing the Ghosts of Old Minnesota**, Christopher S. Larsen.

Text taken from the Haunted House Hay Ride script sponsored by The Mantorville Chamber of Commerce every October. Written by Lynnette Nash. Adapted by MaryLee Lambert.

Paranormal Investigators-In-Residence: **After Hours Paranormal Investigations**

<https://www.afterhoursinvestigations.net>

**Twin Cities Paranormal Investigations** <http://www.tcpsmn.org>