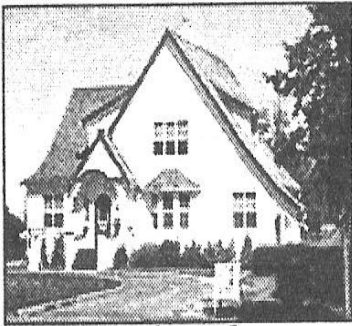


Things That Go Bump In A Canadian Night

by Ronald Wolf



Fort Saskatchewan Museum And Historic Site

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We know that people were hanged in the past for their crimes. At times those who were executed didn't go all too willingly and their spirits may still be roaming the very grounds they had their last few moments on earth. Some spirits may like to play tricks on people while others like to take an evening stroll. Fort Saskatchewan Museum and Historic Site (FSMHS) is one of the jails that have seen some paranormal activities in its time. It was even on Creepy Canada, a Canadian TV show about the paranormal.

The North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) established a fort on the south side of the North Saskatchewan River in 1875. When it was transferred to Edmonton in 1913, however, the old fort was destroyed, and a jail and courthouse went up in its stead. Established in 1958,

the three-acre FSMHS is ideally located at the heart of Fort Saskatchewan, near Legacy and Jarvis Parks and the historic CN Station. At the site there are eight heritage buildings furnished with period pieces that form a picturesque historic village serenely overlooking the North Saskatchewan River and a collection focusing on the Northwest Mounted Police and the settlement era dating back to 1875.

Here are some quick facts on Fort Saskatchewan as researched by Fred Laudenklos, Historian. Between 1916 and 1960, 29 people were hanged at this jail. On execution days, only a few citizens recruited as witnesses, attended the hangings. These witnesses were recruited by the hangman and once chosen, were obligated to attend the hanging. In 1915 the \$200,000 Provincial Jail building was completed. In 1919, a woman's jail was added, and an extension was built in 1921.

This case was featured in Creepy Canada a few years back. Emilio Picariello, 47, and Mary Florence Lassandro (aka/nee Filomena Costanzo and The Mobster Princes), 23, were convicted of murdering Alberta Provincial Police Const. Steve Lawson, 42, in Coleman, Alta., on Sept. 21, 1922. Lawson had recently fired a shot at Picariello's son, Steve, who was a rum-runner. Steve suffered a minor

injury. Picariello and Lassandro heard that Steve had been seriously, perhaps fatally, wounded and went to see Lawson. An argument followed and Lawson was shot in the back as he was returning to his house.

Picariello and Lassandro were hanged on May 2, 1923, at the Fort Saskatchewan Jail. Lassandro was the only woman hanged in Alberta and the fifth woman hanged in Canada. Lassandro claimed she was innocent right up to her execution. Before her execution an appeal went to Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King but her appeals fell on deaf ears.

Years later a mock execution of Lassandro "looked so real that I almost threw up," noted Sandy McArdle, vice-president of the FSMHS.

Years ago, a woman worked in the courthouse. Just across the hall from her was a bathroom and she was the only one in the building. She was typing away and the light switch in the bathroom came on. She went into the bathroom and found the switch turned on so she turned the switch off. It kept reoccurring so an electrician was called and everything checked out fine. There was no reason for the mysterious incident. "She quit because of the ghost in there." According to the Creepy Canada episode, Irene Martina, a clairvoyant and medium entered the courtroom with a pendulum to seek out the spirits there. She discovered a strong thick atmosphere and cold spots near the judge's bench. Later when Martina investigated the Dr.

Henry House she picked up the spirits of two children and his wife. Martina stated that it was this house that had the most spiritual energy in the fort.

Darlene Briere is a volunteer of special events and programs and also of research stated that she experienced strange happenings, voices and noises along with shapes and images of people. One year, there was a Halloween event called Fight Night at the museum's grounds. Briere was taking a stroll on the jail's grounds and a fog rolled in. There were no clouds in the sky. When she took a picture of the fog, an image of a woman appeared in the fog in the picture. "I strongly believe it was the image of Florence," the woman who was executed. Later that evening Briere went to do a second check on the buildings and noted a curtain was moving in one of the rooms. The curtain "crumpled" to the floor. When she lifted the curtain up she witnessed a face, that of a young lady. "We got more than we bargained for when we participated that night," she said.

I would like to add a special thank you to Mallory Garvey, cashier and receptionist at FSMHS, who without her professional assistance this article couldn't be written and to Sandy McArdle for his information on the paranormal events.

<http://www.fortsask.ca/ftsk>

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