

A photograph of a dining room. In the center, a large window with a striped valance looks out onto greenery. A multi-tiered crystal chandelier hangs from the ceiling, casting a warm glow. The walls are covered in dark, patterned wallpaper with a light-colored floral or damask design. A dining table is covered with a white, textured tablecloth and surrounded by dark wood chairs with high, curved backs. A vase of white flowers sits on the table. A white radiator is visible on the left side of the room. The floor is dark wood, and a patterned rug is partially visible under the table.

Ghosts of
Niagara-on-the-

-Lake

Colleen Cone, owner with Rick Jorgensen of Brockamour Manor, a B&B, has many stories to share about Sophia, who was secretly engaged to Isaac Brock until he was killed in battle. Some people see a translucent woman in the dining room, Cone says.

By Andrew Hind and Maria Da Silva Photographed by Mike Davis

IT'S A CHILLED AUTUMN NIGHT. A pale half-moon floats high in the black sky. The wind whispers through the trees, making branches quiver and bend. The town is hushed, strangely silent. It's the perfect evening for ghost hunting, and Niagara-on-the-Lake is the ideal setting.

The inventory of haunted locations in this historic community is unusually long for a town of its size, thanks to a lengthy and often troubled history. This article explores a handful of locations where the afterlife intrudes upon the mortal world. These buildings may seem welcoming during daylight hours, but once the sun dips below the horizon and shadows begin to stalk across the landscape...well, read for yourself. ▶



▲ Brockamour Manor was built in 1809 and renovated in 1840. It is said to continue to be the home of Sophia, Sir Isaac Brock's fiancée.

The Old Courthouse

The Old Courthouse, a national historic site, is a treasured landmark in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Despite the fact its upper floors play host to live theatre that brings joy to so many people, it's a strangely intimidating place. And perhaps for good reason: many believe the building's stone walls entrap a number of lost souls.

Sound preposterous? Ask Ron Dale for his thoughts, bearing in mind that he is one of Canada's most respected experts on the War of 1812 and a former long-time employee of Parks Canada.

"For many years I had my office in this building, and I often felt otherworldly eyes

watching me. I liked it cold, but many times I'd find the room sweltering and would discover the thermostat had turned itself up really high," he explains. "My office used to be that of Judge Edward Clarke Campbell. He was always complaining of the cold in this big, stone building and said it would be the death of him. Ironically, he died of pneumonia in 1860." Dale is convinced Campbell is responsible for turning up the thermostat to a level more of his liking.

Campbell seems to be a benign entity, but there are others in the building who aren't nearly so kindly.

Continued on page 46 ▶



▼ The Old Courthouse on Queen St. The two windows lower left are in the former office of Judge Campbell, said to play tricks with the thermostat.

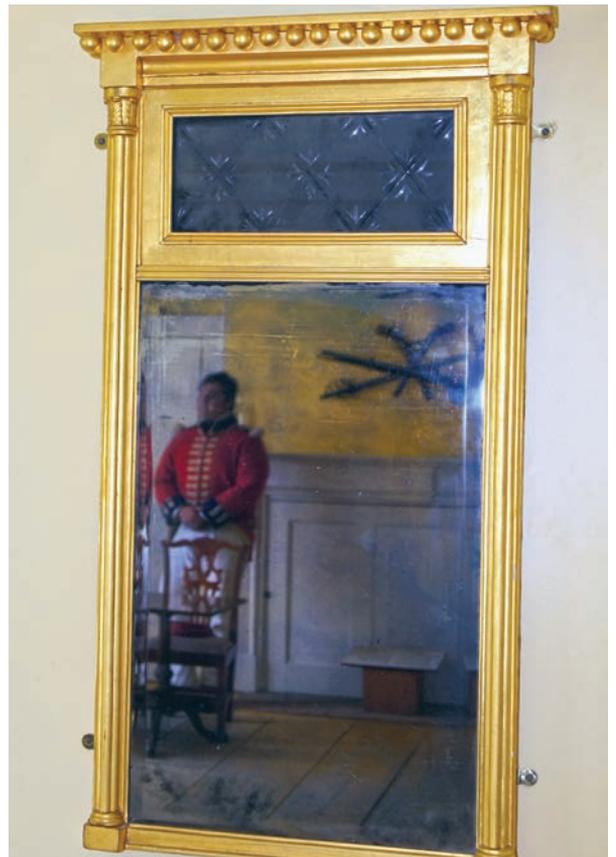


► At the side of the building on Queen St., columns mark the entrance to Shaw Festival's Courthouse Theatre.

▼ One of the bastions protecting Fort George. The ghost of a soldier who froze to death while guarding the wall is sometimes seen pacing.



▼ This old mirror in Fort George's Junior Officers' Quarters is associated with plenty of unusual sightings. Reflected in the mirror is Evan Vatri portraying a batman of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, but is there a glimpse of another figure beside him?



Some, undoubtedly, are individuals whose lives were ruined, perhaps even ended, by verdicts handed down herein.

On the main floor a jail cell has been preserved in its 19th-century state. This tiny room, with its heavy door and thick bars, seems to be a vortex of negative energy. More than one person has seen a sinister face—shallow cheeks, unkempt beard, bloodshot eyes—peering out between the bars and raced from the building in abject terror.

Fort George

No visit to Niagara-on-the-Lake is complete without a tour of the War of 1812-era Fort George. It's a place where

history, often quite literally, comes alive in the form of unquiet spirits that lurk behind the earthen parapets and within the shadows of restored buildings. It seems that almost every one of its buildings has played host to a chilling tale or two.

The Officers' Quarters reveals the elegant lifestyle afforded to even junior officers in the British Army. It's been 150 years since soldiers have lived in Fort George, and yet not all have given up residence. A young officer, perhaps one who died in battle with the balance of life still ahead of him, remains behind and goes about the routines

of his previous life as if unaware that he is being watched by startled onlookers. Sometimes, the bizarre phenomenon experienced here can be quite chilling: voices whispered in the ear, spectral hands shoving from behind, candles mysteriously blown out and flashlights that simply die. It can be quite frightening, and even hardened ghost tour staff have been known to flee in terror.

One of the more tragic tales centres upon a soldier who froze to death while standing guard along the walls one frigid winter's night. It wasn't until the next morning that his body, dusted with newly fallen snow,

was discovered. This soldier remains vigilantly watching over Fort George to this day. He walks back and forth, though he has no legs—they disappear into the earth below. Interestingly, this detail adds credence to the eyewitness stories, as few people realize the earthen floor of the bastion is three feet higher than it would have been in 1812.

And then there's the playful young girl, the nightmarish spectral horse, the grisly blood-splattered apparition of the post surgeon...there's still a garrison at Fort George, just one made up of ethereal figures.

Continued on page 48 ▶

▼ A jail cell from the 19th century has been preserved in the Old Courthouse. Heavy iron bolts and hardware fortify the door.



▼ Inside the jail, a stoutly barred cell secured the prisoner. There are reports of a face seen between the bars.





▲ Ron Dale's former office in the Old Courthouse often mysteriously became too hot. Judge Edward Clarke Campbell, who occupied the office before 1860, declared that the cold of the building would cause his death. Pneumonia took his life.

▼ The mark of a werewolf? Plenty of spirited performances happen in the Courthouse Theatre, but there are no reports of spiritual visitors. It's a different story a couple of floors below, in the Old Courthouse.





◀ The owners of Brockamour Manor sometimes hear footsteps at night going upstairs.

all that they had dreamed of. When she learned her beloved had fallen in battle, Sophia went into a deep and inconsolable mourning. The shock of losing her future husband was an emotional blow that she would never recover from. Sophia died years later, still lonely.

Sophia's mourning is so deep that it extends beyond the grave. Her home had burned down during the war, but a replacement—the current Brockamour Manor—was built upon its foundations and the heartbroken spirit has taken shelter within. And why not? A refined setting with undeniable warmth that one feels on crossing the threshold, there are certainly worse places to spend an eternity.

Over the years, many guests have been awoken at night by the phantom sounds of a woman sobbing. On occasion, the woman, still beautiful after all these years, is spotted wandering the enchanting halls of the inn, crying in despair, still longing for the man she loves.

Continued from page 46 ▶

Brockamour Manor

The war of 1812 left behind many scars. Some wounds are so grievous that time, even death, cannot heal

them. Such is the case with Sobbing Sophia, an eternal guest at Brockamour Manor.

When British hero General Isaac Brock was killed leading a desperate charge at the battle of Queenston Heights on October 13, 1812 he didn't just

create a legend for himself. He also created a ghostly legend for his fiancée, Sophia Shaw.

In peaceful times, Sophia and the young general had fallen deeply in love for one another, but then the war came and dashed



▲ Despite being turned off, lights have stayed on in Brockamour Manor's games room. Sophia seems to be a friendly ghost or spirit, said to like music. When unexpected things start happening, Cone says "Hello, Sophia, I don't have time for this."

Ghost Tours of Niagara-on-the-Lake

After dinner, step out into the crisp, autumn air for a guided ghost walk. You have two options, both promising a few good chills. On the one hand, you may opt for a walk through hushed streets as part of a Ghost Walks of Niagara-on-the-Lake tour. With shadows being kept at bay by the light cast from lanterns held aloft by your costumed guides, you'll hear creepy tales associated with a number of haunted sites.

"Our ghost walks are a unique way to experience places and buildings while enjoying only the darkest of history and spookiest of ghost stories," explains Daniel Cumerlato, who owns Ghost Walks of Niagara-on-the-Lake and is an expert in the area's paranormal history. He can't guarantee you'll see a ghost, but assures you that guests will be introduced to some!

Instead of strolling along empty streets, perhaps you'd rather step through the ominous walls of Fort George and experience its shadowy history more fully with Ghost Tours of Niagara. Tour owner Kyle Upton stresses that darkness takes on a whole new meaning at Fort George after dark, and that the ancient fortification takes on a whole new, eerie atmosphere under lantern light. Soon, you begin to imagine lurking monsters behind every corner or in every rustled leaf. Spectral horses, a door that appears at night but doesn't exist during the light of day, and various shadowy soldiers have all been reported. Watch for the ghostly girl, the fort's most frequently seen spirit; she's innocent, but likes to play pranks on tour members.

**Ghost Walks of
Niagara-on-the-Lake**
www.ghostwalks.com
1-855-844-6787

Ghost Tours of Niagara
www.niagaraghosts.com

*Andrew Hind and Maria Da Silva are freelance writers specializing in history and travel. They are the authors of 17 books, including Ghosts of Niagara-on-the-Lake (Dundurn, 2009). **NEV***