

Haunted

06-27-2016 by Harry Zirkelbach
Stars and Sun date 34465

It sat on a gentle hill, the front door facing west, covered by a large portico allowing modern, luxurious vehicles to be sheltered from rain, wind and sun, while resident, guest, stranger emerged, to be welcomed to this Mansion.

The builder, owner, first occupant, had dwelled and entertained here only the briefest of interval before the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The days following, his wealth vanished; he wondered where, but not for all that long. Before the end of that year, he had seated himself in the Great Chair before the warming fireplace, shot himself. Those who knew said blood covered much of that chair, the carpet and the teak floor. He has been alone. The aftermath was dry when a friend investigated early the next decade.

Shortly, the mansion was emptied of every trace of habitation, including the dried blood, though some of the wooden floor disclosed hint of the millionaire when the setting fall sun peeked through the front windows; disclosed blemishes on the floor.

Whoever inherited this albatross seldom visited, did not maintain the lawn, shrubs, flowers of the former palace. Though weeds did not grow in the driveway, there were no hint of a vehicle using that semi-circular path. The land to the west, a field of wild grasses sloped gently down, then in a half mile met the first homes on Second Street of the township of Marion Hill, the deceased'd family name.

Father bought our first home on Second Street about that time. We were unaware of the tragedy a half-mile east-southeast. As winter had sent in, all adventures were confined to the yard and the unpaved Second Street.

With spring, our family of four mingled with neighbors; they became an extension of our family. By July with vacation from school, long summer eves, we learned all we need to ever know

about the residents of Marion Hill. Few shared our Catholic faith; we were the only children attending school in Saint Joseph's Catholic in New Brighton, two and a half mile away.

In an earlier geological moment, Marion Hill's ridge had been the east side of the Beaver River; Patterson Heights three miles west, the other side. Now the Beaver was 200 feet wide, centered between the two cliffs, hundreds of feet below.

Neighbors had lived here before the Mansion was built. Had known their wealthy neighbor, though the source of his wealth differed with every telling. Recounting tended to make him ten foot tall.

None had been his guest. He had maintained a gulf between himself and the community. Stories differed, converged as legend. He became our mystery. Shortly, we agreed with their consensus; the house, grounds were haunted.

Enticing to my sister and I. We visited the Mansion regularly that summer and later. We peeked in all first floor windows. Nothing; certainly no ghosts. Doors to house and two level garage were tightly sealed. We continued searching for signs of the occupant, every day openly asking questions we could not answer, expecting none.

Then, just before School began in September 1930 we found this note inside the front door glass window.

"LEAVE ME ALONE".

We did, all that winter.

When we next visited June 1931, now ages nine and seven; that note was gone. Nothing.

Until my sister called my attention to the fading 1929 Calendar neither had not noticed, on the wall opposite the door.

The providing advertiser had added this final note, oversize, printed crimson red,

the only four-color not faded,

"THANK YOU".