

June 10, 2006

Haunting

Room 502 is perhaps the most notable location in Waverly Hills and the number has sometimes been adopted symbolically. One story claims that a nurse hanged herself after finding she was pregnant out of wedlock and attempting surgery upon herself to abort the illegitimate child. Another tells a different nurse who jumped from a balcony. However, the SciFi Channel series Ghost Hunters turned up no records or death certificates to confirm the legends, although there is confirmation of the nurse's suicide by hanging and her discovery in official records. Some sources claim there is also confirmation of the second death, but it is currently disputed. Other common sightings in Waverly Hills include the vista of young children running through the halls, as the hospital had a large number of children and families housed there.

Apparitions & Other Strange Events

The most common experience of visitors seems to be "moving shadows" or "shadow people". These are shadows that appear to have some substance - able to "walk" across doorways and, demonstrated in the Sci-Fi Channel special "Spooked", able to block some light when a laser is pointed at them. There are many reports of these shadows both inside and outside the building.

Glowing Orbs (nicknamed "Soul Orbs" by some) have also been photographed there. These small balls of light appear almost like light bulbs or specks of dust when captured on film, but there has been no electric power to the building in years. They are often reported to fly around corridors and spawn other orbs.

Some photos show indistinct "brown imps" outside the grounds too, but these humanoid shapes are a less common sighting. The existing photographic evidence of the imps is dubious to say the least.

There have been many Electronic_voice_phenomenon recordings made in the building and grounds. Varying from the more common "Get out" or "Go away" to more specific statements like "What kind of hospital is this?" and "The winch" (referring to the winch that powered the Death Tunnel's body cart, and recorded in that area). The makers of the movie Death Tunnel (and the documentary "Spooked") recorded many such voices and sounds while filming.

Ghosts

Often a boy bouncing a ball is seen and at least one small, old, leather ball has been found in the building. Investigators once found a ball rolling towards them, and it being moved by an unseen force. Electronic_voice_phenomenon recordings feature a child saying "I am three". There have been numerous sightings and recordings of small children.

Another notable vision is the sight of a woman - reports vary as to the age and appearance - bearing chains around bloodied wrists chanting or screaming "Help me!" at the entrance of the building.

The most common apparition though is of a young girl with no eyes which has appeared on photos and been encountered by witnesses. This girl is called "Mary" by staff and researchers, based on a recovered photo of a young woman that was recovered and was signed "Love, Mary Lee". However, the girl in the photo is older than most reports of the ghosts perceived age. Mary is the most conversational of the ghosts and has spoken to many people, usually wanting to play games with them.

Other Features

Also of note is the "death tunnel" or "body chute" which was first constructed to move supplies to the building during the cold winters. Because of the increasing number of dailies deaths from the horrible disease, the staff also transported dead bodies in the tunnel to the bottom of the hill on which the sanatorium was built. They believed this would help keep up the morale of the patients by not allowing them to see the hearses picking up the deceased. At the height of epidemic, as many as seven to ten deaths each day. At one point in time, it was reported that as many as three per hour died there, but there is no independent confirmation of that figure.

Estimates vary wildly of how many died at Waverly, though the owners of the building say that it was around 63,000. This estimate would be consistent with other TB hospitals, considering Waverly's size.

DEATH TUNNEL

The Death Tunnel! This tunnel has to be the most famous tunnel up at Waverly Hills. It has been a major subject of discussion among people who have been to visit Waverly on tours during October. For some reason...this tunnel has come to be called "the body chute." Actually however, this is an incorrect term...because a chute is a slide. Bodies of deceased patients were never slid down this tunnel and piled up at the bottom in heaps - a popular misconception that a lot of people have come to have about this tunnel.

In reality, this tunnel was originally a supply tunnel and was also a good way for employees to get up and down the hill during the winter time and keep warm at the same time. Transporting the bodies of deceased tuberculosis patients was only ONE of the uses of the tunnel. During the peak years of tuberculosis there were a lot of deaths at the sanatorium, and the staff realized that it would be very discouraging for patients to look out the windows and see hearses pulling up and taking away people who had died. Try to imagine yourself being administered to the sanatorium with a diagnosis of having TB. It is the late 1920's, and antibiotics have not been invented yet. So, you realize that you have a chance to get cured and live, but...you could die too if the treatments they gave you didn't work well enough. Now, imagine how discouraged you would feel if you looked out from your assigned room, and when you pull the curtains back...you see people who have died being picked up with a hearse. And to make matters worse...you see that perhaps many times throughout a day. It would be so emotionally depressing to you that you might give up the fight to live. Thenyour body's defenses dwindle. It is a known fact that if a person gets very depressed emotionally....it can affect their body's defense system to the point that it may not fight off a disease as well as if the person is in good spirits. So, that is the reason why the staff at Waverly would sneak the bodies down through this tunnel!

Taps Ron Milione

Review of Waverly Hills

June 25, 2006

Part II

Some more details here.....

* For WHS, a switch has been constructed from the Illinois Central Railroad nearby to supply the new powerhouse with 75 carloads of fuel (coal) that are needed annually and the hospital with supplies sent by freight. (Taken from an unknown 1926 article.)

* In the beginning, a small group of buildings were erected on the hill under the name "Waverly Hill Tuberculosis Hospital". (Louisville Herald, Sept. 8, 1929)

* The main building is a modern four (5 if you count the station on the roof)-story structure. It was built of stone and is fireproof throughout (Louisville Herald, May 11, 1930)

* Estimated cost of the African American Hospital is \$212,000 and the children's unit was estimated to cost \$153,000. The Laundry building estimated cost was \$10,000, a Power House at \$50,000 and 14 fire hydrants at \$30,500. (Courier Journal, Aug. 9, 1930)

The 1931 budget for operation of the sanatorium asked \$402,562.07 from the city and \$204,750 from the county. Totaling \$607,312.07.

This covers an estimated deficit to Dec. 31 of \$107,000, the sum of \$25,000 for incidental expenses and \$474,000 for actual operation. (Courier Journal, Aug. 9, 1930)

Main Sanatorium (1926)

Minor Surgery:

- Artificial Pneumothorax

Major Surgery:

- Thoracoplasty
- Pleurectomy
- Lobectomy
- Pneumonectomy
- Phrenicotomy (Phrenic Nerve Crush)

Morgue:

- The morgue on the first floor was used for autopsies. The majority of the dead were processed through the body chute to the receiving building off the hill.

Kitchen, Bakery, & the Dining Room:

- The kitchen has the capacity and equipment of which can easily take care of 500 people w/ a ventilation system that can completely change the air tempature every 3 minutes.
- The average consumption in one meal was 140 pounds of bacon, 100 dozen eggs, 30 pounds of cottage cheese, 30 gallons of ice cream, 9 gallons of syrup, and 190 pounds of liver. In 1 year, in addition to container milk, 1,147 barrels of bulk milk, 13 tons of sugar, 6 tons of butter, and 52,276 pounds of ground beef.
- The main dining room capacity in which 328 employees and, or patients can be seated at one sitting. The room could be expanded to seat 448 people at once. An average of 2,100 meals served daily.

Patient Areas:

- Each bed is equipped with headphone connections for listening to the radio.
- Single & double rooms were available for patient use.

Theater:

- Motion Pictures
- Plays provided by local drama clubs

Library:

-Variety of donated & bought books, magazines, newspapers for the patients entertainment.

Workshop (Not in main sanatorium) / Occupational Therapy Department:

-Patients who are able to work without injury to themselves are taught rug weaving, toy making, wood carving and basket making, copper hammering, leather cutting, and the girls are instructed in needlework and fancy embroidery. The workshop for men produces furniture and other things of interest to them.

-The articles made in the department are sold by the woman's board of the hospital and the funds are devoted to the hospital.

School & Other Children's Activities

-The children spend about 4.5 hours a day in school each day.

-The children have outdoor swings, see-saws

Structure Details.....

1st Floor:

- * Lobby
- * Solarium & patient rooms
- * Offices
- * Medical labs
- * X-ray & dark room
- * One nurse's station
- * Salon / Barber Shop
- * Dentist
- * North wing contained access to the beginning of what is now known as the body chute.
- * Library
- * Breaker & transformer rooms
- * Cold rooms for meat & other food storage
- * Old electric / stone / water potato peeler is still present on this floor. (It's not a meat grinder as many believe it to be.)
- * Small morgue

* Maintenance offices

-Maintenance fact... the main maintenance office has a light indication system that would let workers know if a cooler or transformer went out and needed repair.

2nd Floor:

* North wing contained the kitchen. The kitchen had the capacity and equipment to easily take care of 500 people, with a ventilation system that could completely change the air temperature every 3 minutes.

* North wing also contained the Bakery & the dining rooms. The main dining room had the capacity to seat 328 employees and/or patients at one sitting. The room could be expanded to seat 448 people.

(An average of 2,100 meals served daily.)

* One minor surgery / Treatment Room

* Solarium & patient rooms

* One kitchenette

* One dinette

* Chapel

* Two nurses stations

3rd Floor:

* One minor surgery / Treatment Room

* Solarium & patient rooms

* One kitchenette

* One dinette

* Two nurses stations

* Occupational therapy (Shown on a video made about TB)

4th Floor:

* Major surgery

* Recovery rooms

* Waiting room

* One minor surgery / Treatment Room

* Solarium & patient rooms

* One kitchenette

* One dinette

* Two nurses stations

5th Floor:

* The 5th floor was reserved for the heliotherapy department, where those suffering from TB of the bone were treated with sunlight. (1926)

* Access to elevator maintenance was in what is now known as the "Belltower".

* Children had a roof top swing set.

* One nurses station

* One kitchenette

Basement:

* Crawl spaces for pipe maintenance

* Elevator maintenance

* Access for laundry building

* Unidentified room contains a fire door with fans in the windows to circulate the air. Also in this room are low lying tables that line each wall.

More to come – Stay Tuned!