The Legend of O'Club Hollow

Fact or Fiction?

Story by Maj. Dawn Dancer Research my Master Sgt. Miner Roth

It was late afternoon on a dark, dreary October day. Merry Meredith was closing up the Camp Grayling Officer's Club for another season. The wooden floors creaked beneath her footsteps as she moved from one room to another preparing the historic building for its winter solace.

Merry worked alone but she was familiar with the annual routine and already had all the outside windows shut and locked. With the late autumn chill setting in, the welcoming screened front doors, normally propped open to encourage guests, were also shut tight. So too were the large wooden exterior doors. Merry had the entire perimeter sealed like a tomb.

Inside, Merry spent much of her time putting away all the items the O'Club's many visitors had moved here and there. She stacked chairs, returned books to their shelves, and removed a stray plastic cup pinched between a seat cushion and the wicker chair frame that held it in place. Knowing the O'Club's clientele, she didn't think twice about how it got there or why. But when her office door suddenly slammed shut, she paused.

She looked backwards, her eyes moving up and down the antique stained walls that held the smiling pictures of current and previous Michigan Army National Guard general officers. As her head turned, she paused, her gaze at the shut office door, puzzled. It had been open just a moment before when she answered the phone. 'Had someone come inside without her notice?' she wondered.

Earlier that summer, 27-year-old Capt. Corissa Barton had stood near the same wicker chair that held the stray cup. She was a temporary tenant of the old building, staying in one of the bachelor quarters upstairs during her annual training period. Late one evening she had found her way to the bookshelves in an effort to relieve her insomnia. As she searched the dusty books, she felt the presence of the portrait hanging above the bookshelves. From

Photo illustration by 1st Lt. Mandy Sullivan

the corner of her eye, she peered at the portrait of the man she knew as Rasmus Hanson.

Rasmus Hanson is well known around Grayling for donating the original plot of Camp Grayling's land, used today for training the men and women of the Michigan National Guard. Barton tilted her head to get a better look at the man. He wasn't smiling but he didn't look mean either. Mischievous, she thought. The tarnished plaque beneath his face stated the O'Club had been established in 1917. As she returned her attention to the bookshelves, she wondered if the books were that old too. As she shifted her weight the old wooden floor creaked. She thought nothing of it until it creaked again, this time without the help of her body's movement.

"Strange," she thought. She pressed down on her knee to make the floor creak again, as if to remind her the creaking was natural. As the floor voiced its opinion, the wicker chair added its "two-cent's worth" and moved ever so slightly. Barton looked up again at the portrait. "Rasmus!" she thought. She grabbed a Bible jammed between the paperbacks within the bookcase. She didn't figure she would necessarily read it but she thought its presence in her room couldn't hurt.

As Merry blinked at the closed door she thought about the stories she had heard over the years about the supposed haunted structure. They could all be easily explained as coincidence she reasoned, adding a faint smile and eye roll to her gestures as if to emphasize her disbelief in ghosts.

Merry recalled another guest, Vicky, who complained someone was trying to get upstairs but instead fell down the steps and ran into the nearby pool table. "It was like they were pushed," said Vicky. "Show me one night when the bar is open that someone doesn't do that?!" Merry exclaimed. "Fine," said Vicky, "but the bar was closed and I am your only tenant."

"Everything is closed-up now," Merry thought. "There's no possible way that office door closed by itself." "Pam, are you here?" It was Pam Deline's day off but Merry thought maybe she came by to help. No answer. "Rasmus?"

Pam Deline has also worked at the O'Club for years and is very familiar with the haunted tales. She says when she's working at the O'Club she often sees someone or something moving out of the corner of her eye but when she turns to look, nothing is there.

Another employee, Aaron, was closing up late one evening. He walked from the bar area across the creaky wood floors to the front doors. He peered out into the parking lot to ensure everyone was gone. Empty. He pulled closed the large wooden French doors and twisted the lock. "Ring!" Startled, Aaron twirled around to face the office door where the old push-button doorbell was installed. No one was there. Aaron figured maybe he shouldn't be either and quickly departed.

Merry decided she needed to get back to work. She returned the last book to the empty slot in the bookcase. It was a Bible. "Oh it's nice to see someone reading this...or perhaps they used it for a coaster?"

Barton pushed the wicker chair out of her path and carried the Bible to her room. She laid it on the desk next to her bed and crawled under the cool sheet. She had no sooner drifted asleep when the alarm rang. "Already?!" She found her shower shoes and flip-flopped across the hall. She passed the seating area and saw the Bible lying open the couch. "How? . . ." She walked back to her room to survey the desk. Half eaten bags of Doritos, an empty bottle of water, a crumpled pocket-sized safety guide required to be carried while at A.T., a toothbrush –"Ooh, I'll need that"—and a pile of dollar coins left over from the Laundromat. But no Bible. She heard her neighbor's door unlock. "Damn-it Stein* -- I'm showering first today!"

Merry bent over to fluff the seat cushion. "The Portrait" loomed from the corner of her eye. She stood up and walked towards the picture.

"Rasmus, what do you think? Is it time for me to go home for the evening? I really should finish up here." Merry listened for a sign, a creak, a ring or a slight breeze. Nothing. "Come on Mr. Hanson, work with me!" She turned away from the portrait and walked to her office. She grabbed the door knob and started to twist it open. It was then when the light bulb in the phone booth behind her decided to burn out.

"That can't be coincidence," she smiled. She snatched her purse from the desk drawer and was gone.

*"Stein" refers to Capt. Allison Stein, the state's Overseas Deployment Training manager and also a tenant of the O'Club during Annual Training. According to Stein, the O'Club is not haunted; however, others argue there may be a credibility issue with her expert opinion. This group reports that the O'Club floors don't creak when Stein walks across them.