



Contributed by  
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## Hauntings on the Hill: A spirited campus

I had always heard about ghostly encounters on the Nichols College campus, but a phone call I received one night a number of years ago led me to start collecting them.

"Have you heard anything about... ghosts in Budleigh?" the caller asked. "I was shaving in one of the bathrooms and when I looked up there was a face looking over my shoulder! But, when I turned around, there was no one! It really, really spooked me! [no pun intended]. I even called my Mom!"

I discovered that many incidences seemed to have occurred in the older buildings on campus, such as Academy Hall, Conant Hall, the Guest House, and Budleigh Hall. Here are a few stories.

### Academy Hall

"Cold spots" have been reported, as well as sudden breezes in rooms with closed windows and doors. Lights have gone on after being turned off. Chairs have shifted, and typewriters have turned on by themselves. A college-aged man with "old-style clothes" has



been seen staring and then walking into a bathroom. Another time, a staff member in a women's room saw a pair of small feet wearing patent leather shoes in the next stall. When exiting, she expected to see a little girl, only to discover she was alone. Another story claims a "young spirit" named "Rebecca" was not allowed to attend school, so now she comes to sit in on classes. And, a member of the cleaning staff had seen a "pale woman in black, visible only from the waist up" floating down the stairs late at night. He was so frightened he refused to go back into the building. Two weeks later, a second person witnessed the same specter.

### Conant Hall



Built in the 1880s, Conant Hall is one of the oldest buildings on campus (only the Guest House is older). Originally built as housing for students and a summer hotel, it was renovated in the 1930s with three floors for student rooms and a game room in the basement with a dart board and pool table. In later years, the building was used for faculty offices, but the

basement remained abandoned because of poor light and no heat. Late one night, teachers working on the first floor heard someone playing pool, balls being struck and rolling around on the pool table. This went on for a while and when they went down to look, the light was off and the room empty. Under the dim light, they saw the floor and pool table covered with a thick, undisturbed layer of dust. At that point, they also remembered that there hadn't been any pool sticks or balls down there for years.

### Guest House



All by itself, an alarm clock mysteriously flies across a room. Footsteps and angry voices are heard even though only one guest visitor is in the house.



### Budleigh Hall

A disembodied face is seen in a mirror. Doors slam. Running feet are heard. Faucets turn on by themselves. Convinced a friendly ghost is sharing her apartment, an RA names "him" Henry and soon students are doing the same. All seems fine until a mother, who happens to be a medium, is helping her son move in and reports that someone is screaming at her "My name is George, not Henry!" Ever since, the "ghost" in Budleigh has been referred to as George.

Campus hauntings are nothing new. Some ghost stories are meant to entertain, some to be cautionary tales. According to Elizabeth Tucker, folklorist and author of "Haunted Halls: Ghostlore of American College Campuses," "Campus ghost stories have distinctive patterns, because they are told by young people who are going through a big transition in their lives: the liminal stage between adolescence and adulthood. Campus ghosts reflect both the issues and stresses that come up at college and movement toward adulthood, an exciting but relatively unfamiliar stage of life."

Patterns she has noticed: sightings/encounters usually occur in older buildings; first-year students are often involved; attics and basements are often involved; and "campuses with lively ghosts usually have strong cohesion." School spirits reflect school spirit.

## Ghost Encounters

### Haunted house?

Between 1939 and 2004, presidents of Nichols College lived in a house just down the road from campus. A former president once said it was not unusual for lights to turn on and off, for locked doors to become unlocked, and for the heat to unexpectedly come on because a thermostat had been mysteriously moved higher. Everyone in the family vehemently denied having anything to do with any of this. Guests would report hearing footsteps, the sound of a woman's heels, on the floor above when, in fact, no one was there and, moreover, all the rooms above were carpeted wall-to-wall. One night, while watching television, a commercial for the singer, Norah Jones, came on. The television sound grew louder and louder, yet the remote was out of reach on a table. Residents thought the house was haunted by the wife of a previous college president who had died there. Her name was Eleanor, but everyone called her "Nora."

### Protecting our turf?

At 10 o'clock one summer night, a student and his girlfriend were taking a run/walk around the track surrounding the football field, most of which was lit except for a dark section by a wooded area. They ran then walked for about an hour and their conversation fell to Nichols College football. They discussed the disappointing records of the team over the past several years and may have made a joke or two about it. About that time, the student thought he heard footsteps behind him, but his girlfriend had not. A little later,

she suddenly screamed as they both saw a tall dark figure walking toward them from the unlit section. They sprinted up the hill and straight to Public Safety who involved the police. Their investigation turned up nothing. That night, they heard "touching" at their door, and woke to find red track scuffmarks on it. The next day, the student returned to the track and remembered, "... we were absolutely fine until we started making fun of the football team," he says. "So is this a 'ghost' experience? I have no idea. All I know is that it was absolutely terrifying. Gut wrenching, run-for-your-life terror. I have never been so scared in my life." Maybe a former coach or player was protecting his Bison turf.

Perhaps you experienced a strange encounter on the Hill or heard about something that happened to others during your time at Nichols. If you would care to share your story, I would love to hear it!

Please send your comments to me at [jim.douglas@nichols.edu](mailto:jim.douglas@nichols.edu) or to my attention at Conant Library, 127 Center Road, Dudley, MA 01571.