

Spirits of St. Michael's: Ghost Stories from Hospital Staff

Teruko Kishibe & Christine Neilson
Scotiabank Health Sciences Library

St. Michael's

Inspired Care.
Inspiring Science.

Purpose

To investigate and raise awareness of the ghosts that haunt St. Michael's Hospital.

Background

A Brief History of St. Michael's Hospital

St. Michael's Hospital is one of Toronto's oldest health care facilities. The Hospital, along with the St. Michael's Hospital School of Nursing, was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1892. When it opened, St. Michael's had a bed capacity of 26, and a staff of six doctors and four nurses. From these humble beginnings, the Hospital has grown - tearing down and adding new wings - though parts of the early hospital still stand today. The oldest include the 1912 façade near Bond and Shuter Streets, and the 1936 Bond lobby.

The Nature of Ghosts

People have encountered ghosts throughout history. Ghosts are generally believed to be spirits of people or animals who have died. Ghosts may appear as translucent shapes or figures, or may be mistaken for living people. In some cases they cannot be seen but they may be heard, smelled, or felt. They may also manipulate objects. For example, moving items or turning machines on or off.

There are various theories regarding why ghosts exist. These spirits may be present because of:

- ❑ A particularly strong tie to a location, object, or person
- ❑ Unfinished business may prevent them from moving on to the afterlife
- ❑ A ghost may be "stuck" between this world and the next as punishment for their actions taken in life
- ❑ They may return with messages for the living

Methods

A call for personal experiences with ghosts at St. Michael's was circulated in our newsletter, *The Daily Dose*. Stories were collected in person, via e-mail and over the telephone. We also researched St. Michael's ghost stories on the Internet.

Conclusions

Draw your own conclusions!



Acknowledgements

'Thank You' to everyone who shared their St. Michael's ghost stories with us!

Other Sources Consulted:

"Ghost" Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost>

"St. Michael's Hospital" *The Toronto & Ontario Ghosts & Hauntings Research Society* [website]
<http://www.torontoghosts.org/index.php?/2008081472/The-Former-City-Of-Toronto-Public-Buildings/St.-Michael-s-Hospital.html>

Results

4-Shuter, 1999 - Anonymous

A staff member from the IT department was working alone one Saturday, replacing a computer in the Medical Media Centre. At that time most of the wing was padlocked and mothballed (it was previously an ICU for many years), so he knew that he was alone. As he was leaving, he realized that he had left something behind so he went back to where he had been working. As the employee started to pick up the forgotten item, he heard papers rustling loudly behind him. He turned to see what the noise was and, as he did, something walked through him; it gave him huge goose pimples and sucked the breath out of him. The experience gave the employee a scare and he left as fast as he could. Afterwards, the employee was talking to a member of the cleaning staff who relayed a similar experience; one day she was watering a plant in that office when it began to move and shake vigorously. Prior to this experience the employee had no opinion of whether ghosts and spirits exist, but now he is convinced. He has never gone back to that area of the hospital by himself again.

7-Cardinal Carter, since 1965 - Various

Perhaps St. Michael's most well-known ghost is Sister Vincenza, who worked at the Hospital for 28 years as Nursing Supervisor of Obstetrics. She had a reputation for being intimidating, but also for caring deeply about her patients. She passed away in 1958.

Beginning in 1965, Sister Vinnie has been "seen" by numerous St. Michael's staff and patients. She is known to place blankets on new moms, rearrange medication carts, and turn lights on and off.

She is usually seen faceless, dressed all in white.

7-CC is the location of the old Maternity Ward.

8-Bond, c2009 - Zana

Approximately five years ago, I was working late with my colleague. At around 10 p.m. I took a washroom break. The washroom is located at the end of the hall. In addition, the floor I work on used to be inhabited by nuns. When I was in the washroom I heard a voice calling my name more than once. I assumed it was my colleague so I responded, "hold on". When I returned to my office, I asked my colleague why she called me; she turned to me and said she never had called me.



4-Cardinal Carter, c2010 - Thelma, Devin

This happened a few years ago in MSICU. We were expecting an admission and, in the process of preparing the bed, got the cardiac monitor to go on standby mode. No sooner than this was done, the sounds of a heart beat emanated from it, audible for all working around to hear. This spooked the RN enough to change the spot. I suspected that the monitor had some sort of recording device installed in it, and assumed that the sounds were a result of it malfunctioning. However, I discovered that I was wrong when I bumped into Engineering one evening when they came in to fix another monitor. I was told that one should not hear the sounds of a heart rhythm unless the monitor is hooked up to a patient or a simulator.

The second story came from a young patient who had a language barrier. At the end of the visit by his brother, who spoke English, it was requested that the patient be given a sleeping pill - as the patient was being kept awake by a lady in a red dress.

About three years ago on an overnight shift, working as a porter, I took a break in the 4CC MSICU/CVICU waiting room. I had just finished a morgue call by myself and couldn't help but reminisce about a ghost story that a friend had recounted to me earlier in the week. I was a little freaked out and wanted to calm myself down. So I turned on the television to take my mind elsewhere. Alone in the room, all the doors shut and lights off except for the TV, I took a seat to relax. Within moments the kitchen sink was on full blast and I froze. There was nobody else in there who could have turned it on. I couldn't move for awhile and was just in shock until I calmed myself down. About ten minutes later I finally was able to get up and remove myself from the room. I turned off the TV and on my way out physically turned off the tap, which was on full blast that whole time. I forget which temperature it was, hot or cold, but that was my one eerie experience working at the hospital. When I think about it today, I feel that was someone telling me not to be scared, as those thoughts about ghosts were fresh on my mind. Someone or something at St. Michael's was looking out for me.

4-Bond, Present Day - Rosemary

There is a gym on 4-Bond, Room 57, that nobody uses. The call bell goes off all the time without reason. They have tried calling Engineering to fix it, but no one can figure out what would cause it...besides ghosts!

The elevators on 4-Bond opposite the nursing station ride themselves during the night.

1B-Bond, Present Day - Anonymous

In the Fracture Clinic, an older male ghost laughs and turns computers on and off (possibly Joe, a morgue attendant who died on the job).

1-Queen, Present Day - Anonymous

A male ghost wanders the back filing room of Health Records.

