

Don't go to Rugby if you are afraid of ghosts! – part 2

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on October 29, 2014)

My good friend Fred Eiler brings you the second and final part of this Historically Speaking story of our utopian neighbor community to the north, historic Rugby. Part 1 was published in Monday's edition.

Enjoy Fred's Rugby story.

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Newbury House according to Barbara Stagg in "Historic Rugby," was built by Otis Brown, from Boston, in the mid-1880's and was called Brown House. It served as a boarding house before Tabard Inn was completed.

Later renamed Newbury House, it was run by James Milmow, Louise Dyer, and C. A. Clark. Then it was purchased by Nelson Kellogg in the late 1880's. It continued to receive boarders until at least 1920, and perhaps later.

It was acquired by Historic Rugby in 1985, restored and furnished with period pieces, with some coming from Rugby. And like the Tabard, Newbury House now receives overnight guests year round, if you would like a chance to encounter a ghost personally. Several guests have reported awaking in the middle of the night to discover the apparition of a man standing near their bed.

Two of the rooms of this haunted...I mean charming... bed and breakfast seem to be particularly favored. Just ask the management if you would like to experience the supernatural, or likewise if you would prefer to avoid it.

According to Coleman, the ghost of Newbury House is traced back to an inspector named Mr. Oldfield, who was sent to the fledgling colony in the early 1880's by the Board of Directors in England to report on its progress. Having quickly fallen in love with the rural community, he sent word to England, telling his wife and son to join him in the earthly paradise.

Mail didn't travel quickly in those days, and people traveled at the same speed. Mr. Oldfield died the night before the long-anticipated arrival of his son. Some say his spirit still wanders Newbury House, awaiting the arrival of his son.

But others insist that the spirit is none other than the bloody murderer of the second Tabard Inn, Mr. Davis. They believe that he came with some of the furniture of room 13 that was saved from the fire and made its way to Newbury House.

Another Rugby spirit is associated with its very founder, Thomas Hughes himself. Hughes had a house constructed for himself at Rugby, which he called Kingston Lisle. Although the financial reverses associated with the failed colony prevented him from retiring there, as he had planned, he was an occasional visitor.

Although no one is thought to have died in the house, visitors have reported hearing the sound of someone snoring in the upstairs bedrooms. Usually in the morning, but also occasionally in the quiet of afternoon tea time, the not so terrifying sound has been reported. Some have also reported having seen the bed linens disturbed when no one had been there.

Yet another ghost is associated with Roslyn. According to Barbara Stagg's "Historic Rugby," Roslyn was built in 1886 by Montgomerie Boyle, who rented it to Mrs. Richard Tyson of Baltimore, who brought her marriageable-age son, Jesse, and daughter, Sophia, to Rugby.

The many parties and dances she hosted are fondly remembered in the letters of Emily Hughes, Thomas Hughes' niece, who accompanied his mother and were permanent residents of Rugby. Mrs. Tyson named the house Roslyn, after her ancestral home in Scotland.

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At that time, the house had a circular drive in front and elaborate gardens around the house. Her son Jesse was reported to race a carriage pulled by a team of four horses from the house to nearby Sedgemoor, where the road met the Cincinnati Southern Railway. Several visitors had reported hearing and some had even seen, this carriage and team racing along the road, and sometimes disappearing into the nearby woods.

Recent archeological studies have determined that a road, then called High Street, had existed on that very route. Roslyn was occupied by Barbara Stagg's brother, Brian, for a time. As a teenager, he was instrumental in forming the Rugby Restoration Association in 1966.

As Coleman tells the story, soon after moving into the house, Brian became aware of a supernatural presence. Small happenings, a door locking itself, footsteps in the hall, soon turned into a real apparition: a lady dressed in Victorian clothes pacing the halls and sobbing.

Sarah Bonner, an independent observer, confirmed the sighting and the two were able to identify the apparition from historical photographs. She was none other than Mrs. Tyson's daughter, Sophia.

Although no deaths were associated with the house's history, Brian's untimely death in 1976 will always be associated with his stay there. And his spirit most certainly lives on in Rugby through his efforts to save this precious jewel in the history and culture of this region.

For those who do not believe in ghosts, Rugby has at least one resident witch. Twin Oaks, originally called the Mansion House by Rugby residents, was one of the largest homes built there.

It was built by Beriah Riddell from Kentucky. Barbara Stagg, in "Historic Rugby," adds that "he showed up in the Rugby newspapers, carrying out all types of building projects for other colonists."

He and his wife Mary gave elaborate parties at Twin Oaks, sometimes featuring hired bands. Twin Oaks took its name from the two huge black oak trees that graced the entrance. Coleman, in *Strange Tales...*, relates how the Riddell family employed a local washerwoman named Matilda, who was considered a "wisewoman."

Although in Puritan New England such a woman might have been burned at the stake, in the rural South her skills were sought out by nearly everyone. Their knowledge of herbs, ability to bind wounds and remove hexes made them invaluable in frontier communities, not to mention their role as midwives.

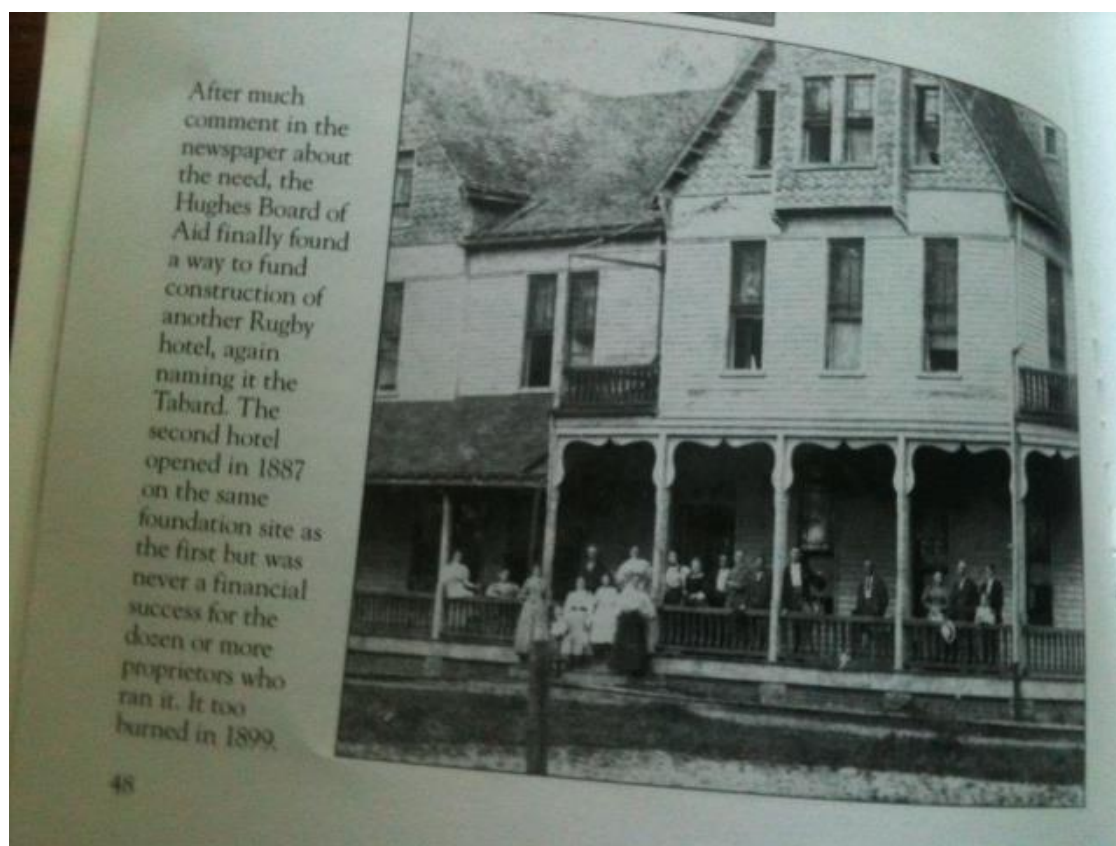
She was never known to cast evil spells, yet, Matilda was known to be in contact with the many spirits that inhabited Rugby. She is long gone now, but even those who do not believe in the supernatural cannot help but sense the presence of those from the past in the beautifully restored village of Rugby.

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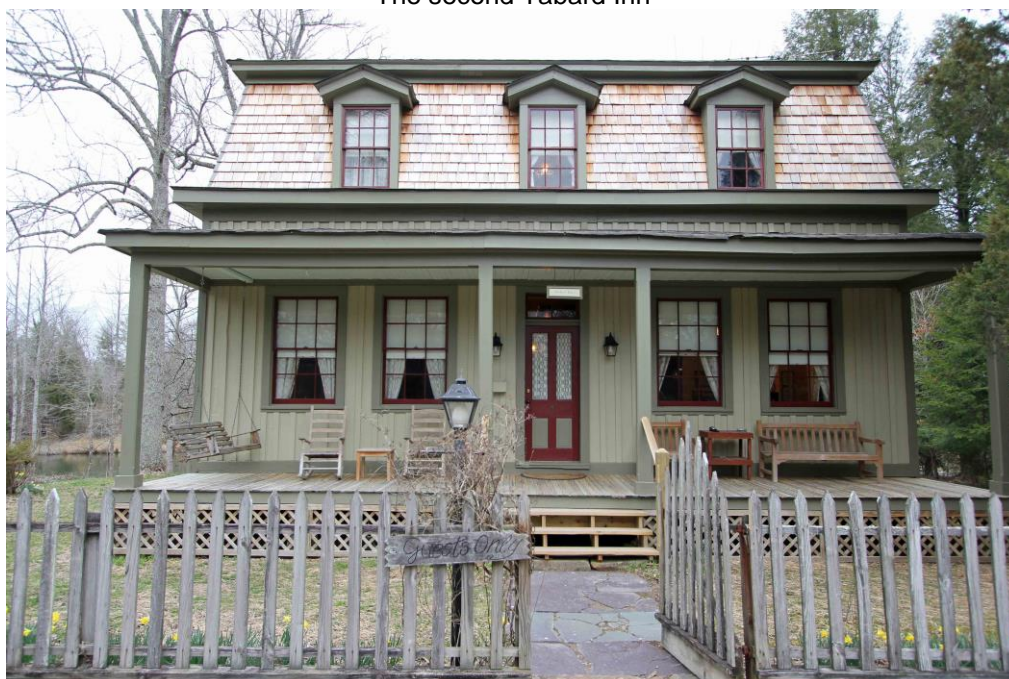
Thanks Fred for a most chilling account of the ghosts of Rugby! Remember, the "Ghostly Gathering" on Friday, October 31, 2014, at 6:00 PM in historic Rugby.

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The second Tabard Inn



The Newberry House where Fanny and I spent the night on March 10, 2014 – no ghosts were observed

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Christ Church – historical photograph showing Mrs. Cebrat third from left



Christ Church today