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# Haunted North

Photographer  
Manu Keggenhoff  
interprets ghostly tales



Vol. 11 Issue 4 Winter 2017  
www.NorthofOrdinary.com  
CAN. \$6.95 | U.S. \$4.95



Display until Feb. 1, 2018



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#### MANU KEGGENHOFF

When Manu was a teenager she was convinced she'd seen a ghost while trying to sneak into an abandoned castle in her German hometown. The "White Lady" she saw back then was the only eerie experience she's ever had, but it sparked her fascination for the other world. Intrigued by many ghostly northern tales, the Atlin-based photographer and YNoO art director dared to meet up with a few local spirits for this photo essay.

## Ghostly tales throughout the Yukon and northern B.C.

Photos by Manu Keggenhoff  
Stories written and edited by Tara McCarthy

### WEARY WORKERS AT THE BUNKHOUSE Bear Creek, Yukon

The bunkhouse, with a long hall and rooms on each side, used to be the living quarters for workers at Bear Creek. The dredging project there, run by the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation, was desperate to find workers and would hire young men from down south, buying them a one-way ticket on ferries and boats to Dawson City. Since it was before the road was built, this left the men stranded.

They worked hard for a month without a day off. Then, in November 1966, the dredging operation came to a halt. The workers left the compound as is and never returned. However, people claim the men still roam the old, crooked hall of the bunkhouse.

HAUNTED  
NORTH





▲ **HANDPRINT ON THE WINDOW**  
Bear Creek, Yukon

Steph Davidson and her partner lived in a picturesque cabin at Bear Creek from 2011–2014. They were the only people living in the compound, which had once been the site of a dredging operation. The cabin was previously used as staff housing.

Many eerie experiences convinced them the place was haunted. They'd hear footsteps up and down the basement stairs, and one time the front door flung wide open, which was odd considering the door was heavy and there was no wind.

The scariest incident happened just after New Year's in 2014. Davidson had a friend over and was making spaghetti in the kitchen. Suddenly, she heard three loud bangs on the door next to the stove and saw a man's shadow. She yelled to her partner and friend that someone was in the house at the back door. When she opened it, no one was there. She opened the door to the outside—no footsteps in the snow. Davidson went to the front door—no one was there, not a single footprint in the snow.

By now the pot of boiling water for the pasta had steamed up the window by the stove. As Davidson walked back into the kitchen she watched as a handprint smeared right across the fogged glass on the inside, sending shivers down her spine.

◀ **TRANSPARENT PRESENCE**  
Bear Creek, Yukon

About 10 kilometres east of Dawson City, up the Klondike River Valley, is the Bear Creek compound, a collection of buildings that were once part of the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation's dredging operation, from 1905–1966.

The compound is now owned by Parks Canada and many of the buildings are used to store artifacts, such as gold-rush bric-a-brac, a couch made from cow horns, and wicker coffins.

While working for Parks Canada, Leslie Piercy was transporting artifacts into storage at the drafting and engineering building when she witnessed something that left her cold: a transparent and booted foot taking a step up a flight of stairs.

"It was terrifying. I sort of shut down and I froze," she says. "Then life carried on. It was probably an instant, and I continued walking into the room I was going into."

Piercy was shaken by the experience, but kept working. Later that day, she saw a floating head drift past her and down the hallway. "Then I just left the building without any questions," she says, feeling like the latest spectre was a warning to leave.



◀ **THE MAN IN THE  
YELLOW JACKET**  
Westminster Hotel –  
Dawson City, Yukon

*Dawson City resident Tara Borin scribed this story on her blog about an unexpected encounter in the Westminster Hotel:*

I've been seeing someone in the bar where I work. He's a big guy, broad shouldered, wears a dull yellow jacket. Out of the corner of my eye, in the mirrors behind the bar, I see him step up as if to order a drink. When I turn, he's gone.

I've seen shadows in the hotel before, and once heard a woman in heels walk across the empty room, but I've never experienced something quite like this. It's not so much seeing a solid figure as it is the impression of him.

It was easy to write it off as though my eyes were playing tricks in the low bar light or maybe a reflection in my glasses. But it continued to happen. And each time it seemed like he took shape not so much before my eyes, but in my mind. Stepping up to the bar, forever, to order a drink. I think it would be whiskey, neat. But then, that might be my imagination taking over.

I'm not the first to see a ghost at the Westminster Hotel, nor will I be the last. Parts of it have been standing since the early 1900s. I don't believe in ghosts, at least not in the sense that a dead person's spirit haunts a place. But I do believe all the energy we put out has to go somewhere. I think it hangs around, reverberates across decades. So on a cold, quiet January morning, I'll catch a glimpse of a big guy in a dull yellow coat step up to the bar, his rough hands opening in a gesture for a glass he never gets. It might just be a glitch, like a tape skipping. He'll loop through the bar for a few weeks and then the tape will roll smooth. I'll never see him again. His silence will make way for other echoes. If you listen closely, you may just hear them.

**BESSIE GIDEON'S EERIE APPEARANCES AT THE CARIBOU HOTEL**  
Caribou Hotel – Carcross, Yukon

It began as the Yukon Hotel, constructed at the start of the Klondike Gold Rush, in 1898, in Bennett, B.C. In 1901, owner W.A. Anderson floated the building down Bennett Lake to Carcross, Yukon, and renamed it the Caribou Hotel.

It had several owners, including Dawson Charlie, who struck it rich during the gold rush. After his death, Edwin and Bessie Gideon rented the hotel from his estate. However, tragedy struck on Christmas Eve in 1909, when the hotel burned to the ground. The Gideons hired builder W.H. Simpson to construct a new hotel in the same spot.

Edwin died in 1925, and Bessie ran the hotel until she died in the building on Oct. 25, 1933. Since then, strange things have occurred. Current owner Anne Morgan says she has often heard hammering, which is believed to be Simpson at work. However, many say Bessie's ghost, a spirit that is neither friendly nor unfriendly, specifically haunts the hotel. Stories are told of a figure that often stands near a third-floor window, appears in the hallways and stairways, knocks on doors, bangs on the floorboards, or even visits guests in their rooms.

Although it is believed Bessie was buried in Carcross, her grave has never been found.



**▲ THE HAUNTING OF THE P. BURNS & CO. BUTCHERS BUILDING**  
Engineer Mine – Tagish Lake, B.C.

*Whitehorse resident Casey McLaughlin and a friend explored the abandoned Engineer Mine, in northwest B.C. One spot in particular caught their eye: the grand P. Burns & Co. Butchers building. McLaughlin writes:*

The building was originally at Conrad City, which was once a thriving mining town at the base of Montana Mountain. After the mine and town closed down in the early 1900s, the butcher shop was floated down Windy Arm to Engineer Mine.

The beautiful, large, classic frontier building still boasts a hand-painted sign, front door, and windows. Some wood detailing is still visible inside the main floor, as well as the remains of an ornately decorated tin ceiling. Otherwise it's bare. The stairs to the upper floor are wide and still very strong. We opened a hatch to continue up the stairs to where there were bedrooms, a kitchen space, and a backroom looking out at the mountains.

Night was coming, so we left the hatch door open and headed down to the main area for dinner and to settle onto our squeaky beds. Hours later, in complete darkness, I woke to something upstairs coming from the backroom: the sound of aluminum being crinkled, dropped, and crinkled again.

Then I heard the sound of someone walking, heavy and determined, slowly across the upstairs hallway. I was frozen, not moving an inch. Then came the sound that made my heart stop: a heavy foot hitting the top stair with a thump, then slowly moving down to the next stair, and the next.

I fumbled for the lamp and flashed it at the stairs, terrified of what the darkness might reveal. Nothing. Only empty stairs and silence. Hours later, I heard it all again—the sound of crinkle, bang, crinkle, followed by the heavy, slow steps on the stairs. This happened the same way three or four more times that night.

The next night I closed the hatch to the upstairs, clicking the metal clasp that locked it shut, but the sounds came again. Someone was walking across the top floor toward the staircase. The footsteps continued slowly on the stairs, then silence. I grabbed my lamp and ran over to the stairs. There was nothing and the hatch was still locked.

**"I WAS FROZEN, NOT MOVING AN INCH. THEN CAME THE SOUND THAT MADE MY HEART STOP..."**



GHOSTLY APPEARANCES OCCURRED REGULARLY DURING THE DECADES THE HOUSE WAS BOARDED UP.



#### ▲ SUDDENLY THERE CAME A TAPPING Kootenay Hotel – Atlin, B.C.

One of the landmarks in Atlin, B.C., was the Kootenay Hotel, which was rebuilt twice after fires devastated the town. The third version was built in 1917.

The Roxborough family, who came to the North from Ireland during the gold rush, owned the hotel. One of the brothers, Andrew, suffered from a disabling condition and needed a cane to get around. The story goes that he lived in room 11 above the kitchen. Whenever he needed something, he would tap his cane on the floor and workers in the kitchen knew he had a request. Andrew Roxborough died in 1935.

Donald Shaw, who is Andrew's nephew, remembers hearing the tapping of Uncle Andy's cane long after he'd passed. Shaw's father would send the kids to room 11 to check if Uncle Andy was in need of something when they heard the tapping, even though he was long gone. It's said Uncle Andy tapped his cane until the Kootenay burned down a third time in 1969. The hotel was never rebuilt again.

#### ▲ THE MADAM AND HER SEAMSTRESSES Little Blue House – Atlin, B.C.

Eva Lambert Daniell, born in 1874, is a mysterious figure in the history of the Little Blue House. Around 1920, the house was moved to its present location on the outskirts of Atlin, B.C., where it became a brothel. Daniell was the madam, and she came with experience, having run brothels in the nearby town of Discovery during the height of the Klondike Gold Rush.

The brothel was run under the auspices of a seamstress shop. Ladies would sit and sew in the five-sided bay window, while gentlemen would pass by on the street to have a look. If they liked what they saw, they would have "some tailoring done."

As the stories go, Daniell or one of her ladies has been seen sewing in the bay window long after they departed. Ghostly appearances occurred regularly during the decades the house was boarded up. Jennifer Tyldesley, the new owner of the Little Blue House, has also heard a baby crying inside the walls. It is a building eager to tell its secret stories.



“I HAD HEARD ABOUT THE GUILD GHOST, AND I THOUGHT, YEAH, WHATEVER. I BELIEVE IN SCIENCE, FACTS, THINGS I CAN SEE. THAT’S NOT MY MOTTO ANYMORE.”

**▲ THE MILITARY MAN**  
**Guild Hall – Whitehorse, Yukon**

Jenny Hamilton is the former general manager of the Guild Hall, a community theatre in Whitehorse. Generally, she considers herself to be a skeptic. However, when Hamilton saw a ghost in the flesh, it shook her foundation.

“December 2006 was the first time he and I crossed paths,” Hamilton says. “I had heard about the Guild ghost, and I thought, *Yeah, whatever. I believe in science, facts, things I can see.* That’s not my motto anymore.”

It was Thursday evening, around 7 p.m. Hamilton was alone in the theatre, repairing a patch on the floor.

“I heard somebody come in through the front doors and stomp their feet to get the snow off,” she says. “I turned around and I saw this guy standing at the doors in military gear, all done up

in uniform. He was fairly young. My thought was he’s got to be one of the actor’s friends looking for them. So I called out to him and said, ‘I’ll be there in just a sec.’

“I dropped all of my tools, pulled myself up off the floor, turned around, and he was gone. I checked the dance studio and the lights were all off. I checked the men’s room, the women’s room, and the kitchen—the lights are all off. Nobody.

“Then I walked to the front door, opened it up, and saw fresh snow outside. Not a single footprint in it. I grabbed my coat, turned off the lights, and didn’t come back for two days. It just freaked me out. He looked like a solid person.”

Hamilton is now a skeptic who thinks she has seen a ghost. **Y**



Curious about more eerie stories and the tale behind the cover image? Visit [northofordinary.com/hauntednorth](http://northofordinary.com/hauntednorth) for an extended version of this photo essay.