
Chestnut Chills



A collection of the
Lore and Legends of
Chestnut Hill College

**Written and Submitted by
students of Chestnut Hill**

**Edited By
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Benevolent Alumni

One winter afternoon, as darkening skies began to come over the hill and cover the quaint campus of Chestnut Hill College, two freshmen sat quietly in their room in Fournier Hall. Their silence was one of sheer boredom, and a look of restlessness passed between the girls as they attempted to do their work.

"Did you hear those upper classmen girls talking outside," the girl said, lifting her eyes from her tedious biology reading. "They were trying to scare us out of going to the 6th floor tonight."

"How did they know we were even going?" Her roommate replied, closing her history book. "And what do they care; they'd love to see us get caught."

"True. I don't know though. They seemed pretty freaked out about it, something about a statue or a picture that stares at you from a corner." The girl said, lowering her eyes and staring eerily at her roommate, a look of mischief having come over her. "We should bring the Ouija board up with us tonight."

"Yeah, ok." The roommate sputtered, reopening her history textbook.

"No, I'm serious, lets try it now." The girl rushed over to her closet and reaching under a pile of blankets she pulled a beaten and water stained Ouija board, and tied to it was a black pointer. Placing the board on the floor between their beds, the girl stared at her friend, waiting to be joined. The roommate stared objectionably, but closed her textbook nonetheless and slid onto the floor.

"Alright, let's start."

The two girls sat pensively, four shaking hands lightly touching the pointer, waiting for the unbelievable to occur. Eyes closed they began to speak, a voice lighter than a whispering wind:

Spirits if you hear us, show us.

Spirits if you hear us, show us.

Spirits if you hear us, show us.

Slowly the pointer began to move.

"Are you serious, stop moving it!" The girl exclaimed incredulously at her roommate, whose face revealed her inward mix of amazement and sheer terror, as

she silently replied, "I'm not." The pointer continued to move about the board, almost pacing, eventually making its way to the "Yes" spot. The girls watched with wide eyes, which moved from each other to the board and back again. The roommate, whose idea it had been in the first place, gave into her curiosity.

"Spirit, what is your name?" She spoke, managing to keep a steady cadence despite the wracking fear and nervousness evident by her shaking hands. They watched the pointer as it traced a path through the letters of the board, stopping here and there to spell out a woman's name.

"OK, that's it! I'm leaving, and we're sleeping with the lights on tonight." She braced herself to stand and leave the room.

"No," her roommate exclaimed grabbing her hand, "You'll break the circle and then we'll never know who this is. Please?" Her eyes, filled with trepidation and curiosity, stared, pleadingly at her roommate. The girl relaxed, somewhat begrudgingly and re-crossed her legs, "You owe me one." She resumed their questioning.

"Spirit, were you a student here?"

A moment, or a lifetime could have passed and the girls would have little noticed, so focused they were on the pointer and its miniscule movements over to the "Yes." A floodgate of "yes" and "no" questions opened, and the girls discovered the benevolent presence had resided in their room several decades earlier, had studied biology and had unfortunately died all too young soon after graduating. The spirit had entrance the girls, as did the stories she could have told them. Too soon, the spirit faded, and their questions were no longer answered. The girls sat there, staring at the board for sometime after the spirit had left their presence, the experience washed over them, and they pondered what to do next. Night has fallen around the campus, but the lights of the Lounge Library still were on as the girls made their way to the front desk.

"Is there a way to get into the old yearbooks?" They asked, knowing that normally the yearbooks were kept in "The Cage" as it was affectionately known. Realizing their story would seem insane and unfathomable, they insisted they needed to find information for a history project.

They were allowed to see the yearbooks, quickly coming upon that which they had wanted to find. Carefully handling the yellowing paper, they went through the yearbook page by page, staring at every name, every comment flipping the information they had over in their heads.

"Look, it's her..." The girl whispered, the disbelief in her voice having faded away.

A pretty young woman with chestnut hair and light eyes looked back at the girls from the black and white picture, her pressed white blouse and gray skirt denoting both her time period and sophistication. Standing in the rotunda with her heels to the base step of the staircase, she smiled warmly at the camera, clasping a biology textbook. The caption under the picture read:

"Enjoy your time at Chestnut Hill College, live your time here to the fullest. I did."

Apparitions in the Computer Center

When asked to write down stories of apparitions at Chestnut Hill College, my first thought was who would ever think them to be real? I swear to you that it is truth; myself a disbeliever who experienced an event firsthand that led me to doubt my own skepticism.

There are several historical facts I did not learn from books about Chestnut Hill College, rather by ghost stories later to be verified by sisters whom had lived at the college for countless years. One story involves a figure from the time period when the college served as a boarding school. The basement of St. Joseph's hall once served as a dormitory for male students with the most prominent room for apparitions occurring in what is now the computer lab.

A girlfriend to a friend of mine worked as a work-study student for the computer center and was often left alone in the evening when the computer personnel stepped out temporarily. On one of these occasions, she was sitting in the room using a computer when the room began to get cold. The lab is in the basement, surrounded by windows, and furnished with air conditioning; this by anyone's determination is a natural sensation to feel. But to her it felt like the room had instantly slipped into an icy confine. As the hairs began to rise with the goose bumps she now felt, she raised her head and she saw an elderly man standing at the far end of the room. In front of the emergency exit, dressed in a robe of red, he simply held a warm stare at her and made no motion. The vision then began to fade from her sight, almost merging with the door and took the eerie chill with it.

She encountered this apparition twice more before graduation and did not ask anyone about the sighting - shy student that she was. My friend and I learned from a sister in the motherhouse that a cardinal frequented the orphanage, and some believe the figure to be St. John Neumann visiting an updated version of the location to which he visited.

Several other students working alone at night have heard children giggling and running within a room or through the hallways unseen. However, possibly for the better, these ghostly noises are commonly discarded as figments of a tired student's imagination or an echo of another student's child from within the basement.

Fontbonne's Quest and the Red Eye Ghost Visit

During the first few months of school, I overheard some interesting ghost tales from persons of various prestige across campus. Among one of them was a friend who had lived in Fontbonne her freshman year and indifferently told us the story about the ghost that frequented her room on the third floor. She and her roommate experienced frequent occasions when the door would lock or unlock on its own. In addition, things would randomly fall from their secure places in the dorm, and items that had gone missing strangely appeared in the most obvious of places. They became accustomed to such happenings, accepting them as the doings of a mischievous spirit, after all,

One does have to keep in mind that Fontbonne is built upon the grounds where a cemetery once stood and perhaps the spirit being of bodies that were neglected to be relocated may have been acting out.

One morning, the roommate awoke to the pressure of the bed sinking by her side. She opened her eyes to see no one there, but instead a man standing at the end of her bed. Frozen and unable to speak, the apparition walked toward the door and disappeared. She started freaking out and woke her roommate, my friend. Looking at the floor where the man had passed a trail of dirt had been left behind. A sense of fear did not accompany this ghostly encounter but before they moved from their dorm room, they experienced a terrifying confrontation with the Red Eye ghost.

One day the two girls had been talking on their own beds for some time when the roommate of my friend suddenly froze and turned pale. She trembled and could not be coaxed into talking. What was not known to my friend was that the girl was staring into the bodiless glowing eyes of the Red Eye ghost that was standing behind her. My friend had begun to frantically question her roommate when she heard a voice in her ear—the one away from the ghost standing behind her, *Why don't you go for a walk?* She bolted up from her bed, announced that she was taking her for a walk and grabbed her motionless friend.

During that year the room was blessed (some say exorcised, so I'm not sure which) and the morning after the roommate saw the ghost which had stood at the foot of her bed now sitting atop a cemetery marker.

St. Joseph's Art Room Ghost

It is generally agreed at the school that the ghosts of Chestnut Hill College are generally more mischievous with males, a belief that the ghosts are female and enjoy interacting with the men.

It was my first year at Chestnut Hill College and I had moved into St. Joseph's Hall while taking summer classes. I was one of four students to stay in the dorms and got to know the others pretty well. Two of the students educated me in the history and lore of the building, but I had not expected to hear about any new tales until the school became more populated. I was wrong. The third student was living in the West Wing of St. Joe's and was working with the dean of academic affairs, a young man new to the co-ed dormitory experience at Chestnut Hill, a sensible man and reliable source for information.

One afternoon I was in my room completing class work when he knocked on my open door. He had just returned from work and had an anxious look in his eye. "You'll never guess what happened to me," was his greeting. He asked if there were ghosts in St. Joe's Hall and I responded that there were and told him that there was believed to be an art room ghost. Chuckling, he sat down and told me what had happened:

The night before, the student was on the phone with his mother when he began to hear footsteps above him on the fifth floor. For a few minutes he managed to ignore the noise and reassured himself that a security guard was doing his rounds. As he thought this, there was a sudden loud thump directly above him. He thought to himself that a Summer Success student or two were wandering about upstairs and asked his mother if he could call her back. Grabbing a flashlight he opened the door. As he stepped out from his room, he said he was "hit with a wall of perfume." It was strong enough to capture his attention and later recalled it as smelling like an older woman's perfume. He attributed this as to a female student who was wearing a strong perfume that probably walked down the hall. He had gone but four steps when all the hairs on his arms and neck rose. A chill went down his spine and he retreated to his room.

Collecting himself, he picked up his phone and called security. He asked if security had done their rounds recently. The guard responded that they had, but about twenty minutes ago and that the art room doors had been locked when they entered and that they had been relocked when they left.

The Chapel Basement Exorcism

There was once a maintenance worker for the college who learned about some of the college's lore while working in the chapel basement. While making his way to an electrical box he noticed a room off to the side with what appeared to be remnants of wood nailed into the wall. The texture of this wall was not conducive to nailed objects, and this fact he found bizarre. He redirected his attention back to his work and left shortly after.

Later in the day he located the sister with whom he worked, and questioned her about the room adjacent to where he had been working. A typically jovial woman, her face became stone and he swore she had slowed her breathing. He expected an explanation yet was answered with a question: *The one with the cross above the door?* He replied "no" and proceeded to retell the description of the doorframe. As though lost in thought she spoke unto herself: *There used to be a crucifix above the door.* The worker again asked her, this time much more cautiously, why the door had had wood on it at one point. The sister returned to her usual demeanor and guardedly told him what she knew about the room:

The door had at one point been completely boarded up with wood haphazardly to discourage individuals from entering that room and a crucifix had been affixed above the door. To her knowledge an exorcism conducted by St. John Neumann prior to his anointing as cardinal had been held in that room. The exorcism was successful and the area possessed with the spirit had been cleansed; however, the spirit chose to remain on the earth and thus the priests agreed to confine the spirit to this room with the crucifix of Christ to serve as a safeguard against its roaming evil.

With the disappearance of the crucifix the question arose, "If it ever existed, where is the evil spirit now?" Almost any student who has encountered or heard and believed the tales of the Red Eye Room ghost agree that it is possibly this same evil spirit, and that it chooses to stay within the limits of the campus. This hostile ghost has not only been encountered in Fournier Hall to the room it inhabits but also to Fontbonne Hall as well.

Billy

This story begins when Chestnut Hill College opened in 1924. When Chestnut Hill College was still a Catholic, four-year, liberal arts college for women. A happy couple worked there, both married for some odd years. They lived a fairly simple life and had only one child. Their child's name was Billy. He was a difficult child with autism and some slight mental problems. His hair was red as fire and so curly it appeared to stay up on end. His eyes were emerald green and his glowing stare made anyone feel uneasy.

But they loved him anyway...everyday the couple would take Billy to school and he would play in the well house all day. They then would get Billy at the end of the day and go home. This routine repeated for years and years and Billy was getting to be a troubled teen. One night the couple stayed at school especially late grading papers. Both tired and exhausted they decided to leave Billy at school for the night.

"What's the harm?" the husband said to the wife..."One night here will not harm the boy and knowing Billy he probably will not know the difference. The boy is always sleeping near well house anyways. I bet if we would go down there now we would find him asleep. So lets just go home."

The wife reluctantly agreed and they headed towards the car. The couple got into the car and the husband turned ignition. The car wouldn't start...Instead there was just a murmur followed by the car stalling. He tried again and again but the car would not start. He turned to his wife and said that he would go and walk and find help at the nearest gas station. During this time, only trees and endless back roads surrounded Chestnut Hill College. The nearest gas station was miles away yet he opened the door and made his walk into the dark forest.

She sat there staring into the dark her husband had just disappeared into. It is at this moment when she felt this odd feeling. She had worked at the school for all those years but for the first time she felt as if her surroundings were unfamiliar. It was as if she had never been at Chestnut Hill in all her life. She began to panic and double-checked to make sure all the doors were locked. Time passed...20 minutes...30 minutes...an hour...

"Where is he?" she wondered to herself..."It doesn't take this long."

Then she heard a sound...A sound she would remember for the rest of her life. Above her head she heard a slow dull tap. The tap sounded as if someone was hitting his or her finger on top of the roof. This tap continued for an hour longer...Panicked, scared and confused, she was too curious not to wonder what that sound was but too afraid to even think of going outside the car...The stress finally got to her and she passed out from mental exhaustion and fear.

She awoke several hours later still a state of shock and confusion. Bewildered because she was no longer alone but instead surrounded by police officers. Feeling relieved she was no longer alone, she opened the door and exited her car. The officers began to shout to get back into the car but it was already too late. She had seen the horrifying image that had created the slow monotonous tap on the roof of the car.

She looked above the car only to see her husband. He had been strung in a tree and his blood had been slowly dripping onto the roof of the car...Soon after, a manhunt began to find Billy. Yet, Billy was never found and the search came to a tragic end. So be careful at night if you are brave enough to wander near the well house. Some still claim they see a boy with a hair of fire and emerald eyes.

Unexplainable Noises

Fontbonne has always been known for the strange and unexplainable noises coming from its rooms. From the loud sound of banging coming from above the heads of the residents, children running up and down the hallways laughing, or the sound of a ball being rolled down the hall above the rooms on the third floor. Usually explained with open windows and noisy residents, sometimes the noises of the first-year dorm have become inexplicable to even the most persistent realist.

What isn't know is the there have been two separate times in the past five years when the college chaplain has had cause to bless two separate rooms.

The college chaplain blessed the two different rooms in Fontbonne because of these unexplainable noises that were causing the students to become frightened. In both instances, the chaplains died of natural causes shortly after, although one could say "natural" as a relative term. It is said that one chaplain is known to have prayed, "Let this evil come to me and leave this child of God alone." He died within months of uttering this prayer.

The Mask Room Ghost

Students have reported many stories over the college's existence. But, what makes this story so unusual is that a Sister is the witness to this story. This is her account of the young woman she met that fateful morning in the mask gallery of St. Joe's.

It was a cold winter morning when this Sister descended the steps in St. Joe's. She was making her way back to her room in Fournier, when she saw this beautiful woman staring at the masks. Moonlight shone through the large windows, casting the room in a hazy grey light. She walked up to the young woman, noticing that the woman was wearing the most beautiful brooch she had ever seen.

"What a lovely brooch," she said to the young woman. The woman turned to the Sister and said, "thank you my sister gave it to me just before I died." It was at this time the Sister looked down at the young woman's feet. To her surprise and shock she noticed that the woman she had just talked to had no feet. She was floating in thin air. Bewildered and scared the Sister quickly looked up. As her head lifted all she could see was the beautiful brooch and a slight smile as the woman disappeared into thin air.

The Cellar Door

This is a brief account from a Sister who once lived in the Motherhouse and the strange and unusual event that occurred there.

"I do not know whether, when we sang our Lady's hymn on the riverbank, we chased the devil up to the house, but it is a fact that he tormented us for several months. Every night at eleven o'clock, there was a loud knocking at the door, and at the same time you could hear knocking on the furnace in the cellar. That lasted until midnight and no one could sleep. Neither postulants nor novices wanted to stay, and I could not blame them; we spent some nights watching at the cellar door to try to discover the cause of the noise, but those nights we heard nothing. I spoke about it to the bishop who came himself to watch all night, but he heard nothing. The next morning the bishop blessed the cellar again (He had blessed the whole house after our arrival), and he threw holy water into the furnace saying; "Burn in hell, and don't come back here anymore." From that day to this we have not been bothered. That holy bishop Neumann told us that he had no doubt that the devil did not want us here and that he was doing all in his power to make us leave the place where he had reigned for so long."

Picture in the Loft

Last year I had the pleasure of meeting a wonderful senior who loved the history and lore of Chestnut Hill College. She would constantly go to areas on campus where the weird or unusual occur and take pictures. Then one day, the weird and unusual happened to her. While on the loft in the sixth floor of St. Joe's she was looking for statues or artwork she could take pictures of. It was at this time she noticed a picture of Jesus with a black trim all around him. She decided it would be an awesome picture for her scrapbook. She took out her camera and took the shot

She dropped the pictures off the next day at the CVS down the road and picked them up later on that day. All the pictures came out fine except for one. The picture she had in the loft had changed. The image of Jesus looked the same yet the black trim around him had changed to white. She would go back many more times and take the same picture even with different cameras and every time the outcome would be the same. The trim of the picture would change from black to white. Now I have seen both this picture and the picture hanging in the loft. There is no explanation to why this occurs other than the fact that the strange and unusual always seems to occur at Chestnut Hill College.

Dice Girls

While not all stories have meanings or reasons why they occur this one seems to be one of the strangest I have heard. I've talked to these two girls many times on what occurred that fateful night.

The two girls were sleeping peacefully in their dorm room in Fontbonne when they both awoke to one of the most peculiar noises. They both heard the sound of what appeared to be dice being thrown against the wall. To their surprise they saw three girls crouched around in a corner. The three girls were giggling as they were playing with dice throwing it against the wall. It was at this moment the three girls looked up and noticed that they were being watched. All three girls smiled and vanished into thin air.

Now why they appeared in that room still remains a mystery. Some say that they were ghosts of past students showing how they too broke the rules of the college. Maybe they were showing the new students how the students of old used to have fun.

Civil War Nun

This story begins during the civil war. Injured soldiers would be sent to where Chestnut Hill College is built today. Here a nun would do her best and try to save as many soldier's lives as possible. Even after getting tuberculosis she would work tirelessly at her job. She sacrificed her time and health to save the lives of many men. She finally paid the ultimate price. She finally succumbed to tuberculosis and passed away. She gave her life in order to save the lives of many.

Chestnut Hill College went co-ed in 2003. Some people were worried that having men at Chestnut Hill College might lead to other changes. They worried that traditions would be changed or lost. Two freshmen were watching television in the Fontbonne lounge when they heard this strange noise. A sudden rush of air came into the room and the shades on the window flew up. Both startled, turned around and looked in the corner of the lounge. They saw nothing and turned back around on the couch they were sitting on and began to watch television once again. Yet, again a rush of air came into the room. Jumping up, they turned around to see a nun standing the corner. They say she was wearing a pure white habit and dress. It was at this time they both ran out of this room.

I was just entering Fontbonne when I saw the two running out of the lounge. Their faces were as white as a sheet of paper. People came into the hall to see what the commotion was. They told us their story yet both refused to even go back into the lounge. So, while some traditions have changed since men were allowed to attend Chestnut Hill College, the tradition of the strange and unusual events happening at this school will never be lost.

The End

Or is it?

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