The Haunted Bowdoin Tour

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Thorne Servery Basement

Access: Typically not available to the public.

Directions: If you stand by the loading dock between Thorne and Jewett halls, you will be standing just about exactly over the basement.

An appetite for fear. The basement of the Thorne Servery has long been a source of rumor and unease among the dining staff at Bowdoin. No one likes to go down to the cellar at night alone. For some people it might just be the area's uncanny resemblance to a dungeon or fallout shelter that puts them in a worried state; but there's no question others have had more concrete reasons to be upset during their forced sojourns below.

Lights in the hallway frequently switch themselves on and off and the elevator doors at the far end open and close all on their own accord. Everyone complains about feeling watched and unwelcome.

Several employees have reported hearing voices when down there on their own. One employee who was working alone in the meat-cutting room one night kept coming upstairs to complain of hearing voices down there. The next night after complaining about it again, he walked off his shift and never came back!

One staff person told me the general consensus is that the spirit in the basement is female. This may stem from another incident that used to occur. At one time, Dining began to use an old closet in the cellar for storing condiments. They cleared out the bric-a-brac that had been in there, which included a portrait of a woman from early Bowdoin history. Every morning for several weeks, when someone went to get condiments from that closet, they found the portrait had somehow found its way back inside.
The Coles Tower complex was built in 1964 and prior to that the area was simply an open grassy space. So what could be the source of this paranormal activity? Well, when workmen were laying the foundations, they excavated many Civil War-era (or older) trinkets such as plates and utensils from the site. Is the Thorne Servery basement dug directly into the bowels of some older residence that history has forgotten? The answer might be found at the Pejepscot Museum in Brunswick, which accepted the relics and may still hold them in their collection.

Hawthorne-Longfellow Library

Access: Open to the public when the library is open.

Directions: Walk in the front entrance and past the gates and immediately turn to your right and back toward the portrait of Hawthorne.

Dirty Family Secrets. Walk in the front door of the Hawthorne-Longfellow Library and you will immediately be greeted by portraits of two of Bowdoin's most famous alumni: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Nathaniel Hawthorne. We will focus our attention on Hawthorne, whose portrait hangs to your right as you walk in.

Hawthorne was a descendent of William Hathorne, a deputy of the General Court of Massachusetts, who made himself famous for having Quakers publicly whipped if they dared set foot in Puritan lands. William's son, John, was one of three judges presiding over the Salem Witchcraft Trials that resulted in the executions of 20 men and women. Yet another relation was an infamous pirate on the Atlantic. There has long been a legend that the Hawthornes added the w to their name to try to distance themselves from their checkered family past.

Nathaniel Hawthorne begins his novel The House of Seven Gables with an accused witch's curse on a Judge Pyncheon: 'Pycheon, God will give you blood to drink and quench your greed for eternity.' This derives from a real quote from the Salem Witch Trials. When the Reverend Nicholas Noyes asked Sara Good to confess to being a witch, she responded: 'I am no more a witch than you are a wizard, and if you take away my life God will give you blood to drink."

Twenty-five years later, the Reverend Nicholas Noyes died of a hemorrhage in his neck, choking on his own blood.

Hubbard Stacks

Access: Open to the public when the library is open.

Directions: Walk in the front entrance of the library, past the circulation desk, and take the stairs off to the right down to the basement. Follow the signs to the Hubbard stacks. Alternatively, you can view the stacks from outside by walking out of the library and bearing to your left toward Hubbard Hall. The stacks form the southern branch of the Hubbard "T."

Security Concerns. A library is supposed to be quiet, but if you have ever been in the Hubbard stacks at night, you know that it can also be rather unnerving. A cough or a dropped book seems to break a silence
that is best left undisturbed and the looming shelves and dust-darkened windows seem to frown down on you with displeasure.

Bowdoin Security has the job of securing the stacks every night, making sure that no one has stayed behind before they lock up the building for the night. One night an officer took the elevator to the 6th floor, walked through, then took the elevator to the 5th floor. After scanning that floor she was headed back to the elevator when she saw it being called up to the 6th floor. This meant someone on the 6th floor had pushed the button to call it up there. She figured she must have missed a student somehow and they were just now leaving. She heard the elevator doors open and close on the 6th floor, so she pushed the call button again so it would stop on the 5th floor and she could escort the student out of the locked building. When the doors opened on the 5th floor, no one was there!

Two more officers were called in to check the entire building. They started at the top and worked their way down to the 4th floor without finding anyone. Then they looked and saw the elevator being called back up to the 6th floor again! One officer ran up the stairs, one ran down the stairs to cover the exit, and the original officer pushed the call button on the 4th floor and waited. Again the doors opened and no one was there!

A work order was placed to check the elevator. The electricians came back and said it was in perfect working order.

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**Hubbard Hall**

Access: Open to the public when the building is open.

Directions: Begin this station at the front doors of Hubbard Hall, which face north and overlook the Quad.

**Bowdoin's Deathtrap.** Hubbard Hall features high on our list of spooky places on campus. With its Gothic architecture, long facade, and looming 100-foot tower, it looks as though it rose right from an Edgar Allan Poe story.

Hubbard Hall also features a rarity for buildings today: a fully operating gargoyle, which juts out from the top of the tower just to the left of the wooden doors as you face the building. This gargoyle is a replica of the original gargoyle placed on the building in 1903. The original was replaced in 2007 after nearly 100 years of weather had worn it down and caused several fissures.

Historically, gargoyles served two purposes. First, they are built to prevent water collecting on rooftops and to convey it away from the side of the building. You can see Hubbard's gargoyle doing this task on just about any rainy day. Its second purpose is to frighten away evil spirits with its terrifying appearance. Based on the stories Hubbard Hall has to offer, we might question how well it is serving in that role.

There's no getting around the fact that Hubbard Hall has been a dangerous building. It has at least three kills to its credit. One wintry morning, Athern Daggett, professor of government and member of the class of 1925, slipped on ice on the front steps and died later in the hospital (the iron rails you see today were added as a result of this unfortunate accident). An economics professor had a heart attack and died in his
office on the second floor, and an early Information Technology employee suffered the same fate in her basement office.

Louann Dustin-Hunter, a former security officer, called Hubbard Hall the freakiest building on campus. Another security officer several years ago was securing the building and locking it up for the night. As he was standing just inside the large wooden doors and preparing to leave, he heard a voice call out: “Hello?” Thinking he must have missed a student somewhere, he called out; and when he received no reply, he went through the building searching again.

He found no one. Getting ready to leave, he suddenly heard the voice again: “Hello?”

He repeated the same process one more time with the same results. As he prepared to lock up a third time, he heard the voice again: “Hello?”

This time the officer went ahead and locked up the building. He had decided whatever was making that call wasn’t going to be found!

Another story involves a custodian working alone after midnight when the building was locked and empty. There is a long rug in the lobby in front of the Arctic Museum that this custodian had vacuumed, rolled up, and set against a wall so he could mop the floor. He went to the basement to fill his bucket and retrieve his mop. When he came back up, the carpet was laid out on the floor in its original location. He scratched his head and concluded he must not really have rolled it up as he thought, so he just rolled it up again and proceeded to mop.

With the floor mopped, he decided to take a break while the floor dried. He went for a short walk outside and met some of his fellow custodians. When he told them about the rug incident, they confirmed that strange things like that had been known to happen in Hubbard Hall.

When he returned from his break, he found the floor dry...and the carpet once again inexplicably lying unrolled on the floor.

The custodian immediately walked to the Communications Center, left his keys, and told the dispatcher to tell his boss he had quit.

What might be the source of these activities? Well, it may be connected to the building's namesake and patron, Thomas Hubbard of the Class of 1857. Thomas Hubbard actually had a suite of rooms he lived in on the second floor of Hubbard Hall across from the Bliss Room. Much of the furniture from those days remains in the office that is there now, and the current resident reports that for years the doors of an old liquor cabinet in the office used to start shaking and she would have problems with items seeming to move around on their own or getting to places she had not left them. Rather than becoming alarmed, she took the spirit's hint and began leaving a bottle or two of alcohol in that cabinet and the strange activities subsided.

Though maybe not entirely. Also in this office is an old bell for ringing servants. A custodian I interviewed said that when he is walking by the office at night he frequently hears that bell ringing away.

More recently, a person seems to have had an encounter with Thomas Hubbard himself. A staff person coming into the building in the very early hours of the morning saw a figure in a Civil War uniform ascending the stairs to the second floor landing just as she was preparing to go up the stairs herself. When
she got to the second floor, no one was there. What she didn't know at the time was that Thomas Hubbard had had a distinguished career as a general in the Civil War before he had the building commissioned.

Searles Science Building

Access: Open to the public when the building is open.

Directions: Walk in the front doors of Searles Science Building and walk in far enough to view the hallway that runs the building's length.

The Echoing Footsteps. As with Hubbard Hall, the Searles Science Building's architecture, with its medieval turrets and castle-like facade, makes it easy to imagine it as the setting of a ghost story. People say it is a hard building to work in at night because it makes so many unexplained noises. You might be wrapped up in some experiment or math problem in complete silence when suddenly, bang! an unexplained noise breaks you from your reverie. Was it a water pipe? Some shifting plaster cracking on the floor above you? Who can say?

Outside of its general "noisiness," Searles has one particular noise that has disturbed its occupants for years. When walking through the long hallways, people report hearing footsteps behind them as though someone was right on their heels. When they turn around, no one is there—except that a few people have said they have seen a white, shadowy figure darting away out of the corner of their eyes.

One legend had it that the shadowy figure is the ghost of a girl that fell from one of the turrets when Searles was being built in 1894. More say that it, and the heavy tread you can hear, belong to the spirit of a custodian that worked in the building for years.

Northwest Campus

Access: Always available.

Directions: Walk out of Searles' north-facing doors and look towards the Chamberlain statue.

The Resident Mad Man. If you stand in the walkway between Pickard Theater and Searles Science Building and look towards the Joshua L. Chamberlain statue, you will be looking in the general direction of the spot where Thomas A. Curtis used to have a small shack just off the Bowdoin campus.

Curtis arrived at Bowdoin in the summer of 1840 as a traveling entertainer with a small puppet show. He soon dropped his entertainment career and invested himself as Bowdoin's personal handyman, running errands, mending clothes, cooking, and cleaning. He also earned a bit of a reputation for being somewhat mad. Indeed, there was even a rumor that he had come to Brunswick after having murdered his wife in lands unknown.

Curtis lived alone in his shack for almost 30 years. When he died, it was discovered that his humble dwelling contained a large collection of books. Since he did not seem to have any living relatives, Bowdoin College added his collection to its own.
Massachusetts Hall

Access: Always available.

Directions: Walk to Massachusetts Hall and then proceed around the building to the right and face toward the First Parish Church.

Mutilation Scenes. Long before the College sprang up, Twelve Rod Road used to run from Brunswick Falls all the way down to Maquoit Bay, passing through just behind where Massachusetts Hall sits today. At the time that the land was set aside for the campus, several squatters and would-be settlers were living in the area around the road. When surveyors came in to measure the campus, they received a very unfriendly welcome. The squatters tried to scare them off and even killed and mutilated two of the surveyors' horses to try to get them to stay away.

Adams Hall

Access: Available when the building is open. Basement closed to the public.

Directions: From behind Massachusetts Hall, walk due east and on to the front doors of Adams Hall.

Bowdoin's bit of macabre. We now come to the centerpiece of the Bowdoin Haunted Tour: Adams Hall. No other building has such a rich history of the paranormal—and is it any wonder? From 1861 until 1920 Adams Hall was the home of the Maine Medical School, and as such had a steady stream of bodies being brought through its doors for dissection. Many of the bodies were shipped in from Maryland where, at the time, grave robbing laws were lax and an unscrupulous fellow could make a deal for quick cash from a doctor that didn't ask too many questions.

Step in through the main doors of Adams Hall and you enter a small foyer with a door to the basement to your left and a stairway just beyond leading to the upper floors. If you pass through the basement door, you will go down to where the cadavers were kept "in pickle" until they were ready for use. You can still see the alcoves (now plastered in) where the bodies were slid into the walls to be kept out of the way.

Take a few steps forward and you will see the stairs winding up above you. Take a look at the shape of the space around the stairs. Just perfect for hoisting a gurney! And that is just what they used to do. The dissection rooms were on the top floor of Adams and the bodies were hoisted up by a hook in the ceiling. You can still see the hook today if you look straight up to the top landing.

When Adams Hall was renovated in 2007 (sadly, removing forever a lot of its spooky charm), workers on the project made a gruesome discovery. When pulling up the floorboards on the top floor, they discovered that some of the boards were actually lids to the coffins that were used to ship their corpses!

Only a few years ago, the basement was accessible to the public and was used as a costume storage area for Pickard Theater and also contained a small study room. To get to the costume shop required walking past the cadaver walls in the dark before you could get to a light. A student went down one night to retrieve a
costume and as she was heading towards the light switch, she saw just ahead of her a dark shape hunched over by the wall. She waited for her eyes to adjust to the dark so she could make sense of what she was seeing, but rather than clearing up, the figure continued to become less and less solid. She stayed long enough to watch it melt away into nothing and then turned around and ran back up the stairs and straight back to her room!

A few years before that, students were using the study room during one stormy night. In the middle of their session, there was a sudden clap of thunder and the building lost power. The students were instantly encased in complete darkness. As the students started groping their way towards the door, they were stopped by the appearance of a bluish-white light that kept bobbing back and forth by the doorway. The students watched in silence until the light finally faded and the power came back on.

One night about 30 years ago, an ambulance was seen pulling up outside of Adams Hall. As a custodian was wheeled out on a stretcher, he could be heard repeating over and over again: "I was pushed!" He had been found by a co-worker at the bottom of the stairs when he had been left alone in the building. Another custodian told how while vacuuming the third floor, his vacuum cleaner suddenly stopped. Thinking he must have accidentally jarred the plug from the outlet, he followed the cord back. When he got there the cord was firmly plugged-in. What's more, as he stood there, the vacuum cleaner suddenly jumped back to life, nearly causing the custodian to jump out of his skin!

On the third floor, only a few years ago, an employee was coming into her office late one night to finish a project. When she got to her door it was locked, so she got out her key and inserted it into the lock. No sooner had she done so then the entire door started shaking violently. Being a rather brave person, she went ahead and unlocked the door, thinking she was going to find one of her office mates inside playing a trick on her. When she opened the door, she found the office completely deserted. The project would have to wait, and she never worked in Adams after hours again!

And what about the top floor where the dissections actually occurred? Well, a person in facilities shared a story about that room that he couldn't explain. On this particular night a storm had cut power not to just Bowdoin but to all of Brunswick and Topsham as well. He had to come onto campus because back then, if they didn't shut off the power circuits in the buildings, when the power came back on suddenly it would sometimes blow them out. He had just come from the basement where he had flipped the circuits and was heading for his truck when he looked back and saw a strange light coming from the window of the top floor. This made no sense to him because there was no power in the building—no power in the entire town! So what could be causing the light? Knowing Adams' reputation for the unusual, he decided he didn't really want to walk up five floors alone in the darkened building to check it out, and just drove home.

85 Federal

Access: Building is open during the day, but is mostly offices.

Directions: From Adams Hall, exit the front doors and turn to your left and walk towards Kanbar Hall. Take the sidewalk between Sills Hall and Kanbar Hall to the corner of Bath Road and Harpswell Road. Note: You may find it easiest to just view 85 Federal from campus rather than crossing the street.
The party's NOT over! 85 Federal was once the residence of President Kenneth Sills, and the staff that work there have long said that his wife, Edith, still haunts the building. The first "sighting" came 15 years after Edith had died when a secretary smelled Edith's perfume and felt a cold draft of air move through the hallway. After that reports of strange encounters began to surface and the legend of Edith's ghost was born. Edith Sills was apparently quite the hostess in her lifetime, and people there do say that parties or events at 85 Federal or nearby Cram Barn are the most likely to trigger her appearances.

Dudley Coe

Access: Building is open during the day, but is mostly offices.

Directions: Work your way back to Adams Hall and then walk into campus along Campus Drive. Walk past the Chapel, then turn left and cross the grassy area between the two union buildings.

Flushed with Fear! The Dudley Coe Building is named after the son of Thomas Upham Cole. Dudley died when he was fourteen and many people believe his spirit haunts the building to this day. A portrait of Dudley's sweet face still hangs in the room just to left of the entryway, and there is perhaps in his expression just a hint of playfulness. No one has ever accused Dudley of being malicious. As spirits go, he is much more of a practical joker. The large wooden doors in the building inexplicably slam shut causing the staff to jump out of their seats. Radios turn on and off by themselves, and, for some reason, Dudley amuses himself by flushing the toilets. The staff had to explain what was going on to some contractors that were replacing the toilet when it began flushing before it was even hooked up!

"Dudley isn't a scary ghost at all," a former staff person told me, "He's very friendly. We're used to him and I think we'd miss him if he wasn't there!"

Appleton Hall (North End)

Access: Doorway view is always available.

Directions: From Dudley Coe, head due west in the direction of the Chapel. The north face of Appleton Hall is just beyond the parking spaces.

Chamber of Horrors! In 1897 during renovations to Appleton Hall, some Delta Kappa Epsilon relics were found in the basement. The New York Evening Post ran a sensational front-page story about the find on July 24: "Chamber of Horrors Found Under a Dormitory at Bowdoin College!" The article alleged that instruments of torture and human bones were among the finds. The Post eventually printed a retraction, but was this really a mistake or was something hushed up?

Appleton Hall (South End)

Access: Graves are always viewable, but be careful not to damage the flowers.
Directions: Walk around Appleton Hall on the Quad side and position yourself by the doors on the other end.

The Gravestones. Students and faculty take the walkway between Appleton and Hyde halls every day, but very few of them know that they are passing right by the grave of "Anna." Don't believe me? Walk up to the door of Appleton and then look at the garden to your right. Depending on the time of year, you might have to dig through some plants, but after late fall, you should easily see a gravestone marked "Anna." In fact, there are three such stones.

Who was Anna? Well, as it turns out, "Anna" stands for analytical geometry. After a particularly brutal exam in their analytical geometry class, a number of students decided to indulge in a cathartic act and burned their blue books from the exam and buried them outside their door. They even went so far as to raise a headstone. Over the years other students followed their example, and the stones remain to this day.

Coleman Hall

Access: Coleman Hall is not accessible to the public.

Directions: Walking away from Appleton, bear left following the sidewalk that runs parallel to the road. Coleman Hall is the last building before College Street.

I know where the bodies are buried. There is a legend among the residents of Coleman that when the Medical School in Adams Hall closed its doors in 1920, the administrators of the College found themselves in a difficult situation. The school was closed, but they still had a number of cadavers left in the basement. What could they do? Well, rather than raise a big fuss, the legend is that they simply buried the bodies in the empty lot where Coleman stands today!

Site of the Robert Peter Tristram Coffin House

Access: Always accessible.

Directions: From Coleman Hall, walk to College Street and turn left. Take College Street until you reach Coffin Street. The site is on the far corner of College and Coffin.

The Ghost Ship of Harpswell. Just off campus once stood the home of Robert Peter Tristram Coffin. Tristram liked to write Maine ghost stories and in the book *John Dawn* he writes about the Dead Ship of Harpswell, or the Ghost Ship of Harpswell as it is commonly known. The ghost ship was a masted ship that attacked British ships in the War of 1812. Christened the *Dash*, it vanished with all hands on a stormy night in 1815. Months later fishermen would report hearing a ship bear down on them in the fog and then see a phantom ship glide by with *Dash* inscribed on her bow. As the legend grew, people said that the ship appeared whenever a family member of one of the sixty original crew members died.

The last reported sighting of the *Dash* was during World War II when she appeared on a radar screen. When an intercept ship was sent in to investigate they saw a masted ship called *Dash* vanish into the fog.