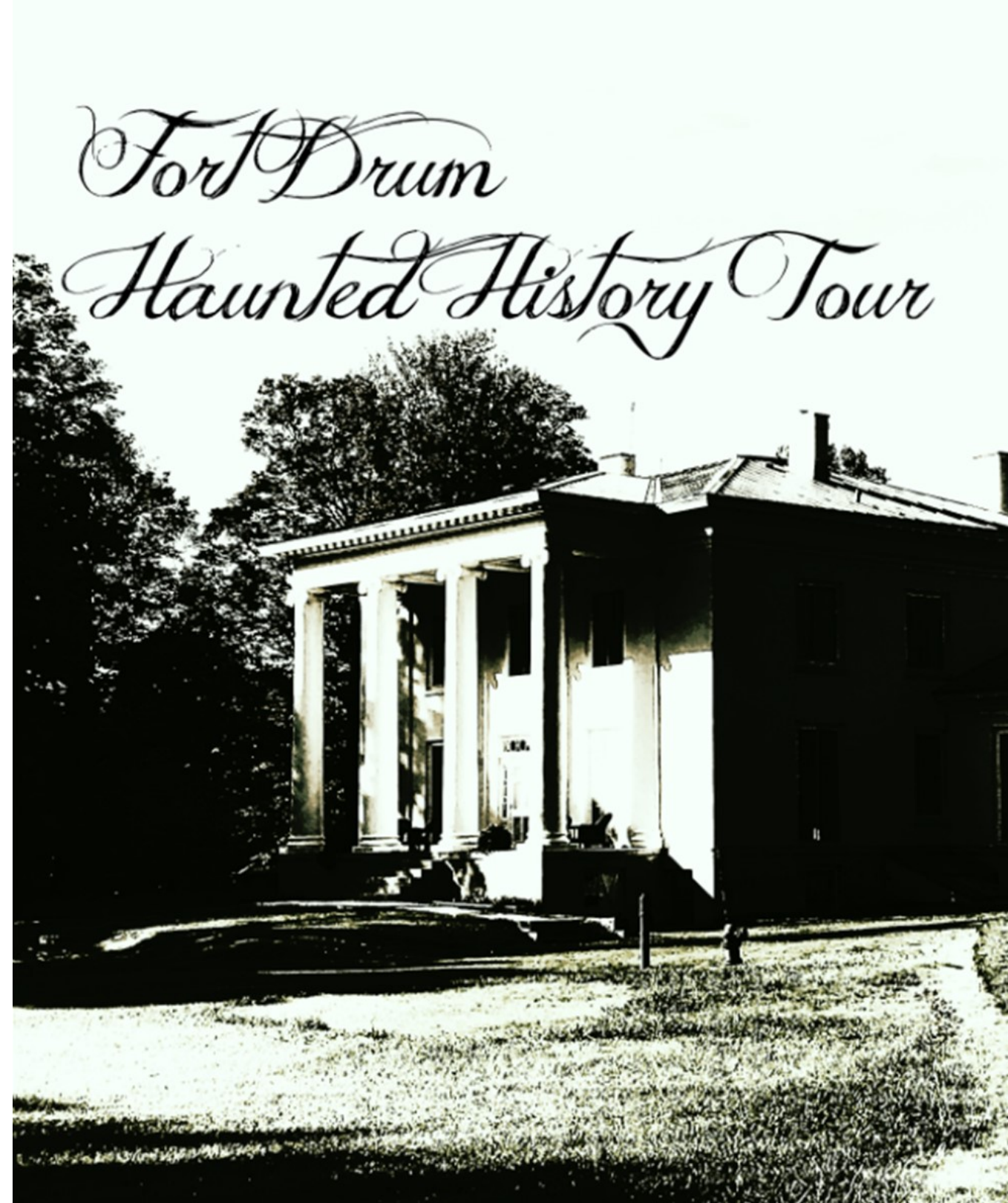
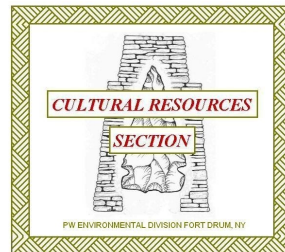
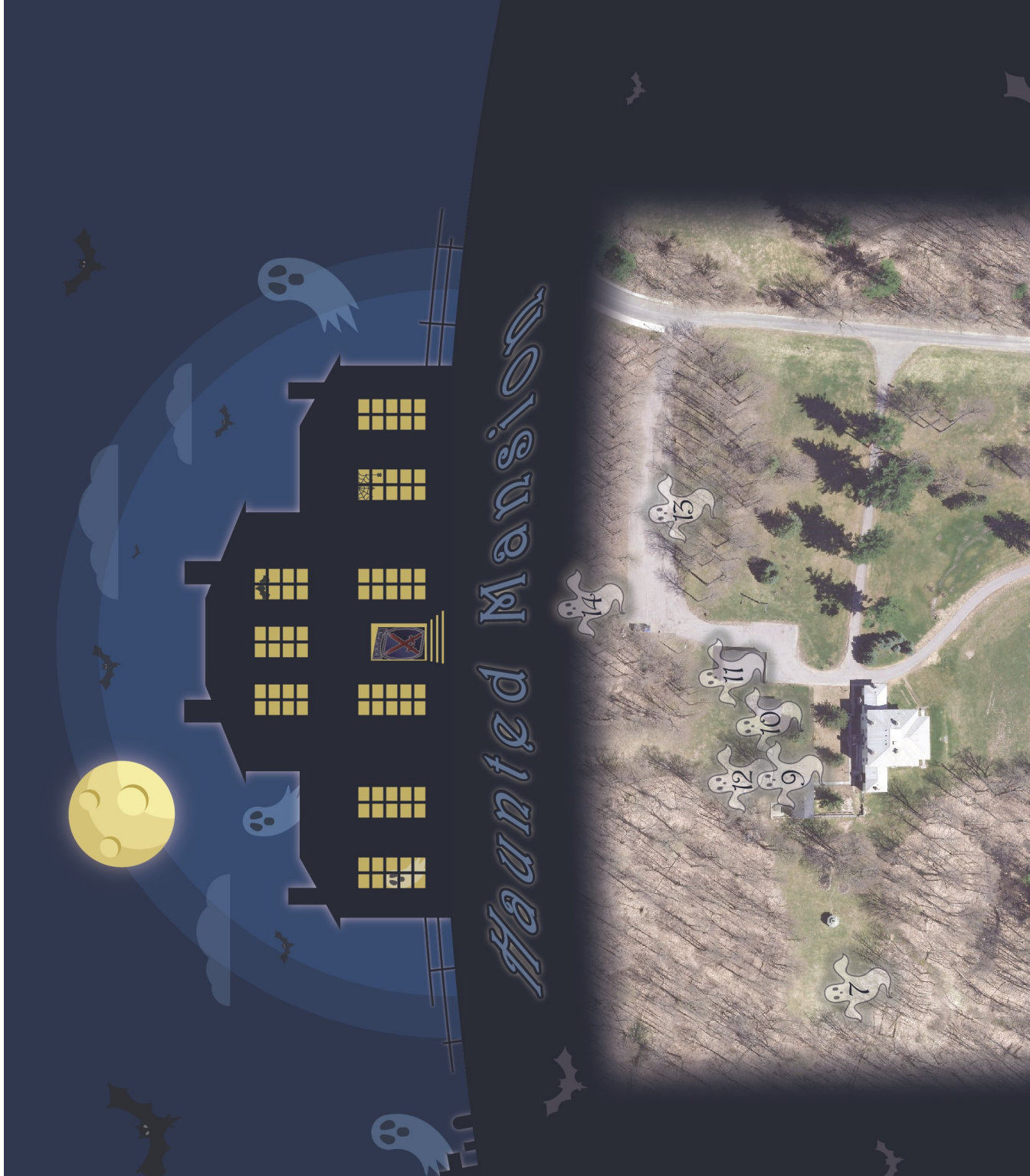




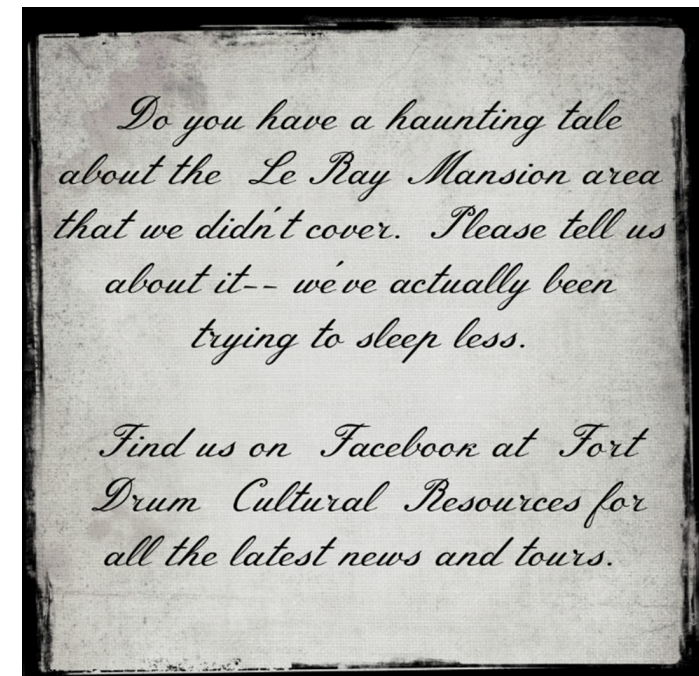
Disclaimer: This booklet was published September 2018 as a compilation of recorded histories and information for educational purposes. Written and compiled by Heather Wagner, CSU-CEMML Fort Drum, NY.





the feeling that someone is there.

- You are afraid to be inside the mansion alone.
- It is an old and historic area.
- People frequently report minor electrical problems, like lights going on and off, or light bulbs being blown.
- People report unusual smells such as unexplained perfume scents, flowers, cigars, cigarettes, food or even the stench of death and decay.
- People report a feeling of grief or sadness in specific rooms or areas of the house.
- A feeling of dread or unexpected fear suddenly overcomes you.
- Someone has died there.
- It is near an old hospital.
- Dogs growl or bark at nothing in particular.
- People, including children, have had unexplained experiences in the home.
- You believe in ghosts or spirits.
- You have seen a ghost or had a paranormal experience in the past.
- You think there are ghosts in and around the mansion.



Stop 14

30 Signs that the Le Ray Mansion is Haunted

Have you experienced any?

- You frequently feel an urge to look around because you have the feeling someone is watching you.
- Noises are regularly heard from other rooms.
- You hear your name called when no one around you said anything.
- Doors open and close on their own.
- Dogs or cats stare at corners or at an area when there is nothing there.
- Small objects regularly move or go missing, and sometimes unexpectedly reappear.
- Children meet imaginary friends.
- Rooms or areas around the district feel thick, heavy or cold.
- You unexpectedly feel exhausted or tired.
- Doors slowly close without any interference.
- Lights turn off or on when no one can recall doing either.
- You see shadows or movement out the corner of your eyes.
- You can hear people mumbling or music playing but can't determine the source.
- The back of your arms tickle as if your hair is standing on end, or you feel like you have walked through a spider web when there isn't one.
- You feel a static or electrical charge in the air while walking around the mansion area.
- After visiting, you have dreams of people you have never met.
- When outside, you find yourself constantly looking up at the windows because of





LeRay Mansion District: Where History Meets the Haunted

The following stories were gathered from oral histories, newspaper clippings, and local history books. This collection of creepy, spooky and other worldly recollections invites the paranormal curious to participate in this self-guided history tour around the 200 year-old LeRay Mansion historic complex. Like many things, this tour is as scary as your imagination.

This area is a national heritage site. All persons on the grounds should be respectful, cause no damage, no physical disturbance or leave anything on the site. Thank you for visiting this great historic community asset and allowing us to share it with you and future generations.

Feel free to take your time. There's no rush, and we hope you make it safely back to the bus.

Stop 13 Monster of the Pine Plains

*"The younger generation laugh at these yarns and say they are old, foolish tales set in motion a century ago by superstitious French Canadians who came down to lumber in the pine country, but there are not many people who would like to travel over the Pine Plains at night."**

Old Tom Fuller, who had a farm and a few acres of blueberries not far from General Grant's headquarters on the hogsback ridge overlooking the Black River and Great Bend, recounted in 1908 the story of the monster that has been told for the last 100 years or so. Now some will say these are just stories, but Fuller said lots of local folks accept this as gospel truth.

Stories are told of eerie echoing noises across the sand and sightings of a strange and fearsome beast with fiery red eyes and long shaggy white hair, a white animal big as a Merino ram with whiskers like a cat whose growling and bellowing have often been heard in the dead of night across the fort.

Tom Fuller had heard the story of the creature his whole life but he is a true believer, having seen the monster and escaped its grasp when he was just a young man in his 20s. Several people in the area claim to have seen the beast. Perhaps a few have also been its prey. Men and women have gone missing on the sandy barren flats, but few bodies are ever found.



*1908 newspaper article about Fort Drum area

Stop 12

Close Encounters

In 1952, a UFO sighting was reported over Camp Drum. A local newspaper covered the event as “Strange object in skies takes half-hour peek at Camp Drum Installation.” According to that news report, military authorities said an unidentified object zoomed through a half hour of weird aerial gyrations over the base. The object was described as 20 feet in diameter with an exhaust tail of red-orange sparks. Observers said the object hovered, circled rapidly and occasionally stopped completely. The officials at Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome, NY, would not comment.

Frequently there are UFO reports around the installation. The latest was in May 2016 when a Fort Drum couple recorded a strange triangular-shaped UFO in the sky.



Stop 1

Water Covers & Grass Conceals

One of the local legends surrounding ghosts at the LeRay Mansion centers on seeing a young girl dressed in white who wanders the woods at night. She disappeared from a farm between the Mansion and LeRaysville in the 1850s. Newspaper clippings from that time herald the event as having “stirred the people of Jefferson County as much as anything in its history.”

Ann Jane Converse, age 25, was educated, refined and “above average in her looks.” One newspaper article notes, “She was noted for her wit and tact, fond of flowers, and the great outdoors. For parties and other entertainments she was never in need of an escort.” The summer she disappeared, Ann stayed with her aunt and uncle, whose house was just 60 yards from the formal reflecting pool in the LeRay Mansion landscape. This pond was said to be her own personal playground while staying with her uncle. “She reveled in its beauty and came often to enjoy what she declared to be, *the enchanted groves of peace.*”

One fateful morning, Ann did not come to breakfast. When her aunt became worried, she went to check on Ann Jane, only to find her missing. Her family searched, but no clues were found in the house. Overwhelmed with fear, they went to search the pond. Nothing was found- no footprints, no trampled grass, not a trace.

News spread like wildfire. Her parents arrived from Watertown, neighbors went in search, and well over 1,000 people came from near and far to join in the search. The questions on everyone’s lips were “Did she have a steady?” “Was she crossed in love?” “How did she disappear?” But again, nothing was found.

Her grief-stricken mother believed she had sleep-walked in the night out into the forest. So the search party renewed their efforts. For days, her father tramped fields and forests calling his daughter’s name. Those who heard him shouting wished they hadn’t. It was the voice of hopeless despair.

Men formed a long line 25 feet apart, and they swept the Pine Plains for three days and nights. They came home dirty, ragged, and soul weary.

After 10 days of fruitless searching something startling happened. On a some bushes, a few shreds of white cloth were found near an impression of a woman's shoe. This news renewed the searchers. More people joined the search party, including a "clairvoyant and crystal-gazer" who declared the girl was alive, on the Plains but very weak.

Three weeks later, nothing was found and the search was all but abandoned. The community forgot and the grief-stricken parents were silent when grief has no language.

Months later, a local newspaper had the following article: "Two boys were paddling a boat along the shore of LeRay's Pond. They see a white object floating among the tall reeds and grass. It is the body of Ann Jane Converse."

Is the woman in white who wanders the woods around the Mansion the young Ann? Is she searching for her lover? Her home? Have you seen her?



The tragic death of Pvt. Waldron Russell caused a local sensation in the early 1900s. Was he murdered? Was his death accidental? Was it the lights or monster of the Pine Plains?

Pvt. Russell of K Company, 45th Infantry disappeared from the area only to be found days later bruised and battered floating in the dark waters of the Black River about a mile from Great Bend, NY. According to the theory of his superior officers, Russell disappeared on a Friday night with a bankroll of cash in his pocket and left camp to visit a "colony of allegedly dissolute women" which had gathered in Great Bend. He was never seen alive again.

The case went unsolved for weeks since the coroner could not find any cause of death. No gunshots, no stab wounds. The only evidence was the post-mortem bruising caused by the river. With no clear cause, the case was the sensation in the local newspapers at the time. Many speculated that he fell victim to the monster on the plains. Soldiers of the 45th Infantry spread the story widely of the monster on the plains and, when interviewed, told more than one reporter that they had heard the monster and that the sand plains were indeed haunted.

Weeks after the discovery of his body, Pvt. Carlos Gilbert, also K Company, 45th Infantry, and Nora Leonard, a local woman, were arrested for Russell's murder.

Was he murdered in a love triangle? Was he robbed and then dumped in the river? Was it an accident? Was it the monster? No one has ever been certain, but some still see his ghost walking the plains along the river banks searching.



Back in the late '90s, a woman from the Jefferson County Historical Society (JCHS) accompanied the Fort Drum cultural resources manager, Dr. Laurie Rush, to the LeRay Mansion for a tour. One of the places Dr. Rush usually includes in her tours of the Mansion is the basement. However, as soon as the woman from the JCHS stepped onto the stone part of the cellar floor, she got a terrified look on her face and said, "I have to get out of here." She then ran up the stairs and out of the house.

The woman told Dr. Rush afterward that she had never heard any of the Mansion ghost stories but that a terrible sense of foreboding had overcome her such as she had never experienced in her entire life. She felt as if something evil did not want her there. Dr. Rush reported that she was standing right beside her and that the woman was clearly terrified but that she herself didn't feel anything.

A sense of foreboding is a foretelling, a sign or glimpse that "something wicked this way comes." Interesting fact: a sense of foreboding can actually be a medical symptom for often serious ailments. A sense of impending doom is a symptom of anything from cardiac arrest to a jellyfish sting. It's not conclusive in and of itself, but it is listed as one of the identifying features of multiple medical problems.



Jules-René Payen purchased the LeRay Mansion and estate from James' son Vincent LeRay de Chaumont in 1840. Jules Payen was a distinguished French legionnaire, mining engineer and chemist whose expertise was in explosives. Payen discovered a process by which gunpowder could be manufactured in a more economical way than any during its time.

While Payen perfected his gunpowder process in the old barns of LeRay it has been said that an industrial spy from the Dupont Corporation became very interested in how Payen was making his cheap and efficient gunpowder.

(The Dupont businesses were formed in America when Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours, the son of a Parisian watchmaker, and his sons, Victor Marie du Pont and Éleuthère Irénée du Pont, emigrated from France in 1800 to the United States in 1800. Here they used their heritage and resources to establish one of their most successful corporations, E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, as a gunpowder manufacturer on the Brandywine River near Wilmington, Delaware.)

Gil Thoreau was employed by the Du Pont family as an industrial spy. Thoreau was a woodsman and was described as a tall, skinny man wearing deerskins and a coonskin cap. He had a pet fox named Fiery.

Reportedly the Du Pont spy came up to the wilds of Northern New York and snuck onto the Mansion grounds. While doing so he was caught red-handed by Payen. One moonlit evening, Thoreau stumbled into the compound of the Du Pont's testing field and collapsed at the door of the foreman's room. Below his heart gaped two bullet holes and a dirty blood crusted bandage was wrapped around his shoulder where a knife wound had been inflicted some days earlier and had now turned green. When water was brought he managed to murmur the name of "Payen" and then died.

After the death of Thoreau, the LeRay Mansion was plagued by foxes killing and carrying off the barnyard fowl. At times a lone red fox could be seen sitting on the lawn in front of the portico. The fox would sit motionless for hours, watching and waiting. When a passerby would approach, the fox would melt away, only to return. On nights of the full moon, it was reported that the fox would bark in a most frenzied manner and in the morning blood would be found splattered on the white steps of the Mansion.

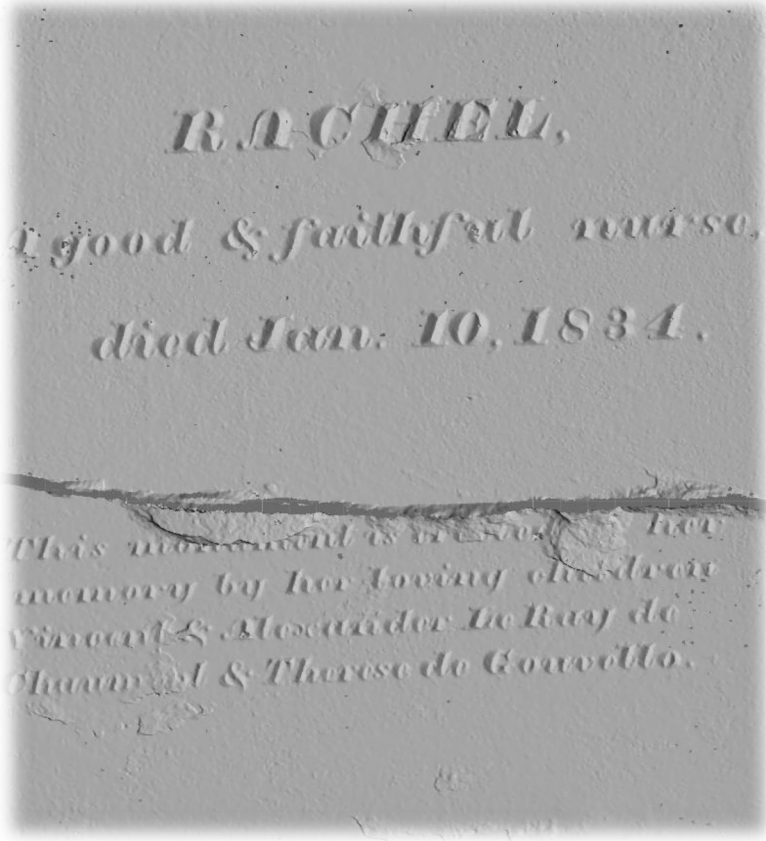
Today, tales are told by hikers in the woods around the LeRay Mansion of a red fox suddenly appearing on the path and then speeding silently past without taking notice of the hikers. Then a few hundred yards away, a deer-skinned clad figure of a tall, thin man wearing a coonskin cap lopes into view. He too passes silently, eyes intent on the trail ahead.

Over time, the Du Pont Company grew into the largest black powder manufacturing firm in the world. Perhaps that knowledge will let Thoreau’s ghost rest.



families in the town of Champion, one of the earliest settled areas in the county. Of these, the Benjamin Hudad family had left the county by 1830. The Peter Sharp family, however, continued to reside in the county throughout the 19th century. The 22 slaves were scattered throughout the county but the greatest concentration, a full one half, lived in the town of LeRay. James LeRay de Chaumont, a wealthy Frenchman for whom the town was named, was one of the county's largest slave owners, with just three slaves. LeRay's family had been supporters of the United States during the American Revolution and had housed Benjamin Franklin when he was the American ambassador to France. LeRay bought hundreds of thousands of acres of land in northern New York - including most of the northern half of Jefferson County. He built the LeRay Mansion and for a number of years lived like a king in the wilderness before eventually returning to France.

One of LeRay's slaves, a woman known only as Rachel, was nurse to his children. When she died a free woman in 1834, she was buried in LeRaysville's Sheepfold Cemetery. Her tombstone identifies her as "a good and faithful servant." A further



inscription states that "This monument is erected to her memory by her loving children Vincent and Alexander LeRay de Chaumont and Thérèse LeRay de Gouvello."

Does she still watch over the care of the Mansion today?

Stop 9

Sweet Dreams or Ghostly Screams

After a LeRay Mansion tour for one of the family readiness groups, Dr. Rush was pulled aside by an African American woman who was a spouse of one of the officers. She told Dr. Rush that before her husband got his orders to transfer to Fort Drum, she had a dream about the Mansion. In her dream, she had seen the entire slave staff of James LeRay. They were all dining in the kitchen in the basement, and the slave Rachel was at the head of the table. The woman claimed that she had never read or seen any of the historic material on the LeRay Mansion, James LeRay, or his slave Rachel.

James LeRay de Chaumont and his family were involved in transatlantic shipping which at one time most certainly dealt in the slave trade.

The 1810 federal census represents the first detailed information on the area's population. In that year there were 22 slaves and 18 free blacks in Jefferson County, a total of 40 African Americans out of a population of 15,337. The free blacks were members of two



Stop 3

Walking in Ghostly Footsteps



These ghostly footsteps make a heavy echoing sound, like those of leather-soled shoes, with the long distinctive stride pattern that only an adult could achieve. Leather-soled shoes tend to make more noise than many of today's rubber-soled shoes. Leather soles are often harder and can make quite a sharp clacking noise when walking. Often, leather heels on shoes are put together with nails, which can sound a bit like tap shoes when walking.

The elderly in-laws of one of the colonels on post had arranged to stay in the cottage for a weekend visit to see their daughter. When asked how she and her husband enjoyed the accommodations, she commented that she had a restless night because she had been awakened and frightened by the sound of footsteps from inside the cottage. Her husband had been asleep beside her and no one else was in the cottage. She remarked that it sounded like someone wearing leather-soled shoes walking through the cottage.

A couple of years later, the parents of a returning Soldier stayed in the cottage. The next afternoon they came to the Cultural Resources office to speak with the Fort Drum Cultural Resources Manager, Dr. Laurie Rush, to learn more about the LeRay Mansion. When Dr. Rush asked how they liked staying at the Mansion, they explained that they were in the cottage, but that they didn't get much sleep because of the strange footsteps. They said it sounded like someone - "you know like with soft shoes on, was walking around all night."

Experts in the paranormal theorize that hearing footsteps means the ghosts feel quite at home in the house they are haunting. They may be merely passing through and quite noisily taking a snoop around the Mansion. Sounds of pacing usually imply a residual haunting where a ghost is caught in a sort of loop, reenacting a single scene from their life.



There has long been the story of dancing lights across the Pine Plains where the Fort Drum cantonment sits today. The earliest story of the lights was given in the late 1800s by a Frenchman who lived near where the village of Deferiet sits now. He was walking his horse across the sand plains to reach his home one evening when he saw a light in the distance bobbing up and down. Thinking it may be the lantern light of another traveler, he thought nothing of it until a piercing scream of a woman tore through the air. The Frenchman jumped on his horse and rode toward the light and the screams in aid of the mystery woman. No matter how hard he rode he couldn't catch up to the light or get any closer to the periodic screams that echoed through the night.

Still determined to be of help, he continued chasing the light until abruptly his horse reared up and he fell over backwards to the ground. Dusting himself off, he approached his horse and looked down the steep stone cliff to the churning dark waters of the Black River. He might have fallen to his death on the water covered rocks below if not for his horse saving him.

Local residents have long thought that the bodies that showed up on the sand plains and in the Black River along Fort Drum may have been those lured by the dancing lights, men found without stab or shot wounds to tell the end of their story.

Reports of dancing lights still trickle in across Fort Drum. In fact, orbs of floating lights are often reported at the LeRay Mansion. For years ghost tours of the Mansion have been cancelled because too many paranormal experiences reported in the house were causing a concern. One high-ranking officer's wife had been in the Mansion and had witnessed a ball of light enter the room that she was in, float across the room, over the bed and disappear under the armoire. Others staying at the Mansion have seen the orbs of light descending the staircase.

Watch for the lights, but be careful. If you follow the dancing lights, you may find yourself over a precipice and may be found in the mighty Black River the following morning.



A former garrison commander of Fort Drum had a dog that would from time to time sniff around the cellar door to the LeRay Mansion. The dog would always get very frightened, and then tuck its tail between its legs and run away yelping. When it had retreated to a safe distance, it would work up its courage and go back to the cellar door, where the process would be repeated.

During the same garrison commander's tenure, the front door to the Mansion would not stay closed. Public Works attempted to fix the problem by adding latches and additional locks but to no avail.

The movement of objects like the door, when you can be sure that a living person isn't doing the moving, is one of the clearest signs that there is a paranormal presence, according to ghost hunters, perhaps even that of a poltergeist. Poltergeists are known to have a flair for mischief and like to stay completely unseen.



Stop 7

Sliding down the Bannister

The command leader spouses had gathered in the Mansion to decorate for the holidays and to have lunch. One of the women brought her young child along. The child played happily all morning, running around the room and brushing up against the women from time to time. As the women were about to leave, the child asked, "Aren't you going to say good-bye to the children?" When the mother asked, "Which children?" the answer was, "The ones I've been playing with. They are on the stairs waving good-bye." The child was so convincing that all of the women waved good-bye to the children on the stairs.

Ghost hunters call these types of voices EVP (electronic voice phenomenon) and with the right equipment they can reportedly pick up the sounds of spirits talking. But there is something far more intimate and frightening when you hear a ghostly voice with your own ears. According to paranormal researchers, hearing ghosts talking, laughing or interacting with people is evidence of an intelligent haunting and one that is easier to interact with, should you feel comfortable and safe doing so.

Is there a message they wish to share with only the people who can hear them and see them? Should you listen?



Stop 5

Soldier in Distress

The POW cemetery just off Route 26 on post is said to be haunted by the ghost of one of the prisoners of war buried there. Fort Drum, known then as Pine Camp, was the holding place of thousands of German and Italian prisoners of war between 1943 and 1945. While held prisoner here, eight soldiers died out of the thousands under the control of Pine Camp. Five died from complications of the flu, one in a horrific train accident, one in a vehicle accident and one drowned in Remington Pond.

The story goes that the cemetery is haunted by one of these soldiers. In 1993, a mother with her children saw a soldier standing by the edge of Route 26, waving his arm as if to flag her down. She slowed as to stop but the Soldier retreated into the woods. After waiting, then later returning to try to find him, the mother and children never saw the soldier again.

It has been said that a soldier in an old WWII uniform has been seen walking in the woods around the POW cemetery, Remington Pond area, and the Mansion district.



Stop 6

Tales from the Staff



The Ghost of Mrs. Phelps

The lodging staff checks on the Mansion regularly whether there are guests or not. One morning a member of the staff heard footsteps upstairs, so he went upstairs and knocked on the door of the Alexander Room where he thought the sounds were coming from. In response to his knock, a woman appeared at the door. She informed him that her husband was still asleep and asked that he come back later. He then went to the lodging office to inform them that someone was still using the room. The receptionist checked the registry and found that, in fact, there was no one staying at the Mansion at that time. Additional members of the lodging staff went to the Mansion and discovered no evidence of anyone having been in the room. Upon being questioned, the employee described the person that he met as an elderly woman in an old fashioned bath robe. When asked her ethnicity, he said that she was white, "...and come to think of it, she was very, very pale." Many have now come to believe that this apparition was that of Mrs. Phelps, one of the former owners of the Mansion.



Soothed by the Bell

Clotilde de Gouvello was the daughter of Thérèse de Gouvello (daughter of James LeRay de Chaumont). Clotilde was born in the Mansion but contracted "the Pox" early on, weakening her heart. She unfortunately died at the age of 15 months on September 20, 1818. She is buried on the Mansion grounds near the trout pond. From time to time, the lodging staff has reported hearing the sound of a baby crying. At times the sound is that of a whimper, and other times it is a wail. However, every time, the house has been empty.



Immediately after the baby, Clotilde, was buried, a bell was placed beside the grave so that passersby could ring the bell and share in the grief of the LeRay Family. For a long time there was no bell, but it is said that it can sometimes still be heard. Today the bell has been restored by a kind soul. Coincidentally, a baby crying is very seldom heard in the neighborhood. Perhaps the recognition and remembrance has created a sense of serenity for the spirit.

It's a Constant Party Here

One lodging staff person entered the Mansion to conduct her daily cleaning duties. Once inside the mansion, she heard the sound of what sounded to her like someone laying out glassware in one of the parlors, accompanied by the sound of people talking. She walked through the house to find it empty.

This story is quite common and seems to reoccur. Some people have reported the sound of a dinner party coming from the dining room. Others have heard what sounded like music coming from one of the parlors. Perhaps it is the LeRay Family entertaining their guests.