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The Legend of the Lady in Black: 100 years later

By Addie Woods

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As Cone-Bottoms Hall celebrates its centennial birthday, stories arise that were passed down from generation to generation surrounding the iconic building on campus. One urban legend follows the story of Jane and her mysterious death.

In the early 1920's, Jane began dating Joshua, a student at Henderson State University. As their relationship blossomed, Joshua's friends started to pressure him to break up with her. His friends taunted and teased him because of the longstanding rivalry between the two schools as it was almost unheard of to be seen with someone from the opposing school.

On the eve of Henderson's Homecoming, he ended things with Jane and took a Henderson girl to the Homecoming dance instead. Convinced her life could not go on without him, Jane walked back to Cone-Bottoms, which served as a women's dormitory then, and put on a floor length black dress and veil before throwing herself down the elevator shaft.

Almost a century later, it is rumored that her ghost still haunts the halls of Cone-Bottoms, where she warns against dating a Henderson boy and can be seen still wearing the fateful long black dress and veil she died in.

Janice Craig '83, a previous resident of Cone-Bottoms dormitory, recalls the stories of the "Lady in Black" she heard while she was a student.

"The Lady in Black walked the halls at night and would open doors and stand over (students). When the girls would wake, the Lady in Black would run out of the door. She also might hide in their closet to come out later and scare them," said Craig.

Other strange happenings that have been noted are the sound of footsteps throughout the halls late at night, flickering of lights and an unexplained cool breeze in parts of the building.

After an extensive renovation in the early 1990s, Cone-Bottoms became the administrative hub of campus. The Office of Development is on the third floor.

Emily Merryman '01 served as Ouachita's director of development operations and annual giving from 2011-2014.

"When I used to run the Annual Fund phone-a-thon in the evenings on the third floor in Cone-Bottoms, I was often locking up around 10 p.m. or later," Merryman recalled. "If I was alone, I would feel someone following me all the way down the hall and then downstairs. She would never continue past the back door, though!"

Whether the legend of the Lady in Black is true or not, her story has remained a part of Ouachita folklore and has haunted the students in more ways than one.



Addie Woods is a senior communications & media/strategic communications major from Searcy, Ark.