

# ARCHIVIST'S CORNER

## historic Beware of Ghosts at McKay Avenue School

by Mike Kostek

# GHOSTS

**Something strange and inexplicable continues to occur in Edmonton's oldest brick school.** Locked doors are discovered unlocked; firmly hung pictures are discovered askew; heavy furniture is mysteriously moved; gleaming maple floors are scraped; cabinet drawers are found open, and lights are discovered blazing in previously darkened areas of historic McKay Avenue School.

Reports of ghosts inhabiting McKay Avenue School first surfaced shortly after the building was opened in 1905. At that time mysterious voices and sounds were reported heard in a section of the building adjacent to two stone fireplaces that once were functional. In recent years a spate of ghostly activities have resurfaced in the old landmark.

Ron Hlady, custodian and building preservation technician at the historic school, has had numerous encounters with the ethereal beings that supposedly haunt the building. One of Hlady's major responsibilities at the school is maintaining security in the almost century-old building. A veteran of 18 years of service at the landmark institution, Hlady is convinced

that he is not alone in protecting the old school; he firmly believes that historic McKay Avenue School is the home of several phantoms, and cites a number of personal encounters with the spirits that frequent the three-storey building.

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Another story, from retired school principal George Schurman, recounts moaning sounds emanating from the school's attic as late as the 1960s. Yet another story of ghostly encounters was recalled by the late Ena Schneider, a secretary at the school in the early 1990s. Claiming that something strange brushed past her on several occasions, Mrs. Schneider would enter certain sections of the basement area of the school only when she was accompanied by a colleague.

Schneider's encounter with the spirits in the school's basement paled in comparison with painter John McCormick's

experiences in the same basement.

McCormick was convinced that something in the school repeatedly attempted to push him off his stepladder perch whilst he was painting. So intense was one encounter that McCormick refused to work in the basement area for the remainder of his contractual period at McKay Avenue School.

Recently, a team of respected psychics participated in a nightlong vigil at historic McKay Avenue School. Each of the ghost hunters detected the presence of spirits in the old building. Their conviction was confirmed by images from a time-delay camera which photographed some weird shapes hovering over the old wooden staircase. The photo images are being analyzed by other psychics and spirit hunters, including Barbara Smith, author of *Ghost Stories of Alberta*.

The ghosts that haunt historic McKay Avenue School are featured in Smith's lead story in her recently published book *Even More Ghost Stories of Alberta*.