

The Irvington Historical Society Newsletter

OCTOBER 2012

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 10

Message from the President

Autumn in Irvington

Irvington is beautiful throughout the year, but I believe autumn is when Irvington is at its best. It seems like the colors of fall complement the quaint atmosphere of the neighborhood wonderfully.

Another reason that autumn is Irvington's season is Halloween. Irvington is known for many things—an interesting history, wonderful architecture, friendly residents—but one of the main things it is known for is its Halloween Festival. Since 1947, the festival has been a defining element of the community, and the increased inter-

est in the holiday over the years has shown a spotlight on Irvington that doesn't show any signs of waning.

For years the Halloween Festival has grown to encompass several activities and events over the week preceding the street fair that is the hallmark of the festival. As part of the festival the Irvington Historical will host its second annual Chili Supper and Washington Irving Presentation on Saturday, October 20. See page 6 for more information .

Happy Irvington Halloween!

Don Flick,
IHS President

Ghostly Evenings at Bona

The very popular Irvington Ghost Tours have been making indoor stops at the Bona Thompson Center this month. Tour participants get to hear tour guide Al Hunter relate the tragic story of the real life Bona as well as the other fascinating stories that make up the ten-stop tour, including tales about Masonic Lodge 666, America's first serial killer H.H.Holmes, D.C. Stephen-



son and the death of the Ku Klux Klan, Abraham Lincoln, and John Dillinger.

In their tenth anniversary, the tours continue to increase in popularity. Over 90 people participated in the tour this past Friday.

Al Hunter is co-author (with Russ Simnick) of *Irvington Haunts* and *More Irvington Haunts*. Recently released is Al's latest work *Indianapolis Haunts*.

Irvington Ghost Tours is a non-profit organization which donates a part of the tour proceeds to local charities. This month the Irvington Historical Society is benefiting from the tours.

To find out about the tours, log onto their website: www.irvingtonghosttours.org. Tours depart from 10 S. Johnson Avenue.

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Irvington Ghost Stories from the Indianapolis Star Archives

Submitted by Don Flick, IHS President

The following article appeared in the July 7, 1907 edition of the *Indianapolis Star*.

FIRE ENGINE HOUSE HAUNTED BY GHOSTS

Strange Noises Disturb Bold Fire
Fighters of the Irvington
Company.

LAUGH AT THE MYSTERY

Captain and Men, However, Admit
That They Hear Strange Rap-
ping and Knocking.

Bold fireman ought not to be afraid of such an insignificant thing as a ghost or a goblin or a spirit or a tricky bad fairy, and maybe the firemen at the engine house in Irvington are not. Maybe the engine house is not haunted, but at any rate strange noises have been heard and there is no reasonable explanation for them. Even those firemen about the place who say that these strange sounds,

rapping and knocking, and the mysterious movements of furniture are not caused by ghosts are startled in their sleep at midnight. The ghost alarm rouses them as quickly as the alarm of fire in Irvington would. The firemen at the Irvington engine house discuss the matter seriously and with great perplexity, telling the nature of the noises and strange behavior of beds and chairs but the only explanation they have to offer is: "I know it happened but I don't know how."

**"...WHEN MY BED
MOVED SEVERAL
INCHES WITH ME
IN IT"**

Dave Williams says that he is not superstitious but that Sam James is. Sam James says that he is not superstitious but that Dave Williams is. Jon Keys says he does not take any stock in the haunted theory at all but admits that he has been roused from his slumbers at night by peculiar, strange sounds and has come down stairs to see what was the matter, only to find everything quiet and nothing stirring, without a single ghost in sight. Capt. John Hull says it is all sheer nonsense and silly to think of ghosts being in an engine house, but admits that noises are made sometimes and he feels like the building is going to fall down on the heads of the fire laddies.

Hears Mysterious Knocking.

"The first thing I ever noticed," said Dave Williams, as he sat in his undershirt getting cool the other evening, "Was knocking

on the floor by my bed. But I don't know what it was. Then in a night or two I heard a noise like someone was knocking on the wall by my bed, but I don't know what it was.

"The worst thing happened when my bed moved several inches with me in it. I don't know what caused it but I was wide awake and felt it move and Sam James said he never touched it. I don't know what it was caused by. I believe Sam is superstitious.

**"WE DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT MADE THE
CURTAIN FLY UP"**

"Sam is always talking about ghosts and telling ghost stories. I don't believe in them myself, but these noises are strange. One night Sam was talking about ghosts and how he believed in 'em when I said: 'You'll have to show me before I believe in 'em.'

Right then, before I had the words out of my mouth, the window curtain flew up just like some one had had hold of it. We didn't know what made the curtain fly up.



IRVINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

"After that a few nights Sam was talking about ghosts again and said we was being pursued for something bad we'd done in our early days, when we sowed the wild oats. While we talked a bright light flashed in the room and flickered around us and neither one of us knew what made the light flicker."

**"...AND NEITHER
OF US KNEW WHAT
MADE THE LIGHT
FLICKER"**

"Even up in the attic there was a strange noise not long ago. It was such a terrible noise that Will Rusie, a brother to Amos Rusie, the one-

time famous ball player, by the way, got up out of bed and went downstairs.

Irvington Ghost Stories (cont'd from pg. 2)

Joe Keys, who laughs at the mere suggestion that the Irvington engine house is haunted, has also heard the mysterious knockings at midnight. Once they became so terrible to him that he got out of bed and went downstairs to try and get a little rest sitting by the big front door where the street cars go by and it is not so lonesome.

Policeman Hears Noises.

Policeman Grant Fulton had heard the strange tales about the haunted engine house. He had heard that strange noises came from the alley running near the engine house, and he wanted to know who it was or what it was that made all these strange sounds that had been reported to him. He thought it was some joke or else the noises could be accounted for in some natural way. He stepped into the engine house one dark night about midnight and sat down in a chair. Everything was still and he remarked to himself that it was foolish to think of

ghosts or to be afraid of them. Suddenly there were two raps on the floor by his chair and he fled precipitately from the building.

Some of the wise ones try to account for the sounds by saying they think the walls of the building are settling or that the big cross beams which support the second floor and the attic are giving a little bit. The theory is scouted, because the building has stood so long that it has had plenty of time to settle before this. And the firemen say besides that they can tell the difference between a creaking sound and a knock which sound like some one's fist was beating against the walls or the floor. They will not admit it that the sounds are caused by ghosts, but they solemnly declare that they do not know what causes them.

Since the story of the haunted engine house has spread in Irvington there are not as many pedestrians on the north side of the street as there used to be at night.

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Submitted by Don Flick, IHS President

The following article appeared in the November 1, 1913 edition of the *Indianapolis Star*. It is curious that this incident occurred around Halloween but there is no mention of that in the article.

"GHOST" FAILS TO REAPPEAR.
"Oh, Man! Oh, Man!" Mourner Does
Not "Come Back" In Irvington.

The "ghost" which frightened Samuel Rodkey, a carpenter, and others at the home of Miss Leota Bray, 290 Burgess avenue, Thursday, did not put in an appearance yesterday and the neighborhood in which Miss Bray lives rested easier last night. Miss Bray was not at home last night. It is understood that she has no explanation to offer for this mysterious noises which emanated from her home.

...ALL ASSERT THAT
THEY PLAINLY
HEARD SOME ONE
OR "SOME THING"
CRY, "OH MAN! OH
MAN!"

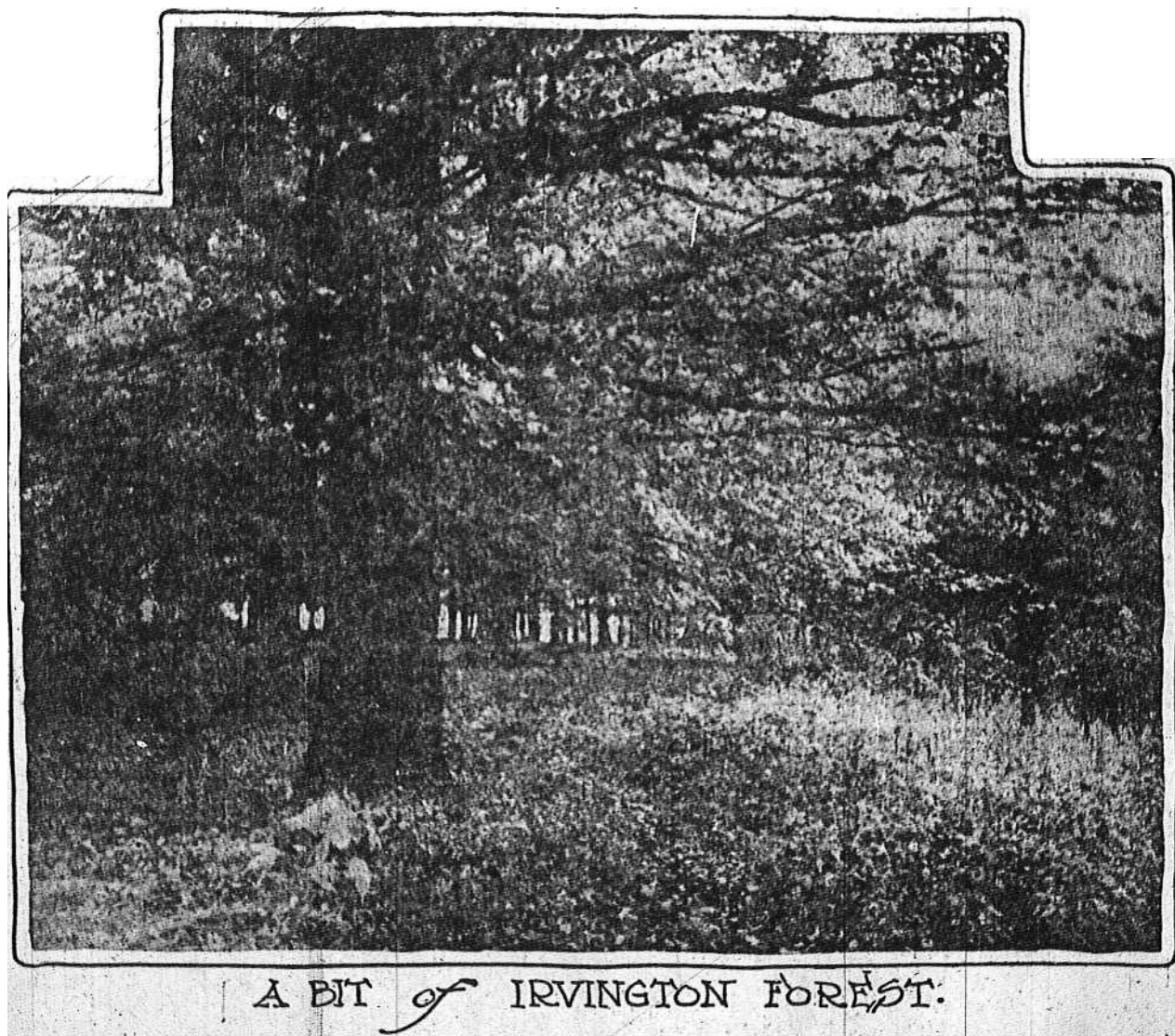
It is the statement of Bicyclemen Englebright and Chitwood, Rodkey and J. T. Pickett that they heard weird sounds coming from the house. All assert that they plainly heard some one or "some thing" cry, "Oh man! Oh man!" Search failed to reveal the source of the cry.

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A Bit of Irvington Forest

Submitted by Steve Barnett, IHS Executive Director

The following appeared 100 years ago this month in the October 19, 1912 edition of the *Indianapolis News*.



Irvington and its new-old park, Ellenberger's Woods, is now another shrine of autumnal color grandeur. The woods along Pleasant Run are in fine tone and there is something mystical about it all. Here a rush of sunlight makes the leaves a golden yellow at noonday. There shadows appear that seem as dark as night, although the sun may be in the zenith. There are dozens of pleasant walks through Irvington that will help to make an October Sunday afternoon strike a happy spot in your heart. Better take these walks, too, Friend Wayfarer, for gloomy winter soon will pass this way.

Butler Returns to Irvington

Written by Don Flick, IHS President.

As originally reported in the August newsletter, a bit of Butler University has returned to Irvington in the form of a finely-crafted diorama of the former Irvington campus. University officials recently donated the diorama to the historical society after deciding that there was not enough space at the current campus to house it.

In 1965 James Layman Schell, a 1922 Butler graduate, commissioned modelmaker Robert Hollingsworth to create the diorama. Through the years it was housed in various locations at the current Butler campus. After it was decided that it no longer was to be located at Butler, Dr. Julie Miller, Dean of Libraries, and Dr. Sally Childs-Helton, Associate Professor and Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Librarian, agreed that the best home for the diorama would be the Irvington Historical Society's Bona Thompson Center. They contacted IHS Director Steve Barnett and he readily accepted their offer.

The diorama had its official homecoming on Sept. 16 as part of the Benton House Irvington Home Tour. A nice crowd of tourgoers was on hand to listen to Miller and Childs-Helton relate the story of the diorama and its journey to Irvington.

The diorama is now at home in the main lobby of the Bona Thompson Center.

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Top: Dr. Sally Childs-Helton relates the decision to donate the diorama to the historical society as Dr. Julie Miller (in blue sweater) looks on.

Left: Detail of diorama showing Main Building, Burgess Hall, and Physical Plant.

Photos by Alan Allred.

Visitors from Sister City Hangzhou, China

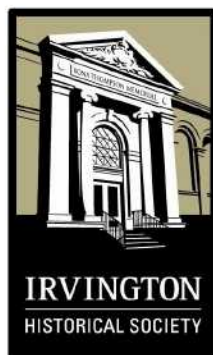


On Sept. 22 Cathy Carrigan from Irvington Terrace brought to the Bona Thompson Center two visitors from the "Far East" (and we don't mean Cumberland or Greenfield). The visitors, Liang Liang and Yu Lin, are librarians at the public library in Hangzhou, China. Hangzhou is known as "Paradise on Earth" for its beautiful West Lake, "Home of Silk" for its huge silk market, and "Tea Capital" for producing China's number one tea, West Lake Longjing Tea.

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Left: Steve Barnett, IHS Executive Director, (far right) explains the model of the original Irvington commercial district to two visitors from the Hangzhou, China Public Library. Visiting were (l—r) Liang Liang, Associate Professor and Vice Director; Yu Lin, Director, Literature Circulation Centre Public Library; and an unidentified interpreter.

Photo by Cathie Carrigan.



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2012

An Irvington Halloween Festival Event

To Benefit the

Irvington Historical Society

at the

Bona Thompson Memorial Center

5350 University Avenue





CHILI SUPPER:

Serving begins at 4:30 pm

\$6.00 per person, at the door

Includes bowl of chili, cole slaw, drink, and dessert

(Cheese and crackers, if desired)

Admission to Washington Irving Presentation, by hand stamp



WASHINGTON IRVING:

7:00 pm

\$3.00 adults; \$1.00 students/ children

Free admission if hand is stamped from the chili supper



Dramatic reading by Jon Burroughs, as Washington Irving,
of the "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"

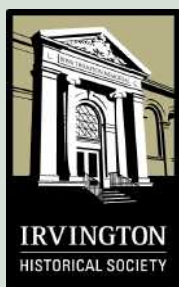
All proceeds will go toward the maintenance and upkeep of the
Bona Thompson Memorial Center.

Membership to the IHS is always available. It is an important way to say
you support our mission, and a bargain at \$25 per household.



***Please join us for this special
Irvington Halloween Festival event!***

IHS Membership



Annual Member Benefits:

- Special invitation for all events at the Bona Thompson Memorial Center.
- Newsletter
- 10% discount on Irvington Historical Society items at the Bona Thompson Memorial Society Gift Shop.
- Holiday gift.

To Join:

- Please complete the following application and mail it along with your annual membership dues for \$25.00 to:

*Irvington Historical Society
5350 East University Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46219-7009*

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Email _____

For more information about the Irvington Historical Society, visit www.irvingtonhistorical.org.

Recent Donations:

- Tech High School, *The Arsenal Cannon*, issues: January 1924-28; June 1923; 1925-27. Donor: Linda Lake.
- Various International Harvester items that belonged to Richard "Bill" Harper. Donor: Rhea Harper

IHS Happenings

Calendar

- Saturday, October 20: **Chili Supper and Washington Irving Presentation**, BTMC; Serving starts at 4:30pm; presentation at 7:00pm.
- Saturday, October 27: **Historic Irvington Halloween Festival**, East Washington Street between Ritter and Audubon Avenues.

Permanent Exhibits & Attractions at BTMC

- Butler University Memorabilia including diorama of the Irvington campus
- International Harvester Memorabilia
- Eastside Fire Museum
- Irvington Garden Club Conservatory
- IHS Bookstore and Gift Shop (new and vintage items)
- **"Influence of the Railroad on the Development of Irvington"** including scale model of Pennsylvania Railroad and the original Irvington commercial district
- **"The Civil War and its Influence on Irvington"** featuring exhibits on Camp McClellan, historic lithographs of notable battles, etc.

ABE MARTIN
OF IRVINGTON *Says —*

It's that time of year when you're accosted by bizarre characters who play on your emotions to extract favors from you.
Oh, and besides it being election time, it's also Halloween.