



The building most haunted by myth on campus, Biological Sciences was completed in the late '60s, representing the efforts of five separate contractors supervised by Public Works. Stories are told of the bubbling animosity between the strained quintet—that tensions grew so high that they refused to work with one another, opting instead to each construct a wing according to their own plans. The result was the labyrinthine building we know today as BioSci, where the floors don't quite line up, classrooms are built behind closets, and some doors and stairwells don't lead anywhere at all.

Even in its infancy, BioSci was victim to damning critiques. On 4 December, 1969, the main floor was drenched in a torrent of water when one of the pipes in the elevators burst. Shoddy construction wasn't the only issue, either: history tells us that several complaints were raised over the building's overall safety. Fire extinguishers could only be found on the main floor; doors would automatically close, locking unwitting biology students in dull and windowless classrooms; cockroaches ran rampant throughout several floors.

But roaches were the least of the building's creature-related concerns. Rumour has it that some years ago, a large snake broke free of its human confines and made a break for

freedom into the relative safety of the building's walls. Supposedly, the serpentine fugitive still calls these crawlspaces home, surviving on the juicy meats of the innumerable bugs, rodents, and students who inevitably lose their way en route to Zoology class.

The legacy of the contractors' quagmires is evident in even the smallest details. Explorers are bound to discover showers with illogically placed electrical outlets, sinks without taps, taps without sinks, toilets without plungers, and plungers without funjers, capdabblers, or smendlers. It's become an accepted habit to traverse multiple levels to get between rooms that are supposedly on the same floor as one another. Some classrooms weren't immediately discovered, let alone put to use when the building opened, as they were inexplicably buried behind storage closets.

A favorite tale of Orientation leaders is perhaps one of the most perplexing rumours surrounding the building. According to several sources, if you mark every window in the building from the inside and then view it from the outside, a handful of windows will remain unmarked. While the locations of these rooms remain a mystery to many, it's believed that they're enjoyed by BioSci's permanent residents, including the elusive serpent, as well as the pre-mortem spirit of Rod Fraser.

While BioSci may be bizarre in its own right, it's the antiques on campus that are home to some true hauntings. Legend has it that the University of Alberta houses no less than six ghosts across campus in some of its earliest buildings. Little is known about Corbett Hall's "Emily," or the unnamed spectre that resides in St Stephen's College. But former Graduate Students' Association president Alexis Pepin, in an interview for Ellen Schoeck's book *I Was There: A Century of Alumni Stories About the University of Alberta, 1906-2006*, gives this account of the PowerPlant's own spooky apparition:

"You can hear things fall off tables in the next room, but when you go to check, no one is there. And no one could be there because the rooms are locked," she says of the ghost that calls the GSA's quarters its home. "On the weekends when only a couple of us are here working, you can hear someone running from one room to another, but again, when you go to check, no one is actually there. And lights flick on in empty rooms. It's creepy."

Another playful poltergeist has been rumoured to inhabit the great chambers of Convocation Hall, in the old Arts Building. Late-night visitors to the building have heard the sounds of the great organ being played in the hall, even when there's nobody else in the building. Though sounding slightly skeptical himself, Convocation Hall audio technician Pat Strain shares a story about his colleague, Russ Baker:

"One night, Russ was up in the booth. We've got a closed-circuit video monitor up there so that we can see the performers on stage. He looked over at the monitor and could see the curtain kick, like somebody came up and gave it a quick boot. It was a little creepy because he was the only person in the building that night."

These aren't the only reported sightings of ghastly activities on campus. In fact, corporeal accounts of the university's spiritual inhabitants have been reported by many throughout the years. According to *I Was There*, Emma Read Newton, an acquaintance of former University President Henry Marshall Tory, is one of those residents of campus that simply can't bring herself to leave.

When the University first opened, Strathcona was experiencing a housing shortage that would surely be familiar to the denizens of today's campus. Tory dealt with this problem by having a series of homes constructed for professors along the northern ring of Saskatchewan Drive. Therefore, these ten homes were aptly dubbed the "Ring Houses," and numbered accordingly. From 1950–59, Newton lived in Ring House 1, which today

is home to the university's Museums and Collections Services. It's believed that she still makes her presence felt by causing a ruckus in the house, slamming doors; and running up and down the stairs. As well, despite the house being a smoke-free environment, the distinct odour of cigarettes still lingers in the air from time to time, a remnant of Newton's residence in the house.

But perhaps the most notorious phantom on campus is Athabasca Hall's "boy with the blue lips." In 2001, former Gateway editor Dave Alexander was able to interview a source on the ghost, under the condition that her identity remain anonymous. In the story, she recounted her late husband John's experience with the boy. While doing maintenance work around the Hall on a late autumn afternoon, John heard the soft cries of a child from the bushes. Though his initial investigations warranted no results, when the crying became much louder, he looked down to discover what appeared to be a boy of about eight years old. From John's report, the child was wearing an older-style plaid shirt and wool pants. He was covered in dirt as if he had been digging through the mud, and he shivered and sobbed painfully. Although John tried to approach the boy, he quickly disappeared into the bushes towards the river valley.

Several of his co-workers claimed to have experienced a similar haunting, though they tended to downplay the matter, keeping it mostly hushed. However, the tale became well-known amongst the workers, who kept a shared history on the boy and his unfortunate demise. When Athabasca Hall was first being built around 1910, there was a camp for workers and their families near the river. The boy was a child of one of the workers, who had been playing in the river valley one day, against his parent's orders. The boy forgot his coat in the bushes, but, not wanting to reveal his defiance to mom and dad, waited until night fall to sneak out and track down his missing jacket. The boy apparently became lost and disoriented in the heavy night fog and froze to death in the chill of the night's sub-zero temperatures.

When his parents discovered him missing the next morning, a search party was formed, and the boy's body was finally discovered. The boy's father gave him a hasty burial before disappearing with his wife, apparently fleeing in sorrow. Despite search efforts by Strathcona RCMP, neither the body nor the parents were ever found. Shortly thereafter, about a year since the boy's death, many workers around Athabasca Hall began to report tales of their run-ins with the ghostly child, sobbing and timid and blue-lipped from the frozen cold.

Whether you're a skeptic or a true believer, the university grounds are home to an endlessly rich and fascinating history. Some stories can't be found in any textbook and are only passed down as folklore, as true ghost stories are. Take a closer look at the buildings around you on your next walk about campus—if you're truly gutsy, try it after dark. Such an experience can shed a whole new light on the leviathans that have stood watch over the past century.

Watch for more mad science on Thursday, when we'll be bringing tales of human lab rats.

