

Book Review: The Ghost Will See You Now: Haunted Hospitals of the South. Russell, Randy. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: John F. Blair, 2014. ISBN 978-0-89587-631-7 (Hardback). 233 p.

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Smith, K. M. (2015). [Review of the book *The Ghost Will See You Now: Haunted Hospitals of the South*, by R. Randy]. *The Southeastern Librarian*, 63(2), 27.

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Abstract:

Randy Russell believes hauntings can happen anywhere, but that ghosts may actually prefer the South. This premise has led him to pen several books about Southern ghosts, including *Ghost Cats of the South* and *Mountain Ghost Stories and Curious Tales of Western North Carolina*. The author now turns his attention towards hauntings that take place in medical facilities throughout thirteen Southern states. Fortunately for Russell, Southern ghosts spill out of the confines of hospitals and sanatoriums into streets, parking lots, ambulances, hospital trains, and even medical emergency kits, offering the opportunity for a variety of tales in an assortment of unusual places.

Keywords: book review | hauntings | ghosts

Article:

*****Note: Full text of article below**

The Ghost Will See You Now: Haunted Hospitals of the South. Russell, Randy. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: John F. Blair, 2014. ISBN 978-0-89587-631-7 (Hardback). 233 p.. \$19.95.



Randy Russell believes hauntings can happen anywhere, but that ghosts may actually prefer the South. This premise has led him to pen several books about Southern ghosts, including *Ghost Cats of the South* and *Mountain Ghost Stories and Curious Tales of Western North Carolina*. The author now turns his attention towards hauntings that take place in medical facilities throughout thirteen Southern states. Fortunately for Russell, Southern ghosts spill out of the confines of hospitals and sanatoriums into streets, parking lots, ambulances, hospital trains, and even medical emergency kits, offering the opportunity for a variety of tales in an assortment of unusual places.

The Ghost Will See You Now: Haunted Hospitals of the South is organized by state, from the Virginias to Texas, and guides the reader to paranormal activity taking place at over one hundred and fifty sites. These hauntings involve surgeons, doctors, midwives, suspected witches, and patients as well as victims of tragedy and mayhem who did not quite reach medical assistance before they died. While some of these apparitions are interactive, others seem to re-enact their earthly duties throughout eternity. Not surprisingly, many of the accounts involve Civil War hauntings, which allows the author to pull in many buildings and historic sites that served as make-shift hospitals during the War. Soldiers from both the Confederacy and the Union vie for ghostly territory in modern day school buildings, summer camps, and doctors' offices, along with deserted hospitals, asylums, and battlegrounds.

Ghost stories by nature are full of pathos and despair -- lives cut short and unrealized. Similarly, Russell's specters range from pitiful to tragic. Hauntings include woeful sagas, such as the story of the poor pregnant girl from Kentucky who died in the rain on the hospital steps, the staff alerted by the unearthly cries of her stillborn baby. Other stories have an eerie quality, like the account of the young Memphis girl who was hit by a car driven by a handsome 1920s matinee idol. As he did not have time to take her to the hospital before his show, she accompanied him to the theater. Apparently, the girl did not survive the detour and remains to haunt both actors and patrons alike. Sometimes, the narratives are truly hard to fathom, such as the story of the woman from Mississippi, so devastated by the death of her soldier lover, that she attached his amputated leg to her own body; thus, giving rise to the legend of the "three legged ghost," who is particularly adept at kicking hapless teenagers' cars off of a local bridge. The book includes a variety of restless spirits who offer ghostly morality tales (such as attaching a third leg never works) and provide fodder for supernatural sightings and campfire lore.

Described as a "ghostlorist," Randall's interest in storytelling is evident by his choice to expand several tales in each chapter. These narratives have titles and read like short stories, enhanced by local history and imagined dialog. The remaining accounts are shorter references to hauntings occurring at different sites throughout each state. This creates a sometimes confusing mix of fictionalized accounts and gazetteer-like descriptions. In most cases, the author does not include sources for his accounts, therefore it is not clear whether his tales derive from first hand experiences or if he is relying on interviews and local legends. *The Ghost Will See You Now: Haunted Hospitals of the South* will more than likely find its audience with those who enjoy regional folklore or supernatural stories with Southern themes.

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