

Is The Myrtles Plantation Haunting a Hoax??

In December of 2002, Rick and Bobbie Atristain visited the Myrtles Plantation while on their honeymoon. Bobbie's review of the trip wasn't favorable - considering the Plantation has the reputation as being one of the Most Haunted Houses in America - it fell quite short of that proclamation. You can read her review with the originally alleged haunted history at the end of this article.

Quick Facts @ a Glance

- The Myrtles wasn't known to be haunted until the 1970s - all of the ghost stories originate around this time period. One of the ladies I talked to her family lived there from the time the Stirlings sold it in the late 1880 till 1955 and she never heard and stories of ghosts. Today she still lives on part of the original Myrtles property she inherited.
- A copy of all the slave holdings David Bradford and Clark Woodrooff (which I got at the courthouse) have no mention of a slave named Chloe
- The courthouse records also indicate that Sarah and the two children did die but not from poison but from yellow fever all within a years time. Sarah dying first
- The only murder to ever take place at the Myrtles was that of William Winter - The true account can be found in a local paper of the day. William was called out onto the side gallery and when he got out there he was hit by a single shotgun blast to the chest and he fell dead right there. Never did he make his way back up the stairs and die at his wife's feet.
- Clark Woodrooff died in New Orleans many years after he left the Myrtles. He never even owned the plantation till after his wife's death.
- The famous mirror - that mirror was never in the house until it was remodeled in the late 1970's.
- Nothing in the home today is original except one small piece in the dining room that was sent back years later from the Woodrooff family
- The reason none of the tour guides wanted to talk about the ghosts is because the Louisiana Historical Society has gotten on them several times about talking about the ghost on day tours. If they get caught they can lose their statues with the state. That is why they do the weekend mystery tours.

The full Story

David Bradford built the Laurel Grove Plantation in 1796 but the house would not receive the name 'The Myrtles' till 1850 when the Stirling family remodeled and added the southern half of the house which now contains the main entryway. David Bradford lived at the Laurel Grove till his death in 1817 of old age. His wife Elizabeth stayed at the family home till her death in 1830.

Clark Woodrooff who was a law student under Bradford, took a fancy to Bradford's daughter, Sarah Matilda, who went by the name Matilda. After David's death Clark asked Elizabeth for permission to marry her underage daughter. Elizabeth granted that permission and on November 19, 1817 they were married. Together they had three children, Cornelia Gale, James and Mary Octavia. This happy family would be broken up by the death of (Sarah) Matilda on July 21, 1823 when she succumbed to yellow fever. By this time yellow fever was quite a large epidemic in New Orleans and every family was feeling it's effects. Clark continued to manage the plantation for his mother-in-law Elizabeth, while she helped him with his three children. It wouldn't be long till his only son James would die (July 15, 1824) of yellow fever. then almost two months to the date (September 16, 1824) his oldest daughter, Cornelia Gale would too die from yellow fever. ***{Note: Most of the time when they talk about the two children that died (were poisoned) at the Myrtles they say it was two girls, this was not the case}***

With his mother-in-law getting up in age. Clark purchased Laurel Grove from her on May 25th, 1825, and stayed there till Elizabeth died in 1830. He then left the plantation and became a judge over District D which was in Covington, Louisiana. On January 1 1834 Woodrooff sold the Laurel Grove to Ruffin Grey Stirling. Later Clark would move to New Orleans where he served as judge until his death.

Ruffin Grey Stirling was a very wealthy man and owned many plantations on both sides of the river. Stirling had a large family so remodeled the main house to what we see there today. Besides adding to the size of the house he increased plantation land from 600 acres to over 15000 acres.

Ruffin Grey died from consumption on July 17, 1854 leaving his wife to manage his vast holdings. At this time she took in William Drew Winter to help manage the plantations for her. Through these duties he fell in love with her daughter Sarah and they were married on June 3, 1852. After they were married the Myrtles became their family home. They had several children. By the end of the civil war William found himself bankrupt. Even though he regained the use of the plantation it had been sold to a holding company out of New York City.

On January 26, 1871, while going over a Sunday School lesson with his son in the men's parlor, William heard a man ride up on horseback and called out wanting to talk with the attorney. When he went out to see who this was that was calling he was shot dead on the gallery . This was reported in the Point Coupee Newspaper. E. S. Webber was the man suspected of firing the fatal shot. William's wife, Sarah, died seven years latter on April 16, 1878 from what they believed was a broken heart.

In February of 1881, The Myrtles was purchased for \$3000 cash in a Sheriff Transfer by Sarah's Brother Steven Stirling. In 1889 the plantation was sold to Harrison Williams. His family owned The Myrtles till 1955 when they divided the plantation land among the Williams family heirs and the plantation home with ten acres was sold to Marjorie Munson. The house had been empty for several years and had gotten in real bad shape. It wouldn't be completely restored until the 1970 when Arlen Dease purchased the Myrtles. The color scheme and the furnishings that can be found in the house today can be contributed to him.

Up until the late 70's when the house was purchased by a couple from California, James and Frances Kermeen Meyers, **there were no reported stories of ghosts haunting the halls at The Myrtles**. It wasn't to long after they moved in that all the stories we hear today started. There have been several owners since and the stories just continue to grow. Looking back over the history and putting it up against their stories you can see discrepancies. **First There**

is no record of there ever being a slave woman owned by Woodrooff names Chloe. Even if there were the story of her poisoning the Judges wife and children can be proven false by their recorded deaths from yellow fever. The January article in the Point Coupee Democrat tells how William Winter died on the side porch not on the seventeen step at told by tour guides. Even their famous mirror that is said to hold the trapped spirits of Sarah and the two Woodrooff children did not appear at the house till Arlen Dease purchased the mirror at an antique shop in the French Quarter.

If you take a Mystery tour at The Myrtles you will see the stories and events change all the time. Always being fluffed and added to to give the house a better reputation. They will tell you that the Smithsonian Institute came out there and set up all kinds of equipment and after a week came back to say that The Myrtles is one of the most haunted houses in America. After talking with people from the Smithsonian, they told me that they have never done a study of ghostly happenings at the Myrtles and that isn't something they even do. When questioned about this the people at the Myrtles will say, Oh did I say Smithsonian, I meant National Geographic.

Original Review

REVIEW: The Myrtles Planation in St. Francisville, LA

Please note the views expressed in our REVIEWS section do not necessarily reflect the views of the VGHRs as an organization. This section is for members of the VGHRs to express their OPINIONS of certain alleged haunted locations.

www.myrtlesplantation.com

In December of 2002 Rick and Bobbie Atristain honeymooned at the infamously haunted Myrtles Plantation in St. Francisville, LA. We stayed in the William Winters room - formerly known as the Peach Room. Here's the details...

The Myrtles Plantation has been billed as "One of America's Most Haunted Houses" - by **Troy Taylor - the founder of Prairie Ghosts and the author of numerous books about spirits including *The Ghosthunter's Guidebook*** - however I'm going to have to disagree with him on this one. I'm actually a big fan of his books and his theories but he missed this one. Please don't waste your money on this place. There is a lot of energy in the house and the property - as you read the ghostly history you'll understand why - however the energy of the place is bad - very negative - it's a depressing place to be and with all of the murder and betrayal that has taken place you can understand why. Not only is the place depressing - there's not a darn thing to do in St. Francisville - nada - and the closest city is Baton Rouge - which isn't exactly a booming metropolis. **The staff at the Myrtles Plantation are NOT ALLOWED to talk about the ghost stories associated with the place.** Please - give me a break - the only reason people go out to St. Francisville (where by the way you can not smoke, drink or eat in your room even though you're paying over 200 bucks a night to stay there....) is to hear about the ghosts. The employee I asked about the ghost stories associated with the Myrtles (whom I

might add has been on at least 2 or 3 television shows about the Ghosts of the Myrtles) said she wasn't allowed to talk about them. AHHHHH!!!

TO be fair "supposedly" the couple that stayed in the William Winters room the night before Rick and I arrived captured the voice of a child asking "Who's in my room"? I didn't hear it and I don't believe the employee would lie to me but the place isn't anymore haunted than many of the homes I've been to in Virginia. So please enjoy the ghostly history listed below but save your money and go to the **Castle Inn of New Orleans** - they have ghosts - and they will TALK ABOUT THEM!!!!

Haunted History:

From a mirror that is said to hold the spirit of a ghost to phantom children who play on the verandah, the Myrtles Plantation may have more ghosts than any other place in America! Since it was built in 1794, no less than ten murders have been committed here and there are so many bizarre occurrences that have been documented at Myrtles that it has become a favorite spot for ghost hunters and curiosity-seekers alike!

The Myrtles Plantation was built in 1794 by General David Bradford and remains today an excellent example of antebellum architecture along the Mississippi River. The residents and the owners of the house, who have changed several times over the years, recall the many ghostly tales and stories that have been passed on from generation to generation. In a book that was published about the Myrtles in 1900, the author claimed that if every light in the house was darkened, the Myrtles would receive a visitation by one of its spirits.

It has been said that the lights have never been all turned off since....

The troubles that led to the haunting began when Sara Matilda, the daughter of David Bradford, married Judge Clark Woodruffe and they moved into the Myrtles. Sara Matilda had given birth to two daughters and was carrying a third child, when an event took place that still haunts the Myrtles today.

Woodruffe, had a reputation in the region for integrity with men and with the law, but was also known for being promiscuous. While his wife was pregnant with their third child, he started an intimate relationship with one of his slaves.

Unfortunately, this practice was fairly common at the time and it has been recorded as one of the tragedies of slavery. This particular girl, whose name was Chloe, was a household servant who, while she hated being forced to give in to Woodruffe's sexual demands, realized that if she didn't, she could be sent to work in the fields, which was the most brutal of the slave's work. Eventually, Woodruffe tired of Chloe and chose another girl with whom to carry on. Chloe feared the worst, sure that she was going to be sent to the fields, she began eavesdropping on the Woodruffe family's private conversations, dreading the mention of her name.

One day, the Judge caught her at this and ordered that one of her ears be cut off to teach her a lesson and to put her in her place. After that time, she always wore a green turban around her head. What happened next is still unclear... some claim that the next event was done so that the family would just get sick and then Chloe could nurse them back to health and earn the Judge's gratitude and some claim that it was done for vengeance!

For whatever reason, Chloe put a small amount of poison into a birthday cake that was made in honor of the Judge's oldest daughter. The two children, and Sara Matilda, each had slices of the poisoned cake but the Judge didn't eat any of it. Before the end of the day, all of them were very sick. Chloe patiently attended to their needs, never realizing (if it was an accident) that she had given them too much poison.... in just hours, they were all three dead.

The other slaves, afraid that the Judge would punish them also, dragged Chloe from her room and hanged her from a nearby tree. Her body was later cut down, weighted with rocks and thrown into the river. The Judge closed off the children's dining room, where the party was held, and never allowed it to be used again as long as he lived, which wasn't long, for he too was slain by a murderer a few years later. To this day, the room has never again been used for dining. It is called the game room today.

Since that day, the ghost of Chloe has been reported at the Myrtles and has even been accidentally photographed by the current owner. A photo that she took of the house showed a shadowy figure in a turban standing near the building. Her spirit has also been seen in the house, perhaps seeking the ghost of the Judge who escaped her revenge.

But Chloe is not the only ghost who haunts this house.... the place seems to be infested with spirits from many different parts of the history of the place. Two of the most tragic ghosts are those of the Woodruffe children who died from the poisoned cake. These small spirits have been seen playing on the verandah of the house, in the hallways, in the children's dining room and strangely, have been reported on a hanging chandelier. They seem to be trapped here in the place where their lives were horribly taken.

One spirit is that of a French woman who wanders from room to room and searches for someone she never seems to find. Residents and visitors have also told of the sound of a ghostly crying baby who can be heard in various parts of the house. Perhaps the French woman is seeking this phantom? Another ghost only appears when a thunderstorm approaches. A young girl, with long curly hair and wearing an ankle-length dress, has been seen floating outside the window of the game room, cupping her hands and trying to peer inside through the glass.

The grand piano on the first floor also plays by itself, usually repeating the same chord over and over again. Sometimes it continues on through the night. When someone comes into the room to check on the sound, the music stops and will only start again when they leave. In the French bedroom, a woman has been reported in a black skirt who dances to music that only she can hear. This ghost appears to be floating about a foot off of the floor.

The employees at the house often get the worst of the events which happen here. The Myrtles has been open for some time as a bed and breakfast, renting rooms in the house and in cottages on the grounds. One day, a maid was mopping the hallway on the first floor when she came to a strange spot near the front door. She found that no matter how hard she pushed the mop, it would not enter an area on the floor.... it was roughly the size of a human body. There was nothing there and no reason for it... other than that it was the same place where a man had been shot and died right after the Civil War. The strange phenomenon lasted for a month. Another employee, a gateman, was hired to greet guests at the front gate each day. One day, a woman in a white, old fashioned dress walked through the gate without speaking to him. She walked up to the house and vanished through the front door without ever opening it. The gateman quit his job and never returned to the house.

Past owners also claim to have seen a woman's ghost carrying a candle walking up the stairs. One night, a previous owner was talking with some guests on the front porch when they heard a sound that appeared to be a door slamming in the house. They looked and saw a candle, with no one holding it, slowly floating up the stairs as if it were being carried. They walked in to follow it and found the room to be icy cold. The same thing had been reported by the five previous owners and some believe that it may be the ghost of Sara Matilda, searching for her husband.

Another strange phenomenon seems to be a portrait hanging in the game room. This same picture had also been reported to detach itself from the wall and fly across rooms. One owner was struck in the face by it and still bears the scar to this day. According to legend, the expression of the man in the painting is supposed to change expression... is it true or the power of suggestion? Whatever it is, an infrared photo that was taken of it several years ago revealed what seemed to be a bloody handprint on the wall next to the painting.... strangely, four people have been murdered in that room over the years.

If you've stayed at the Myrtles and had a better experience than we did please email me and tell us about it - bobbie@virginiaghosts.com.