

*“Phantoms, Ghosts, Spectres, and
Unsolved Mysteries await...”*

ghosts

of the

Carolina Coast

Ocean Isle Beach Area Legends

By

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An Introduction to: “Ghosts of the Carolina Coast”

The Ocean Isle Beach area has had a rich history of Spanish conquistadors, ante-bellum plantations, Indian wars, pirates, shipwrecks, slave ships, civil war battles, smugglers, speakeasies, man-made calamities and natural disasters.

This coastal region is also home to a rich diversity of mysteries, myths, phantoms, specters, and apparitions that span our distant past to our current headlines. Each of these paranormal events create a tapestry of stories and legends that reach into our imagination, touching on our greatest fears, confirming our strongest beliefs, demonstrating the depth of honor and duty, and yet confounding our senses.

In this collection of stories reported by *The Star News*, *The News and Observer*, *The Southport Times*, *The Brunswick Beacon*, *Ghosts of America* web page, and the *Bald Head Island Gazette*, I have assembled recollections, myths and legends of the Ocean Isle Beach area to give a unique perspective of our place in American folklore.

The Ghosts in the following pages have especially earned our fascination, fear, sympathy, and respect.

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Chapter 1: “The Grey Man Ghost



The Gray Man has long been famous as a specter at Pawley's Island, South Carolina warning residents of approaching storms, but the Gray Man has also been seen at Ocean Isle Beach and as far north as Oak Island.

It is said that the Gray Man walks along the beaches right before a terrible storm or great tragedy. It is said that those who see him know that they should leave at once or face disaster.

It is also reported that ,amazingly, the Gray Man is a supernatural warning sign that when heeded offers safety and salvation.

A few days after the tragic October 29, 2007 fire at Ocean Isle Beach, a local lady named Lisa reported that she saw the Gray Man a few days after the fire in the early morning cross Scotland Street in front of the destroyed house.

No one is quite sure who or what the Gray Man is, but all indications are that he means good. Quite a few people report to have seen the Gray Man along the southeastern North Carolina coast.

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Chapter 2: The Conquistador Ghost

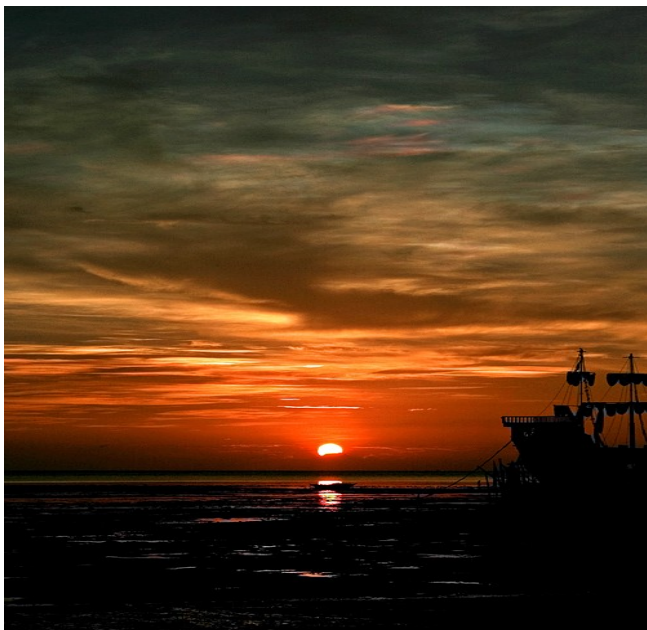


The earliest European explorers landed on or near Ocean Isle Beach in the 1520's. In 1526, the Spanish attempted to settle present day Brunswick County. In the summer of 1526, Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón led a group of 500 Spanish settlers to the mouth of the Cape Fear River. As their provisions ran out, these would be conquerors were forced to move south and steal food from the natives.

By October of that year, only 150 of the original 500 survived, forcing the Spanish to give up and evacuate to Santo Domingo. Local historians believe that the Spanish foraged the Ocean Isle Beach area and perhaps as far south as the Little River in their attempt to find food and shelter. The wanderings of these first settlers may help explain an odd sighting of an observer in Ash, North Carolina (9 miles from

OIB) of a creepy ghost of a conquistador that can regularly be distinguished in the middle of Bay Branch trying to capture something to eat, as well as the strangely dressed European warrior seen hunting in the early morning fog at Sunset beach.

Did the ragged remnants of a past group of starving settlers become forever etched into the ethereal fabric of the OIB area? Whatever the ghostly source, perhaps it demonstrates that while time and starvation may have driven the Spanish from our shores, some faint echo of the poor souls that tried to become our first settlers still resonates in the winds of our coastal plains.



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Chapter 3: “The “SAM” Ghost”



In the 1970's, Miller Pope built the Winds Beach Resort. This resort has grown over the years and with each addition it has become more comfortable, accommodating and enjoyable to families of tourist for over three decades.

The Winds also has the distinction of being a preferred resort for the supernatural as well.

According to many reports, in one of the guest cottages one street back from the beach a man named Sam died of a heart attack while on vacation at the Winds. Apparently Sam was satisfied with his accommodations because since that time employees and guests have reportedly noticed strange happenings in the

cottage, including cold spots as well as the shades opening on their own. In a few rare instances people have reported an actual manifestation of Sam.

Is Sam simply a lost soul trying to remain in the one place he found happiness?

Whatever the reason, Sam is content to remain and his ethereal imprint is now a permanent fixture in the folklore of Ocean Isle Beach.



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Chapter 4: The Dunbar-Davis Ghost



Often the living must make accommodations for past residents.

For almost 100 years, the Oak Island Life-saving Station served as a quiet sentinel guarding the waters off of Oak Island, N.C. The keepers of this station served to protect ships, crews, fisherman, and seaman during two world wars and countless hurricanes and storms.

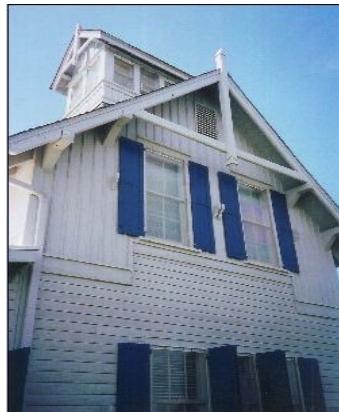
One of the bravest and most famous keepers of the Oak Island station was Dunbar Davis. In 1893, the infamous South Seas Hurricane struck the North Carolina Coast and Dunbar and his crew rescued the crews of four

ships at sea in a Category 3 storm, a herculean feat unmatched to this day.

After honorable and heroic service, keeper Davis died in 1923. However he has seen fit to resume his duties.

When the Oak Island Life-Saving station was bought and renovated, the new owners found that Dunbar Davis had resumed his post. The current owners have restored the station and with a few exceptions, they have found accommodating this dutiful spirit rather easy. In fact it is said that guests who stay in his bedroom go unharmed but will often find the door opening all night long no matter how many times they close it.

For duty, perseverance and not leaving his post regardless of his personal circumstances, keeper Dunbar Davis earns a place in history as a ghost near Ocean Isle Beach.



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Chapter 5: The Apricot Creek Ghosts



During the 1920's, Ocean Isle Beach had a reputation as the place to go for a good time. Ocean Isle was connected to the mainland prior to 1934. In those days, there was road where the bridge is today; the road ran along the shore of Apricot Creek. Also on Apricot Creek was a speakeasy or honky tonk that entertained visitors from as far away as Greensboro.

In the 1920's, Apricot Creek was a wandering tidal creek that ran from Ocean Isle Beach to Sunset Beach and ended at Bird Island. Apricot Creek and the tidal area off of Ocean Isle Beach was also known for liquor smuggling and the road running past Ocean Isle Beach from Georgetown to Wilmington was considered one of the most dangerous in the United States.

Multiple apparitions have been seen along Apricot Creek but four recurring phantoms have been seen apparently reliving a tragic set of events. The first is the spirit of a pregnant lady who has been observed very late at night attempting to conceal a cadaver.

The second is a female without a head. The third is a man with a sizeable hole through his torso at the stroke of midnight attempting to hide a dead body. The fourth is a luminous human form regularly seen before dawn crawling out of Apricot Creek covered in mud.



What is the story that these apparitions are reliving? Are these phantoms the ghostly images of tragic lovers reenacting a triangle gone horribly wrong? Whatever the events they are doomed to relive, they have imprinted their tragic story on the very banks of the Apricot Creek and now wind through our imaginations. The mystery of these poor doomed souls places them in the mist of legend of Ocean Isle Beach.

Chapter 6: The Indian Ghosts



Indians inhabited the Ocean Isle Beach area for hundreds of years before the first European settlers arrived here. Nearly every town in Brunswick County has a report of an apparition of an Indian, sometimes young and sometimes old, but always trying to communicate.

In Ash the ghost of a youthful Indian warrior can be seen often in Waccamaw Township District Park. In Calabash, the ghost of a young-looking Indian

warrior materialized outside the entrance to the Park attempting to articulate something. In Bolivia, the spirit of an aged Indian chief emerged gazing at folks in a mobile home through a peephole. In Oak Island, the ghost of an elderly Indian chief has been seen hurling chunks of concrete at Caswell Beach saying something unintelligible.

What holds these spirits to the land, what lessons are they so desperate to pass to the living, and what are they still searching for?

Little is known for sure, but what is historically known is that in 1521 the Spanish captured over 100 Indians from the Ocean Isle Beach area including one they taught to be an interpreter and gave him the name Francisco de Chicora. By 1526 Francisco De Chicora had convinced the Spanish that the Carolina Coast was rich in gold and easy to colonize. A few months later the Spanish gave up entirely on North Carolina, even abandoning their attempted settlement in the mountains all the while De Chicora managed to escape with all the slaves of the expedition.

Perhaps it is wishful thinking, but I tend to believe that the Indian spirits on and near Ocean Isle Beach may be apparitions of Francisco De Chicora's band Indians who managed to outsmart the Spanish Empire.

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Chapter 7: The Mt. Misery Road Ghosts



Some places retain a memory of the events of the past, forever marking a tragic point in time and staining the land with grief and sorrow. Sometimes a place can become a living memory of past injustices and human suffering that will cry out to the living.

If you are ever driving through Leland down Mt. Misery Road, you might want to roll up the windows and drive a little bit faster because if you listen closely, the spirits of Leland may call to your very soul.

In the 1700's and 1800's, slave ships would dock along the Cape Fear River and the unwillingly cargo would be marched up Mt. Misery Road 90 miles to Fayetteville which was a major slave trade center.

In a time when man's inhumanity to man stained the American psyche, many of those marched into slavery died of heat exhaustion on a lonely stretch of road in an unfamiliar land far from home. To this day, many motorists passing through Leland swear they have heard the sounds of clanking chains and moaning slaves still marching to their tragic fate, unaware of the passage of time, and doomed to repeat their march night after night.

Do these poor souls continue to walk the back roads of our area to remind us of our dark past or to warn us of a dark future?

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Chapter 8: The Tony Caselleta Ghost



Some spirits are mischievous, some are benign and some are entertaining. One of the more thoughtful and entertaining spirits of this area resides at the Brunswick Inn in Southport.

The resident spirit of Southport is Antonio (Tony) Caselleta.

In the 1880's, Tony was an accomplished harpist and musician who regularly played at locations around Southport and especially at the Brunswick Inn. Tony was nineteen, talented and well liked with a young wife and children.

On a clear day in April 1882, Tony decided to take a boating trip around Bald Head Island. Even in calm seas, his ship, The Passport, sank and he perished.

Since that day however, Tony has made the Brunswick Inn his home, helping with household chores, tucking in children, closing windows before storms and amusing the residents with music from his harp.

Visitors so often claim to hear Tony walking around and playing his beloved harp that his antics are now part of the lore of Southport, making the Brunswick Inn a true tourist attraction.

Tony Casellea is a bona fide North Carolina legend. What holds Tony's spirit to this earthly plane? Was Tony's attachment to his beloved harp so great that it holds him here or does he play it throughout time hoping the melodic tones might touch the souls of his young wife and children, reassuring them of his presence?

Whatever his reasons, Tony has made a home at the Brunswick Inn and still entertains an audience.

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Chapter 9: The Seneca Guns Mystery



In the earliest days of our young nation, the mysterious booms that the great American author James Fennimore Cooper termed the “Seneca Guns” have plagued us.

Early white settlers were told by the native Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) that the booms were the sound of the Great Spirit continuing his work of shaping the earth. Yet others have told that the sounds are the echoes of thunder called down by Indian ancestors as a warning to the living. Still others say they are the ghosts of native Indians making the noise of naval cannon fire like that which drove them from their lands to drive us away from sacred land.

Whatever the source, since the 1850’s mysterious booms have left the upstate lakes of New York and now regularly rattle coastal areas on and near Ocean Isle Beach. For 150 years, researchers have been unable to agree on their source as residents of

Brunswick County have become accustomed to their presence.

Veteran sailors of World War II say that it sounds exactly like the noise from the firing of naval cannon. Scientific explanations range from UFOs, to supersonic aircraft, to earthquakes, to ocean methane, to continental shelf slippage, and yet none can explain why there has never been a recorded occurrence on a Sunday.

Also interesting is that the Seneca Guns started about the same time Brunswick County got its first permanent towns. Our coastal towns are almost all built on sacred Indian burial grounds. Science may yet find an answer or perhaps they really are the ghostly warnings from the long dead Cape Fear Indians reminding the living to appreciate what they have now before it is all gone.

No matter the source of the mysterious sounds, their spiritual connections and ghostly warnings have boomed their way into our local Ocean Isle Beach history.

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Fred R. David and Vern J. Bender, co-authors of “The History of Ocean Isle Beach”, would like to express their appreciation and gratitude to Wilburn “Will” Smith for allowing us to include these stories in our book, and to make them available to you, our readers.

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