

Macabre Moffat Hall



Written by Steve Skierski

Currently serving as the residence for the football team as well as other sports programs, the building was the freshmen residence when I worked in security. Moffat has to it a certain charm, if you're fond of the smell of mildew and mystery weed purchased from shadowy figures in parked cars late at night. It also carries one of Keystone's best-known ghost stories.

Popular Lore:

The basement of Moffat was supposedly the site of a suicide some years ago. It's said a girl hanged herself in one of the basement showers and that her crying can still be heard late at night. I've had MANY students share this story with me, and which bathroom it was changes every time. For the reader, Moffat has two sides: the creek side and the higher side. The former sits very near the Nokomis Creek and retains a perpetual dankness and mustiness. The higher up side is right next to the road leading around campus and is much dryer.

The weeping woman is one of the oldest tropes in ghost stories, so I don't know how much I believe this one. Jeremy said he used to hear it whenever he went to visit his girlfriend in her room during their freshman year. I've heard from people years later that they too had heard the crying. The jury is out on whether this one is real or just a scary story to tell in the dark.

Firsthand Accounts:

I've heard several compelling stories about Moffat from students and friends. First, and perhaps most bizarrely, my College Writing students came into class one day seeming out of sorts and distressed. When I asked what was up, one of them explained that everyone in the building heard loud banging over and over as the night wore on, but that nobody was ever in the hallway when they answered the door. Ethereal knocking is another classic of ghost stories, but the raw emotion I saw in my students' eyes tells me they heard something. Considering the nature of a freshmen dorm, there's all kinds of chaos going on at all hours every night. Why would they be so perturbed by this particular knocking?

Next, my girl Serena once recounted that as she was meditating in her room overlooking the creek one night, a strange symbol appeared on the floor in front of her in the moonlight. She said it resembled a triangle with various letters and shapes around it. While this is simply a story she told me, such an apparition sounds like a summoning sigil of some sort and could be a residual trace left from a prior occupant of the room conducting a conjuration or other ritual. Serena was very in tune with nature and "the universe," so I don't think she'd make something like this up to try to shock me. We were already two hours into a conversation with her and another student (TJ) so it wasn't like she needed to get attention from myself or the student officer (George) working with me that afternoon.

A rarity in paranormal investigation, a disturbing photograph was once forwarded to me by a founding KPS member, Tori. She explained that she had various troubling encounters with evil spirits while on campus and she felt she was under demonic oppression. She found scratch marks on her abdomen after a ghost walk on campus and later sent me an image of a bizarre mold formation in her room. See Figure 1 attached below.

The mold in the picture is growing in the formation of the “Hanged man” symbol known from several cultures. This is particularly curious because the mold general just grows in a slow creep across whole ceiling tiles in damp settings. This mold looks like it was planted in the specific shape seen. My theory is that a prior resident had drawn the symbol on the ceiling with something sweet (beer, urine, etc) that the mold fed on and grew faster than it did on untainted tile. This could very well be pareidolia, but I couldn’t help but feel uncomfortable while reviewing the image for the first time.

A truly compelling Moffat story comes from my friend and founding member of the KPS, Max. While dorming at Moffat freshman year, Max had a series of encounters with an unseen entity in his room. You can hear Max tell the whole story in his own words on our Youtube channel under the KPS Stories podcast episode titled “Moffat Hall.”

It started as Max was sitting on the bed one day after class. As he sat there decompressing, the small whiteboard he’d hung on the door dropped to the floor unexpectedly. He picked it up and replaced it. Within a short time, the board fell to the floor a second time. Thinking something was fucked up with the Commandstrips, Max replaced them and went back to studying. This time the board fell and slid across the room toward him.

Thoroughly freaked out, Max spoke to whichever spirit was present and offered condolences for the pain it was feeling. He suspected it was the spirit of the girl who died in the bathroom across the hall and spoke to the presence as such. After this acknowledgement and conversation, the activity quieted for a while.

The other incident of note came as Max was again sitting in bed studying. He heard a loud series of raps on the windowpane a few metres from his head. Every time he told me this story (several now), he got visibly tense. This is because the other side of the window is encased in a heavy metal grate. This was installed to prevent students from sneaking in or out of the building. Between the grate and the pane is only a few centimetres of open space. As Max always said: “whatever it was was right there in the room with me, knocking from the inside.”

I don’t have any personal experiences of Moffat Hall, other than a time a gray catbird got stuck inside the lobby and I slowly approached him and earned enough of his trust to gently grab his leg and release him out the window.

Figure 1 of the mold in a "hanged man" shape.

