

Glen Ellyn building has haunting reputation

by ROBERT LUNDIN
Correspondent

A vacated Glen Ellyn building, said by some to have genuine spooks, has brought Glen Ellyn to the attention of at least one national ghost-hunter. He's had his sixth-sense tuned into the ghostly going-ons at the old and deserted seminary building at Maryknoll, southeast of Highway 53 and Roosevelt Road.

The 450,000-square-foot complex, which is topped with an unmistakable and prominent cupola, is best viewed as one drives west on Roosevelt Road from the I-355 interchange. The four-story brick structure, with several large wings radiating from the center, was originally built to accommodate a Catholic seminary. In its day, it housed upwards of 500 Catholic seminary students.

The property was vacated in 1971 when costs for running the seminary escalated beyond the Catholic Church's ability to meet them. Since then, there have been a few attempts to revive the property, none successful.

In 1974, plans were drawn up, and the property was converted into a law school for Lewis University. Eventually, since the law school used only 10% of the property, costs to maintain the structure overran funds to run it. The law school moved and Maryknoll was again abandoned. Later, in 1986, an ambitious plan by Elder Care Services in Boston to turn the

property into a senior citizen's retirement village failed outright. Today, the seminary remains vacant—nothing but a shell of an institution. It is set to be sold at a public auction on Nov. 23 in Wheaton, along with the surrounding 22 acres of land.

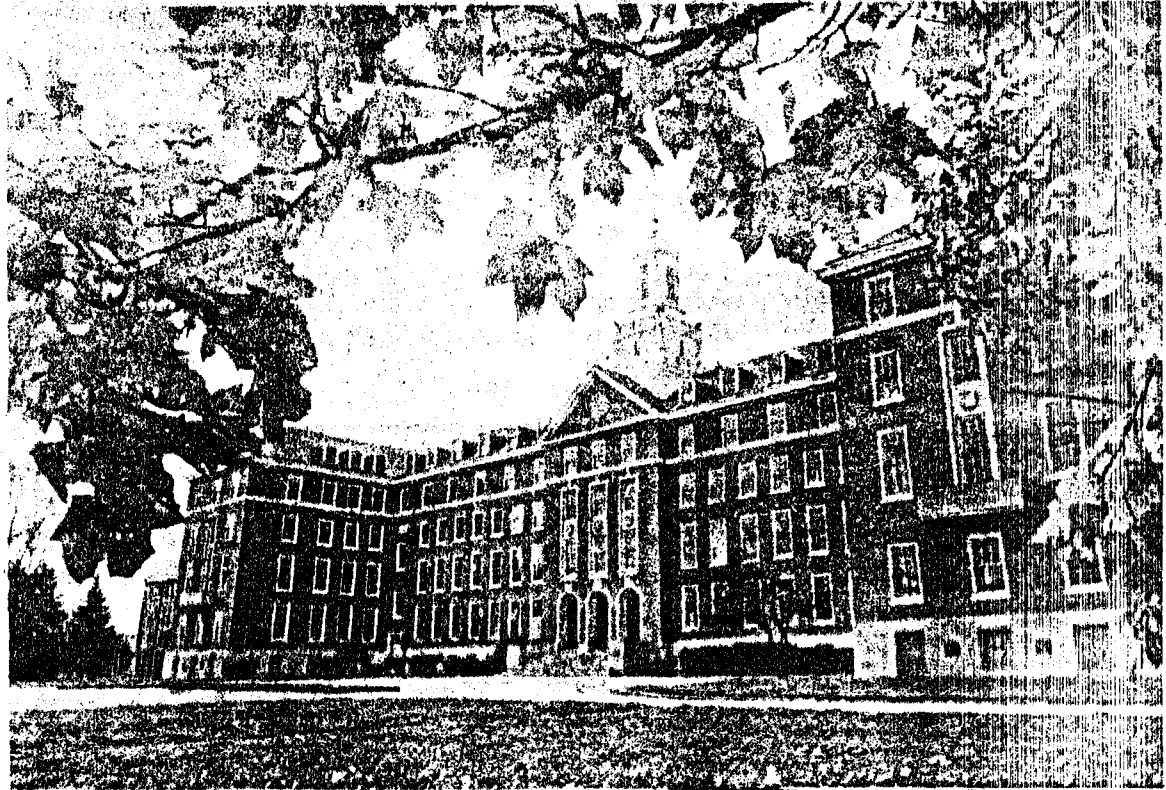
Those who believe the seminary is haunted point to these failed projects as proof that unknown forces are rendering the property uninhabitable. They

say there are spirits at Maryknoll who won't permit anyone else to use the area.

Hans Holtzer, author of "Haunted America," say ghosts roamed through Maryknoll even when it was an active seminary. Holtzer is a New York parapsychologist who is the author of a prodigious 110 books, a great many on ghosts and hauntings. He holds a doctor of philosophy degree from the London College of Applied Science and has lectured widely on the subject of ghosts. Holtzer was one of the creators of the NBC series "In Search Of..."

In his 1993 book, "Haunted America," he selects "The Seminary Ghost" as one of seven ghost stories representing the state of Illinois. Says Holtzer, a few years before the closing of Maryknoll, a seminarian named Gary M. worked regularly as a photographer in the seminary's darkroom.

Holtzer says: Gary M. often felt as if he were being watched while working. One day, he felt



THE OLD MARYKNOLL BUILDING in Glen Ellyn is said to have some genuine spooks, the building is slated for public auction soon (Photo by Robert Lundin).

as if a strong, cold hand had gone down his back. Looking down, he noticed that the temperature of his chemicals had inexplicably dropped several degrees below room temperature.

Gary M. brought the incident before his Catholic colleagues. He learned that one of his colleagues had had eerie experiences in the same place. A man had appeared to at least one of them and had touched him on the cheek. The seminary student's description was detailed and def-

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inite. Gary M. went to his photo files so the student could pick out the picture of the ghostly man he had seen. With great certainty, the student chose a pic-

ture of a dead priest. Ironically, the chemicals that Gary M. had used in the darkroom had once belonged to that priest. Other ghostly activity has been seen and experienced at Maryknoll; one witness goes by the name T.K. According to T.K., as a high school student, he often enjoyed sneaking into the deserted Maryknoll Seminary with his friends late on a Friday or Saturday night. They would comb the

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Haunted Building

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darkened halls and explore different passages and rooms. There was often an eeriness to the place, said T.K., like the presence of another person watching you.

One night, he and his friends stole their way into a room which kept architectural drawings of the building. His friends took two of the elaborate drawings as souvenirs before returning to their car.

When they reached their car, the two friends with the stolen drawings noticed blood dripping from their hands. To their alarm, both of their index fingers were bleeding. But mysteriously, after they wiped away the blood, neither could find any cut or abrasions from where the blood had dripped. Were the spirits of Maryknoll punishing them for stealing?

T.K. also relates a story of an incident that occurred during the filming of the movie "Lucas."

The "Lucas" movie was searching for a location for a hospital scene. Eventually, they were led to Maryknoll Seminary.

When the crew reached Maryknoll, a woman who was with them suddenly became agitated. She left the group and quickly entered the building. Then she ran down one of the building's long hallways.

The woman was to later say that a spectre of a Catholic priest appeared to her. When she ran away, she was barricaded by a locked door, though she had not locked it when entering the hallway. She could not get back to the movie crew. She screamed and suddenly the door burst open. Breathless and terrified, she ran out of the building.

No one is to know the truth of these stories about Maryknoll. There is a tendency to add a splash of color to a lukewarm story. Nonetheless, Maryknoll seems to be great fodder for the imagination.