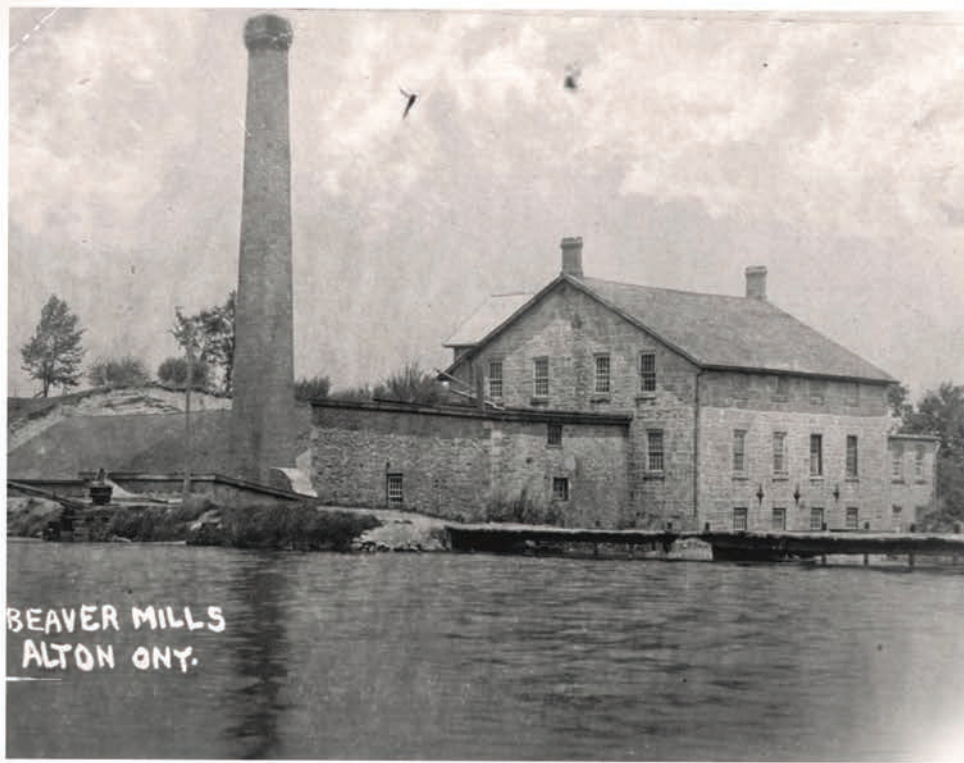


Public Library, Orangeville, Ont.

Exterior of Orangeville's old Carnegie Library.
IMAGE P-3477 FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE DUFFERIN COUNTY MUSEUM & ARCHIVES.



Orangeville Town Hall. Note the horse trough in bottom left and the horse and wagon in the shade close to the building. IMAGE P-1036 FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE DUFFERIN COUNTY MUSEUM & ARCHIVES.



Beaver Mills in Alton, circa 1905. William Algie built the Beaver Knitting Mill in 1881.
COURTESY OF PEEL REGION ARCHIVES AND THE ALTON DEVELOPMENT INC..

Haunted **HEADWATERS**

Take a journey to the Headwaters' haunted side, where the ethereal residents are unrestrained by mortal bonds.

WRITTEN BY ANDREW HIND
PHOTOS BY MIKE DAVIS EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

THE HILLS OF THE Headwaters is a pleasant area, full of bucolic farms and historic communities, but even with its reputation for tranquility and simple living, the region isn't immune to dark mysteries and eerie haunts. Spectral reminders of the past, displeased with the tragic nature of their deaths, abide within any number of historic buildings, awaiting the perfect moment to emerge from the darkness and chill the heart.

Library's Restless Spirit

By twist of fate, most ghosts reside in historic buildings, so uncovering the identity of a restless spirit is a lesson in history

as well. Take the Orangeville Library for example.

This building in the heart of town is the residence of a mysterious spirit, an ethereal woman wearing a long, Victorian dress and with hair pinned up in an old-fashioned manner. This ghost regularly makes her presence known in a variety of poltergeist-like ways. Chairs are rattled, books are scattered about the floor after staff have carefully tidied the library for the night, and once a wide-eyed patron watched as a book truck rolled several feet by itself. On rare occasions, the ghost is actually seen, gliding without a sound across the floor before disappearing in the blink of an eye. Thankfully, this spectral woman is more

Hills of Headwaters consists of:

Erin, Caledon, Dufferin County, Mono and Shelburne

playful than petrifying and has not done anything to truly frighten staff or patrons.

But who is she? The building's history offers some possibilities. The current library actually comprises what were once two distinct buildings: The Carnegie Library (dated to 1904) and a neighbouring bank (built in 1903 on the foundations of the Gordon Hotel). The two were joined in 1988 to make a more expansive library facility for what was a rapidly growing town.

With this in mind, perhaps

the ghost that silently wanders the library's hushed halls at night was a longtime teller or librarian who was so tied to her job that her soul is literally bound to the building? We'll never know. What we do know is that there was no tradition of the library being haunted before 1988, so it seems likely that the renovation work awoke the spirit from her slumber.

Restless activity aside, the spirit seems to enjoy the hushed tranquility of the library and shows no sign of leaving anytime soon.



▲ Interior of the old Orangeville library. IMAGE P-0030A FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE DUFFERIN COUNTY MUSEUM & ARCHIVES.



▲ The Orangeville Public Library now consists of the old Carnegie Library and a 1903 Bank of Commerce with its entrance on Broadway.



▲ Signs at the entrance to the Orangeville library. In 2002 the Town of Orangeville designated part of downtown Orangeville as a Heritage Conservation District to protect historic buildings.



▲ Orangeville's Town Hall and Opera House make great use of the old building.

One night when locking up after a performance Nixon was surprised to see a woman walking up the stairs from the basement.

Spectrally Active Opera House

History is close at hand at Orangeville's circa-1875 Town Hall and Opera House, so close that spirits from bygone eras feel perfectly at home, clinging to the walls like vines on time-worn walls. A sense of chilling unease, a shadowy figure seen in your peripheral vision, and ghostly sounds with no obvious source alert you to their spectral presence.

While the council chambers on the first floor are rumored to be the domain of a mysterious male figure, the theatre above is far more spectrally active. Here a female apparition makes frequent nocturnal jaunts to silently glide the halls.

Due to the nature of his

job, former Town employee Stephen Nixon was often alone in the building at night, working the very hours when the lonely spirit emerges to begin her aimless wanderings. One night when locking up after a performance Nixon was surprised to see a woman walking up the stairs from the basement. He thought she had somehow been locked in, so raced after her. Nixon called out to her, but she didn't respond. Instead, she simply disappeared, gone in a single beat of his now rapidly-racing heart.

On another occasion, while Nixon was alone in the building doing repairs in the dressing rooms, he heard the sound of someone climbing a ladder that had been left on the



▲ In addition to a show about Judy Garland, the Opera House hosts a ghostly play this autumn!

stage. Fearing that the person might fall from a step, he raced to the stage where he was stunned to find nobody there.

Others have seen the spectral woman floating across the stage, heard disembodied footsteps echoing through the theatre, and noted poltergeist activity in the dressing rooms. One young actress felt a chilled hand gently touch her shoulder while undressing after a show. A quick glance in the mirror and a turn of her head showed she was completely alone.

Fate may tie this woman's restless soul to the Opera House, condemning her to an eternity of aimless nighttime wanderings.

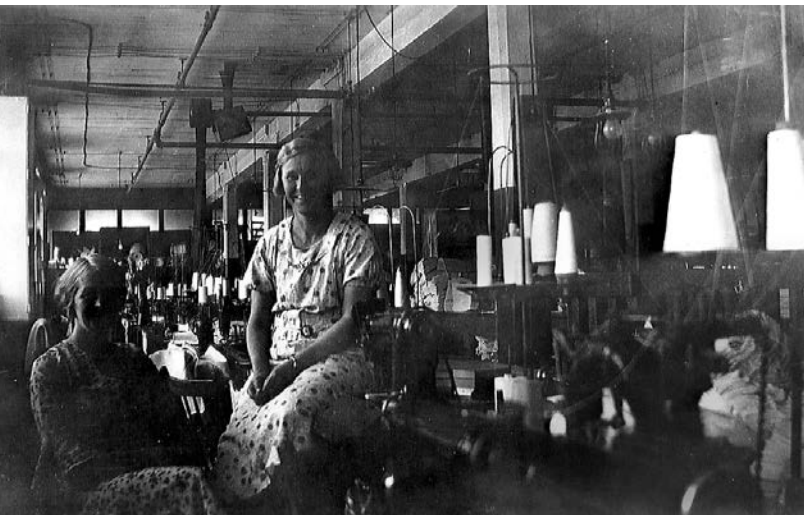
Haunted Mill

The village of Alton was once a thriving industrial centre thanks to its many mills. While much of the industrial past is

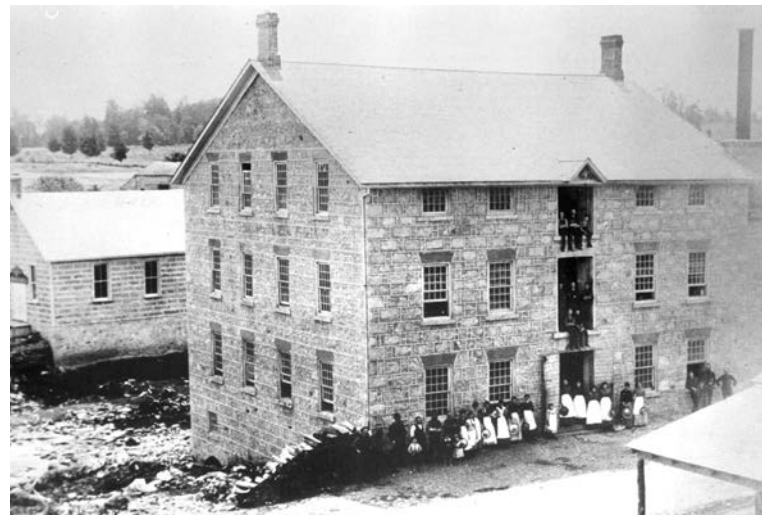
long gone, a prominent remnant is the Alton Mill, a provincially designed heritage building that's also listed on the Canadian Register of Historic Places. If the legends are true, the mill must also be listed as one of Ontario's most haunted sites.

Built by William Algie in 1881 as the Beaver Knitting Mill, today the beautifully renovated historic building is home to the Alton Mill Arts Centre, an inspiring collection of studios, galleries, shops and a café. But the past cannot be covered over with new coats of paint. The spirits of those associated with the mill's past remain bound to the structure, tied forever to the building that defined their lives. The mill has long had a reputation for being haunted, and many point to William Algie as the spirit responsible for much of the unusual phenomena. After all,

Alton Mill Arts Centre is a fascinating renovation of the old building into artist studios.



▲ Women who worked in Beaver Mills. “The women in this shot are not identified and goose bumps come up when I think of the reality that they worked there, met people there, and lived full lives, and are now gone,” says Jeremy Grant of Alton Mill Arts Centre. PHOTO COURTESY OF PEEL REGION ARCHIVES AND THE ALTON DEVELOPMENT INC.



▲ No safety concerns. Staff at the old Beaver Mills building line up on all three storeys. PHOTO COURTESY OF PEEL REGION ARCHIVES AND THE ALTON DEVELOPMENT INC.

the mill was his life’s work, his legacy, and no one was more connected to it than he was.

At night, when the lights are turned off, a dark atmosphere pervades the building. Some people tell of footsteps echoing down the

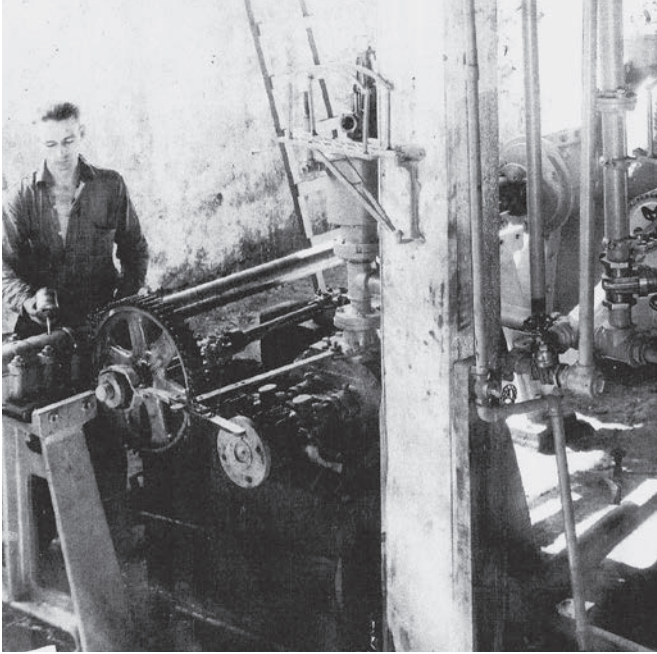
halls, unusual banging, and spectral machinery at work—all without earthly cause. Glowing orbs of light and mysterious shadows are seen flitting along darkened halls.

There are often strong emotional links between

a building and the people closely associated with it—sometimes this connection is strong enough to extend beyond the grave. **NEV**

Andrew Hind is a freelance writer, who with Maria Da

Silva has written 19 books, including Niagara: Daredevils, Danger and Extraordinary Stories and Ghosts of Niagara-on-the-Lake. His last article for Niagara Escarpment Views was “Cataract’s Historical Falls,” Summer 2015.



▲ Stan Hedges, mechanical engineer, running the boiler at the Western Rubber Company, a former business at Alton Mill. PHOTO PROVIDED BY JOEL PETRIE, COURTESY OF PEEL REGION ARCHIVES AND THE ALTON DEVELOPMENT INC.



▲ Very scary! Close up of a bronze sculpture by Yael Erlichman, available for sale at Alton Mill.