

Menomonie Middle School 8th Grade Language Arts

The Ghosts of Mabel Tainter

Mya M.

“Ok students, what a great beautiful Thursday but listen up, today we are going to be learning a little about the Mabel tainter before we take our field trip on friday!” Ms. K paused “Ok let's get started. The Mabel Tainter Theater has been a center of the arts in Menomonie, Wisconsin, since it was built in 1889.”

“Ms. K I have a question.” a super small quiet little boy asked.

“Yes Brody, I might have an answer.”

“Is it haunted? It was built more than 100 years ago.” he said with a big bright smile on his face.

“So, there have been reports of paranormal activities around the theater, but let's get back on track.” Ms. K said as she put her long blonde hair into a high ponytail. “Ok so where was I,” she said, glancing at her notes. “Alright so, originally, the structure was created as a tribute to Mabel Tainter, a beautiful young woman from the area who cherished theater and arts. Unfortunately, she died at the age of 19 in 1886, and her very wealthy lumber baron parents decided to construct the theater as a memorial to her. Andrew Tainter, Mabel's father, was a lumber baron and silent partner of Knapp, Stout, & Co. Andrew Tainter brought in artisans and materials from all over the world. People say this theater was built out of their parent's guilt and grieving. She died suddenly, from “cancer of the side” or a ruptured appendix. We aren't really sure what one she died from. Harvey Ellis designed the building and created a sophisticated structure of local sandstone. The unbelievable designs on the walls and ceilings were created by hand as we will see them tomorrow. They made the exterior faces by using the most expensive and the best stone in the area of Menomonie, Wisconsin at the time the memorial theater was built. The stone is called Dunnville sandstone, smooth and tan. You guys have probably all seen sandstone. The sandstone was quarried along the Red Cedar River. It was carved on site and set in place by a crew of nearly one hundred stonecutters. Once again, all the creations on the outside of the building were created by hand, can you imagine?. The inside of the theater is also very cool, there is huge stained glass and marble stairs and floors help decorate this building. The centerpiece of the theater is a gigantic pipe organ with 1,597 pipes in the 313-seat theater auditorium. Once again, the theater in memory of Mabel Tainter has been told to be haunted. Since the time that it was built in 1889, it has not changed drastically.” Ms. K finished as her class looked very interested and started to chatter before school was out.

The next morning Ms. K's third grade class was more excited than ever to take the field trip they had previously known about for a long time. They boarded the old yellow school bus and got dropped off at the Mabel Tainter Theater they have been longing to see.

“Wow, this sure is a cool place!” Said the third grade students as they were walking up to the curved doorway and seeing all the details in the sandstone! After about 15 minutes of walking around the theater and pointing some cool features out, like the library that is 100% fire proof because of the 2 feet walls it offers, that was the biggest thing that they liked.

“Ummm Ms. K, Ms. K, we see something like uh ghostly...the eyes on the portraits are moving and watching us,” some very frightened students said shakily.

“Alright, let's keep moving,” said the tourist guide as the teacher nodded in agreement looking around at the students and gold picture frames that the students claimed the eyes were moving in. The teacher pulled the tour guide over away from the students that were sitting in the what could be haunted auditorium, on the velvet chairs with a very smooth wood back that were very comfy to sit in. There was a bunch of chatter between the students.

“So, what is going on?” the teacher began whispering in a scared voice to the tourist, “I saw what they were seeing, is this like legit-” Before the teacher could finish. The 1,597 pipe organ made a huge loud BANG that made everyone startled. The teacher went over to make sure all the students were ok. The tour guide went to check on the organ, she came back and she saw nothing. She then pulled the teacher over to have a chat.

“Ok, what the students were seeing were the eyes moving on the beautiful pictures of Mabel's parents above the big marble staircase, you see them there? They saw what many other people have reported seeing as well.”

“So, is this place haunted?” the teacher asked scarcely.

“Well what do you think?” The guide said giggling. “There has been talk about the Mabel Tainter Theater being haunted. People talk about seeing strange lights in the windows, seeing a woman in white, hearing chains rattling and footsteps when no one is around.”

“Oh my goodness that is new news to me!” The teacher was very interested now. It was then time to leave because their time to tour the theater for a half an hour was over. The students walked out of the big wooden doors getting one last look at the very beautiful hand carved sandstone, and looking very admirable to the designs the theater offered.

“Phew, what a chaotic day.” the guide that the students had told her coworker.

“Yes, I know. Not even the kids, but all the stuff that was paranormal was just crazy.”

“It was just so, I wonder how many of those kids are gonna wanna come back..” she said laughing,

“I was doing research the other night, and you won't believe what I found.”

“Tell me now!!!”

“I found that some people believe it is Mabel herself haunting this theater when the people have reported to see a woman dressed up in a white gown, or they think that it is the Mother of Mabel. Some think that it is Mabel's mother in the white gown, because they say that she is too attached to leave the building and she needs to watch over it.”

“Really, I mean we all kinda figured that this place was haunted due to the look of everything and how old it is, and like today all the paranormal events.”

“Yeah, also while performing on stage actors and actresses have reported seeing apparitions watching them...and look here a executive director reported lights turning on after he leaves a room. Now here is where it gets crazier than crazy, police have received calls from people walking by the theater at night and they insist they saw someone inside the builded long after we have all gone home.”

“Weird, weird, weird.”

“And also we all kinda figured that the most famous ghost story of the theater happens to be Mabel Tainter herself. But look she died at the age of 19, and sources say that she died suddenly. Her birth certificate says that she died from “cancer from the side” or a ruptured appendix. So, maybe she found the theater that was built in memorial for her..”

“Wait I got it, the memorial of her was commissioned by her parents, Andrew and Bertha Tainter. So it would also make sense that her mother is the one haunting it, but it would also make sense since it is Mabel’s memorial sight.”

“You have a point, but I guess we will never know...”

Works Cited

Berthiaume, Judy. "University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire." *University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 26 Jan. 2018, www.uwec.edu/news/news/blugolds-tell-spooky-story-about-mabel-tainter-theater-in-new-childrens-book-2790/. Accessed 18 Feb. 2022.

"Mabel Tainter Theater – America's Haunted Roadtrip." *America's Haunted Roadtrip*, 3 May 2016, americashauntedroadtrip.com/tag/mabel-tainter-theater/. Accessed 17 Feb. 2022.

Menomonie's Historic Theater Ideal for Entertainment, Weddings, Business Meetings and Tours, mabeltainter.org/. Accessed 16 Feb. 2022.

"They Live Amongst Us: The Ghosts of Menomonie." *Unexplained Research*, www.unexplainedresearch.com/media/they_live_among_us.html. Accessed 17 Feb. 2022.

Winter, Jenna, and Stacy Endl. "The Mabel Tainter Theater and Memorial." *The Mabel Tainter Theater and Memorial*, 22 Mar. 1999, p. 2, p13cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_251181/File/Durand%20History/19th%20Century/Mabel%20Tainter%20Theater%20and%20Memorial.pdf. Accessed 16 Feb. 2022.

Yoho, Carol. "Mabel Tainter Memorial Theater, Menomonie, WI." *College in Kansas | College Degree Programs in KS*, 16 July 2001, www.washburn.edu/cas/art/cyoho/archive/MidwestTravel/tainter/index.html. Accessed 18 Feb. 2022.