Spooks and ghosties of St. Charles County

By JIM MUELLER
Of the Journal staff

If you walk down St. Charles' Main Street tonight, you might run into a ghostly newspaperman.

No, the Journal isn't throwing a costume party.

Elijah P. Lovejoy, an abolitionist editor who died in 1837, is said to haunt Main Street near the First State Capitol. According to the legend, he used to go to St. Charles whenever things got too hairy in Alton. But one November day he stayed in Alton to protect his presses from an angry mob and was killed.

If you do see Lovejoy, write to Jim Longo in care of the St. Anne Press in St. Louis. Longo spent about four years collecting ghost stories for his book "Haunted Odyssey, Ghostly Stories of the Mississippi Valley." It includes six hair-raising stories on St. Charles County spooks, but doesn't mention Lovejoy because Longo couldn't find anyone who had seen the ghost.

The search was frustrating because the Lovejoy ghost was the one Longo had most wanted to write about. He also couldn't find a storyteller to give him the lowdown on the ghost of Daniel Boone's wife, which is supposed to haunt the family graveyard near Defiance.

But St. Charles County contains enough spirits to make a book without Lovejoy or Mrs. Boone. One of the most famous is that of Mary Easton Sibley, the founder of Lindenwood College, who is said to have walked the grounds of the school and Sibley Hall ever since her death in 1879.

"On Halloween, supposedly Mrs. Sibley, who is buried on the grounds, would rise out of her grave and go to Sibley Hall and check it out," said Longo.

Over the years students have reported windows mysteriously opening or closing in the building. Others have claimed to be touched by the ghost, and one girl is supposed to have been saved from falling down a flight of steps by the friendly spirit.

"Mrs. Sibley loved the school very much," Longo said. "She was a wonderful person. A lot of people feel that her love stayed after she died and takes care of

(Continued on Page 13A)

One of the most famous ghosts in the St. Charles area is that of Mary Easton Sibley, founder of Lindenwood College. The spectral image (above) walks the parlor of Sibley Hall in front of Mrs. Sibley's portrait. (Journal Photo by Roy Sykes)
Spooks and ghosties

(Continued from Page 1A)

the kids.”

But the story Longo selected for his book is not quite so loving. It was told to him by a woman who attended the school in the 1940s and whom he would only identify as a prominent St. Louis educator.

At the time of the appearance, Sibley Hall was used as a dormitory. The woman’s best friend decided to play a trick by walking the halls late at night dressed as Mrs. Sibley. The plan called for her to make some noise to awaken the other girls so they would come down and see her shadow on the wall.

But while she was walking along the hall, she heard something behind her. It was Mrs. Sibley — the real Mrs. Sibley. The girl screamed and Mrs. Sibley vanished.

Longo is diplomatic when asked whether the story is true. “I believe the storytellers who told me the stories believe they’re true,” he said.

Longo, who is a part-time college instructor and also a consultant for Learning Consultants in Clayton, only wrote stories that he heard from someone who had seen a ghost or knew someone who had.

His research uncovered some weird tales in St. Charles County, including that of a little green Dutchman that haunted a house on Boonslick Road. The green man is supposed to be the spirit of a cook who had lived in the house. Occasionally residents of the house would be awakened by the man preparing a large meal in the kitchen.

Another legend claims that a Civil War-era sailor and a slave girl haunted a Jefferson Street house that is now the site of the post office.

Longo said the most frightening St. Charles County tale involves a strange old lady at the Friedens Church. One night a man was riding by on horseback and saw her collecting wood. She waved a stick at him, and her appearance was so ghastly that his horse recoiled from her.

He rode home and told his mother, who said the appearance was an omen of death. Within the week the man’s fiancée was dead.

Longo said that there are three main theories for the appearance of ghosts. Some say the spirit is that of someone who does not know he is dead. The ghost continues to haunt the area until something convinces him otherwise.

Another idea is that ghosts have some kind of unfinished business. For example, if someone is murdered, his spirit may hang around until the criminal is punished.

Others claim that there is a separate spirit world.” “There are other spirits or people living in another dimension, but most of us are unable to see them,” Longo said when explaining the theory. “But some people are more able to see them than others. For a brief moment the veil drops and they get a glimpse of the other side.”

So keep your eyes open tonight, and maybe you’ll see Lovejoy trying to escape the Alton mobs.