

Library's ghost may be dispirited

Leslie Moriarty / Herald Writer

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By Leslie Moriarty

Herald Writer

SNOHOMISH — There may be a reason Catharine McMurchy can't seem to leave the old Snohomish Library.

The former librarian, thought to haunt the library with a kind spirit, probably feels at home there, where she worked from 1923 to 1939. But she may also be reminding patrons that something is missing.

Stories that McMurchy, who died on Jan. 26, 1956, haunts the historic Carnegie Library began to circulate a few years ago. A story about Herald reporters spending Halloween at the library last year led an old family friend to come forward with some little-known McMurchy family history.

Barbara Kyлло of Seattle remembered outings to visit sisters Catharine and Anna McMurchy in Snohomish in the 1920s and '30s.

Kyлло's mother, Mary Henni Simmons, met Catharine McMurchy while attending

Bellingham Normal School and they became good friends.

"Mom considered both of the McMurchy sisters to be like family," Kyлло said. "They were included in every holiday and every family event we had."

Helping hand

Contributions to a cemetery marker for Catharine McMurchy may be sent to Mike Malone at the Snohomish Library, 105 Cedar Ave., Snohomish, WA 98290.

To read about the hauntings at the Snohomish Library, visit www.heraldnet.com/ghostcam. The 24-hour camera, set up last year to try to capture McMurchy's ghost on film, still operates at the library and can be viewed at this Web address. Also read about other ghost stories shared with The Herald.

The sisters lived in a large house at Fourth Street and Cedar Avenue that is no longer standing.

"We lived on Whidbey Island," Kyлло said of her family, which included seven children. "Mother would get us all ready and we'd pile in the car to go see the McMurchy sisters."

The trip included a ferry ride and an hour's drive to Snohomish. Once there, Kyлло and her brothers and sisters were the center of attention.

"They had no children," she said. "So they doted on us. "

There were white doilies on the tables, and tea was served in fine china cups.

The sisters remained in the family home until January 1950, when they moved to the Kings Garden Rest Home in Seattle. Kyлло remembers visiting the sisters at the rest home. She also remembers placing flowers on Catharine McMurchy's grave after she died in 1956.

But when she recently sought out the grave at Evergreen-Washelli Cemetery in Seattle, she couldn't find it.

"Her grave isn't marked," she said. "It has no stone."

Catharine McMurchy was buried by King County at a cost of \$91. Because there was no money in her estate, no marker was placed on her grave.

Kyлло also found that in January 1980, Anna died at age 100. Her cremated remains were released to a cousin, Jean Paine of Tacoma, for burial elsewhere.

Kyлло searched for Paine, but several letters were returned.

"It just seems sad to me that one sister was cared for by family and the other wasn't," Kyлло said. "And for Catharine's grave to remain unmarked after all these years, I just find that unbearable."

Mike Malone, a librarian in Snohomish who has had his own experiences with Catharine McMurchy's spirit, also found the unmarked grave to be unthinkable. Malone has decided to ask the Friends of the Snohomish Library for help.

Malone says the dead woman's visits to the library may be partly because she feels her departure from this life wasn't properly noted.

"I think she comes around just to visit her old library," he said. "But I think she led us to discover that she is still in need of a fitting farewell from the earth."



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