

THE LADY IN WHITE

HEAR UR SEASON 4

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SOUNDS OF THUNDER, RAIN, AND CAMPFIRE

NARRATOR 1: My name is Divya, I'm Wesley and I'm Jacob and this is Hear UR: Rochester Retold 200 years of hidden history, episode 4: Lady in White.

PAUSE

In the dark of a cold night in the 1800s, a young girl left her home by Durand Eastman Beach, just on the outskirts of Rochester. She put on her jacket,

SOUND OF JACKET BEING PUT ON

tied her shoes,

SOUND OF SHOES ON WOOD FLOOR, CREAK OF AN OLD SCREEN DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

and trekked off along the beach of Lake Ontario.

She was never seen again.

PAUSE FOR 2-4 SECONDS.

CREEPY/ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC STARTS

For years the Lady and White searched along the paths of Durand Eastman park but she was never able to find her daughter. To this day, her story has been passed along as her ghost is still seen searching the park in the afterlife. When she's seen in the woods she-

MUSIC STOPS.

NARRATOR 2: Wait what? That's not how the story goes!

NARRATOR 1: What do you mean? It's the Lady in White? I've heard this story thousands of times.

NARRATOR 2: Well that's not how I heard the story, what do you mean the daughter was never found? Let me go:

SOUNDS OF THUNDER, RAIN, AND CAMPFIRE AND MUSIC CONTINUES

NARRATOR 2: Hear UR -- Rochester, New York, the origin of the infamous ghost tale of the Lady in White.

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As the sunrise glistened across the Lake the next morning, a mother awoke to an unusual silence in the house.

All SOUND CEASES, PAUSE, THEN MUSIC RETURNS

Having not seen her daughter since the night before, the mother immediately contacted the police, put on her infamously chilling white dress, and went out with her dogs to search for her daughter.

DOGS BARKING, FOOTSTEPS RUNNING

After days of searching, her daughter's body was found, having

been raped and murdered in the woods by the beach.

Heartbroken and enraged by her daughter's death, the Lady in White continued to search for the killer.

For years, the Lady in White searched but never found the one responsible. Defeated and on the brink of insanity from years of searching, the Lady in White jumped off of a cliff by the beach into the afterlife, where her ghost is still seen looking for the killer today. Her vengeful soul is known to kill beachgoers and-

MUSIC STOPS

NARRATOR 3: Wait wait wait that one's more similar to the one I heard, but you're missing some pretty big pieces of the story *before* the Lady in White's daughter went missing. This is what I heard on a ghost tour once:

DARK, OMINOUS MUSIC WITH SOUNDS OF THUNDER, RAIN, AND CAMPFIRE

The Lady in White, whose supposed name was Eliza, came from a rough background and her parents married her off to a local farmer. However, soon after the marriage, her husband started getting violent.

Once Eliza was pregnant, she quickly realized she could not raise a child with this man, horrified that he would hurt her daughter. Over time these fears became too much for Eliza and with no other way out she murdered her husband inside what is now known as Durand Eastman Park.

Her fear of men, however, never seemed to go away. Sixteen years later when her daughter introduced her to the man she was planning to marry, Eliza was seized by fear, and then rage. She threatened the man to never return.

Furious with her mother, Eliza's daughter chose to leave. Grabbing her bags, she ran away into the night to rendezvous with her fiancé at the nearest stagecoach stop.

Not having enough money for both of them, her fiancé bid her farewell and sent her off to an inn in the City of Rochester, with plans of meeting her the next day.

Walking back through the cold dimly lit forest, he stumbled upon a wandering Eliza in a white dress with two dogs by her side. Eliza, not noticing her daughter with the man, assumed he must have done something horrible to her.

DOGS BARKING, WALKING THROUGH WOODS.

Quick to act, she released her two hounds on the man, severely injuring him. As he held onto the last bit of life left,

Eliza dragged him into a quicksand pit to finish him off.

SOUNDS OF THUNDER, RAIN, AND CAMPFIRE, MUSIC CHANGES TO MORE DAUNTING

Fueled by vengeance and sorrow, the Lady in White would search Durand Eastman Park day in and day out in hopes of locating her daughter. After months of searching to no avail, the Lady in

White decided to take her and the dogs on a shortcut over a frozen lake.

FOOTSTEPS & PAWSTEPS, LEASH SOUNDS, CRACKING ICE.

The ice was not sturdy enough and engulfed the Lady in White and her two dogs.

ICE SNAPPING

She continued the search for her daughters through the afterlife, killing any man that she encountered along her search.

END OF MUSIC

NARRATOR 1: Well why are these stories so different?

NARRATOR 2: Do you actually believe in the Lady in White?

NARRATOR 1: I mean this story's been around for decades and there are so many avid believers around Rochester.

NARRATOR 3: Yeah I've heard about her hundreds of times but most of the story has been debunked. The details of the Lady in White usually depend on the storyteller. Here is Jason Milton, a Rochester native who is a producer of Ghost Stories, a web series looking into the supernatural.

JASON MILTON: "I think I've heard like probably like seven different ones and different variations on like, what the story is, why it's happening, who it is all that stuff. So it's like it very much is I think it's like constantly morphing, like every time someone tells the story, they kind of add

a little bit to it or change something and eventually that kind of makes it into the the whole bigger picture of it"

NARRATOR 1: It's clear that this story is still prevalent especially amongst older Rochesterians who were in school during its height throughout the 1980s. Although the legend has inspired campfire storytellers, ghost tours, and a fear of the woods neighboring Durand-Eastman beach, there has never been any proof that the Lady in White actually existed.

Jenni Lynn, a local who gives guided ghost tours about the Lady in White had a lot to say about this story.

JENNI: "I always hear from Rochester youth that Rochester just isn't that interesting of a place and I think there's that desire to have something special here. I think for a lot of people that is the white lady's castle. I know for me, this has been a big part of my life since I was a little kid. I was fascinated by the story, fascinated by the architecture of the castle, and I think just wanted something important and interesting here and to be a part of that. I know I feel that way."

NARRATOR 1: The Lady in White's spooky stone castle was allegedly on the outskirts of Durand Eastman Beach.

Today, the castle's remaining stone walls stand damaged from years of graffiti, trespassing, and even arson.

The remains of her alleged castle are actually the remains of an old

concession area for pre-depression tourists, never once being a place of residence.

There is also no record of a death or disappearance that lines up with the daughter of the Lady in White, and no name has been found for this family allegedly living in the castle by the beach.

Here again, is Jenni Lynn
from the ghost tour:

FADE IN INTERVIEW WITH JENNI FROM THE GHOST
TOUR

JENNI: "It was probably around the turn of the 20th century when the story sort of picked up and started really getting into the public. Because people were flocking here.

SOUNDS OF A BUSY BEACH ENTER BACKGROUND

NARRATOR 1: In response to the rapid economic boom in Rochester and expanding businesses, there was a large middle class that could afford to frequently camp at and spend time at Durand Eastman Park.

NARRATOR 1: Attractions grew along the shores of Lake Ontario. This brought more tourists to the area driving the need for the concession stand which is now confused as the Lady in Whites castle.

BEACH NOISES FADE OUT

Narrator 2: While there's evidence of this story existing in the

early 1900's, it didn't really seem to take off beyond word of mouth or end up in Rochester newspapers until the 80s, where its popularity seemed to have peaked.

Since then, there have been new sightings and revivals of the legend throughout every generation. Many people attribute this spike in popularity to the 1988 murder thriller "The Lady in White" produced by a Rochester local Frank LaLoggia.
(Lah-low-jah)

FADE IN AUDIO FROM "LADY IN WHITE" TRAILER

LUKAS: There was a little girl! I saw her she was killed in the cloakroom!

TRAILER NARRATOR: A girl who wants you to find her killer.

GIRL: Will you help me?

TRAILER NARRATOR: You have just one hope to solve the mystery... to save your life.

LADY IN WHITE: Come here child

TRAILER NARRATOR: Say your prayers... Lady in White

MOVIE AUDIO ENDS

NARRATOR 2: While the plot is loosely based on the original legend, it continued the fear of that figure through the late 80s into the 90s and beyond.

More recently, her legend came back into the media after a big storm hit the area in 2017.

THUNDERSTORM SOUNDS

During the storm, a lightning bolt struck a tree in Durand Eastman Park.

LIGHTNING STRIKE, TREE CRACKING

Out of the singed wood was a silhouette of the Lady in White reaching out of the tree. (This could be replaced with an interview if someone mentions this)

This reinvigorated the story for a younger generation.

Since the legend's origin, the ghost of the Lady in White is said to attack young men when she spots couples on her search, hoping to protect the young women from the same fate as her daughter. Every retelling of this urban legend has a unique perspective, but there's more than what meets the eye for this seemingly innocent ghost story. The differences we see can reveal patterns of local thought in Rochester throughout time.

It's widely known that there's no proof behind the story, yet it's still stuck around. Chiefly spread through word of mouth, the story is warped by people's individual fears and twists. But how exactly has the chilling legend of the Lady in White been kept alive for so many years?

BEGIN JAZZY MYSTERIOUS MUSIC

NARRATOR 3: While the Lady in White of Durand Eastman Park is popular in Rochester, apparitions of a vengeful female spirit in white are usually common.

Aniela Jaffé's (ahn-yehluh yah-fee) book *Apparitions and Precognition* dives into the common figure of a woman in white throughout folklore and urban legends. Apparitions of this type are common amongst many locations and cultures but display some of the same characteristics between their different versions of the story.

In every iteration, the white lady is usually seen more than once, is connected to some sort of location or castle, and lures innocent people into an encounter with the apparition.

Jaffé also says that reactions to these spirits are different in the eye of the beholder. Young girls typically see white lady apparitions as friendly while young boys are usually much more scared of these encounters. Rochester's Lady in White fulfills all of these expectations.

Ghost stories are born out of a sense of fear fueled by youthful imagination, like a monster under the bed, vampire in the night, or an evil clown in the sewer. Humans get exhilaration from being scared. Just because our society feels safe, there's always a fear of the unknown and this may even increase as we become more comfortable in today's modernizing world.

R.C. Finucane's (finikin) book *Ghosts: Appearances of the Dead & Cultural Transformations* highlights the impact that supposed "apparitions", scary stories, or supernatural activity can have on people, as well as how

people's fears in life are usually imprinted onto them.

He explains that in the 20th century, many people wanted to believe in ghosts throughout the catastrophic loss of life that came with the world wars. Fathers and sons lost in battle were yearned for by their living families, hoping they would be able to see them again.

Even today, people frequently seek out mediums to speak with the dead and ghosts are common in movies and pop culture. Whether it be a positive visitation to grieving families, or a vengeful demon in a horror movie, ghosts are seen frequently in media today.

The basis of tales like the Lady in White are urban legends, and this is nothing new. Bloody Mary, Slenderman, and other common characters brewed out of imagination are kept alive through questionable sightings. They then get passed down through generations and can highlight how people make sense of their world and fears, and have only gained potential to spread and stick around with the rise of social media.

Stories like these start with fear, we latch onto this and spread it with other people, giving them the same terror and rush. The constant retelling leads to the shuffling of details like a long telephone game that have led us to today's different versions of the Lady in White in Rochester.

Our Lady in White has nestled into pop culture today but the horror

trope of a creepy lady in White exists far outside of our local version. There are Lady in White stories that have sparked out of many other parts of the United States and even abroad in countries such as Taiwan. Some revolve around the same general idea as ours while other versions outside of Rochester have different messages, even one centered around safe driving.

MUSIC FADES OUT, NEW SOLEMN MUSIC BEGINS

NARRATOR 1: Near the start of this legend, The Lady In White was painted as a vengeful soul still looking for her daughter, but when it resurfaced in the 80s, it shifted to a way to scare youth into behaving. The main implication of this version was to push boys to be more respectful and for girls to not be promiscuous, and this was truly a sign of the times.

NARRATOR 1: Something as simple as a ghost story can say a lot about people's ways of thinking during the time they circulate, this principle aligns with the Lady in White's prevalence in Rochester throughout the 80s.

NARRATOR 2: At this time, Rochester locals were familiar with disappearance, murder, and were experiencing real horror in their community.

Between 1971-1973, three young girls were murdered in Rochester, Carmen Colón, Wanda Walkowicz, and Michelle Maenza. Because each of the victims had double initials, the killer was named "The Alphabet

Killer" but still to this day has never been identified.

It was also around the same time in 1972 that the infamous Rochester mobster Salvatore Gimgello was killed by an unknown hitman with a car bomb.

The mob presence in Rochester was well known and another source of violence and fear during this time.

Another murderer from the time was Arthur Shawcross, better known as the Genessee River Killer. He went to prison in 1972 for killing two young children. Upon his release in 1988, he went on a killing spree, driving around looking for sex workers and killing 11 by the time he was caught in 1990.

These very real terrors undoubtedly affected the livelihood of Rochesterians, and when there so much real killing around you, it makes sense why people would latch onto a scary ghost story. The story even shows similar motives as the Genessee River Killer's targetting of sex-workers at the end of the 80s.

By this time, 80% of women were using birth control, fashion quickly moved to more flashy outfits, and people (particularly women) started becoming much more in tune with having freedom in their body and choices.

This makes sense as to why a ghost looking for her lost daughter could have been spun into something to scare them straight. Teenagers were imprinted with the fear that if they went on any sort of date of romantic excursion by

the beach or the woods, they would be at the mercy of the Lady in White.

While we all love a good ghost story, understanding why we latch onto these and how public opinion influences each iteration can show us a lot about people through history. The Lady in White has haunted Durand Eastman park for many years and I'm sure she won't be going anywhere soon. While she probably isn't real, you may want to stay aware of your surroundings at Durand Eastman Park... just to be safe.

MUSIC FADES OUT, CREDIT MUSIC BEGINS

Narrator 3:

HearUR is a podcast created by students at The University of Rochester.

Our episode featured Jacob Hall as our producer, Wesley Mawn as the lead researcher, and Divya Duraisamy as the sound engineer, with all three serving as narrators. The music used on this episode was from Blue dot sessions and sound effects from freesound.org. We'd also like to thank Jenni Lynn and Jason Milton for their interviews. Be sure to check out the ghost tours and Jason Milton's show on Youtube Ghost Stories.

Hear UR is created using Faders, a collaborative online audio production workstation. It offers browser-based audio recording and editing, all within an easy-to-use interface - all for free! Go check it out at Faders dot I O.

The coordinating producer for this season of HearUR is Celia Konowe (Kah-no). The executive producers are Thomas Fleischman and Stephen Roessner (Ress-ner). And, be sure

to check out the other episodes of
HearUR Season Four: Rochester
Retold at HearUR.Com