

Lesson 8

READ THIS STORY #1, Advanced

The Octagon House

If stories of hauntings and apparitions intrigue you, you might choose to visit the Octagon House in Washington, DC. A circular rotunda, two rectangles and a triangle are incorporated into its design. The American Architectural Foundation maintains this unusual three-story mansion as a museum.

The Octagon House was built around 1800 by John Tayloe, a wealthy plantation owner and friend of George Washington. According to folklore, one of Mr. Tayloe's daughters fell in love with a British officer. Her father vehemently disapproved and prohibited the officer from entering the house. After a stormy argument with him, the daughter took her candle and proceeded to climb the staircase. A piercing scream was heard.

No one knows if the fall causing her death was an accident or if she threw herself from the top banister. But, since that tragedy, witnesses have reported seeing unexplained rays from a flickering candle, sensing an unseen presence, and hearing someone walking up and down the stairs.

During the war of 1812, President Madison used the Octagon House as a temporary residence. Some say they have smelled the scent of lilacs and have seen the ghostly figure of Dolly Madison dancing in the mansion.