

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Alfred University

The Alfred Book of Ghastly Tales

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for
The Alfred University Honors Program

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My main goal with *The Alfred Book of Ghastly Tales* is to showcase the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) here at Alfred University. Seeing an anthology of student and faculty writing for sale on Amazon and Barnes & Noble is something that would have convinced me to attend Alfred University long before I actually came to Accepted Students Day and met with the friendly and inviting Division of English. Although an English degree is available at nearly all colleges across the country, I think the opportunities offered by the Division of English here are unparalleled. I hope that this book will encourage prospective students to consider attending the small liberal arts college “nestled away ‘mid the Empire State hills” by using our society’s obsession with the paranormal (Lester C. Randolph).

My very first English course at Alfred, Tales of Terror with Dr. Allen Grove, was also my First Year Experience (FYE) course, designed to help acclimate new students to college life and classes. I credit this course for establishing my relationship with ghost stories and the paranormal. However, I also recognize this course for helping me to get to know and appreciate my college campus. Since this class doubled as a FYE course, we went to the Career Development Center in the Steinheim so that we as students would know what resources we had available to us. It was in that little field trip up the hill from Seidlin that I learned not only how beautiful the campus is in the fall when all the leaves are changing colors, but also that Abigail Allen is haunting the Steinheim.

Throughout my four years here, both my love for ghost stories and Alfred have grown tremendously, and when presented with the opportunity to partner my thesis with Dr. Allen Grove’s Honors seminar, “A Dark and Stormy Night,” I couldn’t have been happier. Over this past spring semester, I worked with twelve students of all different classes, writing abilities, and interests as they wrote and revised their very own ghost stories. I only had one requirement: their

stories had to be set in Alfred, New York. While the students mulled over different plots in their minds, I made a call for submissions flyer inviting students outside of the class and faculty to contribute their best Alfred-based ghost story to the anthology. I wanted to make the anthology cohesive in its landscape since it was one thing that all of the contributing writers shared. I also wanted my thesis to be a combination of two of my favorite things: ghost stories and Alfred.

Using the Honors course as a jump board for this project worked really well in helping me to achieve my goal of showcasing CLAS. Since the Honors program allows for interactions between other schools at Alfred University, it allowed the anthology to be inclusive to the entire Alfred community. Stories in the anthology were written by English, Art and Design, Biology, Psychology, and even Engineering majors, and I hope that those students as well as prospective ones (no matter their major) will enroll in a creative writing course and develop a love and appreciation for the craft as I have in my four years here at Alfred.

Although having students from across the disciplines made for an inclusive and inspiring anthology, the process to developing the final book was challenging for me. I had to switch from the person being critiqued to the critic of my peers. I am grateful for Prof. Susan Morehouse and Dr. Juliana Gray that prepared me for this type of role through workshopping my classmates' short stories and poems in advanced Creative Writing courses. Even though I had practice giving constructive criticism with these courses, I still struggled with providing professional and positive feedback that would be beneficial in helping the students to make their stories stronger. I wanted to make sure that I was asking the writers to think about their stories in three-dimensional ways so that the next drafts would be driven by organic characters and not so much by their plan for the plot and punchlines. It was difficult for me to separate from myself as a writer so that I could give the students commentary that would not push my vision of their story onto their own

creative ideas. I had to work hard to stop myself from saying things like, “you should have Character X do...” and adding tiny details that steered away from their original ideas.

After the rough drafts were completed and I had provided general feedback and asked questions about characters and their overall concepts, I focused on meticulously line-editing each story. This part of the process challenged my own skills as a writer. For example, I love commas and I will put them anywhere I can, even where they don’t belong, creating comma splices. This habit proved to be difficult for me when line-editing, and I am thankful to have had Dr. Allen Grove as a second pair of eyes to correct some of my corrections of the final versions of the stories for the anthology. It was through this series of edits and revisions that I realized I do not want to be an editor.

When I took Publish Practicum with Dr. Allen Grove in the spring of last year, I was able to compile and edit four different works into an anthology, *Horsewomanship in 19th-Century America*, which inspired my desire to edit another book for my thesis. However, I realized after a couple rounds of editing that working with out of copyright texts from dead writers is a lot easier than working with living, opinionated writers who also happen to be my peers. This being said, my project confirmed my love for working within the Adobe Creative Cloud software. Once all the major editing was done and I was able to focus solely on the layout of the book in InDesign, I really enjoyed spending hours at the computer meticulously adjusting the leading and kerning of the texts to fix page and paragraph widows and orphans. Each individual story presented its own set of additional challenges depending on its narrative form. For example, the stories written in epistolary form took more time to format because of their subheaders. Once I had converted the file into a PDF for the printer, Dr. Allen Grove and I asked the students to read over their stories to identify any typographical errors we may have missed. This was a really good idea considered

I had missed quite a few errors which is reflective of how challenging it is not only to be meticulous in editing, but also in the expedited timeline for the project. I was pleased to see the students so excited to look at their stories formatted as they would appear in print. Their excitement made the work all that more rewarding.

I was also happy to see that the students were excited to read the introduction I had been working on all semester with both Dr. Allen Grove and Laurie Lounsberry McFadden of the Alfred University's Research & Archives. Laurie Lounsberry McFadden helped in multiple ways. She came early in the semester to talk to the class about Alfred's folklore, and this visit inspired many of the students' stories. She also offered me interesting information to use in the introduction, and she then helped me fact-check this information in later working drafts. With interesting stories like President Kenyon falling down the side of The Brick in a basket and the unproven legend that the Seneca people referred to the land as the Valley of the Insane, I wanted to write a captivating introduction for readers either familiar, or not at all familiar, with Alfred and its history. Instead of a scholarly introduction that can be alienating to some readers, I used a conversational tone that would be accessible to a wide audience. I hope that the introduction and the companion photos will draw readers into the anthology and into reading some great work from Alfred University students and faculty.

I also really enjoyed working on the graphic design for the cover. I started by taking a wide-angle photograph of the Steinheim and importing it into Adobe Photoshop. Within the software, I was able to play around with the colors and channels to remove most of the saturation from the original photo and "spookify" our iconic castle. I then used the pen tool to outline the entire building, a very precise and time-consuming task, in order to add a layer of clouds behind it, as well as some of the all-too-common Alfred crows. Once satisfied with the cover image, I

imported it into InDesign using the template provided by the Lightning Source, the printer. I found the font, Viner Hand ITC, that I thought looked both eerie and readable when paired with the photo, and then used the eyedropper tool to pick up a light bit of color from one the windows to use as the font color. For the back of the cover, I used a photograph from the archives, a very romantic photograph from a 1936 student's scrapbook of a student in a lab coat with a skeleton propped up on his lap. Not only did I just love the photo itself, but it also worked well with the theme of some of the stories within the anthology.

Having graduated from a performing arts high school where I majored in creative writing, a lot of my peers are currently finishing up their undergraduate careers in English departments at colleges all across the country. Not one of them, however, has ever worked in-depth with Adobe InDesign, edited an anthology of out of copyright texts, or published a book of student and faculty work from their university. These kinds of opportunities are unique to Alfred University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and I hope that *The Alfred Book of Ghastly Tales* helps to sway prospective students into attending our college and developing the appreciation for writing and our little town as I have.

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THE ALFRED BOOK OF GHASTLY TALES

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY ELLIE WOZNICA



Hidden away in rural western New York in the Valley of the Insane, a small college town is overrun by crows and deer. There are buildings with unexplainable mirrors, creepy paintings, and townspeople with ghostly pasts. Nine dead in *The Brick*, a murderer's skeleton, and a missing knight. It's time to prepare yourself. Turn on your reading lamp, sit down, and get ready to enter *The Alfred Book of Ghastly Tales*...

WHITLOCK PUBLISHING
ALFRED, NY



Front Cover Image: Ellie Woznica
Back Cover Image: Alfred University Archives

THE ALFRED BOOK OF GHASTLY TALES

EDITED BY ELLIE WOZNICA



The Alfred Book of Ghastly Tales

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The
Alfred Book
of
Ghastly Tales

The Alfred Book of Ghastly Tales

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ELLIE WOZNICA

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This anthology is dedicated to Matt Chabot. Thank you so much, Matt, for your unwavering support.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

The stories in this anthology are loosely based on Alfred, New York folklore. This is a work of fiction. All events or incidents are fictitious. All information and photographs for the introduction provided by the Alfred University Archives.

COMPANION

You're walking down the sidewalk after eating dinner at Ade Dining Hall. It's dark and you're alone. The orange incandescence of the lamps is all that holds the darkness at bay. You pull your jacket tighter over your body, but not even that can stop the biting wind.

You can see your shadow strolling in front of you, almost as if to beckon you to chase it. As you approach the next lamp in the line, your shadow grows fainter and fainter.

What's that?

You see a dark figure in the corner of your eye. Your heart skips. You are being followed. How long has it been since you were alone? Were you ever truly alone? These thoughts vanish in an instant as you see your shadow swing around you. It was just your shadow.

Your pace doesn't falter, but your entire body feels the relief of knowing you were the figure. Yet, you feel the urge to look behind you. But something stops you. Not fear, but embarrassment. What if someone saw you whipping your head around out of paranoia?

You realize the foolishness of that thought. Still, you look behind you. It is a mere glance, a movement so small you can barely see the sidewalk behind you. But that is all you see. You were alone after all. You laugh at yourself. You're a college student now; you're too old for such childish fears. But you can't shake the feeling that you aren't alone. That someone or something is with you while you walk through the dark. A silent companion.

—JOSHUA BENHAM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	v
ELLIE WOZNICA	
“NEEDLEWORK”	1
JULIANA GRAY	
“WE ARE OUTNUMBERED BY THEIR DEAD”	9
“TFW BAE IS A GHOST”	13
HALEY RUFFNER	
“A GHOST’S GUIDE TO MANNERS”	19
“PROWL”	25
NIC OSINOFF	
“PASS BY CATASTROPHE”	29
“THE KILN”	37
JULIE BARR	
“ALCOHOL VIOLATION”	43
CATHERINE DONAHUE	
“THE BLACK KNIGHT”	53
TORI PELLEGRINO	
“PARALLEL TO THE PAST”	63

ANNA WIEGMAN	
“ERR”	71
DANIEL FLETCHER	
“THE ROOMMATE”	79
SUSAN MOREHOUSE	
“STEREOPTICON, SHOTGUN, BLENDER”	87
SYDNEY DOMINICK	
“LIGHTEN UP, DUDE”	91
MEGHAN RAHNER	
“THE MIRROR”	103
“THE MORTICIAN”	113
JOSHUA BENHAM	
“WHY SHOULD I CARE WHO DIED?”	117
AVA HAMEISTER	
“MAN, YOU’RE ALREADY IN DEBT”	137
“A LESSON IN BIOLOGY”	141
ALLEN GROVE	
“WASTE NOT”	149
SUSANNA BARGER	
“WHEN AND WHY ARE YOU?”	153
“PIECES”	163
“PIPISTRELLO”	173
“HEALTH AND WELLNESS”	175
MARY J. RUTHERFORD	
“THE BLOWFLY MAN”	181

ILLUSTRATIONS

SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST CHURCH, CIRCA 1920	vii
TIP TOP, CIRCA 1920.....	viii
TRAIN WRECK IN ALFRED STATION, JUNE 14, 1897	viii
SOUTH HALL, COMPLETED IN 1909	ix
STUDENT ARMY TRAINING CORPS IN FRONT OF THE BRICK, FALL 1918	ix
THE BRICK, CIRCA 1910.....	x
THE BRICK ON FIRE, NOVEMBER 13, 1932	x
PRESIDENT KENYON AND HIS WIFE, IDA, CIRCA 1865.....	xi
PRESIDENT ALLEN AND HIS WIFE, ABIGAIL, CIRCA 1885.....	xi
THE STEINHEIM, UNDER CONSTRUCTION FROM 1876-1892	xii
INSIDE OF THE STEINHEIM AS NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, CIRCA 1900.....	xii
THE SCIENCE CENTER, CIRCA 1970	xiii
BARTLETT HALL, 1932	xiii
THE BLACK KNIGHT WITH ALFRED UNIVERSITY CLASS OF 1908	xiv
THE BLACK KNIGHT BEFORE HIS DISAPPEARANCE, MID-1980S	xiv
KING ALFRED STATUE, 1996.....	xv

INTRODUCTION

COMPILED HERE ARE ghost stories written by Alfred University students and a few faculty members. The stories range in form and narrative style from Haley Ruffner's epistolary tale, "A Ghost's Guide to Manners," and Julie Barr's "Alchol Violation" to some third-person narratives with Mary J. Rutherford's "The Blowfly Man" and Anna Wiegman's "ERR." The stories also vary in time from the mid 19th century in Meghan Rahner's "The Mortician" to the present day with Sydney Dominick's "Lighten Up, Dude" and Catherine Donahue's "The Black Knight." Tori Pellegrino's "Parallel to the Past" dances between the two.

With all of their differences, the stories in this anthology are all linked by the shared landscape of Alfred, New York. Some are set on Alfred University's campus; Ava Hameister's "A Lesson in Biology" and Juliana Gray's "We Are Outnumbered by Their Dead" take place in the Science Center, Barger's "Health and Wellness" in South Hall, and Joshua Benham's "Why Should I Care Who Died?" in the Powell Campus Center. Meanwhile, others are set in the rural village and surrounding areas like Allen Grove's "Waste Not." Wherever they are set, the writers in this anthology are using the ghost story genre to tap into Alfred's haunted history.

The dead have been present in literature for as long as literature has existed, appearing in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

(1601), and one of the first English texts, *Beowulf* (circa 1000); Samuel's ghost even makes an appearance in the Bible. The ghost story genre itself became extremely popular in the Victorian period. Some obvious reasons for the genre's prominence include relatively high literacy rates and decreasing costs for publishing and distributing literature. The popularity of the ghost story genre is also linked to the growing interest in paranormal activities including séances, mesmerism, and hypnotism, all of which were seriously studied by the Society for Psychical Research. The Victorian period saw the birth of photography that, thanks to long shutter speeds and the limits of the early technology, often transformed our world into one haunted by ghostly figures. Later in the century, the discovery of x-rays caused magazines and newspapers to be flooded with images of transparent flesh.

The short story itself is largely a product of the Victorian period because of the presence of more periodicals and places to publish works of short fiction. As a result, short fiction became a popular source of entertainment. A good ghost story could provide a family with an enjoyable evening's amusement.

As in the Victorian period, the works included in this anthology will define "ghost" broadly. Some will feature indisputably supernatural occurrences, while others can be explained away as the chimeras of a haunted mind.

THE VALLEY OF THE INSANE

Before the town of Alfred was officially created by the New York State Legislature in 1808, the area served as the hunting grounds for the Seneca people. The creek running through the valley, the Kanakadea (sometimes spelled Canacadea), received its name from their native language. Translated into

English, the word means, “where the heavens rest upon the earth.” The name stems from the topography of the valley and the creek’s relationship to it. However, local folklore states the creek’s name is derived from the people who died in the valley. Legend says the Seneca dubbed the land “The Valley of the Insane,” a place where they exiled insane members of their tribe to live amongst the deer and elk they hunted.

The Seventh Day Baptists, “many [of whom] were veterans of the War of 1812, and descendants of soldiers who had fought in the Revolution” (“History of Alfred, NY”) are credited with settling the town in 1808 as well as founding the university itself in 1836. Since its first days, the little village (originally called Alfred Center) has made a name for itself, not because its annual festival to celebrate the Hot Dog that brings college students from all around Western New York to Alfred’s secluded countryside, but because of its unique history.

When exiting New York State Route 21, before you reach the village of Alfred, you will pass through Alfred’s second noteworthy settlement, Alfred Station (originally called Baker’s Bridge). Although there is no longer an operational train station, when the Erie Railroad was first created in 1851, Alfred Station was not only a passenger line, but also a way for the community to export agricultural products such as livestock and cheese. Approximately three miles away from the station stood a water tower and a place for railroad workers and engineers to stay overnight. This stop was commonly referred to as “Tip Top,” known for being the highest point of the Erie Railroad. The steep grade proved to be very trying for the steam engines of the time. However, the trains continued to make the trek, responsible for providing Alfredians with items ordered from the *Sears, Roebuck & Co. Catalog*, products

that ranged from clothes and household products to entire barns and houses.

ALFRED'S HAUNTED BUILDINGS

South Hall was originally opened as the Alfred Central School that offered high school classes to all of the town's districts, but it now sits with its windows boarded, the building delapidated and rotting, home to many of Alfred's stray cats. The building state of decay that it made it the perfect setting for Pellegrino's "Parallel to the Past" and Susanna Barger's "Health and Wellness."

A product of its time, Alfred University's classrooms and residence halls were illuminated by candlelight or oil lamps before electricity, and unfortunately, the iconic building, "The Brick," is one of its most well-known victims of fire. When The Brick was first built in 1858, it was even more impressive than it is now, standing tall with four large stories. However, a fire broke out in one of the meeting rooms on the highest level costing the building its cupola and one full story, compressing it down to only three floors. In the time both before and after the fire, The Brick served many purposes, some even considered a little haunting. Not surprisingly, the building inspired a couple stories in this collection.

Before the residence halls became coeducational in 1970, The Brick was a women's hall where Alfred University's first president, William Colegrove Kenyon, strictly enforced the segregation of the sexes. President Kenyon was known for his rules and need for little sleep. During his term as president (from 1857 to 1865) students would see him walking around campus after curfew making rounds with his lantern in hand. Careful to avoid him seeing men enter The Brick via the front

doors, the ladies of the upper stories developed a system which involved a basket and a password; once the password had been spoken, the basket was lowered and pulled back up with a man sitting inside it. The observant man he was, President Kenyon watched from afar and learned about the secret. After he recited the password, the basket was lowered, and he climbed in. After he recited the password, the basket was lowered, and he climbed in. It wasn't until the women saw the top of his bald head that they screamed, let go of the rope and sent the basket and the president down to the ground. President Kenyon was not wounded in the fall, but that night did mark the end of The Brick's basket-boy-retrieval-system.

During World War I and World War II, the United States Army contracted with Alfred University and The Brick housed the soldiers, serving as both barracks and infirmary. Near the end of the first World War came the spread of the insidious Spanish Flu in 1918, which ran rampant, killing 10% of the world's population including some of Alfred's own residents. At the time, Alfred University did not have an infirmary to treat students, so The Brick's military infirmary served that purpose. Unfortunately, a nurse, some soldiers, and some faculty died as a result of the influenza. Some students who have lived—and some who currently live—in The Brick have reported hearing people who cannot be seen, feeling as though someone has crawled into bed with them, and three students even talked to one of the ghosts on a Ouija Board. Ruffner's "Prowl" focuses on the building's spooky past, and Rahner's "The Mirror" taps into its interesting architecture.

Unlike The Brick, the Steinheim was never a residence hall, but it is still said to house a spirit. Now the Career Development Center, the Steinheim was originally owned by President Kenyon's widower, Professor Ida Kenyon who

started its construction in 1876. The structure itself is built of rocks collected from neighboring farm fields. Cemented into the walls of the castle are “rock[s] collected from ice age debris, all from within three miles of campus” (Alfred University Archives). The president of Alfred University at the time of its construction, Jonathon Macomber Allen, purchased the unfinished castle from Professor Kenyon. President Allen completed it, inspired by the castles he had seen on a trip to Germany with his wife, Abigail. The Allens made the Steinheim into a natural history museum and a classroom, finishing the interior with many variations of wood from the region. The Steinheim was privately owned by the Allens until after Abigail’s death in 1902.

In 1863, Jane Brooks was officially found guilty of poisoning the wife of her lover, making her the first female convicted of murder in Allegany County. President Allen visited her in Sing Sing Prison and paid three hundred dollars for her skeleton which later resided in the Steinheim and was affectionately nicknamed “Sally the Skeleton.” Sally was used in student pranks, can be seen photographed with students in scrapbooks, and even makes an appearance in Hameister’s “A Lesson in Biology.” Though Sally’s skeleton presided in Steinheim, the staff at the Career Development Center believe it is the spirit of Abigail Allen herself who inhabits the castle since her ashes were at one time housed there. Presently, Abigail Allen has been accused of making the elevator move to which the receptionist replies, “Oh, Abby!”

THE BLACK KNIGHT

Alfred University’s class of 1908 wrote in their yearbook that their “mascot [was] the statue from the top of the former

history-room stove.” After that, the statue of the Black Knight became a token, passing hands from the Class of 1910, to 1912 to 1914, and then to 1916, dubbed the “Black Knight of the Even Classes.” The Class of 1923 envied the knight, and it soon became a battle of the classes, the odds against the evens. As a result, students hid the Black Knight from one another, everywhere from blouses and trousers, to burying him beside the creek. The Black Knight survived the battle but took quite the beating. He is pictured in the 1931 Kanakadea (Alfred University’s yearbook), accompanied by the following poem:

The Black Knight
 The Even classes proudly boast
 Of a mascot, brave,
 A relic of an old black stove,
 Long since in its grave.

The Evens still are prone to laugh
 At our oddity,
 But we retain the part which means
 Supportability.

This duel ownership was caused
 (Some perchance know not)
 Some years ago by a class fight –
 Each a portion got.

Each Junior Class receives in stealth
 Trophy treasured.
 One a legless knight now guards;
 One a knightless leg.

In Jean McCord’s article, “The Black Knight” (1977), she writes, “Ralph Rhodes, President of the Class of 1942, wrote to the Annual Fund Office: ‘If you ever want the ‘Black Knight’ returned, please let me know. It was last seen on campus in the Fall of 1939. Ellis Drake, Dean of Men at the time,

asked me to retire ‘it’—which I did.” Unfortunately, after being returned and standing proud in a glass case in the Powell Campus Center, the Black Knight was stolen in 2005 and has not been seen since. Both Pellegrino and Donahue imagine his reappearance in their stories.

Hidden away in rural western New York in the Valley of the Insane, a small college town is overrun by crows and deer. There are buildings with unexplainable mirrors, creepy paintings, and townspeople with ghostly pasts. Nine dead in The Brick, a murderer’s skeleton, and a missing knight. It’s time to prepare yourself. Turn on your reading lamp, sit down, and get ready to enter *The Alfred Book of Ghastly Tales...*

ELLIE WOZNICA, APRIL 2018

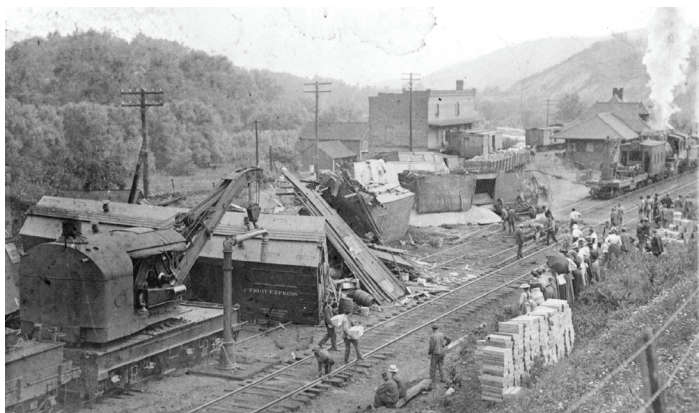
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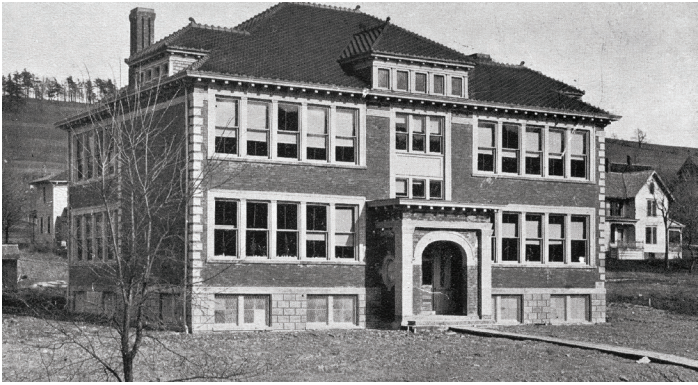
Seventh Day Baptist Church, circa 1920.



Tip Top, circa 1920.



Train wreck in Alfred Station, June 14, 1897.



South Hall, completed in 1909.



Student Army Training Corps in front of the Brick, Fall 1918.



The Brick, circa 1910.



The Brick on fire, November 13, 1932.



President Kenyon and his wife, Ida, circa 1865.



President Allen and his wife, Abigail, circa 1885.



The Steinheim, under construction from 1876-1892.



Inside of the Steinheim as natural history museum, circa 1900.



The Science Center, circa 1970.



Bartlett Hall, 1932.



The Black Knight with Alfred University Class of 1908.



The Black Knight before his disappearance, mid-1980s.



King Alfred Statue, 1996.