



HAUNTED HAMILTON GHOST WALKS & EVENTS

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Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada *Canada's Most Haunted Town*

By [Daniel Cumerlato](#)

Upper Canada's first provincial capital of the late 18th century was home to many firsts for the budding nation. Included are the first:

1. Library
2. Courthouse
3. Post Office
4. Apothecary (fancy word for pharmacy)
5. Newspaper
6. Two of the first churches in all of Canada

That's what the British had accomplished in the short time after Colonel John Butler, his men and their families settled the area. Butler and his group fled the American Revolution into British Upper Canada so they could remain loyal to the crown of England and avoid the violence.

This isn't where the energy begins, that energy which makes Niagara-on-the-Lake Canada's Most Haunted Town. We start with the unrecorded native story comes which survives history in small amounts. The natives called this unique land home for over 10,000 years before the British knew it existed.

The Neutral Nation was there for 500 years and is credited with the name Niagara, given to the raging waters starting in Niagara-on-the-Lake and going to the massive falls. The translation is believed to be "thunder of the waters" or "neck" (because of the shape of the river). The Neutrals called the town Onghiara, their paradise, until the Mississauga's found them.

The Neutrals were a large society, and as the name suggests, a peaceful one. This would be their downfall. Over the centuries, the warring tribes stole their land until the Neutrals were completely removed from Canada. It was the Mississauga's, not the Neutrals, who would stand in front of John Butler and his men as representatives of Niagara.

In 1781, the land was purchased in the name of the British Government. The Mississauga's were compensated for the uprooting of their entire village with "300 suits of clothing", something new and exciting to the tribe, but cheap and easy for the British to procure.

In 1782, 16 families established the village of “Butlersburg”. Only 10 years later, it was renamed “Newark” by Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe. Simcoe made the change because Newark would become the new capital of Upper Canada for 5 Parliament sessions and a total of 3 years. In 1796, the capital was moved to the less vulnerable York (now [Toronto](#)).

One of the most historic decisions in the world was made at this time in Niagara-on-the-Lake during those 5 sessions... the outlawing of slavery in Canada. It's said the men who made this decision retired to The Harmonious Coach House Tavern to celebrate. The Coach House would become The Angel Inn after the war.

On May 27, 1813, the American's marched into town as the concurring army only two days after bombarding Fort George, overwhelming the much smaller British garrison. 5,000 Americans easily defeated the 1,000 British, and many of them died horrible, violent deaths.

They held the town until December 10, 1813 (only 7 months) before realizing they were unable to advance into Southern Ontario without meeting major resistance from the British and native soldiers. As the American's retreated, they took one final shot at the British, by burning their first capital.

Every building and structure in Niagara-on-the-Lake was destroyed by fire, except the McFarland House just outside of town (being used as an American post) and the Power Magazine at Fort George (because it was full of explosives).

The people of Newark, also called Niagara, and finally Niagara-on-the-Lake (to avoid confusion with Niagara Falls) rebuilt their town. You can see many “original” houses and buildings date back to 1814 until 1830, the time of rebuilding.

One of the first symbolic structures to be put together was the Freemason Lodge on King Street. It was built back up in 1816 using the rubble of other houses and structures in town. This was a symbol of rebirth and taking the negativity of destruction and putting into the creation of something great.

Most towns in Canada have their claim to haunted locations solely attached to the menial events of historic tasks, things done, things lost, and accidents or tragedies that are part of any Victorian society. But Niagara-on-the-Lake is much, much different.

The only “modern” war to be fought on Canadian soil affected no other place more than this little town with big ambitions. The death, violence, emotions and tragedy to affect such a small place in our history of just over 200 years, and the native history of 10,000, combine to confirm that Niagara-on-the-Lake is Canada's Most Haunted Town.

Now for a couple of legendary ghosts of Niagara-on-the-Lake...

The Legend of Sobbing Sophia

Sophia Shaw was the beautiful love of General Isaac Brock. Brock was the great general of the British, and the most important strategist for Upper Canada's resistance against the Americans.

The Powell family lived in a historic Georgian manor now called Brockamour. Sophia Shaw was the sister of Captain Powell's wife and lived with the family. Even though Sophia lived away from her family, her father Aeneas Shaw was a frequent visitor to the house.

General Brock met and fell in love with Sophia while stationed in town at Fort George. Their courtship was a fast one due to the tragic times, and many plans were made by the couple to get engaged and married.

Sophia's father was against it, because even though Brock was the most important man in Upper Canada, he wasn't born of nobility. He didn't come from money and couldn't afford the best for his beloved daughter. Because of this, Aeneas denied permission for Isaac to marry his daughter, something that wouldn't deter the loving couple.

Then in October of 1812, Brock was called away with his men to defend Queenston Heights from the Americans. This was a strategic location, which if lost would give the Americans a line straight to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The couple said their goodbyes, Sophia not knowing this would be the last time she would ever embrace her lover.

Brock charged into battle at Queenston Heights with his men, running into the heavy American assault. Unwounded men were dropping behind their ranks due to fear, at which point Brock screamed out, "This is the first time I have ever seen the 49th [the men around him] turn their backs! Surely the heroes of Egmont will not tarnish their record!" This was enough to surge the men forward into battle.

Brock was struck in the wrist by a musket ball, which didn't discourage him. Then an unknown American emerged unseen from the bushes 50 yards away and fired into Brock's chest, killing him instantly. His men would retrieve the body, stained with blood across his bright red coat and the gaudy sash given to him by famous native rebel Tecumseh.

Sophia went into hysterics when hearing Isaac was dead. She mourned the death of her lover for many years, eventually dying at a young age. Many believed she died of a broken heart.

For those final few years, people in town did not see Sophia. Instead they would only hear her cries from a second floor bedroom in Brockamour. This is where she got the name "Sobbing Sophia".

The sobs didn't cease, as there have been many reports of a woman being heard crying along Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake, especially at night.

The Watcher of the Town

Many of the town's people have reported a strange blue light, some have called it an orb, floating through the town starting from the west side near the Post Office and [The Museum of the Paranormal](#).

Witnesses have speculated this is the ghost of a former constable, hence the blue light (like the police), but nobody has seen the light long enough to investigate if there is any figure behind it. Instead it's given the name "Watcher" because it appears only at night when the town is quiet.