

# Pueblo Hose Company Three

*Field Report concerning the Pueblo Fire Department's Hose Company Three museum.*

**Boulder County Paranormal investigation of Pueblo Fire Department Museum**

***116 Broadway Ave, Pueblo, CO 81004***

Wednesday March 12th 2008 (16:00) to Thursday March 13th 2008 (08:00)

**Present:**

Richard Estep (BCP)

Miranda Armstrong (BCP)

Brad Carstens (CPRI)

Randall Schneider (CPRI)

**Weather:**

Full moon. 45F, 31% humidity, wind 12mph  
WNW, dewpoint 16F.

**Narrative:**

We arrived on-site at 16:00 hours and met with our contacts, Mark (PFD engineer and museum employee) and Gary (fire investigator for PFD). Both gentlemen treated us with great kindness during our visit, regaling us with colorful stories from the history of the Pueblo Fire Department in general, and hose company #3 (now the museum) in particular. Not only are Gary and Mark long-serving members of the fire department, they are both full of historical knowledge and a treasure trove of anecdotes.

The firehouse is situated next door to a Masonic temple, which in turn neighbors a large mortuary. Originally constructed in 1881, the firehouse entered service as a volunteer station, and remained so when the Pueblo Fire Department became fully paid in 1889. When the mortuary was cremating bodies, smoke would often waft through the firehouse kitchen when the wind blew from a certain direction, leading firefighters to complain that dinner smelled of dead people. Hearing this made me feel quite spoiled.

Two stories high, the upper floor was originally a hayloft used to store feed for the horses which drew the fire engine. When the department transferred over to become fully motorized, the hayloft was

converted into a kitchen area and crew quarters. Hose company three served the residents of Pueblo for ninety-eight years, until engine three answered her final alarm at 04:18 on the morning of March 9th, 1979 - station three closed doors officially at 07:00 that same morning. Since then, the station has been home to the Pueblo Fire Department's "institutional memory" - the fire museum.

As a firefighter myself, it is hard to be truly objective in my description of this wonderful building. Passing through the doors, the sense of history is truly pervasive. It takes little imagination to picture the horse-drawn hose appliances charging through the doors at a run. Despite being a cliché, "if only these walls could talk" has never been truer than with regard to this building. Stepping inside, one is confronted with tools, uniforms, documents, and photographs from bygone days. Pompier ladders, axes, pike poles, bunker gear, turnout boots, leather helmets, truck belts, and all manner of equipment line the walls and display cases.

After staging our equipment inside the building, we were given a guided tour of the place - with a particular emphasis on the paranormal elements. During the 1950s, the company's fire engine somehow started up in the middle of the night, crashed forward through the closed bay doors, and came to rest outside across the street. Despite the protestations of her engineer, who was adamant that he had set the brakes and turned off the engine, the official verdict blamed him for not securing the vehicle properly.

Fifty years later, the vintage "chief's car" which usually resides in the center of the engine bay, was sitting in the rear parking lot. The car somehow accelerated, made a ninety-degree right turn (cutting between the mortuary wall and some gravestones set into the sidewalk) before making a second ninety-degree right turn onto Broadway, ultimately colliding with a trailer outside the front door of the firehouse itself. The trailer was being loaded with artifacts from the fire museum at the time. Mark's father also served at engine company three, and used to speak of a male handprint that would commonly appear on the upstairs window situated at the top of the staircase. The window was actually replaced at one point, yet the handprint reappeared. Located on the wall next to the window are the photographs of the three Pueblo firefighters killed in the line of duty during the department's history. Mark has reported cold draughts and chills at the top of the staircase, and a feeling of great anger from an unknown source.

A traditional pole still stands, taking pride of place in the firefighter bunk room and dropping down to the engine bay's A-D corner. The pole opening is covered by a grille to prevent accidents. During the 1970s, a young boy visiting the station on a tour accidentally fell through the opening and sustained multiple fractures when he struck the engine bay floor below. Accounts state that he did survive the injuries. A hose tower stands at the C-D corner of the structure, which still has hose and rope hanging from rollers to this day. Research has uncovered no accident or injury associated with the hose tower. For our initial walkthrough of the building, we were joined by a reporter from the Pueblo Chieftain newspaper. A sketch plan of the structure was drawn up, and we proceeded to take baseline temperature and EMF readings. An electromagnetic hot-spot of 14-15 milligauss was detected in the front left-hand corner of the ground floor bay wall, where an old telegraph device resides. It is unpowered, and we could find no electrical source to account for the EMF spikes (which intensified as

the meters drew closer to the object). Although other minor EMF variances were detected on the ground floor, all were traced to their sources and satisfactorily explained. Temperatures on the ground floor were unremarkable, and sweeps with the Geiger counter revealed no radioactive abnormalities.

Proceeding to the upper floor, EMF readings climbed into the 5-6 milligauss range as we approached the external load-bearing walls and windows. Looking at the structure from outside, it is easy to determine the cause - the building is enclosed within a triangle of high-voltage power lines which close to within several feet of the windows. Proximity to the power lines explains the increased levels of EMF. Readings were taken using Gaussmaster, standard Tri-field, and natural Tri-field meters. No abnormalities in either the EMF, temperature, or radioactive spectra were noted. Still photographs were taken in all rooms under conditions of natural daylight, and of each exterior side of the building. At this point Gary and Mike bid us goodnight, promising to return in the morning, and leaving me with the master key.

Remote cameras were placed throughout the structure. Thermal cameras covered the engine bay from front-to-back, and four cameras were located upstairs to cover the bunkroom (including the pole, and control object co-located with it), kitchen, and corridors.

My team sealed doors and windows with surgical tape, with the exception of the B-side door, which would be used to exit the building when we went to dinner. Control objects were placed throughout the building - I used firefighter helmets placed on white paper, in this instance - and a digital voice-recorder was left running at the top of the staircase. We then left the building for an hour in order to get dinner, securing the B-side door from the outside and taping the frame to prevent tampering.

On our return, Randy entered the building alone (the door seal was undisturbed) and conducted a brief EVP session on the ground floor. Control objects were undisturbed during our absence from the building, and all security seals remained intact. We conducted a number of EVP sessions in the upstairs kitchen and the firefighter bunkroom.

Time was spent in the dark in the firefighter bunk-room. Brad, Miranda, and Richard were present. An unusual metallic click-tap sound was heard sporadically, which was traced to slight disturbances in the frames and springs of the extremely old iron beds as we occasionally shifted position. Nothing unusual occurred during this blackout period.

It is not my policy to rely on "sensitives", "psychics", "mediums", or such when conducting an investigation. I believe that information obtained from any source is only reliable if checked and verified against existing data, documentation, and records. However, I am willing to test information provided by such sources against the existing facts to see if there is a correlation. The opportunity to do this presented itself during our investigation of engine company three, when a colleague's wife - Robbin - offered to work with us. She was located in another city at the time, and was available via speakerphone.

Please note that the following sections of my report are based upon written notes and recollection. However, the speakerphone conversations with Robbin and subsequent activity were recorded on a mini-DV camcorder in order to preserve evidence. As part of the post-investigation analysis phase, these conversations will be transcribed and appended to the body of this report. Detail which may have been omitted from this section of my report may be clarified within these appendices - the following section should be considered as summation only, and subject to amendment following transcription of the digital media.

Robbin provided us with a great deal of information, some of which was verifiable and some of which was not. Much of the information provided was in the public domain, and some was not (to the very best of my knowledge). I have absolutely no reason to doubt Robbin's personal integrity, and wish to cast no aspersions upon it. However, a skeptic would state - indeed, using Ockham's razor, is required to state - that she could have obtained the public domain information using the Internet. We were not present in the room with her when this information was obtained. She claimed at the beginning of the evening that any paranormal activity encountered would take place at the bottom of the stairs (a noise resembling footsteps was noted from that location) and around the firemen's pole in the bunk room (heavy breathing was heard there when one researcher was in the room alone in the early hours of the morning), and the activity would peak between 2am and 3am.

Robbin states that an angry male was attached to the firehouse. She described him as a square-jawed man, dressed in blue station pants and shirt[1] with a name-tag showing the name Lawrence or Laurence[2], with colleagues referring to him as "Larry" or "Larr". Robbin could not describe rank insignia on his uniform. He is angry, depressed, bitter, and aggressive[3] for reasons unknown. Robbin believes that he is a deceitful individual, capable of aggressive outbursts and concealing something of great importance from her. She also states a belief that he may not be telling his true name[4], and that he may not have been a firefighter employed by PFD. When asked for a timeframe surrounding his involvement with the department in whatever capacity, Robbin states that he was involved with the department up until some point in the 1990s[5]

Attempts were then made to communicate with "Larry". As a firefighter, it was suggested that I be the person to try this. Feeling somewhat self-conscious at addressing thin air, I attempted to strike up a one-sided "conversation" with him. A tri-field EMF meter was placed in the doorway of the restroom near the entrance to the firefighter bunk-room. Reminding "Larry" of the brotherhood existing between firefighters, I asked him to make noise, display light, or somehow make his presence known as a welcoming courtesy. Questions followed regarding Larry's attachment to the fire service in general, to engine company three in particular, the last time Larry had attended a structure fire, and similar subjects, without result.

At this point, Randy asked questions regarding divorce and the possibility of a broken relationship. The EMF meter fluctuated wildly, spiking and falling in rapid succession with no visible electromagnetic source to account for it. Disparaging remarks were made on the subject of females in general, and of females in the fire service - all such comments were greeted with swings on the EMF meter of twenty-five to thirty milligauss.

Robbin stated her impression that "Larry" was forced to leave the service due to ill-health of a respiratory nature, and that he was a heavy smoker. After ten minutes of questioning, the EMF meter fell silent. Robbin reported that "Larry" was now following me around because "he likes you, and you have a common bond". I must report that I felt absolutely nothing out of the ordinary.

When asking about a person by the name of "either Arnell or Darnell", Robbin stated that the name was coming through quite clearly. A look at the organization charts of Pueblo Fire posted around the engine bay showed no such name within recent years (the charts range from 1980 through 2005). I had consigned the name to memory, thinking I would follow up on it with Mark and Gary the following morning. Three hours after hearing this name mentioned, I was heading to the restroom when my eyes were drawn to a wall-mounted plaque bearing a Christmas gift to the Chief of Department for the year 1910. The first name in the right-hand column of the plaque was "Darnell", a less-than-common surname. This information is not in the public domain, and I can see no means by which Robbin could have obtained it other than pure guesswork.

Robbin stated that a young man was haunting the firehouse, believed to have been pulled from a body of water at some time, and either die in the firehouse or was brought there and died at another location.[6] We have no record of such an event taking place, but research is ongoing into the matter. The figure of a woman in period costume gazing from an upstairs window was Robbin's next piece of information to us. This seems highly unusual, because the firehouse was an all-male province during those times. Robbin later suggested that she may have been the widow of one of the fallen firefighters, though it has not been possible to verify this information.

A break was decided upon, as it was now 01:00. Randy and I went out to stock up on caffeine and to buy some food supplies. Robbin had suggested some possible tactics to draw "Larry" out of his shell: she advocated "starting a very small fire of some kind in the firehouse" (I declined to do so, not wishing to anger or disrespect our hosts by starting even a tiny controlled fire in the middle of the historic premises which they had entrusted to my care), or placing cigarettes as control objects. I'm pleased to say that none of our team members smoke, so Randy purchased a pack of the cheapest cigarettes available and a disposable lighter. Cigarettes were placed as control objects, but none were moved throughout the course of our investigation.

We reconvened our phone conference with Robbin at approximately 02:15. Robbin stated that a man "looking like Tom Hanks with a beard" was a prominent, intelligence-based haunting at the firehouse. She described him as being in his mid-to-late thirties, having died of a head injury while responding to an alarm during the 1890s. Robbin said that she envisioned a crowd of firemen standing around him and crying.

Consider the following information, obtained from the Pueblo Fire Department website:



## **Robert J. Krague**

1854-1891

Two years after taking office as the first paid chief of the Pueblo Fire Department, Chief Robert J. Krague was killed when he was thrown from his horse-drawn buggy. He was 37 years old.

It was July 31, 1891, mid-afternoon. Chief Krague was making a practice run in the vicinity of Carlisle Spring (near what is now Dutch Clark Stadium). Driving westbound on Abriendo Avenue at a high rate of speed, his horse, Tom, apparently was spooked and was running out of control. Near the Abriendo bridge his buggy overturned, and Chief Krague was thrown to the ground.

According to a 15 year-old witness, Chief Krague struck his head on a rock and rolled several times. When the witness got to him, the chief was unconscious and bleeding from the ears, nose and mouth.

He was taken by a police wagon to the Sisters of Charity Hospital (St. Mary's), where he never regained consciousness. He died in the early evening with his grieving wife by his side. Quotation from *The Pueblo Chieftain* in the August 1, 1891 edition:

"Anyone of them (veteran and paid gathered around his deathbed) would have suffered tortures to bring him back the health and strength to the poor stricken body on the bed before them, but they were powerless to aid him, and could only wait for death to sever the brave spirit from its earthly tenement." Chief Krague lie in state in the city council chambers until his funeral. The Richmond Hook and Ladder truck was used as the

casket bearer, pulled by Tom, Krague's uninjured horse. Krague was buried at Riverview Cemetery.

I must point out that all information supplied to this point was publicly available on the Internet. Robbin stated that the man was immensely proud of the fire house, and often stood gazing out of "one of two windows in the D-side wall that are now walled up". This information is not available in the public domain. Photographs of the firehouse available on the Internet do not show the D-side of the building with two windows in it - the only photographs we have discovered show a single second-story window on the D-side, not two. If Robbin were guessing (and I am not claiming that she was, merely floating the possibility) or researching the building online, she would not be aware of the second window.

Robbin then reported the presence of a second individual, who also died of a head injury secondary to a vehicular collision, with a surname that begins with R-O-B. She stated that a colleague of the deceased individual was also harmed at the same time, sustaining a broken back, injured lungs, and other traumatic injuries. Consider the following information from the Pueblo Fire Department website:

### **Joseph F. Robida**

1904-1945



On Monday, May 9, 1945, fireman Joseph F. Robida was killed in an auto accident. Riding on the back of Engine Company No. 4 with fellow fireman Joseph Ferraro, the fire truck was struck at the intersection of Mesa and Lake by a Rainbo bread delivery truck

Responding to a fire alarm at 512 Acero, the crew from the Bessemer station was traveling west on Mesa. The bread truck, driving north on Lake, made an effort to stop, but struck the rear of the fire truck, throwing firefighters Robida and Ferraro from the vehicle. Robida struck his head on the edge of the curbing, killing him instantly. The pumper travelled 172 feet after the impact. Fireman Ferraro was thrown to the

pavement, where he received four broken ribs, a fracture of the spine, a punctured lung, cuts, abrasions and other injuries. Ferraro had to retire from the Department on a full disability, after being on the Department for 8 years.

Fire engineer Frank White was driving the fire truck, with Captain Charles DiPalma riding next to him. Each also sustained cuts and bruises, with Engineer White suffering internal injuries also. The driver of the bread truck received injuries to his legs.

The 41 year old Robida, husband and father of four, was a 10 year veteran, and the second fireman killed in the line of duty on the Pueblo Fire Department.

Although the information provided by Robbin matches that contained in the obituary of Firefighter Robida, this obituary is publicly available on the Pueblo Fire Department website. I must also point out that Firefighter Robida was serving as a member of Engine Company #4, not #3.

Robbin next reported the presence of a third individual in the firehouse, another firefighter involved in a motor vehicle collision. She stated that this particular individual was an older gentleman, who was thrown through the air before dying. Robbin stated that the man had a widow with a name beginning with T, which contained four or five letters, and that she believed the woman was the same figure she had reported earlier.

From the Pueblo Fire Department web site:



On Christmas Eve of 1949, the first aid squad of the Pueblo Fire Department was involved in a fatal accident at the intersection of West 9th St. and Grand Avenue. Killed was 57 year-old William A. DeLong, and 30 year veteran of the Pueblo Fire Department. The accident occurred as the first aid squad was answering a call at 1426 N. Grand. Travelling north on Grand, the first aid squad slammed into an automobile, which had proceeded through the intersection on a green light.

The high impact of the collision hurled the first aid vehicle over the top of the automobile, throwing DeLong out of the vehicle. Fire Medic Sal Pannunzio, the other occupant of the first aid vehicle, sustained only minor injuries.

The 42 year-old driver of the automobile had minor injuries. His wife sustained a fractured leg, cracked ribs and a bruised neck. The man said that when the light turned green, he proceeded through the intersection and neither saw nor heard the oncoming first aid unit.

William A. DeLong was survived by his wife, Thea, and their two children. Pueblo firemen G. Lowe, C.C. Wood, R.J. Stewart, A.A. Pisciotta, M. Colby, and S. Pannunzio served as pallbearers. DeLong was buried at Mountain View Cemetery in Pueblo.

Robbin then returned to the first firefighter, stating that he was "attached to a device in the engine bay, with red wheels containing stars, that has a horse bridle with a bell on top, and the words 'J.P. Morgan'." She stated that the device was near a round object such as a bell or a clock. The following photograph appears on the fire museum website:



In actuality, the wheels are brown and not red. The lettering says "J.B. Orman". On speaking with Gary and Mark the following morning, we were told that Chief Krague could possibly have been connected with the hose cart. However, the hose cart is no longer physically located in the position shown in the photograph, as another piece of apparatus occupies that position in the bay. It now resides between the Chief's car and other apparatus, in the center of the bay.

We ended our conversation with Robbin at this point, resuming the investigation.

Considering the lengthy drive home later that morning, it seemed a good idea to begin instituting "safety naps" on a rotational schedule. Miranda slept first, on the B-side bed in the firefighters' quarters. She stated that, partway through her hour-long sleep, she was awoken by the sound of breathing coming from the A-D corner of the room, by the fire pole. Nobody was physically present at the time, nothing appeared on the night-vision camera used to cover that corner of the room, and none of the control objects placed there were moved.

Randy commenced an EVP session, utilizing "Frank's box", a frequency-skipping radio device that scans radio channels and has been used with some success by certain researchers to record EVPs. "Frank's box" is an extremely polarizing topic in the paranormal research field at the moment, with researchers tending to either love it or hate it. That is a discussion for another day. Suffice it to say that a thirty-minute session conducted with the box yielded no audible EVP that we could discern.

Brad, Randy, and I took turns to sleep, before welcoming Mark and Gary back the following morning (they very kindly brought us coffee!). After discussing the events which took place over the course of the investigation, we packed away our equipment. Mark and Gary gifted us with a museum T-shirt each and a book detailing the Pueblo Fire Department's history over the course of its existence.

## **Richard Estep Director**

### **Footnotes:**

- *[1] PFD adopted blue station uniforms in 1988*
- *[2] According to fire service convention, this would be a surname, not a first name. A check of HR records dating back to the 1940s revealed no firefighter, company-level officer, or chief officer with this surname employed by the Pueblo Fire Department.*
- *[3] A good description of many firefighters, including myself!*
- *[4] It is interesting to note that D-side wall of the firefighters quarters, where the pole is located, has two framed photographs/documents. One is a tribute to a former Captain of the department named Larry. The second involves Mike's father, and the manufacture of PFD's first departmental patch, based on a bid tendered by a man called "Larry". Coincidence? Probably. I must add that these two photos/documents are not in the public domain.*
- *[5] Research pending. Mark and Gary are currently researching the possible existence of "Larry", studying HR records and speaking to former firefighters who served at engine three within living memory.*
- *[6] Research shows that, in the era before ambulance-based EMS, injured parties were often brought to the firehouse for medical attention.*