



2016 Ghost Walk

Matthias Arnot – played by Joe Edkin

Hello and good evening. Before I tell you about myself, I have some questions for you. How many of you have visited the Arnot Art Museum?

Good, good. And how many of you found it enjoyable and educational?

I am very glad to hear that. All I can say is, you are most welcome. In 1910, I donated the art, the money, and the building. My name is Matthias Arnot and it is thanks to me that the Arnot Art Museum exists at all.

Now, please do not misunderstand me. I am not a braggart by nature, but collecting art was a singular passion of mine. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and I feel that is something of an understatement. A work of art can inspire and educate. With a single glance, it can transport one to another place and time, be it medieval France or a land of the artist's imagining. Personally, I always preferred the European Schools, especially the French, over the works of Americans. I was especially keen on pastorals and tableaus which told stories. By 1880, I had so many works of art I had to build an extension onto my house to display them all.

For me, art collecting wasn't simply about the art itself, although I would never buy anything I didn't think was beautiful. It was about the thrill of the hunt. I traveled extensively in Europe, searching for the perfect pieces. There was nothing more exciting than coming out on top in a good bidding war. In 1882, I earned my international reputation as a fierce competitor by outbidding everyone at the infamous Hamilton Palace Sale in London. Why, I spent \$10,000 on a single painting alone. Today, that would be well over \$250,000.

How could I afford all this, you might ask? Well, I was exceptionally rich. My father, John Arnot, Sr., was the owner of the Chemung Canal Bank. I worked there after graduating from Yale in 1856, and eventually took it over. When I wasn't working at the family bank, I was out founding companies including Arnot Realty Company, Elmira Lumber Company, Chemung Gas Company, the Junction Canal Company, and the Plank Road Company. I also liked to dabble in what today would be called venture capitalism, that is to say, lending money to enterprising young men with interesting business ideas. I prided myself on knowing a solid investment when I saw one and encouraging others to meet their full potential.

That was a large part of why I created the Arnot Art Museum. Fine art broadens the mind and enlightens the soul. Unfortunately, very few people in Elmira could afford to travel to a museum in New York or Philadelphia to see true art, let alone buy some at an auction in London. I wished to create a place where ordinary citizens could not only view my collection, but also learn about artists, schools, and techniques, all for free. To that end, in my will I set aside my entire collection of art, valued at over \$400,000, my home, and an endowment of \$200,000 so that Elmirans for generations to come could share the beauty and be inspired.

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Zippie Brooks Wales – played by Kayla Alexander

Hello everyone. I am Dr. Lucy Zipporah Brooks Wales. Everyone calls me Zippie.

I was born in 1836 in Winhall, Vermont, 16 years after my sister Rachel Brooks Gleason. Perhaps you have heard of the Doctors Gleason? Rachel and her husband Silas ran the Water Cure here in Elmira for nearly fifty years. Rachel was a role model for me growing up. She was always seeking knowledge, always learning. After marrying Dr. Silas Gleason she started to study medicine. When she graduated from Central Medical College in Rochester in 1851, Rachel became one of the first women in the United States to receive a medical degree.

A year later, she and her husband opened the Elmira Water Cure, also known as the Gleason Sanitarium or the Gleason Health Resort. The Water Cure was in a wonderful location on East Hill, overlooking the city. The air was clear and dry, not like down in the city where the oxygen was all used up by lights and lungs, and was polluted by noxious gases emitted by animal life.

Silas selected the location because of a reliable spring on the property. You see, Rachel and Silas were devotees of hydrotherapy, or the use of water for treating illnesses. Water could put the body back into balance, remove toxins, and promote relaxation and mental well-being. The Cure offered hot and cold baths, vapor and electric baths, and various douches and enemas guaranteed to alleviate the symptoms of chronic diseases such as rheumatism, neuralgia, and scrofula. There's nothing like a well-directed spray of water to restore a body's zest for life.

For just \$8 to \$14 a week, men and women from all walks of life could receive treatment. Clergymen, physicians, and public school teachers received a \$2 discount on a week's stay. The cost included room, board, baths, and medical attention. The Water Cure was not to be mistaken for a hotel, however. Everyone needed to understand that the Cure had its own peculiarities which needed to be conformed to in order to be beneficial. A patient's stay was strictly regimented from breakfast at 7:30am to quiet time at 10:00pm. A bell would ring throughout the day to summon residents to their prescribed baths, twice-daily light gymnastics, and meals. There was also free time each day to play billiards and croquet, ramble through the 25-acre grounds, or relax on the 300-foot wide veranda.

I worked with my sister at the Water Cure as a nurse before taking some time off to get married and go to school. In 1873, following in my big sister's footsteps, I got my medical degree from the Women's Medical College in Pennsylvania. Rachel and Silas graciously invited me and my new husband, Dr. Theron Wales to join the staff at the Water Cure. Theron provided general medical services while I specialized in women's medical issues along with my sister.

While Rachel and Silas spent nearly 50 years working at the Water Cure, Theron and I were there just 24 years. Six long years after getting married, I was finally blessed with a child, Ralph Avery Wales. We all lived together at the Water Cure until 1897 when Theron and I moved into the city and went into private practice as Ralph went off to school. You can just imagine my pride watching my son grow into a fine young man. He graduated from Cornell University in 1902 and began work at the Second National Bank in Elmira. A brilliant future seemed just ahead of him until a warm evening in 1908. Ralph went canoeing on the Chemung River all by himself. He decided to take a dip in the water and something went wrong. There were other canoers nearby but they did not reach him in time. I lost my son that day. My dear sister, Rachel, had passed away just three years earlier.

Family is one of the most important things in the world. I was truly blessed to be able to work with my family - my sister, my brother-in-law, my husband - doing something that I truly loved, caring for people.

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John Rawlings – played by Robert Lavarney

My name is John Rawlings and Elmira wasn't where I planned to die. I always imagined I'd pass old and peaceful-like in my bed with my children and grandchildren standing by. Or that I'd fall in glorious battle fighting for the Confederacy's righteous cause. Dying of typhoid in a northern prison camp, far from home and anything resembling glory, was the last way I wanted to go. Unfortunately, that's exactly what I did.

I was born in Leesburgh, Virginia where my pa worked as the overseer on the Elzy family plantation. When the Civil War broke out, I joined up with the 59th Virginia Volunteer Infantry. My family never could afford to have slaves of our own, but, for me, the war was never about that. It was about rights, and damn the Yankees if they thought they could come to Virginia and tell us what we could and couldn't own.

I marched off to war with dreams of glory in my head. I figured we'd show the Yankees what for and be home by Christmas. Instead it was years of fighting and marching and eating things my ma wouldn't have fed the pigs. Then I got captured and ended up here in the Elmira Prison Camp.

They brought us up here packed into the train cars like cattle. As much as I didn't like being gawked at by the townsfolk, it was a relief to stretch my legs on the march from the train station to the camp. In those early days, the camp was a city of tents. There were 400 prisoners to start, but our numbers grew quickly. I figured it would be awful, and it was. They didn't feed us much. The water was filled with human waste and, boy did it smell like it. The camp administration started building barracks, but the fall was short and bitterly cold considering we all lived in tents. Most of us prisoners fell ill with one thing or another, and, in fact, 2,973, or nearly a quarter of us, died.

The strangest thing about being a prisoner was how boring it was. People did just about anything to stave off boredom. Some fellows took to making things like jewelry and little do-dads. Others taught or took lessons on everything from French to Greek philosophers. Some were desperate enough to take jobs working for the Yankees as clerks, cooks, hospital orderlies, or carpenters. They had more in the way of privileges, but weren't exactly popular with the rest of us.

It was thanks to the filthy water that I ended up dying of typhoid fever on September 28, 1864, far from home and everyone I loved. The strange thing was, it turned out there actually was a bit of home much closer than I thought. As a boy, I had been the pet of a field hand named John Jones who had run off in the summer of 1844. Turned out, he had run right here to Elmira and he was the one who buried me over there in the National Cemetery. I'd like to think that if he'd known I was here, he might have visited to offer me a bit of comfort. As it was, he wrote my parents to let them know what happened to me and that I was decently buried.



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Those of the Free Ground – Catherine Bliss as Free Ground Narrator, Steven Winston as Edmund, Martin King as Harry and Unknown Railroad Trespasser, David Wiggs as Emil, Paddy Wiggs as William, Cathleen Koons Wiggs as Alice, and Casey Winston as Maria

Narrator: If you look around this section, you will see very few headstones. But, that does not mean this land is unoccupied. You are now in the Free Ground, or the Potter's Field. This became the final resting place for people whose families could not afford to bury them, or for the people who simply had no family. Also buried here are abandoned infants, children, reformatory inmates, and unidentified bodies. Their graves are unmarked, except for a scattered few who have homemade markers. Many were overlooked during their time, and remain largely forgotten today. But tonight, you will have the chance to pay them some of the attention and respect they deserve. These are all true stories of inhabitants of this Free Ground and how they ultimately came to be here.

I am Edmund. I was arrested in 1935 for writing a bad \$10 check. I was 64 years old and it was my first and only offense. It was simply an honest error in my personal accounting and I truly thought I had enough money in my account to cover it. I died from a heart attack on February 21, 1935 in a cell in the Chemung County jail, the night before I was supposed to be taken to the Monroe County Penitentiary to serve a 4 month sentence. Four hours before I died, I asked the jailer for a piece of paper and pen and wrote this note to my son:

“Your old dad has taken all the punishment possible. My tired old heart is ready to stop after 53 years of hard work. I will be glad when my sorrows are over. I ask only that you remember how I loved you for 20 years.”

My name is Harry and I was killed on August 30, 1933 when the automobile I was riding in crashed into an embankment and overturned near Horseheads. I was 59.

My name is Alice. I died at 7am on the morning of Monday, October 15, 1934. I was 70 years old. I had no surviving family.

I was 16 and a half when I died alone of heart disease on February 7, 1889. My name is **William**, and at that time I was an inmate of the New York State Reformatory. I am not the only prisoner who makes his final resting place here.

I'm Maria and my mother Hannah and I lived together. I was in my 60s and my mother was in her late 90s. We made our meager living as rag pickers, collecting and using the scraps that most folks are fortunate enough to discard. Our small home was piled full of our various finds. We died on February 15, 1898. Our bodies were found lying together on the floor of our home, where we both succumbed to coal gas fumes from our small heating stove. My body lay partially covering my mother. We tried to escape, but we were found a mere three feet from the door and the fresh air that could have saved us. My mother died quickly, but I lingered for hours longer because I made it closer to the threshold of the door before I collapsed, allowing me to breathe in a small amount of fresh air. Yet, it was still not enough to revive me and my suffering was eventually relieved.

I am Emil. My seven year old son found me dead in my chair from heart trouble on June 16, 1934. I was only 39 years old.



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I was only 9 years old when I died on December 2, 1932. How sad to think that just one year earlier, I was so proud to see my name, **Pauline**, in the newspaper when I was named an honor student at the Coldbrook Park School. I had been awarded a silver dollar for attaining some of the highest grades in my school. That seems like so long ago now.

No one knows who I am. I am buried in an unmarked grave and, do you know what they wrote down for my name on my death record? **Unknown Railroad Trespasser**. For that is how I died of a fractured skull on April 30, 1927. There are many, just like me, who will forever lie here unidentified and unremembered.

Narrator: Friends, please do not make this your last visit to the Free Ground. For while all of the dead here in this cemetery deserve to be memorialized, these people need your attention, sympathy, and remembrance just as much, if not more. Even though they do not rest in an ornate vault or even have a humble grave marker, they each have a deeply human story to tell. They remind us that there are many paths leading to the Free Ground.

Also Featuring Gail Lewis and Ivy Robinson as Wandering Ghosts at Woodlawn Cemetery



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John Arnot, Jr. (at the Chemung County Historical Society)

Hello, my name is John Arnot, Jr., and I am tied to this building in death as I was in life. I was just three years old when my father, John Arnot, Sr., helped to establish the Chemung Canal Bank here in 1834. For the first several years, my whole family lived on the second floor so that father would always be on hand in the event of a crisis. Even after we moved into our fine new house on Lake Street, father practically still lived here.

In 1852, when I was just 19-years-old, I became a bank cashier and started to work my way up through the business. When my father died, I took over from him as bank president. It was my duties at the bank that eventually led to my untimely death.

On the morning of Monday, October 20, 1884, my clerks and I began getting the bank ready for the day's business. Around 9 am as usual I went into this vault to open the safe, but that day when I went to light the gas lamp my world exploded. The massive fireball blew me across the room and into a cashier's desk. The blast tore off my clothes, vaporized my hair, and severely burned my face and hands. Worse still, my collision with the desk broke several ribs and caused irreparable internal injury.

My bank was damaged as well. The explosion shattered every window in the building. It twisted the vault door and tore off the locks. Even the banking apartments upstairs were damaged.

The building recovered faster than I did. Although I was eventually able to return to work, every day was a constant battle against my exhaustion and pain. In the end, I died on November 20, 1886.