

Lilian Voorhees

Good evening, everyone. For 15 years, we residents of Woodlawn Cemetery have been telling visitors such as yourselves about our lives and deaths. You may be comforted to know that I died in a field of daisies, their white and yellow blossoms waving on the soft summer breeze under the shade of chestnut trees. How I got there, however, is not so peaceful of a story. My name is Lilian Voorhees, and I was the victim of the very first fatal automobile accident in Chemung County.

It was the day after Independence Day, July 5, 1914. It was such a lovely day that my husband Sherman suggested we take a drive up South Mountain so we could enjoy the fresh air and scenery. He and I and our dear 13-year-old son Sherman, whom we called Laddie, all climbed into the Chalmers and went motoring up the hill.

Our little family was always on the move, always traveling, even when Laddie was just a baby. My favorite place to visit was Atlantic City. Sherman would attend the American Medical Association conference there each summer and we'd go along. I still remember the bustling boardwalk with all the fantastic shops and the feel of the warm sand and the cool waves on my feet. The sun rising from the ocean at dawn in spreading shades of gold and pink is a sight well worth seeing but nothing is as satisfying as time spent with family in our own home.

One of the greatest pleasures in life is walking through my own front door after weeks away and being immediately surrounded by the comforts of home. I took great care in choosing every furnishing and bit of décor to make it the most beautiful, serene place it could be. I was always proud to offer up our parlor for concerts and readings to benefit charities such as the Anchorage and the YMCA.

As I left home that warm July afternoon, I didn't expect it to be the last time I would ever do so.

Sherman wasn't driving overly fast as we made our way over Comfort Hill Road. One moment, the lightly-rutted packed dirt road stretched out before us and in the next, the car was plowing through the tangled growth along the berm. We careened off the 75-foot embankment, the car bouncing and

tumbling. Each of us was forcefully ejected from the vehicle as it rolled over and over again.

Laddie, thank the heavens, wasn't badly hurt, but somethings are more painful than physical injuries. He rushed to my side, then to his father's, but he couldn't aid either of us himself. Despite cuts and bruises and broken fingers, he scrambled up the embankment and ran to a nearby house for help.

Rescuers arrived in time to save my husband, but my life had departed before the car even come to a rest in the flower-dotted field. My neck snapped when I was thrown from the vehicle.

Sherman never fully recovered from the severe injuries he suffered that day. Some ten months later, he succumbed to complications that developed from a fracture at the base of his skull.

And Laddie, my brave, precious Laddie, found his way through life under the guardianship of a close family friend. He grew up to be a fine man and a leader in business. He was also instrumental in bringing the area's first soaring contests to South Mountain. I wonder what it would have been like to lie in that very field where my life was extinguished watching dozens of gliders above me drifting on the air currents like enormous silent birds. I'm sure it was lovely.

I know it's difficult not to think about death when you're in a cemetery, but I want to remind you to, please, take a moment now and then to stop and appreciate the beauty all around us in life.

Baldwin Kolb

Portrayed by David Wiggs

(With arm sweeping gesture) Well, I offer my hospitality to you elegant ladies and gentlemen this fine, fine evening. Having owned various establishments, I'd offer a seat, but tonight I see we will all stand.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Mr. Baldwin Kolb but my dear friends call me Baldy. (bows and clicks heels)

I was born in 1831 in an area of France that later became Germany and growing up I spoke both German and French which became very useful

when meeting foreigners, which I did in my businesses. Early on I was schooled in the trades, and at 20, I immigrated to the United States of America to seek my fortune. In 1853 I landed in Elmira, a busy little town in Western New York. Known as the Queen City, Elmira was a city bursting with activity. We had a canal shipping lumber out and bringing goods in from afar, and we had the railroads teeming with people, coming and going at all times of the day.

I immediately fell in love with the city and here I also fell in love with Miss Johanna Coakley, and she with me. We married and had a son, little Charlie. (pause, wipes a tear) Tragically both mother and the dear boy died young. Too young, too young.

For the next few years, wanting a distraction, I threw myself into my work, putting my skills to the test. I quickly discovered I had a flair for the refreshment business and I built the Exchange Hotel at 139 Wisner. Being near the Erie passenger station, it attracted both locals and visitors looking for refreshment or a place to lay their heads. It was a respectable establishment and I was both owner and proprietor of the hotel. I operated the establishment until just after the Civil War, when I sold the Exchange to my younger brother Jacob.

Being successful, I went into partnership with Louis Snyder. Together we took over the Queen City Palace. We offered our patrons something special. We had the largest beer hall in Elmira, complete with billiard tables to entertain the men. We also entertained patrons by hiring a live violinist to wander through tables playing high-class music to lift people's spirits. We were known as an establishment of stature.

In 1883 I was fortunate enough to meet Miss Anna Zett from a prominent family in Syracuse who agreed to marry me and move to Elmira. She was the light of my life and we were devoted to each other. Our home was located on the corner of College and Gray and we frequently enjoyed driving around town greeting friends and neighbors.

I did my duty for the city, serving two terms as excise commissioner. I affiliated as an old line Democrat and believed in the power of government.

As I got older I adored my nieces and nephews, having lost my own son Charlie. And in the wee hours of December 26, 1915 I passed.

I did right by my family leaving my sizable fortune of \$150,000 (\$3.8 million in your money) to my family to be watched over by beloved Anna.

It does make one pause, doesn't it? I suppose the phrase "Last Call" takes on a whole new meaning for me this evening.

Anna Palmer

Portrayed by Casey Winston

"Be a good girl." Those were the last words my mother spoke to me before she died, leaving me alone in the world at age 14. My name is Anna Campbell Palmer and, since that day, those words have been my guiding force. I have been a writer, a teacher, a mother, and a wife, but, above all, I have strived to be a good girl.

I was born here in Elmira in 1852. My parents were Thomas and Sarah Campbell. At one point, I had a big, loving family with parents and siblings, but, one by one, they died until I was the only one left. I had always enjoyed writing and had first had my work published in the *Ithaca Journal* at age ten. An orphaned teenager can't make a living as a writer though, so I became a teacher instead. At age 16, I began working at Elmira Public School No. 2, now called the Beecher School. I loved it. I loved working with children, molding young minds, and teaching them to be good little boys and girls. I left teaching after nearly 10 years to marry my husband, George Palmer. Together, we raised two daughters, Georgianna and Sally, and I loved that too.

I had been writing for all my years as a teacher, mostly poems and short stories, but I hadn't published any of it. Then, in 1883, two years after my marriage, I was finally published again. Writing under the name Mrs. George Archibald, my husband's first and middle names, I published my first piece in the *Elmira Telegram*. Soon, I was a regular contributor to the *Telegram's* Family What-not department in the Sunday paper. Eventually, I was hired as that section's editor as well. I didn't just confine my work to the local paper, though. My poems and short stories appeared in *St. Nicholas*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Judge*, *Time*, *Northern Christian Advocate*, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, and others. I worked as an editor for

several local papers, including the *Telegram* and the *Evening Star* and was the only woman editor for the YMCA's *Young Men's Journal*.

Quite a lot of my work was written for children. I like to think of it as my best work and it was certainly my most popular. In 1890, I published my first book for children, *The Summerville Prize*. I wrote it with my own daughters in mind. My other novels for children include *Lady Gay and Her Sister*, *A Little Brown Seed*, *Lady Gay* and *A Dozen Good Time*, all of which I wrote in the 1890s. Two of them, *Lady Gay* and *Lady Gay and Her Sister*, are largely based on my Georgianna and Sally's nursery room adventures. I tried to keep my stories lighthearted, educational, but not boring, and with a strong moral core, but not preachy. I may have given up being a teacher, but I was still an educator at heart.

As my own children grew up, I found myself focusing more and more on adult non-fiction. In 1900, I wrote a biography on my dear friend, the late Joel Dorman Steele, the gentleman for whom the library is named. He was a fellow educator and is buried not far from here. I also started work on a book of Chemung County history, although I never did get to finish it. There was an awful lot of research involved and I was quite busy working on my weekly column, "The Well Meant Comment," in the *Sunday Telegram*. They were short vignettes about interesting or important locals and a nice way to share a bit of the information I'd found in my research. I wrote them every week, right up until my death in 1928.

As a teacher, a mother, a writer, and a wife, I always tried to live up to my mother's last words. I taught with compassion and care, and raised my children with love. As a writer, I kept things wholesome, and avoided gossip, scandal, and trashy affairs. I never wrote an ill word about anyone, living or dead, even though such stories sold well. No, I tried to be good and inspire others to be good too. I like to think, in the end, I was, as my mother wished, a good girl.

James "Matt" Lockwood as told by Abbie Lockwood

Portrayed by Gail Lewis

You know that venerated goateed gentleman from England, Mr. William Shakespeare wrote "*All the worlds' a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances.*"

Well to that I say, too true.

Tonight I play my part in that and lay my **brother's** life before you. I am his youngest sister Abbie. My brother was Matt Lockwood of Elmira, New York.

Actually Matt was a name he assumed having been given the name James which he detested. He was born in 1850, the oldest of us six Lockwood children, and he was the only Lockwood boy to survive. At 15 he ventured out to live a boy's dream as torch boy of the Elmira Volunteer Fire department, and gallantly served among them for 30 years, bunking at the old engine house on East Market and doing his part to fight fires and keep the city safe. The tales he shared. The heroics, the drama, the excitement...hearing how we performed his duties often required his split-second reactions, very much like performing on stage. And his other world did involve the stage.

I suppose you could say that theater was what Matt was really known for. It was something he pursued first as an extra for the Old Elmira Opera House when he was only 16. He was drawn to live theater like a moth to the flame. He found live theater had the drama and excitement of fires without the burn, though a bad review could often scorch just as badly, and leave him blue.

Nonetheless, he was bitten by the theater bug, and as the country recovered from the Civil War, Matt and one of our cousins joined the Byron Christy Minstrels to entertain crowds with songs, recitations and short dramatics. In the 1870s Matt was invited to join the Queen City minstrels and they traveled all over the greater Midwest. It was their ticket to adventure. It ended up inspiring him to start his own collection of theatrical ephemera. Matt was the one people turned to when they needed a sword or uniform, a parasol or a pagoda. The collection had it all including a playbill and cape from Ford's Theater the night our dear president was shot.

His costumes and props graced the stage in productions at the Lyceum, Rorick's Glen, Elmira Female College and all up and down the east coast. He became known for his word, and for his clever and reliability. I helped him out with that. Matt collected, curated, and created costumes and props of extraordinary detail and finery with no equal in the region.


The theater was our life. We knew many of the prominent families of the area. Matt was busy with his work, his good deeds, and his various civic associations. He was part of the Tomoka Tribe, the Loyal Order of Moose, the Haymakers Left, the Stage Hands Union, and even the newly established Chemung County Historical Society.

When the theatrical collection became cumbersome, and his health began to fail, I helped him out taking on more of the business dealings and traveling about. Tragically I passed before him. I was in Pennsylvania for business and stumbled on the steps at the Erie Railroad Baggage room. It was a horrible fall and though I made it home, I never recovered and succumbed to my injuries. I don't think Matt ever really recovered. He died one year later.

Now, gentle persons, I've shared my brother's story, and will retreat once again. But the theater will go on. Today some of my collection resides with the historical society and is evidence that theater was very much a part of this dear city's past, spreading roots throughout the community. All the world's a stage, and I thank you and kindly make my own exit.

GHOST WALK 2021



1. Lilian Voorhees (actual grave is located at )
2. Baldwin Kolb.
3. Anna Palmer
4. James "Matt" Lockwood.