2026 Elmira Ghost Walk Scripts

Jim Hare (August 8, 1946-March 16, 2026)
Told by Mistress of Ceremonies Cathleen Koons Wiggs

In previous years, when you stepped off the bus here in Woodlawn Cemetery, you were greeted by a distinguished gentleman in a suit and top hat. Sometimes it was Jervis Langdon. Sometimes John Arnot or William Butler Ogden. The man who portrayed those historic figures was Jim Hare. Jim passed away on March 16, 2026, and is now another resident of this historic cemetery. He found joy in telling stories from the past. He has a story too.

Born on August 8, 1946, in Medina, New York, Jim lived a life defined by service, leadership, and an unwavering commitment to his family, his community, and his faith.

Jim earned his master's degree from SUNY Albany and went on to serve his country, with distinction, as a sergeant in the United States Army from 1969 to 1971. Following his military service, Jim dedicated himself to education and public life. For 32 years, he taught American History and Government, inspiring generations of students with his passion for learning, storytelling, and civic responsibility. His love of history extended far beyond the classroom. He authored a monthly column on Elmira's past for the Star-Gazette and co-authored *True Stories of Elmira, New York, Volumes 1–4*, helping preserve the rich heritage of the community he loved.

Jim's commitment to Elmira was extraordinary and enduring. He served as a city councilman representing the 6th council district on Elmira's Southside from 1980 to 1987 and again from 1998 to 2011. Between his council service he served three terms as Mayor of Elmira.

His civic involvement reached across countless organizations including the Southside Community Center, the Chemung County Library District, the Elmira Water Board, the Elmira Little Theatre, and the Elmira Youth Advisory Board. Jim

was a member of B.P.O.E. Elmira Lodge #62, the American Legion Harry B. Bentley Post #443, and the Mark Twain Society. He was also the driving force and a founding member in the formation of the Friends of Woodlawn Cemetery, serving as a board member at the time of his death. Most recently, Jim served as the Democratic Commissioner of the Chemung County Board of Elections from 2021 to 2024, continuing his lifelong dedication to civic engagement and public trust.

A devout member of New Beginnings United Methodist Church, Jim lived his faith through action. He welcomed others with kindness, humility, and sincerity, embodying servant leadership and serving as a true ambassador of Christ in his daily life.

Jim will be remembered not only for his many accomplishments, but for the warmth and energy he brought into every room. A natural storyteller, he had a gift for connecting with others – always ready with a smile, a story, and a genuine interest in those he met. His presence made people feel welcome, valued, and heard.

His devotion to family, faith, and community leaves behind a legacy that will endure for generations.

Jim Hare’s memory will continue to bring comfort and inspiration to all who knew him, as they reflect on a life truly well lived.

2026 Elmira Ghost Walk Scripts

Dr. Sara E. Green (1868-October 18, 1959)
Played by Laura Voorhees

Good evening. I am Dr. Sara Green and I want to tell you about the highest point of my life. Back in 1893, I was Miss Sara Crandall, the youngest of Henry and Eliza Crandall's ten children. I was 25 years old, living with my sister in North Chemung, and happily engaged to Mr. Frederick B. Green. He was studying at the University of Buffalo to become a doctor.

Elmira was hosting the Inter-State Fair at the end of that summer. It had the regular program of events – races, a grand band carnival, road making demonstrations, and livestock competitions – but there was also something very special. One lucky couple would be married on the grounds during the fair. Not only that, they would also receive $300 in gold as a wedding gift. That's more than $11,000 today. But there was a catch: after the ceremony, the couple would take a novel wedding trip in a gas balloon.

Ballooning had been around for more than 100 years, but people still considered it dangerous. They thought only a fool would risk their life in a balloon for such a prize. I suppose that makes me a fool. Fred, too. We put in our application and were chosen from 25 couples to have this grand adventure.

Our families actually tried to talk us out of it, but I was very excited. A reporter asked me if I was nervous and I replied, "Oh, not in the least!" I was hoping for a very long trip in the balloon. I wanted them to cut it loose and let it go way, way up, just as far as it would carry us. The newspaper called me "the pluckiest girl in the Chemung Valley" for that.

On September 5, Fred and I arrived at the fairgrounds with our families to find some 10,000 people gathered to watch us get married then make our balloon ascension. We were up on a raised platform beautifully decorated with plants and flowers from the fair's floral exhibitors. Rev. Mills of the First Methodist Episcopal Church performed the ceremony, and, when he presented us as husband and wife, the crowd erupted in cheers.

The band played "My Love's the Man in the Moon," and we were ready to take to the skies. But there was one problem: the balloon wasn't inflated yet. Apparently, Professor Carl Myers, the aeronaut who was to take us up, had misjudged how long it would take to fill the 60-foot high, 56-foot wide balloon with gas.

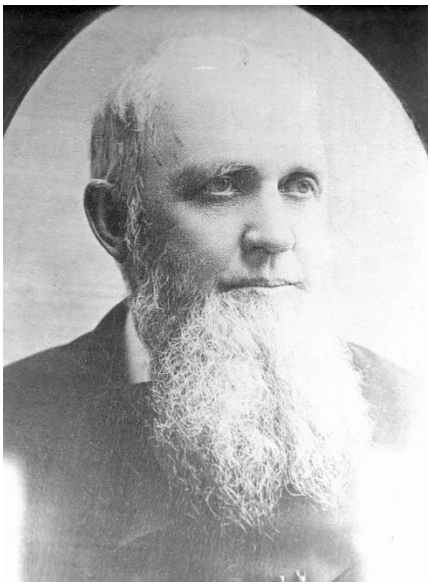
Everyone was disappointed, but only for one night. The next afternoon, Fred and I climbed into the balloon's woven wicker basket with Professor Myers, the ropes were released, and we sailed gracefully into the air. It was such a strange feeling. It was like we weren't moving at all, but the fairgrounds were sinking away from us.

We had the most delightful time. The balloon's barometer registered one and a half miles above the earth. We could see Seneca Lake and all the towns from there to Towanda and down the Susquehanna valley. After more than two hours, we decided to land, but it took a couple tries. On our first attempt near Ulster, Pennsylvania, we called to a man standing in a field to catch our anchor, but he just stared at us in open-mouthed astonishment. The second time we descended into a field, the men there shot at us, thinking the balloon was empty. We finally landed in a field in Sheshequin. A farmer kindly took us to Ulster where we had dinner before taking the train back to Elmira. It was one of the most exciting, pleasant trips I have ever been on. I would not have missed it for anything in the world.

I did a lot of things in my 91 years on this earth – Fred and I had two sons; I became a doctor and went into practice with my husband; and I was honored by the New York State Medical Society for 50 years of service – but my wedding trip in 1893 was literally the highest point of my life.

2026 Elmira Ghost Walk Scripts

Zebulon Reed Brockway (April 27, 1827-October 21, 1920)
Played by Richard Urban



On the occasion of my 90th birthday, the newspaper asked me to share some of my wisdom. I said, "Life is what we make it. Give the best of your talents. Don't let your light hide under a bushel. That is the price of living. Profit by your mistakes. Don't worry about the opinions of your critics."

My name is Zebulon Brockway, and, in my lifetime, I have had plenty of critics. All true innovators do. Over the years, I have been called the father of American prison reform and the father of parole. Both roles changed the lives of thousands, but change is often a tricky process.

I was born in Connecticut in 1827. At age 21, I took a position as a prison guard at the Connecticut State Prison in Wethersfield. In those days, prison was seen strictly as a punishment with little thought given to the improvement or reform of the prisoners. Prisoners worked, yes, but to spare the taxpayers the cost of their imprisonment rather than teach them a useful trade. They were made to pray, yes, but not in a systematic way aimed at moral improvement. The warden at Wethersfield in those days was Amos Pilsbury, and I learned a great deal from him as I rose through the ranks from guard to clerk to assistant warden.

In 1854, I took a position as superintendent at the Albany County Alms House. From there, I worked at the Monroe County Penitentiary, Detroit House of Corrections, and the military prison at Fort Leavenworth. By the time I became Superintendent in Detroit, it was clear to me there was something wrong with our prison system. It did nothing to correct the underlying problems that lead to criminal behavior. To build a better society, prison should be like a hospital, where prisoners are released only when cured of their criminal impulses. They should be treated with education, religious instruction, and useful employment. At Detroit, I began to experiment with these ideas, focusing my efforts on younger and first-time offenders. From 1861 until I resigned in 1872, I attempted to introduce a series of reforms, including separate housing based on age, supervised work-release programs, and indeterminate sentencing. I helped to write and push through

legislation in Michigan allowing for the conditional release of common prostitutes and left for Fort Leavenworth shortly after it was struck down by the courts.

In 1876, I was offered the unique opportunity to design a prison based on my ideas from the ground up right here in Elmira. [Point toward the prison] At the Elmira Reformatory, I implemented all of my ideas for the rehabilitation of youthful and first-time offenders. Prisoners attended courses in ethics and religion, vocational training in various trades, and remedial classes for those who lacked schooling. They also could participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities like sports, music, art, and the publication of the prison newspaper. I introduced indeterminate sentencing and a graded point system. Prisoners could earn points with good behavior which would grant them special privileges and get them closer to release. They could lose points for bad behavior and be subject to punishments.

I thought it was going quite well, but, in 1894, the New York State Board of Charities launched an investigation after a former prisoner made some complaints. Yes, I personally beat some of the more difficult prisoners. And yes, we did occasionally starve and refuse medical care to some as well, but the Board's findings were, frankly, ridiculous. The idea that I, Zebulon Brockway, was guilty of "mismanagement, incompetence, and neglect," let alone of "unlawful, unjust cruel, brutal, degrading, and excessive and unusual punishments of inmates" is simply absurd. By 1900, my critics had forced me out of the prison I had founded.

Luckily, the people of Elmira did not lose their faith in me due to the findings of the report. In 1905, with the city facing a financial crisis caused by embezzlement by the former city chamberlain Frank Bundy, I was the person the Democratic and Republican parties both nominated as a fusion candidate. I won handily and set to work rectifying the situation. That first year was a battle. The city's 24 alderman fought me at every turn, desperate to cling to their own power. In 1906, I pushed through a revision to the city charter that halved the number of aldermen and solved that problem. After that I was free to launch a series of road improvements and create a Public Relief Commission to assist the city's poor.

By the time I died in 1920, I had left my mark on the city, just as surely as I left it on the thousands of young offenders I had the care of over the years. While the system at the current Elmira Correctional Facility is a pretty far cry from the one I created, a lot of my ideas live on. Juvenile prisoners are housed separately from adults. Many prisons now offer courses for education and self-improvement. Parole and supervised release for deserving prisoners are used throughout New

York State, and, indeed, the nation. My ideas re-shaped the face of American prisons, and I never could have accomplished it listening to the opinions of my critics.

2026 Elmira Ghost Walk Scripts

William H. Lovell (October 4, 1845-January 22, 1917)
Mary Lovell (1837-March 6, 1923)
Played by Alex Dell and Jasmine Cook

[Step out from behind mausoleum pillars deep in discussion]

MARY: Everyone calls it the Sullivan Monument.

WILLIAM: I told you, its official name is the Newtown Battlefield Monument.

MARY: But we've always called it the Sullivan Monument. [Turns toward audience] Right folks? [Turns back to WILLIAM] I'm sorry darling. Just because your committee gave it an official name, doesn't mean we're going to call it that.

WILLIAM: I guess you're right. But, wait a minute. What are all these people doing here?

MARY: Oh, did I forget to tell you? I've invited them here to learn about your life.

WILLIAM: That's very kind of you, dear, but I don't think I did much that would entertain an audience.

MARY: You're so modest my love! You've done so many important things. I want everyone to know what a wonderful man you are.

WILLIAM: Well, I suppose, since they're already here, I should start by introducing myself. I am William H. Lovell.

MARY: I'm his wife, Mary. We were married in 1873. I was already 36 at the time, eight years older than him, so having children was not meant to be, I'm sorry to say.

WILLIAM: Don't be sorry dear. I'm not. I have loved you since the moment I met you and I would not change a thing about our life together.

MARY: Oh Billy. You see how kind he is? He's also supremely unselfish, considerate, honorable, trustworthy, and very humble. He's got the best stories. You can tell them all about being a cemetery commissioner here for nearly ten years or about being on the board of managers of the Elmira Reformatory.

WILLIAM: Okay.

MARY: Or, how about some stories from when you were the town of Big Flats supervisor or the chairman of Democratic County Committee or –

WILLIAM: Dear. Why don't I start at the beginning?

MARY: I suppose that makes sense.

WILLIAM: I was born on October 4, 1845 on my family's tobacco farm in Big Flats.

MARY: Billy helped out on the farm as a kid then went to the Warner Business College in Elmira. After graduation, he went to work for John Brand & Company as the manager of their New York City branch. We lived in the city for about six years before coming back to Elmira. That's when Billy started his own business in the wholesale tobacco trade. He made it a huge success.

That wasn't the only business he was involved in. He was also the president of the American Sales Book Company and vice-president of the Elmira Cooperative Savings and Loan Association and a director of the Chemung Canal Trust Company.

And of course he was chairman of the Sullivan Monument commission. You should tell them about that. Go ahead.

WILLIAM: Well, yes dear. I served as chairman of the Newtown Battlefield Monument Dedication commission in 1912.

MARY: He met with officials and engineers and discussed plans for the new 60-foot tall monument. He also organized all the festivities for the monument's dedication. There was an elaborate banquet at the Hotel Rathbun and a large parade through Elmira. It was called one of the finest spectacles ever witnessed in the city. Then of course there was the dedication itself followed by a grand reception. It was a lot of work.

WILLIAM: It certainly was, but I didn't do it on my own. There were countless people who helped make it a success. It was truly a group effort.

MARY: Of course it was my darling, but you made it all come together because you get along with everyone. That's the same reason you were appointed postmaster of Elmira in 1914.

WILLIAM: That is true. I didn't seek the nomination, but I was pleased by the support of so many people.

MARY: Hundreds of people signed petitions and sent letters and telegrams supporting him for the position. They weren't just from his own party, but also from Progressives, and even Republicans. In fact, J. Sloat Fassett, chairman of the Republican County Committee, said Billy was the only honest Democrat he knew. I think that becoming postmaster was my Billy's biggest accomplishment.

WILLIAM: No dear, my biggest accomplishment was finding and marrying my biggest supporter, my dearest love, and the kindest women I've ever known. Our 44 years together in life were not enough. I hated leaving you all alone when I died. At least I was successful enough to leave you a nice nest egg to finish your life in comfort.

MARY: I would have given it all up to have you still with me.

WILLIAM: We're together again now, and all these folks now know what a wonderful woman you are. If I can just get you to agree that it's the Newtown Battlefield Monument, my afterlife will be perfect.

MARY: But everyone has always called it the Sullivan Monument. You know that my darling… [return to the mausoleum while debating]

2026 Elmira Ghost Walk Scripts

Alfred Holt Stanley (December 23, 1896-June 24, 1961)
Played by Todd Lamar

At your service, Sargent Alfred Holt Stanley here. [salutes] You may have heard of me, why, when I returned in 1919 from fighting with the French, the Star-Gazette called me the "most be-medaled Elmiran" of the war.

Indeed, my flying skills were unsurpassed, if I do say so myself. You know, I shot down nine German planes, though the boys in the office said it was only five. I think they were just jealous.

Oh, you didn't know that I flew for the French? Well, let me start at the beginning. I was born in Elmira in 1896, and was Rufus and Charlotte Stanley's only son. Yes, that Stanley. He was a strident social reformer, advocate for young men's clubs, an outdoor enthusiast, and frequent lecturer on the right way to live. My father. I know what you must be thinking. You're right, he was a hard act to follow.

I started school in Elmira, but was soon shipped off to boarding school in New Jersey. Not sure why, but I think my parents wanted to get me away from my growing passion for flying. See, I'd been hanging out in Hammondsport with Mr. Curtiss learning everything I could about aviation.

After high school, I enrolled at Cornell University to study aeronautics, but my heart wasn't really in the books. I was hungry for adventure and I knew I was ready. When World War I broke out, I left school to enlist in the newly formed U.S. Air Service. I just knew we Americans would be entering the war and I just wanted to fly planes. Things seemed perfect until they turned me down.

So, I found another way to fight for our nation. I headed to France as a volunteer driver for the Ambulance Corps, and, after three months, I convinced them I'd be a better pilot. I went off to sharpen my skills at a few French flight schools. By November, I was assigned to another group, and boy did we see action!

We flew Spads, the fastest French planes at the time. Yup, we were pretty damn good, and part of the war's most famous battles. I shot down those nine German planes, remember?

Sort of ironic that I'd been denied by the U.S. but was the first American to shoot down not one but two German aircraft. I tell you, it was all pretty exciting! The speed, the firefights, the explosions. (kapow!)

It wasn't easy though; that fall, I lost five flying pals, all pilots. I was shot down at Verdun. The plane went spiraling down in flames and crashed. Somehow I survived. I wrote letters to my folks, and they shared them with the *Star-Gazette*. It was a good thing I didn't tell them everything though.

They were pretty surprised to hear I got married in Paris. See, I'd met Lora Melvin, an American, working in a canteen helping the troops. Soon, sparks flew, or maybe that was just the excitement of being in an air raid. Anyway, after only a few months, we got married. It hit the national news from Kansas to Buffalo. Seems everyone loves a love story with a war hero.

The French awarded me four distinguished medals including the *Medaille Militaire* and the *Croix de Guerre* for my flying, and, when the war ended, I returned to Elmira. By now, Lora and I had a daughter, and they stayed with her folks in Chicago while I got things settled here. They joined me when I finally landed a job selling automobiles. I still flew whenever I could.

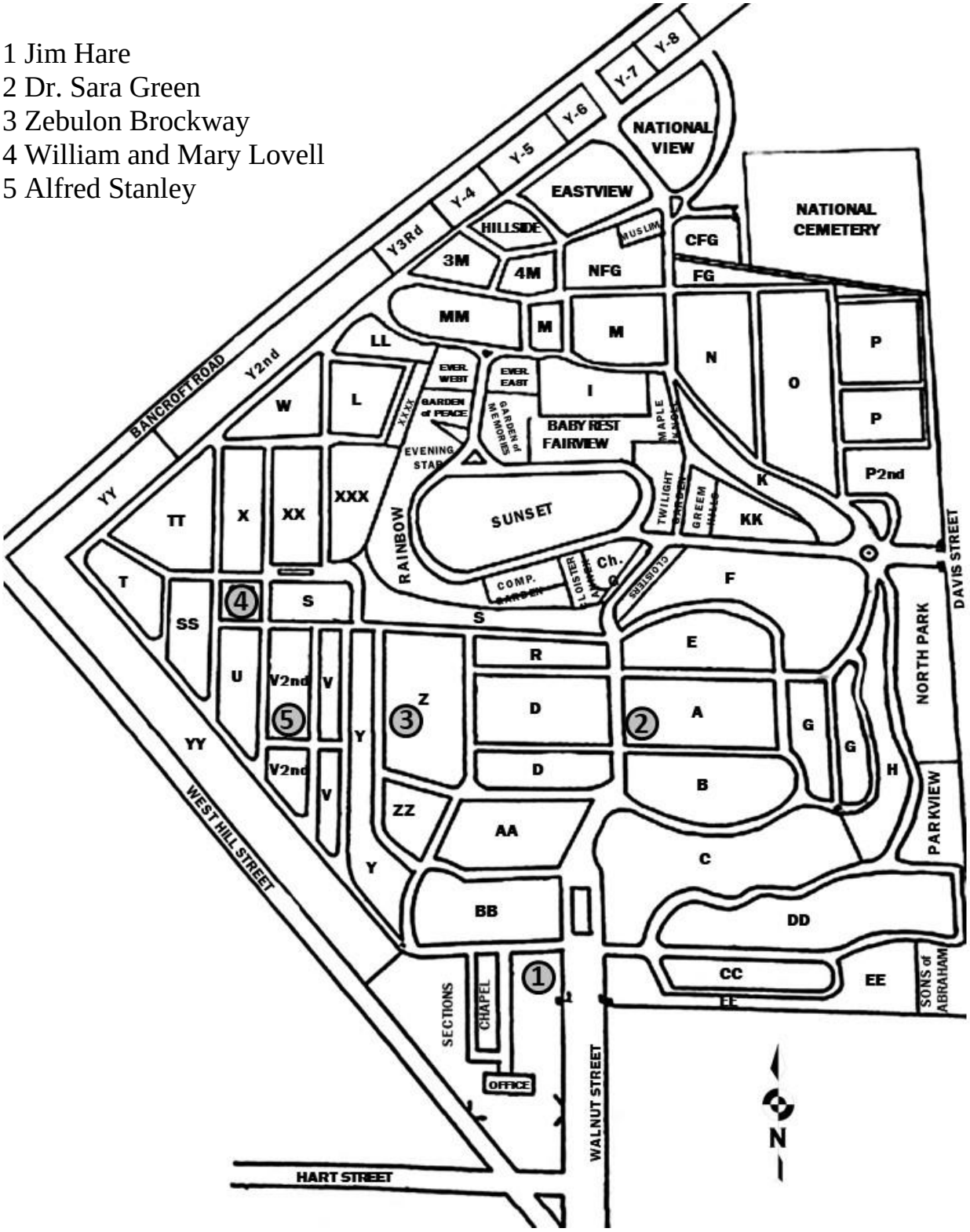
I Started Stanley Airways, offering folks sightseeing and aerial photography. But when the Depression hit, my business was wiped out. When my father died unexpectedly, Lora and I moved to Rochester then Binghamton to start over. Didn't work; my marriage or the job. We divorced in 1942, and she moved to California while I stayed here. I had a job at Link Aviation training pilots, but I couldn't make that job stick either, so I started driving taxis. I loved the speed.

Not my fault, but I racked up a few tickets and some DWIs. I remarried too. There was an incident where they charged me with shooting my wife. Shoot, come on, it was only an air pistol, and she lived, but things weren't ever the same between us.

In 1961, my heart gave out, and I died at nearly at the same age that my Dad did. No awards for that, but what an adventure I had. [salutes and turns away]

2026 Elmira Ghost Walk Scripts

1 Jim Hare
2 Dr. Sara Green
3 Zebulon Brockway
4 William and Mary Lovell
5 Alfred Stanley



Roaming ghosts included David Wiggs, Scott Geiss, Leslie Cloke, Barry Clocke, and Danny Clocke