

Darklore Manor

America's Most Haunted House?

Welcome to Darklore Manor, where spirits of the dead do not rest easy, nor do they find release from their eternal sorrow. The history of this household is a grim and tragic tale, steeped in darkness and blood. But are these tales true, or merely legends from America's haunted past?

by Devon King



Haunted History

Stories of haunted houses abound throughout America and Europe, but few can boast as many ghostly and unnatural occurrences as Darklore Manor, the haunted Victorian mansion that once loomed over the town of Gloucester, Massachusetts, just up the coastline from Salem.

Strange tales have been passed down from the time of the earliest settlers to the region. Native American tribes named the area "the place where shadows walk," and seldom ventured near the surrounding forests. It is also believed that the area was originally settled by citizens of Salem who fled the town during the infamous witch trials in 1692, and that the place became a haven for practitioners of black magic.

The mansion was built by Edmund Darklore for his lovely young bride Delarosa. Construction of the three-story, forty-room Victorian manor began in 1889 and was completed three years later. During the course of its construction, two stone masons were crushed to death beneath a wall of bricks when a hoist rigging mysteriously snapped in two.

Over the next forty years, a series of tragedies and deaths plagued those who would call Darklore Manor home. In 1941, the last of the Darklore bloodline, Damon Darklore, his wife Elizabeth and their daughter Belladonna vanished without a trace overnight, leaving the mansion deserted.

Abandoned and left to fall into disrepair, this once elegant manor began its decline into decay. Eventually, tales of ghostly sightings began to surface around the deserted mansion. Throughout the years there have been numerous reports of strange lights and sounds coming from inside the house. A dark form known as the "Shadow Man" has been sighted at the entrance gates. Another ghost, known as the "Lady in Black," is believed to be the spirit of Belladonna Darklore, and has been sighted wandering the manor grounds and halls. It is said that her dark form appears when the clock strikes the midnight hour.

Mysterious Deaths

On the night of November 27th 1961, area businessman, Theodore Thompson and his wife were killed in an automobile accident when their car crashed into a tree in front of the mansion. They were survived by their six year old son, Theo Jr., who told the police that his father swerved the car to avoid hitting a woman dressed in black who was standing in the middle of the road, directly in front of the gates leading to the house.

On March 13th 1962, local councilman Richard Franklin was found hanged to death inside the manor. Although no note was found, the case was ruled a suicide. One curious footnote concerns the fact that Councilman Franklin was the last surviving member of the Brotherhood of Thule, a masonic order of town elders that was founded by Edmund Darklore.

There have been rumors that a note was found near Franklin's body, but the facts were later covered-up. The alleged suicide note was said to have had the words "forgive me" written in Franklin's handwriting. Other rumors alleged that the word "sinner" was carved into his forehead.

The Darklore Curse

In a 1967 article appearing in *Haunted Havens* magazine entitled "The Curse of Darklore Manor," the mansion is reported to be the site of more than a dozen mysterious deaths. According to the article, these fatalities are believed to be connected to the occult rituals practiced by the Brotherhood of Thule. A letter written by Damon Darklore that was said to have been recovered from his study claims that his ancestors fell victim to a curse brought on by their own macabre delvings into the realm of black magic.

Woe befalls all who dwell within Darklore Manor, for those who have met their fate within this blighted place are cursed to forever wander its unhallowed halls. Within this sanctuary of shadows, the restless dead can find no respite from their eternal suffering.

I have brought this curse upon myself, as did my ancestors before me. I hereby confess my guilt, for I have conspired in blasphemous acts and have committed grievous and ghastly deeds. And though I be the last of the Darklore bloodline, this curse shall not end with my death, for we have awakened a great darkness, and its unfathomable hungers cannot be quenched. May the Lord have mercy on my soul.

I implore you to heed my warning! Leave this place and never return, lest ye fall victim to the Darklore curse and are doomed to an eternity of suffering and sorrow.

— Damon Darklore

According to popular accounts of the legend, the Darklores conducted arcane ceremonies involving black magic and sacrificial rites within a secret chamber deep below the manor. Whether intentionally or by accident, they awakened an ancient evil which caused the plague of deaths surrounding the mansion throughout the years. The legend goes on to state that whatever was conjured forth not only claimed several human lives, but also stole the souls of those who died within the manor, leaving them cursed to haunt the mansion and grounds for eternity.

Many believe that something unnatural still dwells there, lying in wait for unwary visitors, hungering for the blood of the living and the souls of the dead.

Ghosts from the Past

Several months after the *Haunted Havens* article was published, noted spiritualist Sandra Faraday investigated Darklore Manor and alleged to have detected the presence of several paranormal entities. She claimed to make contact and speak with the spirit of Belladonna Darklore, who told her that she and her family were murdered and that their bodies remain hidden within the walls of Darklore Manor, however, a thorough search of the home revealed no trace of any human remains.

Members of the paranormal investigative team reported hearing a music box playing an eerie melody, though they could not pinpoint the source of the ghostly music. Several members of the team also reported detecting the unmistakable aroma of lavender and being overwrought with an unexplainable feeling of sorrow while inside the house.

Faraday's visit was cut short after her assistant, Pamela Moore was traumatized by a dark entity that appeared on the main staircase. Miss Moore claimed that she was startled as she was ascending the stairs when an icy cold chill passed through her. She turned to see a man dressed entirely in black, wearing a Victorian-style tophat and coat, standing directly behind her on the stair. The man lifted his head to reveal two gaping black holes where his eyes should have been.

Moore was visibly shaken by the encounter and refused to return to the house. Though photographers shot several rolls of film inside the mansion, none of the pictures could be developed.

Unexplained Disappearances

The Darklore curse reached its zenith in 1968 when three area teens were reported missing after setting out to hold a séance inside the mansion on Halloween night. Seventeen year old Eric Shipley, along with sixteen year old James Murphy and Andrea Mather were never seen again. Theories have arisen that the teens somehow gained access to the mansion and, once inside, the three held a séance to speak with the dead. But instead of merely communing with spirits, they disturbed and awakened some unnatural force that trapped them within the house and eventually caused their deaths.

On Halloween night in 1971, Darklore Manor was the scene of a mysterious fire, and the mansion burned to the ground. The official police report lists the cause of the fire as arson, however, there are rumors of a cover-up concerning certain facts of the investigation including the discovery of skeletal remains of several bodies found deep in the foundation of the ruins.

Though few traces of the mansion remain, reports of the Lady in Black continue to this day near the site of the old manor house, and the mystery of the Darklore curse remains unresolved.



LOCAL TEENS STILL MISSING

Parents of the three Essex Township teenagers who have been missing since October 31st report that they still have hope that their children will be found safe and unharmed. In statements given to the police, friends of the missing teens reported that the three Ipswich High School seniors had plans to hold a séance on Halloween night in Darklore Manor, the deserted mansion along Old Salem Road.

This once-stately Victorian manor has stood unoccupied for the last twenty-seven years and has since fallen into a decrepit state of disrepair. The mansion has been the sight of several unexplained occurrences since the mysterious disappearance of its last owner, Damon Darklore, giving rise to local rumors that the house is haunted. Darklore vanished in 1941 along with his wife and daughter.

Sheriff George Hill and his deputies have investigated the mansion and reported no noticeable signs of forced entry. "There's something very wrong about that place," stated Hill, "you can actually feel it. Something's just not right. I wish the city would just tear it down and be rid of it, once and for all."



NOX ARCANA



Best known for his acclaimed gothic fantasy artwork, Joseph Vargo returns to the music arena with his strongest work to date. With his new project Nox Arcana, Vargo teams up with musician and composer William Piotrowski and picks up right where he left off as producer and creator of the gothic vision that launched *Midnight Syndicate*. Together, the two have created a superbly dark and moody soundtrack to accompany the legend of a haunted Victorian mansion known as Darklore Manor.

What does the name Nox Arcana mean?

JOSEPH: The name, which translates to mean "Mysteries of the Night," was taken from the legendary book of spells, *The Nox Arcana*, which is said to contain dark, forbidden knowledge of the old ways. We thought it was the perfect name for the kind of music we would be creating.

What was the inspiration for this project?

JOSEPH: It's been four years since I worked with *Midnight Syndicate* on *Realm of Shadows*. In the meantime, I've had plenty of projects to keep me busy, including creating *The Gothic Tarot* as well as co-writing and illustrating the gothic anthology, *Tales from the Dark Tower*. I developed a lot of new album concepts over the years and now I finally have the time to return to creating music. William and I have been friends for several years, but we didn't get the chance to work together until recently.

WILLIAM: Joseph's painting of Darklore Manor has always been one of my favorite pieces, so when he approached me about working together on a soundtrack based on the Darklore legend, I was really looking forward to creating music that would capture the same haunted atmosphere.

What can you tell me about the concept behind Darklore Manor?

JOSEPH: *Darklore Manor* is based on the tales of a legendary haunted house near Salem, Massachusetts. We researched the news articles and rumors, and took all things into consideration when creating this storyline, which centers around the disappearance of three teenagers who set out to hold a séance in the house on Halloween night several years ago. The concept of the album is our version of what took place in the house on that fateful night.

The story itself is somewhere between Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* and H.P. Lovecraft's *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. It's also reminiscent of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. This real-life ghost story has all the elements of a classic horror tale—an old mansion with a dark history, a cursed bloodline, tales of black magic, murder, and vengeful ghosts.

The Nox Arcana website and cd booklet are filled with some great gothic visuals.

WILLIAM: The visual elements take the music to another level with a complete storyline that offers a tour through a haunted mansion while telling a classic ghost story.

JOSEPH: Being an artist, the visual aspects of a project like this are just as important to me as the music. It amazes me when bands put so much effort into making their music sound as

good as they can, then put absolutely no thought or effort into making their packaging or websites appealing or even interesting for their fans. We worked closely with *Dark Realms* art director, Christine Filipak, who shot the photos, gathered the articles and put the whole thing together. Christine and I created the gothic look and identity for Midnight Syndicate.

Midnight Syndicate has really strayed from the classic gothic sound that you established with them. Darklore Manor seems to be a return to your original concepts.

JOSEPH: Yes. The idea was to create a moody and melody-driven gothic soundtrack, very much like we did with *Born of the Night*, but with the addition of Gregorian chanting. *Born of the Night* and *Realm of Shadows* have been used in Halloween attractions all over the world, but we've also received numerous letters from fans who said that they have used the music to set the mood for everything from gothic wedding ceremonies to candlelit bubble baths. We took these things into consideration when writing the music for *Darklore Manor* and the end result is a blend of darkly haunting melodies that encompass the complete gothic spectrum—the romantic, the mysterious, and the horrific.

WILLIAM: The CD is a mixture of morbid sonatas, pulse-pounding orchestrations and some creepy narrative interludes. Tracks like "Remnants" convey an eerie and melancholy feeling. Likewise, the song "Belladonna," which is the theme for one of the ghosts that is said to haunt Darklore Manor, is a very sorrowful and lonely melody. Other pieces such as "No Rest for the Wicked," "Nightmare" and "Resurrected" are much more ominous and foreboding.

How do you create the music?

JOSEPH: As composers, we're completely in tune with one another and we collaborate on every aspect of every song. We begin with one idea from the concept of the album, then create a melody that conveys that particular mood. It's really important to begin with a strong melody, otherwise the compositions just end up sounding like background music. Our basic melodies are composed on the piano, then we determine what instruments would best fit the theme of the song.

WILLIAM: Since Darklore Manor is the tale of a haunted Victorian mansion, we utilized instruments from the period, such as pipe-organs, harpsichords, violins, and tolling bells, then accented the compositions with ghostly choirs to capture the perfect haunted feel.

What are your musical influences?

WILLIAM: The music is influenced by John Carpenter, Danny Elfman, and various other horror movie soundtrack composers. Jerry Goldsmith's classic Academy award-winning soundtrack for *The Omen* was the major influence for the Latin chanting.

JOSEPH: I did several narrations with Midnight Syndicate and the idea was originally inspired by a variety of sources, including the disembodied tourguide voice from Disney's Haunted Mansion, Vincent Price's narratives for Alice Cooper's "Black Widow," and later for "Thriller." Also the intro to Iron Maiden's "The Number of the Beast." The idea is to set the story and let the various dark melodies take you on a musical journey.

What are your plans for a live show or tour?

WILLIAM: We would like to incorporate as many visual elements as possible into our live show. Since a production like this requires a great deal of time and resources, we most likely won't be touring until after the next CD.

JOSEPH: At the moment we are in the planning stages, but it should all come together by next Halloween.

What does the future hold for Nox Arcana?

JOSEPH: We have several ideas for future concept albums, but we don't want to reveal all of them too far in advance. We are currently putting the finishing touches on *Necronomicon*, a dark symphony based on H.P. Lovecraft's legendary book of shadows. The album will be a musical opus with gothic choirs chanting the forbidden rituals contained within the pages of this ancient tome.

WILLIAM: We've already been approached by television and independent film producers who have asked us to score their movies and shows, but right now we have too many of our own projects and ideas that we want to complete first. Beyond that, anything's possible.



"Our goal was to create a blend of darkly haunting melodies that encompass the complete gothic spectrum—the romantic, the mysterious, and the horrific."

—Joseph Vargo



"Darklore Manor is a concept album that tells a ghostly tale as it takes listeners on a dark musical journey through the haunted halls of a Victorian mansion."

—William Piotrowski

For more information on Nox Arcana and the legend of Darklore Manor, visit:
WWW.NOXARCANA.COM