



Ghosts of Alton, Pt. 2: Parade Marshal Boogaloo

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - This year's Alton Halloween Parade Marshal is none other than local historian, Charlotte Stetson.

Stetson has written no less than half a dozen books about the history of Alton. Her most recent book, an updated take on her 1986 work *Alton's Illustrated History*, is currently available at the Alton Visitors Center on Piasa Street. It is a collection of photos detailing Alton's history. Stetson said she updated it to reflect some of the newer articles of Alton's colorful and textured history - including the Great Flood of '93. She also worked as the resident historian at the *Telegraph* for many years, retiring only recently.

Because Stetson is both a notable historian and this year's Halloween Parade Marshal, Riverbender.com decided to ask her about everyone's favorite aspects of Alton history -



at least this time of year - ghosts.

"I think the haunted history of Alton is great," she said. "I have not yet seen a ghost, but that doesn't mean they're not out there. I'm very familiar with the hauntings, but I've never been on the ghost tours."

When asked about her favorite local haunting, Stetson did not give the usual answers of Mineral Springs Mall, the McPike Mansion or even the Milton Schoolhouse. Instead, she said her favorite haunting occurred at the Mansion House, a former hotel once located on State Street. Stetson said it burnt down several years ago.

"The Mansion House had a very colorful ghost," she said. "It's colorful, because we know who it was. It was related to Ol' Tom Bigby."

Bigby, Stetson said, was an "Indian Fighter," meaning he went out into the Great Plains with the U.S. Army and took part in the systematic genocide of an entire group of Native People. Possibly because of his involvement in that blood-soaked era of history, Bigby got himself a bit haunted.

"He was an Indian Fighter and retired to the Mansion House," she said. "He was haunted by the spirit of a Native American. Bigby died there, but the ghost stayed."

Stetson said Bigby was known to cry out in the night and was concerned to the point of obsessed in regards to the ghost. She said this condition of life secured the adjective "haunted" for Bigby.

She said her other favorite haunted places in Alton were the usual suspects, however. She was also pleased to see development in both the Milton Schoolhouse and [Mineral Springs Mall](#).

"I think it's great," she said of the [revival of those buildings](#). "It's wonderful. I'm happy they're in there, and I hope they survive."

As far as the Halloween Parade goes, Stetson said she was honored to have been named, but was unsure of her official duties.

"It's an honor to be named, and you get to ride in the parade, and see the rest of the parade and see everyone coming out for the event," Stetson said.

Going to the Alton Halloween Parade has been a family tradition for Stetson, like so many families in the Alton area.

This year's parade will begin at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 31 at the corner of Broadway and Washington.

For more spooky Halloween news, check out [our Halloween page](#)