

ARGYLE WINERY'S RESTLESS SPIRIT

BY KAREN FRAZIER

On a recent wine tour through Oregon's Willamette Valley, a tasting room employee at one winery related an incident that occurred on Halloween. In the small sitting room adjacent to the tasting room, a shelf with wine bottles that was securely attached to the wall came crashing down.

Such incidents are common at the Argyle Winery.

Nestled at the foot of the Dundee Hills in Oregon's premier pinot noir appellation, the Argyle Winery is famous for its delicious reds and some of the best methode champenoise sparkling whites to ever come out of the United States.

Troubled Spirit Haunts Argyle Winery

Founded in 1987 on the site of an old nut processing plant, the winery has embraced the restless spirit that is believed to haunt the tasting room — honoring her with their Spirithouse Pinot Noir.

The spirit that haunts the Argyle Winery is believed to be Lena, a troubled woman who once inhabited the home that became the Dundee City Hall and later Argyle's tasting



room. Lena Elsie Imus died in 1908 after ingesting carbolic acid in a successful suicide attempt.

As the story goes, Lena became pregnant at the age of 25. The father of the baby told her he was going to leave, and Lena became despondent. She ingested carbolic acid on

Dec. 17, 1908, and was unconscious for 10 hours.

After she was conscious for 24 hours during which she told loved ones that she had nothing to live for.

The ingestion of carbolic acid and the fact her death was a suicide have been verified in Lena's obituary in the Dec. 24, 1908, *Newburg Graphic*, though nothing was said about a pregnancy.

Also, two young men reportedly died in the house after Imus.

Spirit Makes its Presence Known to Employees

Employees of the old Dundee City Hall (which occupied the Argyle property from the late-'70s until the mid-'80s) began to suspect the property was haunted when two City employees noticed a rash of strange occurrences.

Molly Davis, then City recorder, and Chris Culver, former City clerk, started to notice strange occurrences in the building. The incidents were accompanied by a flowery scent, leading the employees to believe that the spirit was female.

Often, the sweet scent would be accompanied by an unexplainable



Pictured at left and above: The Argyle tasting room. The Spirithouse Pinot Noir is made in honor of Lena Elsie Imus, the ghost that reportedly haunts the Argyle Winery. Lena died in 1908 after ingesting carbolic acid in a successful suicide attempt. Employees report multiple paranormal events throughout the winery.

puff of air, as if someone wearing perfume was passing by rapidly.

Tod Miller, assistant public works superintendent for the city of Dundee, also worked in the old City Hall building.

He said that he also had experiences with Imus' ghost, including lights turning off and on by themselves and footsteps heard in the upstairs hallway when no one was there.

Other employees began to take notice. A copy repair technician was in the building and unexplainably had a toolbox full of tools dumped onto the floor. The repairman never returned.

At one point, winery employees within earshot of the tasting room heard a glass roll off the counter and shatter. However, upon investigation, all the glasses were in place, and not one was missing.

Laughter also erupts from empty rooms and glasses break, without really breaking.

Spirithouse Pinot Noir Made in Honor of Lena

Employees at Argyle believe Lena's ghost indeed haunts their winery. Lights still turn themselves

on and off, footsteps can still be heard, a presence is sometimes felt, and occasionally, something startling might happen, like a shelf coming off of a wall or a glass breaking on its own.

Whether you go for the wine or the spirits — the next time you are in Oregon's Willamette Valley, be sure to visit the Argyle Winery. At the very least, you'll get to taste some

world-class wines, including the Spirithouse Pinot Noir.

Just don't forget to raise a glass and drink a toast to Lena. She might just make her presence known.

The Argyle Winery is located at 691 N Highway 99W in Dundee, Ore. You can contact the winery at 503-538-8520 or 888-4-ARGYLE (1-888-427-4953). Their Web site address is www.argylewinery.com/. ♦



Pictured above: Lena's grave in the Dundee Pioneer Cemetery. The inscription reads, *Not Dead, but Gone Before*. Lena is buried with her parents and two brothers.