WM. S. HART

The Joe McNinch Story

Joe McNinch was an elderly Volunteer at the Hart Mansion when I first started in 1994.

He had been a personal friend of WSH and would often drive Bill’s limo to the train stations to pick-up visitors.

One day, around 1996, Joe and I were sitting in the Volunteer’s room, and he told me this story - -

One particular night, in the early 1930’s, Bill and Mary Ellen Hart hosted a small group of friends for dinner. Joe was in attendance.

After coffee and dessert, Bill felt a little tired and excused himself for bed, upstairs. The guests stayed in the Dining Room, continuing their conversations in lowered tones. As the hours went by, some migrated around the kitchen and pantry areas.

At one point, however, Bill snapped awake and heard a faint noise downstairs. Presuming that all his guests had left by now, he assumed it was a burglar. [This was the Great Depression era, and many unsavory characters might dwell in his woodlands, near the train tracks.]

The Mansion features a ‘back staircase’ - from the upstairs kitchen, down to the ground floor Butler’s Pantry. Well, the upper door crashed open and looking down at the small crowd was William S. Hart, in his long white nightshirt, holding two six-guns!

When the shock wore off, everyone had a stiff drink and a laugh. Then Joe drove all the guests down the hill.

Bill Crowl