

# Deck The Halls with Ghosts And Tunnels: A Look Into Popular Chicago Landmark

By ALYSSA SUAREZ



*The company clock (left) and the building plaque (right) are the historic remnants of the Marshall Field and Company Department Store. (Photo by FourSquare and Fine Art America)*

The Great City of Chicago is more than just the “Windy City” or the home of “Da Bears;” the city holds many historic mysteries that are hard to find in plain sight. From the origins of the Great Chicago Fire in 1871 to the hauntings at Drake Hotel, a major part of Chicago’s identity lies within its architecture and the supernatural, and the Marshall Field and Company building is no exception.

Built in 1885 and located between Wells and Franklin Streets, the historic building, now a Macy’s Department Store is a seven-story, 73-acre store that spans almost an entire block — the foundation for hidden secrets. Marshall Field, an American architect and entrepreneur, got his start at the age of 19 in working at Potter Palmer’s dry goods store, where he later took over. After the Great Chicago Fire, he built a six-story merchandising emporium catered to women with leisure time. By 1887, the Marshall Field and Company building grew to be the intricate department store

standing today, with freight elevators, a 1.6 million Tiffany glass roof, and a Frango mints demonstration kitchen on the seventh floor and Narcissus tearoom— now closed.

The building has undergone many adjustments and ownerships, most notably being a temporary morgue after the 1903 Iroquois Theater Fire; a deadly fire that killed roughly 600 people because of poor architecture and a lack of safety inspections. During this time, the Marshall Field and Company building offered its eighth floor as a temporary morgue for victims as the theatre was in proximity. While the “morgue” was more of a hospital and sanctuary, many people unfortunately lost their lives while receiving treatment.

Alexander Fieldman, an ex-employee of the then-Marshall Field’s Department Store noted strange sightings on the seventh and eighth floors while working as a sales clerk, “I was stationed on the sixth floor, where we sold toys and children’s clothes — we got especially busy during the holidays, and sometimes when my buddy would call off, I would take over his shift on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor and I would always feel as if I was being watched.”

Fieldman explains that he would see mannequins out of place and saw a “small, black coffin” near the back staircase one night while closing the shop.

“I heard footsteps once when I was closing up the store ... the [building] is huge so you never know if it’s a squatter or an animal, but I never intended to find out — who would?”

Fieldman’s son, Lance, also worked at the current Macy’s Flagship Store during the late 2010s as a Fragrance Vendor, “I grew up watching paranormal shows so hearing my dad’s stories about the store always interested me ... I never worked the late-night shift, but I did hear heavy furniture

dragging on the floor when I went up to the Walnut Room on the eighth floor, like if someone was moving them.”

Lance, along with his coworkers, explored the intricate architecture of the store, “It’s pretty easy to get lost, I think they did an episode about this on Twilight Zone... my friends and I would work there after school so we would take the Metra underneath the store where there would be food vendors. They had really great hot dogs.”

The Chicago underground freight tunnels are just another mystery that lives in the Marshall Field and Company property. Constructed in the early 1900s, the tunnels transported coal and people to different areas of the city. The Marshall Field’s Department Store used the tunnels to move merchandise packages to and from their stores.



*An ash car train in the Marshall Field and Company boiler room on February 16, 1915. Picture by thetrolleydodger*

The eerie-ness of the building has attracted tourists from all over the nation as TikTok users share their supernatural encounters while shopping there. One user, @its.murt, shares an experience of ending up in the basement of the building when she took no escalators down and “walked on the fifth floor looking for an escalator.”

With a building spanning almost a city block, the entirety of the Marshall Field and Company building has not been explored. With all the paranormal experiences and architectural shortcuts, who knows what other secrets are still lying in plain sight.