



2013 Ghost Walk

Jennie Crocker Fassett – played by Kayla Nash

My name is Jennie Crocker Fassett and I've always believed that each of us has a responsibility to give back to our community. I was lucky to have more to give than most. I was born into wealth in 1860 and then I married a prosperous and ambitious man. I met my husband, Jacob Sloat Fassett, when I came to Elmira to attend my friend Julia's wedding. Jacob was already the Chemung County District Attorney by the time we wed in 1879, but he had the drive and talent to be so much more.

Like me, Jacob came from money but he was determined to make more of it. He had a wide range of business interests from banks in Elmira to cattle ranches in New Mexico to lumber in Canada to mines in Korea. He was a politician too and a Progressive Republican. I don't believe you have those now, but in Jacob's day that meant he supported Prohibition, government regulation of business, income tax and social justice reforms. He started his political career in the New York State Senate in 1883 and served as United State's Congressman from 1905 to 1911. His far-flung business interests and political career meant that we had to travel quite a bit, but we always came back to our beautiful home, Strathmont, here in Elmira

I suppose I could have sat back in our luxurious house to simply raise our six wonderful children and host parties but, as I said, I've always believed in giving back. There were so many problems in our country, in our city, and I had a moral obligation to help fix them. Throughout the 1890s, I was involved in a number of charities aimed at helping poor women get vocational training, parenting classes and free childcare. There were quite a few competing and overlapping charities in the city at the time run through different committees or church groups, and it struck me as rather silly and wasteful. So, in 1905, a number of us decided to form the Women's Federation for Social Services to bring everything together under one roof. Jacob and I donated \$65,000 and a plot of land and, in 1908, we opened the Women's Federation Building on Church Street. I served as the organization's first president and I could not have been more proud. We housed the Social Service Offices, the Visiting Nurses' Association, the Industrial School, a kindergarten and nursery, a dining hall with nutritious, low cost meals, spaces for various women's clubs to meet and even bedrooms for stranded women and girls.

Of course, a woman can do only so much with charity. I could lobby my husband's colleagues about child labor laws and Prohibition until I was blue in the face and there would still be seven-year-olds slaving away in the mills and fathers who drink away their wages. No, if there was one thing my husband's career in politics had taught me it was that if we wanted to accomplish *true* and lasting change, we ladies needed the vote. I was a charter member of the Elmira chapter of the New York State Suffrage Party. We had some hard fought battles, but in 1917 we won the vote here in New York and nationwide in 1920. I made a point to never miss a vote until my dying day in 1939.

The Federation Building is gone now, but my other gifts to the community remain. Students at Elmira College still use Fassett Commons and Hamilton Hall, both of which I helped to fund. The Steele Memorial Library, where I served on the board, continues to thrive. I gave to my community my money, my time and my passion. I like to think it was worth it.



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Colonel John Hendy – played by Mike Lavarney

As the very first resident of Woodlawn Cemetery, I want to welcome you here tonight. I am Colonel John Hendy and mine was the first grave dug in this cemetery. I was reinterred here with much fanfare at its dedication on October 9, 1858. I say reinterred because I was originally buried in the old Baptist burying ground, which is now Wisner Park, when I died in 1840. Both of my funerals were large affairs with bands playing and the entire town turning out. But those are tales from the end of my life. I want to tell you about how my life in Elmira began.

I grew up in Pennsylvania and enlisted in the Continental Army when I was 17 years old. During the American Revolution I saw action at Bunker Hill, Princeton, Trenton and Monmouth in our fight against the British. While I was fighting along the east coast, General John Sullivan was laying waste to Indian villages along the New York and Pennsylvania frontiers. By the time he was done, the Chemung Valley was nearly a complete wilderness again.

That's how I found it when I arrived by canoe at Newtown Forks in April of 1789. There, I cleared a field and sowed the first corn ever planted by a white man in the valley. As the corn grew, I searched for a spot where I could settle permanently. I found that spot just up the river in what is now West Elmira and built a cabin. After that fall's harvest, I went down to Tioga Point and brought back my wife Polly and our son and two daughters. My oldest daughter, Rebecca was expecting a house like the one they had been living in. When she saw the rough cabin she wept.

Those early years were not easy. In our second year there was a severe frost that killed most of our crops and those of our few new neighbors. We survived on green pumpkins and Indian beans until some late rye came ripe. I, myself, nearly starved to death. Thank God that was the only famine we ever saw.

Now, while General Sullivan destroyed every Indian village he came across during his march, there were still Indians living in the area. My cabin was along the path running through the valley between Tioga Point and Painted Post. We'd often see groups of Indians passing by. When I first arrived here, I depended on the kindness of the Indians to help me get along. I returned that favor by leaving my home unlocked and open to them. If they wanted a warm place to stay in their travels they were welcome to sleep on the floor of my cabin. My wife Polly was always afraid of the Indians. Whenever she heard them coming she would gather all our forks and knives and hide in the loft with the children until they were gone.

In July of 1791 there was a big meeting here between the remaining Indians who still held title to these lands and Colonel Timothy Pickering who had been appointed by President Washington to negotiate a treaty. They called it the Treaty of Painted Post but it was actually signed here. After three weeks of talk, the Indians left with payment for their land. I watched the Indian men, women and children going west past my cabin on their way to a new home near Batavia. I counted over 1,400 in all. That treaty marked the end of an era. From then on there was no more warfare between the Indians and the white men in New York.



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Francis Hall – played by Jim Wellington

I guess you could say that I've always been an adventurer. In my nearly 80 years of life, I visited distant lands and was at the forefront of many great changes here and abroad. My name is Francis Hall and I was among the early Westerners in Japan after Commodore Matthew Perry opened the country to foreigners in 1854.

But we'll get to Japan in just a little bit. First, let me tell you about myself and how I got to take such an opportunity. I was born in Ellington, Connecticut on October 27, 1822 and as a young man I developed a love of nature, art and, especially, books. In 1841, I went to work as a clerk in a bookstore in Syracuse, but soon found myself desiring to have my own store. I had heard stories of Elmira and saw it as a promising place to start my bookstore. You see, at that time Elmira was a small village of no more than 2,500 people. However, the Erie Railroad line was shortly to be built through Elmira, and I recognized this opportunity to establish myself in a soon-to-be bustling metropolis.

After some tough years getting the store off the ground, I eventually had a successful business on my hands. My store served as a gathering place for local intellectuals and famous writers, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horace Mann and Oliver Wendell Holmes. I was involved in many local endeavors, including the development of Elmira College. I also was instrumental in the design process of this beautiful cemetery in which you all now stand.

Enough of that, though. Let me now speak of my adventures in Japan. After Commodore Perry opened Japan, a number of enterprising Americans and Europeans went to explore that mysterious foreign land. Some people went as missionaries to try to Christianize the Japanese, while others went as explorers. I myself was in Japan from 1859 to 1866 where I helped found Walsh, Hall, and Co., which was one of the most important American trading houses in Japan. We were a well-known firm in the silk and tea trades. I also wrote observational columns about Japanese life for *The New York Tribune* and the *Elmira Daily Advertiser*. I didn't know much about Japan before arriving there and was amazed at what I encountered. The ruling Tokugawa shogunate was losing its power and drastic cultural changes were coming to the country that had been closed to the world for centuries.

The Japanese landscape was quite remarkable. Although the cities existed in various stages of decay and dullness, the country was picturesquely beautiful. Low hills were fringed with sparse woods and were lined with emerald rows of growing crops. Despite its beauty, Japan could at times be a dangerous place for a lone foreigner. On my trips to the countryside I would put a revolver in one pocket and a copy of Tennyson in the other!

Still, I was quite fond of many people I met there, particularly the children. I recall flying kites and playing with the young Japanese boys and girls. In all my time there, I never saw children fighting or arguing. They were also perfectly obedient and respectful of their elders. When I returned to Elmira in 1866, I resumed my passions for books, arts, and philanthropy. But I will never forget my adventures in Japan.



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Mabel Flood – played by Ivy Robinson

My name is Mabel Flood and I always wanted to be a doctor. My family was full of medical men; my grandfather, uncle and cousin were physicians while my father was a pharmacist. Although there were only four other women in my class, I was certainly following family tradition when I graduated from Buffalo Medical College in 1911. When I came home in 1912, I was excited and proud, ready to heal the world or at least Elmira.

I went into practice with my uncle Henry at the Realty Building on Market Street. Most of my patients were women with lady troubles and children with the sniffles. I was doing well, but some days it felt like there should be so much more to life, to me, than just small town medicine.

When war broke out in Europe, I got my chance to find out. In 1917, the American Red Cross put out a call for doctors and nurses and I told my cousin, Dr. Regina Flood Keyes, that we needed to go. Just a few days later we were on a ship out of New York City sailing for a war-torn Europe and who knew what challenges. The Red Cross posted us in the Balkans where we established the American Women's Hospital in Monastir, Serbia.

Regina served as the commanding officer and surgeon while I handled the medical cases. We treated nearly 3,000 patients a month. During the influenza pandemic in 1918, half the staff fell ill, even Regina and I were rather under the weather, but we worked through it to care for our patients. We saw the hospital through a second epidemic, this one of typhus, in 1919. I am proud to say that we earned a reputation as the best hospital in the Balkans. The governments of Serbia, France and the United States awarded us both medals for our efforts.

After the war, Regina and I were slow to return home. We saw the last of our patients recovered and even took a brief tour of Europe before setting sail for New York in the spring of 1920. It was a good thing we had stayed so long because it was on that ship where I met the love of my life, Alfred Heath, one of the ship's officers. Like me, Alfred had an adventurous spirit, or at least enough of one to take to the sea and then follow me home to Elmira after just a few months of courtship. We married in August of 1920 and I returned to my medical practice, now as Dr. Mabel Heath, while Alfred tried his hand at dry cleaning. I suppose, compared to my wartime escapades, it sounds rather dull, but I found that marriage, and later motherhood, to be an adventure as well. Honestly, after all I'd seen, done and been through during the War, my patients' minor maladies and my own domestic challenges were just what the doctor ordered.