



## Sweet & Maier, S.C.

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### A HAUNTING AT THE "INNS OF COURT"

Fall 2009

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# Legal Bytes

Lowell Sweet and John Maier have known each other for 30 years, but until they joined forces to practice law, Lowell had never mentioned he had a ghost sharing his office at the "Inns of Court" in Elkhorn. Our ghost is not mean or mischievous, but he does wander about the office. Neither Lowell nor John believes their ghost has a license to practice law, but John has learned first hand that the friendly spirit does indeed occupy space in their building. We have done a lot of research, but have not been able to learn when the haunting stories began, or who the ghost is.

Dexter and Deidamia Dewing, the original owners of our building came to Elkhorn in 1843. They were the parents of eight children, and built the original structure the same year. Known as the "Dewing House" it was occupied by the Dewing family for over 80 years.

There are stories of a murder having occurred in the home many years ago, which we have not been able to verify, as well as tales of tragedy, which have come from the historical records. Myron Dewing, as a two-year-old, fell into a fire with outstretched arms. As a result, his hands were burned so badly that they appeared as if they had been amputated at the wrist. Later, as an adult, he served as County Clerk from 1857 - 1874. Could he be our ghost - unready to give up his job as County Clerk?

The home at 114 N. Church Street was purchased in 1913 by Bridget Murphy, and for the next 30 years was used by her as a boarding house. Ms. Murphy was a color-

ful character who raised chickens in her kitchen!

Another story we have heard is that two male boarders became intoxicated, got into an argument, and a fist-fight ensued. The fight ended when one of the participants fell, or was thrown, down the stairs, and died. Could that be the ghost?

In 1970 Lowell and Mary Ellen Sweet bought the building, converted it to a law office, and named the office "Inns of Court" after the old English buildings in London where barristers lodged, trained and carried on their legal profession.

John and Terri Maier are the current owners and ghostly sights and sounds have continued to be observed by John. Early one morning John arrived to find no other cars in the parking lot, no lights on, and no one else in the building. However, upon entering the rear hallway, John distinctly heard footsteps, as if made by hard-soled boots, walking across a wood floor, above him. John recalls, "Someone was walking above me on the second floor, as if passing from the rear office and on down the hallway. The clomp, clomping was very loud as the person passed right over me and then grew gradually softer as they moved away from me down the hall, and then stopped. I was first confused on who could be in the office so early, but then the hair really stood up on the

back of my neck when I remembered that the upstairs is carpeted! The sounds I heard, were made by someone wearing boots or shoes walking across a wood floor. I couldn't explain it then, and still can't."

Law office staff aren't exempt from periodic ghostly visits either. One legal assistant "felt a very strong presence" from time to time while she worked at her desk. She insisted that occasionally she glimpsed a man who then vanished. She no longer works at the law firm.

On another occasion, a repairman (unaware of any stories of ghosts) was working outside near the side porch. He said he looked through the window and clearly saw a man standing next to the secretary who was sitting at her desk outside of Lowell's office. The repairman described the apparition to the secretary, but was told there had been no such man in the office!

This year, the Sweet & Maier Law Office is one of the stops on the Elkhorn Holiday House Walk. If you aren't squeamish, you can come for a visit on Saturday, November 21, 2009, anytime from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. - but be careful not to be caught inside as the tour hours end, when the lights are turned out and the doors are locked, or you might find out first hand what it's like to have a ghost for a companion.

## Estate Planning: Leave Less to the IRS (and the Lawyers)

You've worked hard to build your assets, your investments, your home, and your treasured possessions and to provide financial security for your loved ones. Doesn't it make sense to work just as hard to protect those assets for your heirs?

That is the primary goal of estate planning – to protect, preserve and manage your estate if you die or become disabled. Estate planning is a topic the living love to avoid, but the cost of procrastination can be high for those you care about most.

Without an estate plan or with an out-of-date plan, the fates of your assets and your loved ones may be decided by attorneys or the government. Taxes and legal fees could eat away at your estate, and distribution of your assets could be delayed at a time when your heirs need them most.

**Getting Started:** Estate planning can begin with something as simple as updating the beneficiaries of your insurance policies and retirement accounts. To make sure all your wishes are carried out, you'll need to draft a will or establish a trust, but these things can be handled in a few brief meetings with an estate attorney.

**Updating your estate plan:** When life inevitably changes, so should your will. Would you feel confident that if you died today your wishes would be carried out as you have planned? Because change is a constant in our lives, it's important to keep estate plans up-to-date.

**You are Invited:** Sweet & Maier, S.C. in partnership with US Bank invites you to a **Financial and Estate Planning "Town Hall Meeting"** designed to provide you with valuable information you can use to help yourself and your loved ones, and to let us hear and answer your questions.

**Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>**

Matheson Memorial Library – Community Center Room

101 N. Wisconsin Street

Elkhorn, Wisconsin

**Morning session**    **Attend either session\***    **Evening session**

8:00 – 9:30 a.m.

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

\*RSVP 262-723-5480 (requested, but not necessary)

### Firm updates Web site to better serve clients and visitors

[plans to roll out its new web site on November 1, 2009]

Sweet & Maier, S.C. recently completed an update to our firm's Web site. We are very excited about this new version which includes a complete overhaul of the Web site's functionality. Our objective is to improve the overall usability of the site for our clients and visitors.

The new site includes a drop-down navigation menu that enables users to find content faster, as well as practice group and office pages designed to display fresh content relevant to our practice areas. Included on the site are articles on current legal issues, a newsroom/headline page which allows visitors to browse all our attorney's latest achievements, and our quarterly newsletter. A brand new feature is the "Ask Your Attorney" column where questions sent in by visitors are answered and posted on the site by one of our attorneys.

Why not check out our new site today and send in a question of your own to "Dear Counselor" at [www.wisclaw.com](http://www.wisclaw.com).



### Coming Events:

November 10, 2009

#### Financial and Estate Planning "Town Hall Meeting"

**Two Sessions:** Sweet & Maier in partnership with US Bank 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

**Come to either session, have some refreshments, bring your questions and learn whether your Estate Plan "measures up"!**

This is a free opportunity to ask your questions!

November 21, 2009

**Elkhorn Area Holiday House Walk** sponsored by Elkhorn Area Women's Club. Tickets are available at Deakin Isle and Pharmacy Station for \$10. (Proceeds will be donated to the Food Pantry)

Come and visit us at our office on North Church St. in the historic "Inns of Court" building from 11:00 o'clock to 4:00 o'clock.

### ATTORNEY ADVICE – NO CHARGE

**Tip #1:** When you are writing checks to pay on your credit card accounts, DO NOT reference your complete account number on the "Memo" line. Instead, just put the last four numbers. The credit card company knows the rest of the number, and anyone who might be handling your check, as it passes through all the check processing channels, won't have access to it.



#### Top costumes for Halloween

According to extremehalloween.com. here are the top costumes for 2009: For babies, Baby Pea in a Pod,

For girls, Pretty Witches and Wizard of Oz characters.

For boys, Clone Trooper, Yoda Dog and Batman.