

Through the Stereopticon

Stereopticon: a slide projector or "magic lantern" with two lenses. The device was a popular form of entertainment and education in the mid 19th century.

One stormy day, three girls, Lou Anne, Emmy, and Cara were on a field trip to the Dublin Coffman House and Barn.

When the tour got to the children's room, the girls became very interested in the toys. They were especially interested in the marbles. They became so distracted that the tour left them there!

The bus was gone and so were the tour guides! They were really scared, but they decided to stay the night where they were in the drafty, damp, creaking, old Coffman House. Surely someone would come back to get them.

Emmy couldn't sleep. She walked over to the window and saw a man in old-fashioned clothes with suspenders. He was standing right outside! Emmy dashed to the antique rope bed and shook Lou Anne and Cara until they woke up.

"There is a guy out there with suspenders and a hammer. He's down in the yard!" Emmy screamed.

"No way!" Cara exclaimed.

"That guy could help us!" said Lou Anne, jumping up and down in excitement.

They pried the window open and hollered out to the man, "What are you doing with that hammer?"

"I'm making some repairs to the house while everybody's gone."

Emmy then watched her friends get back into bed. She looked out the window again, and the man and his tools were gone. Emmy shook Lou Anne and Cara again. "The guy... th-th-th the guy!"

"What about the guy?" Lou Anne asked.

"H-H-He's gone!" Emmy gasped as she talked.

"There's no way he's gone!" Cara announced. It's impossible."

Lou Anne moved over to the window with Cara by her side. As Emmy had said, no trace was left of the man. "I told you so!" Emmy shouted at her friends when the girls came back to the squeaky rope bed. Now none of them could sleep.

All of a sudden, they heard a thud and a scream. They looked outside and there was the man lying on the ground. Then it looked like he was being dragged away. They heard a few booms and men talking. Then all was silent. The girls looked out the window to see horses and carts, women in long dresses, and children playing with sticks and dolls. It was like a blast from the past, just like the tour guides had described life in Coffman House.

Soon the girls woke up from what seemed like a dream. "We have to find out about that man!" Lou Anne demanded. "But we don't have much time. The tour guides will be back soon after the sun comes up."

The girls started exploring the house for clues. They looked in the barn, but all they found were antique tools like the corn shucker.

They went back to the house and soon came across the stereopticon that the tour guides had shown them. Cara put in a slide and looked through the lenses. The

slide was in backwards. She was about to turn it around when she noticed some writing. It said,

“Help! Help! Buried under floor in cellar.”

Cara told her friends to look through the stereopticon. They saw the writing, too.

They picked another slide and viewed the back of it. It said,

“Need proper burial.”

“I think the man wrote that,” proclaimed Lou Anne. “He must be sending us a message.”

Cara announced, “We have to help him and inform the police.”

Suddenly, the door flew open. Tour guides, parents, and the police came running in. “Girls, where have you been?”

“We’ve been here all night. The busses left us. But you have to help us look in the cellar!” shouted Emmy.

It took a bit of work, but the body of a man was found in the cellar of the Coffman House. The girls had solved a 145-year-old mystery of a worker that went missing while building the house. The man was given a proper burial and was never seen again. Strangely, no one else was ever able to view mysterious writing in the stereopticon.