

**OPAL CAREY  
'CAROLANN'  
SMITH  
1893-unk**



**MISTRESS  
OF  
HEX  
HOUSE**

Carolann Smith set off a scandal in Tulsa in 1944 as mistress of the macabre Hex House. She mesmerized two young women and held them in bondage in a fancy Maple Ridge house at 10 East 21 Street for eight years.

She was born as Opal May Carey in May 1893 in Indianapolis, the daughter of a wealthy Indiana Glass Company employee. After her mother died, they moved to Muskogee in 1912. There, Opal met Fay Smith, a salesman for several steel companies, and married on February 3, 1914. Her sons, born in 1915 and 1919, were born prematurely and died hours after birth because Opal was told she wasn't strong enough to have children. The couple moved to Tulsa in 1930 and lived in the Sophian Plaza Apartments, where Opal taught music.

As sales manager for the Williamsport Wire Rope Company, Fay was sent to Casper, Wyoming and Portland, Oregon but mostly worked in Tulsa until he was dismissed in June 1933, due to the Great Depression. His boss J. A. Dudley helped Fay find work as a life insurance salesman. Opal convinced Fay to write a \$31,000 policy for himself and \$10,000 for their housekeeper Beulah Walker.

On January 24, 1934, Fay's abandoned car was found on a road in Sand Springs. His body was on the ground, with a bullet in his chest and his rifle nearby. In his hat was a note about a letter he mailed to Opal. Fay's co-workers doubted he committed suicide and investigators wondered why a calm Opal was unwilling to open the letter or why his body was leaning over the shotgun instead of being knocked backwards by the blast.

In February, after an argument with Opal, Beulah ran outside and was hit by a car. Opal had previously asked her father to live with her after her husband's death but he died suddenly in September 1934. Opal, as beneficiary, collected on life insurance policies for her husband, father, and maid. In 1937, using the alias Meredith Fontane, she met Virginia Evans at a bookstore and Willetta Horner at a grocery store. They became friends and both moved in with Opal. When the Sophian apartment manager raised Opal's rent in 1938, because she was a difficult tenant, the women moved to a duplex at 10 East 21<sup>st</sup> Street. Opal, now calling herself Carolann Mary Smith, had Willetta sign the rental agreement as Janet Sherman.

Carolann had the male tenant in the other duplex evicted when she made Willetta claim he assaulted her and all three accused him of being a Peeping Tom. The Tulsa Police soon began investigating 'Meredith Fontane' for fraudulently applying for war ration books at nearby Lee Elementary School. Carolann not only lied about her name but also claimed eight people lived in her duplex. According to the neighborhood kids at the school, the names of her children she put on her application were really the names of her dogs.

Filled with witchcraft books, the place was dubbed Hex House. During the investigation Virginia and Willetta were found sleeping on orange crates without blankets in the cold basement while the house was stocked with expensive furniture, a \$250 silver set, expensive clothing, 18 pairs of new gloves, 26 hats, and 45 pairs of expensive shoes. The women freely worked outside the home, but inexplicably gave Smith all their monies, wearing only rags and no makeup, although Carolann had makeup galore. Carolann also swindled Evans' rich father out of \$17,000, claiming she employed a nurse who provided for his daughter's mental health services, even though Virginia was actually working.

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, Carolann was arrested after the women told police that Meredith Fontane was really Opal Mary Smith. In October, Opal was found guilty of federal charges of using the mail to defraud Evans' father and state charges of making false statements to obtain ration books for her dog Bon Bon. Opal served one year at McAlester prison, followed by three years' probation, and disappeared permanently soon after her release.

The Hex House was a favorite haunted site for young Tulsans to visit on Halloween for years until it was torn down in 1975, even though the rock foundation and the original front steps can still be seen. It has since been rebuilt into a popular Halloween attraction, and is still considered one of the fifteen Most Haunted Houses in America.