

'Lady in Blue' said to wander hotel's halls

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Palace Hotel Manager Gary Schweizer looks at a portrait of the hotel's "Lady in Blue." Photo by Jeff Chew/Peninsula Daily News

PORT TOWNSEND, Wash. -- The Palace Hotel may be the most haunted place on the North Olympic Peninsula.

Ask the hotel's manager, Gary Schweizer, for some spooky stories about the historic inn and he pulls out "The Ghost Files," a scrapbook of photos and letters about first-person paranormal run-ins that have taken place inside the hotel.

Most are with the "Lady in Blue."

"It does freak some people out," Schweizer said with a laugh as he stood in the hotel's lobby recently.

Atop the staircase is a large portrait of the Lady in Blue, a mournful, mysterious woman from decades ago whose legend paints her as having ties to a former brothel that operated at the hotel from 1925 to 1933.

The name, Miss Claire, appears on the door of Room 4 upstairs, which has been said to be haunted.

Miss Claire and the Lady in Blue could be one and the same, as the story goes.

The spirit of the Lady in Blue is believed to leave the portrait to walk the Palace halls in search of a lost lover.

She supposedly likes to haunt the second floor, especially Rooms 3 and 4.

Shaking beds, eerie moans and strange shadows are not unusual in those two rooms.

Several guests claim to have had conversations with the Lady in Blue.

Members of the Amateur Ghost Hunters Of Seattle Tacoma -- AGHOST -- held their third annual Ghost Hunters Conference in Port Townsend in 2005.

They visited the hotel and, by using a "talking board," similar to a Ouija board, said they talked to a spirit named Betty who died at the age of 39, and another spirit who said his name started with "F" but would give no more details.

All the talk of ghosts and spirits during the conference was nothing new to the staff at the Palace.

They've been keeping The Ghost Files since 1987.

The book now has more than 100 different cases.

Curious are welcome

Whether they consider the Palace to be spook central or just want to check it out for a stay, Schweizer says visitors are always welcome at the hotel at 1004 Water St.

They can walk around and peer into any room with the door still open. Schweizer and his staff are happy to answer questions.

When Room 4 has been rented, its a private room.

"Ten women came into the room to get it exorcized," Schweizer said. "I had to kick them out because the room had been rented."

The Capt. Henry L. Tibbals building, which houses the Palace, was built in 1889 and is the former site of the Town Tavern, which later moved to 639 Water St., today the home of Water Street Brewing.

The Tibbals building also has housed restaurants, a theater, a grocery store, a liquor store, even a flower shop.

The doors of the 16 rooms at the hotel, which once was known as the "The Palace of Sweets," bear the names of many of the prostitutes who once worked there.

'Ghost orbs'

The Ghost Files reveal photos with "ghost orbs," fuzzy, bubble-like objects believed to be those of the Palace spirits.

But it is the stories from former guests that captivate and amuse:

- "I have never been more scared in my life than while I was staying at your hotel," an Oct. 5, 2005, letter to Schweizer says.

The writer said that a ghost, perhaps the Lady in Blue, actually touched her and her husband.

- "She came to my door last night and tried to come in, though the lock was strong," a 1987 letter reads.

"Perhaps it was her grief that made her turn away. Even a ghost can shed tears of loneliness, and as I cautiously peered into the hallway, I caught a glimpse of those tears as she turned away."

- "Are there ghosts in Room 4? Does the image of two grown men sleeping with the lights on all night answer the question?" says a 1996 letter from Michael of New Brunswick, N.J.

- Other hotel guests recall dreaming about the Lady in Blue, awakening to strange noises in the night, hearing a cry or a groan, smelling perfume or feeling a cold draft from the hall.

Schweizer said one particular guest comes to the hotel each year, bringing with her an electromagnetic field device.

"She came in here and took all these pictures of everything," Schweizer said.

"I guess she's trying to find orbs."

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