

Historic Oakland sites are known to stir up a few ghost tales

The Historic Holly Hotel is a converted restaurant in northern Oakland County known nationally for its strange collection of ghosts, and hotel special events coordinator Steven Evans is not ashamed to admit it.

“Every server here has a story. Everybody sees something, heard something or had a guest tell them something,” Evans says.

He adds that visitors to the Holly Hotel reveal ghost stories just about every weekend.

“We had somebody at the comedy club (in the basement) that said somebody kicked their chair, but there was nobody behind them, so they got up and left.”

This hasn't frightened away business.

“Everyone loves to come here to the hotel,” he said. “I don't want to say you're guaranteed to find something, but every person I've encountered has found something in this hotel, whether it be an orb, or a voice, or seeing something, hearing something that shouldn't be there... I've heard a woman yelling my name, and I was the only one in the hotel.”

The Ghost Hunters of Southern Michigan – known as GHOSM – is just one of the local paranormal investigation groups that studied the Holly Hotel.

Composed of six core members, GHOSM has been offering its nonprofit services for 16 years.

“We like to go in without knowing anything,” founder Robin Lemkie says. “We try to ask them not to give us info.”

That way, she says, the investigators can formulate their own theories and see if it coincides with what the complainant has previously observed.

Call the Historic Holly Hotel at 248-634-5208 for more information or visit its website at www.hollyhotel.com.

Meadow Brook phantoms

John Dodge, the celebrated auto tycoon, once owned a farmhouse in Rochester Hills, on what is today Oakland University's Meadow Brook Estate. The property was a weekend retreat for the Dodge family, who spent many years visiting the home.

John Dodge died in 1920. His daughter, Anna Margaret, followed suit soon after, succumbing to measles. She was only 4 years old.

Some say the family's spirits haunt the John Dodge House, which serves as headquarters for Oakland University relations. Tales of strange happenings inside the old home continue to circulate throughout campus – footsteps, disembodied voices and the feeling of being watched.

Jill Dunphy, the former alumni relations director for OU, remembers her late nights at the office and the eeriness that accompanied the place.

One night she was alone in the Dodge House and talking with a friend on the phone, when she suddenly heard

somebody come on the line, accompanied by the sound of breathing. No one besides the two was on the phone.

Meadow Brook Hall hosts daily guided tours of the estate. Tickets may be purchased in the Meadow Brook Hall Museum Shop, and reservations are not required.

The Ghost of Cranbrook

Henry Scripps Booth, the youngest son of Cranbrook founder George Gough Booth, was known to ponder the metaphysical.

In 1963, he published a short book titled “Cranbrook Boasts a Ghost; or the Skeptic’s Tale.” It details the mysterious disappearance of a stonemason who allegedly fell to his death into the foundations of the Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills during its construction.

“Maybe he (the stonemason) knocked himself out and had been buried alive – beneath the hard, hard concrete. Maybe, maybe!” Booth wrote of the victim’s untimely fate.

As a result, the ghost of Cranbrook haunts the church today, and Booth alludes to it in other writings.

“Besides the boys’ school work, construction of St. Dunstan’s Chapel and the main walls of the church went slowly but steadily up. It was in this period that the Ghost of Cranbrook is supposed to have been sealed in the east wall,” he had written in the fall of 1927.

The book also references another oddity – on May 18, St. Dunstan’s Day Eve, the chapel is rumored to fill with a congregation of spirits.

Group tours of the Christ Church Cranbrook are offered by the church’s trained docents. Call 248-644-5210, ext. 26, to have one scheduled.