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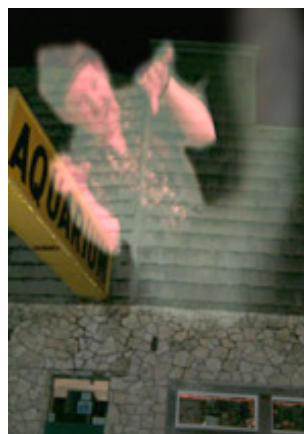
Oregon Travel Secrets: Tales of Ghosts on the Coast

By *Andre' Hagededt*

It's an unusual and hidden dimension to Oregon's coast. It's not something on the surface of this pristine and stunning area. Tales of the paranormal abound along this stretch of U.S. shoreline - and for good reason. It has a lot of moody weather and atmospheric vibes that lend themselves well to the birth of spooky stories.

No wonder the recent remake of "The Fog" is set in a fictional North Oregon Coast town. From flying pots and specters who've moved from one building to another in Seaside, the ghostly legends of a hotel in the Nehalem Bay, to the myriad of hauntings in ancient Astoria - there's plenty for the ghost-hunting tourist to have more than a little fun with.

SLEEPLESS IN SEASIDE




Tales of things creepy abound in Seaside - but they're hard to find. It's almost as if they've been swept under the carpet.


For almost 100 years, the old Hotel Seaside (later named The Seaside) was a grandiose, beautiful building that was a sort of centerpiece to [Seaside](#), at the Turnaround. So it's no surprise that place acquired tales of apparitions and otherworldly guests over the years. There were numerous spirits that purportedly haunted it.

These days, the Shilo Inn sits in that spot. But when the old hotel was torn down, the spooks


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moved to Girtle's Restaurant, just down the street on Broadway, according to owner Bob Girtle. He recounted numerous stories of otherworldly happenings in the restaurant, having seen them himself or coming from various employees who tell their own tales. They talk of seeing the mysterious shadows of feet walking behind the door of a closed-off area of the kitchen, visible from the small space between the floor and the door. This happens when it's not possible anyone else is in there, say Bob and his crew. They don't even check that room anymore when they see the shadows.

Then there is the notorious flying coffee pot in the galley area between the kitchen and the main dining room. Bob and others on his staff have experienced this more than once. Sometimes it moves a bit, others it literally flies across the hallway.

Bob said he inherited some employees of the old Seaside back in the 80's, and at least one said they saw some of the same ghosts.

John Sowa, owner of the New Orleans-style eatery Lil' Bayou, also related tales of moving objects in the kitchen and a strange sense of someone being near him while alone in his office. Kitchen utensils are found in different places than employees have left them, or an object suddenly falls off a hook or a shelf.

Lil' Bayou lies in the historic Gilbert District of Seaside, which is filled with old buildings, almost all with upstairs areas that are often unused. The charming, atmospheric area has gone through a rebirth in recent years, and often there are whispers of ghosts coinciding with many of the renewed buildings.

The Seaside Aquarium may have a closet containing something - or rather, an upstairs that could be haunted. When the building was a natatorium back about 80 years ago, there were apartments at the top floor. That area isn't used much at all now, but manager Keith Chandler says he's heard whispers over the years the top floor is haunted. Various stories have been handed down through the generations about noises coming from there.

EERIE AND NOT-SO-EERIE ON THE BAY




Manzanita, which caps the north end of the [Nehalem Bay](#), is shrouded in mists and mystery, with Neahkahnie Mountain looming overhead and legends of a galleon and its buried treasures. Some versions of that tale contain atrocities, like purportedly burying their African slaves alive with the treasure to keep the natives away.


On its beaches, there are mysterious piles of rocks that have appeared over the years, apparently overnight. Sometimes they appear as single piles or stacks. No one has ever figured out who is responsible, creating speculation of an otherworldly artist.

In nearby [Wheeler](#), facing the Nehalem Bay, Old Wheeler Hotel owner Winston Laszlo says he's encountered several things in that old building he couldn't really explain. Sometimes, he said, he believes he sees someone in the corner of his eye, only to discover there's no one there.


Once, Winston was looking in a mirror in the hotel's public area and saw the reflection of a man sitting in a chair behind him. Winston says he turned




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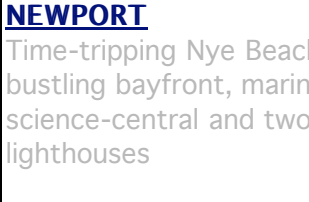
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around to look at the man, whom he didn't recognize as a guest, and there was no one there.

A pair of ghost hunters even came to the visit the place and took photos of what they believed could be "spirit orbs" just outside the basement area. Winston still has copies of these.



Winston and wife Maranne Doyle-Laszlo say the entire building seemed to be against them during the process of remodeling the ragged old construct into the first-rate hotel it is now. They had a nagging feeling a presence seemed to arrange one disaster and setback after another, such as when a window blew out in a storm. Then, one day, they say the building seemed to accept them, and reconstruction proceeded smoothly thereafter.

(www.oldwheelerhotel.com. 877-653-4683.)

In an email just before her visit, ghost hunter Martina DeLude told Winston that made sense. "Ghosts that haunt residential and business locations become very threatened when someone starts changing things that they are accustomed to. Some spirits actually become incensed when furniture is moved around. Just like the living, most spirits do not like change. Possibly, as soon as they realized that it was once again going to become a hotel - perhaps something they may remember - they decided to help you along instead of stifling your efforts." There's more on their investigation of the Old Wheeler Hotel at

<http://www.nwpprs.com/Investigations/Places02/OldWheeler.html>.

In other tales, Wheeler Antiques owner Garry Gitzen says a Wheeler woman, descended from local tribes, actually burned down her own house in recent years because disturbing spirits haunted it. She did this in lieu of tearing the thing down, never rebuilding it, with rumors floating about that Native American children had died in a fire in that spot in ancient times.

Not all is creepy here. According to Winston and Garry, there is a host of well-meaning spirits there known as the "Good Spirits of Wheeler," and Ekahni Books owner Peg Miller says the place is a sort of "spiritual vortex lite." They all point to something they call a "Wheeler Moment," where serendipity seems to suddenly rear its head. Locals talk of numerous circumstances where pleasant, happy coincidences popped up, assisting folks in some way. They all note various incidents where someone is discussing wanting to do something, and someone or some opportunity arises that helps things along - like the time the Garry and Winston were talking about creating a film festival, and they discovered a documentary filmmaker was staying in town.

Read more on Wheeler Moments here:

http://www.beachconnection.net/vtour_nbay32.htm

LINCOLN CITY SPOOKS



Several spooky stories inhabit this Central Coast town. The North Lincoln Fire Station is said to have an apparition lounging in the recreation



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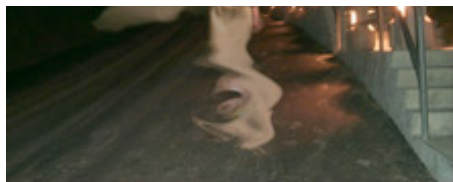
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area. Visitors Bureau official Jennifer Sears vouches for that one, saying she's encountered something there she couldn't explain.

At the beautiful Wildflower Grill, on the north end of town, some have talked about encountering a helpful geist named Matilda, who liked to putter around the restaurant. At one point, the place was supposedly "cleaned" of any spirits by a group of ghostbuster-types. But for a while, she would pull a prank or two, knock objects around the kitchen, and had been known to conduct herself in a politically incorrect manner by occasionally patting someone on the behind.

On Siletz Bay, numerous locals have talked about seeing a ghost ship appear and then



disappear over the years. This one has some added potency because there have been several shipwrecks there before the 20th century. The skeleton of one such wreckage was visible there until the 80's (a scientific crew went in search of that one earlier this year).

There's actually a videotape sold by the [Lincoln City](#) Visitors Center that features a group of paranormal investigators looking into the angry ghost that wanders upstairs at Depoe Bay's The Spouting Horn restaurant. This one gets rather chilling in some spots. At one point, the group finds out there was once a doorway in the spot where, according to employees, the spook keeps walking through the wall. The video gets really freaky when the two female hunters tell their male colleague to be absolutely still, as the ghost is standing next to him and extremely aggravated.

OREGON'S COASTAL X FILES

It's not all spooks and goblins on the beach. There are a few tales of UFO's beingspotted in Astoria and in the coast range around Corvallis and Albany, close to Marys Peak.



Oregon may just have its own Area 51 in the Van Duzer Corridor, just outside Lincoln City. Strange murmurings surround talk of lights in the sky or people appearing in the roadway and then disappearing.

One rumor has a pair driving through the winding, twisting roadway and feeling like their car was controlled by some unseen force. Another tale, according to Portlander Jason Frank, has two Seattle friends telling him they spotted what looked like a secret military base while hiking in those woods.

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There have also been some whispers by locals that a forest road was cut off by the government in the 70's, fueling some of the secret base talk. There actually is a government testing facility near Cascade Head that's locked off to the public.

SPOOKY LIGHTHOUSES

[The Heceta Head Lighthouse, north of Florence](#), is the subject of some truly chilling tales. This yarn has shades of the old "Ghost and Mrs. Muir" TV series, with families who've run the B&B at the keeper's quarters saying the lady phantom is like a member of the family.

Tales abound of wispy figures being seen or things being inexplicably moved. And there are some decidedly non-crackpot witnesses. Famed Oregon photographer Steve Terrill, whose photos grace dozens of books and calendars, gladly speaks about his encounter.

Terrill says he and photographer friend Steve Gaddis caught a glimpse of something in the shape of a woman in the attic of the keeper's quarters while on a shoot.

"We both saw it," Terrill says. "You could just barely make out the outline. And then it just disappeared. Steve got spooked and said, 'No, I don't want to think about it.' And later on, when we found out it was the attic we were looking at, I realized it was right above the room he was staying in."



Terrill said that Gaddis recoiled at that news. Later, Gaddis found it thoroughly dreadful when the pair discovered there was no one home during their sighting.

[Newport's Yaquina Head Lighthouse](#) was, for many years, the center of a tale about a lighthouse keeper named Higgins who died on the spiral stairway, then haunted the place. Purportedly, his colleague was scared to enter the tower at night because of his ectoplasmic former coworker.

That one was recently ghostbusted when a letter was sent to the curators of the lighthouse by a descendant of Mr. Higgins, saying he actually died in Portland in the 30's.

The tale of the teen ghostess at [Yaquina Bay Lighthouse](#) is so very Scooby Doo, where the figure of the young woman is supposedly seen on the beach occasionally. The legend came from a fictional story published in the local newspaper in the early part of the 20th century, and has somehow lingered, sometimes getting confused as an actual legend and not a work of short fiction.

ASTORIA - OR GHOSTORIA?

At the very tip of Oregon, Astoria is full of major ghost stories of one sort or another. That's no surprise, considering it's the oldest settlement west of the Mississippi.

The Liberty Theater is widely regarded as haunted. It was once a haven for the likes of Duke Ellington, Jack Benny, Guy Lombardo and supposedly even gangster Al Capone. Purportedly, it's also occupied by someone named Paul. One employee was quoted as saying that Paul is "quite handsome," giving him the nickname Handsome Paul. He apparently wears a "white tuxedo and a panama hat," according to the Clatsop County Historical Society.



Cast and crews over the years have talked about spotting him. While mostly just an apparition, he's been known to slam doors and make other unruly noises. Other tales from the theater include objects gliding through the air, knobs unscrewing themselves from appliances and utilities, as well as two or three other inhabitants from beyond.

Also famous for being haunted is the firehouse there, plus the town has a brutal history of men being "shanghaied" in the early part of the century.

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