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Rumors persist about Hoquiam museum

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Ghost hunters want to look for "paranormal phenomena" in the Polson Museum, but the curator says that if things are going bump in the night, it's just him fumbling for a light switch.

Rumors of spirits haunting the Hoquiam mansion have persisted for decades, yet John Larson scoffs at the specter of spooks. He doesn't believe in ghosts.

However, if you want to pay the price of admission, he won't say "Boo." You can sniff around to your heart's content; you just can't stay overnight, hoping for a burst of ectoplasm, an encounter with a "lady in white" or a long-dead child clutching a dolly in the old nursery.



DAILY WORLD / [KEVIN HONG](#) The Polson Museum isn't haunted, says John Larson, curator of the former Hoquiam mansion, but that hasn't squelched the rumors about a "lady in white." Amateur ghost hunters and Web sites specializing in haunted places point to the Polson as fertile ground. There's also been talk of ghosts "in the nursery area."

"I do get a lot of people asking if this house is haunted, and my answer is 'No,'" Larson says. "There's a pretty big howl coming from the front door, but I've been here 10 years and I've never seen a ghost."

In July, a producer from the Sci-Fi television series "Ghost Hunters" inquired about hauntings. And a Raymond ghost hunter from the Advanced Ghost Hunters of Seattle-Tacoma asked to spend the night at the museum with a team of ghost hunting experts.

Larson says he's also had several people "who obviously look like they could be ghost hunters" visit the museum on Riverside Avenue looking for signs of the supernatural.

Strange voices

Joey Greenfield of Raymond says, "I've had a few people tell me they thought they heard voices outside around the building and such — nothing really big." He still really wants to investigate the situation.

Greenfield believes in ghosts and says he has evidence on film. Once, when his dog was barking at something in his Raymond home, he took a photo. Sure enough, a white spot, which he says is

ectoplasm, shows up in the picture.

He has another photo of something he purports to be a ghost at the Harvard Exit Theatre in Seattle. (There's a black shadow in the window's reflection.) He even once investigated Kurt Cobain's childhood home in Montesano. "We didn't get anything, but people sure like to know about that investigation," Greenfield said.

The notion that Kurt's ghost is in his old room, working on the chords to "Come as You Are" is certainly intriguing.

Listed on Web site

The Polson Museum is listed on some Web sites featuring haunted places around the nation. Shadowlands.net includes a one-line listing for the Polson Museum, telling of "a story of a lady in white that is in this place and a ghost of a child in the nursery area."

There is a nursery, and two girls were raised in the home, but Larson can't figure out why the ghost of a child would be at the home — even hypothetically if he believed in ghosts, which he doesn't.

"There were no murders in the nursery," Larson says. "No one ever died in the house. I guarantee that."

Larson emphasizes that he's turned down all of the requests from people who want to spend the night at the museum or do in-depth investigations. But if people want to come by and pay admission, he leaves them alone to wander.

"We're a serious museum with a serious message," Larson said. "I can't lie about this. I don't have any information about ghosts."

Erected in 1924, the 6,500-square-foot mansion featured 26 rooms, six bathrooms and four fireplaces.

It was a wedding present to Arnold Polson, heir to the Polson Logging Co. fortune, from his bachelor uncle.

"The Polsons lived in the mansion to 1965, when they left their Hoquiam home for Seattle," according to the Polson Museum's Web site. "Widowed in 1968, Mrs. Polson donated the property to the city in 1976. It has been the Polson Museum ever since."

Children long gone

The Polsons had two children — Jackie and Shirley — who were both raised in the home. Both have long since died, Larson said.

Technically, there are two rooms that could be construed as nurseries.

Walking into the first nursery — a metal plate on the outside is marked "Private" — Larson notes that there isn't anything special about it. The room has been closed off for the last four years as the museum catalogues its vintage doll collection. Larson said he hopes to have the nursery opened soon.

"There's nothing spooky here," Larson said. "I mean, come on. ..."

He points at four mannequins dressed in white standing in a closet behind the door wearing vintage clothing.

"Whoever made the ghost claim probably saw these children in the corner," Larson said. "They're all dressed in white, so there's your answer. Mannequins in children's clothing."

The room next door is adjacent to the elder Polsons' large bedroom — which is where the museum's large model train set now sits. Larson figures this other room may have been a nursery at some point since it's so close to the master bedroom, but he doesn't have any pictures to back up the claim.

A photo on the wall from the 1940s shows that the room was, at one time, a second bedroom.

"I won't say there are or aren't ghosts, but there are rumors that there are ghosts," said Polson Museum volunteer Scott Lucas.

"I have heard people ask about a ghost upstairs ... and I consistently tell them 'no,' but they keep asking."

Who ya gonna call?

In March, ghost hunter Greenfield e-mailed Larson asking for permission to bring a team from the Advanced Ghost Hunters of Seattle-Tacoma to spend a night at the museum.

Greenfield said his group would conduct the investigation for free.

"Our group is very professional and you may have seen it on several television shows, such as "Scariest Places On Earth — an A&E documentary about a haunted prison in Pennsylvania — and 'Haunted America' aboard the U.S.S Hornet in San Fransisco," Greenfield wrote in a pitch to Larson. "We also transmit our active investigations via the world wide web so that others who are interested in the paranormal can watch as we investigate locations.

"Where permitted, we spend the entire night at the location. Which is one of my favorite things to do. I have spent the night aboard the U.S.S Hornet several times and it was amazing. We gathered several proof positive photos from the location as well as many E.V.P (electronic voice phenomena) recordings."

Larson said he never responded. He's hoping the ghost hunters just go away.

"Instead of people talking about ghosts, I'd much rather refute a rumor out there that we've sold out of raffle tickets for our red car," Larson said, referring to the snazzy Mazda roadster the museum is auctioning as a fundraiser.

"We haven't. Tickets are still available. Now can we stop talking about ghosts?"

On the Net:

www.ghost.us/

www.polsonmuseum.org/

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