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Victorian-era house has an extra guest

A ghostly tenant is said to stay on, flirting with the modern world

BY KRISTINE KISKY

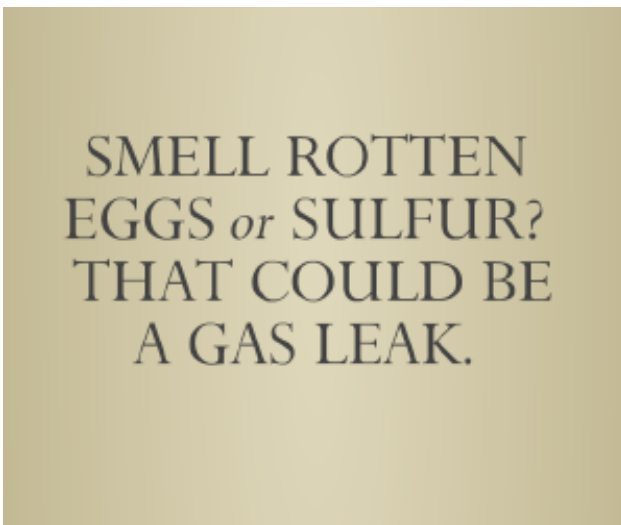
The Portland Tribune, May 6, 2003

The distinctive John Palmer House has been mentioned in many newspapers, magazines and books. However, an interior presence also has garnered some attention, including a passage in Jefferson Davis' "Ghosts, Critters & Sacred Places of Washington and Oregon II."

While researching the book a few years ago, Davis came across accounts of a possible presence at Portland's Palmer House. He spoke briefly with Mary Sauter, who owned the home with her husband, Richard, for more than 30 years. Davis says Mary Sauter confirmed, "Yes, we've got a ghost; no, it's not a lie."

"When we were there, we suspected there was something going on," Richard Sauter says. "How we got onto the fact was we had a guest staying with us when we were running the bed-and-breakfast. É She had this clairvoyant-type thing."

One morning the guest informed the Sauters, "There's a lady in your attic É surrounded by theater trunks, and she wears a wide-brimmed hat." Immediately, the Sauters thought of Lotta Hoch, who lived in the house from the 1010s to the 1020s



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from the 1910s to the 1930s.

“She was an opera singer in Europe and had been many times on stage,” so being surrounded by costume trunks was likely familiar to her, Richard reasoned. Neighbors previously had told the Sauters that Lotta used to work in the Palmer House yard, always wearing a dress and a wide-brimmed hat.

The guest assured the Sauters that the presence wasn’t harmful.

“She said she was here to oversee what we’re doing, and she likes what we’re doing,” Richard says.

“Then, one time we had a neurosurgeon stay with us. He was a gifted pianist, as well,” he continues. The Sauters were in the kitchen enjoying a concerto their guest was playing when the music suddenly stopped.

The surgeon reportedly came to the kitchen and declared: “I’m a scientist. I don’t believe in supernatural things.” That said, he told the couple, “I was playing that piece, and I felt somebody standing behind me.” The doctor dismissed the presence and continued playing until he felt someone touch his leg.

“I thought, ‘Woo, Lotta’s getting kind of racy in the afterlife,’ ” Richard says.

From time to time, other strange things happened. “I was in the kitchen,” Richard says, “and the telephone rang. I picked it up, and there was nobody there. It rang several times.” Each time, the caller was unresponsive. Later, the Sauters went down to the basement office.

“Someone had taken the phone off the hook, stretched it clear across the desk and laid it down,” he says.

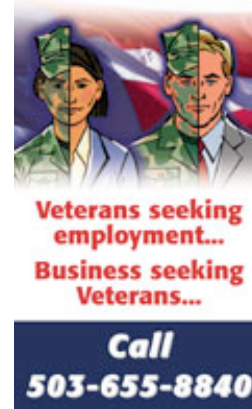
The prankster went undiscovered: “We went through everything. There was nobody there.”

Several years ago, KATU (2) came to film the home for a Halloween special. “When they were showing the segment (live), they lost all the power to the television station,” Richard recalls, teasingly surmising that the spirit was camera-shy.

The home’s current owner and resident, Roger Goldingay, says he has yet to see or hear any evidence of the ghost of Lotta or anyone else.



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