

BEAVERTON VALLEYTIMES

A haunted haunted house

Fake and real ghosts scare visitors of The 13th Door Haunted House in Tigard

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Those of you considering visiting the 13th Door Haunted House because you think it's just another cheesy Halloween attraction may want to think again.

Why?

Because it's really haunted.

At least that's what Todd and Martina Baker of the Pacific Paranormal Research Society believe.

"There is so much stuff ... this is one of the most haunted places in the area," Martina said. "We could write a book about this place. You've got a haunted house that's haunted."

Her husband seconded that.

"There are four or five ghosts that we know of for sure," Todd said.

These ghosts include a little girl, a woman who committed suicide while on drugs, an older man and a black cat.

Martina said visitors of the old Regal theater near Washington Square see the girl a lot, and she is most often described as 9 or 10 years old, with brown hair in pigtails and wearing a pioneer-era dress. Sometimes people hear music box-type melodies when they see her, and she is often seen playing with the cat.

A teenager who went through the house when it first opened for the year saw the girl but thought she was just one of the actors. Martina said he remarked to her how cool the little girl was, and he wondered how they made her so ghost-like; even though she knew there were no actors who fit that description, Martina didn't have the heart to tell the teen that he had actually seen a ghost.

"She loves to haunt, apparently," Todd said. "We don't know how she got here."

The ghost of the older man, whom they call Frank, likes to haunt the theater one area. Martina said none of the actors will stay in that area alone for more than 30 minutes because Frank scares them so much. He also dislikes women, and back when the building was still a movie theater, a female employee was shoved down the stairs and broke her leg.

Martina said she isn't afraid to be in the building, which, along with the nearby T.G.I. Friday's and Bank of America, is set to be torn down at the end of the year, but some areas of it make her a little uneasy.

"... I don't like being in theater one," she said. "It's a little unnerving sometimes."



JONATHAN HOUSE / THE TIMES
Todd and Martina Baker didn't let the paranormal activity at The 13th Door stop them from showing visitors a frighteningly good time during Saturday's ghost tours.

With this information at the front of my mind, I decided to swallow my fear and brave the 15,000-square-foot building that loomed before me. As I was ushered to the front of the line of eager visitors, I kept asking myself what I was doing there. Why didn't I do a Halloween article on a pumpkin patch or a costume shop? There are plenty of other ways to celebrate the holiday that don't involve me getting scared half to death. As I was frantically trying to figure out a way to sneak out of line without anyone noticing, the gate in front of me was opened up and I heard the two words that struck absolute fear in my heart: "Go ahead."

After a moment's hesitation, I grabbed the hands of my equally nervous friends and ran. And ran. And ran some more. We never really stopped running (or screaming) until we met up with a group of people who had entered the building way before us. After a couple minutes of slowly walking through the haunted house and being bombarded by actors screaming and jumping out of hiding places, the group in front offered to let us go ahead of them and continue our sprint through the building. For some reason we said yes, and once again we were off like Forrest Gump, ducking, dodging and just praying we wouldn't see anything that would scar us for life.

When we finally reached the gift shop that marked the end of the haunted house, Todd and Martina were amazed that we had arrived so soon. Apparently it's supposed to take at least 20 minutes to get through the attraction, but we ran so fast that we had made it out in 10 (take that, ghosts!). After I caught my breath and stopped my heart from beating out of my chest, the Bakers filled me in a little more on some of the weird things that had happened inside the old theater building. These include doors being opened and closed by themselves, items being moved from place to place and people being pushed around.

Martina said she was working in the gift shop recently and heard a baby crying, but when she called one of the other workers to tell them the baby sounded way too young to be going through the haunted house, she learned that nobody had taken a baby in. Todd said one evening when it was just he and Martina, they heard a lot of running, doors slamming and someone whistling inside the other parts of the theater. That same night he had to go upstairs to turn all the lights off, and when he was coming back down in the dark he could feel all the ghosts following him and just toying with him.

"It's a little unnerving, not so much scary, just unnerving to know they're messing with us," he said. "I don't know if they're ready to leave at this point."

Since the Bakers have spent a lot of time around ghosts, it should come as no surprise that all the weird occurrences at the 13th Door don't frighten them. Visit their Web site www.NWPPRS.com and it's clear that they take their jobs as paranormal investigators seriously: With five years experience and more than 100 investigations under their belts, the Wilsonville couple is quite accomplished in the area of paranormal activities. But that doesn't mean they don't get strange looks from people the first time they tell them what they do in their spare time.

"We're really cool on Halloween, but we're really weird the rest of the year," Todd said.

The two do investigations of businesses and private residences all over the area, and they said every request made for an investigation will be fulfilled. It usually takes close to two hours for them to completely get through the place in question, and they use a number of different types of equipment to check for cold spots and detect kinetic energy.

They also use a video camera with night vision and take close to 100 pictures, looking for orbs and other out-of-ordinary things. Todd said one of the things they do during an investigation is try to rule out any rational explanation of the things people are experiencing, taking into account the natural settling of buildings, noisy appliances and the psychological state of the person who requested their expertise.

"We try to take some of the scariness out of it," he said.

The couple said through the years they have stayed overnight a few times inside the old theater, and

every time they do, something weird happens. One time when another paranormal group from Seattle stayed the night in the building with them, the ghosts got so active that, at 2 a.m., the other group packed up and left.

Todd and Martina also lead ghost tours during weekend afternoons in October while the building is empty, and Martina said a lot of unexplainable things happen during the 15- to 20-minute jaunts. Last year was the first year they offered the tours, and an entry on their Web site reported some of the things people experienced: "Tons of women on our tours got strands of their hair pulled, and heard loud stomping or walking behind them. Quite a few of the men were tapped on the shoulder or pushed, as if someone wanted to move them out of the way. And many, many of our guests reported odd smells, darting shadows, and voices or loud whispers coming from the other theaters."

This year Martina said the ghosts were particularly "frisky" during a Sunday afternoon tour, making it so cameras didn't work inside the theater but worked fine once people got outside.

Though they don't guarantee supernatural activity during the tours, the Bakers said there is a very good chance of something happening because of the theater's activity level, which will remain high even after the building is renovated and possibly becomes a new place of business. They both said they are saddened that the old theater is going to be torn down, making this the last year the haunted house will be in operation.

"It's just too bad it's not going to be here anymore," Todd said.

Martina agreed.

"We're really sorry it's being torn down," she said.

Whether or not you believe that the old theater really is haunted, it is still worth stopping by and taking one last look-see. At the very least, you will meet some cool people, and maybe, just maybe, you will get really freaked out. Because even though I didn't see any ghosts during my run through the 13th Door, I still spent the next week sleeping with the lights on... and the radio on... and the television on.

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