

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCERhttp://seattlepi.nwsource.com/getaways/339494_shorttrips15.html**Short Trips: History is served with a few chills in Auburn***Last updated November 14, 2007 11:33 a.m. PT***By GORDY HOLT**
P-I REPORTER

There may or may not be a Main Street ghost still haunting old Slaughter, the pioneer settlement that eventually became Auburn.

But according to a group of Auburn ghostbusters, there are some strange goings-on at Neely Mansion, the 113-year-old Victorian house that looms over a field east of town.

David Vacknitz, co-founder with his wife, Regan, of the Auburn Paranormal Activities Research Team (APART), tells -- in all seriousness -- this story about a recent visit to where the ghost of a child is supposed to linger.

"Upstairs in a kid's bedroom is a toy they have hanging on a door," he said. "When we investigated, it started swinging. We tried to locate a draft or something that might have made it swing, but couldn't, and there were no trains going by. But all of a sudden it just started swinging, back and forth."

Vacknitz said his wife tried to talk to whatever appeared to be moving it, "but when she asked if it would move it some more, the swinging stopped. It didn't, like, just slow down. It stopped. Instantly."

His conclusion? Woooooo-eeeeee!

The toy in question is one of those wooden monkeys that climb a pair of strings when one string is yanked, and then the other. With the monkey all the way down on its strings as it was the other day -- it was about 11 a.m. on Oct. 31 -- it was swinging slightly when P-I photographer Gilbert Arias and I walked into the room. We were led up the stairs by Neely Mansion Association president Pat Hallowell and her sidekick, Linda Stephens.

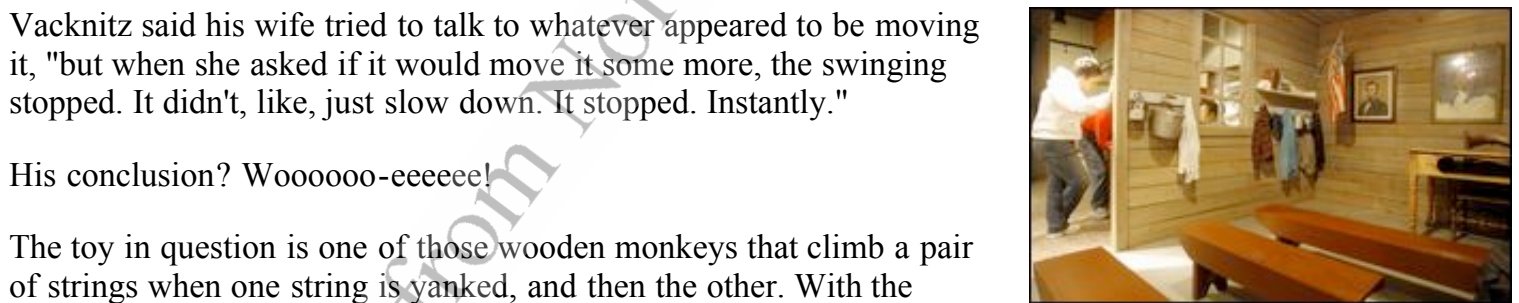
Hallowell and Stephens, but particularly Hallowell, have spent countless hours repairing and polishing the place since 1983, when their group acquired it from another that had given up on the challenge. With financial help from the city of Auburn, the first group had managed to shore up walls and add a new



+ zoom

Gilbert W. Arias / P-I

Neely Mansion Association president Pat Hallowell has spent countless hours repairing and polishing the house since 1983.



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Gilbert W. Arias / P-I

Visitors check out the one-room schoolhouse exhibit at the White River Valley Museum.

foundation, but the lath-and-plaster walls were still mostly lath, and much of the woodwork was missing, as were the doors and door casings.

What kept the restoration dream alive, however, was the vision of all this Victorian handiwork preserved, and there was plenty yet to save -- the gingerbread, the balls-and-dowels, and the spindle pieces all turned by hand and still intact but needing paint and loving care.

And so, Hallowell said, "this house was worth saving."

To see what this tax-deductible group has done over the years, you need to visit. Between now and April, you can do that only by calling Hallowell for a reservation. (253-833-2116). But when the weather warms from April through September, drop-in visits are encouraged on Saturdays from 1 to 4 p.m.

(The place also is available year-round for private events, and on Dec. 1 a special Farmhouse Christmas celebration in Victorian style will be held for the public over four one-hour sessions beginning at 1 p.m. (\$15 with a reservation).

Now, about this woوو-eeeeee business.

Stephens said she was the one who unlocked the mansion for Vacknitz and his 'busters. When the monkeyshines commenced, however, she was downstairs, where the group had asked her to stay, and has never been convinced that spirits were afoot that night.

However, when Hallowell suggested that the old house is wobbly enough to set almost anything to swinging, Stephens was quick to protest: "Oh, now don't take all the romance out of it."

For anyone interested in White River Valley history, the Neely Mansion serves to introduce not just the Neelys as valley settlers but their European equivalents as well -- and others -- the Fukudas for example, who came from the opposite direction, from Asia.

As Hallowell and Stephens tell their story, the Fukudas ran a highly successful dairy outfit on Neely land until the Wall Street crash of 1929 obliterated the market for their produce.

A 1926 panoramic photo of the enterprise -- showing the family in a pasture with their cows and equipment, and with the two white guys who did their milking -- hangs over one of the fireplaces.

The Fukudas made a go of it, however, despite the state constitution, which contained a clause prohibiting Asians from becoming citizens, and, by inference as non-citizens, from owning land. The inference would be codified in 1921 when Washington followed California in passing an alien land act that banned first-generation Asian ownership. (Washington voters would repeal the act in 1966, but only after three failures.)

To expand your view of this fertile valley and help connect more dots, pay a visit to the White River Valley Museum.

You'll find it tucked into a building at the corner of Ninth Street Southeast and H Street Southeast, behind the Auburn Senior Center in Les Grove Park.



zoom

Gilbert W. Arias / P-I

A high school diploma and other artifacts are on display in the schoolhouse exhibit.

As it happens, on exhibit until Jan. 21 is the little-known story of the Military Intelligence Service, a World War II organization staffed mostly by Japanese-Americans whose language skills were employed against Imperial Japan in postwar Japan during the occupation. The story is told in displays, photos, documents and recordings as well as in appearances by Seattle-area veterans of the MIS, and their families. Find the details at goto.seattlepi.com/r1088.

The museum's sweep ranges from the earliest days of European and Asian settlement to include that nasty business of sending non-alien residents to special reservations under military guard -- and to the 1855 armed dustup that occurred between the settlers and those being displaced.

Among the killed-in-action was an army lieutenant, William H. Slaughter, in whose honor this community was named initially.

Also told about the dustup is the story of Wilecthid, a Native American called "Indian Tom" by the white settlers, who swept two white children away from the skirmish to safety in Seattle.

From its carefully presented dugout-canoe display through an early 20th-century Auburn streetscape to a Japanese family farmhouse complete with Buddhist altar, the White River Valley Museum keeps its focus tightly fixed to White River life, and while they're at it gives Seattle's Museum of History and Industry a solid run for its money.

You will be impressed, especially on Wednesdays when admission is free.

IF YOU GO

White River Valley Museum -- 918 H St. S.E.; 253-288-7433. Hours: Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. Entrance: \$2, \$1 youth and seniors; free on Wednesdays. wrvmuseum.org

Neely Mansion Just off state Route 18 at the Auburn-Black Diamond Road exit. Dec. 1 Farmhouse Christmas celebration (four sessions, 1, 2, 3 and 4 p.m.); \$15 per person, reservations required (253-833-2116). Open to drop-in public April through September only, Saturdays, 1-4 p.m.; otherwise by appointment as volunteers are available. neelymansion.org

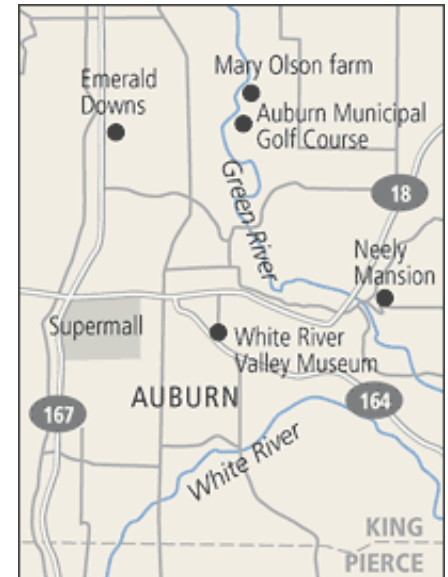
Mary Olson Farm -- 28728 Green River Road N.E. A national historic site and the most-intact 1880s family farm left in King County, under restoration by White River Historical Society. 253-288-7433; goto.seattlepi.com/r1079

Auburn Paranormal Activities Research Team -- apartofwa.com

ALSO:

Soos Creek Fish Hatchery -- 13030 Auburn-Black Diamond Road; 253-833-2805. Operating continuously for 106 years.

Comstock's Bindery & Bookshop -- 257 E. Main St.; 253-939-8770. Browse for hours.



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White River Amphitheater -- 40601 Auburn-Enumclaw Road; 360-825-6200; whiteriverconcerts.com

Muckleshoot Casino -- 2402 Auburn Way S., Auburn, 253-804-4944; muckleshootcasino.com

Supermall -- 1101 Supermall Way, Auburn; 800-729-8258; supermall.com (directions under "information")

Emerald Downs -- 2300 Emerald Downs Drive, Auburn; 888-931-8400; www.emeralddowns.com (driving directions under "General Info")

Pacific Raceways -- 31001 144th Ave. S.E., Kent; 253-639-5927; pacificraceways.com (at bottom of the page, click on "Website Map" to access "directions")

Game Farm Park -- 3030 R St. S.E. Sports complex, walking trail and open space in 160 acres, operated by City of Auburn under an agreement with the State Parks.

GOLF:

Auburn Golf Course -- 18 holes; 29630 Green River Road S.E., 253-833-2350;

goto.seattlepi.com/r1078 ("Driving Directions" in left column)

Washington National Golf Club -- 18 holes; 14330 S.E. Husky Way, 253-333-5000;

washingtongolfclub.com.

Jade Greens -- Nine holes; 18330 S.E. Lake Holm Road; 253-931-8562 **White River Valley Museum** -- 918 H St. S.E.; 253-288-7433. Hours: Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. Entrance: \$2, \$1 youth and seniors; free on Wednesdays. wrvmuseum.org

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