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Ghost tour keeps alive the spirit of oral tradition**Walking and talking in Pike Place Market**

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SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

Mercedes Yaeger says ghosts haunt Pike Place Market.

Or so the stories go.

She was passing some of the stories on the other day during one of the ghost tours she gives by request at the Market.

There is the man in the tuxedo who she says is seen in the window of the Market's atrium. He stands at what used to be the office of the man who put the rows of light bulbs in the Market's ceilings to look like a vaudevillian theater. "He's looking over the Market still," Yaeger says, and continues to the scene of the next ghost sighting.

Later, she and a tourist from Portland named David Schargel were in front of the Starlite, one of those swanky new bars popping up downtown. But even as downtown changes, the ghosts remain.

Yaeger, 33, said she likes all the new life the changes are bringing. "I remember downtown in the '80s with all the closed businesses," she said. In other words, when downtown was a ghost town.

But there are stories to be told, she said of the people downtown who've passed through ... and on. If not for the ghosts, who'd recall the Starlite's past, or notice the porcelain tiles once part of a mortuary that are outside the front door?

Her father, Michael Yaeger, and Sheila Lyon, who owns the Market Magic Shop, had been running the ghost tours for 30 years, telling those stories.

Mercedes, an actress who was also part of a team that won an Emmy nomination for the KCTS documentary "The Perilous Fight: America's World War II in Color," took on the tour last year.

It doesn't really matter if you believe in the ghosts, she said, only that you hear the stories.

"This is really about keeping that oral history going," she said.

"I hope that a hundred years from now there will be people telling about the people and the personalities of the people who are here now."

At the Starlite, she said, the owner of one of the restaurants that had been in the space was up on a ladder changing a light bulb one time. "He looked down and there was this procession of people of all ethnicities and manners of dress walking by," Yaeger said.



zoom

Karen Ducey / P-I

Mercedes Yaeger of Market Ghost Tours says ghosts have been seen in the Market Theater in Post Alley behind her. Then there's the Starlite bar in the building that held Seattle's first mortuary. One of the co-owners says, "There's always ghost hunters down in the basement taking readings."

Inside, co-owner Steve Harris said he's never noticed anything unusual to point to the fact the building had been Seattle's first mortuary. That is, except, "there's always ghost hunters down in the basement taking readings," he said.

Who knows, Yaeger said, what stories the ghosts might tell. They might be the souls of the bodies that had been taken there.

Or, she said, they might be the souls of those left behind in Seattle's great migration of the dead.

About a block from the Starlite, where the Josephium apartment building now stands, was the city's first cemetery. She told a story verified by the historical organization, HistoryLink.org.

Seattle's settlers had been buried at what's now Second Avenue and Stewart Street, beginning in 1853. But in the early 1870s, many of the bodies were moved to the city's new municipal cemetery at Denny Way and Dexter Avenue. When the city built Denny Park there a few years later, the bodies were moved again to Washelli Cemetery on Capitol Hill. But then the city built Volunteer Park there, and the bodies were moved yet again, just north to Lake View Cemetery, where they've been ever since.

But some of the bodies never left Second Avenue. According to HistoryLink.org, an 1898 article in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer quoted settler Arthur Denny as recalling many of the settlers' graves had been neglected. At the time of the move from Second Avenue, some of the bodies could not be found.

The article said of Denny, "He expected that those (bodies) would still be there."

WANT TO GO?

The ghost tours are offered Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 6 p.m. and on Sundays at 9 a.m. The cost is \$10. To sign up, call 206-322-1218. For more information, go to marketghost.com/

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