

SAN  
Diego

## HALLOWEEN HAUNTS FOR CHILL-SEEKING TOURISTS

By BEKAH WRIGHT  
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A cold sweat woke me at 1:51 a.m. as I slept soundly in Room 309 of the Horton Grand Hotel. I'd booked the room to see if I'd learn anything about Roger Whitaker — considered to be the room's

permanent "occupant" — a gambler who'd been shot to death in the mid-1800s after playing a less than "straight" hand of poker. The first shot hadn't done Whitaker in — it was the trail of blood that led his pursuer to his hiding place in the armoire for a second and fatal shot.

As pain wracked my stomach, I

wondered: Had Whitaker been shot in the gut? Or was I merely suffering the aftereffects of ordering a cheeseburger at a Mexican restaurant?

Over the years, I've found that learning about a city's history through its ghost stories can be both educational and intriguing. Ready to delve into San Diego's

past, I scheduled an itinerary to some of the city's most notably haunted areas — the Gaslamp Quarter, North Embarcadero, Old Town and Coronado.

Lending their expertise were experienced tour guides and the staffs of the various sites said to be haunted. As Halloween fast approaches, it's a good time to partake of these tales of the ethereal — and get spooked in San Diego.

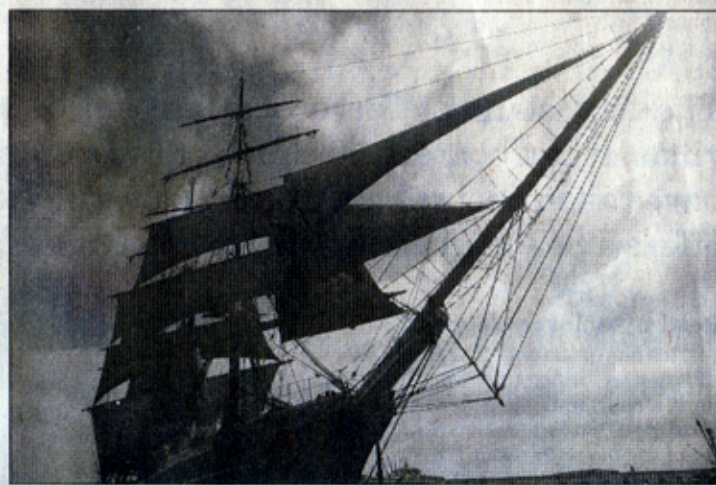
#### Gaslamp Quarter

"This was the one area in town where you wore guns," said Michael Mather about the Gaslamp Quarter. During his 15 years as front desk night manager at the Horton Grand Hotel, Mather has heard numerous stories of ghostly encounters from guests staying in Room 309 — reports of everything from loose change being stacked like poker chips to the armoire door suddenly springing open.

As for the Horton Grand's two ghosts — Whitaker in Room 309 and a notorious madame, Ida Bailey, who tries to solicit customers in Room 209 — Mather has his own theory about who's really haunting the hotel.

"If we have ghosts here, they're probably associated with two saloons that were on the block. The Seven Buckets of Blood and [Old] Tub of Blood." Visit the Gaslamp Quarter today and you'll find a plethora of fine dining establishments, hip shops and hot nightspots. Back in the 1800s, though, the area was known as the Stingaree, or San Diego's red light district.

"No woman who valued her virtue would cross Market Street," said Sean Shiraishi. Together with partners Andrea Rustad and Charles Spratley, Shiraishi operates Ghostly Tours in History LLC, a series of three-hour haunted tours



Looking for ghosts in October? The Star of India ship is among the many places in the San Diego area considered to be haunted.

throughout San Diego via limo, and a one-hour walking tour of the Gaslamp Quarter. "We give guests the opportunity to go inside and experience haunted places for themselves," said Rustad.

Shiraishi took me to some of the Gaslamp Quarter's haunted sites. On the route was the William Heath Davis House. From 1873 to 1881, San Diego residents seeking health care on a budget could check into the house for a "hospital" stay at \$1 per person per day.

Apparently bidding current-day guests welcome from the top of the stairs is a ghost believed to be Anna Scheper, who ran the hospital in the 1870s. "Anna's responsibility was to make patients as comfortable as possible in their final days," said

had San Diego's seat of government moved to New Town San Diego. Angered that his lease had been broken, Whaley refused to turn over court papers. An embittered standoff between the County and Whaley ensued. In March 1871, Whaley felt comfortable enough to leave town for a few days. The city chose this time to disrupt the Whaley family and forcibly remove the documents.

Over the years, visitors to the Whaley House have apparently seen apparitions and evidence of ghosts such as billowing curtains in front of sealed windows, unexplained body-like indentations on beds and the sound of Dolly, a spectral terrier, scampering through the hallways.

"I encountered the ghost of Thomas Whaley standing on the

**'I encountered the ghost of Thomas Whaley standing on the upstairs landing one morning.'**  
— Dean Glass

Keiliki Rodriguez, administrative coordinator for the William Heath Davis Historic House Museum. It's considerable history also includes stints as a Civil War barracks and a secret distillery.

Rodriguez said visitors have reported mysterious figures appearing in their photographs. "Because this is a 156-year-old house, it's no surprise that spirits may linger," she said.

#### North Embarcadero

Rustad of Ghostly Tours in History took me to the Star of India, a feature of Maritime Museum of San Diego, where she spoke of numerous ghostly inhabitants that reside aboard the ship, built in 1863. Among those are John Campbell, who fell while working on the rigging, breaking both his legs. Days later, he died and was buried at sea. Rustad also spoke of a Chinese crewman who died after being accidentally caught in an anchor chair.

Over the summer, San Diego Ghost Hunters came on board with a four-man team with backgrounds in archeology and genealogy who were armed with infrared cameras, divining rods, digital recorders and video cameras.

"We recorded actual voices," said team member Maritza Skandunas. "One voice announced 'Hamburg on deck!' This guy was ready to work." Another voice apparently came, according to Skandunas, from "a German woman who used to work in a brothel. She told us she fell and broke her back on the ship."

#### Old Town

Build a house on the site of former gallows, and one might say you're just asking for trouble.

Old Town's Whaley House has been described as "one of the most haunted houses in the United States" by The Travel Channel's "Most Haunted in America" show.

It is considered home to a number of ghosts, including convicted thief, Yankee Jim Robinson. Indeed, its original owner Thomas Whaley attributed the sound of disembodied footsteps to Robinson. Years later, many Whaley family members would join his vigil.

Why the unrest among the Whaleys? For years, a room in the home was used as the local courthouse with a monthly stipend being paid to Whaley by the County of San Diego. In 1870, the County Board of Supervisors

upstairs landing one morning," said Dean Glass, administrative aide for the Save Our Heritage Organisation, which runs the house.

#### Coronado

On Thanksgiving Day, 1892, Kate Morgan mysteriously checked into the Hotel Del Coronado under an alias, carrying no luggage and appearing to be ill. When staff and guests inquired after her health, Morgan said her brother, a physician, would be joining her soon. Morgan kept to herself, leaving the hotel only to travel into San Diego to purchase a pistol from Chick's Gun Shop.

On the morning of Nov. 29, a hotel electrician found Morgan's body on the west oceanfront stairs. On the step above her was the gun she'd purchased. An inquest into the apparent suicide commenced immediately. Rumors swirled around the identity of the woman who was later discovered to be Kate Morgan. Had she been pregnant? Had she been jilted by her husband? Had she been murdered? Unclaimed, her body was put to rest in San Diego's Mount Hope Cemetery.

Today, questions persist as to what really happened that November, as does Morgan's apparent presence, seen most often by guests staying in her original guest room.

Gaylene Scarbrough, who works in the hotel gift shop, said Morgan also makes appearances there, where books have been known to tumble to the floor and other merchandise literally "flies off the shelves."

Morgan is said to have made contact with one young guest through a dream. Christine Donovan, the hotel's director of heritage programs, was informed by the visitor that Morgan had appeared to her in a dream because she wants the truth behind her death to finally be revealed. What that truth is has yet to be uncovered, and Morgan's enduring spirit seems to continue to haunt the hallways of the Hotel Del Coronado.

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