



REPORT

MONTE VISTA HOTEL

INVESTIGATION



*Flagstaff
Arizona*

AZ027

SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

★ **SOLVED** | 1998
2002 | COMPLETION
STANDARD

WWW.SGHA.NET



Forward

The word “investigation” is defined as
“a searching inquiry for ascertaining facts; detailed or careful examination.”

The key word here is “facts”. Do ghosts exist? No, it has not been proven.
Therefore are no facts to investigate.

What we do have is the testimony of the witnesses and this is where an investigational process will work. Investigations are often viewed as a skeptical activity because the main goal is trying to determine what the witness actually saw. Is it explainable or not? This is done through critical thinking and an event replication process developed by SGHA. This is an important concept because what defines a haunting or ghost sighting is “Multiple witnesses reporting unusual phenomena over a period of time”. If these phenomena can be explained, the witness reports are no longer validating paranormal activity as a cause and thus there is no ghost or haunting. Additionally historical research may be done in an attempt to validate facts.

It is important to understand that the goal of an investigation is not to find evidence of the paranormal but to attempt to identify any natural or manmade causes of the reported phenomena

Definition of Terms

Investigation Status: Unsolved investigations will have either an open or closed status. An investigation is given an “Open” status if:

The investigators were unable to replicate all of the witness events. Something significant remains that is still unsolved.

It is important to understand that an “open” investigation does not mean that the unsolved facts are paranormal in nature. It simply means that we have exhausted our resources and cannot solve the “open” items/events.

A “Closed” status indicates that there is insufficient data or confounding variables that prevents replication or identifying possible explanations. This often occurs when investigators do not have direct access to witnesses or some other environmental change have occurred that creates confounding variables.

Confidentiality Notice

Many of the witnesses interviewed have wished to remain anonymous in exchange for presenting their accounts of paranormal experiences. We honor that request and thus witnesses will often be identified by aliases. Any coincidence between aliases and actual persons is unintentional.

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Part 1: Location Information

Monte Vista Hotel

100 North San Francisco Street

Flagstaff, Arizona

Part 2: Location History

When tourism was on the rise during mid 1920's local residents agreed that Flagstaff needed first-class accommodations. Existing hotels were old and outmoded. Fundraising began in April of 1926, and within one month investments of prominent citizens and funds donated by the novelist Zane Grey, totaled approximately \$200,000. Ground was broken on June 8.



Construction plans tied the 1917-1927 Post Office and incorporated the existing structure that housed The Coconino Sun, which is now the Monte Vista Cocktail Lounge, together with the hotel. The tallest building in

Flagstaff, the 73 room hotel, originally named the Community Hotel opened on New Year's Day, January 1, 1927. The hotel was then renamed by a contest winner, a 12 year old school-girl, who entered The Monte Vista Hotel. The Monte Vista continued on to be the longest publicly held commercial property in America until it was sold to a private individual in the early 1960's, and continues to be the longest lived operational hotel in Flagstaff.¹

In 1927, Mary Costigan became the first American woman to be granted a radio broadcasting license, and her three-hour radio show aired daily from her second floor studio at the Hotel Monte Vista, room 105. In 1931, a major Flagstaff bootlegging operation was put to an end by local officials. The main speakeasy: Hotel Monte Vista Lounge. From 1935-1940, Flagstaff residents Fred Nackard and Rex Gobel ran slot machines out of the hotel lounge and lobby, the only slot machines ever in Flagstaff.



After World War II, Hollywood glitterati favored Hotel Monte Vista. Shoeshiner, Gregory Martinez, and porter bellhop, Isaac Henderson, quickly amassed a national reputation, along with the Hotel Monte Vista, for having the best and friendliest service around.

Both men were offered parts in Hollywood movies, but neither ever accepted, choosing to remain on staff. Barber, Samuel Cancinas, who worked out of the hotel for twelve years, was once flown to Phoenix upon special request to cut Harry Truman's hair. The ex-president stated he wanted the best, and knew he could get it from the Hotel Monte Vista.

Over its illustrious years, Hotel Monte Vista has been home to several local and international prominent and famous people. Presidents and Hollywood stars alike have made the hotel their home away from home. From ghost

¹ <http://www.hotelmontevista.com/history.php>

stories, to tales of scandal, the Hotel Monte Vista endures into a new era and new spot of local and national popularity. Hotel Monte Vista is the longest publicly held commercial hotel in the history of America, finally selling to a private individual in the early 1960's.

Built on the corner of Aspen and San Francisco streets, the Hotel Monte Vista incorporated some of the Old Post Office, built in 1917 by the famous local Babbit Brothers and Tim Riordan. The remaining Old Post Office is still connected to the hotel and serves as a premier concert venue in Flagstaff, owned and operated by Jim Craven, owner of Hotel Monte Vista.

Part 3: Reported Phenomenon

Although the stories vary through time, there are typically nine stories about the ghostly activity at this hotel.

The Bank Robber

In 1970, three men robbed a nearby bank & during the robbery, a bank guard shot one of the men. Despite their injured comrade they decided to stop by the hotel lounge and have a drink to celebrate. The wounded man bled to death while enjoying his last drink. Since then both patrons and staff have reported being greeted by an anonymous voice saying "Good Morning!" There have also been reports of barstools and drinks that seem to move on their own.

The Women of the Night

Years ago Flagstaff's Red Light District could be found just south of the railroad tracks, only 2 blocks away from the Monte Vista. In the early 1940's two prostitutes were brought to the hotel to room 306. During their "visit" they were killed and thrown from their third floor window to the cold street below.

Over the years, numerous guests have reported being awakened in the middle of the night and unable to return to sleep due to a feeling that they are being watched. In most instances, it is our male guests that report the feeling of having a hand placed over their mouth and throat, and awakening unable to breathe. After they awake, these guests say they found it very difficult to return to sleep due to an overwhelming feeling of anxiousness and a sense that someone is "keeping an eye" on them.

The Phantom Bellboy

Hotel guests have reported a knock at their door and in a muffled voice, someone announces "room service". When guests open the door, they find that no one is there. Some guests however have seen the figure of a bellboy standing outside of room 210. John Wayne experienced this ghost while he was a guest of the hotel. Mr. Wayne reported that the ghost seemed friendly, and that he did not feel threatened at all by its presence.

The Little Boy

Some guests have seen the image of young boy wandering the halls of the hotel. Some guests say that they have had this young ghost touch their hand! His voice can sometimes be heard as if he is walking behind you. Guests who have seen this ghost have said it looks as though he may be speaking with his mother.

The Meat Man

This bizarre long term boarder was known by his strange habit of hanging raw meat from the chandelier. In the early 1980's he was found in room 220 three days after his death. Not long after his death, a maintenance worker was doing repairs in the room. Needing a new fixture for the repairs, the employee left the room, turned the lights off, and locked the door. Upon returning, only a few minutes later, he found the television on with the volume full blast, and the linens on the bed had been ripped and scattered around the room!

The Rocking Chair



Once featured on the television show "Unsolved Mysteries" room 305 is by far the "most active" room in the Hotel. There are numerous reports of seeing a woman in the rocking chair near the window. Also guests and housekeeping alike report seeing the chair "move by itself"!

History tells us that years ago an elderly woman who was a long term renter would sit by the window for hours on end. No one knows what she was looking at or looking for. Could it be she was waiting for someone? Someone she waits for even in death.

Baby in the Basement

The disturbing sounds of an infant crying in the basement have been heard again & again. Reported primarily by maintenance & laundry personnel, making the most disturbing encounter reported in the hotel. Staff have found themselves running upstairs to escape the sound of the cries. Though the sounds are very real to those who hear them, there has been no information that has explained this phenomenon.

The Dancing Couple

On several occasions lounge staff & patrons have witnessed a transparent couple dancing in the Cocktail Lounge. They are seen in formal dress laughing and smiling, eternally dancing.

The Voices

The staff at the Old Post Office (OPO Salon) have heard voices & seen figures moving in the building for years. No one is quite sure who these shadowy visitors might be.²

Part 4: Historical Research

The stories were researched to check for any accuracy to historical events. The Arizona Daily Sun and the Northern Arizona University Archives were searched from the years 1930 to 1975. Our findings are listed below.

The Bank Robber – After doing an extensive search we have discovered that this story is false. There is a shred of truth in that there were several bank robberies in the 1970's, however, all of the suspects in these crimes were apprehended by the police and stood trial. There was not a incident in any of the newspapers where one suspect went into the hotel and died or any reporters of any of the robbers being shot by a bank security guard.

The Women of the Night – Unfortunately, the tale of two prostitutes that were thrown from a third story window is yet another story that has no historical evidence that corroborates with the ghost legend. If such a thing happened, it would be front page news. It is not there. We found absolutely nothing about in any of the newspapers or archives.

² <http://www.hotelmontevista.com/hauntedhotel.php>

The Phantom Bellboy – There are no newspaper articles that we were able to find regarding any incident with a bell boy in the hotel, including a death or accident in the building.

According to the stories told at the hotel, John Wayne reported seeing this ghost in the late 1950's. Describing the spirit as friendly, this benevolent ghost evidently made a brief appearance in the movie star's room. He complained his alcohol and cigars were going missing, and blamed it on the ghost. The question is "Did John Wayne really report this?" There is no collaborating evidence other than the hotel's story.

By examining his filmography, we know that in the late fifties John was not in Arizona. He was in Tucson in 1950 filming "Rio Bravo". The only time he would have been in northern Arizona was when he was filming westerns in Monument Valley which was in the late 30's. While it is possible that the date was remembered incorrectly, the 20 year difference is noteworthy.

The Little Boy – Once again there was no historical evidence that suggests that a child had died or had been attached to the building for any reason.

The Meat Man – Such an unusual incident would have surely been reported in the local newspapers. However, after an exhaustive search of not only the local newspapers but also those across the United States we were unable to find any mention of a body found in the Monte Vista hotel or any reference to particular room with a "meat decor".

During our investigation in 1998 we interviewed many of the staff working at the hotel. The only stories of paranormal activity at that time were the phantom bellboy and the ghost of a woman in Room 305. However, one of the maintenance men and two housekeepers told us about the "dancing couple" and that it was made up by a television show. The television show also "exaggerated" the tales of the haunting in Room 305 (no apparition, the chair just moves around and it **does not** rock on its own). They were very adamant about this as the bellboy and woman are the only "real" ghosts at the hotel.

The other tales of ghosts were told to us during our second visit in 2002. The hotel is obviously the propagator of the ghost stories.

Part 5: Investigation

We performed two separate investigations of this hotel. The first was in July 1998. After the historical research was finished the second investigation was launched in September of 2002.

Since the historical research was highly suggestive of myth building, the 2002 investigation was focused on the tangible events that could be analyzed. Simply take away the ghost stories and simply examine what the witnesses are reporting. Is it really paranormal or does it have a rational explanation?

A high percentage of the phenomenon is auditory. The historic hotel was not built to the current standards of many modern hotels. the walls are paper thin and sound travels farther than one may expect. The hotel's bar is popular on the college scene and the noise is quite noticeable until it closes at 3 am. So between the partying and the noises made by the other guests of the hotel, there a multitude of possible explanations.

We decided to test this hypothesis by doing a simple test. The team was stationed inside Room 210 (where the ghost of the bell boy was reported) and instructed to wait for a knock on the door. Cody left the room and a minute later the team heard a knock on the door accompanied by Cody saying "room service". When the door was opened, no one was there. Cody walked around the corner a few seconds later. He was actually knocking on a door around the corner.

The knock sounded like it was at the door of Room 210 and just like the ghost story, Cody's voice was muffled. This occurs because lower frequencies (the knock) travel further and higher frequencies (Cody's voice) attenuate more readily (which is why the voice sounds "muffled").

We went to the basement to test the same hypothesis. The basement is long and used mostly for storage. The immediate thing that we noticed is that it made a great echo chamber. Even whispers at one end of the basement could be easily heard on the opposite side of the room.

However before we could start any actual testing, the band started playing upstairs. We could easily make out the lyrics of the song being played. If

the sound upstairs was actually a baby crying, the effect would probably be similar.

Based on our tests we think this provides a rational explanation for the bellboy, crying baby in the basement and the voices heard in the OPO Salon.

We then turned our attention to Room 305. The actual phenomenon is that the chair appears to move around the room, supposedly by the ghost of an elderly woman.

During our interviews with the staff in 2002, we discovered that moving the chair is often required for maintenance and housekeeping purposes. The Maintenance man told us about a time that he went to the room to fix the air conditioning unit. Guests had just checked into the room and found out that it was not working. He promptly went up to repair it while they were out so it would not be an inconvenience to the them. He had to move the chair to work on it and did not place it back to its original location. The guests came back to the desk later that day freaked out because the chair had moved.

The fact that the staff often moves the chair could account for the "unusual" phenomena reported by some of the guests.

The rest of the reported phenomena can be explained by typical psychological effects caused by the belief system of the witnesses.

Part 6: Conclusion

Many guests are well aware of the ghost stories upon their stay and so come to expect the strange and spooky. It is extremely likely that as happened and that this expectation has caused them to attribute normal phenomenon to something otherworldly.

The propagator is the business itself. The myth is propagated by disseminating information to guests, the media and other people who visit the location.

Guests at the hotel search for, interpret and focus on information in a way that conforms to the myth's preconceptions (Confirmation Bias). This primes the location for additional "paranormal" experiences by creating an observation selection bias.

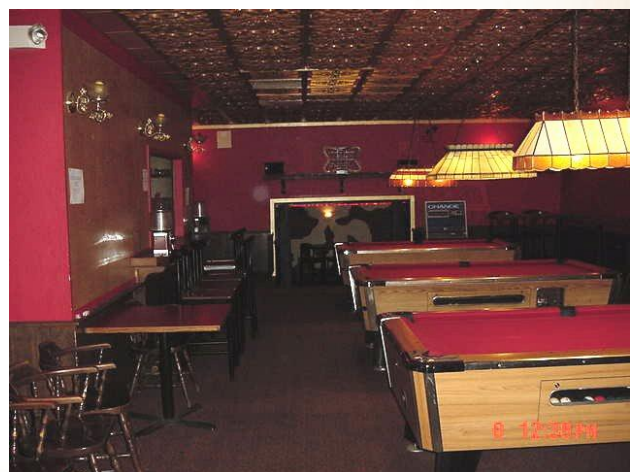
Biased by the knowledge of the myth, people start noticing things that were not noticed previously and, as a result, wrongly assume that this newly discovered phenomenon is paranormal in origin (Observation Selection Bias).

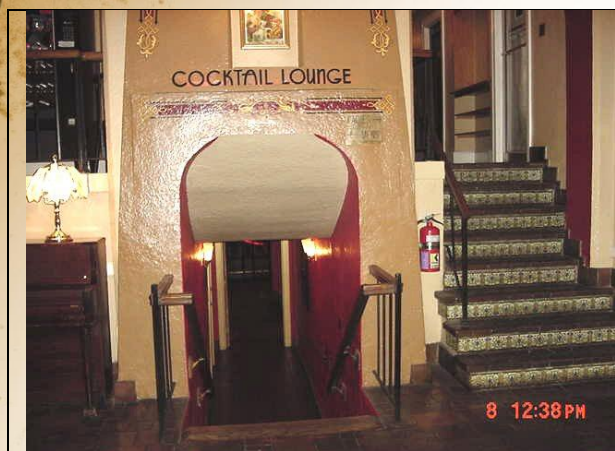
These visitors have been biased and if the person's belief is open to the existence of paranormal phenomenon, their perception creates an increase in the possibility of misinterpreting a normal event as a paranormal oriented one (Subjective Validation Bias). This, in turn, creates additional events that give the myth longevity.

The activity at this location does not meet the Gurney/Myers Standard for Ghost Investigations and there is not any sufficient evidence to support the claims of paranormal activity.

Part 7: Photographs







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