



# REPORT

## BAKER HOTEL

INVESTIGATION



*Mineral Wells*

*Texas*

**TX011**

### SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

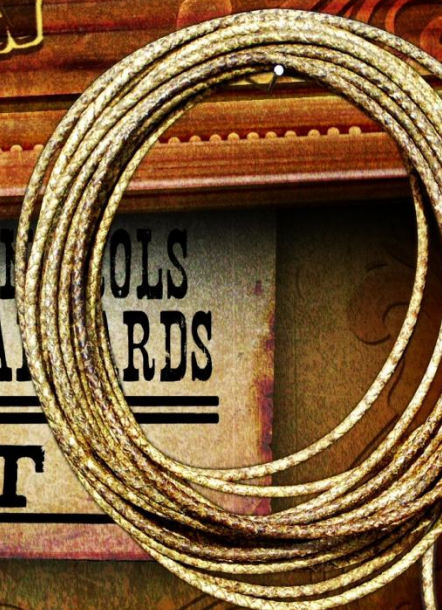


**SOLVED**

**2001  
2006**

**COMPLAINTS  
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

The Baker Hotel

Mineral Wells, Texas

## Part 2: Location History

The Baker Hotel was always at cross purposes with time.

It opened at a point when time seemed to stand still, just before it jerked backwards. T.B. Baker threw open the doors of his 14 story, 450 room pleasure palace two weeks after Black Friday, the stock market crash in October, 1929.

But then, for the next 40 years or so, the hotel was ahead of its time. The Baker Hotel was glamorous, indeed. Baker, a hotel entrepreneur, designed



it in the Spanish Renaissance style after the Arlington Hotel in Hot Springs, Ark., another Southern city, like Mineral Wells, renowned for the curative abilities of its water. It was only the second hotel in the United States to have its own swimming pool.

Now, even in disrepair, the regal digs evoke wonder. Even cloaked in suffocating heat during a recent visit, standing in the wasted lobby it was easy to imagine Will Rogers shuffling up to the check-in desk, Gen. John J. Pershing marching down the stairs, or Marlene Dietrich sashaying in the grand entrance. They were just a few of the rich and famous who came here to "the South's greatest health resort."

The whole second floor of the air-conditioned hotel - that was still a novelty in 1929 - was reserved as the bath-and-massage floor. Private elevators allowed guests to discreetly go to and from treatments in robe and slippers. And "patients" came from all over the United States, as doctors everywhere



prescribed week long stays in health resorts, in those days before pharmacology caught up to demand.



By the late 1940s, modern medicines had replaced mineral water as cures for ailments such as rheumatism and eczema. The magic of the waters of Mineral Wells had faded. Not that the Baker Hotel was left high and dry. In the 1950s, the hotel turned to business conventions and non medicinal vacation packages for its main business.

The Baker Hotel advertised its baths to “overworked, stressed out executives,” according to the Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce, which notes that some 80 percent of the hotel’s business came from Dallas and Fort Worth businessmen and their families escaping the city. In the early days of the Dallas Cowboys, when the games were blacked out in Dallas, people rented rooms at the Baker to watch the games on a television station out of Wichita Falls, the chamber notes.



The hotel stayed busy. It was so popular it got the attention of the federal government, which made it quit advertising the mineral water as a cure-all. There began the beginning of the end.

Time, suddenly, was passing the Baker Hotel by.



By the 1960s, health resorts all over the country were losing business. Earl Baker, nephew of the founder, let it be known that he would get out of the business when he turned 70. In 1963, he did, and some Mineral Wells businessmen bought it shortly after - but the Baker's enchanted era was over. The hotel closed its doors for good in 1972.

In those days, folks in Mineral Wells told tales of those who drank the water and lived long into their 100s. The story of a demented woman who drank the water and became sane made news across the nation.

Some tried to bottle the water and sell it. Others tried to sell the land for outrageous prices. But only Baker had the genius to build a mammoth hotel



on top of the well and advertise it as a resort for the wealthy, and for \$30 a night -- about \$200 in today's currency -- you could drink all of the water you wanted.

Surrounded by comfort, guests could douse themselves in mineral water, which could take five years off their age, Baker advertised.



There is something almost eerie about Baker's ability to see the future. For example, many spa rooms were furnished with mechanical chairs with electronic devices that moved the feet back and forth and rubbed the back. The rooms' lights were linked to the door handle so that the light automatically came on when a guest opened the door.

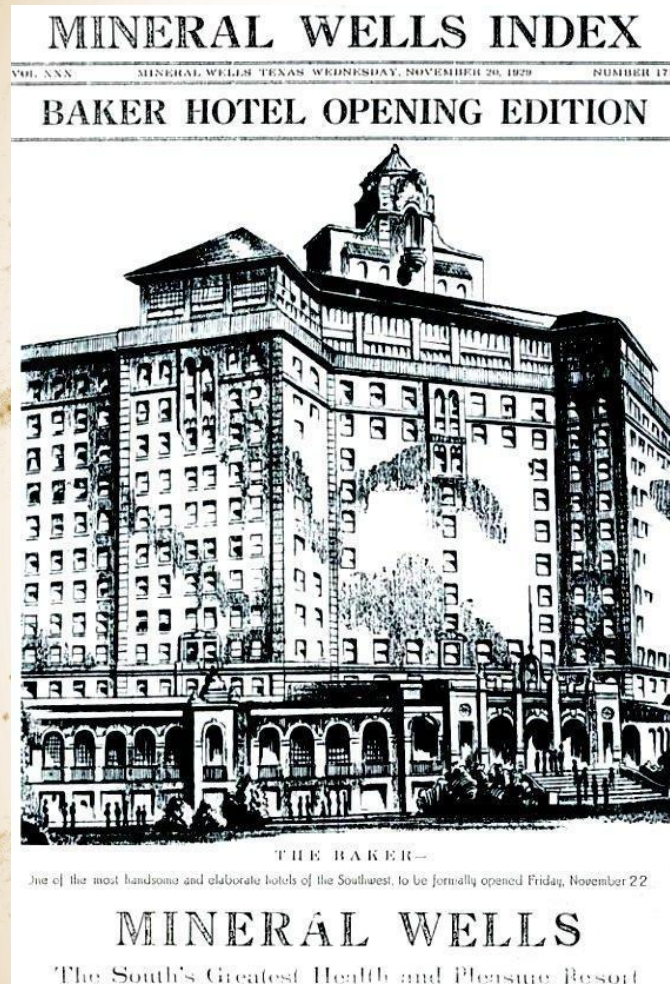
This place became popular on a level that Mineral Wells hasn't seen since, it was hard to know what was the bigger draw, the hotel or the water.

The hotel had three stairwells, one for the rich, one for their servants and one for those who wished not to be seen. Judy Garland and Lawrence



Well fit in the first category. The outlaws known as Bonnie and Clyde fit in the last one. All visited more than once.

The hotel is full of little trick doors and secret rooms. In Baker's 10th-floor quarters, you can push back a cabinet to reveal a closet in which Baker reportedly concealed his liquor during Prohibition. On the third floor, a hidden door led to a gambling parlor.



Baker watched his masterpiece fall on hard times in his later years and died in 1972 just one year before his hotel finally closed its doors. What followed was a scenario similar to that involving the Settles in Big Spring.

New owners sold much of the interior, vandals sprayed graffiti on some of the walls, have broken windows and other features and the building fell into disrepair. There is something ominous about a huge empty building that just sits there.

Other interesting facts about the location include:

The area under the Olympic sized pool is open, supported by huge columns. The parking

garage for the Baker is across the street and is accessed by driving into a tunnel and underneath the pool and street. The tunnel is now sealed before it reaches the street.

The Baker also generated its own power. Two huge generators are located in the basement which supplied the hotel with all of its power requirements. It should also be noted that the hotel has certain areas that allowed unseen access to rooms and other areas by the employees.



## Part 3: Witnesses

This section identifies the witnesses to the reported activity.

Name	Sex	Connection with reported incident	Interviewed
Ronny Walker	M	Witness, guide	10 June 2001
Jane Catrett	F	Witness, manager	12 June 2001
Robin Fletcher	M	Guide	2001, 2002
Mary Smith*	F	Witness	15 April 2002

*Witnesses given aliases are noted by a \**

### Ronny's accounts

*Ronny reported one night he was near the main lobby on the first floor when he heard the distinct sound of a woman in high heels walking across the lobby. Thinking the footsteps to be those of Jane Catrett he yelled out her name; however, the footsteps faded away and upon further inspection, Ronny found himself all alone. Later he discovered that Jane had not been in the building that day.*

*On another occasion, he told us that he was on the 7th floor re-setting an electrical breaker to the Christmas lights, which continuously tripped every night during display. As he was inspecting the fuse box, attempting to locate the breaker switch, he heard the footsteps of an unseen person walking up to his left - quietly - as if not to bother him. A bit startled, he turned to look and saw no one. Ronny spoke to the possible ghosts and assured them he meant no harm. After that night the lights never tripped off again.*

*Ronny also shared his thoughts about the findings of the other ghost hunting teams that had visited the building. Most he thought were "flakey".*

### Jane's accounts

Jane told us about the following accounts of odd occurrences happening in the hotel.



*In the 1990's she was told that employees at the bank across the street from the hotel reported that they noticed the windows of the hotel would be open on various floors. Later they would notice these windows closed and others would be open. After awhile they began to take note and count which were opened and closed. The pattern changed.*

*They thought that it must be the man who lives in the building and takes care of it". After that, the interest ceased and they stopped noticing. The strange thing is, no one has ever stayed in the Baker at any time since its closure in 1970. There never was a caretaker. So just who was opening and closing the windows?*

### **Mary's Account**

*On the weekends my boyfriend and I go to the downtown video store and rent movies. On several occasions we've witnessed strange lights coming from windows. The lights that we've seen aren't like the kind of light you see coming from a flashlight. It doesn't reflect on the window as the light from a flash light does. We've also seen people looking down at us from many of the windows. I waved to the figure without hesitation, the figure waved back and when we looked back up it was gone.*

## **Part 4: Reported Phenomenon**

Paranormal activity that has been reported in the hotel centers around several major areas. These include the ballroom, the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 10th floors, the Brazos room and the lobby.

Lights turn on and off by themselves in the Brazos room and the sweet smell of chocolate, similar to "Milk duds" can be easily detected at times.

In general, the phenomenon that is reported relates to one of four legends that surround the old hotel.

### **1. The mistress on the 7th Floor**

The genesis of the Baker's ghost stories starts in the 1960s when a porter reported the ghost of a woman on the seventh floor. Not much remains of this initial report other than the fact that the "ghost" had red hair. This ghost is commonly believed to be the hotel manager's mistress. She lived in a suite of rooms on the southeast corner of the seventh floor. Distraught from



her affair , the woman, whose name was Virginia Brown, committed suicide by jumping to her death from the top of the building.

Connected to this event are reports of people smelling perfume like odor that has a lavender scent. Glasses were found by a maid working at the hotel that had lipstick stains on the rim when nobody was staying in the suite. The ghost also flirts with men to whom she takes a fancy and gets angry when females invade her space.

## **2. The intoxicated "suicide" jumper**

Another story tells of a intoxicated woman who tried to jump into the swimming pool from the ballroom balcony, on the 12th floor. Naturally, she was killed. The stories of the myth vary. Some say that she was racing her boyfriend down to the pool and thought she could survive the dive into the pool from the 12th floor while others indicate foul play was somehow involved.

## **3. The Cook and the Maid**

The legend states that the hotel's cook was having an affair with one of the maids. When the maid threatened to expose their relationship to his wife, he flew into a fit of rage and stabbed her to death in the kitchen pantry. Female visitors have reported hearing a woman's voice telling them to leave when they entered the kitchen.

## **4. The Ghost of Earl (or T.B.) Baker**

It's believed that the ghost of Earl Baker, the owner of the Baker Hotel, and another entity are still residing in his once luxurious 10th floor residence where he died. Some early accounts claim that the ghost is actually T.B. Baker, the hotel's original owner.

## **5. The ghost of Douglas Moore**

The ghost of a 16 year old boy that was tragically killed in an elevator accident is believed to haunt the basement.

The gangsters Bonnie and Clyde have also been rumored to haunt the Brazos room and Ballroom.



## **Part 5: Historical Investigations and myth building**

The focus of our historical investigation was on the basis of the ghost stories surrounding the hotel. The results clearly show that myth building is a major issue as many of the stories have no factual basis.

### **1. The mistress on the 7th Floor**

The first issue, historically, with the mistress myth is that it changes over time, indicating that myth building is actively changing the story to make it more dramatic. The initial accounts of the myth told in the 1980's state;

*"Another legend is that a mistress was so distraught that she could not have her lover killed herself in the Baker. You can smell her perfume of lavender at night in the hall where she killed herself. Another lady jumped out of the bell tower to her death."*

However by the late 1990's the myth has changed to the following;

*"Distraught from her affair she jumped to her death from the top of the building. The room she stayed in, quite comfortably, was a suite on the southeast corner of the seventh floor"*

This raises several questions. Did Earl Baker really have a mistress? Was there a woman named Virginia Brown living at the hotel who committed suicide?

The answer to the first question is hard to determine. To answer that you would need to know what years the mistress was living in the Baker Hotel. However, historical research into that question has dug up some rather interesting facts. The first was that the concept of Earl Baker having a mistress originates among the staff working at the hotel. They know that there is a woman living there free of charge in a suite of rooms on the seventh floor. They are also aware that Earl gives this woman money on a regular basis. If this is the basis of the story then there is an alternative explanation.

Myla Baker, T.B.'s sister, lived at the Gunter in San Antonio. On May 8, 1933, she moved to the Baker Hotel in Mineral Wells. She occupied a suite on the seventh floor using rooms 714, 716 and 718. These are the same rooms where the "mistress" was supposed to have occupied. Myla would



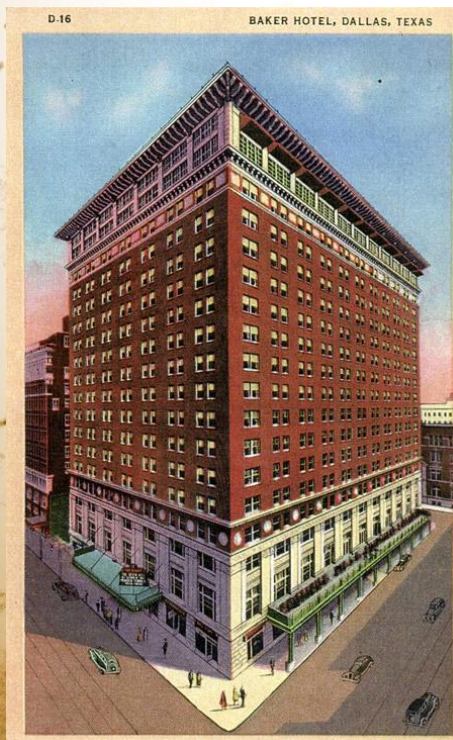
take trips alone to Europe and buy items to decorate the different hotels. When T.B. passed the Baker on to Earl, he had Earl agree to make up a trust for his sister, Myla, agreeing to pay her \$9,000 a year from the dividends of the Gunter Hotel. Myla stayed at the hotel until her death in 1950, thus ruling out the possibility of a mistress living in those rooms during those years. In 1950 Earl would have been 75 years old and was then living in San Antonio. These facts do not make the mistress story very probable.

So what about Virginia Brown? Historical records show that there were three women living in Mineral Wells under that name. None of them were residing at the Baker Hotel.

In the 1940's there was a Virginia Brown living on Mistletoe Street. She was widowed and was 57 years old. The other two women with that name were married and living with their husbands in the 1930's.

Despite this, there is no documentation of any sort of event related to suicide, or anything similar, ever happening at the Baker Hotel in Mineral Wells. However, there were such events at the Baker Hotel in downtown Dallas.

### **The tale of the two Baker Hotels**



There was another Baker Hotel located in the downtown area of Dallas. The hotel had the same owners and it is quite probable that a degree of confusion was formed when talking about "the Baker". The Baker Hotel (in Dallas) did have a apparent suicide whose details were published through the Associated Press.

*11 June 1930, Denton Record*

*Investigation into the death here may 29th of Dr. Clarence Moore, 50, of St. Joe was reopened today. A verdict of suicide was returned after Dr. Moore had plunged from the fifteenth floor of the Baker Hotel. T.H. Yarbrough, county attorney of Montague County, was here today attempting to*



*establish the theory that the physician's death was accidental.*

During our investigations at the hotel in Mineral Wells we discovered that events from the hotel in Dallas were often attributed to the hotel in Mineral Wells. This obviously affected the myth and is an important element in the genesis of this particular ghost story. This also discredits the story of the intoxicated "suicide" jumper story (2).

### **3. The cook and the maid**

During our historical research we only found one instance of a murder occurring in the hotel. It happened in the lobby and involved two men. There is nothing in the newspaper archives that suggests that this event ever happened. It appears to be a product of myth building that was added to the other ghost stories in the 1990's.

### **4. The Ghost of Earl (or T.B.) Baker**

The first problem with the myth is that Earl did not actually die at the Baker Hotel. Newspaper accounts state that while visiting the hotel on Dec. 3, 1967, Earl Baker was found in the Baker Suite on the floor after having a heart attack. He was rushed to nearby Nazareth Hospital but died later that day. Even if you approach this story from a "believer" angle it still does not make sense. Earl said he would close the hotel when he turned 70 years old and he did just that. In a newspaper article he was quoted as saying;

*"I have other financial interests in South Texas that prevent me from managing the hotel properly".*

Regardless of the reason the hotel was closed, why would his ghost be at the hotel? How would someone know that Earl's ghost is even there? There are no reported sightings of his apparition or any other details that would indicate that it is actually him.

### **5. The ghost of Douglas Moore**

According to the legend, Douglas and one of his friends were fraternizing with the laundry women in the basement in the area that used to be the laundry rooms. His boss was going to check on them so the friend jumped into the elevator but Douglas got caught in between the wall and the closing door, causing severe injuries that led to his death. The legend states that *"if you go by the elevators at night you can see him."*



The background story is true. It was reported to the Associated Press on Sunday, January 18, 1948.

## Elevator Mishap Fatal

MINERAL WELLS, Texas Jan. 17 (AP).-Douglas Gerald Moore, 16, was fatally injured here when he boarded a climbing service elevator at a Mineral Wells hotel and failed to get in. Operator of a passenger elevator at the hotel, Moore was getting ready to go on duty when the accident occurred. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Moore of Mineral Wells.

The problem, however, is in the myth. Exactly who has seen him? We were not able to locate anyone who has actually seen Douglas' ghost.

### **Part 6: Investigation**

This report is composed of five individual reports from investigations conducted between 2001 and 2006. Since providing the details of five investigations would be rather lengthy, this report will cover the issues involved with investigating this location and the aspects which we were able to solve.

#### *6.1 Confounding Variables, Investigation Issues*

The biggest problem with investigating the hotel is its size. The hotel is fourteen stories tall and has 450 guest rooms, two ballrooms, an in-house beauty shop, and other novelties such as a bowling alley, a gymnasium, and an outdoor swimming pool.

Throughout the years, trespassers have sneaked inside the Baker despite the risk of being arrested. These trespassers vary from scavengers looking for copper, homeless people seeking refuge in the building to (of course) teenagers from across the area, looking for a late-night adventure. During our 2001 investigation we discovered 8 different areas where someone could enter the building if they really wanted to. This creates the first variable.

How do we know if what is being heard, or seen is not actually one of these trespassers? Out of the five times we investigated the hotel, we encountered trespassers three times. This was often done by trying to track



down the source of a noise, voices or a light source / figure that was seen in the windows from the outside of the building. It is highly probable that these trespassers are the most probable cause for many of the stories concerning ghosts haunting the building.

In two other instances, we tracked down noises that sounded like footsteps only to discover that they were caused by a raccoon and a cat.

Despite the confounding variables and the issues with myth building, we focused on the phenomenon reported by the witnesses.

## *6.2 Phenomenon reported by witnesses*

The phenomenon reported by the witnesses are listed below along with alternative explanations for the associated occurrences. Taken out of context from the ghost stories, the phenomenon itself is not very impressive and has logical origins that are not paranormal.

### **1. Smell of perfume**



During our investigations we discovered not one but two discarded perfume bottles. One was found intact in a corner of the lobby while the other was found broken on the street, just below the infamous set of suites where the mistress was rumored to have lived. We do not believe that the guides or staff of the hotel are trying to hoax visitors but it is very apparent that someone has at least tried to. As such, we cannot rule out the possibility that the reports of smelling a woman's perfume has a rational explanation.

### **2. Sound of disembodied footsteps**

The old decaying hotel has multiple sources and explanations for these sounds ranging from animals and dripping water to the actual footsteps of trespassers and vagrants.

### **3. "Chocolate smell" associated with ghosts**

There are building conditions that produce a variety of growing mold species. At the Baker Hotel it is very likely that there are multiple species growing on various mold-friendly materials. Some mold colonies can be



hard to spot. Certainly different species of mold respond differently to temperature, moisture, and nutrients they find. For example, one mold species is referred to as the "moldy gym socks" mold since it produces that odor. This is the culprit of the chocolate smell that is reported by the witnesses. The smell can be traced to the carpet in certain areas of the hotel.

#### **4. Mysterious opening and closing of windows**

This was the first thing that we identified. The windows are opened and closed by the guides for a variety of reasons. The inside building is quite hot and humid in the spring and summer and the windows are opened to allow air to flow into the building. Both of the guides we were with did this during our investigations.

#### **5. Seeing people and diffuse lights in the windows of the hotel when it was believed to be empty.**

Trespassers, vagrants are an issue that we already identified. The possibility that actual people were in the hotel is completely plausible.

#### **6. Electrical issues, especially on the 7th floor.**

The entire hotel has electrical issues. The electrical issue that did occur was a single event that has rational explanations.

#### **7. Unusual amounts of photographs taken by visitors have "orbs" in them.**

Orbs are not paranormal. They are airborne pollutants, such as dust and mold spores, that are illuminated the flash of the camera.

#### **8. Sensed presence of something supernatural.**

This is typical in people that have a confirmation bias due to their belief in the paranormal. It is explainable through modern day psychology.

### **Part 7: Conclusion**

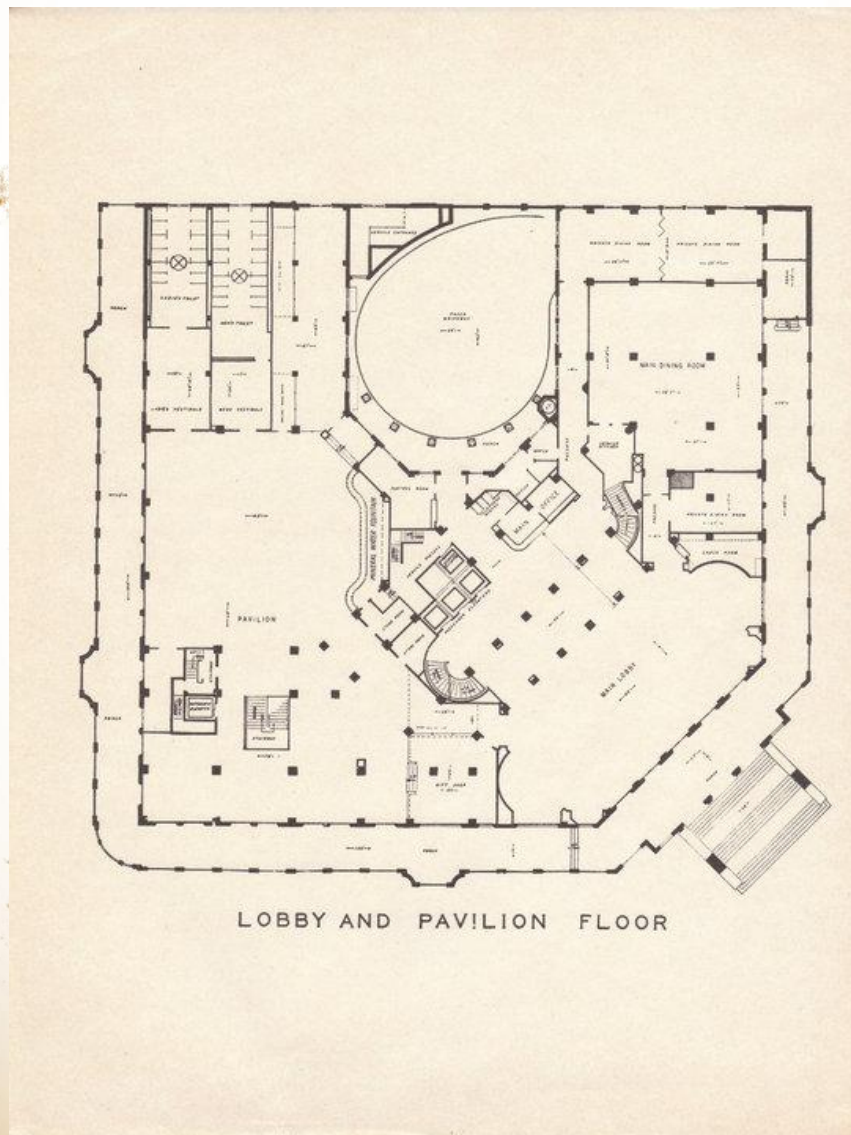
The majority of the ghost stories surrounding the hotel are not accurate in relation to the recorded history. This confirms that the stories are just urban myths. The phenomenon reported by the witnesses is not that impressive once they are separated from the stories surrounding them. All of the



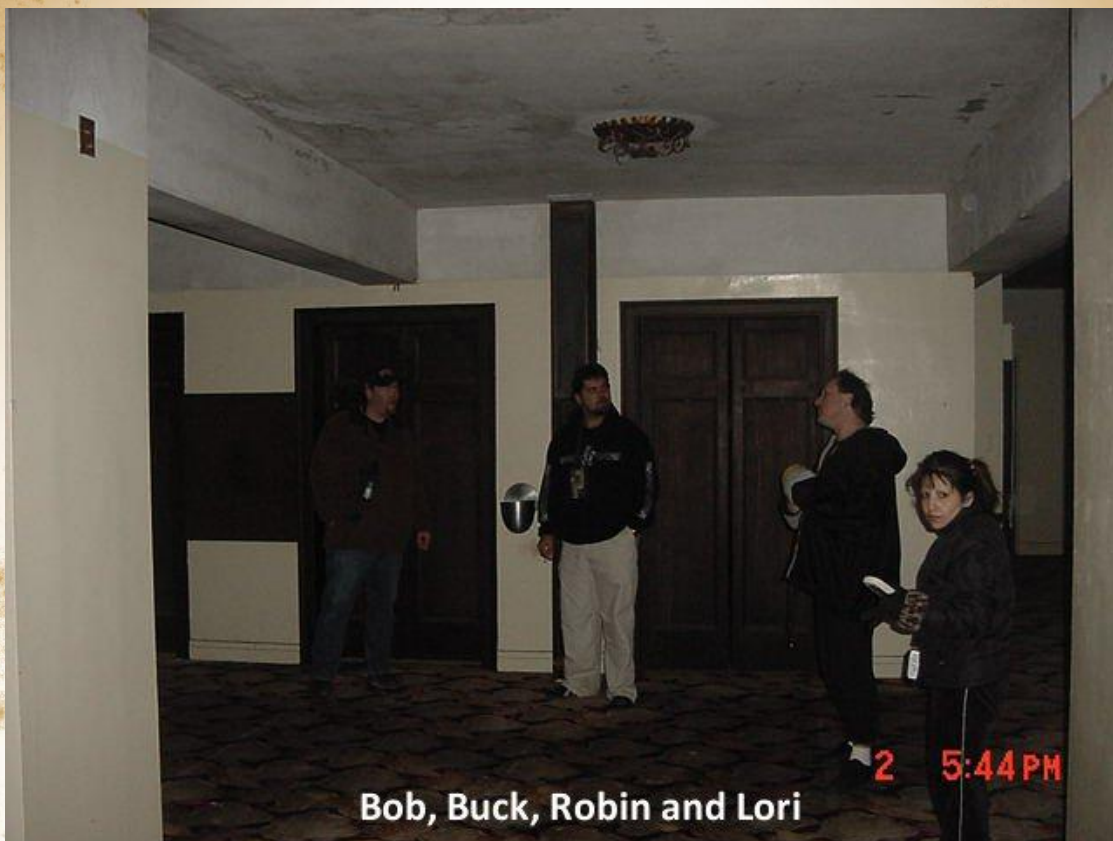
phenomenon has rational explanations and lacks the veridical elements that are necessary to confirm a actual haunting.

**SOLVED**

## Part 8: Photographs







Bob, Buck, Robin and Lori







Basement



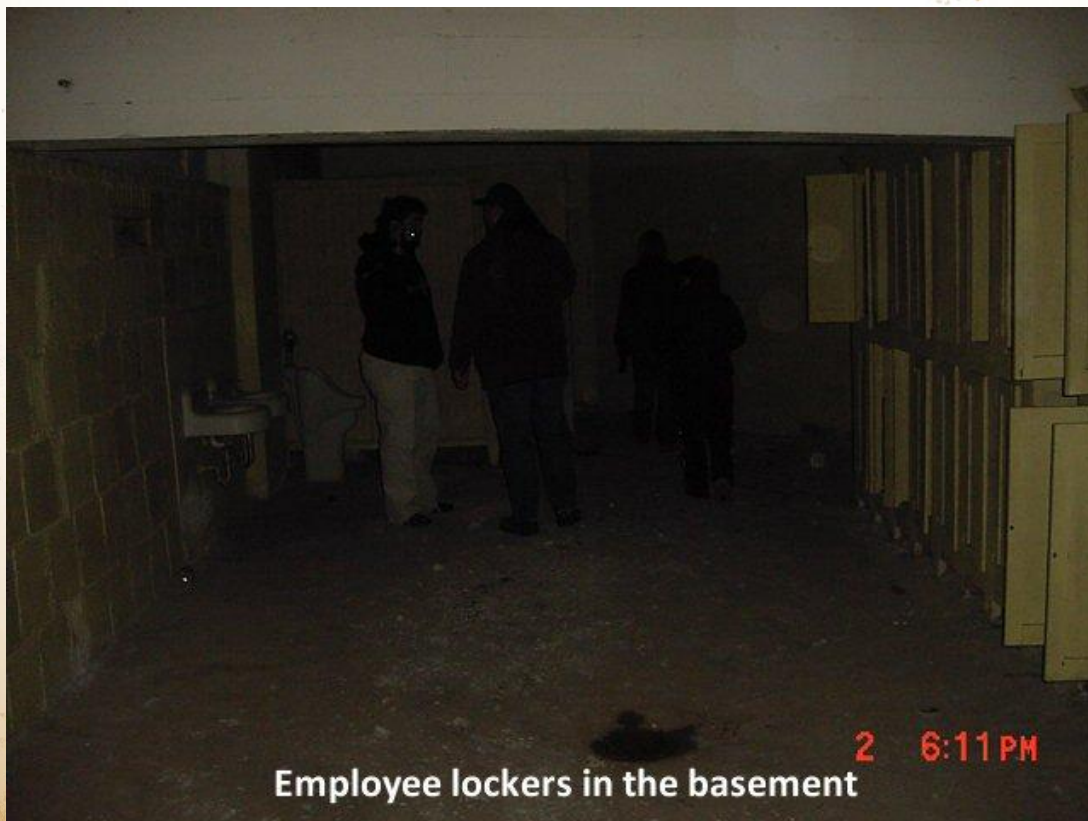
Basement



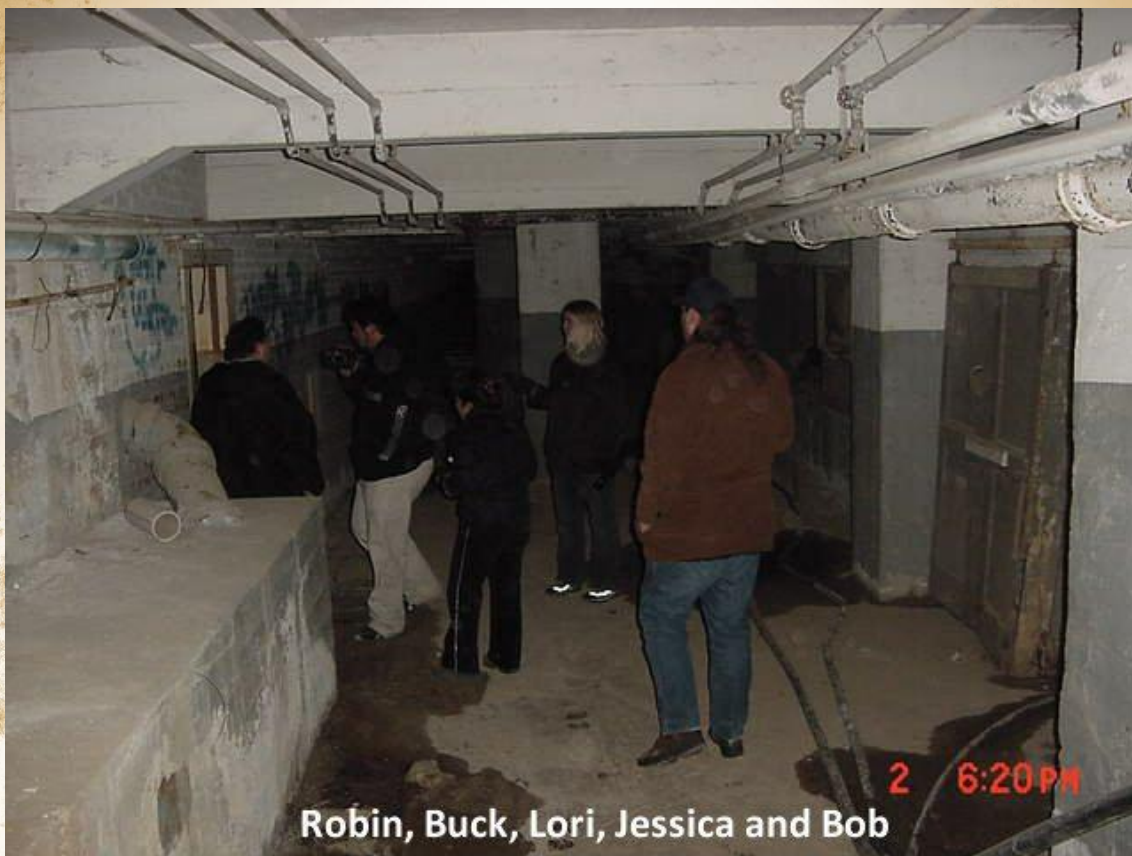
Laundry room in the hotel's basement



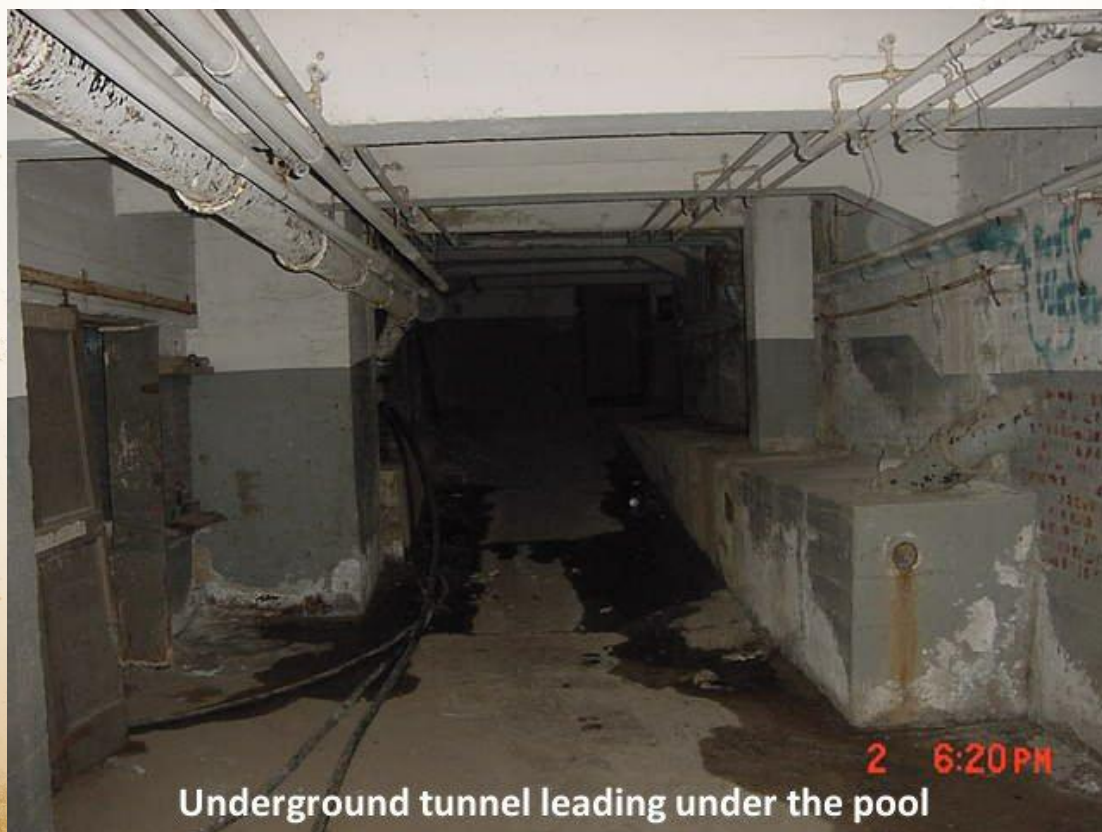
Employee lockers in the basement







Robin, Buck, Lori, Jessica and Bob



Underground tunnel leading under the pool





The hotel's kitchen



Testing the air flow in the Brazos room







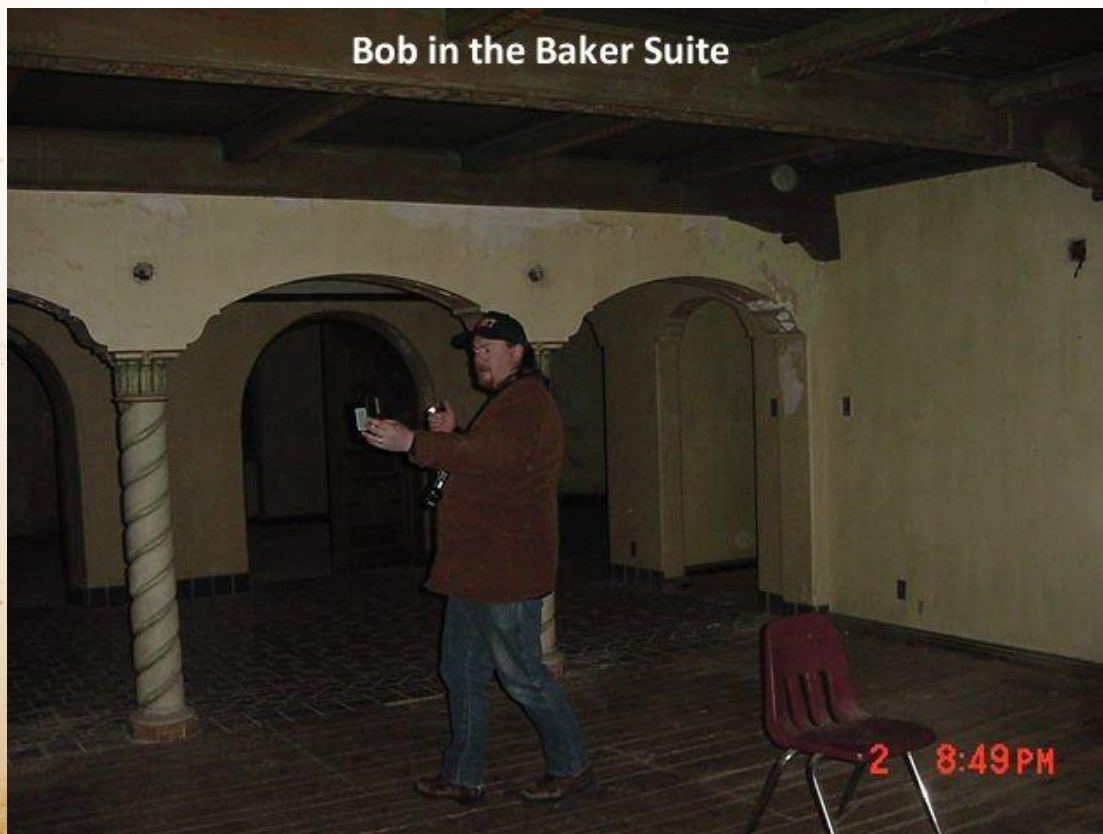




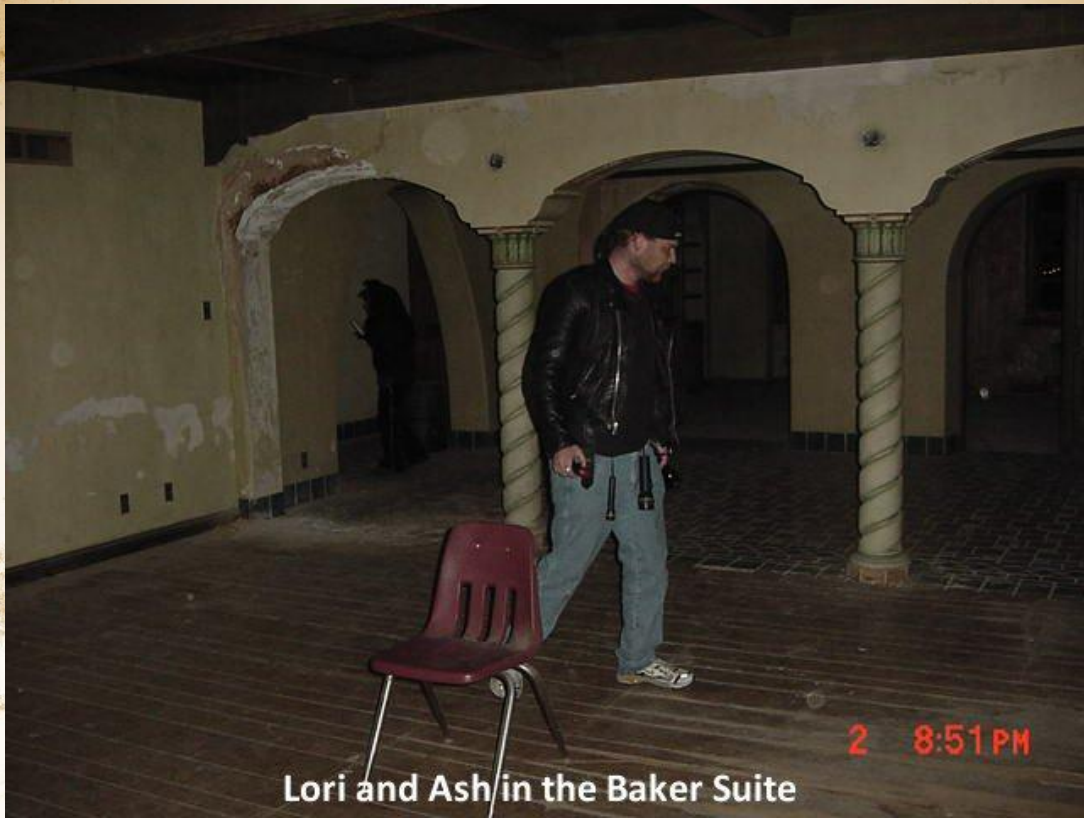


The hotel's lobby









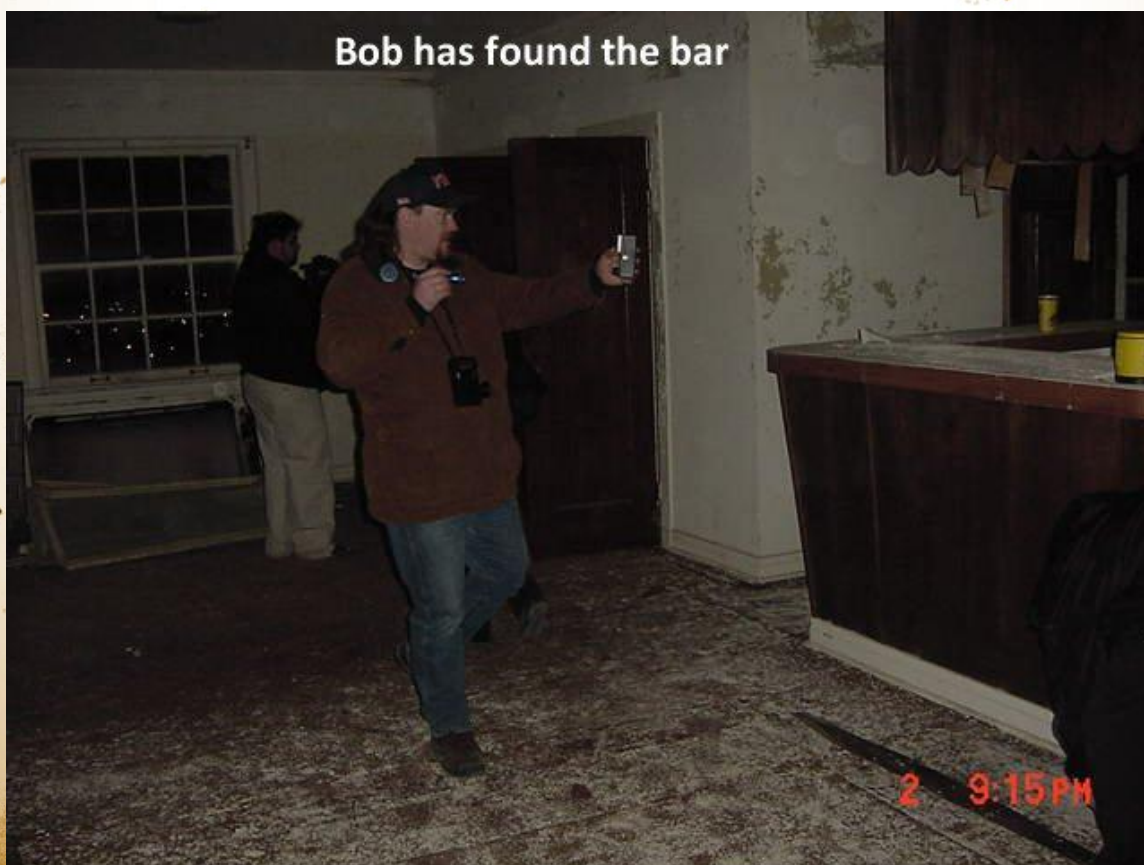
Lori and Ash in the Baker Suite



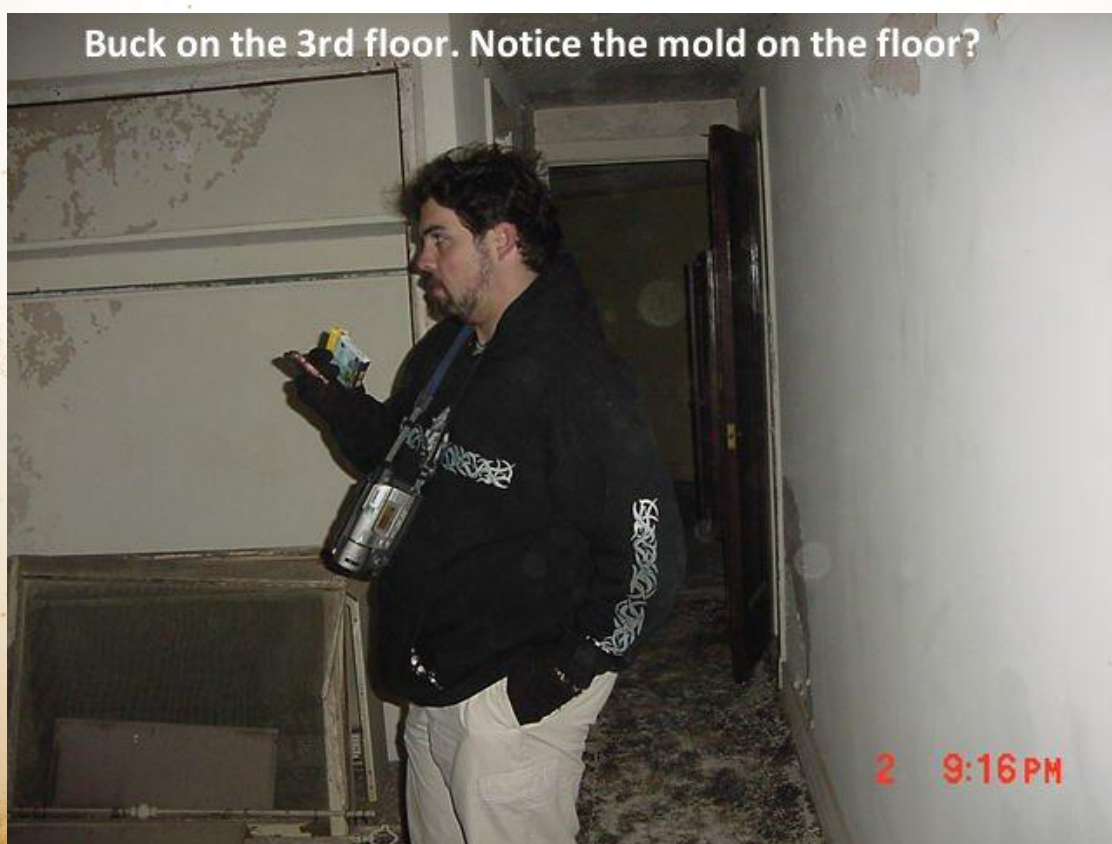




Bob has found the bar



















Inside one of the 7th floor suites reserved for the "Mistress"



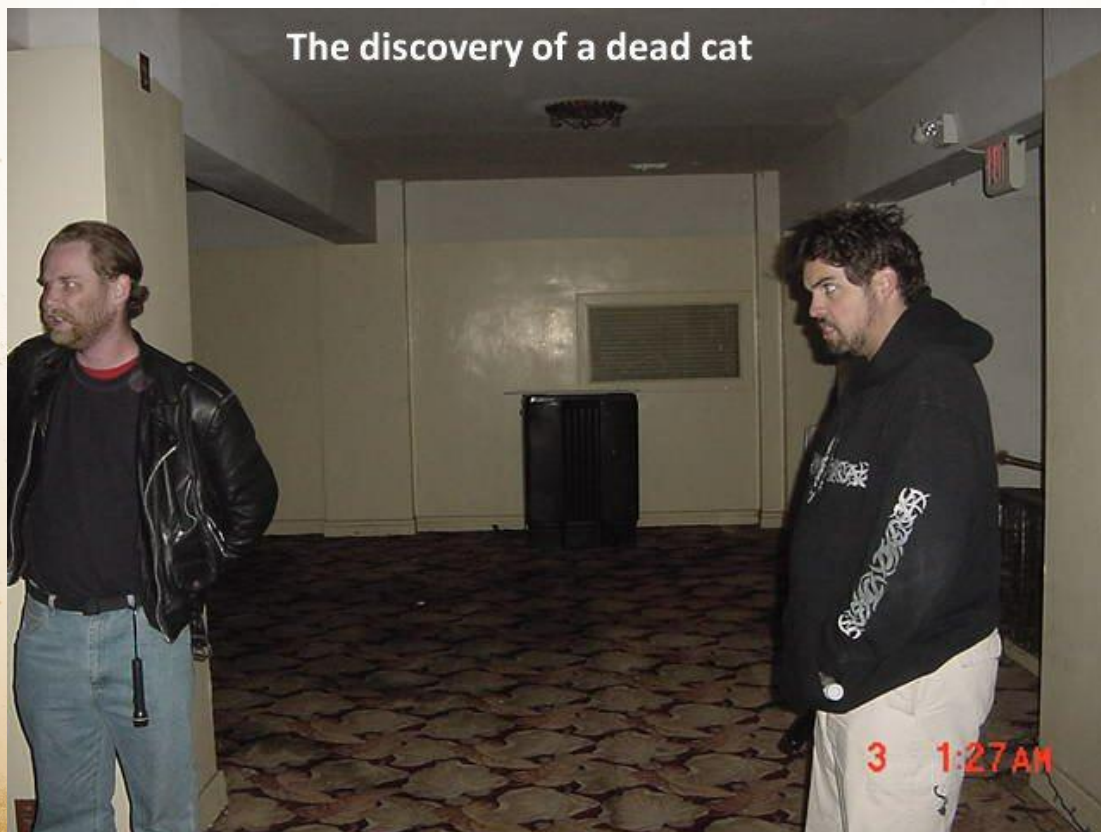








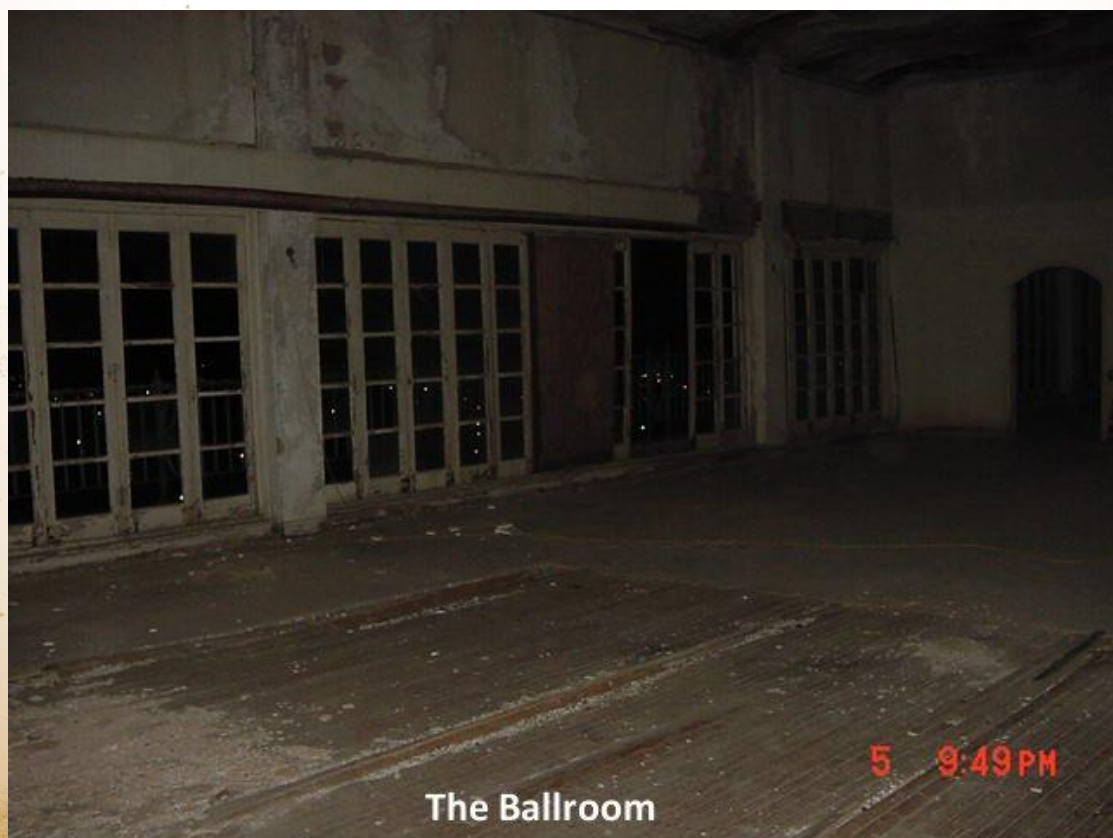








Back section of the lobby

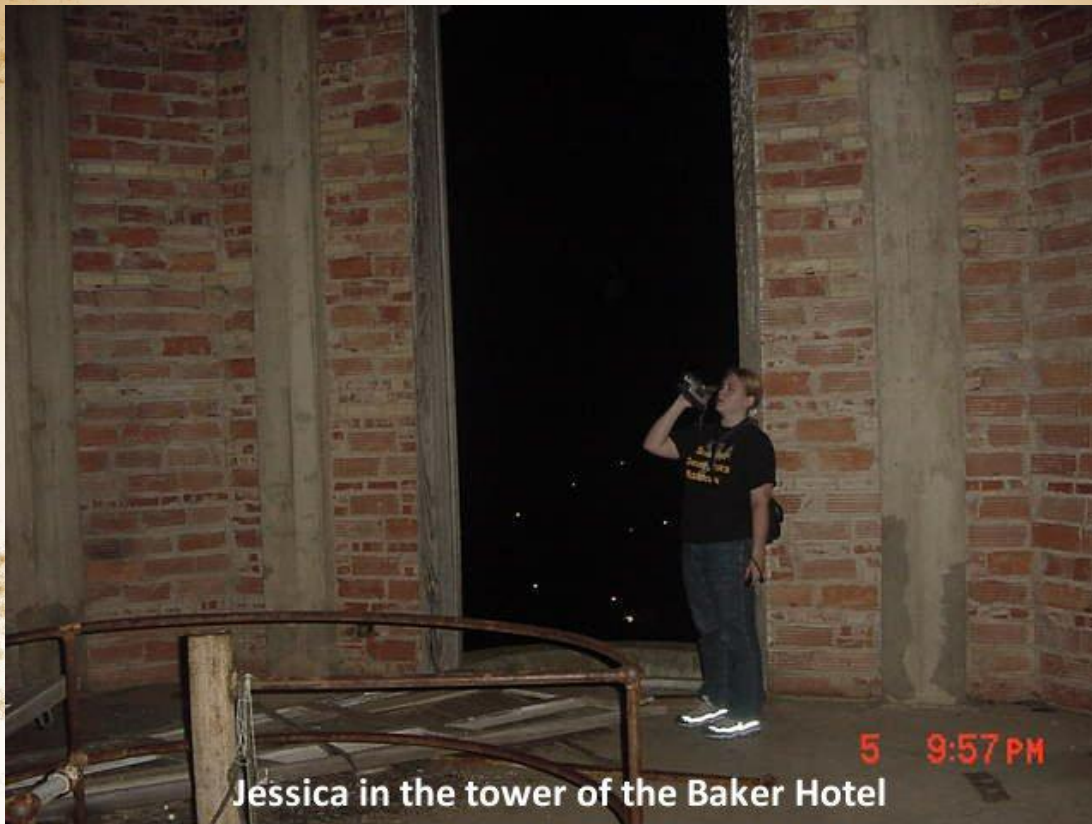


The Ballroom

















Post Office Box 460  
Mineral Wells, Texas 76068

**TO:** Police Personnel  
**FROM:** Jerry L. White, Chief of Police  
**SUBJECT:** Baker Hotel information  
**DATE:** February 5, 2003

J. L. W.

In response to the information requested at the Sergeants and Corporals meeting on February 3, 2003, please find attached the section of the fire code that will be in violation if the rules and regulation are not adhered to. Also attached is a sample of the special events permit required to be issued before an event is authorized to take place. Upon request a copy of the permit should be produced by the person in charge of the special event. If the permit cannot be produced the special event shall be stopped and a citation issued to the person in charge of the event and/or the Fire Chief contacted for further instructions. If the person in charge of the event has a permit but is in violation of the general provisions of the rules and regulation a citation can be issued to the person in charge of the event. Ms. Jayne Catrett has advised me that all persons in charge of special events will be aware of the rules and regulations.

In addition Ms. Catrett has authorized individuals to be in the hotel to provide security, clean-up and repair. A list of these individuals will be provided to the police department and a letter or card of authorization will be produced upon request. Contact Ms. Catrett if a question arises concerning these individuals.

If it is determined a person is trespassing, it is preferred that a trespassing complaint be signed by Ms. Catrett, but if she cannot be located and you have a solid case, the officer should file the complaint. Ms. Catrett's phone numbers are 328-6069 and 452-2739 (cell phone).