



REPORT

THE GRACE MUSEUM

INVESTIGATION



Abilene
Texas
TX009

SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

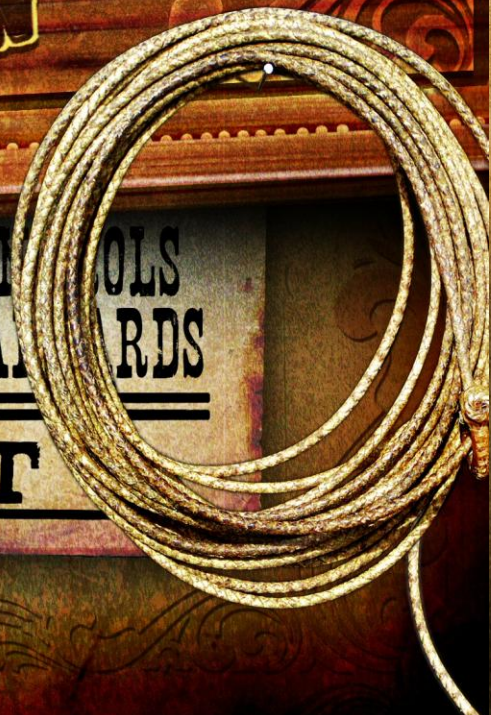


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The word “investigation” is defined as
“a searching inquiry for ascertaining facts; detailed or careful examination.”

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 Grace Museum (formerly the Drake hotel & the Grace Hotel)

102 Cypress St, Abilene, TX 79601

Part 2: Location History

The Hotel Grace was built in 1909 by Col. W. L. Beckham of Greenville, Texas and is located at the corner of Cypress Street and North First Street. The Prairie Style building was initially a three-story structure, but a fourth story was added in the late 1920s. A subsequent renovation removed the main portico, bricked up several main story windows and changed the hotel's name to the Drake Hotel. The Drake Hotel eventually ceased operation and fell into disrepair.

In 1985, a group of preservationists in Abilene, Texas, met to discuss the fate of the old Drake Hotel, a large, four-story structure located prominently in Abilene's downtown district. Once considered Abilene's grandest hotel, the dilapidated facade and badly vandalized interior gave no clue to the building's glorious past. Demolition seemed imminent. This small but determined group of concerned citizens, however, had other ideas.



Originally known as the Hotel Grace, the mission revival style building is one of the oldest in Abilene. Col. WL. Beckham, a hotel builder and operator from Greenville, Texas, built the Hotel Grace in 1909 and named it for his daughter. At the time, the Grace was the major hotel between Fort Worth and El Paso. Located directly across the street from the Texas 6 Pacific Railway depot, it provided a first class welcome to weary travelers.

As years passed, the building saw many changes. It was renamed the Drake in the mid 30s and a fourth story was added to the original three. Locals attended many dances and parties on the roof top terrace and countless games of pool and snooker transpired in the basement. The building was always used as a hotel. The commercial tenants of the building included a barbershop, a basement recreation club (a pool hall), a bus station, and a Western Union office. The Grace Coffee Shop was a favorite downtown restaurant where locals met to discuss the events of the growing West Texas town.



Hotel Grace, one of Abilene's famous hostelries, headquarters for traveling men. Finest hotel structure between Fort Worth and El Paso.

Over the years, the Drake gained a reputation as a "less than respectable establishment." changing ownership many times, and suffering neglect. In the 1950's and 1960's the hotel's decline paralleled that of the railroads. In 1973, the hotel closed with the failure of its fifty-year-old boiler. The building sat empty for almost fifteen years. Vandals and nature wreaked havoc on the once exquisite structure.

Then members of the Abilene Preservation League joined together with representatives of the Abilene Fine Arts Museum to plan a new beginning for the old Hotel Grace. Together they envisioned an alternative use for the building, something that would bring new life to the city's virtually lifeless downtown area.



In a remarkable show of teamwork, the two community organizations joined together to save the building and create an innovative and remarkable cultural and historical gathering place. Following a \$4.8 million campaign, the building began undergoing an intensive restoration and renovation project. Exterior and interior first floor spaces were restored to

their original grandeur using colors and architectural details as they had been in 1909.

Throughout the original ballroom and lobby, capitals atop the columns had crumbled until only one remained intact. A mold was created and new capitals were cast. Today stately columns, lush colors, rich woods, and shining marble grace the lobby, ballroom, and historic stairway. The Loggia, or atrium, was added to the first floor of the original structure.

The Main Gallery on the first floor was restored to become an exhibit gallery for art. Fourth floor hallways were restored to resemble a hotel hallway in 1909. Space that formerly housed overnight guests serves as offices for museum staff.

Part 3: Witnesses

This section identifies the witnesses to the reported activity.

Name	Sex	Connection with reported incident	Interviewed
Larry Garcia*	M	Witness / employee	18 May 1987
Robert Mendoza*	M	Witness / employee	18 May 1987

*Witnesses given aliases are noted by a **

Both of the witnesses we interviewed believed that the 3rd and 4th floors of the building are haunted by "something". Larry thinks it is the spirit of a child who died back when it was the Drake Hotel while Robert is uncertain of the ghost's identity.



The 3rd floor during our second look at the building.

Part 4: Reported Phenomenon

Sounds of footsteps, moving doorknobs and other odd noises are often heard at night, moving through the hallways. No visual phenomena has been reported. Most of the present day "phenomena" seems to be centered around the office spaces of the museum's staff.

We were also shown an old photo which the staff believed to be a picture of the ghost

Part 5: Investigation

Our first investigation of the old building was in 1984 when it was the abandoned and somewhat in ruin Drake Hotel. There were a lot of local stories that the building was haunted but they were all first and second hand stories.



The building was inhabited by stray cat, rats and homeless people and the rumors also suggested that some kind of occult activity was present too. We were able to debunk the later by researching the location and discovering that the building has been used as a "haunted house" during Halloween in previous years.

We also discovered that the homeless men that took shelter in the abandoned rooms were responsible for the "hauntings". They would intentionally try to scare the curious of the building to protect their space and have privacy. Most of these men had "territories" that consisted of certain sections of a particular floor. There appeared to be some sort of agreement to not trespass on others "territory".



We found nothing in the building that one could consider paranormal.

In 2001, we received an e-mail from a employee of the current museum who had found us on the internet. He requested that we take a look at the

location again because several employees have had unusual occurrences and believed the building really was haunted.

We revisited the building to investigate the new claims. the investigation was conducted over three days with different observation teams focused on specific claims. The results of the investigation of those claims are listed below.

1. The sounds of footsteps:

Sounds that resembled footsteps occurred twice during the investigation. In the first instance the sound was traced to the ventilation system. When the thermostat of an HVAC system calls for warm or cold air, the fan on the blower will respond and start to blow (either air warmed by the burners or air cooled by the air conditioner coils). This fills the duct work with air. The pressure inside the ducts increases and the metal duct expands. This expansion is often accompanied by an audible popping noise. The frequency of this popping noise is directly related to the actual shape the duct work in the structure. This occurred on the fourth floor which was still being remodeled. Perhaps the work on the HVAC system on this floor wasn't completed yet.

In the second instance, the sounds seemed to be caused by the building settling and random explainable noises coming from the offices.

2. Moving doorknobs

Robert showed us the office where he had seen a door knob move by itself. After looking at the door we found a explanation.

When you turn the knob the bolt attached to it turns. If you push in the bolt instead, then the knob will turn. When the air conditioning system turns on it causes pressure on the door and therefore pressure on the bolt. This causes the bolt to move inwards and the knob to turn. There is a gap between the door and the door frame where the bolt goes into it. This contributed to the chance of the bolt moving out of the hole which is in the door frame when the door is jarred.

The phenomenon was replicated but closing the door and waiting for the knob to move. In four attempts we were able to get the door knob to move twice.

3. The ghost photo

The picture below is on display at the museum and many of the staff believe it is a picture of the building's ghost. The "ghost" is the smoke looking cloud in the upper center of the photo.



While it could be actual cigarette smoke it does appear that there are two typical developing errors when the negatives were processed. If the film has some odd cloudy marks after development it means it was either not fixed long enough or the fixer has been used so much before that it just didn't do the trick this time around. This problem is generally corrected by re-soaking your film in fixer for a few more minutes, but that was not done in this case.

The second developing error is the crescent shaped mark which most people think is the image of a man. This is caused by kinking or buckling the film during loading or forcing the film onto the spiral or cross threading the film in the grooves during the developing process.

Part 6: Conclusion

All of the reported phenomenon were identified and explained.

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Part 7: Site Photographs



The Lobby



The Ballroom



Entering the second floor

