



Illustration: Wild West Design

Mysterious Manifestations of Santa Cruz

Local lore boasts a collection of apparitions, curses, and hauntings

By Mary Spicuzza

Legend has it that the White Lady — one of Santa Cruz's oldest and most famous ghosts — suffered greatly during her short life. It's said that she arrived in the 1870s, when an old German alcoholic sent away for a beautiful mail-order bride from Massachusetts. They married and settled in his tiny house overlooking Ocean Street Extension.

But the marriage took a nasty turn. The husband supposedly would get drunk each night, force his young bride to wear her wedding dress, and viciously beat her. And when she confided in her friends about her plans to leave him, he found out and beat her to death, and then decapitated her.

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There may be plenty of friendly ghosts out there, but the White Lady does not appear to be one of them. She is said to be haunting the hills of Santa Cruz, out for revenge. Even so, there is a long tradition of people getting quite friendly at the White Lady's old haunt —

over the years the house has been a popular make-out spot for local teenagers.

Santa Cruzans tend to take the occasional ghost in stride, perhaps because of our impressively long history of strange happenings. The White Lady is just one of many famous ghosts who have been haunting us for more than a century.

Around the same time that the White Lady met her untimely death, a man named William Waddell suffered his own tragedy while hunting. Waddell, an early pioneer who

(Above) The White Lady and her house have become one of Santa Cruz's most haunting tales. In this artist rendering the White Lady floats from the entrance of the Evergreen Cemetery which dates back to 1850.

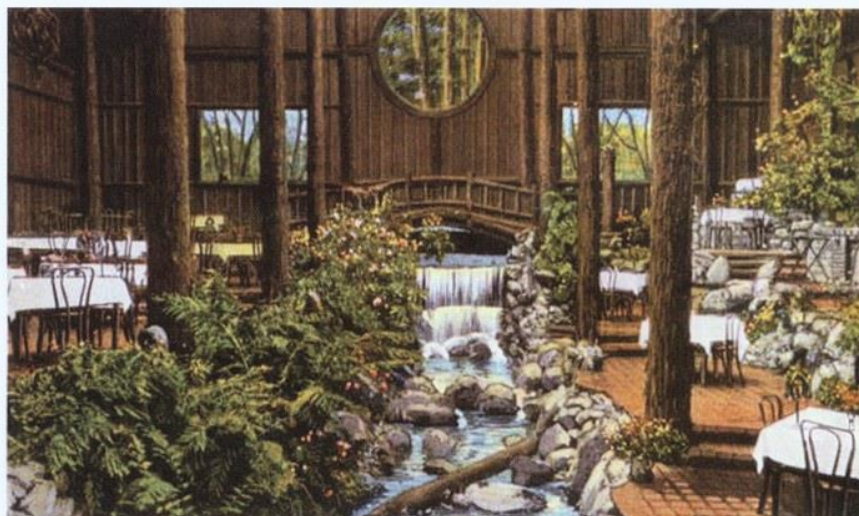


Photo: Mickey Carroll Collection

worked at a lumber mill and built a wharf for shipping lumber at what's now Waddell Creek, was mauled by a bear, and his arm was mangled so severely it had to be amputated. (Some say he got too close to a bear cub, angering a protective mother bear, which is never a good idea.) His arm was said to have been buried, but when he died shortly afterward from his bear-attack injuries, his amputated arm was nowhere to be found.

For years, residents and passers-by near Waddell Creek, on what is now Highway 1, have told stories of mysteriously losing things — and William Waddell's wayward arm has long been a suspect. Pies cooling in open windows. Lingerie. Laundry hanging on clotheslines. Nothing seems to be safe.

So many things have disappeared in the area that stagecoach drivers used to warn passengers gathered around the campfire on foggy nights to stay close and keep a close watch for the sticky fingers of Waddell's missing arm.

Another spot known for ghosts is the beautiful Brookdale Lodge, currently known as the Brookdale Inn & Spa. Currently closed for renovations, it is nestled between Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek on Highway 9. Originally built in 1890, the unique spot has long been known for the stream running through it, and for its enormous popularity spanning from the Prohibition Era to the 1950s. Famous guests included Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. And a few ghosts.

The best-known Brookdale ghost is Sarah. It's believed that little Sarah Logan, the niece of the lodge's creator, Judge James Harvey Logan, drowned in the creek as a young girl. Sarah is still said to make frequent

postmortem appearances at the lodge. Visitors have reported seeing a little girl in vintage clothing asking for help, hearing mysterious big band music echoing through empty rooms, feeling cool spots, and smell-

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The lodge's troubles have continued for decades, including repeated fires on various parts of the property. The most recent was in August 2009, when a massive fire destroyed part of the historic building. It was deemed suspicious, and late last year a federal grand jury indicted the former owner on charges of wire fraud and making false statements to a bank after the fire.

These creaky old buildings seem to just beg ghosts to move in. The Rispin Mansion in Capitola is nearly a century old, and in recent years has increasingly spurred the interests of ghost hunters. The four-story, 22-room manor was built in 1921 by a wealthy real estate tycoon, Henry Allen Rispin, who fell on hard times, died penniless, and was buried in an unmarked pauper's grave in San Francisco.

(Above) Ben Lomond's Brookdale Lodge has had many eminent guests, but the most acclaimed could be the ghost of Sarah, a young girl who drowned in the hotel's famous stream and has never checked out.

After that, the mansion was sold first to a speculator, and then to a Catholic order that used it as a convent until 1957. But the place reportedly was too cold for the nuns. Since the sisters moved out, the Rispin Mansion has hosted hippie squatters, graffiti writers, and plenty of teenagers who've broken into the mansion as a rite of passage. It's increasingly believed to have supernatural guests as well, which may explain why it has had such a difficult time becoming anything but an abandoned old building.

Then there's the so-called "Psycho" mansion. The historic Beach Hill building on Front Street now is an assisted living facility with a cheery name — Sunshine Villa — but the place definitely has known some darker days.

The known history of the property dates back to the 1860s or 1870s, when the wealthy Kittredge family built a mansion and extensive garden there, on what many believe was once sacred Ohlone Indian land. The property changed hands frequently for almost a century, and the old mansion fell further into disrepair with each passing owner. At one point, when it was abandoned, the place was said to have been a haven for drug dealers and Satanists seeking spots for rituals.

The mansion became Hotel McCray in the 1960s, but the son of its new owners reported seeing ghosts there. The old behemoth of a building apparently was creepy

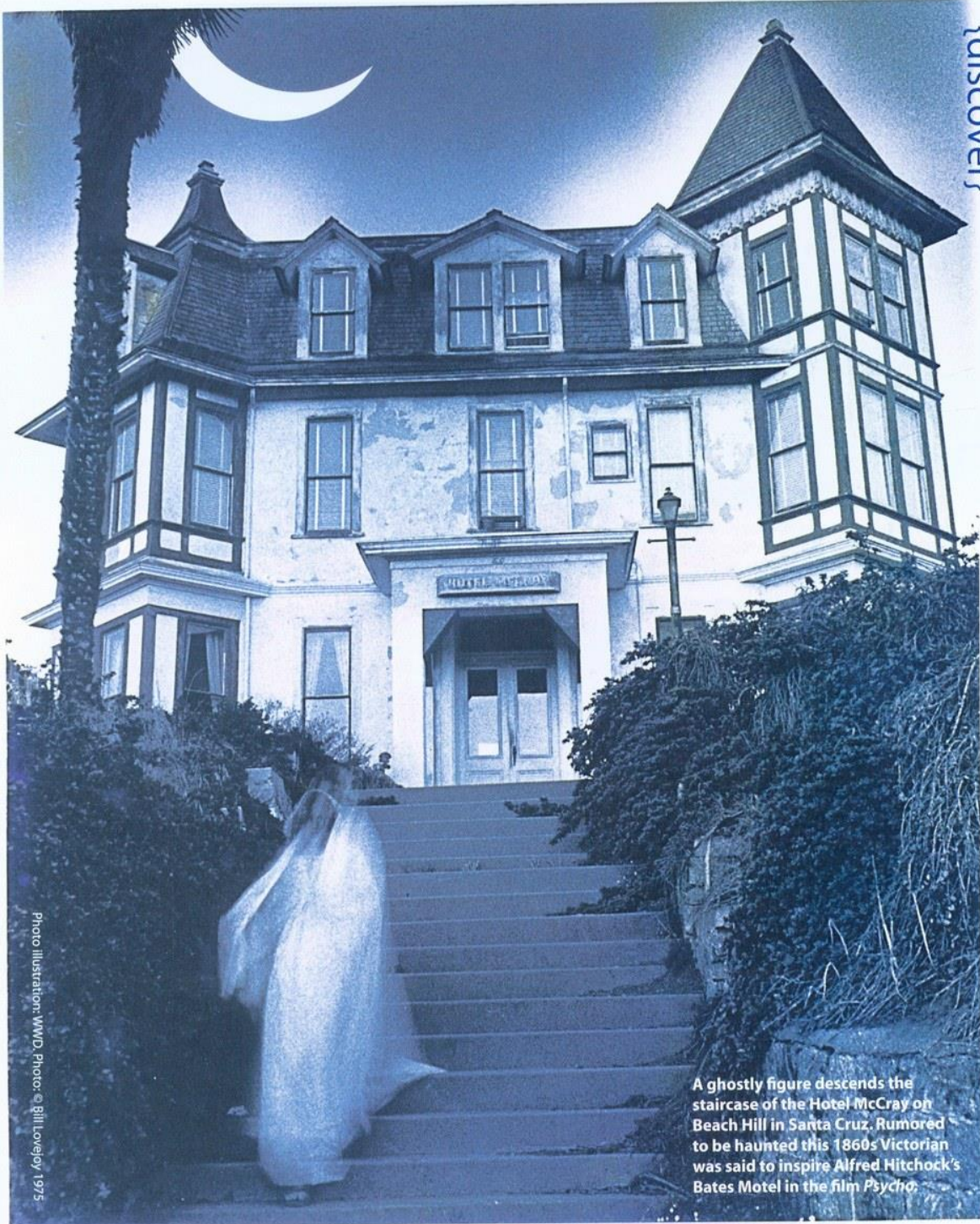
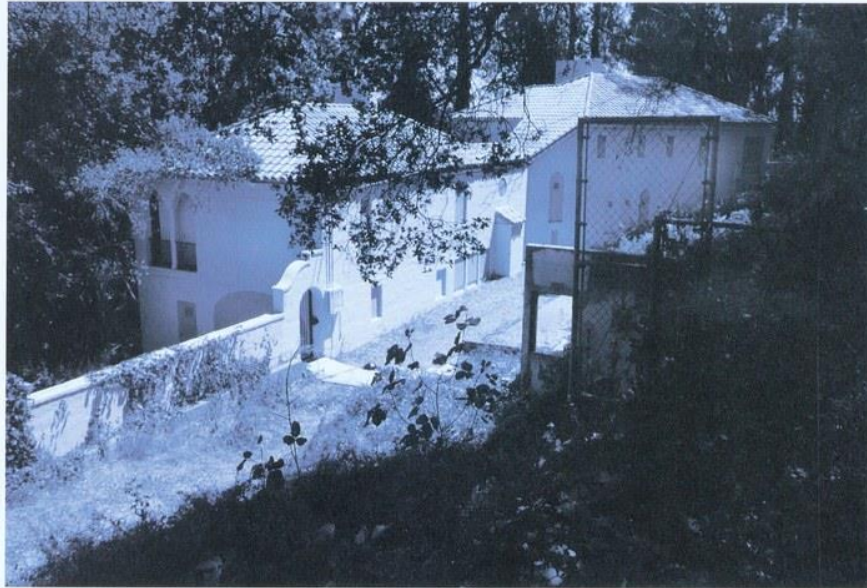


Photo Illustration: WWD. Photo: © Bill Lovejoy 1975

A ghostly figure descends the staircase of the Hotel McCray on Beach Hill in Santa Cruz. Rumored to be haunted this 1860s Victorian was said to inspire Alfred Hitchcock's Bates Motel in the film *Psycho*.



enough to spook Alfred Hitchcock, who's rumored to have used it as his inspiration for the notorious Bates Mansion in "Psycho."

Hitchcock found plenty of creepy diversions in Santa Cruz, where villains aren't limited to the human realm. In August 1961 several Eastside neighborhoods, stretching from Pleasure Point to Rio Del Mar, experienced a bizarre incident involving sooty shearwater seabirds. Newspaper reports from the time tell of people being awakened in the middle of the night by odd noises, only to discover it was hundreds of birds slamming into their homes. Those who ran outside with flashlights, or tried to escape in their cars, were swarmed as the birds flew toward their lights. By dawn, the streets were covered with hundreds of bird bodies. And because the shearwaters had just eaten, disgorged bits of fish skeletons and an "overpowering fishy stench" also covered the Eastside, witnesses said.

The freakish invasion drew the attention of Hitchcock, who kept a home in Scotts Valley. He directed his classic film, "The Birds," just a couple of years later, with a memorable mini-monologue about the events in Santa Cruz. Some attributed the sooty shearwaters' freak flight of fancy to a heavy fog; others claimed that a rare toxin in the bay triggered the phenomenon, but no one could say for sure what caused the attack. Two truckloads of bird bodies were gathered and destroyed.

No word yet on whether any of their feathered ghosts have remained to haunt the skies.

(Above) The century-old Rispin Mansion, or Monastery, in Capitola may be more cursed than haunted. Since its original owner, Henry Allen Rispin, fell on hard times and moved on it has remained mostly vacant.



Poster: © Universal Pictures

(Above) A 1961 invasion of sooty shearwaters seabirds into Santa Cruz neighborhoods combined with a novelette *The Birds*, by British writer Daphne du Maurier, inspired Santa Cruz resident and film director Alfred Hitchcock to produce the 1963 film *The Birds*.