

Haunted Tombstone



Stephanie Caffall / The Tombstone Epitaph

Tombstone City Marshal Jeff Mitchell looks out a window in the old Town Hall, currently vacant and rumored to be haunted.

Town too tough to die has ghosts too stubborn to leave

By Stephanie Caffall
Tombstone Epitaph

It was a rainy Friday afternoon when Melissa McFadden, a 51-year-old New Jersey woman, sat quietly across a clairvoyant with a vision of the past that would shape her future.

"You were a lady of the evening in an Old West theatre. Clairese was your name and you were killed in some kind of public building," she told her.

In 2008, McFadden had watched "Tombstone," Hollywood's version of "The Town Too Tough To Die." All of this made sense to her.

The clairvoyant had more: McFadden was killed because she had seen or witnessed something she shouldn't have. Her neck was broken—that explained the constant pain she had felt in her neck for as long as she could remember, she reasoned—and her body was dumped in the desert.

Shortly after, McFadden sold and got rid of almost everything she owned and drove two and a half days to start a new life with old meaning.

She is not alone; Tombstone has its share of folks who come here looking for past lives. There's a growing industry catering to the concept of Tombstone as a haunted town.

"You're going to feel the chill from the long lost departed," said City Marshal Jeff Mitchell as he opened the door to the old, no longer used, Tombstone City Hall.

He explained that those who work in the marshal's office late at night have heard things they cannot explain.

"I was told by a deputy they were here one night and they heard a door open and close," Mitchell said. "There's only one door back there. They went back there to see if there was someone in there and there was no one there."

"I've heard footsteps in here all the time," Mitchell added.

Penny Dilley, 66, and her husband Dave, 67, first visited Tombstone in 2012 from Vancouver, Wash. One of the many things they did was go to the infamous Bird Cage Theatre, cited by paranormal investigators from Syfy's "Ghost Hunters" and Travel Channel's "Ghost Adventures" as one of the most haunted places in the United States.

"The first time we ever went on the tour I kept getting touched on my left leg and it's just a feeling of like tin-

gling and I happened to say there's something touching my left leg," Penny Dilley said.

A tour guide told her that it was most likely the spirit of a 7-year-old boy named Josh.

"He always goes to the left leg and it's usually always a female," the tour guide told Dilley.

Shortly after the ghost tour at the Bird Cage Theatre, the couple met two sisters, Stacey Corbin, 45, and Nora Weed, 53. Together, the sisters hold nightly ghost tours at the Occidental Theatre, a building formerly known as Tombstone's morgue. The name of the building will be changing soon.

"They run gunfights shows out there during the day and when the new owner took the building over, he knew I did ghost investigations as a hobby so he asked me if I'd be interested in hosting them at night," said Corbin.

While on the tour, the couple was told about their grandchild. However, the Dilleys didn't have any grandchildren at the time. After returning home to Washington, two months later, the couple learned that their daughter was due in October 2013.

After making friends and keeping in touch with a few Tombstone locals, the couple came back to Tombstone for a two-week vacation in February. They visited the Doc Holliday Gunfight Palace again. Their experiences this

time, however, were different.

"I got touched," Penny Dilley said. "I had something playing with my hair, I could just feel somebody's finger just twisting my hair."

"I got poked twice at the morgue," her husband added. "The first time I dismissed it because I wasn't sure. But then the second time, I said OK, that's it."

Dave Dilley explained that on this ghost tour something responded to questions they asked, "by turning flashlights on and off, the ghosts answered questions."

"We're not paranormal nuts," he added. "But there's nothing like experiencing it for yourself because there's no denying it."

To McFadden, who works for the Red Buffalo Trading Co. on Tombstone's main stretch, the Dilley's experiences do not surprise her. She's heard the footsteps walking home late at night.

"You're going to feel the chill from the long lost departed."

-Jeff Mitchell
City Marshal

Ghost Tours

The Paranormal Sister Investigators at Occidental Theatre

521 E. Allen Street
(520) 457-2425
Nightly from 8 p.m.-9 p.m. and 10 p.m.-11 p.m.
\$20 per hour
NOTE: Any evidence captured is available for purchase on DVD

Tombstone's Gunfighter & Ghost Tour

417 E. Allen Street
(520) 255-0474
Fridays and Saturdays; Walking tour at 8 p.m.; O.K. Corral Investigation at 9:30 p.m.
\$15 for adults, \$10 for children 12 and younger

Tombstone Ghost and Murder Tour

4th and Toughnut Street
(520) 955-3090
Fridays and Saturdays at 6

p.m.
\$15 for adults, \$10 for children 12 years and younger

Bird Cage Ghost Tour

535 E. Allen Street
(520) 457-3421
Nightly at 8 p.m., maximum of 20 guests
If the 8 p.m. tour fills, additional tours will start at 9:30 p.m. and possibly 11 p.m.
\$20 per person
Must be 18 or older

19th Annual Rose Tree Festival brings parade and live music

By Amanda Bodenstein
The Tombstone Epitaph

The trunk twists and gnarls, snaking up to offshoots that sprout white blossoms at their peak of blooming in April. These buds create a fragrant canopy at their height.

For the past 18 years, Tombstone has celebrated this historic rose bush, the largest in the world, according to Guinness Book of World Records.

On April 11-13, the town will mark the 19th Annual Rose Tree Festival to honor its historic tree, a Lady Banksia that dates back 129 years.

The event is intended to show off the "softer side of Tombstone," said Marcia Spitler, an employee at the museum. It also honors Tombstone's pioneer families that planted the

If you go

What: 19th Annual Rose Tree Festival
Where: Historic Downtown & Rose Tree Museum
When: April 11-13.
Cost: Free.
Details: Call 1-520-457-3326, or tombstone-chamber.com/Rose-Tree-Festival

tree back in the 1880s.

The tree is located at the museum on Fourth Street between Allen and Toughnut streets and covers more than 9,000 square feet.

"The trunk itself is about 15 feet around," Spitler said. "It will be loaded with millions of

white blooms."

The festival starts at 6 p.m., April 11, with the crowning of the Rose Queen and her court beneath the tree, followed by a one-man show by High Chaparral's Don Collier at 7 p.m. in the Tombstone Courthouse.

On April 12 at 1 p.m., the Rose Tree parade will take off down Allen Street, which will include live entertainment including mariachi street music, a cakewalk and another performance by Collier at the Tombstone Courthouse. At 7 p.m., the Tombstone Vigilette Variety Show will take place in the historic Schieffelin Hall.

Activities will be held throughout the day on April 13, including a pet parade sponsored by the Tombstone Small Animal Shelter and Tombstone Vigilante's skits on Allen Street.



Photo courtesy of Penny Germain

Tombstone's Annual Rose Festival will celebrate the blooming of the world's largest rose tree on April 11-13.