

These businesses have haunted histories

By Cindy Mich
Special to the Lakes Edition

As humans, we are fascinated by the echoes and energy of souls who have passed on in life. There is both a sense of fear and fascination surrounding paranormal presences.

It is an eerie and exciting experience to visit a property or place of business which has had sightings of spirits. Among the areas described in this article are an antique shop and a remarkable restaurant. Both have had visits by unusual visitors.

Elsing's Second Hand Shop is a Stoughton store which has been the bearer of sights and sounds of ghosts both old and out-of-sorts.

The history of this architectural angel holder stems back to 1891. The house held a few labels long before being a building of antiques. It was formerly a hotel and restaurant, namely The Grand Hotel, back in the 1920s. The business of bootlegging was conducted within the walls of the Grand, along with acting as a bordello for the town businessmen. The elite and eccentric of that time were popular patrons, so it has been said. Not surprisingly, activities of an illegal nature tend to attract the attention of the town police. The police chief had committed suicide on site – he shattered a window and dropped down to his death.

Jumping ahead to the year 2004 finds Phil and Vicky Elsing purchasing this very property. They share the stock with their door greeter, Baxter the dog. The couple had crossed cities selling their goods at fairs and flea markets, then chose to share their treasures with this town.

The wares of this warm couple are cleverly spread through the two floors of this building. The first floor holds the main showroom, storage space, and a children's corner. It beholds an abundance of fine furniture and glorious glassware, along with tons of toys and some awesome antiques.

I imagine many pieces hold poignancy to the present proprietors. On the lower level, one finds furniture, books and albums, plus a party room for events.

History has told tales of hauntings within this threshold of glamorous goods, notably, sounds of glass smashing on the second floor, which is where the suicide was said to have happened. Some people claim to see and/or hear a small child in out-of-date clothing crying.

When Vicky initially took ownership, she would hear music play from other parts of the building as she was painting. It would start and stop without warning. Phil has also observed objects levitate, rising up to eighteen inches. The couple have come to embrace their spiritual

sojourners and invite all to follow in their footsteps.

Elsing's Second Hand Shop is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, Thursday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more details, visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Elsings-2nd-Hand-Shop-174698251091.

Our second specialty business also beholds some true ties to the "gangsters" of the 1920s.

The "Terrible" Toughy, a.k.a. Roger, ran a chunk of the Chicago mafia, so he shared his success with his brother Eddie. He elected to make Madison the birthplace of the

beloved Eddie's Wonder Bar. The original date of development is 1929, and the bar became a safe haven for those running from the law. A place to hang your hat while you and your pals enjoyed some great gin and fabulous food.

Throughout the years, the bar changed ownership a total of four times, with its last official change being this spring.

The main menu consists of steak and seafood; however, their libations list is sprinkled with a slew of cocktails that would shake a grin from Sinatra himself. There is The Don, The Under Boss, The Godfather and The La Costra

Nostra, fashioned to pacify followers of Gotti or Gambino. Tributes to the screen stars include The Marilyn Monroe and The Sinatra. Even better is the budgetary benefit from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., as all wine and martinis are \$2 off, while wine is \$1 off.

So what kind of old souls may meander through these halls? Well, a 1930s wise guy along with a ravishingly beautiful redhead have been spotted on site. Footsteps and falling pictures are commonplace to this restaurant. Creepy sounds, along with involuntary chair movements and clinking glasses after closing time are sure to scare.

Others have even stated they can feel the presence of phantoms following them or fingers poking. Lastly, basement chairs can be heard moving or making noise.

To get a glimpse of past scares and potential sheer screams of fun, visit

The Wonder Bar Monday through Saturday. The bar begins service at 4 p.m., with dinner available after 5 p.m. During the summer, the restaurant is closed on Mondays. The Wonder Bar's official website is www.wonderbarmadison.com.



The Wonder Bar is located at 222 E. Olin Ave. in Madison. (Photo submitted by Cindy Mich)



Elsing's 2nd Hand Shop is located at 421 E. Main St. in Stoughton. (Photo submitted by Cindy Mich)

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