



Stave Falls Dam was first visualized in the 1890's

Mission – August 2020

Our much anticipated visit to the Stave Powerhouse was almost thwarted as we rolled up along the long gravel driveway at dusk in late August of 2020. We came upon a security guard who politely informed us we wouldn't be able to enter as the main gate to the outside was closed due to film crews being on site. Luckily, our disappointment was fleeting as we realized if there is a main entrance, this being the BC forest, there is also, undoubtedly, a back way in. We drove along a rolling, twisty road as the setting sun still blazed with plenty of daylight. And plenty of daylight at this particular location is a welcome thing. The powerhouse is located in a very wooded and watery area.

Stave Lake is a popular weekend destination for small boats, swimmers and picnicking families by day. The lake is quite a distance from the powerhouse itself but human activity can easily be heard echoing through the shadowy foliage which gives visitors deep in the wood a sense of comfort with faint, distant reminders they are not completely alone. However, dusk on a weekday brings forth solitude so a trip into the woods is a much more lonely experience. There are a couple of paths which lead to the powerhouse—a direct route which is paved and cuts through a parking lot or the more interesting and adventurous path through the woods. Naturally, we picked the wooded path. Beautifully lined with tall, looming trees the trail is speckled with elaborate, intricate shadows. In the anticipation of the evening we felt a sense of

urgency as we were aware how quickly the light can go out nestled within a mountainous area. But having our mission in mind, we focused, taking in the symphony of sounds. The birds chirped their friendly, cautionary songs safely tucked up in their evening roosts as leaves rustled with sounds of water trickling alongside the crunch of our footsteps.

At the moment, the inside of The Stave Powerhouse is closed to visitors but the outside does not disappoint. The dam, the powerhouse and power grids are embedded amidst the jagged rock and trees. Both elements co-exist in stark contrast to each other yet partner to tell the story of BC's steady progress from past to present. The surrounding natural beauty wraps around the sprawl of an impressive modern day structure which supplied BC with power for almost a century. The powerhouse was once BC's largest hydroelectric power source and it is currently designated as a National Historic Site. Today it serves as a tourist attraction which holds demonstrations of equipment, features interactive exhibits, archival photos, hosts workshops and serves as a resource for information about BC's human heritage and the province's continued commitment to clean energy and conservation efforts.



Construction began on the powerhouse in 1909 and it was opened in 1912. Visions for the powerhouse began around the 1890's and in 1895 Stave Lake Electric and Power Company was given permission to research the location and to study the falls. The Stave Falls Dam was raised in September 1925 and by that time there were five generators successfully in operation. Construction of the Blind Slough Dam was completed the next year followed by Alouette Dam in 1928. Unfortunately, by 1995 the powerhouse was no longer efficient and was difficult to maintain. Today it proudly stands as a pertinent information and education centre with much to see. There is even an electric car on display from 1912! We can't wait until the visitor centre opens so that we can explore inside. For the time being, however, we were excited to be able to wander the grounds to have a look at all of the facets which make up this impressive engineering feat.

Once a busy place with crews hard at work it's not a surprise that the powerhouse has seemingly kept some of its momentum of activity. Several noted mysterious occurrences have been part of the powerhouse's history for quite some time and it is believed to be the most haunted location in BC. There have been reports of phantoms or shadow figures seen by staff, voices heard echoing in various sections inside the powerhouse and loud banging heard as well as sounds of furniture being moved when there is no one in the building. Are these former employees working, packing up equipment and still going about their day? Being a centre open to the general public it's not unusual to hear displays running and the sounds of families enjoying the guided tours, however, these sounds have also been heard by staff after hours

once all visitors have gone for the day. Tour guides have had eerie experiences of hearing machinery going, displays have started up on their own and elevators open and close with no one on them. One tour guide remembers taking a few steps backwards and accidentally bumping into someone only to look over her shoulder and discover that no one was there. One staff member shared she was the first to arrive one morning and as she unlocked the doors and turned off the alarm she heard man's voice yell "hello?" Another staff person heard her name called in an empty area of the powerhouse when she knew she was the only one there while another employee recalls being by herself, startled when catching a glimpse in a window of a dark haired man behind her. Who are these ghostly presences and why do they so often make themselves known here?



These pulleys were used by the Stave Lake Logging Company

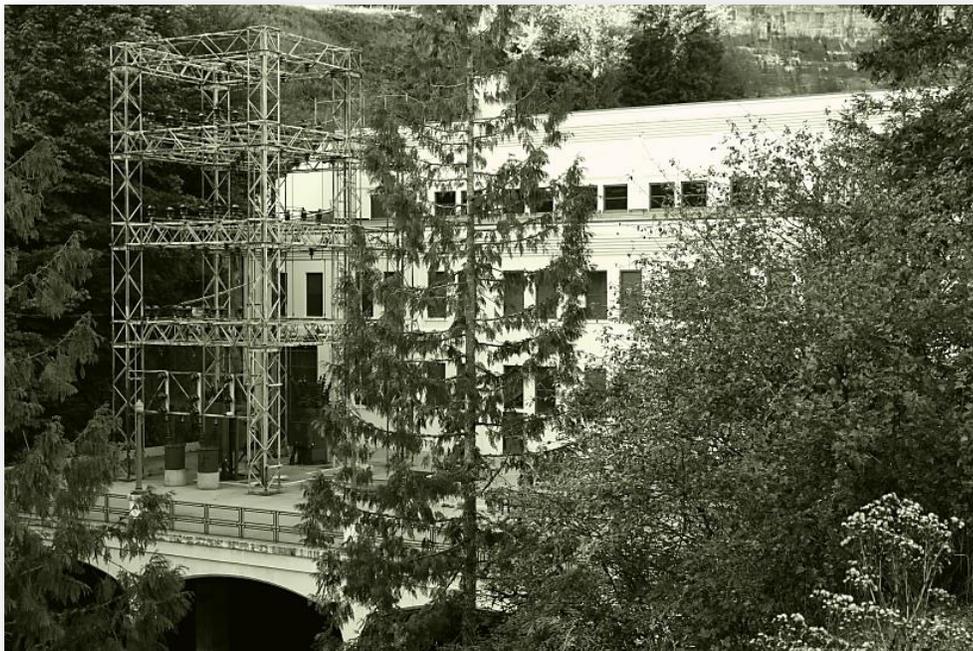
The daylight continued to cooperate so while there was no one else around we quietly crept about the grounds capturing some satisfying photos. Standing near the front of the locked entrance to the visitor centre water rhythmically swished below as we took our time surveying the grounds, making our way around the periphery of the powerhouse. We made sure to pay attention to the windows of the building as not all of the paranormal activity experienced is confined to visitors on the inside. People outside who have toured the grounds have seen someone in the building walking past the windows along the top floor. This would be quite impossible as there isn't actually a top floor, only windows. Even outdoors we felt like we weren't totally alone as the heart of the powerhouse continues to beat. The forest surrounding the area is so alive it gave us the feeling we were constantly watched by invisible eyes inside the trees.

As daylight dwindled we decided to try a couple of EVP sessions to see if we could pick up anything on the outside. We were doubtful about capturing anything outdoors as most of the

activity reported by individuals was experienced inside, though, when researching and exploring a haunted location we never want to limit ourselves. While on location outside we listened back to some recordings and didn't seem to have caught any EVP—this time.

We were thrilled with our outdoor visit of the Stave Power House in Mission, BC as we watched the grand structure slowly begin to transform into a great silhouette against a gradually darkening backdrop. As with many haunted locations there are often electronic issues and even though this was once a hub of energy output the powerhouse encounters its share of electrical challenges and malfunctions. A common belief with ghostly activity is that paranormal energy is attracted to areas with water nearby so this might be one element which offers an explanation for the high level of paranormal activity at this location. Also once being a major power source, Stave Falls Powerhouse might be a magnet for unexplained energies which causes them to linger or perhaps, new energies might somehow get caught up here.

We look forward to the powerhouse re-opening eventually so that we can investigate the inside and also learn about the daily operations that went on in a place where the churning turbines inside were once so loud that workers had to communicate by hand signals. The sounds of machinery dominated the powerhouse for decades drowning out all of the voices and daily human sounds of the people who worked here and went about their routines. Today, no longer used for the same purpose as it once was, the powerhouse, by comparison, is a much quieter place and the ghosts seem to be taking the opportunity to be seen and heard every chance they get.



The old powerhouse currently serves as a tourist attraction