





A Trick of the Light at Carson Hot Springs



Then

The mineral rich hot springs in Carson, Washington were discovered in 1876 by Isadore St. Martin. While on a hunting expedition, he was curious to see steam rising from the banks of the Wind River. Native Americans had used hot springs for generations for their great medicinal properties. His wife, Margaret, suffering from painful neuralgia, fueled a thought the spring might offer relief for her symptoms.



St. Martin filed an Indian Homestead claim on the land and in 1897, began construction on the St. Martin Hotel. Completed in 1901, the hotel served as an escape to the country for those who chose to wander the banks, finding their own natural hot springs experience. A crude bathhouse was erected on the banks of the river in the early 1900's. In 1923, cabins and the multi-unit bathhouse we know today, were added to the property.



Despite the serenity surrounding the historic hotel, things did not remain that way. One day in the spring of 1910, neighbor Robert "Old Man" Brown paid a visit to St. Martin. Isadore, it seems, did not appreciate Brown's comments questioning the attributes of the "healing" waters. As the argument escalated, Isadore demanded that his neighbor leave. Dissatisfied with Brown's lack of haste, the hotelier grabbed him by the collar and wrangled his neighbor forward. Reaching the porch, Brown flailed, the knife he held in his hand (one story suggesting he was cutting chunks of apple with it) struck St. Martin just shy of his heart. Isadore stumbled into the lobby of the hotel, grasping his chest and calling for his wife. He died on the third floor of the hotel that he had built, the hotel with the healing waters that offered comfort to his wife.

The tales of Margaret's passing are less defined. Some say she died shortly after Isadore, her grief too much for her. One report suggested that she died in a similar fate as her husband. Distrusting of banks, she was said to have had a cache of gold buried in hundreds of deposits in the woods surrounding the property. Someone privy to her habit is



reported to have killed her on the property in hopes of grabbing some of her bounty. The final report, lists her passing at the end of a battle with pneumonia, decades after her husband's passing.

Now

A trip to Carson Hot Springs Spa and Golf Resort brings you face to face with the original façade of the historic St. Martin Hotel and bathhouse. Flanking either side of the St. Martin are two modern structures where guests now call home during their stay. Nestled against the hillside, the modern guest rooms offer a peaceful respite in the gorgeous natural setting. Despite a host of amenities at the property, one item you'll find missing in the guest rooms is a television. Forced independence from the appliance has pitted many a visitor to find themselves strolling a nature trail, invoking a delightful family game night or finally finishing that novel they had been promising to complete.



Opposite the current fleet of units is an entirely new building housing upgraded rooms in nearly every facet, including in-room mineral baths. Most units back to the thick wilderness and Wind River running below. Opening for the new section has yet to be announced.



Don't worry; with all of that peace and solitude, you won't be bored at Carson Hot Springs Resort. Their Elk Ridge Golf Course opened in 2012 and along with wonderful greens, holds unparalleled vistas for golf in the Columbia River Gorge. A restaurant and grill attached to the golf course pro-shop means a good meal while you are there. The spa awaits to pamper you with a massage, sauna or luxurious wrap.

And then there is the bathhouse. Divided into men's and women's quarters, the bathhouse is largely as it would have been in the 1930's. The original claw-foot tubs stand unimpaired by decades of service. Seeing the rows of tubs in a line is a trip back in time itself. The waters that flow into the bath are direct from the Wind River. The temperature and minerals are a treat from nature with no alteration in their path.

Ghost Stories

Ghost stories at Carson Hot Springs Resort, the St. Martin Hotel in particular, are notorious throughout the Pacific Northwest. The activity has been chronicled in countless books, articles and an even a television show. As in most cases, the staff has not historically shared the property's darker side proactively. When pressed, most crack a little smile admitting they have had a run in or two.



As in so many cases, footsteps are a prevalent occurrence at the St. Martin. What makes the case here so compelling is that they so often come from the little-used second floor and in particular, from the closed and abandoned third floor. For the staff at Carson Hot Springs, the footsteps are common, even after the upper floors have been visually swept and locked down for the night.

Sightings of shadows is another common event at Carson Hot Springs. Primarily in the original part of the hotel, but also in the bathhouse, though the claims in the bathhouse are infrequent and unverified. Along with the shadows, claims of full apparitions have been quoted. While most hunches would indict Isadore St. Martin for the accounts of activity, all claims of seeing a figure have reported it as being a female.

The claims in the St. Martin also include more direct interaction. Hotel staff that have stayed in rooms on the second floor are said to have been visited by an unseen guest. Impressions in the bed and covers being pulled lightly, reportedly not in a menacing way, but almost a care-taking fashion put a unique spin on the stories.

As one ghost hunting group wandered the halls, the word "abomination" was reportedly whispered hoarsely by no one within the group.

As staff were stringing Christmas lights in the lobby, the strings was being pulled and the lights flickered. More irritated than frightened, the worker snapped, "Cut it out, Isadore!" and the nuisance stopped.



The most intriguing story was one where a staff member was alone setting up for an event. In the St. Martin's rec room, an ice scoop was hurled across the room. She had no doubt she was the only one there and the ice machine was in her view. No one could have been there without her taking notice.

Whether the haunts are the efforts of Margaret, that of a former female employee or Isadore himself, there are plenty of tales with the historic property as the backdrop. Isadore, Margaret and other members of the St. Martin family keep vigil over the springs in physical form too. The family cemetery plot occupies a small fenced square between the golf course and hotel.

The Hunt

Walking up the gentle slope with the setting sun slipping behind the contours of the Gorge, the St. Martin Hotel is an imposing site. Its tall façade and sepia-aged windows beg for a shadow to slip out of frame or a door to groan as you enter. As I made my way to the foyer, a bat streaked overhead, its black body contrasted to the blue-grey sky. All that was missing was a theme song and pocket full of Scooby snacks.

Our primary investigation being the hotel itself, the Carson's General Manager, Marfa Scheratski was kind enough to tour us through the bathhouse. The vibe in either wing was not unpleasant. A quick EMF scan produced nothing out of the ordinary, even when swept along the historic tubs and energy conducting mineral water. Marfa then told us of the "chapel". Up a short trail, a tiny sanctuary had been built. Scarcely enough room for half a dozen to attend, the diminutive chapel was complete with lectern and little pews. While odd, the building seemed rather new, likely built by the previous owners, not the St. Martins.



Our tour complete, we locked the building down. With rumors of locals trying to create their own "scares" when the television crew had investigated, we entered with most staff being unaware of our arrival. To be safe, we installed a pair of motion-sensor lights at the entry points, just in case the living had any plans for mischief.

Setting up the usual sundry of gear, we placed trap cameras in the back store rooms, IR surveillance cameras in the hot spots- the rec room, the third floor hallway, second floor hallway and the old kitchen. Matt had detailed some of the best shots and camera angles we had seen on an investigation.

Grabbing the FLIR camera, infrared thermometers, voice recorders and EMF detectors, we started with the third floor. As the most active floor in the ghostly reports, we had strong anticipation. Canvassing the hallway, we moved from room to room, noting anything of detail. First stop was in the hallway where an ill-repaired ladder led through an opening directly into the attic. Massive amounts of guano and even one unfortunate deceased example told that the

upper floors were at the very least, guests to a family of bats. Likely the one that greeted me when I arrived, called the attic home.

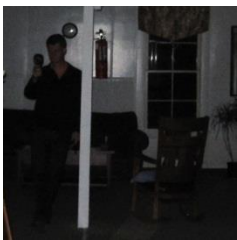


Amidst the rooms stained with mold and awaiting pending renovation, one room with a cracked window played host to a number of wasp nests. As we moved further, we placed a voice recorder on the floor as a static capture of any noises that might emanate once we left. This was the floor where a majority of footsteps claims had been cited. Continuing our sweep, we found little of report, save for a sense of unease we felt on this floor.

Making our way to the second floor, we mirrored our sweep from the floor above. Here, the rooms had had more recent use. Even Marfa had spent the night in one of the rooms. (She didn't have any experiences to share, herself.) As Nick and I moved down the hall, Matt was studying the bank of monitors that displayed what the IR cameras were seeing. All of a sudden he called for Nick and I to meet him downstairs in the lobby. There was an edge to his voice that we were not accustomed to hearing.

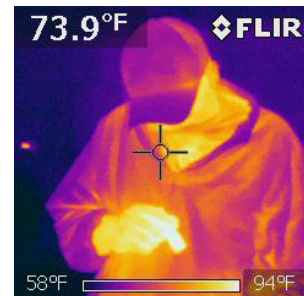


Matt told us that there was a loud metallic noise, near the base of the stairs. Hurrying, Nick and I met him in the lobby. Spying our flashlights around, we surveyed the room looking for anything that might reproduce the sound that Matt heard. After several attempts, he lit up. As I slammed a little mailbox shut that was mounted against the wall that lined the stairs, he pointed, "That was it!" Shutting a few more doors, he was sure the sound matched. Interestingly, the hinges on the boxes required you to exert a fair amount of force in order for them to make that noise. Adjusting one of the motion sensor lights, we aimed it at the area of the mailboxes for an extra "eye".



Having returned to our search of the second floor and completed an unremarkable reconnaissance, we headed for the first floor. Moving through the rec room, Matt studied the ice maker that had the claimed flying scoop. He noted the scoop holder and the scoop were both new, holes on the machine told of where the former hardware had been installed.

Moving back into the old kitchen, the room had a terrible vibe. There were forgotten items strewn about, the scent and streaks of old grease still clung to the walls and floor. Dark corners were pervasive, easy for the eyes to cast shadows almost anywhere, especially when your head was moving. After a sweep and an EVP session, we let our cameras do their job.



Deciding we should spend most of our time in the hot bed of claims, the upstairs, we returned to the upper floors. Matt and Nick studied the monitors for a moment while I listened at the foot of the stairs to the third floor. "The lights," Nick called, "The lights downstairs are on!" In a sprint, and frankly thinking errant human, I raced down the steps. A quick sweep showed the room was empty and the access points were locked up tight.

The three of us assembled and agreed to move the camera from the old kitchen into the lobby. Another beautiful camera angle from Matt displayed the stairs, the light in the lobby, the



mailboxes and much of the lobby itself. Satisfied, we crept back up stairs and watched from the monitor. Within fifteen minutes, it happened again. Perfectly framed in view, the light came on, with nothing we could see that would trigger the sensor. Within minutes, it happened again. And again.

Nick and I decided to swap the lights, wondering if perhaps there was a defect. Placing the second light in its place, we located the original in a spot where it can still be seen from the camera angle. After a short wait, the new light went on. The one that had been there remained dark. Rushing down the steps, they both turned on. This series was repeated again and again with the same results.

Moving into the lobby reception area, we wondered if the light would go on in front of us. To our surprise, it did. The light continued its play, at irregular intervals, throughout the night. We walked by at varied distances and realized you had to be fairly close to trigger the unit. We relocated anything that could possibly be moved, even slightly from a breeze. Same results. We placed two lights next to each other. They would go off together. Sometimes at exactly the same time, most often, sequentially, from either direction.



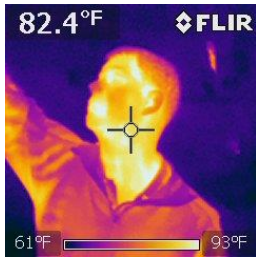
Next, we placed the KII EMF detector next to it. It spiked when the lights went on! We spent hours, isolating variables, only to achieve the same result. Even more intriguing is that the EMF and IR motion sensor work on completely different principles. A bug, for example (which we tested) moving across the lens would have no effect on the EMF. (The bug also did not make the motion sensor kick on, since it does not have the required mass.) Conversely, an electrical spike would have no effect on the IR motion sensor. Just to be safe, we tested to see if the light would make the KII spike, if there was any electrical component under or near the counter. No and no.



Running an EVP session, while watching the light show, Nick and I snapped attention to each other. We both distinctly heard a soft female cry. Not long after, we caught a moan. Add in a handful of footsteps on both the

second and third floor, along with Matt's mailbox, our ears were in on the experience as well.

The final occurrences happened roughly a half-hour apart. While staring at the spectacle of the motion sensor and EMF spikes, I swore I saw a shadow move across the hall and into the banquet room. I ran after it and saw nothing. A later review of the video did not pick the shadow up. The banquet room, incidentally, was the one place we all truly felt uneasy. Even the third floor, once we settled in, lost its darkness. A short while later, Nick said he saw a shadow standing on the landing of the stairs. Quickly snapping on our lights, we could not find any



source for a shadow. Again, the video review revealed nothing. Tired eyes late in a hunt? Very possible.

Overwhelmed with the experience of the lights, and hours of evidence to review, we gathered our gear. Sharing our appreciation for the efforts with the lights, we wearily made our exit.

Verdict: Haunted. Tons of reports stretching over decades. Noises coming from closed off sections of the St. Martin. Footsteps and a recorded cry during our investigation. The light show - we tried every scientific method and rationale for the lights *and* the EMF to be set off, but in the end, could find no good explanation for it, other than Margaret completing her nightly duties perhaps? Or was it Isadore stumbling in after his run in with Old Man Brown? We may never know. At least they didn't tell us during our EVP sessions. Carson Hot Springs has all of the required elements: a tragic event, a love for the property and the healing waters, and the water itself. Water, especially running water is said to be an energy source for the spiritual world. Either way, the historic St. Martin Hotel and the bathhouse in Carson Hot Springs Resort is a fascinating trip into nature and back in time.



About the contributor: Seth Sjostrom is a local resident and author. His thriller *Blood in the Snow* is currently available and Seth releases his holiday title *Finding Christmas* in September. For more information on Seth or his books, visit www.wolfprintpublishing.com.

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