

HPI International hosts paranormal party at the historical Ione Hotel

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Since it was built in the 1850s, the Ione Hotel — which in the last hundred years has undergone two fires and subsequent renovations — has seen its share of colorful spirits, including that of a dead prostitute, a flirtatious cowboy ghost and the apparitions of two small children.

Last Saturday night, HPI International, a haunted and paranormal investigation company, hosted an overnight ghost hunt for those interested in a possible meet-and-greet with the infamous spirits that are known to haunt the hotel.

Hoping to meet paranormal experts and maybe hear a spooky story or two, I attended — dragging along my boyfriend Sam — not at all anticipating that I would have the time of my life and acquire my own first-hand horror story.

HPI, which is headquartered in Sacramento, is owned by Shannon McCabe and managed by “ghost” writer Paul Dale Roberts, who has led more than 600 paranormal investigations all over the world. Together, and usually with a team of psychics and volunteers, they have conducted many past investigations at historical landmarks in Amador County, including Preston Castle, in Ione, and The National Hotel, in Jackson. Saturday night was McCabe and Roberts’ third time hosting what they refer to as, “an overnight scouting mission,” at the Ione Hotel.

The cost for the scouting mission was \$15 a person, and included an optional, investigating technique class, a group seance and a midnight ghost hunt throughout the hotel with experienced investigators. The most common method of investigating by HPI, is attempting to capture Electronic Voice Phenomena, with what Roberts calls the “McCabe” method. Using a digital recorder, the investigator asks a question, like “Are you here?”, pauses for a response and then immediately plays back the recording on high volume, listening for a voice not their own.

“Other ghost hunting groups leave their recorders on all night,” said Roberts, “but realistically, if you asked someone — spirit or not — what their name was, they would tell you immediately, not wait two or three hours to say anything.”



Paranormal investigators Paul Dale Roberts and Shannon McCabe have been featured in TV shows like History Channel's "MonsterQuest," "Penn & Teller: Bull**!" and "Conversations with a Serial Killer."** LEDGER DISPATCH PHOTO BY CLAUDIA LAMAR

McCabe, who also owns an event planning company, is an experienced host and, between “Ghost Hunting 101” and the actual ghost hunt, she proved to be an entertaining DJ and talented karaoke singer — inspiring Sam at one point to serenade me with Van Morrison’s situation-appropriate tune, “Into the Mystic.”

“We do this because we love it. We don’t charge for investigations. We do public events like this so we can raise funds to go out and do investigations that most local groups can’t do,” said McCabe, who, later this year, is scheduled to conduct an investigation at Dracula’s Castle, in Bran, Romania.

Room rentals at the Ione Hotel were not included in the price and HPI received no money from reservations made. By the end of the night, all 14 antique rooms were booked and there was a total of 60 participants in the scouting mission, with almost half of the investigators driving back home or sleeping in cars outside.

Luckily, Sam and I had reserved room 13, said to be one of the most haunted rooms, along with rooms 3, 7 and 8. It is rumored that the room belonged to a nineteenth century prostitute known as Black Rose. After she died, a dark stain resembling a rose appeared on the wall. Over time, the owners of the hotel have tried to wash it off,

but it always returned. Most recently, reappearing upside down.

Throughout the night I heard stories about the room’s effect as an aphrodisiac, and even a first-hand account by HPI lead psychic and investigator Chantal Apodaca, who described a seance in the room which led to some sort of involuntary erotic possession.

My own experience in room 13 was definitely less X-rated and more terrifying. After the investigations, and an impromptu trip to the Ione Cemetery — which resulted in an EVP recording of a woman saying “hello” — Sam and I retreated to our room around 1:30 a.m. Exhausted, we immediately passed out.

Sometime later, I was woken up by what felt like the presence of someone walking up to my side of the bed and bending down to whisper in my ear. “We have something to say,” a man’s voice said and then laughed.

Although I could sense movement around me, I was in a sleep paralysis and could not speak or move, save for a strong, pulling presence at the foot of the bed that forced me to curl my legs toward Sam.

When I could finally snap myself out of the trance, I saw it was 4:48 a.m. and, since Sam had already been hesitant about the sleeping in room 13, I decided not to wake him up and tried to go back to sleep.

The next time I would look at the



One of 14 antique rooms in the historically-rich Ione Hotel, room 13 is reported to be one of the most haunted in the hotel.

LEDGER DISPATCH PHOTO BY CLAUDIA LAMAR

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clock would be at 5:26 a.m. but during the 25-35 minutes in between, I lapsed into a state of awareness that felt both like a lucid nightmare and an out-of-body experience.

Three times, I found myself choking on what felt like a punch of air coming from outside of my body, followed by involuntary noises that sounded like I was speaking some sort of foreign “clicking” language. All the while, I could see myself, as if from above, resisting some sort of invisible invasion into my body; and I could also see Sam, laying beside me, sound asleep.

At one point, I gasped for air again, but this time I laughed — a strange, high-pitched giggle — to which Sam responded by holding me tighter and then himself, giggling in a very unfamiliar and mischievous manner.

Severely startled, I woke up and immediately said every prayer I knew and shook Sam until he awoke. I asked him if he heard me choking on air or remembered laughing in his sleep, but I have known him to be a deep sleeper, so I wasn’t surprised when he said no. He did, however, describe the same pressure I felt at the foot of the bed, and admitted that he had been hesitant to extend his legs all night.

Sam and I stayed awake until the sun came up around 7:20 a.m. Luckily, our room had satellite cable and wireless internet to help keep my mind off my eerie encounter.

The Ione Hotel is located at 25 W. Main St., Ione. To book a room, call 274-6082 or email ionehotel@ionehotel.com.

For more information about upcoming events hosted by HPI International, visit hpi Paranormal.net.