

It's a ghost industry

For some bright-thinkers, the undead can be big business.

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It's close to 2 a.m. and I'm standing alone in the reportedly haunted second-floor restroom of the Red Lion Pub. One of Chicago's premier British bars, the Red Lion is known more for its apparitions than for its U.K. theme. For years, stories have circulated that this bar, and specifically this bathroom, is haunted by a ghost who is sometimes heard whispering; sometimes detected by the strong scent of her lavender perfume; sometimes caught playing her favorite poltergeist-like practical joke: locking women in the bathroom and cutting off the lights.

Which I'm trying not to think about as I plunk my purse down on the floor and attempt to reapply lipstick, until the door of the left bathroom stall swings shut. Maybe it's gravity. Maybe I tapped the door without realizing it. Or maybe the bottles of liquor stacked neatly behind the bar aren't the only spirits available at the Red Lion.

For those who do not believe in ghosts, there is a fuse box in the bathroom's jani-



CHICAGO'S MOST HAUNTED



Some of Richard Crowe's top haunted places.

HULL HOUSE 800 S. Halsted

"Jane Addams believed it was haunted," Crowe says. "Wooden shutters open, then you turn around and they're not open. One person saw a head of a child in a window."

SITE OF THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE 2122 N. Clark

Although the warehouse/garage where Al Capone's henchmen allegedly gunned down seven gang members in 1929 is now a vacant lot (complete with a giant dumpster), locals have reported hearing sobbing around the tree in the center of the yard where the shootings took place. "Dogs walked through [the lot] will often panic and pull up on the leash,"

torial closet that a person hiding inside could feasibly use to turn the lights out. If another person in on the prank was waiting outside the door, they could easily coordinate locking the door at the same time the bathroom blacks out.

That said, I was really freaking scared when that stall door moved.

And I didn't feel a lot better when I asked the bartender about the bar's hauntings and he led me into the bathroom to show me the spot where a prostitute had allegedly been killed years ago — a patch just left of the spooky stall.

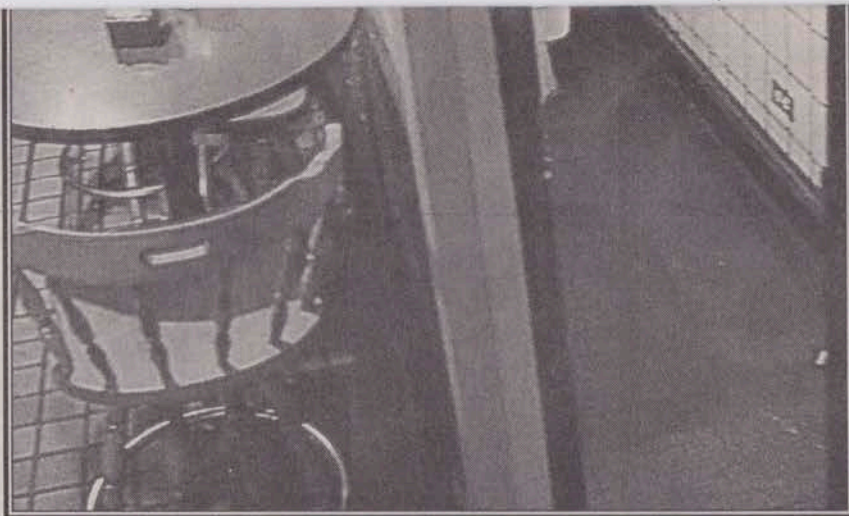
The Red Lion's haunting history is a complex one. The bartender (like two other servers, questioned on different instances) gave vague accounts of spiritual sightings, claiming not to know the full story.

Red Lion owner Colin Cordwell is even admittedly unclear about the details of some of the bar's hauntings. However, he does believe in ghosts, mainly because his father, John D. Cordwell, is one of the bar's resident guests. Colin Cordwell keeps a framed photo of his father (and one of his father's ghost) behind the bar.

"Do you want to see a picture of the ghost?" Cordwell asks with little prompting, and produces the framed photo of two regulars and a very shadowy white figure.

"I looked at it at an angle and saw his face," Cordwell says. The photo is creepy. A visiting psychic once told him a woman spirit also inhabits the bar.

But surprisingly, after 19 years of running the Red Lion, Cordwell hasn't had many first-hand encounters with the spirits thought to dwell in the Lincoln Park building, which he says was built in the 1880s and has served as a gambling house and apartment build-



Bob Black/Red Streak

A knock was heard on the door by the occupants of the Red Lion washroom. When the women asked the owner why he was knocking, he said he didn't, and there was no one else in the place when this happened.

ing, among other things. However, Cordwell has had his share of paranormal hints, such as hearing furniture move around on the second floor when no one is present. "I always know when [one of the ghosts] is here," he says. "The hair goes up on the back of my neck."

Although Cordwell says spiritual events at the bar only happen about every six months, you may be in luck if you're hoping to see one of Red Lion's regular specters soon. "The ladies' room down here has been doing weird stuff lately," he says. "When the women sit down, the [sink] water will turn on by itself and off and the door will rattle."

The Red Lion Pub isn't the only Chicago spiritual hotspot on Lincoln Avenue — Dillinger's Alley, where gangster and former public enemy No. 1 John

Dillinger was shot to death by the FBI after leaving a movie at the Biograph Theater in 1934, sits just a few feet away.

For years, residents have reported seeing a shadowy figure dash and fall in the alley, but standing at the light pole where Dillinger died, the only thing that made me jump was my cell phone ringing.

Cordwell, however, had a much spookier experience several years ago when visiting the spot with historian/Chicago Supernatural Tours owner Richard Crowe.

"[We were saying] a prayer for John Dillinger," Crowe recalls. "The street lamp went off and chills went down our spines. When three people experience something so similar, it's not just your imagination."

Dillinger's Alley is one of the stops Crowe sometimes makes on his several-hour tour of Chicago spirit spots, first de-

SITE OF THE EASTLAND BOATING DISASTER

On Wacker, between the Clark and LaSalle bridges

More than 800 people died when the Eastland capsized in 1915, and Chicagoans have reported hearing "ban-shee-like wails," Crowe says. "Others claim they can peer over the railing to see people flailing but when they go to call for help, the people disappear."

ARCHER AVENUE IN JUSTICE

Perhaps the most famous Chicago ghost, car accident victim Resurrection Mary has for years been appearing on this Southwest Side street, allegedly still on her way home from a dance hall. "Mary is often active around a full moon," Crowe says. "Keep moving; she could be anywhere out that way."

vised in 1973 when finishing his master's in English at DePaul University. The university geography department suggested he create a tour.

"I was the guy who always told ghost stories," he says. "They said, 'You're always talking about haunted places—do we have enough for a tour?'"

Turns out they did. Crowe's ghoulish gig became a full-time job in 1979. In recent years, he's added an assistant to help, but Crowe still narrates most of the tours himself.

Despite eerie experiences like seeing a deceased local lawyer, ghosts aren't guaranteed on Crowe's outings. "Let's say you had something happen on a tour," he says. "Would everyone see it? Not necessarily. I can only guarantee that the places are real."