

# The Haunting of the Heriot Bay Inn



*photo taken by a guest*  
2:00 AM, July, 2023

## Heriot Bay Inn

Quadra Island • BC

# Is the Heriot Bay Inn Haunted?

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There are two spirits said to haunt the Inn. One is said to be an old lady sometimes seen knitting. She's said to have white/grey hair up in a bun. She is sometimes seen in the rooms, and also been witnessed in the dining area knitting "more than once".

On one occasion, a guest ran into the lobby and told a former staff member that an old lady was leaning outside of the room's window and shouting. To them, it looked like she was going to fall or jump. The staff told this individual that there was no one staying in the room and verified by checking the registry that nobody was there. A psychic at one point said that this old woman is waiting for her husband to return from the sea.

The second spirit is believed to be that of a logger. His dress has been somewhat different in various telling – such as suspenders in one account or long overcoat in another. He's usually said to have a moustache, but also might sport a beard. He is said to either walk up and down the upstairs hallway or to be in the Pub. The only pattern in any of the Inn's accounts is that this hallway walking usually happens in the early morning (around "6ish" or earlier).

A few people have seen him come into the Pub or have had him stand beside them and when they turn to look he is gone. In the BC Ghost books (Joanne Christianson and later Barbara Smith), a legend is recounted that says this logger was murdered after a bar fight and put

in an unmarked grave. Lois says she doesn't know where this story came from, but that there is a similar tale that instead claims he was the murderer and not the victim.

Sometimes furniture has moved loudly and inexplicably. Managers have heard this happening when no one else was in the Inn; they started to go up the stairs to investigate but changed their minds. There are several accounts where the Pub's stools had been put up for the night, but were somehow suddenly back on the floor on more than one occasion.

A final rather interesting story from the Pub in 2014: Lois the General Manager was present during this incident, along with staff members and customers... It was open Mic night and Lois was singing a Bob Dylan song with the lyrics "tomorrow's the day that my bride's going to come". The bartender noticed that the floor behind the bar was wet, investigated and identified that the front of the bottle of Amaretto had somehow popped out (just the raised square portion around the label). The rest of the bottle remained intact. The bottle was high up on a shelf and had not fallen over in any way. There was no explanation for the break that anyone could find. Lois said they all had an eerie feeling at the time. They opened a new bottle of Amaretto and poured out shots before collectively toasting the ghosts.



# According to locals, there is a legend that goes as follows...

In the early days of this century, a logger with a little time off decided to visit the Heriot Bay Inn on Quadra Island. The Inn, built just years earlier in 1894, was a popular spot. The logger was looking forward to a little social activity. What he got was a fight.

A brawl between the logger and some other men broke out inside the hotel. Eventually, the ruckus moved outside, where the logger paid for the confrontation with his life. The man's assailants buried his body in a triable lot across from the Inn and hoped that would be the end of it. The logger, however, found no peace and continued to wander through the hotel where he had hoped to spend some pleasant time off.

This is a bit of Quadra Island's folklore, handed down over generations. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to confirm this story of the unfortunate logger's murder, yet many people believe it to be true. Of course, lending credibility to this story is the fact that something

supernatural does, indeed, seem to wander through the century old structure still known as the Heriot Bay Inn.

There is another legend about a ghost of a widow whose husband was lost at sea, in a fishing accident. She sits in a chair by the window in the apartment overlooking the bay and waits for her man to return. According to those who have seen her, she wears a long dress.

Tanya Storr is a writer and photographer from nearby Quathiaski Cove. Her interest in the subject of ghosts inspired her to collect stories from many of the people who had experienced strange things at the Inn. The tales she heard were compelling. The attitudes she encountered were of equal interest.

"Many former rationalists who say they never used to believe in the supernatural have changed their tune after encounters with uncanny phenomena at the Inn," she wrote.



*'Heriot Bay Hotel'*  
circa 1911

*Owned, at the time, by  
Hosea and Helen Bull*

# First Hand Accounts

*of the haunting at the Heriot Bay Inn, written by Tanya Storr*

A female bartender who worked at the Heriot Bay Inn for seven years, had an eerie encounter in the pub one day.

“ It was early fall in 1987; one of those autumn days when the sun was shining and the leaves were orange. It was a humdrum, dead day and no one had been in, yet, for a drink.

I was standing on a stool, stocking the beer fridge, with my back to the front door. I heard the front door open... felt a draft... felt someone standing there looking at me... and then I heard the door swing shut. I didn't want to turn around right away, because I didn't want to drop any of the bottles.

As my customer approached the bar, I heard the shuffling sound of two pant-legs rubbing together, and out of my peripheral vision, I saw a tall skinny man standing there. He had short dark hair and was wearing clothes like the loggers are wearing in the old black and white photographs in the pub; durable and heavy, but worn. I didn't think much of the man's outfit at the time, though. All I was thinking was, 'Alright! My first customer!', and I was glad he was waiting patiently, while I unloaded the last of my bottles.

I then turned around to say, 'can I get you something to drink?', but the words died on my lips... for there was *nobody* there at all. ”

One man who managed the Heriot Bay Inn had an unnerving and unexplainable experience there in the late 1980's. It was the Inn's quiet winter season, when it happened.

“ I was living at the Heriot Bay Inn, in the apartment that overlooks the bay. One night, when I was the only one there, I heard a loud racket outside. It must've been two o'clock in the morning, at least, because the pub was closed, all the lights were off in the building, and everything was locked up.

I thought it was a bunch of dogs getting into the garbage containers... Eventually I got tired of the noise and went downstairs to scare them away.

I went out the front doors, locking them behind me, and grabbed a couple of rocks to throw at the dogs. But once I got outside, everything was strangely quiet. I walked around the campground, but there were no dogs out there... there was nothing around.

When I turned back to the Inn, I got the shock of my life when I saw that every light on the main floor was blazing, although they had all been off when I went outside just a few minutes before. The second floor was still dark; just all the lights on the first floor were on.

I hurried back to the Inn, only to find everything still locked. I then went through the building, thinking somebody must have found a way in, but there was nobody there. There were no people or dogs around at all, to explain either the cause of the noises or the lights.

The whole thing was pretty spooky. ”

# First Hand Accounts

*of the haunting at the Heriot Bay Inn, written by Tanya Storr*

**One winter, a local man rented a room at the Heriot Bay Inn for one month. It being the off-season, he was the only guest, and had a perfect opportunity to acquaint himself with some of the hotel's more unusual attractions.**

“Many times I was in my room upstairs on nights when I was alone at the hotel, and I could actually hear somebody coming down the hall. I'd just lay there quietly, waiting for a door to open, but I wouldn't hear anything else.

A couple of times, I opened my door up and looked down the hall, and there wouldn't be a soul in the hallway. But I'd know I'd just heard someone walking down the hall! A hundred and one things would go around in my head, like, 'Maybe it's just the building settling.' But it wasn't the building settling; it happened too many times to be that.

One night the manager, another guy who worked at the Inn, and I were sitting in the manager's apartment watching movies. We were the only people in the place and the building was all locked up.

As we were sitting there, we heard footsteps come down the hall, go down the stairs, and into the pub area. We all looked at one another as if to say, 'who the heck is in the building?' We figured anyone who was in there must have busted into the place, so we all charged out, expecting to catch somebody on the main floor.

We were determined to catch this person, and it didn't take us a minute to get to our feet, to the door, to downstairs. Not enough time passed

for someone to unlock the front doors and get out that way so we assumed the intruder went through the tackle shop into the kitchen or the pub ... We split up; [they] went into the kitchen, and I went into the front hallway and then through the tackle shop and into the bar that way.

We thought that maybe the person was hiding under the pool tables, so we checked the whole place out, checked the washrooms, checked everywhere — and there wasn't a soul there! But the three of us had distinctly heard somebody walk down those stairs ... and we all just stood there in the pub with egg on our faces, saying, 'Okay, we all heard it, but who was it?' ”

# The Haunted Inn

*Published in the Campbell River Mirror - January 10, 1994*

Do you believe in ghosts?

It's one of those eternal type questions, like do you believe in life after death. There's no one who can positively say ghosts don't exist and also no one who can say they do.

Jo-Anne Christensen was intrigued enough about the subject to write an entire book on it called, *Ghost Stories of British Columbia*.

The book contains dozens of stories about haunted homes, hotels and businesses all across the province.

On the home front, there is even a chapter on Quadra Island's Heriot Bay Inn.

Christensen passes on a sampling of three stories collected by Quathiaski Cove writer and photographer Tanya Storr. The Inn was built in 1894 and there are more than a few good ghost stories going around. Storr says the tales she heard were compelling but the attitudes she encountered were equally interesting.

"Many former rationalists who say they never used to believe in the supernatural have changed their tune after accounts, from Tanya's files, of what three people say at the Heriot Bay Inn," said Christensen.

The stories involve a female bartender and two men who rented rooms during the winter.

The bartender said she was working alone in the pub during the fall of 1987 when she heard a customer enter. She had her back turned but with her peripheral vision saw a tall, skinny dark-haired man. He was wearing clothes like the ones seen in old black and white photos of loggers.

But when she finally decided to serve the customer, something strange happened.

"I turned around to say, 'Can I get you something to drink?' but the words died on my lips... for there was nobody there at all," said the bartender.

Another man was living in the Inn over the winter when he heard loud noises outside early in the morning. He went outside locking the front doors but found nothing.

"Then, I turned back to look at the Inn and got the shock of my life when I saw that every light on the main floor was blazing, although they had all been off when I went outside just a few minutes before," said the man.

The second floor remained completely dark, he said. He returned to the Inn and searched it to no avail, finding no sign of animal or human.

"The whole thing was pretty spooky."

Another man, who was a guest, claimed he would hear footsteps coming down the hall, but no one would be there.

One night, while watching TV with the manager and another man at the hotel, all three men distinctly heard someone enter the pub downstairs.

The three men thought someone had broke into the establishment and rushed to the bar.

Again, no one turned up.

"We thought that maybe the person was hiding under the pool tables, so we checked the whole place out, checked the washrooms, checked

everywhere — and there wasn't a soul there," said the guest.

Who might the ghost be? Well, one old tale suggests it might be a logger.

In the early days of the century a logger with some time on his hands decided to visit the Inn. Just looking for some fun, he managed to get into a brawl which eventually spilled outside.

Tragically, the logger was killed in the melee and then buried by his assailants in a triangular lot across from the Inn.

According to Island folklore, the logger continues to wander the Inn to this day, seeking the pleasure he never found.

## Writer Encounters Ghost Herself

Tanya Storr will never forget her first and only experience with a ghost.

The Quadra Island writer was working at the Heriot Bay Inn during the early 90s when the incident occurred.

Storr, now 25, was working the breakfast shift in the restaurant. She had to get some ice for drinks from the pub, which was locked, dark and completely empty at the time.

It was 6am in the morning. Storr got the key to the pub from the manager and an ice bucket, then proceeded to unlock the door.

To her great shock, Storr saw a little old lady sitting in one of the chairs looking out toward the water.

"It was like looking through someone," said Storr. "You could see right through her, but her shape, her form, was there. I was very startled and alarmed.

"I dropped my bucket and turned around and ran back to the manager and said I'm really spooked right now, I'm not going back in there."

The manager walked in the pub to recover the ice bucket and get the ice. He saw no one.

Storr apparently saw one of two ghosts that have become legendary at the Heriot Bay Inn. Legend has it that an old woman did in fact live in one of the old cabins on the hill behind the Inn. She died of a heart attack.

Apparently an old pendulum clock that used to be located in the pub, would stop at precisely 10 minutes to six — the exact time the old woman died.

Storr worked at the pub for two seasons while earning her degree in English Literature from 1991-92. After seeing an advertisement asking for submission of local folklore, she decided to write up some the ghost stories she had heard.

Three people volunteered to tell their stories and Storr's work was put on a short list. The book's publishers unfortunately decided ghost stories were not what they wanted.

But Storr hung on to the copy, modified it and eventually did find a spot in the newly published, *Ghost Stories of British Columbia*, compiled by Jo-Anne Christensen.

Despite her own experience with a ghost, Storr is no crusader for the legitimization of the supernatural.

"I would say I believe in ghosts," she said.

"Everyone has their own right to believe or disbelieve. I'm certainly not out to convert people.

"I think if you see a ghost or experience some kind of supernatural activity, you're more inclined to believe in them."