

Museum News: The Ghost in Room 6

By CW (Bill) Smith, Curator

Terrell County Memorial Museum

Several years ago the owner of the Sunset Siesta Motel in Sanderson came to the Terrell County Museum to inquire if I knew anything about the motel being haunted. She wanted to know if there were any events that might have occurred at the motel that could spawn a good ghost story. I had heard nothing about this and I knew the county history book barely mentioned the motel, but I told her I would check around and see if there was anything to the story.



Photo: Bill Smith

She went on to explain that she could not keep customers in Room 6 at the motel. At that time the town was full of seismograph crews working the country north of town and the motels were filled to capacity, booked solid for months ahead. A seismograph company had taken a block of rooms for their employees for the foreseeable future, but when crew members stayed in that room, they only lasted one night, then demanded another room. Some didn't even last the whole night, and eventually the whole crew refused to stay in the dreaded Room 6. When the owner and her husband cleaned the room they did not notice anything out of the ordinary, but she could not get anyone to stay in Room 6 for more than one night. It sounded like the beginnings of a great story so I couldn't wait to check into it.

The previous owners of the motel happened to live in my neighborhood and one day I saw the lady out watering her yard. I walked over and asked her about Room 6. She got kind of tickled and thought I was pulling her leg, and said as much. But she was astonished when I told her the back story and the concerns of the present owner. She said she never had any problem with any room at the motel and could not imagine what would be going on. She said the previous owners had not mentioned strange goings-on at the motel, either. We laughed about it, and that was the last I thought of it.

Several years passed and the owners put the motel on the market and moved away. The motel remained open, but I never heard anything else about it or Room 6.

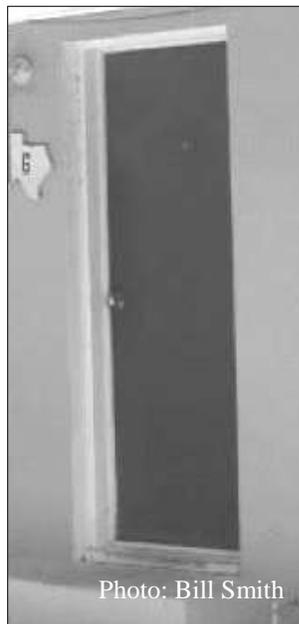


Photo: Bill Smith

Then, a few months ago, I heard that the place had sold and that the new owners had changed the name to Sanderson Motel. They had hired a woman to run the place for them until they could retire and move to Sanderson.

Lo and behold, a few days later the new owner and his son and the new manager walked into the Museum for a tour. They were excited about being in Sanderson and wanted the full tour with all the gory details about Sanderson's sordid beginnings and its exciting wild west history, so I gave them both barrels. (Don't ever ask me for the whole story, that is, unless you bring a snack and are prepared to stay awhile...)

After the tour and as they were leaving, I remembered the previous owners and their strange story, so I told them to be on the lookout for Room 6 and let me know if anything unusual occurred there. As I told them the story their eyes gleamed and they were absolutely delighted. They felt it might even be good for business, although to tell you the truth, I can't imagine a ghost being a good business partner.

(I can tell you from my experience at the museum that you don't want to be there after dark. There is far too much creepy noise going on in that house after dark for my comfort! And, the elementary school, for that matter. And I don't even believe in ghosts!)

The manager asked if I would bring some Museum newsletters so she could offer them to customers in the motel office and, of course, I agreed.

When the end of the month rolled around and it was time to distribute newsletters to the courthouse, the library and businesses in town, I went by to leave a stack of newsletters with the new manager. We visited a moment, but I couldn't wait to ask her if anything strange had occurred in Room 6.

Her eyes twinkled and she got a big grin on her face. "Well..." she began, "Yes!"

She explained that she had asked around and visited with the person who helped clean the rooms under previous owners. That person said the room had an unusual history. It was the room that transients were given when they were put up for the night by the local churches. Sanderson sees many people pass through on busy Highway 90, and a good many have a hard luck tale and come with their hand out. They usually are directed to the local churches which maintain an indigent fund for such travelers.

She said that at one time, a man was de-toxing from drugs and spent a couple of days in that room. Apparently strange things had happened in Room 6, but she didn't go into detail.

"But..." the manager continued, when she and her son were cleaning that room a few days before, she cleaned the microwave and turned to continue with the rest of the room. Suddenly, the microwave timer bell went off. It was one of those mechanical timers, not electronic, and she thought she must have nudged the dial, making it count down and then "ding."

She checked it, but it appeared to be done, so she went back to cleaning.

In a short while, the timer "dinged" again. Nobody had touched it and she was sure the timer had run down completely. Now she was getting kind of edgy about it.

When she and her son had finished cleaning and everything was perfect, she turned as she went out the door and took one last look. In a half-joking manner, she called out to the "ghost" in Room 6 and asked, "Is that clean enough for you?"

"DING!!!"