**10 Real-life Haunted Houses**

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**Some people might be hesitant to admit that they believe in**[**ghosts**](http://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/afterlife/ghost.htm)**. But if you've ever heard a chilling bump in the night when you're home alone, ghosts might not be such a leap of faith. In fact, a little more than a third of American adults believe in ghosts [source:**[**Dolliver**](http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising/mark-dolliver-friday-pilates-90904)**]. Perhaps more surprising is that 23 percent of adults polled said they'd personally seen or felt a ghost [source:**[**Dolliver**](http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising/mark-dolliver-friday-pilates-90904)**].**

Every October, thousands of people pay to walk through commercial [haunted houses](http://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/holidays-halloween/haunted-house.htm), in which costumed actors stand in for otherworldly spirits. Customers can get the adrenaline rush of scary "monsters" popping out at them for a few minutes without any risk of getting their souls stolen or becoming possessed. But real-life haunted houses are a different story. Sure, there are plenty of paranormal enthusiasts who intentionally stay in purportedly haunted hotels and hunt for ghosts. But what if ghosts found their way into your home? If the poll results we just mentioned are accurate, the sensation of an uninvited guest isn't such an uncommon occurrence.

According to the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP), there are some things to pay attention to if you suspect your house is haunted. Seeing apparitions, hearing weird sounds, smelling odd odors, feeling "cold spots" within a room, noticing objects that have been moved or observing your pet acting agitated are all symptoms that people report in what the association calls a "typical haunting" [source: [ASSAP](http://www.assap.ac.uk/newsite/htmlfiles/Ghosts25.html)].

**#10--Whaley House**

The Whaley House in San Diego was originally built on the execution grounds of James Robinson, nicknamed Yankee Jim. In 1852, Yankee Jim was convicted of grand larceny and sentenced to [death by hanging](http://health.howstuffworks.com/diseases-conditions/death-dying/death-by-hanging.htm). The hangman set the noose improperly, allowing Jim's feet to graze the ground, prolonging the hanging process. In 1856, Thomas Whaley bought the land where Yankee Jim had been killed and built a house for his own family. The youngest Whaley daughter, Lillian, said she could hear the sound of boots clomping through the house and suspected it to be the ghost of Yankee Jim.

Today, the Whaley House is a registered [historic site](http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/historic-sites-channel.htm) and museum. Visitors and employees have reported seeing or hearing the ghosts of former owners Thomas and Anna Whaley. According to staff and guests, Thomas' ghost usually resides near the landing at the top of the staircase, while Anna's stays downstairs or in the garden. Television host Regis Philbin is among those who claimed to have seen Mrs. Whaley's ghost. Scents of cigar smoke and perfume have also mysteriously arisen at times. Because of the frequency of such [ghost sightings](http://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/afterlife/ghost.htm), the Whaley House has been cited as one of the most haunted houses in the United States.

**#9--Faces of Belmez**



**Cast faces, like this one of Oliver Cromwell, appeared in the cement flooring of Maria Gomez's home in Spain.**

This small cottage in the southern [Spanish](http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/) province of Jaen, in the town of Belméz, isn't haunted by [ghosts](http://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/afterlife/ghost.htm), per se. The house is built, however, on burial grounds dating back to 1830 [source: [Schweimler]](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/476045.stm). Inside the kitchen, the floor contains an unsolved mystery that has puzzled scientists and laymen for decades. Maria Goméz Pereira, who lived in the house, discovered a face peering up at her from her kitchen floor in 1971. Instead of a two-dimensional apparition, the face resembled a plaster casting that seemed to rise from beneath the house, as though a head was buried right below it.

Spooked by the strange façade, Pereira and her neighbors attempted to get rid of it by chipping away the cement with an axe. Yet upon doing so, they revealed more face casts, this time of older men and children. As word spread about the so-called "faces of Belméz," scientists stepped in to verify their authenticity and test whether they were paintings or fake castings orchestrated by Pereira and her neighbors. The painting theory was ruled out, but no conclusive evidence exists to pinpoint exactly how the faces got there. Nonetheless, the faces have engendered much skepticism.

**#8--Blickling Hall**



**Around May 19 every year, Anne Boleyn's headless ghost pays a visit to Blickling Hall in Norfolk, England.**

In October 2007, the National Trust of [England](http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/) named Blickling Hall the most [haunted home](http://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/holidays-halloween/haunted-house.htm) in the country [source: [McDermott](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-490268/Britains-10-haunted-historic-homes-unveiled-National-Trust.html)]. Located in Norfolk, England, the stately house is said to have a special guest stop by every spring.

Blickling Hall was one of Anne Boleyn's childhood homes. Boleyn was the second of King Henry VIII's six wives. Henry was obsessed with having a male heir to the throne and consequently divorced Catherine of Aragon, his first wife, because none of the males she gave birth to survived. He gave it another go with Anne Boleyn, who also failed to produce a son (but did give birth to the future Queen Elizabeth I). To arrange his second divorce, the king cooked up adultery charges against Boleyn that stuck. Her punishment of allegedly cheating on one of the world's most powerful men at that time was [death](http://health.howstuffworks.com/diseases-conditions/death-dying/dying.htm).

On May 19, 1536, Anne Boleyn was beheaded. Every year, on the anniversary of her execution, Boleyn's headless ghost reportedly arrives at Blickling Hall in a carriage drawn by a headless horseman. But she hasn't lost her head completely in the afterlife -- she carries it along with her during her hauntings.

**#7—Rose Hall**



**Annie Palmer, known as the White Witch, lived in Rose Hall in Jamaica where she seduced slaves and lovers and then killed them.**

The tales of the murderous Annie Palmer of Rose Hall still frighten children in [Jamaica](http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/). Built in 1770, Rose Hall was a sugar cane plantation and home to Palmer and her husband. Palmer grew up in Haiti and learned [voodoo](http://people.howstuffworks.com/voodoo.htm) from her nanny, which would later serve her in her dastardly schemes.

When Palmer became unsatisfied with her husband, she began sleeping with slaves on the plantation. In order to keep them quiet about the affairs, she either killed these [men](http://people.howstuffworks.com/men.htm) or ordered other slaves to do so. Wanting to gain sole possession of her husband's wealth, she poisoned her first husband and later [married](http://people.howstuffworks.com/marriage.htm) and killed two other men [source: [Belanger](http://books.google.com/books?id=kt3C3YT-MbUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+world%27s+most+haunted+places&hl=en&ei=SXjlTt3UONKDtgfH2LW7Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CEwQ6AEwAA)]. Her sexual escapades continued as well. In case she encountered a man unwilling to pleasure her or a slave trying to escape, Palmer had a pit dug 16 feet (4.8 meters) below the house where she would banish these people [source: [Belanger](http://books.google.com/books?id)]. As her nefarious reputation spread around the island, she became known as the White [Witch](http://people.howstuffworks.com/witchcraft.htm).

According to legend, Palmer cast a fatal [voodoo hex](http://people.howstuffworks.com/voodoo.htm) on a housekeeper who caught the eye of one of her lovers. Supposedly, the housekeeper's grandfather later strangled Palmer to death [source: [Belanger](http://books.google.com/books?id=kt3C3YT-MbUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+world%27s+most+haunted+places&hl=en&ei=SXjlTt3UONKDtgfH2LW7Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CEwQ6AEwAA)]. Her body was buried in an aboveground coffin in the eastern wing of Rose Hall. According to the lore, the White Witch's spirit, along with those of the slaves she had murdered, continued to haunt the house. When new tenants attempted to move into Rose Hall, they were quickly driven away from the haunted grounds. Eventually, in 1965, a couple bought the house and converted it into a museum. Yet even today, visitors and employees have reported hearing men's screams and doors slamming, as well as other paranormal phenomena.

**#6--The White House**



**Abraham Lincoln's ghost still hangs around the White House, particularly in the Lincoln bedroom.**

It must be hard for former presidential couples to adjust to life after the [White House](http://money.howstuffworks.com/white-house-job.htm). After four or more years, they probably get used to never having to take out the trash, wash dishes or change a [light bulb](http://home.howstuffworks.com/light-bulb.htm), not to mention the other amenities afforded to arguably the most powerful people in the Western world. Perhaps that's why some have stuck around after their terms -- and lives -- ended. That's right: 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. is not only the most famous address in the [United States](http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/), but also one of the most haunted.

John and Abigail Adams were the first presidential couple to live in the White House, taking residence in 1800, and Abigail has lingered ever since. Her [ghost](http://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/afterlife/ghost.htm) is said to hang laundry in the East Room on occasion [source: [McLaughlin](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/18/AR2009101802274.html?wprss=rss_print/style)]. Another first lady, Dolley Madison, has reportedly been quite territorial with White House renovations. During her husband's term, Dolley oversaw the landscaping of the Rose Garden, where presidents often meet with the media. When President Woodrow Wilson's wife tried to have the garden dug up, the story goes that Dolley's ghost appeared and instructed the workers not to tear up her beloved garden [source: [Scott and Norman](http://books.google.com/books?id=tPnFw-LwuqIC)].

Going along with a rose theme, the Queen's Bedroom, which was once called the Rose Room, is known as a paranormal hotspot in the White House [source: [Scott and Norman](http://books.google.com/books?id=tPnFw-LwuqIC)]. It not only houses the bed of President Andrew Jackson but his ghost as well -- people say they've heard it walking around the room. Jackson's ghost is rumored to hang out in the Red Room as well. People have seen Abraham Lincoln's ghost ambling down the halls and staring out of windows. He pays visits to the Lincoln bedroom at times as well.

Don't believe us? The White House Web site, during George W. Bush's presidency, once had a page devoted to its ghost sightings, spotted by notable residents like Eleanor Roosevelt and Jimmy Carter's daughter.

**#5—Dean House**



**James Dean, seen here in a still from the 1957 documentary movie "The James Dean Story," had a passion for sports cars.**

On Sept. 30, 1955, actor James Dean got into his Porsche 550 Spyder with his mechanic Rolf Wuetherich and set out for a race. On the way, Dean was involved in a deadly car crash that injured Wuetherich and killed Dean. According to legend, however, Dean's Porsche wasn't finished spreading misery. For instance, the car supposedly broke a man's legs when it rolled off its trailer during transport. The list of tragedies associated with the car grew longer every year until the car was, perhaps mercifully, lost during transport [source: [Katz](http://www.examiner.com/sports-car-in-national/james-dean-s-haunted-porsche)].

The Deane House in Alberta, Canada is the haunted house equivalent of James Dean's cursed set of wheels. And just like Dean's Porsche, the house was mobile. Built in 1906 for Superintendent Captain Richard Deane of the Mounted Police, the house was moved from its original location in 1914 to make way for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. Only after moving again in 1929 and becoming a boarding house, however, did the house become a [magnet](http://science.howstuffworks.com/magnet.htm) for tragedy. In 1933, a 14-year-old boy, suffering from epilepsy, took his own life in the house's attic after being bullied at school [source: [Belanger](http://books.google.com/books?id=kt3C3YT-MbUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+world,+most+haunted+places&hl=en&ei=SXjlTt3UONKDtgfH2LW7Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CEwQ6AEwAA)].

Perhaps the most shocking event in the history of the Deane house, however, was the 1952 murder of Irma Umperville by her husband Roderick. Roderick stabbed and strangled his wife in front of their two children before killing himself in one of the home's apartments, adding one more tragic tale to the home's history [source: [GhostStory.co.uk](http://www.ghost-story.co.uk/stories/deanehouse.html)].

With such a violent past, it's no surprise that some say the house remains haunted today. Reports of strange sightings and unexplained laughter emanating from the foyer have surfaced for years.

**#4—Villisca Ax Murder House**

After Andrew and Abby Borden were murdered in their Fall River, Mass. home in 1892, the property was eventually converted to a bed-and-breakfast that's still in operation [source: [Villisca Ax Murder House](http://www.villiscaiowa.com/history.php)]. If the owners of the Villisca Ax Murder House have similar plans, they might consider changing the name to something more inviting. Then again, maybe a murder-themed B&B could be a big draw for people with a little morbid curiosity, but they'd need to have strong stomachs; the crime that took place at the house was so horrific that it changed the house forever.

On the evening of June 9, 1912, Josiah Moore, his wife Sarah and their four children left their home to attend a function at a local Presbyterian church. The family had also invited Lena and Ina Stillinger, friends of the Moore family children, to spend the night at the Moore house following the event. After the family and their guests returned home and turned in for the night, an intruder -- or perhaps a group of them -- entered the house and used Josiah Moore's axe to crush the skulls of every person in the house while they slept. The next morning, a neighbor noticed that the Moore residence was suspiciously quiet. By noon, the entire town was paralyzed by [fear](http://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/emotions/fear.htm). Because no one was ever convicted of the murders, suspicion dogged some of the town's residents for years.

Today, the home is open for tours and overnight visits, though visitors shouldn't be surprised by uninvited guests. Numerous psychics have studied the house and declared the property haunted by the victims of the murder, and strange phenomenon like falling lamps, flying objects and mysterious voices are supposedly common. Although reports of hauntings have increased greatly since the home was restored recently to its former appearance, they stretch back to the time of the murders themselves.

**#3—Monte Cristo Homestead**



**This beautiful view of Junee, New South Wales, Australia, doesn't exactly make you think of haunted houses does it? But this is indeed the hometown of the legendary Monte Cristo Homestead.**

Theories vary regarding why some houses are haunted and others seem free of things that go bump in the night, but as we've seen from several other examples on our list, tragedy seems to be a common thread. It's no surprise, then, that the Monte Cristo Homestead should have such a well-known reputation for paranormal activity. Originally built for the Crawley family in 1884, the Monte Cristo Homestead initially seemed like an ideal setting for the family and its growing fortune, but that soon changed when one of the Crawley's servants dropped their infant daughter down a staircase, killing her. The servant insisted a force unseen pushed the child from her hands [source: [Belanger](http://books.google.com/books?id=W6F4go921mUC&q=monte+cristo)].

In 1910, Christopher William Crawley, the head of the Crawley household, died of heart failure. His passing marked a change in his wife, Elizabeth Crawley. She became extremely reclusive over the next two decades of her life and, according to some, extremely cruel. Several tragic deaths took place at the household while Elizabeth lived there. A pregnant servant fell to her death from a balcony, and another servant, this time a young boy, was burned to [death](http://health.howstuffworks.com/diseases-conditions/death-dying/dying.htm) [source: [Belanger](http://books.google.com/books?id=W6F4go921mUC&q=monte+cristo)].

After Elizabeth died, the house fell into disrepair and suffered at the hands of looters and vandals before Reginald Ryan, a local man, purchased it in 1963. He and his wife Olive immediately knew their home was haunted. Lights acted strangely, and the couple could feel the presence of ghosts and eerily cold spots throughout the property. Psychics were invited to the home and reported strong paranormal activity as well, raising suspicions that the house held terrible secrets in its walls. Today, visitors can test those claims themselves by taking a tour of the property and its grounds.

**#2—Lalaurie House**



**What secrets were buried with the occupants of this New Orleans cemetery?**

Standing three stories high on Royal Street in New Orleans, the Lalaurie House was once the envy of the city's high society. In 1831, a beautiful socialite by the name of Madame Lalaurie purchased the house with her third husband, Dr. Louis Lalaurie [source: [Cable](http://books.google.com/books?id=c4UEAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA200&dq=lalaurie&hl=en&sa=X&ei=5hPuTuycG4-utwfwv9m5Cg&ved=0CDoQ6AEwAQ)]. By all appearances, Madame Lalaurie lived a charmed life.

Like many of the wealthiest members of society, Madame Lalaurie owned slaves. By law, slave owners were expected to keep slaves well fed, clothed and cared for, but a series of incidents made some of Lalaurie's peers think the socialite was, at best, neglecting those duties and possibly much worse. Those suspicions were confirmed when a neighbor saw Lalaurie chase a child of a slave through the courtyard, into the house, onto the roof. Moments later, the child had fallen to her death [source: [Cable](http://books.google.com/books?id=c4UEAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA200&dq=lalaurie&hl=en&sa=X&ei=5hPuTuycG4-utwfwv9m5Cg&ved=0CDoQ6AEwAQ)].

Lalaurie was fined and forced to sell her slaves, but relatives purchased them and sold them back to her immediately. Although her reputation suffered because of the incident, she remained a popular figure in town until a [fire](http://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/earth/geophysics/fire.htm), set by one of Lalaurie's own slaves, brought the attention of the entire community to the Lalaurie House. As the fire burned, several people broke down the door to the slave quarters, and they pulled seven severely maltreated and malnourished slaves from the building, two of whom later died from their mistreatment. Two others were found buried on the premises. The citizens of New Orleans, disgusted and furious with Lalaurie, chased her out of town, looted her possessions and nearly destroyed the Lalaurie House [source: [Cable](http://books.google.com/books?id=c4UEAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA200&dq=lalaurie&hl=en&sa=X&ei=5hPuTuycG4-utwfwv9m5Cg&ved=0CDoQ6AEwAQ)].

Madame Lalaurie herself, having fled to Paris was never brought to justice for her crimes. The house itself later was remodeled and retains little of its original layout, but it remains well known as one of the most haunted places in New Orleans -- at least for some.

**#1—Borley Rectory**



**January 1955: A group of young men digging at Borley rectory in search of the skeleton of a nun thought to have died mysteriously there.**

Unlike many of the other houses on our list, you won't be able to take a tour of the Borley Rectory; the building caught fire and was ultimately demolished in 1944. Built in 1863 at the request of the Rev. Henry Bull, the rectory had always provided its residents with plenty of [ghost sightings](http://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/afterlife/ghost.htm) [source: [Taylor](http://www.prairieghosts.com/brectory.html)]. The source of the sightings was quickly traced back to a story of a nun and a monk who, centuries ago, fell in love and attempted to elope. They were caught, however, and the monk was hanged. His would-be bride suffered an even worse fate, being walled up within her convent and left to die. The Borley Rectory was built on this haunted ground, and its residents suffered accordingly.

Eventually, a newspaper sent an investigator to dig into the stories surrounding the rectory. The investigator, Harry Price, is credited today as being one of the first "ghost hunters" for his use of cameras, [fingerprinting kits](http://science.howstuffworks.com/fingerprinting.htm) and other measuring equipment. Price reported many of the same things past residents had -- strange sounds, ghost sightings, objects moving from one place to another -- and his reports only added to the Borley legend.

By the time Price's investigation was in full swing, the Rev. Lionel Foyster was living in the rectory with his wife Marianne, a particularly frequent target of haunting. Unlike previous encounters, Marianne's were allegedly quite violent. Cryptic messages even began to appear on the walls of the rectory, though only when Marianne was at home.

The Foysters moved out, but Price remained committed to finding out all he could about the building. At one particular séance, Price said he learned the names of the nun and the monk who tragically attempted escape those many years ago. At another one, Price said that a spirit warned that the rectory would burn to the ground and, in the rubble, the remains of the nun would be found.

The prediction ultimately happened; within the year, a new owner accidentally set the rectory on fire, and the remains of a young woman were found in the cellar. Whether they were the remains of the love-struck nun remains unknown, but they were given a Christian burial all the same. With that burial and the destruction of the Borley Rectory, the haunting finally ended.

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