

Editor: Brenda Smith

bsmithTHassisD@msn.com

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The Ghostly Gazette

Terre Haute Chapter IGT

Newsletters will be quarterly from now on

December/January/ hunts

Not to much activity these cold winter months things seem to slow down us. Look for things to pick up these next few months. In December we had a meeting/training and went to a very active home for some hands on training.

In January we had a very active meeting/training for our new members and some Vincennes members. We went to on location that is reported to be very active but because of the bitter cold, we didn't stay to long. We had a private investigation that went very well and will be returning to.

History

A timeline of the Prairie House to the Terre Haute House

This month I would like to talk about the Terre Haute House. This location has been closed since 1970. The last business to close was a travel agency in 1982.

The Prairie House was the first hotel to occupy the site, so called because at the time 7th and Wabash (National Road as it was once called) a simple dirt road was there at the time, was near the river bank and it was outside of town. Building started in 1837 and was completed and opened for business in September of 1837. At the time it was called Rose's folly, Chauncy Rose saw the future of Terre Haute and his skeptics thought the business would never succeed. At first it did not succeed and was closed from 1841 to 1849. The Wabash and Erie Canal arrived and with it many workers The sound of the Captains Horn brought crowds to the big basin at John's Mill near Towpath. That meant more business for the Hotels, Buntin, the manager of the Prairie House, would send an omnibus (a horse Drawn bus) to pick up the workers as they arrived, cornering the Captain to get him to recommend to the workers staying at the hotel . The staff treated the workers so well the Captains would declare the merits of the Prairie House up and down the canal, thus securing business.

In 1851 Guest of the Prairie House paid \$5.00 a week for lodging and \$2.50 a week for a servant or a horse. I find this interesting that a person or a horse cost the same. Meals were .25 cents and the menu consisted of Roast Mutton,

Boiled Beef, Roast Lamb, Veal pie, Chicken pie, Roasted pigeons, breads, vegetables and soups. I am sure there was more but this is what I was able to find described as the menu.

At this same time Rose is building his grand home at 7th and Chestnut Streets. Although Terre Haute is growing, it hasn't yet come close to the Hotel. A grassy common was the view for the guest. A few homes were close by but out in the country at that time. Downtown was within walking distance.

A bell was rung for each room at 6 Am for the guest of the hotel to eat breakfast, at 6:30 a knock on the door again summoned guest to breakfast, At 7:00 a second bell rang which was frequented by children and their attendants and at 7:30 another bell rang for servants of the house and guest. There was no difference in the food for anyone which was a rarity in those days a fresh meal was prepared for each class. Breakfast consisted of hot and cold bread sliced, molasses, seed cakes, pancakes and fritters, milk, butter buried in ice, preserves and blackberry syrup in soup tureens, hot beef steaks, roast, boiled chicken and various sorts of cold meat.

A loud gong rang out at 1:00 Pm summoning guest for dinner. Children were the servants for dining they wore white jackets but were barefoot, they ranged in age 12-15 and ran the tables serving guest. An interesting side note here that I found in a handwritten article. Rose hated dogs and would kick them out of the way, Buntin was constantly chasing behind him and apologizing for Mr. Rose.

January and February 1852 Rose was in the midst of overseeing the construction of the first Railroad into Terre Haute. He tirelessly promotes the financing and idea of it. Richmond Railroad opens in February as the Terre Haute-Indianapolis Railroad.

April 1852 an aggravated Buntin resigns from the hotel citing it was to far from town and the charges are to reasonable and sates he has only made \$300.00 for 3 years of service.

John I. Humaston takes over as manager.

Summer 1852 Rose leaves on an extended buying trip, about this same time, locomotives begin arriving by Canal from Toledo. Workmen take the engines off the boat for construction purposes.

April 1853 an engineer gets drunk and raises a ruckus at the Hotel. Rose issued and orders that no Railroad workers were to be served liquor. This was a bad decision on Rose's part, the manager did not agree with this decision stating "too much business depended on the workers" and he was right. This caused patrons to go to another hotel.

Also during this time Terre Haute votes to become a city.

May 1855 Rose changes the name to the TERRE HAUTE HOUSE, concerned that the Prairie House conveys the idea that the Hotel is to far out of town.

He raises the Hotel by four stories; the Hotel now has 87 guest rooms and apartments for families.

In 1855 A book is published by J Richard Beste called "THE WABASH" He came to Terre Haute in 1851 with his wife and 11 children intending to say for one day. He stayed 11 weeks. He, his 9 yr old daughter and a son became very ill upon the day they arrived. He and his son survived but his daughter Isabella did not. The reason he did not want to

stay is he thought Terre Haute to be an unhealthy place. He changes his mind on what he thought to be the backward country ways of Terre Haute and is pleasantly surprised at the class he finds here. "Finding it to be far superior to what he expected to be find some being gentry by birth and educated" Vol II Pg. 3.

At this time though the area around the hotel was a swampy mess with the river being so near. Mosquitoes, Beetles, swarms of flies and bats were a common occurrence in the rooms. It was stifling hot with no fans or air conditioners as we have now and windows had to be left open to get any air at all. They had no protection against the biting flies and mosquitoes.

During the time of Mr. Beste sickness the people of Terre Haute helped he and his family. They were treated with Opium, Camphor and Epsom salts. A diet of meat, rice and gruel. By Dr's Read and Clippinger, Isabella succumbed July 11th 1851. They were surprised as to the amount of those in Terre Haute that came together and helped them with arrangements during such a difficult time. Mr. Beste was told that many people become sick upon arriving. Little wonder considering the conditions at the time.

At the time of his stay here Colonel Harrison and his wife were residents of the Hotel.

1858 Perry Tuttle takes over as manager.

1864 Rose had an artesian well drilled and hit oil. The water they did find was supposed to have been so pure that he bottled and sold it and also built a bathhouse at 8th and cherry streets because of it.

1866 Rose is weary of the Hotel business and considers donating the Hotel for educational purposes, alarmed by this idea many prominent business men come together and form the Hotel Company and purchases the Hotel for \$77,184.00.

Charles Fairbrothers takes over as manager. In 1867 when he is killed by a Dining Room girl who is upset over being fired.

1872 the Hotel is bought out by William Hawkins Jr. of Indianapolis for \$72,500.00

1875 the Hotel is sold again to William B. Tuell and George F. Ripley for 87,000.00

August 1877 Chauncy Dies at age 82.

1884 Charles Baur leases the Hotel and is the first to install electricity in 1886 the first in the world!

1887 Tuell and H.M. Smith take over management.

March 1888 all the ice boxes are brine cooled. A new corporation is formed with William Ijams as President, Charles Baur and Jacob Baur as secretary, They buy the property and make \$100,00.00 in improvements that include a new exterior of dark brick, round pointy towers capped with U.S. flags, stained glass and awnings on every window.

1891 the Terre Haute House is the first to supply electric fans and portable electric curlers for the ladies, to its guest. Another first in hotel history.

1901 Robert G Watson, William P. Ijams and Harry W. Beggs organize the Watson Beggs Company and buy the Hotel, Watson is manager.

1914 The Hotel is remolded again putting in bathrooms, to keep up with the new Hotels coming in such as the Deming at 3rd and cherry streets.

1925 The Heirs of the Crawford Fairbanks estate, who own the land and Hotel decide to raze the Terre Haute House and rebuild. The history here isn't to clear as it must have been sold during the time period of 1914-1920's to Fairbanks

February 1927 the Hotel is razed, work begins on the new building which is the present day Terre Haute House.

Spring 1928 The construction is completed and it is furnished, The new hotel is 10 stories tall.

July 1928 the new Terre Haute House opens, the 9th and 10th floor are known as the penthouse. The hotel holds a grand opening gala. E.L. Wenzel leases the hotel for 25 years from the heirs of Fairbanks and serves as Manager.

September 1935 The Marine room is doubled in size to meet growing business needs.

Fall 1936 The Mayflower Room is added. After hotel officials see the Ballroom on the Mezzanine level is not big enough to meet growing business. It opens October 15th,

The grand opening last from the 15th to the 17th with many parties, lavish entertainment and grand buffets.

1959 The Hulman Family purchases the Hotel.

1960 The two story lobby is cut down to one story to add the Prairie Room on a mezzanine level of the lobby.

June 1970, Manger Richard VanAllen gathers employees to tell them the Terre Haute House is closing its doors. Forever.....?

Many offers and deals have fallen through since then. The Hulmans recently turned it over to the city and they are working on a redevelopment plan. Let's hope this time all goes well as many of us would love to see it open it doors once again to be able to enjoy its rich history.

Some local legends and rumors of the Terre Haute House have floated around the city for many years.

A construction worker fell to his death during the 20's, I am assuming this happened when the hotel was being rebuilt.

Claims of a ghost of little girl haunting one of the floors. Could this be Isabella or another child who lost their life at the Prairie House or Terre Haute House?

Richard VanAllen still went to his old office occasionally up until 1996. He was manager for 25 years before its closing.

A lawyer in the mid 60's was rumored to have committed suicide, he jumped from one of the suites window amid rumors of shady deals and a mistress. I believe this did happen as I have talked to a few older residents who remember the scandal. In a 1996 newspaper article? Mr. VanAllen says "there were always new problems; maybe someone jumps out of window we have had that happen". We have searched for any articles confirming this but have been unable to find any confirmation.

Rumors of murders in the heydays of organized crime in the 1930's Some classified as suicides

Countless rumors of murders and suicides throughout the time the Prairie house was built in 1837 to the Terre Haute House closing in 1970.

Many political battles were won and lost in the grillroom located on the north side of the hotel.

Men were made wealthy and men lost it all within it's walls.

Its heydays of when highway 40 was built and owning a car was common and people started taking vacations. 7th and Wabash (or National Ave. as it was called then) was the crossroads of America anyone traveling East, West , North and South drove right by it and many a traveler lodged their for the night.

Some famous guest was, Gene Autry, Annie Oakley and Phil Harris.

Woman entertainers were told if they did not please certain employees and guest then they would never sing or dance there again or anywhere in Terre Haute.

It is rumored to have been the meeting place for many gangsters such as Dillinger and many murders were ordered within its walls.

Edith Brown a Madame of Terre Haute was also rumored to send her best girls for many prominent business men. That is another story to tell

A beautiful Mural in the Mayflower room depicting the first immigrants to step onto its soil. Plastic paintings covered the North and South walls depicting the history of the Wabash river, The Mayflower room was the site of countless celebrations, political Rally's, welcoming home our soldiers and Weddings.

Some of these are just rumors, told to me by some older residents of the county. Not to be taken as fact. I found the stories very interesting though. Brenda Smith 1/24/05

One can imagine what beautiful place it was and can be again. It was a four star hotel in its day. It was the first to include many amenities we take for granted today. The Historical society and library has many pictures and articles. It is well worth the trip to delve into its history.

Taken from many articles of the Terre Haute tribune, and the Gazette. The Wabash written by J Richard Beste in 1855. A few older residents of Terre Haute who remember well the Terre Haute House. Its beauty and scandals.

February hunt

Details will be posted soon on the board

Investigations

Please turn in all paperwork, EVP's, Photos and video's within two weeks of the investigation to the person in charge of the investigation so we can get a report done in a timely manner.

Business and home owners are anxiously awaiting our report and it makes us look unprofessional if we do not get a report to them within 30 days as we promise.

If you did not get anything let us know.

Turn in all notes, regardless.

Thank you for taking your time to do all this. It is very much appreciated!

In Closing

We are working on many exciting hunts for us this upcoming year.

If you have any suggestions or ideas email Juli, Janis or Brenda.

Welcome home Janis