



When I owned the Cabaret in Bandera, locals delighted in telling me there was a ghost in the old dancehall. Struggling under the weight of the business, combined with constant maintenance, my response was, "If he shows up, I'll hand him a mop and a broom and tell him to get to work!"

I never did make the acquaintance of the Cabaret ghost, but there are tales of haunted buildings throughout the Hill Country. Let's see if we can find some.

In her book, *Spirit Magnet in Texas* by Ann Bridges (© 2016, Shiffer Publishing, Ltd), the author recounts tales of haunted buildings, houses, and historical places. She references Enchanted Rock in the heart of the Hill Country where the yips and howls of coyotes give voice to Comanche warriors who once waged bloody battles here. The Silver Spur guest ranch, The Bandera General Store and the legendary Bandera Pass are also mentioned as ghostly habitats. Unfortunately, the only "evidence" of spirits are shivers, secondhand tales and things that go bump in the night. Ghosts? Maybe. Maybe not.

In 2004, Hoot Gibson, Mark Andrews and I made a horseback ride from Bandera to Calgary, Alberta, Canada. We covered a lot of ground – 2500 miles to be exact – and saw a lot of towns, countryside and buildings along the way. Two towns in particular speak to the subject of ghosts.

As described in my book, *Riders On The Storm*: "We camped . . . surrounded by the skeleton of the town of Clairemont. The old red stone courthouse was still strung with Christmas lights, although who hung them, or the lights on two trees flanking the deserted building, was anyone's guess. A similarly decorated water tower, the old jail, and other abandoned and decomposing buildings formed the backdrop of our campsite. To say it was eerie was an understatement, but more than that, it was unutterably sad. Turned out the town had not died. It moved over several miles along with a new highway. Good news, but it made the old town seem sadder and the Christmas lights only made it worse. This was the melancholy ghost

of the town of Clairemont.

The other "ghostly" encounter we had on the ride was a town I identify in my book only as "Nameless" It had the same feel as Clairemont, but with a newer look to it, which somehow made it all the more unsettling: "Our first impression was sadness. This was a town in its final throes, dying, on life support . . . The school was the most unsettling. Relatively new, in mint condition, it might have been simply closed down for a holiday. A peek through the windows showed fully equipped classrooms , some with bulletin boards decorated with colorful cutouts. Chairs were stacked on desks. You could have unlocked doors, set chairs in place, filled the rooms with children and started teaching. It was an eerie scene and the ghostly impression echoed throughout the town."

It reminded me of a Stephen King book, *The Langoliers*, where an entire planeload of people goes through a time warp. Whenever they land and go into a building, it appears there were people there not long ago, but now the place is abandoned. "Nameless" felt like that.

Ghosts? Could be. Time warps? Could be. Maybe it's the longing for what was that propels the ghostly tales. Long lost love, children happily playing in simpler times. Was there a ghost in the Cabaret. Maybe it's the music of great entertainers hanging in the air, the sound of boot heels on the old wooden dance floor. What about Clairemont and Nameless? I wrote, "It must be terrible to watch your town die around you." Think of the implications, the energy of bodies and souls who once inhabited these places who might want to go home again.

I have no answers, but it sure is fun to tell stories! I'll bet you can come up with at least one tale that might indicate a supernatural encounter. Go ahead and tell it. Who knows if in the telling you find a truth, a memory, a shiver, or a whisper in the night that might have been a voice.

BOO!