

### *Chapter 3:*

## *The Ghost at Paxton Lodge*

At Paxton, for years, someone, or something has been haunting the guests. It is not known for sure who or what it is. It is known, however, that it is there. Residents of the lodge swear they have seen or felt the presence or something. This “thing” has become known as Paxton’s “Boiler Man.” The stairs creak, the hinges whine, and the walls groan in this old building. These occurrences can be easily explained by the wind, but many others simply cannot be explained at all.

The Boiler Man was first seen sitting in the white wicker rocker which sits quietly on the old front porch of the lodge. No one knew just what it was then, and no one knows now.

The best known theory as to what it is comes in the story that a man was once brutally murdered. His body was then sliced into small pieces and thrown into the boiler in the basement of the lodge. His spirit now haunts the residents.

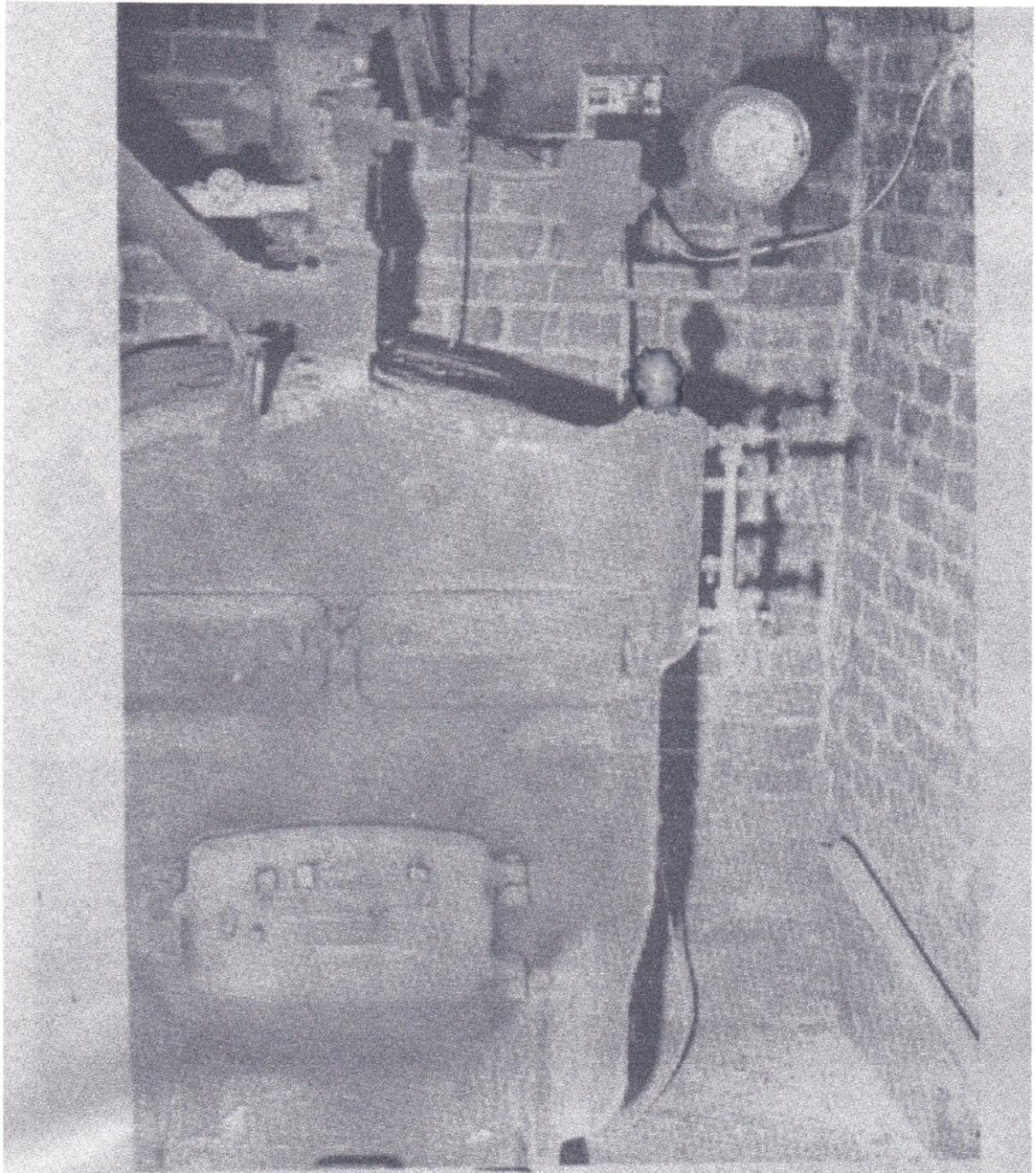
Another theory is that a past owner of the lodge who simply disappeared and was thought to have driven into the river and died, has come back and is living at the lodge, haunting other guests who stay there.

Still another theory is the story that a Mr. Bain, a miner, left his partner at Soda Bar (the land where Paxton Lodge now stands) late in December of 1852 to guide three other miners to Marysville. After a four day struggle through waist deep drifts and blizzard like conditions, he died on a snow bank, cradled by a companion. He may have come back then and still haunts his land and it’s guests.



**FAVORITE CHAIR**—This old porch chair is often seen rocking by itself—even when there are no breezes blowing. Once, at least, it has been observed to be filled with the ghostly silhouette of Boiler Man.

**The white wicker rocker on the front porch at Paxton. The Ghost's favorite chair.**

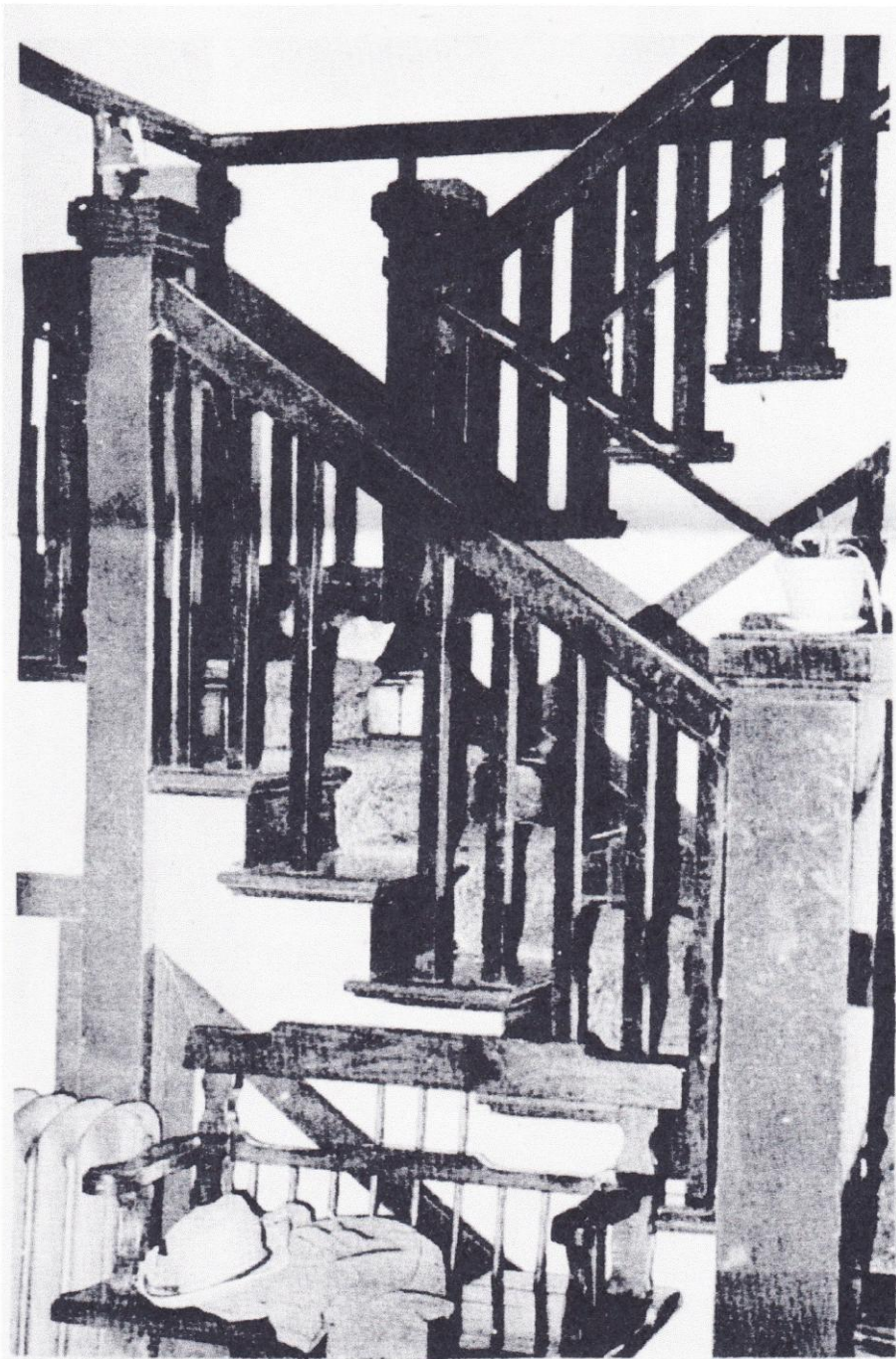


**BOILER'S NAMESAKE**-This is the boiler that, as the story goes, the mutilated body of Paxton's ghost was consumed in. Boiler Man still haunts the spot and has been seen in the boiler room wearing a derby. On

another occasion, he apparently altered the directions for firing up the boiler when an effort was made to warm the lodge for a New Year's Eve party, making it clear he prefers to have the Lodge all to himself.

**The boiler room where, legend has it, the mutilated body of a man was once thrown in the fire and burned.**

Whatever or whoever he is, he is seldom seen or felt. He is more likely to expose himself in other ways. He enjoys playing pranks on residents. Misplacing objects, turning lights on and off when backs are turned, slamming doors, and climbing the mysterious creaking stairs late at night are just a few of his favorites to play. The white chair on the porch in front of the lodge is often seen rocking by itself. There are also many specific accounts of people who claim to have either seen or felt the presence of him.



CREAKING STAIRS--Phantom footsteps are often heard treading the staircase of Paxton Lodge. The little phantom pictured was not at all

frightening, but appeared and disappeared so quickly that he gave the photographer quite a start.

**The suspicious creaky stairs inside the lodge.**

The first documented ghost story comes from Jackson Browne and Frazier Mohawk, who were living at Paxton and using it as a recording studio.

They had decided that their stay at Paxton was going to be a complete failure, and began to call it “The Baby Browning Album” after a stillborn child’s gravestone that they had seen nearby at the local cemetery. However, when they decided to show the rest of the band, they could not find the stone. They asked the caretaker and he said that there has never been one there. One night at the lodge, they were recording in the studio. Later that night, when they played the tape back, they were frightened by what they heard. They could clearly hear what they thought to be a baby crying on the tape. They thought it might be the resident cat, but it was in town getting vaccinated. The mystery of the crying baby was never solved.

Years later, the ghost was seen by Doris Pound, a co-owner of the lodge.

*“It looked like a shadow wearing a small derby hat,” she said.*

During the years that Paxton Lodge was vacant, Michael Lazzarino was the caretaker there. He reported many strange happenings and still to this day is a firm believer in the ghost.

*“One night about two in the morning, I woke up and smelled cooking in the kitchen. I tried to get up, but something was holding me down. It was pushing on my chest so I couldn’t even scream. I woke up in the morning and told everyone of this strange occurrence, telling them that it wasn’t a dream and that it was real because I could even smell what they had been cooking. This is when they informed me that they in fact had been cooking whatever it was that I smelled (I don’t remember what) and that it was no dream. I knew then that I was a believer.”*

-Michael Lazzarino, Caretaker

*“The electricity was not yet connected to the lodge. I had just locked up for the night. From the highway below, I looked up at the lodge and saw the lights blazing. I could clearly see people in the living room of the lodge. I went back to the lodge and was met by an old man who lived nearby. Horrified, the man said that he had seen the lights come on and went to investigate, but could not find anyone inside the building.”*

-Michael Lazzarino

*I was in the corner of the kitchen. There was a cookbook called ‘Cooking For 50’ sitting on the island in the middle of the room. I turned to leave the room and I heard a crash. The cookbook was lying on the counter where I had just been.”*

-Michael Lazzarino

*“We were outside partying when we saw a person in the rocking chair. Someone asked ‘Who is that?’ No one knew, so we went to investigate. The closer we got to it, the*

*harder it was to see the person until by the time we got there, no one was in the chair, but it was rocking all by it's self."*

-Michael Lazzarino

*Everybody left the lodge. No one was living in it in the fall of '72. I was the caretaker. I asked a couple to move in with me. I gave them the big room upstairs and I lived downstairs. They had been there for about a week. They began to complain that they could not sleep. Every night at 2:00 they would wake up and could not breathe or scream. They had to move to Keddie. The first night they spent away from the lodge, they slept just fine."*

-Michael Lazzarino

*It goes where the people are. When no one is in the lodge, it goes to the cabins. Also, it targets people that it can intimidate."*

-Michael Lazzarino

*"There were so few of us there that every time something happened, it was obvious. When more people moved in, they always thought it was someone playing tricks."*

-Michael Lazzarino

*"We were going to have a New Year's party at the lodge and we were going to start up the boiler. None of us knew how. We were all down there reading the instructions on how to start it. In the instructions, it had the basic procedures, and at the end it said 'If all else fails, call Chic Cheichester.' Well, it didn't work. We went upstairs, but decided to go back down and give it one more try. We followed the same procedures again. When we got to the end of the instruction booklet, the part about Chic Cheichester was not there, and the boiler fired right up."*

-Michael Lazzarino

Many others have also seen or felt the ghost.

*"I was opening the door to my room when it was suddenly slammed shut right back at me. The impression was so vivid of someone on the other side that I refused to go back to that room."*

-Anonymous resident of Room #7

*“We heard the basement door by the boiler room open then close. Then we heard footsteps going through the basement. We just froze. We knew no one could be down there.”*

-Corky Lazzarino, resident

*“We saw a light coming up the stairs from the basement. Like a candle flickering. Then it suddenly went dark again.”*

-Corky Lazzarino

*“If it was a person down there trying to scare us, we would have found them that night for sure....But there wasn't anyone down there. We would have known. There was fresh snow outside and no footprints.”*

-Corky Lazzarino

*“She felt the presence of something. Then it pulled her covers off of her.”*

-Sherri, Paxton resident

*“I was reading a rather risqué novel when suddenly I was very aware of a perfume, as if someone was reading over my shoulder. I looked all over, but couldn't trace the smell. When I switched to a story about the Oregon Trail, the perfume disappeared.”*

-Joy Burkholder, resident

Many residents have claimed that *“it gives a suffocating feeling, like someone is pushing down on your chest.”*

The following is an account given by Joy Burkholder, a former Paxton resident:

*“In the spring of 1998 the local antique club toured Paxton Lodge. Among the guests that day was Dottie Preston, a psychic. Everyone was admiring the old hotel and went up to the second floor to see the different rooms. Dottie calmly said to me ‘William H. Johnson.’ When I asked who that was, she gestured down the hall and said “the man standing there with his arms crossed over his chest. He is leaning against the wall with one foot resting against the wall. He is wearing a derby hat, a black vest, and pants and a white shirt with a tall collar but no tie. He didn't live here all the time, but kept a room. He was a railroad inspector. Is there such a thing? He asked for a desk to be put in his room. There are small burns along the edge where he set his cigar when he was doing book work.’*

*Later when we went to the basement, she said ‘everyone sure is in a hurry down here!’ ‘Do you see someone?’ I asked? ‘Yes, they are hurrying right through us because they*



*are on a different plane than we are. Oh, I see, they are in a hurry because they are waiters and waitresses for the dining room upstairs.’ By this time, we were at the far end of the hall where a narrow stairway, which she could not see, went up to the kitchen. ‘One of those women is a waitress, and she and her daughter, Elsie, who is about seven years old, live down here. Elsie is wearing a yellow dress and is crippled. She is playing with a ball. The cook does not live down here. He lives in a cabin close by.’*

*When we continued to an addition which was built in 1920, she commented ‘No, there is nothing here.’ ‘Sure there is,’ I said. ‘No, I mean now, in 1918 there is nothing here,’ she replied.*

*Driving to a meeting one Monday, Dottie asked what we did on the weekend. I started to tell her that they are unearthing something unusual at Paxton. They didn’t seem to know what it is, but they think it might be.....that was all the further I got before she said ‘Eli says it is a pelton wheel, and to be careful and check everything very closely because the value isn’t the pelton wheel, but what is under it that is of value. What in the hell is a pelton wheel?’ I was starting to tell her when she replied ‘Eli says it is something that goes in the water and the water makes it turn and it makes electricity.’ Then with a surprised look on her face she asked ‘Is that right?’ When I nodded my head, she said “Oh my god!”*

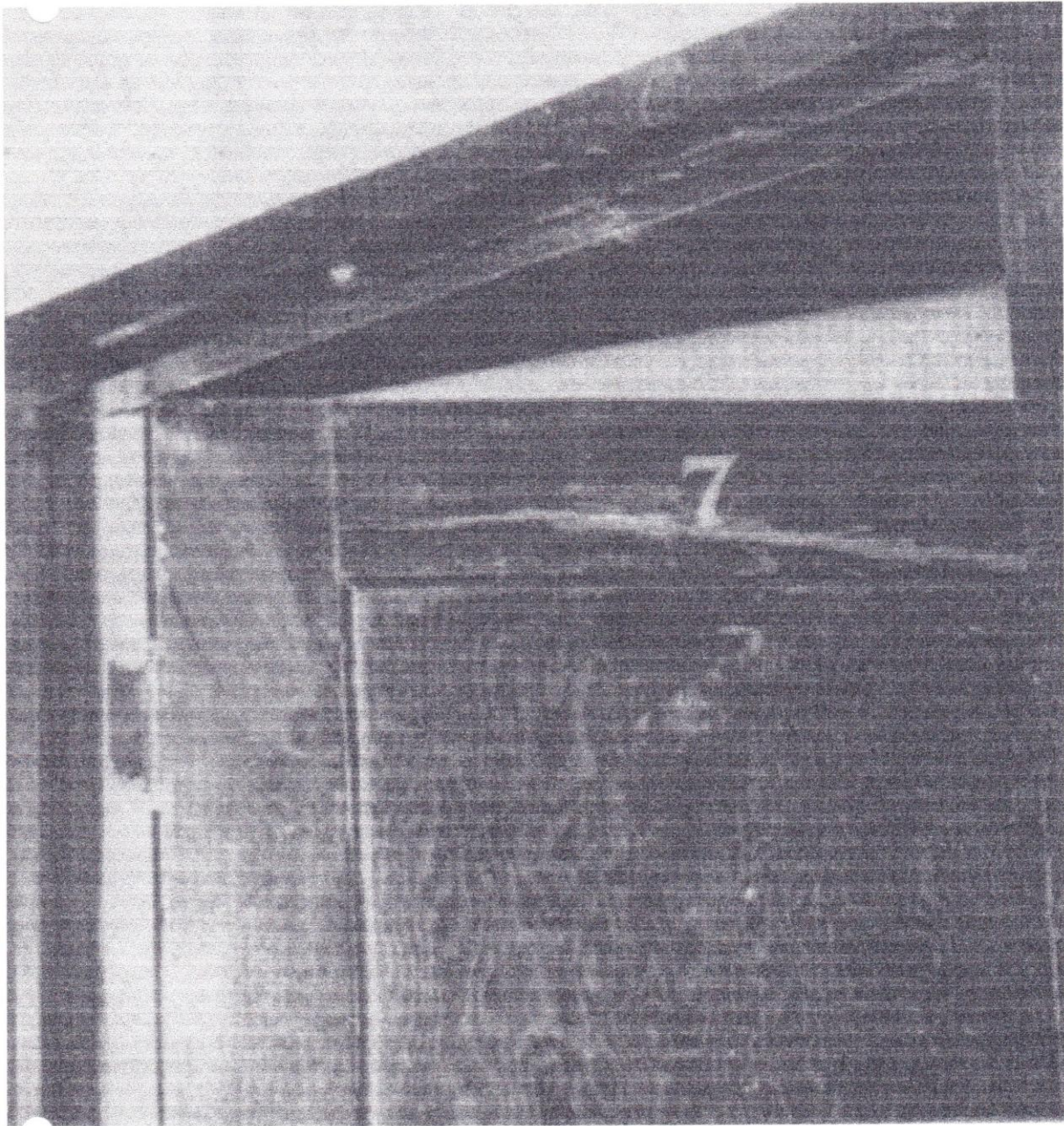
*Eli is her spirit advisor. He comes and goes and she cannot call him at will.*

*Another unusual day with Dottie.”*

A spiritualist was once summoned to the lodge to reveal the ghost’s identity. She felt that presence of something very quickly, but refused to enter the building, claiming that it strongly wanted her to leave the property.

In addition to these accounts, a Ouija board was once utilized to try to discover the identity of the “Boiler Man.” The board spelled out the name S.J. Hill. A few days later, a woman called from Las Vegas. Her name was Shirley Hill and she said that the ghost was the spirit of her dead husband and she was going to come for him. She was never heard from again.

The Ouija board also identified room #7 as the ghost’s room.



**Room #7. The boiler man's room and favorite haunt.**

The Boiler Man is possibly the single most intriguing thing about Paxton Lodge today. Many people believe in it, and many others do not. It is hard, however, to hear the proceeding accounts and to visit the lodge without wondering. There are few people who have visited the lodge and still do not believe in the ghost. No one knows exactly what or who he is. No one ever will. This provides the mystery and elusiveness to Paxton Lodge, and makes it one of the most bizarre buildings in the state.