

Elk Mountain Hotel

Sitting on the banks of the Medicine Bow River at the foot of Elk Mountain is the small, elegant, and historic Elk Mountain Hotel. The compact establishment is overwhelmed by the beauty of its setting.

When I entered the hotel a feeling of precognition overwhelmed me. After

introducing myself to the manager I felt compelled to ask, "Pardon me, but is your hotel haunted?" The manager was stunned and taken back for a moment, but then stuttered out weakly, "Yes." I replied, "Tell me about her." Again, the manager was stunned. This is how the rest of the morning went. The ghost, that is the first one we talked about, was a woman named Mary Evans. She was the wife of the first owner of the hotel, John Evans.

Numerous guests, staff, and most of the building's owners claimed to have seen Mary. When the current owners rebuilt the place they noticed that pictures would be moved but only ones of Mary. The old black and white photographs decorated many rooms but somehow or another would end up back in Mary's old room in a dresser drawer with a Bible on top of them. They tried many spots for the pictures and when they weren't moved from a spot, they figured that's where Mary wanted the picture.

Going with my gut feelings, so to speak, I said to the slightly nervous manager, "Mary's



The Elk Mountain Hotel.

room is on the second floor. Please show it to me." I was right again. Her favorite room is on the second floor, Room 10. The manager kindly took me to the room. Upon entering I noticed a rocking chair next to a window. I pointed at it and said to the manager, "This was her favorite chair and she used to look out the window from it." The manager informed me my guess was again correct and proceeded to tell me more "Mary" stories. Sometimes she is seen in the rocker and other times the chair rocks on its own even though no one visible is sitting in it. Mary seems to think she still runs the place and she runs a tight ship. She turns off lights left on and closes doors left open. Maybe that's why the owners don't feel the need to spend the night there. When you check in they give you a phone number to call during the night in case of an emergency or some such thing that would need their attention.

According to the manager a couple checked in one day, were given the phone number, and informed they would be alone in the hotel. Later that evening while in their room they heard noises coming from down the

hall. The couple got up, went to their room door, opened it, and looked down the hall towards the direction of the noise. At that moment they saw a woman in old-time dress come out of Room 8, stroll to Room 10, and start to walk in. Then she stopped, turned her head towards them, and gave a cold disapproving stare. With a bit of a huff she then turned, went into Room 10, and closed the door behind her. The man, shocked and curious, went down the hall and knocked on her door. After receiving no answer he opened the door and found the room deserted. At this point the couple used the phone number. They explained they were not alone. When the owners convinced them that no other



This is a place with as much charm as it has history.



John and Mary Evans. Notice, Mary won't even smile for her picture.

people were in the hotel, the couple checked out.

At the end of the tour I noticed a wall at one end of the lobby, it must have contained at least fifty photos. One picture contained a woman in Victorian period dress. Her smile-less face contained a pair of black eyes that looked right through you and followed you wherever you moved. I turned to the now quite nervous manager, pointed to the photo, and said, "This

is Mary." She nearly fainted. Then I gently said, "Now tell me about the little girl." Her jaw dropped in amazement. There is a second ghost and it is a little girl. They don't know who she is, or was, but she is heard calling out on occasion. When you come to the voice that called out, you find yourself confronted with an empty room or staircase. Other times she is seen but not heard. She is seen out of the corner of the eye or just turning into a doorway. The cook saw her

once in the lobby staring out the window. At the end I asked, "Can you tell me about the basement?" The manager grasped her chest in horror and pleaded, "What's wrong with the basement?" I just shrugged and mumbled, "Oh, nothing." I didn't have the heart to tell her.

There used to be a dance hall adjacent to the hotel. The dance hall was built in 1880 and it was expanded in 1920. It was purchased in January 1947 by Mark Johnson. After a remodeling, he opened it for business in the spring of 1948 under the name, Garden Spot Pavilion. He used the dance hall to bring in groups from the Big Band Era. The bands arrived by train, stopping here from Denver on their way to Salt Lake City, and stayed at the hotel. The Garden Spot lured some prominent entertainers such as Louis Armstrong, Les Brown, Tommy Dorsey, Harry James, Gene Krupa, Lawrence Welk, Tex Williams, and many more. The first-floor reading room at the hotel has autographed photos and other memorabilia from those days.

The first businesses here were a stagecoach station, the Overland Stage Station, and tavern named, The Crossing. The Elk Mountain Hotel was built in 1905 by John S. Evans. When first built, it had sixteen guest rooms on the second floor, and a tavern and restaurant on the first floor. The hotel was closed in 2000 and went through a complete rehab. It reopened in May 2002. There are now twelve rooms, all with a private bath. There is no longer a lounge but the restaurant serves alcohol, including fine wines and imported champagne. I had brunch and the food is quite good. The grounds have been landscaped and the old interior has been entirely refurbished. The original ornate embossed tin ceilings have been restored and give the place an old charm. The interior is a cross of country and Victorian. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One last brag for the hotel is that it rests on the banks of an award-winning trout stream, the Medicine Bow River. The hotel and the tiny hamlet of Elk Mountain are tucked away together in southeast Wyoming, 3.1 miles south of I-80 at exit 255.

I recommend you go for the fine food, good service, and beautiful setting. I just can't promise Mary will let you have a good night's sleep.

Contact Information

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Part of the hotel's beautiful setting.