

WORTH THE TRIP

Enjoy a supernatural stay at the creepily comfortable Phantom History House — if you dare

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Town Chronicle Correspondent

“There’s a house in Florida where history meets the paranormal and where its eerie elegance makes for a comfortable, yet creepy stay.”

So says the website of the Phantom History House. If you’re planning a comfortable getaway close to home, you might want to give this supernaturally inspired spot — roughly 90 minutes from the Wellen Park area — a try. Add a star if you’re interested in all things eerie.

Steve Blanchard and Tim Hinton have opened their home to all guests, but particularly those who are fond of the paranormal, the strange and the odd.

These gentlemen provide a comfortable stay in lush surroundings — with a paranormal-themed twist. The bed-and-breakfast rests (unrests?) on a bit more than an acre of property and backs up to a nature preserve, providing guests with privacy and deathly quiet tranquility. Although the inn focuses on the macabre, a stay there is all about comfort and fun.

The proprietors regularly bring in psychics and tarot card readers whom guests can book. They are also hosting a course on developing your intuitive senses. Or you can party until not quite the stroke of midnight at their Half-o-Ween celebrations, from 7-11 p.m. April 28 and 29, featuring entertainment by the Sanderson Sisters, who will be costumed as the main characters in the film “Hocus Pocus.” Tickets for these and other events are listed on the website.

Mr. Blanchard, a former journalist and current public relations professional, also hosts a



PATRICIA HORWELL / COURTESY PHOTOS
TOP: Proprietors Tin Hinton and Steve Blanchard. RIGHT: The Victorian Library.

podcast called “Phantom History” (www.phantomhistory.com). He developed an interest in things that go bump in the night and operating a bed and breakfast more than 20 years ago after taking a ghost tour on his first trip to New Orleans.

“It was the first time I stayed at a bed-and-breakfast,” he said, “and I thought it was amazing. It wasn’t themed but it was New Orleans, so it had its own unique vibe. I just thought how cool it would be to run something like that.”

Mr. Hinton is a musician and taught music for many years. He now runs his own business as a musician and arranger. Often referred to as “The Beast of the Marching Arts,” his work has



been seen on football fields across the country.

Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Hinton each have their own individual interests.

“My passion to bring people together who have a similar interest in things that are paranormal, and to offer them an immersive safe space where they can come and experience

that, or share their stories and meet people from interesting backgrounds so we could talk about our experiences, whether it’s in the paranormal, whether it’s in history, whether it’s our countries of origin or whatever,” Mr. Blanchard said.

For Mr. Hinton, “It’s all about comfort and making people feel comfortable, happy and relaxed, and giving them an experience of getting away and turning off their life. I can’t tell you how many people that already stayed here have said that to us, like it felt so good to be in a very comfortable, welcoming space and turning off the world. I get excited about giving people a really upscale lodging experience.”

Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Hinton furnished the home from scratch, visiting antique markets and shops on weekends as well as refinishing old pieces they found in various locations. The result is a relaxing environment — a well-appointed home with plenty of interesting details.

The library is a reader’s paradise, with an entire wall of books (not all are paranormal related; many are from Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Hinton’s personal collection). Comfy leather and upholstered furniture and a fireplace add to the ambiance. Often guests gather here and tell stories — some are even ghost stories. Be sure to check out the fainting chair, otherwise known as a chaise.

The dining room is a sight to behold at night, with all the window candles (battery-operated for safety) ablaze.

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A haunting view of the lanai from the comfortable seating area.

Enter the Potion Room to see a wonderful collection of colorful bottles assembled on built-in shelves that take up one wall. The teeny cobalt blue Victorian tear-catcher bottle is a favorite. This is another area where guests tend to congregate and chat. Guests also like to spend time on the lanai.

The kitchen is tremendous and features a guest refrigerator where one can find water, juices and other thirst-quenching drinks. There is always a snack or two available on the counter. I helped myself to apple cake and cookies during my stay. You'll truly say "ahhh" when you experience your comfortable bed, complete with multiple pillows and linen sheets. Bathroom towels are plush, and black makeup cloths are included. All rooms (and the front door) lock and unlock via a combination system.

I stayed in the Cemetery Room, which features a hand-painted mural of — you guessed it — a cemetery. Candles, like many of the home's features, are operated with a remote. Bathroom towel racks are metal hands affixed to the wall. I assure you that I received no ghostly visitors. Phantom History House is all about fun and



You'll dig the Cemetery Room.

comfort.

The other bedrooms include the Ouija Room, complete with Ouija board and complementary artwork; the Portrait Room, with one wall filled with framed portraits, some old and some new; and the Castle Room, fit for a king or queen, with medieval tapestries and a stone wall in the bathroom. Both the Cemetery Room and the Portrait Room open out to a spacious desk with lounge chairs, overlooking the property and nature preserve. No spooks come out to haunt, but birds, bunnies and deer often visit.

The inn is also available to groups (think wedding parties) and can host private events. The backyard is large enough for weddings and other gala affairs, and Mr. Blanchard said he hopes to eventually put in a pool.

If you don't believe in the paranormal, Phantom History House is just a luxurious, quiet, private overnight getaway or vacation spot. But if you do believe in the paranormal ... well, you're sure to find kindred spirits there. 🏠

Phantom History House

>> Where: 12603 Corral Road, Tampa
>> Contact: www.phantomhistory-house.com, podcast@phantom-history.com, 407-927-7765

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