



Investigation Summary Report

King's Tavern Natchez, MS



HISTORY

The King's Tavern building is 237 years old, making it the oldest structure in the very old river port city of Natchez, which got its start during the time of Spanish settlement way back in the 1700's. Around 1769, when the British moved in and established Fort Panmure, the King's Tavern building was originally built to be a block house for the fort. As there was no saw mill near this frontier town, this building and other structures were constructed using beams taken from scrapped New Orleans sailing ships, which were brought to Natchez via mule.

Another source of wood used in the King's Tavern building construction were barge boards from flat river boats, which were dismantled and sold after arriving in Natchez with their goods after traveling down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Boatmen couldn't take their flat boats back up these rivers, so they just added to their profit by selling the boats as wood, which was needed to build Natchez.

After the Revolutionary War in 1776, the British left town, leaving this wild and woolly frontier river port open for other interests. In 1789, a New Yorker by the name of Richard King moved

his family to Natchez where he bought this block home and opened a combination tavern / inn / as well as the place where the town's mail was dropped off. His inn business was very successful because of the need for boatmen and weary stage riders to have a secure place to rest for the night. The upstairs rooms on the third floor were comfortable accommodations.

Selling drinks to townspeople and visitors as well was also a money maker. He also found himself to be very popular with people, because he received / sent the town's mail. Everyone congregated on the steps of his tavern, socializing and reading their mail. He enjoyed a celebrity status, and he and his wife became prominent and very much respected people in Natchez.

During this time, not so nice people with no redeeming values settled into Natchez, to prey on the boatmen and visitors, making a living from gambling, and robbing people, sometimes not thinking twice of killing their victims. After selling their goods and their flat boats for lumber, boatmen would spend the night at the King's Tavern, and then head home along the Natchez Trace Pathway. Highwaymen outlaws would hold them up, and usually kill them.

The infamous, sadistic Harpe brothers were such outlaws who took delight in torturing, mutilating and finally killing their victims. The Harpe brothers as well as other such men would then return to Natchez and stimulate the economy, perhaps staying at the King's Tavern, if not in the Natchez Under the Hill area, notorious for being a haven for people of questionable character.

Finally, one of the Harpe brothers stepped over the line, even for outlaws, and was killed and beheaded by his own kind. His head was displayed as a warning for others. However, with the invention of the steamboat, which could travel down and up the river as well, the need for this dangerous travel along Natchez Trace ended with this form of modern transportation. This development cut down on the lucrative stage business significantly, dropping the economic activity taking place at the King's Tavern. Richard King sold the King's Tavern in 1817. The building was once again a private home, becoming the Postalwaith family home for several generations, a total of 150 years, beginning in 1823.

In 1973, the building was sold and it eventually became a tavern and restaurant to serve both locals and visitors, taking the original name, the King's Tavern, open to both the living and the entities which stay there.

One of the Harpe brothers known as Big Harpe was staying at the tavern, paying for it from some money he stole from one of his victims. A mother with a fussy baby was staying in the attic room, trying to quiet the child. Big Harpe swaggered from the tavern area, went up to this attic room, grabbed the baby away. He swung the child by its feet, smashing it hard against the brick wall, killing it. He returned to the bar to buy another drink.

Richard King had hired a pretty 16 year old girl to be a server, called Madeline, a beautiful, engaging young woman, who caught the attention of Richard. Forgetting his wedding vows, Richard seduced Madeline, because he wanted her. Madeline gladly became his mistress in a hot passionate affair.

The stately Mrs. King found out about their illicit love. She decided to hire some thugs from Natchez Under the Hill to stab Madeline. Or, perhaps she killed Madeline herself. Madeline was made to go away, without a trace. Mrs. King or the men who killed her took Madeline's body and bricked them up in the chimney wall in the main room of the tavern, to hide this evil deed.

During the 1930's the Portsmouth family needed to do some renovations to shore up the building. While repairing the chimney / fireplace in the main room of the tavern, 3 mummified bodies of one girl and two men were found. One of them is believed to be Madeline. The murder weapon, a dagger, was found in another fireplace in another room.

The two men - Many theories abound as to who they are:

- a) Slaves, servants or tavern guests who annoyed Mrs. King in some manner, prompting her to kill them.
- b) Boatmen or travelers killed by the same men who killed Madeline, around the same time.

INVESTIGATION

We arrived at King's Tavern around 8:30 pm and ate dinner before the investigation. The food was terrific!! Once we were finished eating the restaurant was pretty much closed down for the evening. The owner, Thom Miller, led us through all 3 floors of the restaurant - telling us all of the legends as well as informing us of the different activities that have occurred. While on the second floor, one of our investigators entered the side quickly saying that he had just seen a female with shoulder length black hair sitting at a table by the window. There was no one in the dining room, in fact, we were the only ones in the restaurant. None of the other investigators witnessed the apparition.

Once we finished the walk through, we placed 7 IR cameras through out the restaurant. Upon reviewing everything, no video evidence was found. The wiring throughout the restaurant caused high EMF levels that fluctuated all night long. We were however able to pick up a few possible EVPs of unknown origin. We would like to deeply thank the staff of King's Tavern for allowing us to investigate, as we definitely intend on making a return visit!