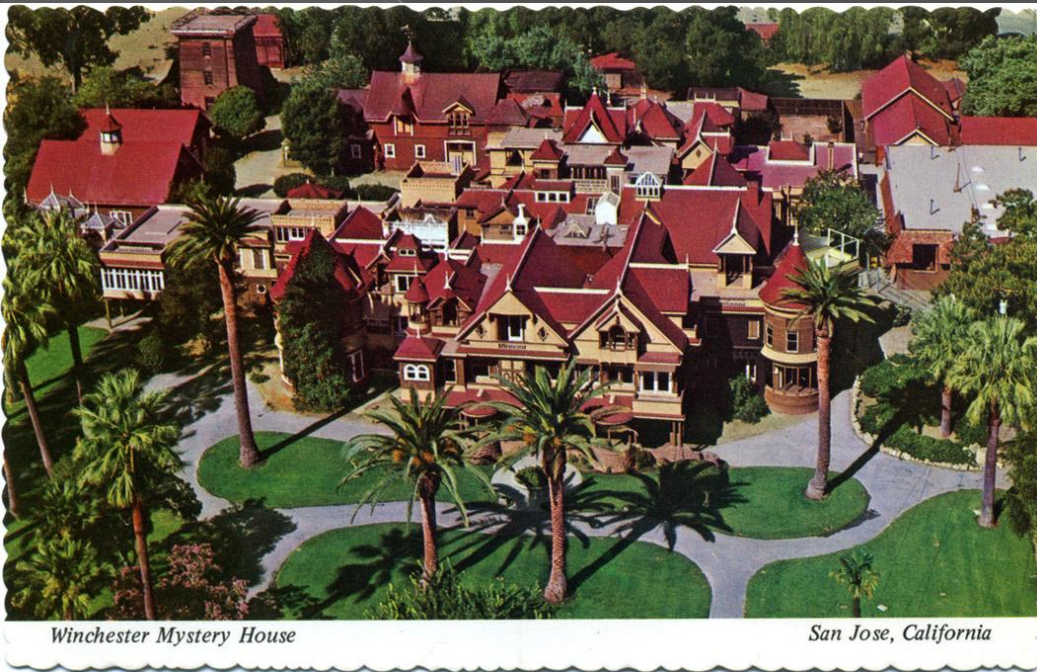


Winchester House



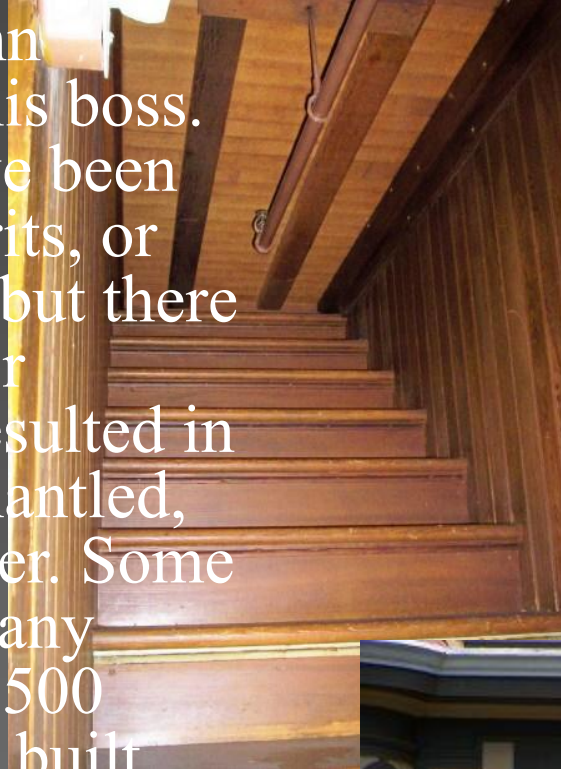


The **Winchester Mystery House** is a well-known mansion in California. It once was the personal residence of Sarah Winchester, the widow of gun magnate William Wirt Winchester. It was continuously under construction for 38 years and is reported to be haunted. It now serves as a tourist attraction. Under Winchester's day-to-day guidance, its "from-the-ground-up" construction proceeded around the clock, without interruption, from 1884 until her death on September 5, 1922, at which time work immediately ceased.

According to legend, Mrs. Winchester enacted a nightly séance to help with her building plans and for protection from “bad” spirits. While she sometimes drew up simple sketches of the building ideas, there were never any blueprints....or building inspectors! In the morning, she would meet with John Hansen, her dutiful foreman, and go over new changes and additions.

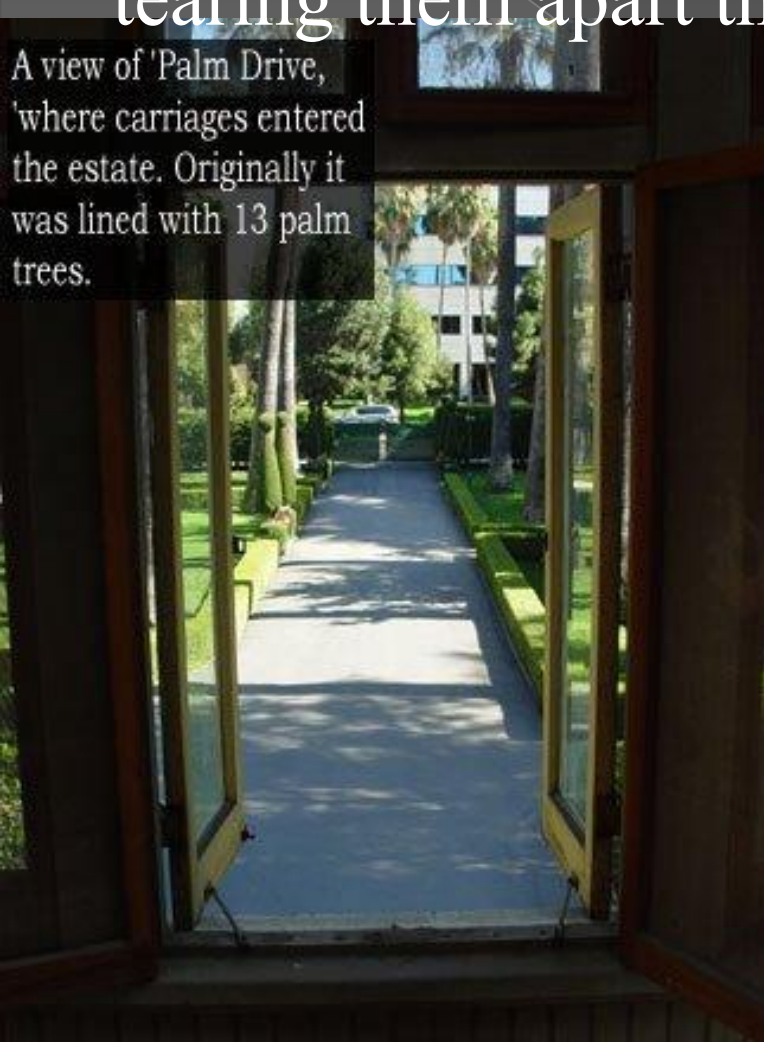


It is doubtful whether John Hansen ever questioned his boss. Mrs. Winchester may have been trying to confuse evil spirits, or simply making mistakes, but there were no budget ceilings or deadlines to meet. This resulted in many features being dismantled, built around, or sealed over. Some rooms were remodeled many times. It is estimated that 500 rooms to 600 rooms were built, but because so many were redone, only 160 remain. This naturally resulted in some peculiar effects, such as stairs that lead to the ceiling, doors that go nowhere and that open onto walls, and chimneys that stop just short of the roof!



But this is how the Winchester Mystery House became known as “the house built by the spirits.” John Hansen stayed with Mrs. Winchester for many years, redoing scores of rooms, remodeling them one week and tearing them apart the next.

A view of 'Palm Drive,' where carriages entered the estate. Originally it was lined with 13 palm trees.



These call boxes were located throughout the mansion, allowing Mrs. Winchester to summon servants at the push of a button. A number would drop down to indicate where she was in the mansion.



Before the 1906 earthquake, the house had been seven stories high, but today it is only four stories. There are roughly 160 rooms, including 40 bedrooms, 2 ballrooms (one completed and one unfinished) as well as 47 fireplaces, 10,000 window panes, 17 chimneys (with evidence of two others), two basements and three elevators. Winchester House has gold and silver chandeliers and hand inlaid parquet floors and trim. There are doors and stairways that lead nowhere and a vast array of colors and materials. Due to Mrs Winchester's debilitating arthritis, special "easy riser" stairways were installed as a replacement for her original steep construction. This allowed her to move about her home freely as she was only able to raise her feet a few inches high.





An unfinished room behind the 'Most Expensive Window.' It is likely that the worktable below has been here since the room was sealed in 1906.



The crawlspaces are the least explored part of the house. The wires seen here were probably part of the servant call system.

The number thirteen and spider web motifs, which had some sort of spiritual meaning to her, reappear around the house. For example, an expensive imported chandelier that originally had 12 candle-holders was altered to accommodate 13 candles, wall clothes hooks are in multiples of 13, and a spider web-patterned stained glass window contains 13 colored stones. The sink's drain covers also have 13 holes. In tribute, the house's current groundskeepers have created a topiary tree shaped like the numeral 13. Also, every Friday the 13th the large bell on the property is rung 13 times at 1 o'clock p.m. (13:00) in tribute to Winchester.





Today the home is owned by Winchester Investments LLC and it retains unique touches that reflect Mrs Winchester's beliefs and her reported preoccupation with warding off malevolent spirits. These spirits are said to have directly inspired her as to the way the house should be built.

