

## CASE: The Winchester Mystery House

**LOCATION:** California, USA



San Jose's Winchester Mystery House was built and owned by Sarah Winchester, the widow of a famous gun maker. The depressed widow consulted a medium, who claimed that her family and fortune were being haunted by the spirits of people killed by Winchester rifles. The medium advised that the only way to keep the restless spirits at bay was to build them a house. And Sarah did, building a huge mansion full of dead-end staircases, doors and windows that lead to walls, and winding halls to trick the ghosts that plagued her. From 1884 until her death, Winchester used her inheritance to fund the ongoing construction. The house contains 160 rooms, including 40 bedrooms, 2 ballrooms, 47 fireplaces, 2 basements, and 3 elevators.

**WITNESS:** Sam Hawkins, tourist:

I went on a tour with my family, but got separated from the tour group. I was admiring the view out the window, and when I turned around everyone was gone. I tried to find my way out of the house but nothing was where I remembered it being. I went down a flight of stairs thinking it would lead me to the ground floor, but there was just a dead-end at the bottom. Then I tried a door, but there was a wall on the other side! Every twist and turn just led me deeper and deeper into the house, and I couldn't find my way out. Finally, I collapsed from exhaustion, and I don't know how much time passed before a tour guide found me. It turns out that I had been trapped in the house for three days.

I know people say it's haunted, and several people have told me I was cursed by Sarah Winchester's ghost, but really, I think I just got lost. Simple as that.

**WITNESS:** Leticia Salazar, tourist:

We were on a tour group, and I'm a photographer, so I brought my professional camera along. I was able to take a few pictures, but the batteries died after a few minutes, even though I just put them in. When I got home and uploaded the shots I was able to get, a bunch of new pictures appeared that I know I did not take...strange, misty forms in the corners of a few of them. So creepy. I'm afraid to even drive by the Winchester House anymore; it just creeps me out.

**How did Sam's experience at the Winchester House affect him?**

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**How did Leticia's experience affect her?**

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