

Chris Gray: [00:00](#) Welcome to The Placer Life.

Scotty Sandow: [00:07](#) I'm Scotty Sandow.

Chris Gray: [00:08](#) And I'm Chris Gray.

Scotty Sandow: [00:09](#) In the spirit of the Halloween season, today we're bringing you first hand tales of encounters with the supernatural in Placer County at some of our very own museums.

Chris Gray: [00:22](#) We've got wonderful and free museums in Placer County, and many of them are in historical buildings that date back to Placer's early gold rush days.

Scotty Sandow: [00:31](#) They're a window into the way life used to be, but as you'll hear sometimes the past isn't quite as past as like to believe.

Chris Gray: [00:40](#) So, grab your flashlights, and your pumpkin spice tea and pull the blankets up close and let's dare to meet some of Placer's dead.

Ralph Gibson: [00:51](#) I'm Ralph Gibson, I'm the ah, museums administrator for Placer County.

Scotty Sandow: [00:55](#) Ralph's been the administrator of our museum and archives division since 2004. After serving in the Navy, he got a bachelors and then a master's degree in archeology and then took a job at the Kell House Museum in Texas.

Ralph Gibson: [01:05](#) Archeology ah, while it's a- while it's a bachelor or master's of arts, um, it's still science based. We're still looking at evidence, we're still weighing um, evidence in the field to come up with a good hypothesis and- and a theory that may ah, fit the evidence that we find. So, we use- we use the scientific method, and I've always kind of used that in my everyday life. Um, but when I was hired to- to work at the Kell House Museum in Texas, I was told by the board that hired me, that I'm going to have experiences, and my first thought was, "Oh, yeah, right. I'm going to have experiences. I'll be able to write everything off in my head once I see what it is."

Chris Gray: [01:41](#) It wasn't long before one of those experiences was not something that Ralph could easily write off in his head.

Ralph Gibson: [01:46](#) It was September 10th, 2002 and ah, the American Alliance of Museums had requested that all museums do special exhibits in the first anniversary of 9/11 and we were doing an exhibit on

the Red Cross in Wichita Falls, which was started by Willie May Kell, one of the Kell daughters.

- Ralph Gibson: [02:03](#) And ah, my (laughs) exhibit team was made up of ah, a bunch of volunteers, who were in their 70's and 80's. So, a lot of the work just fell to me. And I was ah, working well into the night on September 10th to try to get this exhibit done. And it was almost 10 o'clock at night, and I'm working in this one little room, and that's the only light on in the house because when I started, it was daylight. And so, as the night grew on, just this little island of light is where I worked.
- Ralph Gibson: [02:34](#) And all of a sudden, I heard ah, the back screen porch door open. And then I heard the kitchen door open. And then I heard ladies talking. And then I heard footfalls on the linoleum in the kitchen, and they're still talking. I kn- I immediately thought that my volunteers had saw the light on and said, "Oh, Ralph's working late tonight," and maybe they were going to pitch in to give me a hand so, I started talking to them as I started walking toward another light to help them see their way.
- Ralph Gibson: [03:21](#) And I- I said, "I'm gonna get the light. Don't worry." And they were walking right toward me and right where they should be right in front of me, walking and talking, I turn the light on and there was no one there.
- Ralph Gibson: [03:34](#) And that really got me more than anything else. Um, was just I mean, the- the hair on my head stood up, and I got goose pimples all over my- my flesh and ah, I ended up turning on every single light in that house to finish that exhibit, and I don't think I turned them off when I left. I think I just left them all on that night when I was done and came back, but that really shook me.
- Ralph Gibson: [03:58](#) My logical side said you heard talking out in the street, and I ran out and I looked. There was no one up and down the street, no one around. Um, It's not in a very busy part of town. It's in a quiet part of town and ah, and then I thought, "Wait a minute, you didn't just hear voices, you heard the back screen door open. You heard the kitchen door open. You heard footfalls on the linoleum. Those aren't going to come from the street."
- Ralph Gibson: [04:23](#) So, I- I don't you know, I- I can't explain that. I- i- it opened me up that- that there were things that we can't always explain. Um, I'm not going to come out and say what it is, I'm just going to say I can't explain what it was.

- Ralph Gibson: [04:38](#) You go back, ah, a 100 years and beyond, death was ah, more common than it is today, I mean, death has always been, d- death's a part of life. But I mean, people that have multiple children knowing that not all of them were going to make it to adulthood. If you go walking through the Old Auburn Cemetery, you're going to see a lot of ch- ah, children that are buried there. There were accidents um, I mean, medical care wasn't very good.
- Ralph Gibson: [05:06](#) It was a violent time, and it was also a time when ah, you know, if you got hurt, you got an infection, you know, t- there were not good odds you were gonna make it. So, yeah, it was ... Death was all around.
- Ralph Gibson: [05:21](#) History is- is haunting. I mean, we are working with ah, in our museum every object we have was interacted with somebody that has passed, and we're looking at buildings that were occupied people- by people that are long gone. Um, and in fact, if you walk through the Old Auburn Cemetery, you're actually walking, you're seeing our history laid out, right there all our important key figures from the ah, the gold rush era all the way up to- to modern times. Um, these are- these are places that I think people kind of skip over when they start studying the history of an area, is an old cemetery. You're going to find names in that cemetery that match all the streets in a town you're from because of the- who these people were. So, history is really about ghosts.
- Chris Gray: [06:04](#) And that history includes Placer County's gold rush.
- Ralph Gibson: [06:07](#) You know, that- that's probably the biggest part of the gold rush is this mix of people from all over the world because ... A lot- lot of people don't really get how big a deal that was. I mean, this was- this was as far as we can tell, one of the greatest migrations of people voluntarily that has happened in the history of mankind where so many people wanted to come to- to one little place on the- on the globe, and it was to find gold.
- Ralph Gibson: [06:32](#) And ah, you've got people from the old world. You've got people from China. You've got people from Australia and even parts of Africa. Um, you've got people coming from all over. And of course, they bring with their superstitions, their beliefs and you have this sort of mixing of all this sort of stuff.
- Ralph Gibson: [06:51](#) And ah, and I think that- that may lend itself more to like a ghost story or legends that you know, may have a supernatural kind of feel to 'em. You certainly come across superstitions, like ah, people um, ah, fearing ah, there was a- a ... It wasn't for this

area, it was another, I think a Nevada County about a miner talking about a black cat, um, just being totally freaked out by it. Um, and I know just from reading about not Placer County, but just reading about the history of the er- of the era, you know, there were some people that still believed in witches. Um, heck the last trial where witchcraft was used as a defense was in the 1920's in Pennsylvania, so you know, the- the old world superstitions were- were there.

Scotty Sandow: [07:37](#) From the early days of Placer County, the courthouse was at the center of every day life for a lot of folks. And as it turns out, a lot of deaths too.

Ralph Gibson: [07:46](#) Ah, if you want to talk about the courthouse, it- it, we're going all the way back to the gold rush era because if you've ever been to the historic courthouse, there are two big magnolia trees there. The magnolia tree that's ah, on the front corner of the courthouse, if you were facing it, it'll be on that left, front corner. Um, that magnolia tree that's on Lincoln Way, that area is where the first cemetery was in Auburn. Ah, that was a gold rush era cemetery 1849, 1850 probably to about 1852.

Ralph Gibson: [08:15](#) And the reason that it stopped being a cemetery in 1852 was they were going to put our second courthouse right on that same spot where our current courthouse is and so, the county acquired the land and they had to move those bodies to what was then called the E Street Cemetery, which was where the Veteran's Hall is today.

Ralph Gibson: [08:32](#) So, they moved the bodies there. When you're moving old graves, you pretty much can guarantee you're not going to move 'em all. The second thing that happened was (laughs) they had to move those bodies again from the- from the E Street Cemetery to the Old Auburn Cemetery. So some of these, you know, the- the gold rush was very transient, people were moving around all the time. I didn't think they though it would continue after they died, but it did.

Ralph Gibson: [08:52](#) Um, so they were moved to the Old Auburn Cemetery. Now, not just the grave, but once it became a courthouse ah, the- our wooden courthouse was built, I think it opened in 1854, they started construction in 1853. Um, that's where they had ah- ah, hangings, the executions. And often people were buried at the foot of the gallows.

Ralph Gibson: [09:14](#) So, you know, we know there were some that were buried on those ah- ah, right up there on the hill where the courthouse is. In fact, they were digging a ditch in 1911 and found two

skeletons. So, you know, those may have been bodies from people that were- that were hung there. So, there's been executions, there was the- there was the ah, the graveyard, our first cemetery. And then ah, 1894 they started construction of our current courthouse and it was completed ah, July 4th, 1898.

Chris Gray: [09:41](#) Our ghost tour of some of Placer County's museums begins with the sad story of little Leroy Cohen.

Ralph Gibson: [09:51](#) Well actually, I probably need to tell you the story about the little boy first. Um, the jailer of Placer County is, was a guy named Leroy Cohen and he had a little boy who was just shy of his third birthday. It was ah, August 20th, ah, 1899 and it was a Sunday and he was taking a group of family members up to the top of the cupola to look out, a spectacular view from the top of the courthouse and they were all up there, they were looking at it. It was- it was- it was a great view.

Ralph Gibson: [10:20](#) And they were getting ready to go down the stairs and one of the ah, children got pretty frightened so, he though he'd walk the kids down one at a time, carry them down this steep staircase. Well, he took his son first, little Leroy. He was Leroy Junior. He took him down the staircase, and he put him down on a- on a landing um, above the fourth floor and there was this- there was this skylight up there, this glass skylight. It was right off where the staircase was and ah, he went back up to get the other little kid and he was bringing that- that child down and he got on the floor and his son wasn't there. Like, "Where did Leroy go?" And then he saw one footprint next to a, on the glass with the broken glass beyond it. And he knew his son had fallen and he went down and ah, he had crushed his skull. And ah, he languished for about ah, 24 hours. He died the next day. But little Leroy ah, for all intensive purposes died in that courthouse.

Scotty Sandow: [11:19](#) Just a quick note here, both the Placer County Museum and that museum administrative offices are in the historic courthouse in Auburn.

Ralph Gibson: [11:25](#) My first experience was ah, very soon after I was hired. It was the spring of 2005. I worked on Saturdays and I always came in really early and I came and ah, I noticed all the glass, the plexiglass on the first floor ah, right when you come in the hallway was all dirty. And I thought, "Man, I need to clean this before we open at 10 o'clock."

Ralph Gibson: [11:45](#) So I went and got my cleaning supplies. I washed every piece of plexiglass I could find. I got it all shining, I got ah, all the

fingerprints off, nose prints. Put my cleaning supplies away and I went back to my office and the moment I saw down, the alarm went off. And I went running back to the alarm panel and it said, motion, case six.

- Ralph Gibson: [12:05](#) Ah, "What- what the heck?" So, I went running out and I looked at the case and I thought maybe when I was cleaning, I jostled something and it fell and out of place, but I looked and looked and nothing was moved, nothing had fallen. And then, about three feet off the ground, dead center in the case I saw two very dirty (laughs) little hand prints, like a little boy or little girl had pressed their hands against that glass.
- Ralph Gibson: [12:28](#) And I didn't know the story about Leroy Cohen at that time. I could not figure out where those prints came from because the front- the door was locked. No one had access to that building. I'm the only one there and yet here are these kid's prints right on that- right on that glass. I could not figure it out.
- Ralph Gibson: [12:43](#) And it was later on I heard about the little boy, ah, little Leroy Cohen. And ah- ah bailiffs going back into the '60s and '50s um, have heard and seen that little boy playing in the courthouse.
- Ralph Gibson: [12:56](#) It was a bailiff that was on the second floor and there was a trial going on in one of the smaller courtrooms on the second floor and ah, he looked over, he was hearing a- a like a ball bounce. He looked over and he saw a little boy dressed in old time clothes. And this little boy was bouncing a little ball and he was getting ready to go down the staircase, down to the first floor, but he wanted to quiet the kid because he had a trial going on. So as he saw the kid going down the stairs, he radioed to the bailiff on the first floor and said, "Hey, we got a kid bouncing a ball. we got stop him."
- Ralph Gibson: [13:28](#) So the bailiff on the first floor went up the stairs, the bailiff on the second floor went down the stairs and they met and there was no little boy in between.
- Chris Gray: [13:42](#) Up next, one of Placer County's most notorious murderers, Adolf Webber makes an appearance.
- Ralph Gibson: [13:54](#) The Adolf story is- is very dark and it's one I'm surprised has not been made into a movie 'cause it's- it has all these strange elements to it.

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:14:04]

- Ralph Gibson: [14:02](#) ... because it's, it has all these strange elements to it. He was, uh, his father owned, uh, the Auburn Brewery, had several properties that he leased. Essentially retired after he sold the brewery. Retired in his forties. Um, they were well-off and, uh, Adolph was, uh, a very gregarious and warm child growing up. But when he got into his teens, it was like it was a light switch. He became very withdrawn, very introverted, moody, um, and no one could quite put a finger on what it was.
- Ralph Gibson: [14:38](#) He was a brilliant kid. He- he- he could not find anyone around here to play chess with. He had to play chess by mail to find someone up to his, up to his standard. So, um, he was, he was definitely a- a bright, bright boy. Um, but, uh, in May of 1904, the Placer County Bank was robbed. And, uh, no one suspected at the time but, uh, he ended up being the prime suspect, um, after, I guess, after the murdered happened.
- Ralph Gibson: [15:08](#) Um, in November 10th, his entire family was murdered. Um, they were all shot with a .32 caliber pistol and the- the house was burned down to try to hide that fact. Adolph was suspected of, uh, murdering his family and the motive being that his father may have found out that he was the one that robbed the bank. Well, he was convicted and sentenced to death and he was hung at Folsom Prison on September 27th, 1906.
- Ralph Gibson: [15:39](#) And when he was ... Uh, his body was put on public display in Sacramento and hundreds of people, in the rain, lined up to see his body. He was a rock star. He really was. He was getting love letters from women across the country. And it was in the courthouse and of course, the first floor is where the jail was. And I was, uh, my office was down the hall opposite of where the jail was, which is the main gallery. And I was working late one night because I was gonna be meeting a volunteer who worked full time and they were gonna meet me after hours in the courthouse.
- Ralph Gibson: [16:14](#) Well, the courthouse was locked, so I kept walking down the hall to look out the front door, waiting for this person. And on, I was gonna be giving a presentation on Adolph later that week, so he was in my head. And as I was walking toward the gallery to look out that door, um, I, just dawned on me that this was where he was incarcerated. And I said out loud, um, "Adolph, why did you do it?" And the moment I said that, there was a loud snap from my office. I went running back in and all four shades, two shades on two separate windows had completely snapped up, and that has never happened before or since.

- Scotty Sandow: [16:52](#) Sometimes ghosts aren't seen or heard. Sometimes spirits can be smelled. The curious ongoing at the courthouse continue.
- Ralph Gibson: [17:02](#) This is something that- that a few of our staff has experienced. When we're opening the courthouse and opening up all the gallery spaces early in the morning, um, it's happened to me several times. It's happened to different staff several times. It's not every morning. It's not every week. It's not even every month. But it- it, just one of those occasional things. We'll open up our historic, restored sheriff's office door and we will smell cigar smoke. There's no smoking in the courthouse. There's no one outside that could be pumping that in.
- Ralph Gibson: [17:36](#) Um, we'll just smell cigar smoke. And we do know that Elmer Gum is a former sheriff who died in 1941, we know that he always smoked a cigar at that desk. So is it him? I have no idea. But we will. We'll smell that cigar smoke every now and then.
- Speaker 2: [17:50](#) And the stories we've heard so far about Le- Leroy and Sheriff Gum pretty clearly tie back to characters that we know have been associated with the courthouse. Other presences are a little more mysterious.
- Ralph Gibson: [18:07](#) I talked to a janitor, uh, that, uh, he was, uh, uh, one that would clean upstairs late at night in the '70s. And, uh, when I talked to him, he was still, he, when he brought up the story, he was still fearful of this. He said that- that every now and then, he'd be, uh, cleaning the upstairs. It was the third floor where the main courtrooms are and he would smell, um, like this really old-fashioned, he called it grandmother's perfume, just really old flowery perfume.
- Ralph Gibson: [18:39](#) And he just thought it was someone during the day that just wore too much perfume and he'd, every now and then, he'd walk through a cloud of it. And then one day, he was up there and he was cleaning. Uh, he was buffing the floors. And, uh, he saw a woman wearing an old-fashioned black dress with a wide-brim black hat. He said she sort of glided across the floor in front of him and went right through a locked door and that same flowery perfume just enveloped him. And, uh, we don't know who she was. We don't know if she's related to a trial. Yeah, we- we- we have no clue who that- that woman was.
- Scotty Sandow: [19:22](#) Thank you, Ralph Gibson, for sharing your experiences and knowledge about our rich and lively history. We'll hear more from Ralph later in this episode, including a story that may lend photographic proof of one of Placer's ghosts.

- Speaker 2: [19:38](#) And we'll hear about special events happening this fall that celebrate and honor the history and spirits of Placer County, including a preview of a new exhibit coming to the museums in 2020 called, Post Mortem.
- Speaker 1: [19:49](#) Now, we whisk you over to the Bernhard Museum, located just a few short blocks away from the courthouse where a couple of our museum docents share their experiences and other tales.
- Speaker 2: [20:00](#) The Placer dead continues now. Our first ghostly Bernhard Museum story comes from Placer County Museum's docent, Diane Adams.
- Diane Adams: [20:13](#) Hi. I'm Diane Adams and I work as a volunteer docent at the, mostly the Bernhard Museum and with the Living History Program with the kids at the Bernhard. It was built in 1851 by a couple of guys named Bishop and Long. Uh, they built it as the Traveler's Rest, which was a very basic, kind of pit stop. You came off the stage, spend the night, get a meal, probably drink and gamble, uh, roll a bedroll out. Upstairs, no beds, just floor space. And, um, spend the night. Maybe get another stage going somewhere or go out looking for gold was basically it.
- Diane Adams: [20:58](#) And then the Bernhard's came and raised a family there around 1868. And so you'll see things that woulda been in a home around that time between 1850, 1920. It's a really fun place to come see. We decorate at Christmas and the displays get changed around once in a while, especially the clothing upstairs. Um, there's a lot of things in our archives with clothing and those displays get changed and Christmas is very special there.
- Diane Adams: [21:29](#) Come by 3:00 if you want to tour because it takes about an hour. My favorite part is the people who come there. I love meeting people from all over, um, who come. I really like the Living History Program we do with the kids 'cause I kinda like kids and it's fun to hang out with them. And, um, and I like kind of, um, keeping us rooted in our roots a little bit as we progress on with all the things that we do in life now. But to kinda remember where we came from, where- where our pioneers came from and- and I love all the old dishes and stuff.
- Diane Adams: [22:15](#) The Bernhard family, well, they came from Germany, originally. Uh, the story is they met on a boat coming over to America, liked each other, got married, lived in Missouri for awhile. He worked as a Teamster back there for awhile with his wagons and horses going to bigger centers to get supplies and bringing the supplies in to his little town. And then he found out about gold. So he got on a boat, came down around on a boat down to

the Isthmus of Panama, got on another boat, came up, found a little bit of gold, realized he wasn't gonna probably make it rich with gold, so he just became a Teamster here.

Diane Adams: [22:55](#) Sent for his wife and child back East. They came out and then they raised five children in that Bernhard house. He worked as a Teamster. When the railroad came through, he, um, just bought more land. And he was well-known for his wine. People would come from San Francisco to drink his wine. Not sure if those jugs of wine made it all the way back to San Francisco, but they did come (laughs) and get one. (laughs)

Diane Adams: [23:25](#) W- after they passed away, their daughter ... Around 1902, they passed away. Their daughter inherited the property. She lived there with her sons. Sons inherited the property. Eventually, we got it as a museum. It was just before 11:00, 'cause that's when my, um, volunteer shift starts at the Bernhard. It was a sunny day, so I'm gonna say, it was, uh, it was about a year or so ago. And it was really nice weather. I walked up to the front porch like usual. And there's two really, um, skinny, narrow windows.

Diane Adams: [24:04](#) There's one on either side of the front door there and they have a little curtain across 'em. And I saw a white, flowing figure go past. Then I didn't think too much about it because the staff person who was opening up that day often wears kind of long, flowy kinda tops and I just thought it was her. So I went inside and another docent was back in the kitchen. He'd gotten there before me. And I said, "Oh, uh, where's Beth?" And he said, "Oh, she's not in the house. She's out back opening up the buildings." And I went, "Yes, I've seen my ghost." ( laughs)

Diane Adams: [25:02](#) A woman with a long, flowy, white dress and just kinda went from one window to the other. I think where I saw the ghost and I, where w- the way the house is, they would've had to go through a wall on either side of the door to actually pass right in front of the door. 'Cause you step in and there's a little tiny bit of a wall there that one side goes to the living room, one side goes to the parlor. And- and this was right in front of the door, so that was pretty exciting.

Diane Adams: [25:47](#) I don't like, second-guess that I saw it. It was like, yes, I saw it and yes, it wasn't Beth in her outfit. And- and wow, that was really cool. Nobody has really talked about that particular ghost before that I've talked to. W- the thing I have heard is about, um, a guy with a beard, looking in the windows from outside. So I've been lookin' out for him; haven't seen him. I did hear somebody walking around upstairs the other day, but when I

went up, very bravely, "I'm gonna go up and see. I'm gonna go say hi." Nobody was up, that I saw, was up there.

Diane Adams: [26:51](#) And then I had another experience, um, very recently, a couple of weeks ago. I was there with another docent and I was giving, uh, a tour to somebody and we were in the dining room. And right off the dining room is the kitchen. And there's a door that is open that could close, between those two rooms, and the door kept closing. And I would open the door and then continue talking. And the door would close again. It didn't close all the way. It closed about a little over halfway and then I would open it again. And then it would close again. And the other docent and I were like, "Something's really weird with the air conditioning system. It's hittin' that door just right."

Diane Adams: [27:41](#) But it's the only time it's ever happened and it happened all day. Every time we went by, the door was half closed again, so that was, that's kinda cool. When I first started docenting, I heard stories that the person who's in charge of, kind of our displays and-

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:28:04]

Diane Adams: [28:03](#) ... that the person who's in charge of kind of our displays and stuff, Kasha, she has a, um, a photographic memory for where everything is in there. If something's out of place she notices it. She had been talking to the docents about, "Stop kind of messing around with the stuff in the kitchen, it's where it's supposed to be and- and don't move it," and they were always saying, "We're not moving it." They figured that maybe Mrs. Bernhard was coming in at night after they'd done tours, and moving things around in the kitchen. She doesn't seem to do that too much anymore. We're pretty fussy about how we leave things like if- if somebody comes through, and they open icebox door to have a better look we kind of put it back where we think it belongs because we know Kasha's gonna notice that it was opened. (laughs). And still I go in there, and I find things kind of a little bit moved around.

Scotty Sando: [29:09](#) Thanks to Diane Adams for sharing her stories with us. Her stories are just the beginning. Things get a little more personal with a second ghost sighting as told by Placer County Museum's docent, Rebecca Denniston.

Rebecca D.: [29:31](#) Hi, I'm Rebecca Denniston, and I'm a docent for Placer County Museums Division, and I've been doing that since 2002. Well, this happened in 2004, and I was working at Living History, and it was really, really different from the Living History program

that we had... have now. Um, we used to have what was... when we would do what was called a rainy day schedule, we would stick people in the docent office, and set the kids up with games, and stories, and somebody would be in- be in there reading to them, and stuff like that, and it was just kinda this nice, relaxed place.

Rebecca D.: [30:07](#) And so, um, this particular day, we had a lady in there, she was the grandma of one of the kids. Her name was Gena, and you know, it was a great day. We had a great time, you know, nothing happened that was out of the ordinary, and then as we were leaving, Gena turned to Sandi Tribe, and I, because that's who I was working with that day, she turned to us, and asked, "Are there any ghosts in the house?" And we just kinda looked at each other like, "Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay. One of those."

Rebecca D.: [30:40](#) And then she said that, um, she saw a man in the sitting room, and she said it was a good man, he was in a dark suit. He was turning around looking at things, and she basically described Mr. Bernhard. And what really creeped me out was that she said how tall he was, and there was no way that she could've known this. Um, he... Mr. Bernhard was 5'7", she said he was 5'8", and that's what really... I was like, "How would she know this?"

Rebecca D.: [31:15](#) Sandy said, "Well, miss... well, Mary Jane had a door slammed on her one time, but that's all we know, um, maybe we should have the place checked out." And so, you know, she went off, and she was really nice. It was- it was cool, she was very laid back about the whole thing. So, I go back into the house, because back then, the docents had to do all the cleanup, and we had to wash dishes in the tiny, little butler's pantry with the little, tiny water heater, but first of all, I stopped at the bathroom off of the sitting room, and I'm thinking about what Gena said.

Rebecca D.: [31:47](#) And so, I said it out loud, I said, "Okay. Mr. Bernhard, if that's you, you're a gentleman, right? You wouldn't follow a lady into the bathroom would you?" And I go in there, and I shut the door, and I take my hat off. This hat that I have that I wear for Living History, it's got the straw hat pin on it, and it's got pieces of straw sticking out, and sometimes they fall out. So, basically this hat's been disintegrating for the past 20 years.

Rebecca D.: [32:15](#) So, I take the hat off, a piece of straw falls out. I think, "Okay. I'll do what I've gotta do first." Next thing I know, the piece of straw that was on the floor is in the trash, and I thought, "Okay.

It's the Benadryl. I must be... (laughs). I must be delirious from the allergies, or something, because there's no way I could've done this." And right when I'm thinking that, this cold prickle goes over the back of my neck, and it just was like, "Okay. This is... (laughs). This is weird. This is really weird." So, I finished up, and I got out of there, and yeah... (laughs). I did not wanna stay in that room.

Rebecca D.: [32:52](#) It was like the... he was out there saying hi, and maybe trying to... (laughs)... to pick up after me. I don't know. (laughs). I heard Mr. Bernhard was a... kind of a fastidious person, so it would not be out of the ordinary for him to do something like that, but um, yeah, it feels... it just feels like that, you know, maybe he was trying to take care of me, or something. I don't know.

Rebecca D.: [33:12](#) It felt creepy. I just... I kept repeating this- this Bible verse to myself, "Greater is in me... Greater is He that is in me than He that is in the world," and just over, and over, and over again. It's like, "Okay. Lord, this is one of my favorite places, and I don't wanna get freaked out. I wanna come back here, and not get freaked out again, and just, you know, get me calmed down here." And that's what it felt like, and then I just... I don't know, I didn't really like to talk about it once it happened, because it just felt kinda silly. It was like, "Okay. I... You know, I know what I saw, but it just feels weird to- to say anything to somebody, because it doesn't feel quite real."

Rebecca D.: [33:49](#) Ever since then, I've... whenever I've gone into the house to- to do a tour or whatever, and I walk by the sitting room, or the parlor where the pictures of the family are hung, I'll just go, "Hi, Bernhard's," or "Good morning," or something, because I feel like I'm covering my bases when I do that, and I haven't seen anything since, so hopefully maybe that is keeping them happy. I don't know, but um, but that's pretty much it. That was- that was 15 years ago.

Chris Gray: [34:15](#) Special thanks again to Rebecca Denniston for joining The Placer Life to recount her hair-raising tale. And we also heard from Diane, and Rebecca that even though every night the docents make sure that the lights are turned off at the Bernhard Museum, on occasion, folks will drive by, and see that they're on during the night, so maybe something to keep an eye on as you're passing by.

Scotty Sandow: [34:39](#) As promised, Placer County Museum's administrator, Ralph Gibson joins us again to tell us about an experience that happened in a darkened tunnel at the Bernhard Museum, and

we may have photographic evidence of a ghost that just might be proof that they're real. We'll share with you how to view that photo, so you can decide. Here's Ralph.

- Ralph Gibson: [35:02](#) Way back in, I think it was 2014, this, uh, this- this group of folks came in for a tour of the Bernhard, and they were- they were sort of amateur ghost hunters, and they asked if they could just kinda poke around a little bit, and record, and see if they could catch some voices, and- and we told them, "Yeah. You're in for a tour anyway," so we just let them do that, and they asked to see the tunnel underneath.
- Ralph Gibson: [35:21](#) So, we let them down to... this is something we can't do anymore, but back then we could, so we led them down into the tunnel, and uh, the guy took a series of photographs inside the tunnel that went- went from the- the basement of the Bernhard to the, uh, one of the doors on the second floor of the winery. It's where Mr. Bernhard used to- used to pipe his wine down this, uh... with- with, uh, pipes down there to fill up his barrels.
- Ralph Gibson: [35:45](#) And they just took a series of photographs in this tunnel, and he didn't see anything when took... when he took the pictures, but on one picture, and not any other, but on one picture, there's this sort of misty, body-sized shape at the end of the tunnel.
- Ralph Gibson: [36:04](#) Whenever I was giving a tour of, say even the Kell House Museum in Texas, or at Bernhard Museum, the- the question always comes up, "Is the place haunted?" And while in Kell House, even the Bernhard, there's been some stories. I always try to tell people that, yes, you know, we've heard things, we've seen things, but really when you walk into an old building, there's this sort of feeling of continuity with the past, and it's- it's much easier to believe that people are still there, they're walking around, um, because you're looking at the old artifacts. You're looking at the... you're in an old house. It looks just like it did 100 years ago.
- Ralph Gibson: [36:36](#) And so, that feeling of continuity, I think opens people up to- to, uh, to that sort of possibility that, you know, there are things that are still living, they're not living, but things are still around. (laughs). Um, so I think that's a little bit- a little bit of what goes on in someone's brain when they're in an old- old setting.
- Chris Gray: [36:53](#) If after hearing some of these tales, you too are looking for a little bit of that continuity with the past, or maybe a little bit of a brush with Placer County's ghosts, this month, Placer County Museums has you covered.

Scotty Sando: [37:04](#) Here's Ralph with details of some of the events we have planned.

Ralph Gibson: [37:08](#) Yeah. Uh, the first one is, uh, actually coming up this Sunday, October 6th at 1:30, is our Old Auburn Cemetery Tour. Um, this is free. You don't have to register, you don't have to make reservations, you just show up. And uh, there's a little welcome table, and you'll have a map, and we have actors in the cemetery that are portraying different characters from our past, and you- you pick whichever path you wanna go, and uh, it's- it's really fun, and uh, yeah, it's a really good walk through history.

Chris Gray: [37:38](#) While Placer County doesn't host these, Placer County Museum staff lend their expertise to the annual Old Auburn Ghost Tours too.

Ralph Gibson: [37:45](#) Those tickets sell out quick. Um, they're already sold out for this year, but certainly something you wanna keep an eye on for next year. The tickets are usually sold, uh- uh, either late-August, or early-September, and uh, the tours this year are- are on October 26th, October 30th, and November 2nd, and uh, again, players will be re- recounting, uh, um, ghost stories throughout Old Auburn, including the courthouse.

Scotty Sando: [38:11](#) And in spring 2020, Placer County Museums unveils their newest exhibit, Post Mortem, which takes a look back at the ritual and mourning of the Placer County dead.

Ralph Gibson: [38:21](#) We have an exhibit coming out, uh, in the spring of 2020, and it's entitled Post Mortem, and uh, the- the reason we're having this exhibit is we were recently given a large donation of mortuary, um, tools, from one of the original mortuaries in Auburn. In fact, uh, it's one of the oldest buildings, you know, on- on Commercial Street. Um, it's... that's where our first mortuary was, and uh, then they moved to a, uh, a spot right across from the, uh- uh... is it the Episcopal church on Lincoln Way? I think it's the Episcopal church. Right across the street from them is where they moved to, but they had all of these 19th Century, and early-20th Century mortuary tools.

Ralph Gibson: [39:04](#) So, they donated them to us. We have a huge- huge collection, plus we've also got a lot of mourning implements. We have a mourning brooch, one of the Bernhard's'. We have mourning, uh- uh, a mourning gown. So, we thought it'd be interesting to talk about death, and the ritual of death, and mourning, um, how it's changed, because before the Civil War, the Civil War was kinda like the demarkation line. Before the Civil War,

people died at home, they didn't die in a hospital, they didn't die in some faraway battlefield, they died at home around their friends and family.

- Ralph Gibson: [39:36](#) War... Civil War, for the first time, people started dying in these faraway places, and so they was... they were up to these surrogates in the field to like make sure the last letter got home to let the family know what happened to them, and where they're buried, where... what happened. So, all these rituals kinda changed after the Civil War, and of course, after the Civil War, now you start to find people dying in hospitals, and in other places, and so that- that- that ritual really changed, and so we really wanna focus on where that change happened, why it happened, and what the ritual is, and what the rituals are.
- Chris Gray: [40:07](#) Look for that early next year at the Placer County Museum at the Historic Courthouse in Auburn.
- Scotty Sandow: [40:12](#) Join us online at [Placer.CA.GOV](http://Placer.CA.GOV) to read articles, and see photographs of the people and places from the stories in this episode, including the spooky image from the Bernhard Museum tunnel.
- Chris Gray: [40:27](#) That does it for this episode, but we're not done with ghost stories yet this month.
- Scotty Sandow: [40:31](#) We have one more bonus episode to share with you-
- Chris Gray: [40:34](#) And if you have ghost stories from Placer County, we'd like to hear yours, as well.
- Scotty Sandow: [40:38](#) Send us your tale at [PlacerGhosts@Gmail.com](mailto:PlacerGhosts@Gmail.com), and you might be featured in a future episode.
- Chris Gray: [40:45](#) We'd love to hear from you, and share those stories too.
- Scotty Sandow: [40:47](#) I'm Scotty Sandow.
- Chris Gray: [40:49](#) And I'm Chris Gray. Thanks again for tuning in to The Placer Life.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [00:41:03]