

Haunted Victoria



Ghosts swinging canes and spirits with monkeys on their shoulders?
 Welcome to Canada's most haunted city!
 Some were murdered, others were hanged.
 Watch and listen for their signs...

Naturally Haunted?

There are many theories why there are so many ghosts in downtown Victoria. One reason is the long period of human occupation, spanning 6,000 years from the arrival of the first aboriginal inhabitants. Some ghost experts believe that cracks, or "ley lines", in the earth's surface beneath Victoria emit powerful magnetic energy that somehow attracts spirits and magnifies their presence.

Others suggest that the surrounding salt water, the underlying bedrock, the distant hills and mountains that wrap around the region and the abundant natural springs all help retain ghostly energy. Whatever the reasons, Victoria has more ghost stories associated with it than any other city in British Columbia. Of course, you don't need to believe in ghosts to enjoy a good ghost story or to let your imagination wander.



- 1** 600 Block Blanshard – Start your tour at historic St. Ann's Academy. The Chapel is the oldest part of the building, dating back to 1858. While there are no bats in its belfry, there may be a ghost or two. The academy was originally a convent and boarding school, and some people say the nuns still keep silent watch. Many visitors have heard the bell toll when there has been no one in the building. Others report seeing the silhouette of Emily Carr in the tower with her monkey on her shoulder.
- 2** Belleville and Government – In Thunderbird Park, you will find a cedar building with a large native motif amidst a number of totem poles. This is Wawadit'la (**Mungo Martin House**), an authentic recreation of a Kwakwaka'wakw big house. First Nations have lived in British Columbia for thousands of years. In their culture, the human and supernatural worlds are not separate. Dances and songs of spirits and supernatural beings have been passed down through generations. The house is currently used as a centre for First Nations spiritual gatherings where, by flickering firelight, masked dancers bring the spirit world to life.
- 3** Helmcken House – Walking through to the right of Wawadit'la you will find one of Victoria's oldest and most famous haunted places. Built in 1852, **Helmcken House** is the original family home of Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken, the first doctor in the city and an important figure in pioneer Victoria. As his life drew to a close, his daughter Dolly would play the piano late into the night to soothe him. It's said that at night the sound of the piano can still be heard and Dolly is sometimes seen floating past the attic windows!
- 4** Empress Hotel – As you walk back toward Belleville Street, notice the turrets and steep Gothic roof of the **Empress Hotel**, the perfect place to find a ghost. A number of spirits are said to haunt the hotel, but none is more famous than the ghost of its architect, Francis Mawson Rattenbury, (who also designed the Crystal Garden and the Parliament Buildings). He was murdered by his second wife's lover in 1935. Although Rattenbury is buried in an unmarked grave in England, his ghost is occasionally seen swinging a cane and walking the halls of the hotel lobby.

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5 **913 Government** – Some say that a scent may be associated with the presence of spirits. Follow the seductively sweet smell leading up to **Rogers' Chocolates** on Government Street. Not only is this heritage shop one of the finest examples of Art Nouveau design in the city, it's also home to a pair of ghosts. Charles and Leah Rogers started making chocolates in the back of their grocery store in 1885, and their portrait still hangs proudly on the wall. Leah loves to re-arrange the chocolate displays and Charles is known for his own tricks, especially hiding things!

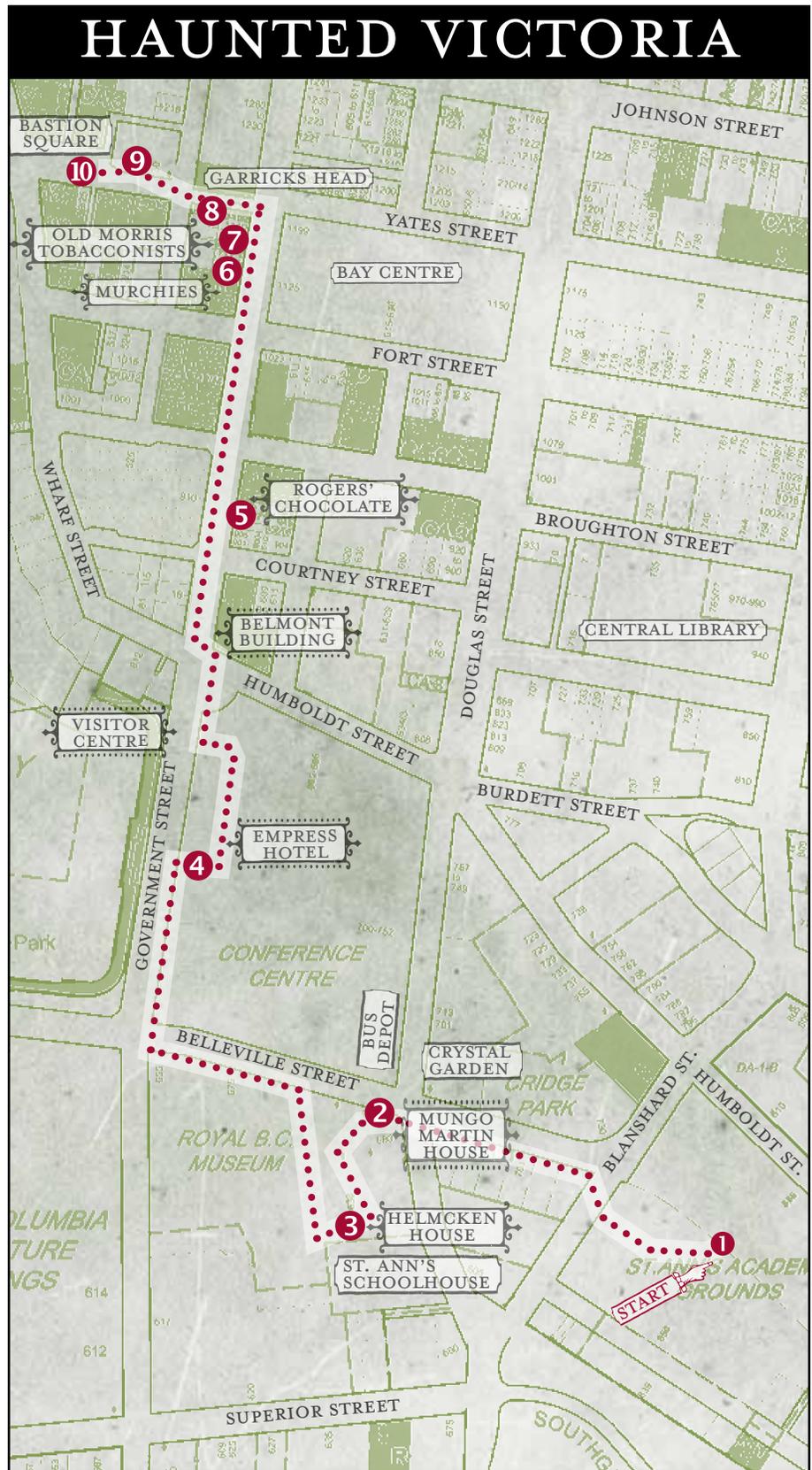
6 **1110 Government** – **Murchie's Tea & Coffee** was established by John Murchie, who got his start in Scotland blending teas for Queen Victoria. Toward the back of the shop there is a set of stairs leading down to Langley Street. Though it looks normal enough, stories persist that the staircase is inhabited by a poltergeist. Visitors report hearing the lower doors slamming, witnessing small objects being thrown by unseen hands, and seeing a phantom passenger riding the elevator at all hours of the day and night.

7 **1116 Government** – Even if you don't smoke you'll want to investigate **Old Morris Tobacconist** next door. It remains exactly as it was in 1892. Many experts believe that the Mexican onyx around the doorway attracts ghosts. If you go inside, don't presume you're seeing smoke from a recently lit cigar – it could be an ectoplasmic being hovering over the alabaster cigar lighter, or "electrolier". One is said to be the resident ghost of an employee who died many years ago while working on the second floor. Listen for his heavy footsteps and the occasional slam of cupboard doors from a second-floor workshop – that no longer exists.

8 **Bastion Lane** – For those who like their spirits by the glass, a few doors down is the **Garrick's Head Pub**, originally built in 1867. Eager patrons would down a pint there before heading over to the city's gallows to watch a public hanging. There are a couple of ghosts among the pub's regular clientele and one of these lost souls can be seen by the fireplace on chilly winter nights. According to local legend, this is the ghost of former owner Michael Powers who was mysteriously murdered early one morning over 100 years ago.

9 **Bastion Square** – You now find yourself in the heart of this most haunted city – **Bastion Square**. Even before Europeans arrived, the natives believed this spot had strong magical powers. Virtually every building in the square is associated with a ghost or two. You might hear the clanking of chains at the entrance to Helmcken Alley or even catch a glimpse of the prisoner murdered there in the 1860s. Listen for phantom music at the window of the building to the right of the alley, where an organist, once employed at a restaurant in the building, is said to still play requests from "the other side."

10 The most haunted building in Bastion Square is currently home to the **Maritime Museum**. Victoria's jail and gallows once stood here. Some unclaimed bodies were buried and their bones remain there today. Look through the windows at the entrance and watch for a shadowy, slender figure with a Van Dyke beard that has been seen gliding down the main staircase. It's thought to be the ghost of Victoria's infamous "Hanging Judge", Sir Matthew Baillie Begbie, eternally looking for another guilty man to condemn.



Anything is possible when you let your imagination run wild and experience the supernatural side of Victoria.

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