

# Dead men do tell tales?

## You can scare up Kissimmee's haunted past with the ghost tours

By Peter Covino  
News-Gazette Entertainment Editor

It's a warm, muggy night in downtown Kissimmee.

The persistent drizzle is a little annoying for a group of about 10 people roaming the almost deserted streets of the historic part of the city, but the rain doesn't seem to bother the downtown area's permanent residents: the ghosts.

Yes, the ghosts of downtown Kissimmee finally are getting a little company most nights thanks to the Ghost & Haunt Tours, a leisurely tour in the downtown area that combines some of the city's most famous ghostly legends with a history of the city.

Bill Spinola is the guide to the ghosts on this night as the tour begins over by the railroad station.

Spinola, a 30-year resident of Kissimmee, is a paranormal enthusiast and can talk at length about ghosts, UFOs and even Bigfoot. But on this night, it is the Kissimmee ghosts that get his full attention.

He tells his group of ghost-seekers, some who came from as far away as Louisiana and Michigan, that while a lot of what he does

**See Ghosts, page C-3**



**Do ghosts really haunt the streets of downtown Kissimmee? You can decide for yourself if you take part in the Ghost & Haunt Tours. Tour guides share their experiences with the paranormal and show how you can capture ghostly images with your digital camera and talk about haunted places such as Grissom Park.**

NEWS-GAZETTE PHOTOS/ANDREW SULLIVAN

# Ghosts

Continued from page C-1

during the tour is done with a sense of humor, there is an excellent chance that some of what happens during the tour definitely will fit under the category of the unexplainable.

The preferred tool of the trade, interestingly enough, is a digital camera. Digital cameras are encouraged on the tour.

Spinola pretty much guarantees if you bring a digital camera, you will get a paranormal image.

"What it is, I don't know, I haven't heard anyone really explain it," he said.

The city's Amtrak station is one of the good spots for paranormal activity, he said. And sure enough, more than one of the ghost tour members finds an "orb," a spherical shape on their digital display after taking a series of photos.

There are several theories about orbs, Spinola tells his guests.

"Orbs usually are found in red or blue. One theory has red orbs being woman, while blue are men," he said. The other theory, the one Spinola feels has more credence, is that red orbs often are suicide or murder victims, and they are searching spirits, spirits that don't even realize they are dead. Blue orbs are conscious of their death, and are in the process of getting ready to "cross over."

"The bigger than orb," Spinola said, "the closer the ghost is."

As the tour continues through some of the downtown's other famous haunted spots, including the "hanging tree" in front of the old county courthouse, a few on the tour

find some unexplained streaks on their digital displays.

Streaks, Spinola explained, or simply orbs caught in motion by the camera.

There are several sites in the downtown area where ghosts seem to gather, he said, including the hanging tree, where many a criminal met his end at the end of a rope.

In the quiet darkness, Spinola's tour group, for the night anyway, is definitely lured into this paranormal world.

"The ghosts can be with us right now," he said. "They appear and disappear at will."

Spinola has lots of other tales to tell in the hopes of sending at least a few shivers down the spines of some members of the tour group.

**See Ghosts, page C-4**

# Ghosts

Continued from page C-3

A particular favorite is the little girl who haunts the small park for children by the Grissom Funeral Home on Main Street. There have been many reports of people seeing a little girl playing on the swing set in the dead of night. Or the swing set that swings all on its own, even when there is no breeze to be found.

After telling his tale, there is again a flurry of activity for all those with cameras. Even a cell phone camera, Spinola said, is good for recording orbs and other paranormal apparitions.

But there are more downtown legends to be explored, including the tale of a woman whose shape is often seen along the glass-enclosed staircase of the Osceola Central Library, and the "ghost of the lake"

— a steamboat captain who went down with his ship many years ago and still is reportedly seen by fishermen in Lake Tohopekaliga. The end of the dock at the city pier is another great place for recording orbs, Spinola said.

The tour isn't all about ghosts, though. Spinola also is a great downtown enthusiast, pointing out some of the downtown eateries and shops along Main Street as well some of the attractions, including the Monument of States, probably the most famous spot in downtown Kissimmee.

As the tour concludes after about 90 minutes or so, it is time for everyone to compare what paranormal images have been recorded on their digital cameras, and sure enough, just about everyone in the

group has at least an orb or two as a lasting memory of the ghostly evening.

Spinola encourages the tour group to examine their images later on a computer monitor because the details will be much more enhanced on a larger display. He also encourages them to e-mail their findings to him for further evaluation.

The tour includes a large scrapbook of images captured by members of past tours.

The Ghosts & Haunt Tours departs nightly in downtown Kissimmee, weather permitting. Reservations are required. The cost for an adult ticket is \$22, children \$12. Children 7 and younger are free. Call 321-251-5204 for more information/reservations.

**Contact Peter Covino at  
407-846-7600, Ext. 206.  
E-mail at [pcovino@osceolanewsgazette.com](mailto:pcovino@osceolanewsgazette.com)**