

INTRODUCTION

The Legend of the Beautiful Stranger of the Hotel Del Coronado has intrigued guests, staff and historians ever since the events unfolded in 1892. The story has been kept alive by reputed sightings throughout the hotel of a woman dressed in black Victorian period clothing.

While there is a generally accepted story regarding her likely identity, the devil is in the details. And it well may be that she been misidentified.

John Streiff became interested in the Beautiful Stranger Legend in 2006. When he realized the existing histories were insufficient and contradictory he decided to start again and develop a new history from first and second sources along with the assistance of period subject matter experts. The result is what may be the most accurate story of this period in the history of the Hotel Del Coronado.

TIMELINE

- Nov 24, 1892 Beautiful Stranger arrived from Detroit
- Nov 25, 1892 Beautiful Stranger claimed she had been separated from her travelling companion
- Nov 26, 1892 Beautiful Stranger said she had neuralgia and purchased quinine pills
- Nov 28, 1892 Beautiful Stranger ostensibly bought a gun in San Diego, burned letters in her fire grate
- Nov 29, 1892 Beautiful Stranger's dead body was discovered at the hotel
- Nov 30, 1892 San Diego County Coroner's Inquest was held
- Dec. 1, 1892 An important conversation occurred
- Dec. 2, 1892 Coroner requested mortician to draw a picture of the deceased woman
- Dec. 3, 1892 Picture ran in newspapers on the West coast and in Detroit
- Dec. 5, 1892 Wyllie family of Detroit contacted San Diego authorities
- Dec. 8, 1892 Wyllie family stopped communicating. Grant family of Los Angeles contacted authorities
- Dec. 9, 1892 The woman's identity was established as Mrs. Kate Farmer Morgan of Riverton, Iowa
- Dec. 13, 1892 Beautiful Stranger buried in an unmarked grave at Mount Hope Cemetery in San Diego

PRIOR AUTHORS

Alan May, *The Legend of Kate Morgan*, first published 1988.

Christine Donovan, *Beautiful Stranger*, published 2006.

Terry Girardot, *The Ghost of the Hotel Del Coronado*, published 2006.

John T Cullen, *Dead Move*, first published 2007.

THE KEY PLAYERS

Kate Farmer, born circa 1867, raised by her maternal grandfather, married Thomas Morgan 1885.

Thomas Morgan, born 1861 in Morgan County, Illinois moved to Hamburg, Iowa with family in 1872. Moved to Nebraska in December, 1890, married Jennie Devor there in 1893.

George L Allen, born 1849 in Morgan County, moved to Hamburg, Iowa in 1884.

DEVILISH DETAILS

Lizzie Wyllie married in Canada in 1898 so she could not have died in 1892 as some claim.

Kate Morgan left her husband and came West in 1890; she was in California before 1892.

Kate Morgan worked in San Francisco and Los Angeles between 1890 and 1892.

Trunks passed through Omaha, Nebraska and Denver, Colorado enroute to San Diego in 1892.

Letter found in her room signed by two well-known actresses of the time.

Desk staff were certain the woman was of a better class.

Train routings to San Diego in 1892 can potentially differentiate among Beautiful Stranger identities.

There is a “smoking gun” witness.

QUESTIONS

Who came West in 1892? Who was the Beautiful Stranger?

Who was her travelling companion?

Why was she at the Hotel Del Coronado?

What really happened to her in Coronado?

What became of Kate Farmer Morgan if she did not die the Hotel Del Coronado?

RESEARCH PARTNERS

Lottie Barnard

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NOTE: Terry Girardot’s book is not available but its contents are posted online.

To access those chapters, use the urls from:

https://iagenweb.org/fremont/bios/morgan_kate_1.htm through

https://iagenweb.org/fremont/bios/morgan_kate_15.htm
