

The Ghost *Julia Staab still watches over her home, now part of La Posada*

By Mary Lee White

The thousands of guests who pass through its halls each year seldom see her, but the ghost who haunts La Posada is never very far away.

"Oh yes, she's been wondering around for many years," say Michael Cerletti, former General Manager of the old and famous inn on Palace Avenue, just a few blocks east of the Plaza. "She has always been described the same by those who have witnessed her presence. She wears a dark flowing gown and a hood."

La Posada's ghost has most often made her appearance at the top of the grand staircase in the central building in the main complex of the inn. But she has also been spotted in the Nason Room, a small alcove off the main dining hall, built not too many years ago where the formal gardens of the original structure used to be.

Alan Day, an ex-employee at La Posada now living in San Francisco, saw the ghost late one night when the inn was deserted. He was mopping in the Nason Room when he looked up and saw her standing by the fireplace. "She was wearing a long dark gown and was translucent," he remembers. "But I could see her dark eyes looking at me. Of course I thought I was losing it, and told myself to just keep mopping. When I looked back up she was gone."

At that time, Day knew very little about the ghost of La Posada, so he sought out another employee to ask about his unsettling experience. After hearing the story, complete with description, Day was convinced that the ghostly feminine figure by the fireplace was not a figment of his imagination.

The woman the house had been built for in 1882 had come back once again. And in that brief confrontation, Day had not only met but also detected an aura of sadness about the ghostly likeness of Mrs. Abraham Staab.

Who was Julia Staab and why would she refuse to rest? Why would she continue to return to her home on Palace Avenue?

Historian Paul Horgan has described Julia Staab as a very small woman with dark eyes. She blushed easily and often, he wrote in his book *Centuries of Santa Fe*, "Her skin was white, her clothes were beautifully made of the height of fashion. She was always alive to the social tone wherever she was."

Mrs. Staab's husband, Abraham was born in Westphalia, Germany in 1839. At 15 years of age he embarked for the United States. Interested in business, he set out for the West having heard of great opportunity there. Settling in Santa Fe, he entered into general merchandising with his brother, Zadoc, and formed the company known as *Zadoc Staab and Brother*.

A major supply contractor for U.S. Army posts in the Southwest, the firm prospered during the Civil War, and by 1865 Abraham Staab had made a fortune and attained a position of respect and influence in Santa Fe. He returned to Germany and married Julia Schuster, who then came back with him to Santa Fe.

In 1882 the house that Abraham had promised his bride was completed. The home (which now is stuccoed over to resemble adobe) was the first brick structure in Santa Fe. Everything in it came from "the East," and reflected the richest in taste and style. There, Julia Staab entertained—endlessly—members of early Santa Fe society. She established a weekly "at home" when she received afternoon callers and gave them tea, coffee and cakes in the yellow silk drawing room.

She was such a socialite that few recognized her dedication to her family. But when one son died as a baby after an illness of several weeks, Julia Staab's hair turned prematurely white. People then realized that she was a sensitive and conscientious mother as well as a prominent wife, hostess and socialite.

By all accounts, Julia Staab's life – behind the glitter- was troubled. Elizabeth Mincez, an Albuquerque resident who has been researching La Posada's history, relates, "Although Julia Staab bore seven children she suffered