Lizzie Borden B&B Museum Visit…If These Walls Could Talk!



The Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast Museum located at 230 Second Street in Fall River

By Kaylie Krauzyk

A ouija board was propped up against the wall with letters facing the room. Stolen by an overnight guest some years ago, it was fedex'd back a few days later with a handwritten note that said: "Make it stop." I've never believed in the stigma of a ouija board or ghosts but in an occult place, expect the unexpected.

On a drizzly Wednesday afternoon, a visit to the Lizzie Borden

Bed & Breakfast Museum in Fall River was a fun way to spend some time downtown. About twelve other folks and myself, from young kids to adults, were each interested in the mystery of the “Murder House” and the popular story that dates back to August 4, 1892.



Lizzie Andrew Borden (July 19, 1860 – June 1, 1927) passed away of pneumonia and is buried at Oak Grove Cemetery, Fall River

Our tour guide Robin led us around the house, giving an in-depth account of the Borden family history. All of the furniture has been replaced except for the original couch where Andrew Borden was killed. Newer sofas and lounge chairs still feel like classic late eighteenth century style with floral prints and dark hues. Black and white pictures of family members can be found in each room.

All of the original wood still holds the house together and I never knew that it used to be a two-family home before Andrew Borden bought it. A penny-pincher, he wouldn’t pay for gas

lighting or working indoor plumbing. An outhouse in the yard and basins in all of the rooms got the job done. I cringe at the thought of what that must've been like.

During the infamous trial in New Bedford that lasted for 13 days, Lizzie Borden had been held in the Taunton jail and was acquitted within fifteen minutes after an hour of court deliberation. Biases of the time were strong and some believed that because she was a woman, she couldn't have possibly committed such heinous crimes. Or could she?

Moving into the dining room, Robin told us about a case of food poisoning that had hit the family during a summer heatwave. As I listened, I couldn't help but stare at what I thought was a washboard that the maids probably used. Actually, it was an autopsy board with numerous holes in it that would let the blood drain from bodies that were examined in that very room. Talk about putting rooms to "other uses".

Sound travels quickly as Robin stomped one foot that shook the entire house. These were private people we're talking about. Andrew Borden locked all the doors, even if someone was home. Speculation as to how the murderer could've made their way around without being noticed still remains questionable.



The Borden Household circa 1895.

Moving to the bedrooms, a portrait of Andrew Borden filled a frame between two doorways. Visitors wondered if he ever smiled, looked stern all the time, or maybe didn't have any

teeth. Actually, he and his wife, Abby Borden, wore upper dentures that aligned their mouths differently. For a man that didn't want working indoor plumbing or lighting, dental work was certainly a priority.

All three doors near the master bedroom had been locked on the day of the murder. A female volunteer from the group laid face down in the same way Abby Borden's body had been found in a staged reenactment. 19 strong blows, leaving deep 4" gashes, spun Abby Borden around and knocked her face down. She died an hour and a half before her husband. I bet the killer had been fueled with an intense rage that empowered them to kill Andrew Borden in a similar way.

Antique portraits of Lizzie and her sister Emma with their biological mother, Sarah Anthony (Morse) Borden, fill frames atop one table in what used to be Emma's bedroom. Lizzie is a spitting image of Sarah and the photo of them together feels like a happier time. Sarah died during childbirth when Emma was only 12 years old. During the murders, Emma had been in Europe, absent from the tragedies at home.

Ascending to the third floor felt a little dangerous as the old staircase creaked and barely gave our feet enough room to step on. The ceiling slanted as we were close to the rooftop and if I didn't pay attention, I think I could've easily banged my head. A dimly lit bedroom in the corner reminded me "Paranormal Activity" with its lack of lighting and coldness; overnight guests get the privilege of sleeping in there. The room right near the stairs was where the family's maid, Bridget "Maggie" Sullivan, slept. Maggie disappeared after the trial and went to live with her Irish family in Montana. I'd say it's a fair guess that she wanted to get away from all the horror she had witnessed. Her room was silent and empty with a small window that let in a little ray of sunshine. I couldn't shake the feeling that staying up there could make you feel pretty isolated.



Who's ready to spend the night and confirm or debunk the haunting anecdotes?

If these floral papered walls could talk to us today, I think they would have a lot to say about what happened on August 4, 1892. Is is possible that a schoolteacher of wealthy status and influence could have done such terrible things out of rage or contempt? Or was it something else altogether? Regardless, interpretations of this case come from many ideas and theories change over time. It's unique that the notoriety of the Lizzie Borden murders continues to this day, over 100 years later. I wonder what else could come to light one day.

The Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast Museum is located on 230 Second Street in Fall River. Tours are offered daily on the hour from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. This bed and breakfast museum is open all year round and closed major holidays. B&B guests can stay overnight for an extended tour and enjoy a home-cooked breakfast in the dining room of "many uses". Group tours are available by appointment only. Check out the gift shop located behind the house for unique items and mementos. All major credit cards accepted. Visit **lizzie-borden.com** or call (508) 675-7333 for more information.