Yankee Pedlar Inn: The Haunted Connecticut Hotel Where Alice Conley Still "Watches Over" Her Guests



Room 353, a rocking chair that moves by itself, a horror film shot on location and a building left to decay: the Torrington inn combines ghost legends with a real-estate saga.

An 1891 Inn in the Heart of New England

At 93 Main Street, on the corner of Maiden Lane, the brick silhouette of the Yankee Pedlar Inn still looms over downtown Torrington. The establishment was built in 1891 for Frank and Alice Conley in a New England colonial style. Frank was an immigrant from Ireland; Alice was a native of New England. She managed the hotel while he ran the operation, and the business stayed in the family for many years.

It was then called the Conley Hotel. It only took its current name in 1956, when the hotel was merged with the neighboring restaurant. For a long time it was among the oldest independent hotels in Connecticut still in operation, with 52 rooms.

Alice Conley, the Landlady Who Never Left

According to tradition, Alice Conley died in the hotel, in room 353 – some sources give the year 1910, with no supporting document in the texts consulted. Her skills as a manager and cook are said to have made the place a success. And it is precisely this concern for her customers that, according to ghost-story enthusiasts, would explain her lingering presence: she is supposedly making sure everyone enjoys their stay.

> "Alice still watches over her guests" – the local legend, as reported by American haunted-places websites.

What Witnesses Report

The accounts center on a few specific points. In room 353, visitors report apparitions, unexplained smells and noises at

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night. In the lobby, Alice's rocking chair is said to rock with nobody in it, to the point that a sign discouraged guests from sitting in it, as the website Damned Connecticut reports.

Other places are mentioned. Room 295 is said to be the scene of moving objects, noises and a diffuse unease; the apparition of Frank Conley is reported there. A haunted-rooms website also mentions, in the Adelaide Room, a woman accompanied by her two children. A visitor quoted by Damned Connecticut says she found 353 locked, then open ten minutes later, and felt chills on entering. These are isolated accounts, with no recording or expert examination.

"The Innkeepers": When Cinema Joins the Legend

The reputation of the place attracted director Ti West, who shot his 2011 horror film *The Innkeepers* there. The screenplay, built around the phenomena attributed to the inn, follows the last two employees of a hotel about to close (Sara Paxton and Pat Healy), who dabble in ghost hunting. Among the guests is a former actress turned medium (Kelly McGillis), while an old man insists on staying in room 353 – a direct nod to the legend.

The shoot itself fed the rumor: during production, the website Bloody Disgusting joked about a set photograph in which a bright dot looked like an "orb"; its writer leaned instead toward dust or a flashlight reflection on the lens. The New York Times (Tammy La Gorce, 2014) and Steve Dollar (2012), for their part, mentioned the link between the film and the establishment's reputation.

From Hotel to Abandoned Building

The irony of history: the film imagined the closing of a hotel that was about to really close. The inn ceased operating on December 1, 2015, for renovations that were supposed to take seven to nine months. The work stalled for lack of funds, the establishment never reopened, and the City of Torrington had to take legal action against the owner, Jayson Hospitality, which had gutted the building after acquiring it.

Since then, the City has entrusted the case to the Torrington Development Corporation under a receivership procedure provided for by Connecticut law (examined as early as January 2021). In December 2024, Governor Ned Lamont announced a $200,000 grant to assess the 1.62-acre site. In April 2026, the city council again voted a reduced allocation of up to $40,000 for the same development corporation. The building's final fate remains open.

The Skeptical View

Several elements call for caution. The accounts about room 353 come largely from haunted-places websites and blogs, whose sources copy one another; the place's Wikipedia page is itself flagged as lacking references. No published independent investigation establishes an objective phenomenon, and the date and circumstances of Alice Conley's death are not documented in the texts consulted.

Above all, psychology offers classic explanations. The work of Richard Wiseman and his colleagues (*British Journal of Psychology*, 2003) on reputedly haunted sites showed that impressions of a presence depend largely on suggestion: forewarned visitors report sensations in the places the legend points to. The physicist Vic Tandy, for his part, proposed in 1998 that infrasound could cause unease and fleeting visions. An old building, its drafts, its creaks and a reputation manufactured by a film are enough to sustain the myth, without any need to summon a spirit.

A Legend That Outlives the Walls

Whether or not one believes in Alice Conley's presence, the Yankee Pedlar Inn illustrates a mechanism well known to folklore researchers: a place steeped in history, a devoted landlady figure, a few precise details (a room number, a chair), and the legend is passed down from generation to generation. It even ended up inspiring a film, which in turn strengthens the reputation of the place. It remains to be seen whether the building will ever reopen its doors – and

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whether Alice, in that case, will resume her post.

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