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Grand Opening Of The Soul Asylum In Mineral Springs Saturday, March 5

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ALTON - The Grand Opening Weekend of The Soul Asylum is finally here and they have a fun weekend planned for everyone – lots of door prizes and great giveaways.

The first 10 people through the door on both Saturday and Sunday receive a free Soul Asylum t-shirt. Every ticket purchased this weekend will receive an entry for some great door prize giveaways to be drawn on Sunday afternoon, including two tickets to any American Hauntings Dinner & Spirits event at Mineral Springs, a private Soul Asylum Tour for six people, a private guided tour of the Mineral Springs Hotel for six people, a vintage horror movie night and paranormal investigation in The Soul Asylum for six people and more.

Troy Taylor, author of *Haunted Alton* and leader in the paranormal community for over 25 years, will host a book signing at The Soul Asylum on Saturday from noon until 1 pm. Admission is \$8.00.

The Soul Asylum is the latest incarnation of oddities, curiosities, historical artifacts, and esoterica in the Mysterious Mineral Springs Hotel in Alton, Illinois. Formerly known as the Curiosity Museum and the Museum of Historic Torture Devices, components of The Soul Asylum were curated for over a decade by Janet Kolar, Alton's 'Mistress of the Macabre'.

Famous worldwide as 'America's Most Haunted Small Town', the region of southern Illinois known as the Riverbend, is home to a seemingly endless variety of historical hauntings, particularly the haunted hotel which houses the attraction's collections.

Following Kolar's retirement in 2021, Dave & Donna Nunnally, proprietors of It's Raining Zen, desired to continue their dear friend's legacy, so they purchased the attraction and began extensive rebranding, renovations, and exhibit updates.

Months later, The Soul Asylum, located in the expansive 108-year-old original hotel ballroom, is ready to open the doors. The museum features dozens of new exhibits, incorporating hundreds of never-seen items, especially artifacts from the Mineral Springs Hotel. Additionally, The Soul Asylum features exhibits on unusual regional history, including the 1873 edition of the Washington Times announcing the death of Elijah Lovejoy, the amazing story of Alton's 'Gentle Giant', and the fascinating backstory behind the preservation and display of Deaf Bill Lee, Alton's infamous mummy. And, most notably, the stories of the Luer Brothers, whose vision led to the building housing The Soul Asylum in 2022.

After extensive research into the deaths and suicides which occurred in the Mineral Springs Hotel, The Soul Asylum also shares many previously untold aspects of the building's historic and folklore hauntings, including Pearl Sons, Lew Harwood, Clarence Blair, Cassandra, the Jasmine Lady, and others. And no museum in Alton would be complete without discussing the many other hauntings the Riverbend is known for, including the McPike Mansion, Unitarian Church, Enos Sanitarium, and others.

Understanding hauntings is not about telling ghost stories, so The Soul Asylum cherishes the decades of intense work our friends, particularly Troy Taylor, Mike Ricksecker, and others, have poured into getting regional history right. Historical documentation and debunking myth are critical when investigating the paranormal and, as such, their efforts serve as both inspiration and historical frameworks for our exhibits. Their books are available for purchase.