The weird, wacky Winchester House hits its stride at Halloween

With its towers and turrets, eerie sound room, upstairs party space, and replication of the number 13, the Winchester House hits its stride at Halloween, but this year two significant events are likely to draw even more visitors than usual, said Tim O’Day, director of marketing. In May the attraction opened 60 rooms, hallways, and other spaces never before open to the public, as the Exploring More Tour, which guests may add to the traditional tour of 110 rooms (there are 180 rooms in the mansion). And in February 2018 CBS Films will release “Winchester,” a biopic based on Sarah Winchester’s life, starring Helen Mirren. In 1864, three years after her husband’s death, Winchester bought a farmhouse in the Santa Clara Valley, then house hunters, carpenters and craftsmen to expand it. Construction continued 24 hours a day, stopping only upon her death in 1922. Money was no object — she had inherited $10 million in cash and stock. The house had indoor plumbing, an elevator, 47 fireplaces, silver and bone-inlaid doors, and hand-laid parquet floors. Hand-painted wallpaper came from Japan. Damage from stolen glasses and gardeners for the heat waves of the mansion’s elaborate Queen Anne exterior, with its turrets, cupolas, cornices, and balconies. Sarah Winchester is buried next to her husband and daughter in Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven. Whatever her motivation for building her mysterious house, she left a treasure that is both a feast for the eye and a source of endless fascination about the mind behind it.

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