

Inmates still haunt old jail, paranormal probers say

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NEWARK, Ohio— Decades after the last inmate walked out of the old Licking County jail, echoes of the lives spent within its walls still resonate among the empty cells.

At least that was the pitch of two paranormal experts who last night presented evidence of spooky activity they collected while on a ghost hunt at the gothic sandstone structure last year.

Tom Robson and Michelle Duke, co-founders of Southeastern Ohio Paranormal Investigators, spent a night in the jail on S. 3rd Street in Newark in November.

Aided by all manner of high-tech ghost-tracking gadgetry and seven other brave souls, the team captured audio and video recordings that they say prove the county's 1889 lockup has some permanent residents that go bump in the night.

Before a small audience of county workers and community members, Robson and Duke played recordings that they said were the voices of the dead captured by electronic devices far more sensitive than the human ear.

Investigators said they also witnessed a shadowy apparition peek out of a cellar room, captured footage of a flashlight turning itself on and off, and heard the sound of shackles.

Robson and Duke are dead serious about their work. Both are corrections officers for the Zanesville Police Department and each has spent more than 15 years investigating reports of hauntings across Ohio and other states.

"I've always considered myself a skeptical believer," Robson said. "I believe in the paranormal, but you have to prove it to me beyond a shadow of a doubt."

Licking County Commissioner Tim Bubb said several groups have approached the county about ghost-hunting in the old building since the county launched efforts to rehabilitate and find a new use for the structure. Another group of investigators is scheduled to present its findings next week.



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Two investigators contend they have recorded voices of the dead "living" in the 1889 Licking County jail.

Commissioner Brad Feightner said few places in Ohio can boast of a haunted locale so steeped in history. A little more than 100 years ago, the jailhouse was the scene of a lynching that made national news.

A black eye for the county then, the famous case and more recent news of the jail's haunting could now translate into renewed public interest in saving the historic building.

As for Robson and Duke, they just want another shot at investigating the jail, which they say is one of the most active spots they've visited.

"You just want answers," Robson said. "Not just for other people, but for yourself."

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