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Ghosts update

JOHN LOWE/The Daily Jeffersonian
May 3, 2009

Recent reports of ghostly apparitions at the Penny Court Antique Mall gained some substance in the eyes of a group of investigators.

After a report appeared in *The Daily Jeffersonian*, a contingent from Southeastern Ohio Paranormal Investigators spent an evening after hours in the Wheeling Avenue business.

"We were able to debunk some [claims]," Michelle Duke said, "but not others."

The group did encounter some of what it considers paranormal activity, including "EVP," or, "electronic voice phenomena."

Duke, of Zanesville, is a co-founder of the investigative group to which people usually refer by its initials, S.O.P.I. The other co-founder is Tom Robson.

One of the most notable instances occurred toward the back of the building in the basement, Duke said.

"What do we have to do to make you come out?" demanded an [investigator](#).

"Talk to me," responded a gruff sounding voice. Readers may listen for themselves by listening in on S.O.P.I.'s Web site, www.seohiopi/EVP_Evidence.html.

"Our group's mission is to investigate claims of paranormal activity by using scientific methods to determine if there is factual evidence to [back up](#)

the claims," Duke said.

"We take our investigations very seriously. We are not in this field just for a thrill."

The group uses a lot of equipment during its investigations, Duke said. Among these are cameras (including night vision cameras), high-tech recorders and devices to detect disruptions in electromagnetic fields.

Assuming the existence of ghosts, a number of questions follow:

- * Are they few in number or widespread?
- * If widespread, why is their presence experienced in some places, but not others?
- * Given their relative rarity, do ghostly manifestations occur spontaneously and arbitrarily? Or are there causes or reasons behind their occurrences?

As part of the probe, investigator and historical researcher Gary Felumlee checked out the history of the vicinity.

He learned that an Oct. 2, 1895 fire destroyed the building that first existed on the Penny Court site. The fire started at a livery on an adjacent site. Practically the entire block went up in flames.

Although the fire started after midnight, everyone escaped -- except for a man named Frank Law who had been sleeping on a cot in Davis Livery. His remains later were found among the embers under a collapsed chimney. His head, hands and feet had been burned off.

Participating the Penny Court investigation, in addition to Duke and Robson, were Billie Janes, Gary Felumlee, Melissa Felumlee and Walter Kreis.

(jlowe@daily-jeff.com)