

Paranormal investigators share findings from local, historical house

By Sloan Brewster
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When Paranormal Investigator Adam Shefts told his name to the long-dead Fanny Phelps at Phelps House and Tavern in Simsbury, she answered.

"I know," whispered the ghost, her raspy voice coming clearly through an audio recording that Shefts and his team were playing during a presentation on their ghost hunting adventures at the tavern.

The crew from Northeast Paranormal Investigations Society presented their findings on Sunday, April 7 to a nearly full audience in the auditorium at the Valley Masonic Lodge.

In another recording, Fanny also replied in a whisper. Unfortunately, the floor creaked right as she spoke, so it is unclear what she said, though the beginning of a word does come through just as the floor board makes its sound and stifles out the rest.

In another audio clip from one

of the two nights the crew spent in the 242-year-old house, a man – presumably Elisha Phelps – makes a wise crack. Investigators were attempting to contact Elisha, so they spoke to him about his own history, telling him about some of the things he and his brother, Noah Phelps, had experienced during the Revolutionary War at the Battle of Ticonderoga.

"No kidding," Elisha said.

There are also other whispers on the recording, but, while they come over clearly as being whispers, the actual words that were said cannot be made out. Video and film clips from the investigations also contain some unexplainable footage, including shadows that are sometimes big enough to block people and pieces of furniture to block people and pieces of furniture in the images.

"We don't know who or what this shadow was, we just thought it was interesting that we got it," said Shefts, pointing to one image on the screen.

The investigators – after going through all the footage from their



The bedroom of Fanny Phelps inside the Phelps House and Tavern in Simsbury where the crew from Northeast Paranormal Investigations Society say they encountered spirits.

Photo by Jennifer Senofonte

investigations – also found that a couple of orbs were captured in photos. Since orbs can be dust particles and other explainable anomalies, they tend not to consider them evidence of the paranormal. Shefts and Investigator Mark Firulli said. Still, there are incidences when the orbs can be viewed as possible proof of paranormal activity.

They referred to orbs that, on film, appear to be colored, patterned or to be moving intentionally in a particular direction.

"An erratic moving orb: it seems to have intelligence to it, it seems to have a purpose," Shefts said of one such orb found on footage of an investigation at Cooke's House in Hartford which was included in the presentation.

In the footage from Phelps, there are a few shots with an orb that is seemingly on a mission and, in one video clip, the circular structure also blocks the light from a lamp. Firulli was in the room when that picture was taken and the light was not only blocked in the photo, he said. He actually recalls the light in the room going dark for a minute while he was in the room alone.

In another shot, which was taken after crew members invited any spirits present to pose for a group portrait, there is another potentially purposeful orb.

One specter even offered the investigators a drink. While attempting to contact Noah's descendant Jeffrey Phelps, who was one of the last tavern keepers in the 1870s, they asked him to lead them to a table.

"Have a drink," came a whispered response, which could be heard clearly on the recording.

After the presentation audience members were invited to ask questions.

One woman asked Shefts if he was ever afraid or if anyone on any crew had ever been hurt.

He replied that – though he is not normally sensitive to energy vibrations – there have been moments when he was hesitant to go into a room because the energy felt dark or intense, but that he never felt hurt.

He and Firulli have, however been touched, they said.

When one audience member asked about Ouija boards, Shefts was adamant that they were dangerous and advised people to stay away.

"No, no, never; you never use a Ouija board. You don't know who you are contacting," he said. "I would just never touch a Ouija board. I just don't believe it's safe."

Shefts told a story about a friend of his who used a Ouija board to contact her deceased father and was tricked by a malignant spirit who pretended to be her father.

"She was crying because her father was coming through," he said. "Then [the spirit] started cursing her. ... She was just destroyed. It earned her trust and just broke her down."

When asked if they had ever seen a figure, Firulli replied, "Only once. At Union Cemetery a hooded figure stood up from behind a grave. It's rare."

Shefts had his own unique experience. While at Devil's Den, at Gettysburg, he and some other men smelled a strong odor of urine.

"Only the guys could smell it. The girls couldn't smell anything, and this was pungent," he said. "Spirits sometimes communicate from odor, and if you're not meant to smell it you're not going to smell it."

Investigators were so intrigued by the evidence of paranormal activity they discovered at the Phelps House and Tavern they are planning another visit.

"But that's the joy of going into these historic locations, it's that you really become a part of it," Shefts said. "You become a part of history."

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