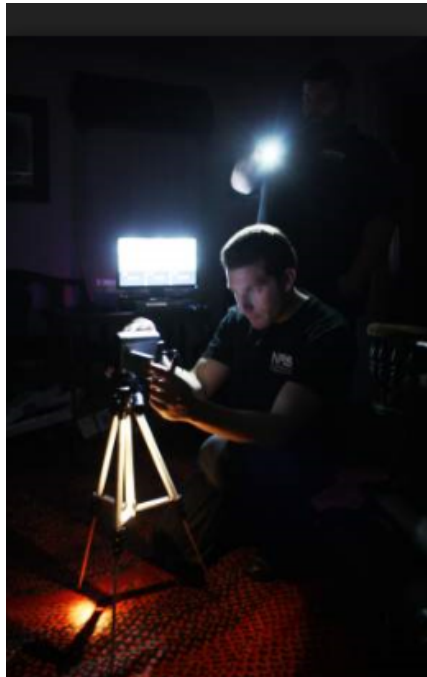


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Adam Shefts, founder of the Northeast Paranormal Investigations Society, sets up a camera in the Martha Culver House. Mark Firulla, co-director of the group, holds a flashlight behind Shefts.

Paranormal investigators search Martha Culver House for ghosts

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By Daniel Jackson The North Haven Citizen

The shadows were lengthening in the golden light as the two members of the Northeast Paranormal Investigations Society set up inside the Martha Culver House Aug. 24.

Wires snaked across the floor from six infrared cameras to a monitor sitting in the living room. Investigators brought along digital voice recorders, two devices to measure electrical magnetic energy in the area. By the end of the night, they hoped to record any contact with spirits lingering in the Martha Culver House.

Martha Culver was a well-traveled woman who lived on Quinnipiac Av. around the turn of the century. When she died in 1925, she willed her home to the town. The historical society knows little about the back-story of her family.

There have been no stories of ghost sightings in the house. The investigation Saturday night was the first time someone investigated the paranormal at the Martha Culver House.

Sue Iverson, recording secretary for the North Haven Historical Society, said she is always looking for new and interesting ways to present history. After the investigation, NPIS will hold a presentation about the history of the location and its findings.

While the men finished setting up, Iverson waited outside, puttering in the flower beds in front of the house. "I don't believe in this stuff at all," said Iverson who previously taught science at the North Haven High School. In fact, the men inside both grew up in town and both took her classes.

Julie Hulten sat on the steps leading to the house. She volunteers at the society. She was invited to the night's investigation and decided to come. She is keeping an open mind about the existence of the paranormal.

"I think there is a possibility," she said.

Iverson's husband, Bob Iverson, president of the historical society, sat on the porch. Like his wife, he's skeptical. If paranormal activity happens, he's oblivious to it. If it happens, it happens.

"I'd love for Martha Culver to appear," he said.

The investigation by NPIS is the first time the Martha Culver House has been investigated for paranormal activity. There have been no stories of ghost sightings, and no unusual occurrences.

Adam Shefts, founder of NPIS, and Mark Firulla, co-director for the group, walked out of the house. Now, it was time to wait for the shadows to turn to dusk. That way, they said, the infrared cameras kick on and shadows don't skew the

footage.

Bob Iverson turned to the men. "See, I've been practicing," he said.

He cupped his hands over his mouth and let out a low moan.

"So have you guys actually found stuff?" Bob Iverson said.

"Oh yeah," Shefts said, "Lots of stuff."

Sue Iverson asked if the investigation will be exciting or rather boring.

Shefts said he tends to find that the quieter the night, the more evidence NPIS tends to gather. After combing through hours upon hours of footage, Shefts said "you learn what's normal and what's not normal," the difference between a ghost and human whisper, creaking of the house and real footsteps.

Even the devices the group uses to measure electromagnetic energy — what ghosts are said to be made up, Shefts said — can pick up energy created by humans.

Firulla said the group takes hours to recreate everything they see. "That's good science, Mark," Sue Iverson said. "It's reproducibility"

Shefts added that the group tries to go into every investigation as skeptics. While they want to capture evidence, there is a chance they will psych themselves out and jump to conclusions.

Both the men became interested in the paranormal at a young age. When Firulla's brother was young, he would wake up, in tears, saying he saw a "bad man" or a "bad shadow." His parents had a priest bless the house. Firulla's brother stopped seeing the shadow.

Firulla wondered "What's that all about? Why did that happen?"

In high school, he started going to graveyards with a camcorder and a digital voice recorder, and he kept trying to get glimpses of the supernatural until he joined NPIS in 2009.

After years of study, he has some ideas of what goes bump in the night. "We know it's energy left behind by something," he said.

Manifestations can take the form of orbs — the manifestation that takes the least amount of energy — to shadows to full manifestations. But he admits the field of paranormal investigations is a vague field of study.

"Everything is theoretical when it comes to this whole field," he said.

But his experiences make him a believer in ghosts. NPIS was investigating Philipse Hall Manor in Yonkers, N.Y. when he felt the temperature drop 12 to 14 degrees and he saw a shadow in the hall. He said he was "literally trying to chase it down the hallway."

During the same investigation, he was in the basement where he said many people saw the ghost of a carpenter. He did not hear anything at the time, but reviewing the tapes a week later he could hear a voice saying "Get the eff out, because you're pissing me off."

Firulla said he believes in God, but he doesn't go to church. He's not sure how he feels about the cleansing his parents held in their home years ago.

Shefts was afraid of spirits as a child. He had no experience with the paranormal and no reason to be afraid, he said. He became curious about spirits, to understand why he was so afraid, and his curiosity turned to interest.

After he ran into a few spirits, "you learn there isn't much to be afraid of," he said, adding that he's trying to document history in his investigations, so it makes the investigation a lot less scary.

Today, he describes himself as spiritual, but not religious. He thinks dealing with the supernatural is a mind over matter issue.

"If you believe you're going to be safe, you're going to be fine," he said.

The shadows lengthened to dusk.

"Well, we can head in," Shefts said.

The house was warm and the wide floor-boards creaked underfoot. The lights were turned off, and the group grew quiet. The red orbs of the infrared cameras glowed in the corners of the room.

After setting up a device to record electromagnetic energy, Shefts began to speak.

"Is someone year in this room?" Shefts said. "We are all here tonight to speak with you, whatever is present, whether it be Martha, or Benjamin."

Benjamin Culver was Martha Culver's brother. The historical society knows little about him.

Shefts' voice was quiet and polite.

"You don't need to be afraid," he said.

He had everyone in the room introduce themselves. He explained that the device, a K2 meter, could pick up the ghost's presence. He asked for whatever might be in the room to light up the device. The device spikes at times during the investigation. But Shefts said the readings are sporadic. It spiked when he asked a ghost to make the lights on the device light up, but sometimes, the spikes on the device didn't make sense.

Mark returns from investigating the upstairs of the house to try to communicate with what may be in the living room. Shefts climbs the stairs to investigate the second floor. This reporter followed him.

The air is still and hot. We share one flashlight between the both of us to illuminate the room. An Underwood typewriter sits in one corner, a writing desk with a quill pen in the other.

"Sorry it's not more exciting for you," Shefts tells me.

We stand in the center of the room. Adam makes an introduction.

"This is Dan, to my right. I'm Adam," he said.

Amanikin stands in the corner, its arm outstretched, and a doll sits in a doll bed.

"You can touch things, move things," Shefts said. "Move the door if you'd like..."

Paranormal investigations consist of a lot of sitting in the dark, talking to no one, Shefts said. But finding that piece of

evidence, the photo of a shadow, or the recording of the voice the investigators didn't hear while they were standing in the room, makes it all worthwhile.

In the silence, we could hear the cars on the road, crickets outside and voices downstairs.

Shefts pulls out a camera and takes photos, the flash illuminating the room for a split second everytime.

He stops at one photo and zooms in. There was an orb, about the size of a soccer ball, floating above the bed.

Legitimate orbs look like they have a nucleus in the center, like an illuminated atom, Shefts said. It's hard to tell because the design on the curtains confuse the picture. He will put the photo on a computer and zoom in to better analyze the footage later.

He takes more photos. Pointing the camera at the area of the room where he thought he saw the orb, he takes photo after photo, flash after flash.

"Come on, if that is you, I'll give you time to try to manifest," Shefts said. "Count of three. Three, two one..."

Flash.

Shefts looks at the photos. Nothing.

Northeast Paranormal Investigations Society will present its findings at the Recreation Center, 7 Linsley Street Oct. 27 at 2 p.m.

For more information about the North Haven Historical Society, visit northhavenhistoricalsociety.wordpress.com or call (203) 239-7722.