

Paranormal investigators spin haunting tale about a historic house in Branford



Ginny Page, president of the Branford Historical Society, right, at the historic Harrison house in Branford Friday with Harrison House guide Ted Eastwood, left rear. Page is holding a vintage photograph of famed American poet and author Ella Wheeler Wilcox with her friends during a summer party in Branford.

Peter Hvizdak—New Haven Register

By [Evan Lips](#), *New Haven Register*

POSTED: 07/11/14, 9:48 PM EDT

BRANFORD >> The soft, whispering voice projected out of the speakers inside a crowded Blackstone Memorial Library, barely audible but certainly noticeable.

“Vegetable,” the voice said, according to those in attendance who responded when host Adam Shefts asked people what they heard.

“That’s what we heard also,” Shefts said.

Shefts is the director, lead investigator and founder of the [Northeast Paranormal Investigations Society](#). Weeks ago his team visited Branford’s historic Harrison House after gaining permission from the Branford Historical Society. The Harrison House, a barn red colonial built in 1724, has always had partial reputation around town as being the kind of place where things inexplicably go bump in the night.

“When you visited it I think you may have kicked a hornet’s nest,” historical society member Ted Eastwood told Shefts at the conclusion of his paranormal investigative team’s presentation.

The team’s June 21 visit produced audio of a whispered voice Shefts believes uttered the word “vegetable.”

Shefts said the voice was captured on recording equipment when his group entered the dining room. The group was accompanied by a member of the historical society. The member can be heard on the recording asking, “what kind of soup did you eat?”

Shefts and his team have toured dozens of historic buildings scattered across the northeast. During Thursday night’s presentation he detailed visits to Nathan Hale’s home in Coventry, the Deacon John Grave House in Madison, an old firehouse in Ansonia and the Eells-Stow House in Milford, among Connecticut locations. Shefts said the work allows him to take a closer look at history, regardless of anything paranormal. According to Shefts, if his work keeps inspires younger people to delve back in time, it’s all the better.

“It’s a different way of bringing history to the forefront,” he said. “There are an awful lot of young people today who don’t care much for history and this can be a way to kind of draw them into it.”

For Shefts and his team, the Harrison House was a paranormal gold mine.

“We captured some of our best evidence at this location,” he said. “We have not yet been able to tie the evidence to any specific person who lived there, but we do find it interesting.”

Jessica Berthiaume works with Shefts and said she prefers entering a historic location without any assumptions.

“I don’t let them tell me anything before we go into houses,” she said. “I don’t want to know anything about it.”

Yet Virginia Page, president of the historical society, had a story to tell to Berthiaume. According to Page, she entered earlier this year on a cold February night and immediately sensed something was amiss. She did not hear voices but the feeling that she was entering a place where she was unwelcome intensified as Page entered the second floor.

Berthiaume recalled how she was one of the first members of Shefts’ team to enter the second floor bedroom.

“I just kept hearing this man screaming in my ear, telling me to get out of there,” he said. “Throughout the investigation I kept hearing him mocking us and laughing at what we were trying to do.”

Berthiaume played a recording of her son, Kyle, speaking in the room, saying to another team member, “leave him to it.”

Seconds later a grating, angry voice can be heard on Berthiaume’s recording, [repeating the same phrase her son said](#).

Before the team began to explore the upstairs of the house, they set up an audio and video system on the second floor. Shefts said several team members were outside when the audio picked up the sound of what appeared to be footsteps walking up the stairs.

Eastwood later explained what he meant by his “hornet’s nest” comment.

“The only other thing I’ve ever had happened is hearing the footsteps,” he said. “But last Saturday, I saw two things of what you call orbs in the main hall. That’s a first for me and I’ve been doing this (giving tours of the house) for five seasons.”

According to Shefts, the orbs — small glowing circles that can appear on photos and video shot at night — are spirits. Critics dismiss the images as dust, moisture or shifting light. Shefts acknowledges the criticism.

“It’s hard to prove anything in this field,” he said. “But in theory, an orb is the easiest mode of transportation for a spirit.”

Eastwood said he suspects the two visits made to the Harrison House by Shefts’ Northeast Paranormal Investigative Society may have upset whatever balance had previously existed inside the historic location. He noted that he’s spent a lot of time alone inside the house.

“Am I going there alone at night now?” he said. “No way.”

To find more events hosted by the historical society visit its website at www.branfordhistoricalsociety.org. The historical society maintains the house, located at 124 Main St., as its headquarters. The house is open to the public on Saturdays between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. from June 1 until Oct. 31