Norristown mansion examined for ghosts

Ghosts

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The voice of a dead person bellowed out through the audio recorder into the ears of Lisa Terio.

She hears these voices all the time. It's part of her job.

"I'm dead," said the unidentified speaker, who Terio and her team say they think is a past resident of Norristown's Selma Mansion on the 1300 block of Airy Street.

A range of other recordings were captured on one of the many recording devices that Terio uses for ghost hunting.

Terio, who founded the Pennsylvania Underground Paranormal Society (P.U.P.S.) in 2007, and her team seek out communication with those long passed, mostly in historical places.

"With historical locations, we can substantiate the people that lived there and what they have done for America," said Steve Foersch, P.U.P.S.'s case manager. Through the electronic voice phenomenon (EVP) sounds they've collected, they say it might be possible to match a name or sound to a historical element of the property.

According to the Norristown Preservation Society, General Andrew Porter of Worcester renovated what was a small structure into the mansion Selma is today. In 1783, after retiring from his congressional appointment as a captain of the marines, Porter settled on the plantation of Selma. Porter's sons grew up in the home, some of whom became active in the political history of the country.

Some of the roles his sons fulfilled were Pennsylvania judicial judgeship, Pennsylvania governor, governor of Michigan territory and secretary of war.

"Our goal is to try to find evidence that would help prove the existence of life after death," said Terio

P.U.P.S. believes that through contact with spirits they can strengthen the relationship between the past and present.

"Let's say a person who likes ghosts might be allured into the history by the fact that there's a ghost there. They might learn the history; it's a benefit," she said.

P.U.P.S. declared Selma Mansion to be haunted after spending the night on Saturday, April 30. Some of the sounds and things they recorded include voices of people talking, breathing and responses to questions asked by the team.

The majority of the sounds couldn't be heard by the naked ear â□□ that's where Terio's job comes in. Spending long hours and perhaps days reviewing the footage, the team attempts to find things they missed during the night, things that maybe happened while the team was out on a break or on another floor of the house.

One recording illustrates a conversation P.U.P.S. says they had with a spirit.

"Is there any Knox family there?" said Terio on the recording. "Yes," a voice responds.

"Is there a Thomas?" asks Foersch. "Yes," said the voice.

Video footage taken shows a light being turned on when the whole team was on another floor of the house.

"Definitely a male voice or a spirit, a female or a young boy, and a child," said Terio in reference to what she was able to pick up on audio.

P.U.P.S. aspires to distinguish themselves from other groups who are mostly interested in the fame and glory that has been generated over the years in the ghost hunting entertainment business.

"It's not to be famous. It's not to do anything like that. We're gathering and doing research," said Foersch.

The group seeks to maintain professionalism using a controlled environment to ensure the accuracy of collected evidence. Before starting, they use an electromagnetic field frequency detector to scan the building for any signals that might alter the evidence. Typically, these come from pipes, phone lines, circuits and any other structures that carry currents like light bulb fixtures.

The group met while volunteering at Fort Mifflin, the Revolutionary War battlefield in Philadelphia. P.U.P.S. has seen the positive impact of tourism through ghost hunters at the Fort and hopes the same type of practices can be implemented with Selma Mansion.

"I don't want to make it a three-ring circus," said Terio, but the group would like to generate revenue and attention to the site as a way of preserving its historical relevance and keeping a piece of Norristown history alive and talking.

By Rebecca Savedow, Journal Register News Service
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