



Drayton Hall Plantation is reputedly haunted by the spirit of William Henry Drayton from the year 1765.



Photographs courtesy of Drayton Hall

Haunted Properties

In a city raveled with history like Charleston, ghost lore is destined to weave its way into the fabric of local culture. The stately buildings stand cracked and sometimes leaning, straining under the unyielding weight of time, unable and unwilling to be torn down. Unlike the structures which create a constant backdrop for generations, the people who dwell here are merely transient against their steadfast façades. The tragedy of untimely or wrongful death causes the air to grow heavy with age and shadows to lurk beneath the flickering lamp light. While most spirits leave the world of the living and find peace in another realm, other lost souls are left behind to face their unresolved issues.

Charleston consistently ranks among the top ten most haunted cities in the country, with the likes of other well-known haunted places such as Savannah and New Orleans. Legends of lost life abound in every cemetery and down every street causing intrigue and fascination to flourish in the minds of believers. Visitors flock to the

Holy City in hopes of catching a glimpse of the paranormal. Hotels and houses believed to be haunted become great spectacles, attracting a nightly audience who crave an eerie tale and a shiver down their spine. Given that many of these haunted properties are privately owned establishments, there are only a select few who are granted permission to cross their thresholds and

investigate what lies within the confines of the buildings' walls.

The curious staff of CH+D looked to the Charleston Paranormal Society (CPS), who receives exclusive access to some of the most sought after historic buildings in the city, to answer our questions about all things paranormal. The team, made up of five like-minded individuals with a shared interest in the supernatural, was the first to conduct formal investigations of noteworthy locations such as the Old City Jail and Poogan's Porch restaurant. Although both of these landmarks maintain illustrious legends as to their ghostly inhabitants, CPS, which is a non-profit organization led by Co-Founders and Lead Investigators Dave Chellis and Brandie Bruns, in no way tries to sensationalize these accounts, but rather attempts to disprove their existence through scientific and factual rationale. Dave and Brandie explain that the team's main objective is to find answers to unexplained events, and ultimately, to help residents feel safe and comfortable in

their own home. “We receive calls for investigations that range from someone with a general curiosity to someone that is really scared,” Dave emphasizes, “When someone needs help, we’ll be there to help in any way that we can.”

In any home, especially one that is historic, there are a number of normal, non-spectral conditions that could cause a door to slam or a draft to form. Commonly, noises and events that are thought to be supernatural phenomena are actually caused by home maintenance issues such as faulty plumbing, bad wiring, unlevel surfaces, etc. When beginning an investigation, CPS initially checks both the mechanical and structural integrity to ensure that all aspects of the home are functioning properly. If the team is unsuccessful at locating the problem or recreating the event, then the presence of the supernatural becomes more probable; however, more concrete evidence is necessary before determining whether or not a home is experiencing any level of paranormal activity.

During an investigation, CPS relies on a series of high definition equipment to record samples of audio/video and to detect changes in electromagnetic frequency. While they may receive responses to inquiries at the time of the investigation, often in the form of knocking or a low whisper, some of the most interesting pieces of evidence are uncovered when reviewing the countless hours of recordings. “It requires a lot of energy for a spirit to manifest itself, and it may not want to be seen,” Brandie explains, “thus, we are sometimes able to capture audio clips known as electronic voice phenomenon, which are produced at such a low frequency that they are inaudible without the recording device.” As a result, the team has analyzed numerous unexplained audio recordings, including moans, exclamations, direct responses to questions or phrases, and even pleading cries for help.

For internationally known psychic medium Elizabeth Baron, electronic equipment is not necessary to communicate with the spirit realm. Elizabeth spent the past thirty years based in Charleston, working both locally and nationally conducting exorcisms, assisting crime and missing persons investigations, and providing personal counseling and education through the use of her unique gift as a trance medium. According



(above) Standing before this memorial headstone in Washington Square, CPS captured their best example of electronic voice phenomenon. (below) The team gathers at the monument at the center of the square. Clockwise from top left: Investigator John Allison, Investigator Barry Lewis, Tech Manager/Investigator Jared Shapiro, Co-Founder/Lead Investigator Brandie Bruns, Founder/Lead Investigator Dave Chellis.



to Elizabeth, Charleston is home to some of the most haunted places she has ever experienced, including the Calhoun Mansion and the Windermere Estate.

We spoke to Elizabeth from her new home in Houston, TX about her experiences in the Holy City. Her most vivid memory in Charleston is that of Drayton Hall Plantation and the spirit of William Henry Drayton. She describes her first visit to Drayton Hall as a very sad experience; “I walked into the foyer, sat on a bench, and started crying,” Elizabeth recounts. Elizabeth re-

turned to the plantation several times, and each time she was confronted with tragic scenes from generations past. These visions gave her insight into the history of Drayton Hall, and at one point, Elizabeth was able to interact with the spirit of William Henry Drayton from the year 1765, which was featured in a television segment on HGTV in 2005, and later on an episode of the Travel Channel’s *Most Haunted Places*.

As Elizabeth reminisces about her time in Charleston, her compassion and empathy for the spirits she has connected with is

palpable. Elizabeth strongly believes that the spirits are lost souls who need to be released into the light so that they may live on in eternal peace. She is fearful that the general fascination surrounding the paranormal and the legends associated with it will prevent homeowners from exorcising their homes when a spirit is present. "It is not healthy—mentally, physically, or spiritually—to have a ghost in your house," stresses Elizabeth. "That house cannot be yours if it belongs to someone else who is living there; you cannot own another hu-



Internationally-renowned psychic medium Elizabeth Baron

man being. Let them go on, beg them to." Although the South Carolina Code of Laws does not require the disclosure of information when a property is thought to be "psychologically affected" or "stigmatized" (see Section 27-50-90), Elizabeth urges that it is both polite and ethical to perform an exorcism before the time of sale. Most real estate experts would agree that honesty is always the best policy when it comes to selling a home with a haunted reputation to avoid any future liability issues. The right buyer will acquire the home regardless of its past. Actually, such a past may prove to be an alluring and unique feature in Charleston, where ghosts will forever remain welcomed guests. ❖

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CPS Investigation Report

CPS investigated a downtown Charleston residence built nearly 200 years ago with reports of doors opening and closing, the sound of chains, and various voices throughout the three story building. Upon arriving, we set up equipment in various places throughout the house, such as video cameras, audio recorders, and infrared (IR) thermometers, then turned off all the lights and began the investigation. We walked around attempting to get something to communicate with us. Specifically, we were looking for "knock" responses, vocal responses, and temperature fluctuations. With our IR thermometer, we can instantly measure temperatures of areas that feel colder as cold spots are said to indicate the presence of a spirit. When trying to communicate, we asked for anyone out there to respond via knocks (i.e. we would knock twice, and ask for whatever is out there to knock twice as well). Houses make all kinds of creaks and knocks, so it's important to note the location and loudness, as well as to ask for multiple knocks to distinguish between non-paranormal and paranormal.

We moved from room to room, sitting spread out in each one to better determine the direction of noises. As we moved from floor to floor, we logged the room and time to help us remember the timing and locations of audio/visual events. Throughout the night, we occasionally heard random sounds we couldn't account for. Mostly, these seemed to be a "honking" sound or footsteps, which we notated on the audio based on the direction we heard them from and the number of steps (or honks, etc). At one point, we experienced a small flashing light dance around the room, coupled with some cold spots that seemed to move in and around us. We have experienced this before, but never for such a long time period (nearly an hour). Having no explanation for this, we noted it and moved on. As we concluded the investigation, we collected all of our equipment and planned out the next few days of evidence analysis.

During our review, we found several pieces of audio which were quite interesting—heavy breathing, muddled words, and sometimes clearly understandable phrases were all heard. We also managed to capture the "honks" which were heard, although the source is still unknown. Coupling our experiences with the captured evidence, we concluded that the house is experiencing mild paranormal phenomena, but it definitely doesn't appear to be anything negative. This is important to note because people don't want to be scared to live in their own house. Should something negative present itself, it's important to let the client know, and in most of cases, we recommend a priest bless the house. Either way, we are always available for help again should the need arise—we're not a one time thing. Unexplained things happen every day, and everyone needs to feel comfortable contacting our team in their time of need.

-Dave Chellis
Founder/Lead Investigator