

## Lifestyle

[> Life > Lifestyle](#)[Print this Page](#)[←-back to story](#)**No spooks in this house**By MaryAnn Kromer, [mkromer@advertiser-tribune.com](mailto:mkromer@advertiser-tribune.com)

POSTED: May 13, 2008

CLYDE — What is a ghost? Gene Lafferty of Buckeye State Paranormal and Haunting Investigators, or BSPHI, defines "ghost" as "an apparition or supernatural entity, typically the visual appearance of a deceased human's soul." But he adds no one knows for sure, nor are there any ghost-hunting "experts."

The Clyde Heritage League invited Lafferty to set up his equipment March 22 in the former home of General James McPherson in Clyde. That afternoon, he spoke to the public about his organization and some of the investigations members have done. About 80 people filled the meeting room at the library.

"I was so amazed at the number of people. It was an interesting program," said librarian Jill McCullough.

During the presentation, Lafferty said "ghost hunting" is a hobby of BSPHI members. The nonprofit group includes more than 50 people who do not charge for their services. He said their goal is the preservation and documentation of history. The group requests seven pages of information from the office of the county auditor before they get started.

Last year, in working at Hardin County Museum in Kenton, Lafferty uncovered some interesting information. The museum originally had been a private residence. Research by BSPHI members revealed the first owners of the home had been members of a nearby church. Records show the family donated another parcel for the present church and built their home, now the museum, on the site of the original church, which burned down.

"We found out that the church they helped build, a deacon had started a diary the day the church burned down," Lafferty said.

He showed the crowd at Clyde some of the equipment investigators use and explained the kind of data they gather. He said the equipment typically runs for seven to eight hours in a given location. Part of that time, data is collected in the absence of any investigators, usually at night, when there is less outdoor noise. Lafferty said he requires the owner of the property or one other person to be present while he is in the building. He coaches people to cause as little disturbance as possible. A handful of people makes less noise than a larger group.

"We observe a phenomena and form a hypothesis. We use the hypothesis to predict what will happen," Lafferty said.

The investigators typically set up a digital video recorder able to handle up to 16 cameras and four audio feeds; infrared night vision cameras attached to the recorder; a video camera with night shot; digital 35 mm cameras; digital voice recorders; electromagnetic field detectors; and thermometers or thermal scanners. Lafferty said spirits seem to drain batteries, so the investigators take a supply of extras.

BSPHI members take their notes and recordings back to a work area for analysis. The results are used to test the hypothesis.

In the case of the McPherson home, no significant paranormal activity was detected. Lafferty posted the results on the Web site [www.bsphi.com](http://www.bsphi.com) in early April.

The report stated the recordings did pick up what seemed to be three knocks in the bedroom facing the highway. An investigator had posed a question and requested knocking as a response.

Also, an electronic voice phenomenon, or evp, that was inaudible to investigators on the scene turned up in the lab, but it was deemed insignificant.

McCullough accompanied Lafferty during the visit to the home, at the corner of US 20 and SR 101.

She said she has never experienced any kind of ghostly encounters, although she does not dismiss what others have told her or deny the presence of spirits. Lafferty told McCullough he didn't feel anything unusual upon entering the house, which is now a museum.

"He said, 'I'm not psychic, but sometimes you get a feeling, a sense that there's something unusual. I just don't get it in this house,' she recalled.

After the equipment was set up, McCullough said she stayed in the building while the investigators went to dinner. They returned and finished at about 10 p.m.

Traffic was heavy on McPherson Highway that Saturday night before Easter, but Lafferty said he would be able to screen out the traffic noise from his recordings. One incident stands out in McCullough's memory.

"The thing thing that got me," McCullough said, "... one of the evps was taken while I was in the room. It was the one where he said, 'If someone's here, would you knock or something?' When I listened to it, I thought, 'That sounds like somebody knocking on the glass.' I was standing next to a window. That gave me a little chill."

As in Hardin County, Sandusky County historians were able to learn more about their hometown hero and the items in the McPherson home. McCullough said a visitor had once observed the sword alleged to be McPherson's and commented that it looked like more like a Confederate sword. Lafferty's research confirmed that fact, suggesting that it may have been a battlefield souvenir.

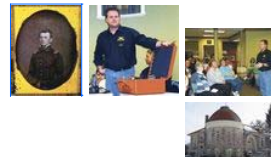
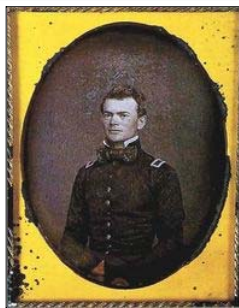
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"One thing we knew for sure was that the sword did belong to McPherson," McCullough said. "He was a West Point graduate, so he would have had a sword ... a ceremonial sword or a working sword."

Air conditioning recently was installed at the McPherson museum to preserve the artifacts and furnishings. Although the building is not open on a regular basis, individuals and groups may schedule tours at any time by calling (419) 639-3017 or (419)618-3321

In addition, McCullough has posted notices in the library inviting area residents to write about any paranormal phenomenon they may have experienced. She wants to collect them into a booklet.

"I go by what people say. I still think that Clyde is one of the most haunted towns I've ever been in. I've never had so many stories from people talking to me. I've had more people that I don't know come up and talk to me ... to find out what went on at McPherson," McCullough said.

Some online comments have suggested the Clyde Library is haunted, but McCullough says he does not believe any spirits reside there. She said the Willard library has set up a Web cam that has captured images of a "gray lady."

"We're collecting stories, and I do hope to hold a follow-up meeting," McCullough said. "I just think oral history should keep track of the stories for the heritage."

The library is taking names of people interested in organizing a group to share their experiences. McCullough said she can be reached by calling the library at (419) 547-7174 or stopping at the library, 222 W. Buckeye St., Clyde. More information about Buckeye State Paranormal and Haunting Investigators is available on their Web site, [www.bsphi.com](http://www.bsphi.com) or by calling their toll-free phone number, 1-(800) 295-3441.

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