

Wrightsville bar owner enlists help from ghost hunters

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Scott Wise, the lead investigator with Pottstown-based Ghost Hunters Inc., checks out a third-floor area above the Riverfront Bar and Lounge on Tuesday night. During their investigation of the bar a few days earlier, Wise said, team members saw a shadow pass in front of the window behind him. (Daily Record/Sunday News - Bil Bowden)



Don Ream, an investigator with Ghost Hunters Inc., checks footprints made in flour that the team sprinkled on the floor in an area of the Riverfront Bar and Lounge where unexplained footsteps have been heard. The final results of the team's investigation will be revealed Aug. 14 at the bar. (Daily Record/Sunday News - Bil Bowden)

The digital picture shows something -- a circle of light, or maybe an orb -- on the attic wall of a Wrightsville establishment whose owner believes is the site of paranormal phenomena. The orb -- or whatever it is -- is just one of many examples paranormal investigators and Katrina Pierce, owner of the Riverfront Bar and Lounge at 338 S. Front St., give when talking about the strange goings-on they say are happening in the historic building. Other examples include organ music from nowhere, unexplained shadows, footprints left in flour in a locked room, markings on the floor and a historic picture that keeps falling but never breaks. Pierce bought the place in November 2008. She opened for business Feb. 19. After some remodeling, she said, she started to notice things.

"The first time I heard it (something strange), it was organ music," she said.

She was walking toward the kitchen and kept walking, asking a friend if he heard it, too. He said he did, but was trying to ignore it.

Pierce researched the property in the York County Archives and discovered about 30 people have owned the building since it was built in 1864. A picture she received from a borough resident shows some of the Abel brothers and others at the building when it was Abel Brothers Storefront. Four members of the family owned the building, according to a deed, but a relative said two other brothers, Robert and Paul, actually started the business in 1937, Pierce said.

That's the picture that keeps falling and doesn't break, Pierce said. "Sometimes it's sitting on the ledge when we come in, and nobody put it there."

Seeking answers, Pierce got in touch with Ghost Hunters Inc., a group based in Pottstown. She wanted to know: Were these experiences paranormal?

"I just wanted to make sure I wasn't crazy," Pierce said.

Ghost hunting has gained mainstream popularity, particularly in the last several years, thanks to the success of shows such as SyFy's "Ghost Hunters," which chronicles the adventures of The Atlantic Paranormal Society; and "Paranormal State," which focuses on a team of investigators based at Penn State University. Thousands of websites sell "ghost-hunting kits" and how-to books on the subject, and groups offering their services as paranormal investigators have sprung up nationwide.

The 10- to 12-member Ghost Hunters Inc. team does about two cases a month, said Allen Phillips, team founder and director.

At the bar, they conducted a free preliminary investigation July 21 and one Sunday morning.



Katrina Pierce, who owns the Riverfront Bar and Lounge in Wrightsville, said the center picture -- which shows some of the Abel brothers in front of the building in the 1930s, when it was Abel Brothers Storefront -- often falls but never breaks. She said the picture has been found placed on the ledge, 'but nobody put it there.' (Daily Record/Sunday News - Bil Bowden)

The first visit yielded high readings on an electromagnetic field meter, and four two-member teams spent about four hours there Sunday, using tools such as digital cameras, voice recorders and infrared cameras to attempt to capture evidence, said Scott Wise, lead investigator.

"So far, we found a couple things," Wise said, including a voice speaking the name of an investigator, shadows and other occurrences.

Pierce said she also heard a voice speaking to her during the investigation Sunday morning. And one of the investigators said she had an unsettling experience in the basement during Sunday's investigation.

Final results will not be ready for about "another week or so," Wise said.

If unseen visitors are there, Pierce said, she's not worried.

"I don't feel threatened by it. It's kind of neat," she said. "The history is more important to me than anything."

About Ghost Hunters Inc.

Ghost Hunters Inc. formed in 1974 in Pottstown, according to the group's website, ghosthuntersinc.net.

The nonprofit's mission is to "provide a high quality, professional, reliable, friendly, knowledgeable ghost investigative team for our clients. It is our sole purpose and intent to provide our clients with the most professional paranormal investigative team possible."

See the results

Investigators with Ghost Hunters Inc. will share their research findings 7 p.m. Aug. 14 during "paranormal night" at the Riverfront Bar and Lounge. Tours and a psychic will be available.

Cost is \$7.