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Haunt Masters Club investigates the paranormal at Abingdon bed and breakfast



Larry N. Souders|Special to the Herald Courier

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Donna Bise, left, the owner of the Maple Springs Inn, reacts as she listens to one of two voice recordings made during an investigation into paranormal activity at the inn. Justin Guess, right, a researcher for Haunt Masters Club, discusses what is heard in the recordings.

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ABINGDON, Va. – To the naked eye, the caretaker’s home is all that is left of the Washington County poorhouse on Walden Road.

But the property’s owner believes that more than just the building remains.

“Everybody always says, ‘Oh, the house has spirits, the house is haunted,’” owner Donna Bise said.

The home, built in 1865, is now the Maple Spring Inn, a four-bedroom bed and breakfast that hosted its first guest in January.

Bise said the property has been in her family for several generations, and she has been salvaging the dilapidated house since 2004.

Contractors working on the building have come across some strange stuff, she said, including water that runs on its own, doors that slam shut of their own accord and other phenomena.

So Bise called the Haunt Masters Club, a Tri-Cities area paranormal investigation team. Club members conducted an initial investigation of the area and returned to check out “hot spots” Saturday night.

The group spent several hours in the inn, conducting electronic voice phenomenon sessions, or EVP, checking temperature and electromagnetic radiation with a gaussmeter and videotaping rooms with infrared cameras. They will analyze the footage and report the findings to Bise.

“It’s not like you see on TV but just like you see on TV,” investigator Maggie Ryan said, explaining the groups’ technique.

Justin Guess, one of the group’s founders, said that June 19, when they first investigated, they isolated two audio messages: “I’m over it.” and “You shouldn’t have slept around.”

But before the club even goes to an allegedly haunted place, they research the area. Guess found deeds to Bise’s land dating to the 1700’s when King George II owned it. He also found records of other owners, an old map of the property and old pictures of the house and the poor farm house.

“What makes us different is we’re also a folklore investigation group,” Ryan said. “We use a more scientific approach and keep weeding out things until [we] come to the things you can’t explain.”

Bise said she wasn’t concerned by the possibility that her inn might be haunted.

“Not only have I wanted to know if there are any paranormal activities here, but I was interested to learn the history,” she said. “Just the history has been intriguing to me, if we don’t find anything else.”

Ryan said she feels that this area is home to paranormal activity in part because of the area’s history.

“Look at the history of this area,” she said. “We had the Civil War, the building of a nation. You can’t not have some sort of something left behind.”

One of the group’s founders, Jacob Denton, said one of the main things about the Haunt Masters Club is the group’s dedication to research.

“We have learned a lot about history through ghost hunting,” he said.

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