

Bumps in the Night!!!!

May 2014 Issue

Paranormal "U"

History of Paranormal Research

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The history of the paranormal research spans decades, if not centuries. It did not start with the invent of paranormal reality TV shows as one might think. In fact, there have been ghost stories since ancient times and they can be found in many different cultures. These ghost stories come from a variety of historical locations around the world. These ghost stories begot the want to research and investigate these stories.

Accounts of supernatural occurrences and the paranormal have always been common in the print media. The earliest found document was a pamphlet, from 1705, called "A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs Veal" by Daniel Defoe. However, the most famous "ghost story" of all time would have to be "A Christmas Carol" written by Charles Dickens in 1843. It is a story of a man, Ebenezer Scrooge, of wealth in money, but not of wealth in love, compassion, and friendship. It takes three ghosts to appear to him to get him to change. In the end Scrooge became a changed man and saw that you can have all of the money in the world, but still be poor without friends and family.

A couple of decades later, in 1860, the first "ghost photo" was produced. It was claimed that W. Campbell in New Jersey took a picture of an empty chair, only to find the image of a small boy in the chair once the photo was developed. This was followed by Boston engraver, William Mumler taking his own photo only to discover the image of a dead cousin in the photo with him. You might know one of Mumler's most famous works as the photo of Mary Todd Lincoln with the ghost of her dead husband Abraham Lincoln. Even though he enjoyed some popularity at the time, these Mumler photos are now generally considered fakes.

A couple of decades later, in 1886, a few scientists banded together and attempted to apply modern scientific or investigative standards to the study of apparitional experiences. These standards were the work of Edmund Gurney, Frederick William Henry Myers and Frank Podmore.

Then in the 1920s and 30s, Harry Price started doing his research on psychics and psychical phenomena. He also spent a considerable amount of time trying to debunk claims and expose fraudulent mediums. He was definitely one of the most influential paranormal researchers of that time. Price was directly involved in a number of investigations of the paranormal in England and founded the National Laboratory of Psychical Research in 1926. Price spent nearly 30 years investigating and putting together the first ghost hunting tools. These tools were the precursor to equipment we use today.

Also in the 1920s and 30s, Thomas Edison had a theory that the "soul" was made up of what he called "life units". He started to work on an invention of a machine that he believed would allow the living to see and communicate with the dead. Edison unfortunately passed away before he could prove his theory. Upon his death, in 1931, his theory was picked up by a Russian born painter, musician and film producer Friedrich Jurgenson. Some say Jurgenson proved Edison's theory by accident. Intrigued by Jurgenson's stories of spirit voices, Latvian-born parapsychologist and former psychology professor Konstantin Raudive spent 9 years recording and analyzing sounds on thousands of tapes.

In the mid-1940s, G.N.M. Tyrrell, after a notable apparitional experience, began research on apparitions. Tyrrell accepted the hallucinatory character of the experience and pointed out that it is virtually unknown for firsthand accounts to claim that apparitional figures leave any of the normal physical effects, such as footprints in snow, which one would expect of a real person.

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The study and discussion of apparitions took a different turn in the 1970s with the work of Celia Green and Charles McCreery. They studied the apparitional experience, aka "ghosts". They were not interested in whether they existed, but rather they analyzed a large number of cases to provide a taxonomy of the different types of experiences. In the end, they viewed them as simply a type of anomalous perceptual experience or hallucination.

Local paranormal researcher, investigator, and author, Dale Kaczmarek, got his start in the mid-70s and joined a team known as The Ghost Trackers Club. This group shared a common interest in ghost research, hauntings and poltergeist phenomena. Kaczmarek joined the team as the Research Director and has since gone on to become their President. This group is now known as Ghost Research Society (GRS) and is still run by Kaczmarek. Over the years Kaczmarek has authored several books on the subject of the paranormal and conducted hundreds if not thousands of investigations. We were lucky enough to be able to interview him in the March 2013 issue of "Bumps in the Night!!!!" in the TnT Paranormal Asks column. To learn more about Dale and his works [click here](#).

In the 1960s local TV news programs in both the UK and USA began to feature ghost stories. Then in 1976, one of the earliest paranormal TV shows was born. The show was called *In Search Of...*, and was hosted by Leonard Nimoy. It explored many paranormal topics, including UFOs, cryptids, lost civilizations, and other mysteries. Throughout the 1980s a few TV programs were featured on major networks, such as "That's Incredible!" and "Unsolved Mysteries", both of which featured stories of a paranormal nature.

The reality based paranormal shows got their birth in 2000 when MTV's premiered *Fear*. *Fear* followed a group of contestants, left at an allegedly haunted location, as they performed a series of tasks, over two nights, to explore and confirm whether or not the place is haunted. This show established the visual look and editing style followed by most paranormal reality television shows today.

Fear was followed by *Scariest Places on Earth*, that aired from 2001-2006 on Fox Family Channel. This show featured reported cases of the paranormal by sending an ordinary family to visit the location in a reality TV-style vigil. Additionally, in 2002, Living TV launched the ghost-hunting series *Most Haunted*; carried in the US by the Travel Channel (show ended in 2010).

In 2004 we saw the birth of two new paranormal themed shows: *Dead Famous* and *Ghost Hunters*. *Dead Famous* was a short lived show that starred local clairvoyant Chris Fleming. The show focused on road trips through the West Coast of America looking for the ghostly locations where the legends of stage and screen reside. *Ghost Hunters*, still on the air as of this article, follows the paranormal investigations of two New England plumbers and their team of investigators. Not only is *Ghost Hunters* still on the air and it has had two (2) spin-off shows.

Some other paranormal shows of note are:

- Travel Channel's *Ghost Adventures* which was launched in 2008. The *Ghost Adventures* crew lead, Zak Bagans, is from Glen Ellyn and graduate from Glenbard West HS.
- Bio Channel's *My Ghost Story* which was launched in 2010. This show features footage captured by every day people of alleged paranormal activity. Season 2 - Episode 2, that aired on 4/9/2011, featured footage captured by TnT Paranormal in New Lenox.

So as you can see the history of the paranormal is a lot longer than the recent interest by the TV viewing public. Hopefully this field will continue on for many, many years to come.