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R.I.P. investigates Civil War spirits at the Mudd House in Waldorf, MD

April 1, 10:08 AM · 1 comment

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Research and Investigation of the Paranormal (R.I.P.) recently visited the Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House in Waldorf, MD, and we experienced everything from an authentic Civil War fife concert to cold spots to EVP sessions over a long and lively day and evening.

We arrived mid-morning at the 200 acre site in Charles County, MD. The house and grounds are administered by the Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Society and several members of the Mudd family still live nearby. The Mudd House is now a museum, open to the public for tours on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Danny Fluhart, President of the Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Society, has an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of the Mudd family, particularly the events that took place here in 1865. Danny, looking dapper in period clothing, answered our many questions and kept us on track as we filmed scenes from this turbulent period in American history with the help of local Civil War re-enactors.

GUILTY OR INNOCENT?

Shortly after the end of the Civil War, John Wilkes Booth – a successful and well-known actor – entered the Presidential Box at Ford's Theatre and shot President Abraham Lincoln in the head. The President died the next day on April 15th, 1865. Booth, meanwhile, got away with the help of his co-conspirators. In his dramatic exit from the Presidential Box, Booth suffered a broken leg when he jumped from the box onto the stage in order to make his escape. Helped by David Herold, an employee at a Washington pharmacy and a Confederate spy, Booth made his way to the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd in rural Maryland. Dr. Mudd, like many residents of this border state, was a well-known Southern sympathizer.

However, despite his support of the Confederate cause, Dr. Mudd always maintained that he was unaware of Booth's identity when the two men arrived at his office and asked for his assistance. Dr. Mudd helped Booth dismount and hobble into the second floor bedroom, where he set Booth's broken leg. The doctor then allowed Booth and Herold to rest for a few hours at his home before they went on their way. Dr. Mudd was later arrested and charged as a co-conspirator in the plot to assassinate President Lincoln. He was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison; however, he was then pardoned in 1869 by President Andrew Johnson, partially due to lack of evidence and partially because of his heroic efforts to save lives during a yellow fever epidemic at the prison camp he was sent to in Florida. Dr. Mudd returned to his home to live out a peaceful and busy life, but never stopped working to clear his name completely. Although he received a Presidential pardon, a cloud of suspicion still hangs over his memory and arguments continue to this day as to whether he was or was not a Confederate agent.

STRANGE EVENTS AT THE MUDD HOUSE

Staff members and Civil War re-enactors alike report a history of odd events in the house and on the grounds. These happenings include doors opening and closing on their own, feelings of being watched, a blast of cold air rushing by when no windows or doors were open anywhere in the house, and even a full body apparition appearing on the stairs to a descendant. During a recent "Victorian Christmas" event at the Mudd House, Civil War re-enactors were camped out overnight. The house had been decorated with electric candles in the windows and these were routinely turned off every night. On one memorable evening, several re-enactors watched the candles in one window continue to turn on by themselves, even after they had been turned off

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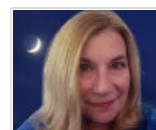
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and, finally, completely unplugged. Another event involved a dress form in the attic that was apparently pushed across the floor when several re-enactors, dressed in Union uniforms, were in the attic attempting to make contact. Visitors have reported hearing voices, including someone whispering "Let me do all the talking" outside the front entrance to the house. That phrase sounds like something David Herold would have said to John Wilkes Booth on that fateful evening when they arrived at Dr. Mudd's home. One Civil War re-enactor reported that his normally calm and even-tempered horse became very agitated at the Mudd House and a dog also demonstrated a visible reaction to the atmosphere at this location. Part of the original reason for opening the Mudd House as a museum was because one of Dr. Mudd's descendants strongly felt the doctor's presence, urging her towards this goal.

R.I.P. MEETS THE SPIRITS

It was a beautiful evening with a spectacular sunset on the day we visited. The aura of another time seems to envelop this gracious home and it's easy to imagine it as it was long ago. Rene, R.I.P. Sensitive, and I slipped away to try an EVP session in the upstairs Children's Room while filming was still going on downstairs.

We sat on opposite sides of the room. Rene noticed something that looked like a face reflected in the mirror, but it came and went too quickly to note any features. We sat quietly, absorbing the atmosphere of the room.

Almost immediately, I began feeling chills, although no windows were open and there was no air conditioning on in the house. I wasn't even close to a window that might have had a slight draft, so it's difficult to explain the source of my goose bumps. I've mentioned in other columns that I am someone who is usually too hot and I seldom feel cold. At home, I keep the air conditioning at the temperature of a walk-in freezer and I've been known to run the fan in my office even in the dead of winter. I'm definitely not someone who reaches for a sweater as soon as the AC kicks on – and there was no air conditioning on in the Mudd House that night. The only time I ever remember experiencing chills for more than a few moments is during the course of some R.I.P. investigations, including this one.

After several minutes, the chills subsided somewhat and I mentioned that I was picking up a female and a feeling of sadness from her. Rene agreed and we later learned that Mrs. Mudd had experienced the loss of an eight month old baby. Rene explained that the woman in the room with us was very religious and somewhat upset at the activity in the house. She seemed to feel that attempting to communicate with spirits was not quite the right thing to do and kept emphasizing to Rene that "This is a Christian house."

At one point, Lead Investigator Mike attempted to join us and the spirit became even more agitated. Mike was unable to take more than a few steps into the room when he began experiencing a cold spot that seemed to block his way. Unfortunately, we had not brought all our equipment with us and lacked a temperature probe that could have helped provide hard evidence of any localized drop in temperature. For some reason – Mike later theorized it may have been because of his crew cut and his Army fatigues – the spirit in the room apparently took a dislike to him and wanted him out. Finally, the spirit seemed to accept Mike and we continued the session, eventually being joined by a younger woman. This second spirit seemed to like men better than women; in fact, Mike experienced his first "ghostly" touch from her. We were unable to get a name for this girl and no EVPs resulted from our initial session in the Children's Room.

OTHER EVENTS AND AN EVP

As R.I.P. investigators conducted EVP sessions in various rooms of the Mudd House, we were followed by the film crew. The crew reported continuing problems with battery drain – particularly in the Children's Room, the Booth Room (the room where John Wilkes Booth rested up for a while after Dr. Mudd set his leg), and the attic – even though they were careful to use only fresh batteries that had a full charge as they began filming. As we conducted another EVP session in the Children's Room, one of the tubes on our portable camping light went out, although this lamp had been in use only a few minutes and it also started out fully charged. Subsequent tests at home proved that the same portable light is working perfectly now.

We decided to visit the attic to attempt to re-create the "movement" that was previously observed. Several re-enactors dressed in Union uniforms accompanied us upstairs. Our theory was that, since the Mudds were Southern sympathizers, they might be stirred into action by the sight of strangers in Union uniforms invading their home. Rene felt there were several entities present with us in the attic, including a descendant of the Mudds who had lived in the house several decades after the Civil War and never knew Dr. Mudd personally. We experienced an object moving on its own, but assumed it was due to the vents when the heat came on. However, upon closer inspection, we realized that the vent was located on the other side and that the moving object was not in its path. We did not find any logical reason for the object to be moving.

We also held an EVP session in the Master Bedroom downstairs and Rene strongly sensed the presence of Dr. Mudd himself, but only for a very short time, as though he merely wanted to check in periodically.

At one point, Jim asked Mike to go upstairs to the Booth Room to adjust one of our four DVR cameras. It was in this room that Mike captured the lone EVP of the night but, of course, did not realize he had done so until he played back the recording at home. You can hear Mike ask if the camera placement is all right and Jim replies that it's perfect. Then Mike says, "I'll be chilling up here for a little while." Immediately afterwards, you can clearly hear someone welcome Mike by saying "Hello." This EVP will be included with the final episode, available on Ghost Channel TV (www.ghostchannel.tv) later this month.

Until then, check out this trailer for the second episode of "*The R.I.P. Files*." On behalf of R.I.P., I'd like to thank Danny Fluhart and the Board of Directors of the Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Society for a wonderful experience at this beautiful site. I'd also like to recognize the talents of a great group of Civil War re-enactors. The soldiers are portrayed by Ray Mishoe, Eddie Roberts, Andy Garcia, Bob Coble, Jeff French, Duane Whitlock, John Mumper, and West Mumper. Greg Hernandez, talented musician, is the fife maestro. Jimmy Robey did a great job as Dr. Mudd, while Jesse Morgan took the part of David Herold and Cliff Morgan was our John Wilkes Booth. Donna Peterson was Mrs. Mudd and Wynn Mishoe played the part of a Civil War lady.

For more information on visiting the Mudd House, call Danny Fluhart at 301-274-9358. The house is open for tours on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays and also welcomes visitors for special events throughout the year, including a wonderful "Victorian Christmas" celebration. Paranormal groups can also arrange to visit and conduct their own ghost hunt. The Mudd House is currently interviewing for volunteer tour guides/docents. Contact Danny for details. For more information on Civil War re-enactors and upcoming events, contact Ray Mishoe at csa1862@comcast.net.

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Karen Jewell says:

Patricia and Rene, It sounds like you really captured some great spirit activity. I have often read about spirit presences in civil war areas and wish that I could experience that. Since we don't have much civil war history here in Iowa, just a few houses in Clinton that were used for underground railroads, it's great that I can read about them on your website. Keep up the good work!
Also I was wondering if Rene's children have inherited any of his Psychic abilities? And I am looking forward to Rene's book. Any idea when it will be out?

April 2, 10:21 PM

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