

**Ghost Hunter's Guide
to
Indianapolis**

Ghost Hunter's Guide to Indianapolis

Lorri Sankowsky and Keri Young



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This book is dedicated to Danny, my unbelievably wonderful husband. Thanks for listening, thanks for laughing, and thanks for loving me, no matter what. Get up, slug!

Lorri Sankowsky

For Kayden, mon petit amour, and his extraordinary babysitter, without whom my stories would have never been told.

Keri Young

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Introduction

From long forgotten graveyards and crumbling historic buildings to modern skyscrapers and new housing developments, ghosts are everywhere and they are hot! Interest in the paranormal has skyrocketed, thanks to the Internet and newer technology that allows evidence to finally be captured and scientifically measured. Ghost hunting has gone mainstream, with wide acceptance and a large following. This new interest has spawned books, Web sites, ghost tours, movies, and television programs, all focused on the paranormal. The Travel Channel, Discovery Channel, and Sci Fi channel are airing more paranormal programs than ever before, and the major networks are following suit with shows such as *Ghost Whisperer*, *Supernatural*, and *Medium*.

“The interest in the paranormal is at an all-time high,” says Mark Mihalko, editorial director of *Haunted Times Magazine*. “Looking back, it seems like just yesterday we started *Haunted Times Magazine* with a production run of seven hundred issues. That was in October 2005. Now we have an international distributor and a production run in excess of eleven thousand issues and growing.”

The city of Indianapolis is known for the Motor Speedway, the 2007 Super Bowl Champion Indianapolis Colts, and as the amateur sports capital of the United States but there is a lot more to the Hoosier State. It has a heritage rich in Native American lore. Native Americans lived along the banks of the White River and Fall Creek and throughout the Indiana Territory. Generations of these spiritual people lived and died, their burial grounds forgotten, blanketed by modern society. Paranormal experts feel that Native American

spirits were so powerful that their energy is still present hundreds of years later, resulting in modern-day hauntings.

Interest in the paranormal is alive and well in the Circle City, as described by Nicole Kobrowski, founder of Historic Indiana Ghost Walks and Tours. “We started with tours a couple of times per month, and it has grown from there. Every year we have seen an increase in demand, and now we schedule our tours almost every weekend.” Kowbrowski agrees that Indianapolis is emerging as an exciting place to investigate and explore what awaits on the other side. “Many of our customers are coming to Indiana specifically for haunted vacations or getaways. I think for a city that doesn’t have the tourism base of Chicago or New Orleans, this has been fantastic!”

FROM INTERESTED BYSTANDERS TO PROFESSIONAL GHOST HUNTERS

We began our trek into the paranormal in 2001, when a combined interest in ghosts led us to a meeting of the Indiana Ghost Trackers (IGT). The IGT is a state-wide non-profit paranormal research group. Mike McDowell, president and CEO, formed the organization. “The Indiana Ghost Trackers started out with about twelve members in August of the year 2000, and it has grown to well over four hundred members. We have maintained this level since 2004, and we currently have twelve chapters all over the state with additional ones planned.”

After a few years as members and team leaders, we became codirectors of the Indianapolis Chapter of IGT, furthering our experiences in ghost hunting and investigating. As a result of the hundreds of haunted locations we have investigated, we have witnessed many types of paranormal phenomena. As more and more remarkable things happened to us, we began to discuss the possibility of a book and started researching and investigating on our own, spending many long weekends prowling through haunted buildings and cemeteries.

As we put together this book, we each wrote the chapters that we found the most compelling. Some of the locations we feature were

very active, and we were able to gather evidence, but at others, we found little or no activity at all. Ghosts don't perform on command, and sometimes it takes many, many investigations to obtain significant results. In some instances, names in this book have been changed or first names given only to protect confidentiality.

GHOST HUNTING EQUIPMENT

Investigating the paranormal is not an exact science, although equipment does exist that can help prove or disprove ghostly activity. The word "equipment" can mean different things to different people. A scientific person may use the latest gadgets on the market, scoffing at anything that doesn't have dials and laser beams. A spiritual person may prefer a ouija board or a pendulum instead of meters and gauges. We have tried to find an equal balance between the scientific and spiritual extremes and have used a variety of methods in our investigations. We feel that all methods have merits, and you should follow your personal preference.

GHOST PHOTOGRAPHY

There are two things that we never leave the house without, one of which is a digital camera. Entire books on ghost photography exist, and everyone seems to have a strong opinion about it. Major feuds seem to erupt whenever anyone discusses the believability of orbs and/or capturing spirits on film. We have read these various opinions and have decided to draw upon our own experiences as a guideline. There are several well-known and verbose ghost hunters out there who will undoubtedly disagree with us, cite facts and figures, and denounce us as professionals. We can live with that.

What we know is this: Orbs do appear in haunted locations without any explanation, as do mists, shadows, and zigzags of light. Another fact: Neither of us had ever photographed orbs before we began ghost hunting. Piles and piles of family photographs exist, taken with several kinds of cameras, and not one of them has an orb in it prior to 2001. We are comfortable in our belief in orbs as paranormal evidence in spite of the arguments to the contrary. Unless



An orb captured in daylight at Mounds State Park, Anderson, Indiana

otherwise indicated, all photographs in this book were taken by us.

To properly discuss orbs in ghost photography, we should explain what an orb is. An orb is a ball of light, rarely seen by the naked eye but captured on film. Spiritual energy, left behind when the physical body expires, often takes the form least resistant in nature, a sphere or orb. We have used digital media, 35 mm film, and even disposable cameras, and all have successfully photographed orbs. Orbs can vary in size and color; most of them appear as pale gray but sometimes blue, yellow, and even red. They normally appear as three dimensional and have a nucleus, occasionally resembling a human face. Most often they appear at night but not always, as evidenced by Keri's daytime orb captured at Mounds State Park in Anderson, Indiana.

The problem with orbs is that so many things can appear to be a paranormal orb, but really aren't. The main culprit is dust. A lot of haunted locations are old and not frequently disturbed. An inexperienced ghost hunter might enter such an area, oblivious to the dust and dirt that have suddenly been stirred up, and fall over faint when viewing the thousands of so-called orbs that appear in the digital



A green mist photographed on the Gettysburg battlefield in Pennsylvania

camera's viewfinder. Rain can also appear as orbs in photos, as can bugs, sunspots, and lint.

Another anomaly that can be captured with a photograph is called a vortex. A vortex is a swoosh of light, usually white, that inexplicably appears in a photograph. It usually has a curve and is wider at one end, but not always. Most people feel that a vortex is a direct, active passageway that spirits use to travel from this world to the other side. Psychics can often detect a vortex because of the large amount of psychic energy that is present. Catching one on film is a bit trickier; these photos are rarer than orb photos.

One of the most elusive types of photographic evidence is a mist. An unexplained mist taken at an otherwise clear location is very exciting. A mist normally appears white, as if white smoke had floated in front of your camera. Rarely, a mist will be a color. In the photograph above, the mist was an eerie green. This photo was taken at the Devil's Triangle on the Gettysburg battlefield. The white spots are rain.

All photos of mists must be looked at with a critical eye. A mist is one of the easiest things to inadvertently create. Cigarette smoke that

is not visible to the naked eye will photograph as a mist, as will fog, exhaled breath during cold weather, and humidity in hot weather. A big cloud of dust from something as common as a dirt road may photograph as an unexplained mist.

The last and most unusual type of ghost photography is an apparition. An apparition is either a face or figure of a ghost. Most of the time, features are fuzzy or nonexistent but the shape is unmistakable. We have been ghost hunting for several years and have never captured an apparition. Not that we haven't tried! It is just that rare to have an apparition make an appearance and even less likely that it would stick around long enough to be photographed.

We mention digital cameras throughout this book many times, however a digital camera is not required to capture orbs. The advantage to using a digital is that the results are instantaneous and you will have a better idea if you are in an active area. A lot of ghost hunters use a digital camera first and then back it up with a 35 mm camera. This allows them to have negatives of their pictures and prevents spending money on developing rolls and rolls of film. We have taken hundreds, if not thousands, of photos that have had no paranormal evidence at all so a digital camera is a wise, but not required, investment.

ELECTRONIC VOICE PHENOMENON

The other item that we always have close at hand is an audio tape recorder. The tape recorder serves two purposes. The first one is mundane; we record ghost stories and interviews so we don't have to take notes. The second reason is much more interesting and involves some of the most mysterious, enigmatic, and sometimes frightening evidence of paranormal activity that we have ever experienced. It is called Electronic Voice Phenomenon, or EVP. It's a long name for what amounts to ghosts on tape. If a spirit has enough energy, it is able to make an imprint on audio tape, resulting in words, moans, sighs, and sometimes complete sentences. Usually this is not heard at the time it is recorded and is not discovered until the tape is played back. EVP can be captured on video cameras, digital recorders, and even answering machines. A dramatized example can be found in the Michael Keaton movie *White*

Noise, where a spirit not only manipulates sound but also the television signal.

We have never had an EVP as dramatic as what is shown in that movie, but we have recorded some very interesting things. Because a spirit is disembodied, it doesn't have a lot of energy. Most of the EVP that we record is barely audible, lots of sighs and whispers, but occasionally we get something fairly startling. We can't stress enough how exciting it is to record a voice from the other side. It is truly the most fascinating evidence we have yet to find.

SCIENTIFIC GHOST-HUNTING TOOLS

Newer and more efficient ghost-hunting equipment is constantly being developed. What we consider cutting edge now will most likely be obsolete in a few years. The equipment that we use is considered standard. Anyone who has watched a paranormal-themed television program knows that much more sophisticated and expensive gadgets are already being implemented; however, we don't have the luxury of an unlimited expense account. The following items are accessible to almost everyone and have been sufficient for our needs over the years. They are certainly not required but do make investigations more scientifically reliable.

An infrared (IR) thermometer. An easy-to-read thermometer that measures temperature fluctuations, instantly substantiating a hot or cold spot.

Electromagnetic field detector or EMF meter. A hand-held device that can indicate when there is a fluctuation in the electromagnetic field. It is thought that in the presence of a spirit, the electromagnetic field is disrupted. Escalating readings on the meter indicate the possible presence of a spirit.

TriField natural EM meter. A TriField natural meter detects changes in electric and magnetic energy. If a change in energy is detected, the meter will begin beeping and the needle in the range window will signal the intensity of the energy detected. It is more sensitive than an EMF meter and, therefore, more costly.

Motion detectors. Motion detectors emit a signal when they sense movement in an area, even by unseen entities.

Compass. A compass can detect changes in magnetic energy. This is an inexpensive tool, perfect for a novice ghost hunter.

NONSCIENTIFIC GHOST-HUNTING TOOLS

A sixth sense can be an invaluable tool when ghost hunting. Psychics and sensitives have been able to develop this sense, however everyone possesses some kind of psychic ability. The tools below can be used by anyone who has an open mind and is willing to accept psychic evidence.

Dowsing rods. Dowsing rods have been used for centuries for divining water sources, unmarked graves, and ghosts. Two *L*-shaped rods are held perpendicular to the ground. When they cross or point in one direction, it's an indication of where a spirit or energy might be.

Pendulum. A pendulum is an object, usually a crystal, that is attached to a string or lightweight chain. Its movement can be used to answer questions or point to areas of spiritual energy.

Ouija board. A board and planchette device used to communicate with the spirit world. The user asks questions out loud while lightly touching the planchette. The planchette moves over the board, pointing to letters and eventually spelling out words. Some ghost hunters do not recommend using a ouija board in investigations. Often the spirit who has been contacted is not who or what it appears to be.

Although this book was years of hard work in the making, we have had a lot of fun getting it done. We've met interesting people and experienced unbelievable things along the way. We have presented the ghost stories and folklore to the best of our abilities, however their very nature prevents us from authenticating their veracity. On the other hand, the investigations and experiences directly related by us are nonfictional. We hope your interest is piqued by these pages and you'll want to continue to learn more about the paranormal. Our sincerest wish is that you enjoy reading about ghosts as much as we like hunting for them. Happy hunting!

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