

An Evening in Springfield's Haunted Castle

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With its daunting stairway leading to the porch and the massive tower, Pythian Castle has the look of something right out of an old horror movie. Owner Tamara Finocchiaro said several things that have happened inside the castle has made some people feel the same way. Reports of cold spots, doors slamming, whistling, and even singing have become part of her daily life since moving from California.

The Arkansas Paranormal and Anomalous Studies Team (ARPAST) recently set out to take a look at Pythian Castle and the events Finocchiaro and several others have experienced.

“When we were up in the tower room, I was using the FLIR to scan a small Victorian sitting couch,” Tiffany Pressler co-founder and vice president of ARPAST said. “I noticed there were two distinct cold spots located on one end of the couch. I touched each of the cold spot locations. The heat from my handprint registered on the camera. “Within minutes, the cold spots began to reappear and bleed through the heat signature of my hand. This happened repeatedly. We could find no explanation in the room for the appearance of the cold spots in those two specific locations.”

President of ARPAST Larry Flaxman and his team set up infrared video cameras in the basement, theater, tower, and a bedroom at the castle. They hoped to catch any movement or lights while no one was around.

“Normally we like to map a place out, but this space is so big we will just have to do the best we can,” Flaxman said.

The history of Pythian Castle could be part of the reason people believe something unnatural resides there. The castle was first an orphanage in 1913. It was later bought by the military for use as a recreational facility, and was later used to house Japanese prisoners of war.

Running around inside a huge castle with such a diverse history might make some people terrified, but Pressler said she has seen many unexplainable things in her research and never felt afraid or threatened.

“One of the most active places I've been with ARPAST is a famous hospital located in Northwest Arkansas,” she said. “On our FLIR thermal imaging camera, we captured a figure walk out of a brick wall and back into it. Moments later, we heard disembodied screams come from the same area in the building.”

Pressler said she also saw a 6ft, 230 lb man try to open a metal drawer, which was wedged halfway open. She said he was unable to open it because it was rusted into position.

“As soon as this person walked out of the room, that drawer launched itself across the room and hit a wall nearly 15 feet opposite,” she said.

“I’m absolutely a full-fledged skeptic and a believer. Do I believe that there are deceased human beings who communicate and/or interact with the living? Absolutely. Do I think that every knock, bang, bump, voice, or other “spooky” event is paranormal? Absolutely not.”

Suzanne Weaver and her mom Jackie came from Dallas to join in on the investigation at Pythian Castle. They sat in the tower with a small electromagnetic field reader and a digital voice recorder hoping to register some kind of EMF change or capture electronic voice phenomena. The idea behind the recorder is to place it in the room and ask questions clearly without whispering.

“If you whisper it can be mistaken for a spirit when it was really just someone you are talking with,” Suzanne Weaver said.

Her mom starts the questions. “Is there anyone here? Are you a boy or a girl? Does it bother you that we are here?” she asked. While no responses were heard the point of the recorder is to hear what you get when you play it back.

“Pythian Castle proved to be a very effective investigation for ARPAST,” Tiffany Pressler co-founder and Vice President of ARPAST said. “Most of our investigators had various personal experiences at the castle including sense of presence, voices, music, various noises, and seeing a black figure.”