

Wholly Ghost: Paranormal society investigates Fort Lupton's St. John building

The Fort Lupton Press wrote up an [article](#) on our investigation of [Wholly Stromboli](#) in the St. John building in Fort Lupton.

Richard Estep comments on the article:

I feel that an inaccuracy in this article needs to be corrected. I did not state that "this is the first time in the group's history we have walked away from an investigation and not used the words, 'There is nothing paranormal at this location'" or words to that effect. As a team, BCPRS has witnessed a very limited number of small but compelling events (some captured as evidence, some not) that appear to be paranormal in origin. My actual statement to the client was, "this is the first time in a very long time that I have not used those words..." With that one exception, I feel that the article is very fair and well-written.

Regarding the use of "psychics, sensitives," etc. I am on record as stating that I do not find claims of sensitivity to be particularly compelling in the vast majority of cases. However, I AM willing to involve individuals who make claims of psychic sensitivity in certain investigations. If they provide information that cannot be gained through other "normal" sources, which can then be independently verified by myself or my team, I would be willing to submit that as evidence for peer review. To date, this claim has not been fulfilled to my satisfaction. However, I believe the very few "sensitives" that BCPRS involves in our investigations to be people of the highest integrity, and will give them the opportunity to test their claims on further cases. I appreciate their time, effort, and involvement. Should they fulfill our criteria for providing information successfully, I will be delighted. This has not yet happened, however, and I remain unconvinced that it ever will.

FORT LUPTON — Forks flying off of customer's tables. Pictures coming off walls. Ghostly touches. Disembodied voices in the night.

These are just a handful of the strange occurrences reported within the walls of Fort Lupton's St. John building over the past 13 months, since the opening of Wholly Stromboli last November. Owner Melissa Rickman, a veteran of several paranormal experiences in the restaurant, said things started to seem unusual during renovation of the building, when hardware or tools would come up missing, and contractors hungry for work on portions of the restaurant work would drop their bids and leave, vowing not to return.

"Mostly in the beginning it was things disappearing, you'd set something down and go back for it five

minutes later and it was gone,” Rickman said. “We started getting at each other over it, but we quickly realized it wasn’t any of us. Things flying off tables and crashing to the floor. We had a pair of computer speakers come unplugged and wind up on the floor.”

Things came to a head when kitchen staff witnessed an entire stack of pans sail off the edge of a countertop, scattering across the floor. Worse yet, the customers began to notice strange things, reporting them to the wait staff, and prompting rumors that a spirit was up to mischief in the restaurant. According to Rickman, these are just the antics of a paranormal entity she and the employees call ‘Edgar,’ after the late Edgar St. John, early owner and renovator of the St. John, with whom Rickman shares a birth date.

Looking for some answers, Rickman opened the doors late in the evening of Dec. 16 to professional help in the form of The Boulder County Paranormal Research Society. The BCPRS is a volunteer cadre of researchers viewing paranormal activity strictly from a scientific viewpoint, looking more for substance than spirits, more hard evidence than ectoplasm. That’s not to say they don’t welcome nontraditional methods; on the night the society investigated the St. John, a pair of ‘sensitives’ accompanied them from a sister society that utilizes psychic help.

The BCPRS staff, a tech-heavy assortment of IT professionals, engineers and technicians, take a focused, businesslike approach to their research, arriving at the appointed time, equipment in tow, ready to operate. After a series of interviews with witnesses to the alleged paranormal activity(s), the team sets up their gear, mapping out the location, obtaining temperature and electrical interference baselines and setting up audio and frequency scanning devices to monitor specific areas. The team attempts to recreate, by normal means, the reported paranormal occurrences, checking for drafts, unbalanced doors, unusual sound sources, machinery noise and potential sources of electrical disturbances.

“We attempt to gather evidence,” said Richard Estep, director and co-founder of BCPRS. “There has been a lot of debate over what constitutes evidence. I think most teams will tell you that they do gather as much evidence as possible, but what truly constitutes evidence means something very different if you have any sort of scientific training.”

“The way science works, is if you are going to propose a huge modification, you better have something very impressive to back it up,” Estep explained. “The onus is not upon the public, or science, it’s upon the investigator making the claims to offer that extraordinary evidence. That’s what we are trying to gather, as opposed to ‘I am seeing a man, in a long dark coat, etc, etc.’ That’s not evidence, that’s fantasy.”

“It takes a different perspective to really enjoy this,” said investigator Kira Woodmansee, of the nights spent in lonely buildings, hoping for a glance of something beyond the pale.

“But you get to see interesting places in a way that most people don’t,” Woodmansee added. “Closed city buildings, schools, landmarks, all after hours, in a completely different light. It takes a lot of

caffeine and sugar, and some very long nights, 99 percent of which are boring.”

What did the society find, in the way of objective evidence?

That’s open to interpretation, and only after a careful analysis, which can take weeks, according to team leader Estep.

“Very, very, very rarely,” Estep said, of the times he has hit upon evidence outside the realm of plausibility. “I can count on one hand in a 17-year career the number of times I have.”

Despite the long odds, this investigation uncovered some promising leads, recounted by BCPRS investigator Lucilla Giron after the evening spent in Wholly Stromboli.

“My director, Richard, and a lot of our team members concluded that there is definitely something paranormal,” BCPRS investigator Lucilla Giron said. “In fact, Richard said this is the first time in the group’s history that he has walked away from an investigation and not used the words ‘There is nothing paranormal at that location.’ It is interesting, and we are going to do another follow up at that location as early as January.”

In addition, a psychic investigating with the group gave Rickman reason to believe there is more going on in the restaurant than meets the eye.

“She would ask some questions, and there were some crashing noises,” Rickman said, of Robin, an ‘empath’ who accompanied the BCPRS. “She started asking questions in the coal room, and I personally was overcome with great sadness. I became very, very sad and began crying. The woman who was in charge of our little group is from Arizona, so she didn’t know anything about the St. John building or Fort Lupton’s history, and she is a psychic. She said she saw a lady standing behind me and she told her that she was sad.”

According to Rickman, the psychic felt the spirit relaying her sadness through Rickman, and the image was of a daughter who had died at a young age.

“Which is very true, because the St. John’s had a daughter, Julia, who died when she was seven,” Rickman said.

It wasn’t the first time paranormal investigators have taken a look into the misty side of Wholly Stromboli. About a month ago, another group investigated the building with surprising results, according to Rickman.

“We had some very interesting things happen,” Rickman said. “We heard a voice. There is a room downstairs, the coal room, where we keep a lot of hardware, screws, bolts, stuff like that. Things were getting flicked off the shelves and hitting the ground, and they actually witnessed this.”

The voice took on a new meaning with a little further investigation on the part of Rickman.

“It sounded like it said ‘Haley,’ or ‘Halley,’ or ‘Nelly,’ and we couldn’t really make it out, and we came back upstairs, and we were pretty blown away,” Rickman said. “We have a picture in the bar of Edgar St. John and his family, and I was showing it to one of the investigators. Well, I picked up the picture frame, and it falls apart. At the bottom of the picture, there were names, Edgar; his son Patrick; his wife, Patricia; and his daughter, Nellie.

“Then we were all like, “Oh my gosh, really?””

For more information on the Boulder County Paranormal Society, visit them online at

<http://bouldercountyparanormal.org>.

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