

# Rooms with a boo

## Walk the hallways of Prospect Place — if you dare

By RICH WARREN

If you're a fan of haunted houses, you owe it to yourself to pay a call on Prospect Place, a macabre mansion in Trinway, a little town just outside Dresden in Muskingum County. It's reputedly one of the most ghostly houses in Ohio, and just the experience of driving up to it on the long driveway stretching from the main road may creep you out — the architecture alone practically screams "haunted house." In the true spirit of "investigative journalism," I decided to check out the place for myself and can attest to some truly spooky experiences on the premises.

My first visit last winter couldn't possibly

have had a more perfectly eerie beginning. Stepping out of the car under the light of the full moon, I was greeted simultaneously by a black cat running up to me and the door opening and a man saying to me "Hello, I'm George Adams." OK, in the old television series, the Addams family had two D's in their name, but this was close enough.

George is a descendant of the original builder of the mansion who erected it back in 1856. At the time, the Adamses were wealthy, highly influential people who built an opulent mansion in the center of what once was thousands of acres of their prosperous farmland. Over time, the house passed on to other owners and fell into disrepair and finally was abandoned. On the verge of completely falling apart, the mansion was saved by the late Dave Longaberger of the Longaberger Company, who was a big supporter of his local community.

After Longaberger's death in 1999, the house was sold back to George, who is determined some day to restore it to its former splendor and to establish it as an educational center, teaching schoolchildren and other visitors about 19th century life, the Under-

ground Railroad and other historical ties to the house. Although much restoration already has taken place, much work remains — evidence of decades of decay is everywhere throughout the house, adding to its haunted ambiance.

During last winter's trip, I was taken on a personal tour through the mansion by George's friend, Randy Mullinex, who regularly runs "ghost hunts" through the place. I didn't expect to hunt up any ghosts of my own, and maybe I didn't — perhaps what I saw that evening was just a trick of the eye. Explaining that the spectral figures inside the house frequently show up on photographs, Randy took me down to the basement, one of the prime hot spots for ghostly movements. He warned me that the spirits there are known to touch visitors,

sometimes even to pull their hair. Other times they whisper your name in your ear.

None of those things happened to me, but something else did. Randy had me and my brother, who accompanied me, sit in chairs at one end of the basement, which has lots of little alcoves and rooms flanking a very long central corridor. Randy stood at the other end and explained he was going to take some photos after he turned off the lights.

In the almost total darkness, when the flash of the camera went off the first time, I saw during that split second a large black figure standing between him and us. No one else saw it, it wasn't there in any of the flashes that followed, and it didn't appear in any of the photographs. So was it a trick of the eye? I figured it probably was, but that it still gave me a good story to tell.

This summer I resolved to go back for one of Randy's regular ghost hunts. Accompanying me was my friend Ann, whom you may remember as my "Amish bride" (see our August issue). We reckoned that we probably would share a few nervous laughs as we paraded through the place by flashlight. We got far



The setting sun puts a rosy glow on Prospect Place. Ann is holding Wintnitz, a black cat who befriended us.

more than we bargained for.

The tours begin with a walk through the house, giving some of its history and focusing on the most active spirit locations — the third floor ballroom directly under the house's magnificent cupola, a large brick barn just out back and — of course — the spectacularly creepy basement. I'd already read up on some of the house's legends and knew that it supposedly is teeming with restless spirits. Legend has it that a train wreck occurred nearby, and the horribly burned victims were brought to the house to be nursed in — where else? — the basement, where many of them expired. Randy has been unable to find documentation of this train wreck in local newspapers.

Another legend tells of a little servant girl who fell out an upstairs window in a feverish delirium and was killed. It was winter and the ground was too frozen to bury her, so her body was kept on ice until spring down in — you guessed it — the basement. Before the Civil War, a bounty hunter searching for runaway slaves supposedly was hanged in the loft of the barn. And up in the ballroom the spirits of children seem to have the run of the place — startled visitors report seeing a ball that's kept up there being kicked around by invisible feet.

You'll hear all these stories and more as you are led through the place, and you'll be shown a video where, clear as day, a ghostly figure can be seen striding through the barn. Then you get the privilege of being unleashed on your own to explore wherever you like — in the dark. As a prelude, our group of 12 or so was led down to the basement, where we were invited to just sit there after the lights were off and commune with the spirits. I planted myself in the spot where I had seen the large black figure last winter. Ann elected to sit in the little alcove where the little servant girl had lain on ice.

The lights went off, and after a few moments, I thought I saw some movement at the far end of the basement, where there was a tiny bit of light. I decided to stare fixedly at that end, and sure enough, the shadows down there were moving. They weren't taking on any form that I could tell, but they definitely were in motion. Not one to keep things to myself, I cried out "Look at that!" I felt motion right beside me and figured it was Ann coming to take a look. When I heard her voice back in the alcove where she was sitting, I knew no one — at least no one living — had just moved beside me.

Was it my own hyperactive imagination at work,

combined with some aging eyesight? Whatever the explanation, this was just the beginning of a number of occurrences throughout the evening. Out in the barn, Ann felt a sense of motion beside her similar to the one I'd had in the basement. Up in the ballroom, she shrieked when she heard little feet scurrying beside her. In an upstairs hallway, clear as day I saw a series of bouncing lights, kind of like Tinkerbell in "Peter Pan." Ever the skeptic, I'm willing to admit that all of these occurrences might have natural explanations or could be blamed on the power of the imagination. Except for one.

Not surprisingly, that event, the creepiest of the evening, took place in the basement. As the other ghost hunters fanned out throughout the house, Ann and I went down to the basement and planted ourselves in the dark in the same chairs where my brother and I had sat last winter. We waited in silence. After a few minutes, I saw something that made my jaw drop. I literally could not believe my eyes. Just then, Ann shrieked "Do you see THAT???" We turned on our flashlight and it disappeared. I questioned her without telling her what I had seen, asking for details. Sure enough, she had seen exactly the same thing I had — a large billowing black cloud moving toward us from the far end of the basement.

So.....can two people "imagine" the same thing at the same time? Can they have the same trick of the eye at the same time? Why did the cloud disappear when we trained the flashlight on it? Minds more scientific than ours might devise some explanations, but at that point we weren't interested in explanations. We were just interested in getting out of there — and we did.

I won't say that I'll never return to Prospect Place. I promise you, though, I will not return to that basement alone. And I think I prefer that the lights be left on. □

Rich Warren is managing editor of Country Living.

As you might suspect, most of Prospect Place's ghost hunts

for October already are fully booked, but you can enjoy a good fright there in November and other months of the year by calling 740-754-4314 or by sending an e-mail to [info@ohioghosthunt.com](mailto:info@ohioghosthunt.com). Call or check out their website at [www.ohioghosthunt.com](http://www.ohioghosthunt.com) for details of dates and times. If you just would like a tour through the house, you can join one at hourly intervals starting at 8 p.m. and lasting through the witching hour — midnight — on Oct. 28 and 29. Prospect Place is located on Main Street in Trinway, just half a mile north of Dresden. Driving directions are located on the website. Believe me, if you find Trinway, you can't miss Prospect Place.



A fellow ghost hunter caught these "energy streaks," supposedly spirits in motion, outside Prospect Place's front door. (Photo by Megan Jones)