



GARDEN STATE PARANORMAL RESEARCH

1 WINDEMERE ROAD
VERONA, NJ 07044
201-417-9403

November 22, 2007

GSPR

WWW.GSPARANORMAL.COM

MARK BYLANCIK
- FOUNDER & LEAD
INVESTIGATOR

JOHN BYLANCIK
- LEAD INVESTIGATOR &
TECHNICAL SUPERVISOR

Report of Findings
Eastern State Penitentiary Training Investigation
November 10-11, 2007
Submission copy for NJGHS
Supplemental to GSPR Investigation Report.

Submitted by John Bylancik

History and Paranormal Activity Reportings

Described by Eastern State Penitentiary's Historical Guide Jesse Sarnoff as "a preserved ruin", Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, PA remains standing today due to the work of the Eastern State Penitentiary's Historic Site, Inc. who lobbied to have the site preserved in 1998.

What they have preserved is nothing less than the most significant physical structure in the history of the US prison system. When construction began in 1822, the groundbreaking was the culmination of concepts of prison reform which dated back to 1777 when the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons was founded, a group which would soon include Benjamin Franklin among other dignitaries of the time.(1) Their collective goal was to improve the current jail system's wretched conditions which were in place at the time. The Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia was one example of the current jails where "old and young, black and white, men and women were all crowded together" (2).

Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP) was constructed as a "cure" for the problematic conditions of current jails. The thought behind this "Pennsylvania System" of incarceration, one where true penitence could be achieved (the source of the word penitentiary), was that if prisoners were kept in complete silence and isolation, with only work and time to reflect on their crimes to occupy the day, then the prisoners would truly see the errors of their ways and repent and be able to rejoin society. (3)

The principles of the penitentiary system—silence, solitude, surveillance, and anonymity—were incorporated into the architectural plan. Eastern State was designed by John Haviland, a young architect, who proposed a hub-and-spokes model that allowed for

constant surveillance. Inmates were housed in 8-by-12-foot cells arranged along a series of cellblocks radiating out from a central observation tower.

Each prisoner remained in his cell at all times, save for a brief daily exercise period held in an individual pen adjoining each cell. Prisoners ate their meals in their cells and did small-scale prison labor there like shoemaking. On the rare occasions when prisoners were allowed to leave their cells, they were prevented from interacting with other prisoners by hoods they were forced to wear to protect their anonymity. They were also forced to use numbers instead of names for the same reason. Silence was maintained at all times in the prison, and reading the Bible was the only activity other than labor that was permitted. Reformers believed that cutting inmates off from the world would foster meditation that would lead to rehabilitation, so visits from family or friends were prohibited. On average, inmates spent two to four years alone in their cells, underneath a single round skylight, known in the prison as the "eye of God."(4)

The awful truth of the matter is that the severe isolation and punishment systems employed at ESP resulted not in reformation, but in madness for many prisoners.

Like any structure that witnessed the degree of suffering, violence and death that has taken place within its walls, ESP has been reported as the sight of paranormal activity since prison locksmith Gary Johnson's brush with ghosts. Johnson was changing the locks when the prison was being converted into a tourist attraction. While working with one of the old locks, he saw several ghosts and felt a cold hand reaching into his body. Johnson said he was almost certain that the ghosts were going to kill him. (5)

Visitors have also seen the ghost of Joseph Taylor. Taylor bludgeoned an overseer named Michael Duran to death in 1884. After the horrific crime, Taylor calmly reentered his cell and went to sleep. Some people believe Taylor's ghost still roams the prison's dilapidated hallowed halls. Another of the penitentiary's most frequently seen spirits is a ghost that stands high above the prison walls in a guard tower.

Additional reports of activity include moaning, laughing, and strange banging noises. This reported haunting activity includes: (6)

- * A shadow-like figure that scoots quickly away when approached.
- * A figure that stands in the guard tower.
- * An evil cackling reportedly comes from cellblock 12.
- * In cellblock 6, another shadowy figure has been seen sliding down the wall.
- * Mysterious, ghostly faces are said to appear in cellblock 4.

One recent story which has not yet been published anywhere except here involves the sighting of a small boy reportedly "dressed funny standing next to barrels" down the end of cellblock 2; viewed from the rotunda. This report was made by a 8 or 9 year old girl on the public tour. This was reported to her mother, who reported it to the ESP guide. There was no one found in that end of the cellblock. (7)

Investigation

We arrived at the location at 10 p.m. and were shown in by ESP guide Jesse Sarnoff. Training began about 10:20 and lasted about an hour in the central rotunda. At one point during the discussion, all of the trainees turned and looked down cellblock 4 simultaneously, as we all heard a loud banging sound.

Around 11:30 we began our investigation tour. We began in CB 12, 3rd floor. Halfway down the gangway on the right side I stopped and entered a cell that felt particularly compelling. I took EMF and temperature readings, both unremarkable. I took a video sweep of the cell which later revealed an EVP candidate, the recording of which is submitted with this report.

The Olympus digital audio recorder was left in the shower room, and was later examined and revealed nothing unusual.

The investigation continued throughout cellblocks 1,2,4,13,15,7. Video and audio recordings were made at several locations along the tour. Outside of CB 4, in the area where the locksmith reporting his encounter, temperature readings were taken, but nothing above the baseline, which was in the low 40 degree F. range. An EMF sweep was also unremarkable. Digital photographs were taken throughout the entire tour. A total of 105 pictures were taken. Several displayed spot reflections (orbs) and were dismissed as light/flash refractions.

Final examination of the remaining 50 minutes of video and 3:45 of audio recordings were unremarkable.

Findings

The findings submitted with this report is a single video clip of 10 seconds which contains a suspect EVP saying “oh my god”. This was taken in a cell on the 3rd floor of Cellblock 12 at 11:40 pm.

Sources:

- (1) Eastern State Penitentiary Historical Site, Inc..
- (2) Legal Affairs.org January|February 2003
http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/January-February-2003/review_brook_janfeb2003.msp
- (3, 4) “A History of Hard Time Solitary confinement, then and now.
By Daniel Brook
- (5) Discovery Channel: ESP <http://travel.discovery.com/ideas/haunted-travel/mysterious-journeys/eastern-state-penitentiary.html>
- (6) Paranormal.about.com: Eastern State Penitentiary:**
<http://paranormal.about.com/od/hauntedplaces/ig/World-s-Most-Haunted-Place/Eastern-State-Penitentiary.htm>
- (7) Interview and conversation with ESP Guide Jesse Sarnoff. Nov. 11, 2007