Un-Living History: Programming, Interpretation, and Management at Haunted Historic Sites

by

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Abstract

Using employee interviews and a variety of other primary and secondary sources, this thesis examines ten historic sites throughout the southeast that are considered haunted in order to explore the advantages and disadvantages of using ghost stories, ghost programming, and paranormal investigators at historic sites. The paper explores how history and popular culture, visitor questions, and employee beliefs in the supernatural affect historic sites. The ten sites serve as examples that demonstrate how historic site managers must consider the risks involved in telling ghost stories, holding events, or allowing paranormal investigators. For some sites, the risks may outweigh the benefits. Since every historic site is different, managers should evaluate the risks and benefits and make decisions based on the institution's mission, values, and history. Regardless of these decisions, managers and interpreters should be sensitive to the diversity of visitor and employee beliefs about the supernatural at haunted sites. Managers should also provide interpreters with written guidance for handling visitor questions about ghost stories. This paper argues that, while not suitable for all sites, utilizing ghost stories associated with a historic site can achieve the goals and further the mission of an institution as appropriately and effectively as other types of programming.

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Introduction

> In 1814, tragedy strikes again [at the home of John and Margaretta Brown.] Margaretta's brother writes back to New York about Margaretta: "The loss of Euphemia [her daughter] was a blow that felled her. She has pined til she has grown thinner than before her marriage. Grief has impaired her strength and furrowed her face so that she has the appearance of young old age. Mr. Brown himself even to this hour is almost un-mend by it.' Margaretta's beloved aunt comes to visit her from New York. But shortly after her arrival, she dies, bringing more grief to Liberty Hall. There is a family story that the aunt's ghost still haunts this room where she passed away. Dressed in her gray travelling clothes she is known as the Gray Lady of Liberty Hall.[1]

John Brown became one of Kentucky's first United States senators in 1792 and served until 1805. In 1801, he and his wife Margaretta moved into the home that he built for them called Liberty Hall. Today, Liberty Hall Historic Site is a National Historic Landmark open to the public for tours. Visitors can view a video before the tour that tells about the house and family and includes the above story. The story originated from Mary Mason Scott who was the great-granddaughter of Margaretta Brown. Mary was a Spiritualist, a believer in communication with the dead. She lived at Liberty Hall and awoke one night to see a gray figure whom she referred to as "our beloved ghost."[2] At Liberty Hall staff use the story in the documentary and also in their tours. Like the Gray Lady, there are many ghost stories associated with historic sites. Many historic site managers and their staff struggle to find guidance on handling their ghost stories since many stories blend the lines between belief and disbelief, entertainment and education, and past and present.

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[1] Nell Cox, *John and Margaretta Brown and Liberty Hall of Kentucky*, DVD-ROM, (Frankfort, KY: Nell Cox Films, Inc., 2001).

[2] Former Director, Liberty Hall. "The Gray Lady and the Woman Behind the Story," (lecture notes, *Hunger for History Lunch Time Series,* Frankfort, KY, October 18, 2006).

Even though the story of the Gray Lady originated in the late nineteenth century, the

story of the Gray Lady is retold today and well known by many in the local community. As

evidenced by the story of the Gray Lady, telling ghost stories is not an antiquated remnant of a

superstitious, irrational past.[3] Instead, ghost stories inform our contemporary culture as

evidenced by the popularity of television shows such as the SyFy Channel's *Ghost Hunters;*

Travel Channel's *Ghost Adventures* and *Most Haunted*; and A&E's *Paranormal State*; as well as

literature such as Kathryn Tucker Wyndham's *13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey*.[4] According to a

Baylor Survey from 2005, approximately 37% of Americans believe that "places can be

haunted."[5] A 2005 Gallup Poll also confirmed over one-third of Americans believe that houses

can be haunted.[6] Ghost stories persist in modern culture as aspects of belief and interest; thus,

visitors ask questions about hauntings at historic sites. Additionally, staff at some sites utilize

their haunted reputation by hosting events while others feel ghost stories associated with their

site distract from their mission to preserve and interpret the past for the public. This thesis

explores the advantages and disadvantages of the practices and policies regarding ghost stories,

programs, and paranormal investigators at historic sites by drawing on interviews and surveys of

staff members from ten historic sites; participant-observations of two events; other primary

sources such as brochures, flyers, folklore collections, and newspaper articles; and secondary

literature from multiple disciplines including public history, museum studies, folklore, religious

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[3] William Lynwood Montell, *Ghosts Across Kentucky* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), xvi; James McCormick and Macy Wyatt, *Ghosts of the Bluegrass* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 6. These folklorists have collected numerous personal accounts from people who believe in ghosts. Gillian Bennett discusses the "evolutionary assumption" of scholars who dismiss supernatural beliefs because they believe society moves from a supernatural to a material or rational worldview. Gillian Bennett, *Alas, Poor Ghost! Traditions of Belief in Story and Discourse* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999), 6.
[4] Kathryn Tucker Windham and Margaret Gillis Figh, *13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1969).
[5] Rodney Stark, *What Americans Really Believe: New Findings from the Baylor Surveys of Religion* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008), 126.
[6] Linda Lyons, "One-Third of Americans Believe Dearly Departed may not have Departed, July 12, 2005," *Gallup*, http://www.gallup.com/poll/17275/onethird-americans-believe-dearly-may-departed.aspx (accessed April 7, 2012).

studies, sociology, and psychology, among others.[7] These sites exemplify how historic site

managers must consider the risks involved in telling ghost stories, holding events, or allowing

paranormal investigators. For some sites, the risks may outweigh the benefits. However,

utilizing the ghost stories associated with a historic site has the potential to achieve the goals and

further the mission of an institution as appropriately and effectively as other types of

programming.

Before exploring these policies, the terminology demands definition and explanation for

use in this work. "Supernatural," according to Merriam-Webster, originated in the fifteenth

century and refers to events that have seemingly no natural explanations and are often believed

to result from ghosts.   "Paranormal," a newer term that originated circa 1920, literally means

"not scientifically explainable."[8] "Supernatural" and "paranormal" will be used

interchangeably.[9] "Ghosts" are generally defined as spirits of the dead that reveal their presence

among the living. [10] Owen Davies defines ghosts as "the manifestation of the souls of the dead

before the living."[11] Some people believe, on the other hand, that ghosts are not actual souls or

spirits of the dead, but instead are left over energy from the past that can manifest itself in the

present.[12] Similarly, there are multiple synonyms for ghost with subtle differences in meaning,

including apparition, spirit, and specter. "Apparition," for instance, refers to a manifestation

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[7] Instead of referring to both interviews and surveys, "interviews" will be used to refer to both throughout the work. To respect anonymity, people's names are not used in this work, although the institution they are associated with and their job title is used to provide context.

[8] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.*

[9] One of the historic sites, however, distinguished the term paranormal as relating to modern ghosts, and supernatural as encompassing a wider range of creatures, spirits, and gods. In this case, I am more concerned with what they define as paranormal.

[10] Montell, *Ghosts Across Kentucky*, xvi.

[11] Owen Davies, *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 2.

[12] See Bennett's discussion of the terms supernatural and ghosts for her research. She recognized that these terms were associated with evil entities by her participants, and she changed her terminology to vague phrases such as "things in houses" and the dead "coming to" the living. I felt, however, that these terms were too vague for my specific purposes. Bennett, 14-15.

witnessed by sight. [13] Despite their differences, these terms generally will be referred to as spirits

of the deceased.

Likewise, the term "haunted" carries multiple meanings and can be a problematic term,

as it can carry connotations of evil. Gilliam Bennett defines hauntings as "threatening

encounters" with ghosts.[14] Owen Davies defines haunting neutrally as "the repeated appearance

of a ghost before someone or in a certain location."[15] Even though some participants in this study

believed spirits inhabited a site, they did not use the term haunted because they associated the

term with evil spirits. For example, one participant explained that "I myself don't say the house

is haunted…[because] I define haunted as being visited by spirits that are troubled."[16] Therefore,

some may believe spirits inhabit the space, but would not define the place as haunted. For others

haunted was too definitive a declaration of supernatural activity occurring at their site. Many

participants admitted to having experiences that they could not explain by natural causes, but did

not want to attribute them affirmatively to supernatural activity and thus hesitated to describe the

place as haunted. The hesitation of using the term haunted may be due to staff wanting to avoid

a reputation among the public of being a haunted site. The term, however, is used in this paper to

generally refer to activity occurring at a location that is attributed, whether by employees or the

outside public, to supernatural causes. All ten historic sites in this study are therefore referred to

in this paper as haunted. When discussing the informant's beliefs I use the term as they do. The

term, however, does not refer to my beliefs regarding the paranormal, but rather the historical or

folkloric association of supernatural activity with a site.

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[13] See Owen Davies, *The Haunted*, 2-3.
[14] Bennett, 17.
[15] Davies, *The Haunted*, 3.
[16] Director of Tour Operations, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.

"Ghost stories" also merit a definition. There are ghost stories that people tell as experiences that happened to themselves or someone they know. Gillian Bennett, a folklorist, defines these types of stories as "memorates" or "stories about supernatural events in which the narrator was the protagonist…or which were told to her by a confidant."[17] This is how they will be referred to in this paper.[18] However, there are ghost stories that are of the "camp-fire" genre.[19] These are stories seen in movies, read in fictional literature, and told as a narrative story. Often these types of tales impart some kind of theme or moral to their listeners, or are meant simply to frighten in order to elicit entertaining thrills from the audience. Most of the ghost stories the participants told are memorates. There are also historical ghost stories. These are stories, like the opening story of the Gray Lady, that originate in the past. Some historical ghost stories are also memorates, but are passed down through multiple generations.

Terms such as reportedly or supposedly are not used when discussing ghosts or haunting as this connotes judgment. Instead, I refrain from judging the validity of someone's experiences. The purpose of this paper is not to determine the existence or non-existence of ghosts, as I am neither a scientist nor a theologian. Instead, as an historian, the intent is to find out what the participants believe. Although it is possible that people, including my participants, can lie, exaggerate, or misinterpret things that happen to them, I assume that all my participants are

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[17] Bennett, 4.

[18] Bennett, 4. For more discussion on the debates about what these types of stories should be called see Bennett, 3-5. See also Alan Brown, *The Face in the Window and Other Alabama Ghostlore* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 4. He uses the term "legends" to describe stories that the storyteller believes is true and the term "folklore" to describe entertainment stories. However, it is not always clear whether or not the storyteller believes the ghost story is true. Elsewhere, Brown defines legends as stories based on historical fact. Alan Brown, *Stories from the Haunted South*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), xv. I use historical ghost stories as a term for both clarity and for avoiding any connotations of falsehood associated with the term "legends." Also, I use the term "folklore" as an umbrella word that embraces all types of stories, not just ones meant for pure entertainment. "Folklore" is defined as tales preserved by a people in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.*

[19] Bennett further categorizes these into three levels: "Scooby-Doo," "Haunted Inns of England" and "Stephen King." The "Haunted Inns of England" stories are used to attract tourism, as she defines it, and has purely commercial purposes. Bennett, 1. However, my research suggests that many of the stories at historic sites that might also be used for marketing purposes are also memorates.

telling the truth of what they believe. Stuart-Clark, a historian of witchcraft, serves as a useful

example of the same approach. He argues that people who believed in witchcraft believed it to

be real, so historians should not dismiss their beliefs but instead seek to understand their

interpretation of those experiences.[20] During the interviews, people revealed very personal

beliefs and experiences. Thus, their beliefs are approached with full respect.

Supernatural, paranormal, haunted, and ghost are all widely used terms. However, a new,

single term is necessary for referring to the multiple types of fundraising events and interpretive

programs related to the supernatural at historic sites. For instance, there are haunted house

events around Halloween where there are "realistic-looking sights of death and dismemberment"

meant to frighten and entertain.[21] David J. Skal in *Death Makes A Holiday* describes these as the

"American spook-house" of which Disney established a "gold standard" in 1969 with the

Haunted Mansion attraction.[22] There are also events such as cemetery tours, like the one held by

Andersonville National Historic Site, where the spirits of the interred, played by actors, come

back to life for an evening to tell the audience about their life.[23] While many different events

used by the sites are analyzed in detail throughout the paper, I will refer generally to these types

of events and activities as ghost programming or ghost programs.

Not all sites in this study use ghost programming, but all sites are historic, haunted, and

in the southeastern United States. Ten sites participated in the project, providing diverse

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[20] See Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7.

[21] Bill Ellis, "'Safe Spooks:' New Halloween Traditions in Response to Sadism Legends, " in *Halloween and Other Festivals of Death and Life,* ed. Jack Santino (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 39.

[22] David J. Skal, *Death Makes a Holiday: A Cultural History of Halloween* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2002), 86-87. Skal also has a brief discussion of non-profit haunted-house events such as the Dallas March of Dimes haunted house. Skal, 102-103. See also Jack Santino, ed., *Halloween and Other Festivals of Death and Life* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994). Nicholas Rogers explains that non-profits in the 1980s popularized these types of events as alternatives to trick-or-treating. In the 1990s entrepreneurs started companies that capitalized on the market for these types of events. Nicholas Rogers, *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 104-105.

[23] Chief of Interpretation and Education, Andersonville National Historic Site, interview by author, Andersonville, GA, October 29, 2011.

representation within a limited number of sites in order to begin analyzing the issues confronting

haunted sites. The sites represent a range of managerial control and funding sources; they

included several house museums as well as one living history museum, two Civil War related

sites, one industrial historic site, and two archaeological sites. Sites from the South are used since

the South is generally well known for its ghost story traditions and unique history. The history

of the South provides ample sites of tragic lives and tragic deaths.[24] One popular author writes,

"Through the South, there is hardly a community that cannot claim at least one ghost or other

psychic phenomena somehow related to the Civil War."[25] The many immigrant groups that

settled throughout the South passed down a strong cultural tradition of ghost stories that persists

to the present day.[26] In the twentieth century, southern gothic literature, which includes

supernatural elements, became a distinct regional literary genre. Additionally, several folklorists

have collected ghost stories from the south such as William Lynwood Montell, Kathryn Tucker

Windham, and Alan Brown.[27] While the South has a unique culture of supernaturalism, this is

not to claim that other cultures and regions of the United States do not also have strong traditions

of ghost stories. However, limiting this study to southern states should encourage more research

in this and other regions of the United States. Although hotels, bed and breakfasts, restaurants

and other tourist destinations make up a significant portion of the haunted tourism industry and

can be historically significant, this study focuses on those sites where historical interpretation is a

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[24] William Lynwood Montell, *Haunted Houses and Family Ghosts of Kentucky* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), xi; Alan Brown, *Haunted Georgia: Ghosts and Strange Phenomena of the Peach State* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2008), 2-4; Alan Brown, *Shadows and Cypress: Southern Ghost Stories* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), xxix-xxx. Brown also attributes the popularity of oral storytelling in the South to low literacy rates. See Alan Brown, *The Face in the Window and Other Alabama Ghostlore* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 1.
[25] Christopher K. Coleman, *Ghosts and Haunts of the Civil War: Authentic Accounts of the Strange and Unexplained* (New York: Fall River Press, 1999), xi.
[26] Montell, *Ghosts across Kentucky*, xi. Brown, *Shadows and Cypress*, xv-xviii.
[27] Alan Brown cites low literacy rates in Alabama specifically as a possible reason for the popularity of ghost stories as an oral tradition. Brown, *The Face in the Window*, 1.

primary function.[28] Finally, a site had to be considered haunted by either themselves or others.

Many employees that work at a particular site might believe the site is haunted while in other

cases ghost stories may be associated with the location even though none of its staff believe it is

haunted.   Including all these different types of haunted locations is helpful for determining

patterns between belief and ghost programming conducted by a site.

      Not all sites contacted agreed to participate in the study. In all, two of twelve sites did

not respond to an interview request. While this may be simply due to time constraints or other

reasons, perhaps those who view the supernatural as a taboo or inconsequential topic for

professional historians may not respond. Most of the participants worked at places with some

kind of ghost programming. These participants may have felt the need to focus on what they

perceive as the positive aspects of their programs. Furthermore, one folklorist explains that

many people hesitate to admit that they believe in the supernatural "due to fear of being judged

or intimidated by disbelievers."[29] This may be particularly the case for participants who might

feel that as professionals, they would not want to reveal certain experiences or beliefs for fear of

being judged by colleagues. Although participant perspective may be a limitation that influences

the findings of this study, their perspective is still necessary for beginning to understand the

unique issues and best practices at haunted historic sites.

      This research reflects the point-of-view of the employees at historic sites rather than

visitor perception of these sites. Focusing on employee-centered research helps to first

illuminate current perceptions of ghost programming among employees and how that affects

managerial decision-making. Participant responses and secondary sources will be used to

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[28] As evidence of a haunted tourism industry, the National Trust for Historic Preservation advertises haunted hotels in its annual directory of historic hotels with a ghost icon to indicate which hotels are haunted. National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Historic Hotels of America: 2011 Annual Directory*, 5. One place researched, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, has both a restaurant and hotel in addition to the museum.

[29] Montell, *Ghosts Across Kentucky*, xvii.

understand visitor perceptions and expectations since this is an important consideration for managers at historic sites. Certainly, individual historic sites, where applicable, may find it useful to survey their own visitors regarding ghost programming in order to understand their visitor's opinions and interests, and to help evaluate more concretely what visitors learn and gain from these activities.

The following sites agreed to participate in the study and highlight diverse history, governance, ghost stories, and ghost programming. They include four house museums: Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, Gaineswood National Historic Landmark, Liberty Hall Historic Site, and White Hall State Historic Site; a living history site: Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill; two Civil War sites: Perryville Battlefield, Andersonville National Historic Site; two archeological sites: Old Cahawba Archaeological Park, and Moundville Archaeological Park; and one industrial historic site: Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark.

Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate located in Lexington, Kentucky was the home to Speaker of the House Henry Clay. Ashland is run by the Henry Clay Memorial Foundation, a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to "to preserve Ashland, The Henry Clay Estate as a National Historic Landmark and Educational Center for the cultural and social history of the 19th century and specifically, to interpret the life and times of Henry Clay, the Clay family and other residents of the estate for the public."[30] Seven staff members participated in interviews. Henry Clay's ghost is said to haunt his old estate and is seen leaning against a mantel.[31] There is also a story that the ghost of Daniel Boone haunts the site. However, few if any of the staff interviewed reported any ghosts and there are no interpretive programs that have to do with his ghost.

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[30] "Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate," http://www.henryclay.org/ (accessed August 1, 2011).
[31] HauntedHouses.com, "Ashland House," http://www.hauntedhouses.com/states/ky/ashland_house.cfm (accessed July 1, 2011).

Paranormal investigators are also not allowed. However, some visitors still ask if the home is haunted.

Gaineswood National Historic Landmark is a Greek revival mansion in Demopolis, Alabama. Cotton planter Nathan Bryan Whitfield built the home starting in 1843. Gaineswood is run by the Alabama Historical Commission, "a state agency charged with safeguarding Alabama's historic buildings and sites."[32] Gaineswood is most well known as haunted due to Kathryn Tucker Windham and Margaret Gillis Figh's book, *13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey*.[33] Two staff members participated in interviews and neither reported any paranormal experiences nor believed that the house is haunted. However, because of Windham and Figh's book, visitors frequently ask about the ghost story. As a part of a larger harvest festival event, staff conducted an educational presentation about the story and its historical inaccuracies.

Liberty Hall in Frankfort, Kentucky is a historic home built by John and Margaretta Brown in 1796. John Brown was one of Kentucky's first United States senators. Liberty Hall is a non-profit organization run by Liberty Hall, Inc., and The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Its mission is to "educate the public by interpreting the life and times of Senator John Brown and his descendants. The site will collect, document, preserve, conserve, and exhibit the social, domestic, and horticultural aspects of Kentucky life, beginning with 1796 at Liberty Hall and 1835 at the Orlando Brown House."[34] One current and one former staff member agreed to interviews. Liberty Hall has a ghost story about the Gray Lady who is believed to be the aunt of Margaretta who passed away at Liberty Hall. The story is featured in

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[32] "Alabama Historical Commission," http://www.preserveala.org/ (accessed September 1, 2011).
[33] Windham and Figh, *13 Alabama Ghosts*, 55-60.
[34] "Liberty Hall Historic Site," http://www.libertyhall.org/ (accessed August 1, 2011).

popular books such as James McCormick and Macy Wyatt's *Ghosts of the Bluegrass*.[35] Liberty

Hall participates in the annual *Ghosts of Frankfort* event that features an appearance of the Gray

Lady played by an actress.

White Hall State Historic Site in Richmond, Kentucky is another historic home that was

owned by Cassius Clay, a nineteenth-century emancipationist and ambassador to Russia. The

home was originally built by his father in 1798 and remodeled by Cassius in the 1860s. White

Hall is owned and managed by the Kentucky State Parks System and is also funded by the White

Hall-Clermont Foundation, a non-profit organization.[36] White Hall features two annual ghost

programs: the *Scandals and Ghost Stories Tour* held in the summer and the *Ghost Walk* in

October. Ghost stories of White Hall are featured in popular books such as Alan Brown's

Stories from the Haunted South.[37] Four staff members agreed to interviews, several of whom

reported experiences that they believe may be supernatural in nature.

Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill in Harrodsburg, Kentucky is a living history museum that

was a nineteenth-century village for a religious utopian group called the Shakers. Shaker Village

is a non-profit educational corporation governed by a board of trustees. The mission is to

maintain, preserve, and make available the thirty-four original Shaker buildings for the broader

use of culture, education, and recreation.[38] Besides being a history museum, Shaker Village also

has a hotel and restaurant. Thomas Freese wrote a collection of ghost stories from current and

former employees and people from the local area in *Shaker Ghost Stories from Pleasant Hill,*

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[35] McCormick and Wyatt, *Ghosts of the Bluegrass*, 16-17; and Alan Brown, *Haunted Places in the American South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 94-97.

[36] "White Hall State Historic Site," http://parks.ky.gov/parks/historicsites/white-hall/default.aspx (accessed September 1, 2011).

[37] Alan Brown, *Stories from the Haunted South*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 105-109.

[38] Manager of Museum & Special Programs, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011 and Historic Farm Manager, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 18, 2011.

Kentucky.[39] Shaker Village does not have any kind of ghost programming, but of the five staff members surveyed, all reported experiences that they attributed to the supernatural. Visitors frequently ask about ghost stories and whether or not the place is haunted.

Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site in Perryville, Kentucky is a historic Civil War battlefield that is also owned and operated by the Kentucky State Parks System. One staff member was surveyed and reported that many employees also believe the battlefield is haunted by Civil War soldiers.[40] Paranormal investigators are allowed to investigate the battlefield and there is an annual paranormal seminar conducted by the Spirit Hunters of Central Kentucky (SHOCK) in October.

The U.S. National Park Service manages Andersonville National Historic Site in Andersonville, Georgia. The site includes a museum dedicated to the history of prisoners of war. It is also the site of a Civil War prisoner of war camp called Camp Sumter where approximately thirteen thousand people died within the fourteen months that the camp existed. Andersonville also has a national cemetery that is still an active burial ground for veterans. Andersonville "commemorates the sacrifices of these brave Americans through exhibits in the National Prisoner of War Museum; preserves the site of Camp Sumter (Andersonville prison); and manages Andersonville National Cemetery."[41] One staff member participated in an interview. There are some reports of Civil War apparitions, sounds of voices, and gunshots. Christopher K. Coleman's book, *Ghosts and Haunts of the Civil War*, Jeff Belanger's *Ghosts of War,* and Alan Brown's *Haunted Georgia*, tell stories of apparition sightings at Andersonville.[42] However, few

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[39] Thomas Freese, *Shaker Ghost Stories from Pleasant Hill, Kentucky* (Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2005).

[40] Historic Preservation and Program Coordinator, Perryville Battlefield, e-mail message to author, September 26, 2011.

[41] "Andersonville National Historic Site," http://www.nps.gov/ande/index.htm (accessed September 1, 2011).

[42] Coleman, 111-115; Jeff Belanger, *Ghosts of War: Restless Spirits of Soldiers, Spies and Saboteurs* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2009), 143-151; and Brown, *Haunted Georgia*, 21-24.

of the staff report having any unusual experiences. Previously, Andersonville held a nighttime cemetery tour event, though this was not advertised in any way with ghosts, spirits, or hauntings. Due to budget cuts, they terminated the event.

Old Cahawba near Selma, Alabama was the first state capital of Alabama from 1820 to 1826 and is "Alabama's most famous Ghost Town."[43] Like Gaineswood, the Alabama Historical Commission runs Old Cahawba Archaeological Park. Old Cahawba holds an annual *Haunted History Ghost Tour* that includes telling ghost stories and a paranormal investigation with a contracted paranormal investigator group. Stories associated with Old Cahawba include the wampus cat and the cedar maze specter. Five staff members participated in interviews and some told memorates.

The University of Alabama runs Moundville Archaeological Park in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The site is an ancient site of the Mississippian culture from 1000 to 1450 AD. Once the site was abandoned it became a Native American burial ground. Museum displays interpret the supernatural in regard to the ancient people's beliefs in spirit creatures and includes their spiritual beliefs about the afterlife. However, there are reports of paranormal activity in the present such as apparitions of a Native American warrior. Three staff members participated in interviews. Generally, staff reported few experiences that they believe might be supernatural in origin. The site does not use or interpret these modern day paranormal reports and experiences. They do, however, have a campsite where paranormal groups will stay and conduct investigations.[44]

Finally, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark in Birmingham, Alabama is owned by the city of Birmingham and supported by a non-profit foundation run by a board of directors.

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[43] "Old Cahawba ," http://www.cahawba.com/ (accessed September 1, 2011).
[44] Director, Moundville Archaeological Site, interview by author, Moundville, AL, November 4, 2011.

Sloss Furnaces has two different ghost programs: *Fright Furnace* and *Sloss Furnaces Historic Ghost Tour*. They also allow paranormal investigators and have been featured on television shows such as *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Adventures* and in books such as Alan Brown's *Haunted Places in the American South*.[45] One staff member participated in an interview and reported other staff seeing apparitions and hearing unusual noises.

These sites show that the type of site itself can affect decision making about ghost programming. For example, government run entities like Andersonville have more bureaucratic hurdles and limitations than private institutions such as Liberty Hall that are run by a board of directors. Certain types of sites must consider collections care when making decisions about ghost programming. Perryville Battlefield, for instance, does not have to worry about paranormal investigators damaging artifacts the same way a house museum would such as Gaineswood. Also, the history interpreted at the site will also influence decision making about programming. Sloss Furnaces, a shrine to nineteenth and twentieth century industrialization, does not have to worry that ghost programming would be culturally insensitive the same way as Moundville Archaeological Park, an ancient Native American city and burial ground.

Despite these differences in the types of sites, ghost programming in general at historic sites is a contentious subject among public history and museum professionals because, in both the historical record and the current scientific field, ghosts, by their very nature, cannot be tested and proven. However, professionally trained and educated or not, this study reveals that some employees at historic sites have experiences that they attribute to supernatural forces. Additionally, many visitors to historic sites believe in or are interested in ghosts, and many ask interpreters about ghost stories. Interpreters represent both the authority of an institution and themselves as individuals with personally held beliefs. Thus, guidance is needed so that

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[45] Brown, *Haunted Places in the American South*, 19-25.

managers can understand and respect the personal beliefs of their employees, direct interpreters in handling questions as both a voice of authority and an individual while maintaining sensitivity toward visitors, and decide what programming is appropriate at their historic site.

Do people believe that ghostly activity in some way helps them feel connected to the past? Is there a connection between people's assumption that a historic site is more likely to be haunted because a historic site, like a ghost, allows people to encounter the past in the present? Authors such as Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen in their book, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* discuss how ordinary people incorporate and encounter the past in their daily lives and in museums. They also discuss issues of public perception of museum authority.[46] Their work, along with others, sheds light on how visitors might understand and perceive ghost programming and interpretation at historic sites. Additionally, what are the implications for ghost stories establishing a deeper sense of place on the landscape? Robert R. Archibald in *The New Town Square: Museums and Communities in Transition* discusses the importance of museums to help communities establish a sense of place rooted in history.[47] While these two authors, along with others, do not deal with ghosts as a part of these subjects, this work will explore if ghost stories can help to serve these purposes at historical sites.

Can historic site managers use ghost stories, ghost programming, or paranormal investigators without compromising the institution's values, mission, scholarship, and authority as a historical institution? What factors should managers consider to guide their decisions? With economic hardships and budget cuts, more historic sites turn to creative programming, including

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[46] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[47] Robert R. Archibald, *The New Town Square: Museums and Communities in Transition* (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2004).

ghost programming, to keep the doors open. Common benefits to ghost programming include fundraising and public relations opportunities; collaborating and sharing authority with the community and incorporating multiple disciplines; combining entertainment and education; building community and creating a connection to place; and creating an emotional connection to the past for visitors. However, such programming also comes with risks including financial loss, damage to reputation, circulation of historical inaccuracies, and compromising the values of the organization. For sacred sites ghost programming is particularly risky and often inappropriate. Whether or not the institution programs around their hauntings, staff members may sincerely believe that their experiences regarding ghosts are legitimate and are an integral part of the place they work.

This work analyzes how incorporating supernatural activity can both aid and challenge historical institutions in furthering their mission, raising money, marketing their site, improving interpretation, and educating the public. This work will also show how incorporating supernatural stories may at times be inappropriate, insensitive, or unprofessional. Highlighting a variety of examples of ghost programming will foster a professional and scholarly dialogue concerning the supernatural and programming at historic sites. Furthermore, this work will suggest guidelines that historic site managers should consider when deciding whether or not to incorporate ghost stories, ghost programming, or paranormal investigators at their site. Overall, these sites demonstrate that although ghost programming may be inappropriate for some historical sites, ghost programming can succeed in engaging the public with the past without compromising historical scholarship.

This work is divided into three chapters thematically rather than institutionally. Throughout the work, sites that are the best or most unique examples are used for analysis. The

first chapter, "'Good Morning Mary Barr!' How Hauntings Affect Historic Sites," will establish how popular culture, historical context, personal beliefs, and visitors' questions to interpreters affect haunted historic sites. The second chapter, "'That Night I Decided No More!' Risks of Using Ghost Stories, Programs and Investigators at Haunted Historic Sites," investigates the disadvantages associated with ghost programming. Last, the third chapter, "'You're Going to Feel Blessed!' The Benefits of Using Ghost Stories, Programs, or Investigators at Haunted Historic Sites," reveals the advantages associated with ghost programming. At the end of chapters two and three, the risks and benefits of using paranormal investigators are analyzed to highlight the same risks or benefits associated with ghost programming. This work concludes with recommendations for historic site managers to use when evaluating whether or not to use ghost stories, ghost programming, or paranormal investigators at their site based on the institution's mission, values, and history.

Mary Mason Scott referred to the Gray Lady of Liberty Hall as "our beloved ghost." Liberty Hall staff feel much the same way as Scott, telling the story in the opening tour documentary, as well as during their regular tours and annual ghost program. As Scott's sentiment suggests, haunted historic sites do not have to be afraid of their ghosts. Staff at historic sites should fear the potential negative consequences of utilizing their ghosts but also embrace the possible benefits their ghosts may have for bringing the past to life. This work will show that, like Liberty Hall, historic sites can incorporate ghost programming appropriately and effectively.

Chapter One: "Good Morning Mary Barr!" How Hauntings Affect Historic Sites

> In the spring of 1862…a 'night in which nature seems in silent contemplation to adore its Maker,' a young lady and gentleman, promenading near the maze of cedars, turned to enter one of the circular walks leading to the center of the labyrinth, when they were startled to see a large white, luminous ball moving a few feet above the ground in front of them, apparently floating in air. This ball would dart first on one side of the walk and then on the other, approach close enough to almost touch them, recede and disappear in the shrubbery, to suddenly be seen again floating beside them. Thinking the apparition was a trick of fancy or was caused by some peculiar phase of the moon's shadows, they turned to retrace their steps, when again it appeared in front of them, going through the same gyrations. The gentleman now determined to test the materiality of the object; but just as he attempted to grasp it, it darted beyond his reach and disappeared, to be seen no more that night. On several occasions this apparition appeared to other parties, and became known as the 'Pegues Ghost.'[1]

In 1908, Anna M. Gayle Fry published this ghost story in *Memories of Old Cahaba,* a book staff uses for interpretation at Old Cahawba Archaeological Park.[2] According to Fry, the story originated in the 1860s, and the mystery of the cedar maze is still told today at Old Cahwba. As this particular story illustrates, people have been sharing and retelling ghost stories throughout the past, and visitors to Old Cahawba need not believe in ghosts to bring the story with them to the site. People working at and visiting historic sites bring with them their past experiences, personal beliefs, and cultural assumptions about ghosts. While managers at many historic sites confront issues that arise from employee beliefs and visitor questions about the supernatural, many sites do not have any official guidance for how interpreters should handle visitor questions. These factors affect the management and operations of historic sites, and

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[1] Anna M. Gayle Fry, *Memories of Old Cahaba* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1905; repr., Huntsville, AL: Strode Publishers, 1972), 47.
[2] Assistant Site Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.

therefore require examination. Managers should understand their employees' beliefs and provide guidance for their interpreters on handling visitor questions.

First, understanding historical conceptualizations of ghosts provides context for issues confronting haunted historical sites since beliefs, folklore, and images from the past shape contemporary ideas. As Owen Davies shows, consistent themes such as how ghosts look, where ghosts are found, and how ghosts are experienced exist throughout history. Along with Davies, scholars such as R. C. Finucane and P.G. Maxwell-Stuart provide useful histories of ghosts and ghost stories. Finucane examines the historical context of ghost stories to illuminate the cultural influences on the belief in ghosts throughout time. One major drawback is that Finucane assumes those who perceive ghosts are either credulous or simply mistaken. He often hypothesizes on how seemingly normal people could be tricked into believing in ghosts. His approach disregards the historical characters he analyzes, as he cannot judge from the present the legitimacy of someone's spiritual experiences. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart in *Ghosts: A History of Phantoms, Ghouls & Other Spirits of the Dead* also analyzes ghost stories over time. In contrast to Finucane, though, Maxwell-Stuart interprets commonalities in the history of ghosts as proof of ghosts' existence. Certainly, both authors are entitled to their opinions, but their biases deflect from understanding what people in the historical record believed on their own terms. Despite this drawback, Finucane's and Maxwell-Stuart's research still provide useful information for understanding historical developments regarding people's belief in ghosts. Owen Davies, in *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts*, analyzes the history of English ghosts thematically and succeeds in showing similarities and differences over time of certain characteristics of ghosts. Additionally, Davies does not question whether or not the ghost stories are true, but instead analyzes what historical actors experienced and believed in regard to the supernatural. Despite

the differences in all three of the authors' works, all provide valuable histories of ghosts in Western society.[3]

In the Ancient Near East and through the Classical period, people performed burial and mourning rituals in order to appease ghosts and prevent them from roaming among the living. With the rise of Christianity and continuing into the Middle Ages, spirits haunted sites where they committed sins to seek retribution. As Catholic thinking about the afterlife and Purgatory evolved, ghosts asked the living to affect their place in the afterlife by performing acts such as saying prayers, giving alms, or purchasing indulgences. These ghost stories served to reinforce church doctrine about the afterlife. Starting with the Protestant Reformation, some intellectuals became skeptical of ghost stories. With rising secularization among intellectuals during the Enlightenment, some disdained believing in ghosts as irrational and superstitious. By the nineteenth century, however, interests in ghosts increased. Gothic horror novels gained widespread popularity and Spiritualists sought out the dead through séances.[4]

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ghosts were less often seen and instead felt, heard, or even smelt. This is consistent with participant reports from the interviews in this study. Experiencing ghosts came in the form of a strange feeling, or a drop in temperature. People

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[3] Owen Davies, *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Ronald C. Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts* (London: Junction Books, 1982). P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Ghosts: A History of Phantoms, Ghouls & Other Spirits of the Dead* (Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, 2006). See also Gillian Bennett, *Alas, Poor Ghost! Traditions of Belief in Story and Discourse* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999), 139-172; Elliot J. Gorn provides information about African American enslaved people in North America's ghost stories. Elliott J. Gorn, "Black Spirits: The Ghostlore of Afro-American Slaves," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 549-565; Robert L. Hall discusses prehistoric Native American beliefs of ghosts. Robert L. Hall, "Ghosts, Water Barriers, Corn, and Sacred Enclosures in the Eastern Woodlands," *American Antiquity* 4,1 no. 3 (July 1976): 360-364; Colleen E. Boyd discusses contemporary beliefs in ghosts of Native Americans, particularly the Klallam tribe. Colleen E. Boyd, "'You See Your Culture Coming Out of the Ground Like a Power': Uncanny Narratives in Time and Space on the Northwest Coast," *Ethnohistory* 56, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 699-731.
[4] For more on Spiritualism see Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008); Owen Davies, ed., *Ghosts: A Social History*, vols. 4 and 5 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010).

believed they encountered ghosts when hearing strange footsteps, tapping, rustling of silk, or disembodied voices. Davies discusses the "landscape of haunting" in order to identify the most common places ghosts seem to be found. Houses are the primary place, since many people died in their homes, and the home "was where people mourned the dead and were surrounded by memories of their presence." Churchyards or graveyards, since corpses are located there, are also popular haunted spots. Places of tragedy such as battlefields are also common.[5] Churches, battlefields, and homes are also likely places to become historic sites, which may explain why visitors often wonder if these sites are haunted.

Strangely enough, apparitions from the distant past are a relatively recent phenomenon. Witnessing ghosts "depended on the collective memory and the stability of oral transmission of local histories in communities from one generation to the next." Historic ghosts, as Davies calls them, are mostly associated with tragic events or turbulent time periods, such as war, or are associated with a place, such as a castle or monastery ruin. Davies provides the example of the modern phenomena of ghost sightings of Roman soldiers in England. These ghosts did not appear in historical evidence until school curricula and movies caused more people to know about the ancient Romans' presence and to recognize a Roman soldier's uniform. Accordingly, "people's perception of historic ghosts depended on their sense and knowledge of history."[6] Davies' observation has important implications for this work as it implies that because historic sites increase people's knowledge of history, ghost sightings at historic sites are therefore not surprising. Certainly, the history of the place interpreted at historic sites in turn influence people's interpretation of unexplained occurrences.

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[5] Davies, *The Haunted,* 26-28, 46, 47, 54.
[6] Davies, 40, 42, 41.

Whether or not specters are real or figments of the imagination, many people throughout history experienced them and believed in them. Therefore, understanding what people believe about ghosts both in history and in the present reveals less about ghosts themselves, but rather people's beliefs about the dead. The interviews from this study suggest many employees at historic sites believe in ghosts, and many of their experiences reflect Davies' generalizations about belief in ghosts in the past few centuries. Understanding that there are employees at historic sites that believe in ghosts, and some that also believe that the place itself is haunted, is important for managers of historic sites. Likewise, of course, there are people who work at these sites who do not believe in ghosts.

A manager should remain sensitive to their employees' diverse beliefs about the supernatural. It would be unethical to inquire directly as to employee beliefs, but a manager should be open to employees sharing their personal views about the supernatural without fear of judgment or discrimination. This does not mean that the manager has to agree with their employees, but he or she should be open to others' beliefs. An open mind will help the manager maintain a trusting relationship with his or her employees, and employees in turn will respect their managers for their sensitivity. At one site, the director did not think any of his employees had any unusual experiences they might attribute to supernatural causes.[7] Yet, his assistant, who also interacts regularly with visitors, reported one experience of hearing a strange voice and reported other employee's experiences from the past.[8] An awareness of employees' personal beliefs can help a manager in developing policies about handling visitor's questions regarding ghosts.

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[7] Director, Moundville Archaeological Site, interview by author, Moundville, AL, November 4, 2011.
[8] Office Assistant, Moundville Archaeological Site, interview by author, Moundville, AL, November 4, 2011.

Belief can be categorized three ways: belief, half-belief, and disbelief.[9] During the interviews, participants provided many examples of belief in ghosts. The director of tour operations at Ashland, though she did not have many memorates about Ashland, did offer some of the experiences she had at other places. In her dorm in college she admitted, "I felt uncomfortable there, but it never really sunk in at first because I thought, it's a dorm, dorms aren't haunted. So I felt uncomfortable…the phone would ring, nobody would be on it. I thought I would see shadows. I felt like I was being followed." One night when her roommates were away, she laid down for bed. Suddenly, she "started hearing [a] bag rustling, [and] my silverware flew off of my table!" She also reported seeing strange lights and hearing voices at other times. This person has a strong belief in ghosts. She explained, "I definitely see my views on the paranormal fitting into my view on the afterlife…my view is when we die, we shed our body and some people's stick around – their spirit sticks around here."[10]

Some people who believe in ghosts also believe the site where they work is haunted. One interpreter asserted, "To say I believe in spirits is like saying I believe in rocks. It is not belief, it is knowledge…there are spirits that walk these grounds."[11] This interpreter works at Shaker Village, and believes Shaker Village itself is haunted. Another interpreter from Shaker Village commented, "Even while I was writing this…I have heard footsteps upstairs, even though there are no guests or employees up there."[12] One manager concluded, "I believe there are spirits here, not just Shakers, but also others who have loved Shaker Village. The Shakers believe in spiritual

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[9] Gillian Bennett recognizes five categories of belief: "convinced belief," "some belief," "don't know," "some skepticism," and "convinced disbelief." Bennett, 19-23.

[10] Director of Tour Operations, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011

[11] Historical Interpreter 1, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.

[12] Historical Interpreter 2, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.

manifestations, that they could come back after death and speak to their brothers and sisters –

why would they stop now?"[13] The maintenance supervisor at Old Cahawba told one memorate:

> I was up in the cemetery, not too long after I got here…I was doing weed eating.
> Now, weed eater got a real loud pitch. I could hear somebody behind me say,
> 'Who are you?' I mean just clear as a bell! There wasn't a soul up there. I stopped
> the weed eater and looked around, wasn't nobody there. So I went back to weed
> eating and it said it again. I stopped, looked around, said, 'Who's there?' And
> nobody answered. So I started again and it said, 'Who are you?' again! And I
> threw the weed eater in the truck and left![14]

This is one of many examples of memorates people told during the interviews. This particular

instance involved a disembodied voice. Others report uncomfortable feelings, cold spots, feeling

clothes being tugged, seeing strange lights, smelling strange perfumes, hearing footsteps, and

even seeing apparitions.

A common type of answer to the question, "Do you believe in ghosts?" was "I'm willing

to accept that possibility."[15] Many participants told memorates, but then expressed skepticism in

regard to their beliefs about ghosts. This seeming contradiction arose frequently during many

interviews. Kramer and Block refer to this as peculiar beliefs or half-beliefs. These beliefs "may

be consciously rejected yet still have an impact on…decision making on a nonconscious level."[16]

In other words, someone might say they do not believe in ghosts but change their behavior in a

way that suggests they do believe in ghosts. This behavior is the "tendency to subjectively

believe they have an influence over outcomes where no such objective influence exists." Kramer

and Block add, "many readers [will]…scoff at the absurdity of others, and then unwittingly

proceed to knock on wood, don a lucky hat for the football game, or refrain from sharing news of

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[13] Manager, Museum and Special Programs, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.

[14] Maintenance Supervisor, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.

[15] Curator, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.

[16] Thomas Kramer and Lauren Block, "Nonconscious Effects of Peculiar Beliefs on Consumer Psychology and Choice," *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 21 (2011): 101.

a potential positive event for fear of jinxing it."[17] Kramer and Block, as consumer psychologists,

use the example of purchasing a plane ticket for Friday the 13th. They observe, "Half-believers

and non-believers are likely consciously to reject the irrationality associated with the unlucky

date, yet still become less likely to choose the flight on Friday the 13th without being at least

partially aware that their choice is driven by the peculiar belief." In other words, half-believers

may realize their behavior is irrational, but are still likely to engage in the behavior anyway.

Additionally, an "uncertain situation" makes people "more likely" to be half-believers.[18]

Feelings of uncertainty may explain why so many employees at haunted historic sites are half-

believers. If he or she does not have a rational explanation for an unusual experience, then they

may engage in seemingly irrational behaviors to prevent a similar event.

      The interviews revealed that many participants are half-believers. The staff from White

Hall provided examples of this behavior among multiple participants. The park manager

maintained that she does not know if the house is haunted, even though she told many

memorates, such as smelling strange perfumes, feeling chills, hearing voices, and seeing a

disembodied man's hand and sleeve cuff on a staircase banister. In regard to ghosts, she joked,

"I don't know if I really believe in them, but don't prove me wrong!" Although skeptical, her

beliefs still influenced her behavior. In a particular hallway she would "get this feeling, not to go

that way but to go this way…it's like something's telling me 'you need to go out now.'" When

asked if she ever feels afraid, she answered, "Sometimes." She noted that some rooms felt safer,

such as the office and the powder room. However, there were "some days I can't go in there…I

won't go in the house by myself." On these days, instead of using the closest bathroom inside

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[17] Kramer and Block. "Nonconscious Effects," 103, 101.
[18] Kramer and Block, 104, 103.

the house she will go to a separate building toward the entrance to use the public restrooms.[19]

Similarly, the curator conceded, "I can't say that I'm a true believer but I can say that there are things that have happened to me…that have made me think that something is here."[20] She too got uneasy feelings in the house: "Sometimes I'll be working and I'll head up to the third floor and something'll tell me not to go up there and I won't." She revealed, "at times I'll come to work and I'll pray the entire time, I don't want to see anything," she added, "I don't want to come to work scared."[21] She used prayer as a tool to prevent witnessing any ghostly activity.

An interpreter, when asked if he believes in ghosts, answered, "I think I'm skeptical because I haven't had, except for that one thing, anything that would convince me that there is. That's not to say that if presented with information or proof that I wouldn't back right off that." The "one thing" is a memorate he told where one night in his apartment he woke up and "all along the side of my bed I felt what was like claws or hands pawing all the way down, and it shook the bed! And that went on for maybe ten seconds and then stopped. And I was so petrified that I could not move!" So despite this experience, he remains skeptical. Still, he used to change into his costume at White Hall in a room that had a particularly haunted reputation. He admitted, "A picture of Cassius's daughter, Mary Barr is on the wall up there. And I would go in every morning and say 'Good morning Mary Barr! How you doin' girl?' and 'Just don't mess with me!' and I never had any problems – hedging my bets."[22] These are just some examples of half-belief among staff at historic sites.

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[19] Park Manager, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[20] Curator, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[21] Curator, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[22] Tour Guide 2, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.

Further evidence suggests that superstitious behaviors are not uncommon at historic sites. According to an article in *The New Republic*, in New York City at the Merchant House Museum the curator talks to the ghost, Gertrude:

> When Smith first joined Merchant's House this summer, he felt Gertrude's presence, but he dismissed it. After awhile, though, he decided it was rude to ignore a lady, and he mended his manners. "When I come in in the mornings, I say, 'Good morning, Gertrude!'' he explains matter-of-factly. "And when I leave, I say, 'Good night!' Ever since I started talking to her, I feel very comfortable," he says.[23]

Whether or not Smith literally believes in Gertrude the ghost, he still talks to her and admits that this behavior helped alleviate his anxieties. Managers should understand that some of their employees, whether they say they believe in ghosts or not, may feel anxious or frightened working at a haunted site. However, managers should be aware that behaviors such as these, even if they are irrational, allow employees to effectively cope with feelings of uncertainty or fear. Employees also use humor, as seen above in several responses, to cope with feelings of uncertainty. Managers could use such examples as suggestions for employees who seem troubled by their experiences.

Of course, there are also people working at historic sites who do not believe in spirits or ghosts. Despite the prevalence of memorates reported by people at White Hall, one interpreter adamantly objected to believing in ghosts. He proclaimed, "I should probably start out by saying I do not believe in ghosts," and jokingly added, "I think that people who do are probably maybe needing just a little bit of medication!"[24] Thus within one historic site, like White Hall, there can be a range of beliefs among staff members, including disbelief in ghosts.

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[23] Liesl Schillinger, "Haunted," *New Republic* 221, no. 20 (November 15, 1999): 50.
[24] Tour Guide 1, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.

Educational background and religious affiliation did not correspond stereotypically with belief. The director of Sloss Furnaces holds a doctoral degree and believes in ghosts.[25] The night watchman at Old Cahawba does not believe in ghosts.[26] The director of tour operations at Ashland has religious views that "don't necessarily match any church's particular views" and believes in ghosts.[27] Two interpreters at Shaker Village indicated that they are Christian, and that their belief in spirits fits within their views of Christianity.[28] The director at Moundville explained that he is a Christian and does believe in an afterlife but not ghosts.[29] Managers, therefore, should not make assumptions about their employee beliefs based on education or religious affiliations. Furthermore, managers should show sensitivity toward employees' beliefs which will help earn their employees' respect. Employees may be genuinely fearful if they have experiences that they cannot explain rationally; furthermore, they may fear that their supervisor will judge or disrespect them because of these experiences. When asked if he thought any of his coworkers would think less of him because of his belief in ghosts, one participant confided that sometimes "I don't tell nobody because they get upset, because they think it's a lie" and that his supervisor "understands now, she used to didn't, but she does now."[30]

There also seemed to be a loose relationship between staff beliefs, or at least reported memorates, and the ghost programming at a historic site. Sites that have ghost programming and numerous memorates reported by staff included Old Cahawba, Sloss Furnaces, White Hall, and Perryville Battlefield. A major exception to this was Shaker Village, where everyone interviewed had memorates, but they do not have any programming. Those who had little or no

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[25] Director, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Birmingham, AL, October 28, 2011.
[26] Night Watchman, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[27] Director of Tour Operations, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.
[28] Historical Interpreters 2 and 3, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.
[29] Director, Moundville Archaeological Site, interview by author, Tuscaloosa, AL, November 4, 2011.
[30] Maintenance Supervisor, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.

ghost programming and also few reported memorates among staff included Ashland,

Moundville, Andersonville, and Gaineswood. An exception was Liberty Hall, where they have

ghost programming, yet few staff members reported memorates. This suggests that if many staff

members believe a site is haunted, then the site will more likely have ghost programming.

Despite the prevalence of belief and half-belief in ghosts among historic site employees

and visitor interest in the paranormal, little scholarship exists about ghost programming and

historic site interpretation. Managers themselves have no recommendations from respected

sources on how to handle the various issues that arise when managing a haunted site. Many

scholars may deem haunting an issue unworthy of study, since ghost stories "have been banished

from intellectual conversation but have lingered in the practices of belief." [31] As a result,

folklorists are one group of scholars who have embraced studying them. Even among folklorists,

however, "serious scholars remain very wary about studying supernatural folklore."[32] Historians

are also accused of ignoring the subject. The author of the book *Ghosts and Haunts of the Civil

War* observes, "You will not find any of …[these ghost stories]…described by any mainstream

historians," despite the fact that "many of these events are amply documented in the

contemporary record."[33] Coleman believes that ghost stories prove ghosts are real. His criticism

that mainstream historians do not use ghost stories as historical proof of their existence is

questionable. However, his criticism that there are too few historians that study ghosts and

people's belief in them is justified. Indeed, only recently have historians begun to study belief of

ghosts as a serious topic worthy of analysis. Some scholars, such as those mentioned at the

beginning of this chapter, do write about the topic. Still, Ann Braude, a historian of Spiritualism

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[31] Marilyn Motz, "The Practice of Belief," *The Journal of American Folklore* 111, no. 441 (Summer 1998): 340.
[32] Bennett, 1. See pages 2-3 for a list of folklorists that have studied supernatural folklore.
[33] Christopher K. Coleman, *Ghosts and Haunts of the Civil War: Authentic Accounts of the Strange and Unexplained* (New York: Fall River Press, 1999), xii.

in the nineteenth century, explains that for many scholars Spiritualism "still attracts controversy and ill repute among critics who view it as a deception of the credulous."[34] Braude's observation may explain why scholars of public history have not addressed the issue of haunted historic sites despite its relevancy in the field. If people dismiss the public's beliefs or interests in ghosts as a trivial pastime of the gullible, then they may also dismiss the important issues that confront haunted historic sites. These issues include visitor questions, guidance for interpreters, handling paranormal investigators, and opportunities and challenges of ghost programming. Since supernatural folklore and the history of ghosts are only recently gaining serious study in the academy, public historians, who might feel pressured to avoid criticism from their academic colleagues, avoid addressing this issue.

Despite the lack of scholarly publications, professionals in the field discuss the topic amongst themselves. One curator explained that he notices people discussing the issue on email listservs and at conferences.[35] Staff from different sites confirmed feeling that some of their peers in the profession disapprove of ghost programming. One director observed that among "professional colleagues there is a real dichotomy" in opinions of using ghost stories at historic sites.[36] She explained that she arranged for a panel to present about ghost stories at historical sites for a conference of the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) titled, "Things That Go Bump in the Night: Marketing Opportunity or Public Relations Nightmare." AASLH accepted the panel but changed the name to "Dealing with Myths and Legends at Your Historic Site." While this may indicate the organization's acknowledgement of the issue as worthy of scholarly analysis, the director commented that they changed the name because "they

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[34] Braude, xv.
[35] Curator, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.
[36] Former Director, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, October 3, 2011.

felt like it wasn't professional that we were trying to promote telling ghost stories."[37] At another

site, one staff member felt that "in general, history professionals look down on the paranormal

thing."[38] While almost none of the other participants in the study suggested that they looked

down on ghost programming, there is evidence that there are professionals who do. For instance,

in response to a newspaper article that reported on paranormal investigators conducting research

at the Ten Broeck Historic Site, Deborah Emmons-Andarawis, a curator, criticizes historic sites

for using paranormal investigators. In her newspaper article, "Wrong Way to Promote History

Museums" she writes, "If historic sites endorse such activities, their credibility as purveyors of

historical truth is undermined."[39] Some of the participant's concerns that their colleagues

disapprove of what they do, then, are not unfounded.

Despite some historians' disdain for the supernatural, ghosts are becoming increasingly

popular in American culture over the past few decades. The internet is just one example of this

popularity. *HauntedHouses.com*, one of the most comprehensive sites, features many of the

historic homes and museums in this study.[40] There is a whole genre of ghost story books that

highlight a certain city, state, or region that can be found at bookstores, public libraries, and

tourist destinations. For example, the authors Alan Brown, Lisa Westmoreland-Doherty, James

McCormick and Macy Wyatt, and William Lynwood Montell all feature Liberty Hall in their

books.[41] Popularity of the supernatural is evident on television as well. Shows such as *Ghost*

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[37] Former Director, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, October 3, 2011.

[38] Historic Preservation and Program Coordinator, Perryville Battlefield, E-mail message to author. September 26, 2011.

[39] Deborah Emmons-Andarawis, "Wrong Way to Promote History Museums," *Times Union*, June 5, 2011 http://www.timesunion.com/opinion/article/Wrong-way-to-promote-history-museums-1410055.php (accessed April 3, 2012).

[40] "Haunted Houses," http://www.hauntedhouses.com/ (accessed July 1, 2011).

[41] Alan Brown, *Haunted Places in the American South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 94-97; Lisa Westmoreland-Doherty, *Kentucky Spirits Undistilled* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2009), 141-147; James McCormick and Macy Wyatt.,*Ghosts of the Bluegrass* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 168-

Hunters attracted approximately two million viewers for their season finale in 2012.[42] In fact, Sloss Furnaces appeared on *Ghost Hunters* on the sixth season.[43] If a historic site is featured in popular media, people are more likely to hear about the site, plan a visit, and ask about its ghost stories.

Even if a site is featured in popular media, people's motivations to visit historic sites vary.[44] Visitors come to historic sites with a curiosity about many aspects of the history, architecture, and preservation of a site. With the increasing popularity of ghosts, visitors to historic sites are increasingly curious to know if the site is haunted. Most interpreters interviewed confirmed they had visitors, with varying frequency, ask whether or not the place is haunted.

In fact, the director at Gaineswood speculated, "I think a huge number of tourists going into any historic home are going to ask, 'Is this house haunted?'"[45] At Shaker Village staff estimated visitors ask as much as three to five times a week, with more people asking closer to Halloween. [46] The historic preservation and program coordinator at Perryville Battlefield

169; William Lynwood Montell, *Haunted Houses and Family Ghosts of Kentucky* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 16-17.

[42] Bill Gorman, "'Ghost Hunters' Ratings Hit Season Highs,'" *TV By The Numbers,* February 16, 2012, http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2012/02/16/ghost-hunters-ratings-hit-season-highs/120407/ (accessed Feb 25, 2012).

[43] "Sloss Furnaces," *Ghost Hunters, SyFy* http://www.syfy.com/ghosthunters/episodes/season/s06/episode/e623/sloss_furnaces (accessed Oct 3, 2011). The episode is also on YouTube: "Ghost Hunters – Sloss Furnaces," *YouTube* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xXRdhynF6s (accessed Oct 3, 2011).

[44] Marilyn G. Hood lists six attributes that motivate people's choices for leisure experiences. Marilyn G. Hood, "Staying Away: Why People Choose Not to Visit Museums," in *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, ed. Gail Anderson (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2004), 150-157;Rosenzweig and Thelen observe that socialization is one motivation for museum visitors. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 27; Cameron and Gatewood argue that among other motivations such as learning, entertainment, and socializing with family, visitors to historic sites seek emotional experiences. Catherine M. Cameron and John B. Gatewood, "Excursions Into the Un-Remembered Past: What People Want from Visits to Historical Sites," *The Public Historian* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 108-109.

[45] Director, Gaineswood National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Demopolis, AL, November 5, 2011.

[46] Manager, Museum and Special Programs, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011 and Historical Interpreter 2, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.

claimed that her staff gets asked "constantly."[47] At White Hall, one tour guide reported that

people ask at least once every other day, and another tour guide joked that "if they don't ask,

they're thinking it!"[48] At Old Cahawba, the person most often stationed in the visitor's center

declared, "There's always been some asking about it, [but] since the TV programs have gotten so

popular everybody wants to know where the ghosts are."[49]

One participant admitted that at Old Cahawba, since the tagline is "Alabama's Most

Famous Ghost Town," people's curiosity about ghosts might be primed to expect ghost stories.[50]

At Moundville, the Director stated that people ask "pretty frequently," possibly because visitors

report that "they feel a spirituality here…and I think that could serve as a basis for some people

feeling other things." Moreover, Moundville had human remains on display in the past, and

many people think of the site as a necropolis rather than a living city; thus, "what they think of

when they think of Moundville is dead people."[51] Old Cahawba and Moundville reveal that

visitors ask about the supernatural at historic sites for reasons other than media influence. In fact,

one site hypothesized that the environment of the house may prime visitors to wonder if it is

haunted. A staff member at Ashland noticed that "it seems that when the guests ask if it is

haunted it tends to be in rooms that I would describe as being physically dark because we've

closed the shutters to protect our artifacts from light…or there's some kind of sad tale that we

associate with that room in the interpretation." The staff experimented for about a month with

opening the shutters "just enough to brighten the room without hurting the artifacts." Increasing

the light seemed to help reduce the frequency of visitors' questions, with one staff member

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[47] Historic Preservation and Program Coordinator, Perryville Battlefield, e-mail message to author, September 26, 2011.
[48] Tour Guide 1, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011
and Tour Guide 2, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[49] Museum Aide, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[50] Assistant Site Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[51] Director, Moundville Archaeological Site, interview by author, Moundville, AL, November 4, 2011.

responding, "I have not been asked since that time if the room is haunted."[52] Evidently, the

expectations people have about what characterizes a haunted place may influence their curiosity

if the environment of the site matches their expectations. In fact, Wiseman found that

environmental factors, such as lighting levels, can explain why people report unusual

experiences in haunted locations.[53] If visitors ask if the site is haunted frequently, managers and

interpreters might benefit from exploring what possible factors within their control,

environmental or otherwise, contribute to their visitors' expectations and experiences.

Although most sites only address the subject of ghosts in daily tours if visitors ask, some

sites include ghost stories as a part of their official tour.   At Liberty Hall, the story of the Gray

Lady is an official part of their regular tour. The staff justified this because it is a historic ghost

story, originating in the 1880s from the journal of one of the granddaughters of John and

Margaretta Brown, Mary Mason Scott.[54] Thus, the story "is rooted in [primary source]

documentation" as a belief of the family whose lives they interpret.[55] The story is told in a

documentary shown before the start of the tour and is also included in the tour guide's manual.[56]

However, the tour is not scripted. Tour guides are not required to tell the story and are

encouraged to talk about what interests them, though telling the story is allowed.[57]

Most sites, however, do not incorporate ghost stories as a part of their daily tours.

Ashland, like Liberty Hall, has a ghost story associated with the site that is rooted in historical

documentation. However, unlike Liberty Hall, the story originated as a fictional short story

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[52] Director of Tour Operations, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.
[53] Richard Wiseman et al., "An Investigation Into Alleged 'Hauntings,'" *British Journal of Psychology* 94 (2003): 209.
[54] Former Director, Liberty Hall, "The Gray Lady and the Woman Behind the Story," (lecture notes, *Hunger for History Lunch Time Series,* October 18, 2006), 3.
[55] Tour Administrator, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, March 29, 2012.
[56] Nell Cox, *John and Margaretta Brown and Liberty Hall of Kentucky*, DVD-ROM, (Frankfort, KY: Nell Cox Films, Inc., 2001) and Tour Guide Manual, Liberty Hall, Frankfort, KY, 24-25.
[57] Tour Administrator, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, March 29, 2012.

written by Henry Clay's daughter-in-law for a newspaper contest. The story is about the ghost of Daniel Boone, and since Daniel Boone is not in any way associated with the site or family, the story is not incorporated into interpretation.[58]

Like Ashland, White Hall and Shaker Village do not officially incorporate any ghost stories in their interpretation since the majority of their ghost stories are memorates. For example, at White Hall one staff member reported seeing a disembodied hand on a staircase banister.[59] At Shaker Village, a night watchman reported seeing an apparition of a woman dressed in white in one of the buildings.[60] Consequently, unlike Liberty Hall, or even Ashland, there is no historical basis to justify including such stories in a daily history tour.

Yet, despite the kind of ghost stories or whether or not ghost stories are used in official interpretation, interpreters are nevertheless asked about ghosts. Interpreters are official representatives of the museum, and yet some, like those above, have experiences that they might share with visitors who ask. Interpreters who are asked questions about ghosts face a dilemma between being transmitters of an official point of view and remaining faithful to their personal opinions. For example, Liberty Hall also has a photograph with a blurry, human-sized image at a staircase taken by an insurance adjustor documenting fire damage in the 1960s. Tour guides sometimes show the photograph to people on the tour.[61] Some visitors even request to see the picture, including teachers who bring their students on field trips.[62] Frequent requests to see the photograph at Liberty Hall is the major reason the photograph is sometimes shown during the tour. One participant emphasized that "instead of saying 'here's a picture of the ghost,' we…say

[58] Curator, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.
[59] Park Manager, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[60] Manager, Museum and Special Programs, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.
[61] "The Gray Lady of Liberty Hall on the Main Stairs, ca. 1965," photograph.
[62] Former Director, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, October 3, 2011.

'here's the picture, what do you think it is?'" The participant reasoned that this way "we didn't tell them there was a picture of the ghost" but that "they could make their own decision."[63] Interpreters could then avoid endorsing any belief about the ghost as official representatives of the museum and still maintain their personal views. This may be a helpful example to emulate for managers providing guidance to their interpreters.

With the exception of Liberty Hall, official guidance from the other sites about how to handle visitor's questions about ghosts is entirely lacking. This is surprising, especially if this is such a common question as reported above and if there are unofficial stories circulating in the public through uncontrolled sources such as the internet. Lack of guidance also contributes to interpreters telling different versions of the same story, which is often the case with oral storytelling. For example, at Ashland participants claimed that the Daniel Boone ghost story originated from Henry Clay's daughter in-law and his great-granddaughter. While such details are minor, the participants interviewed at Liberty Hall told much more consistent stories. Surely providing interpreters a written story, especially for the historical stories, can help interpreters feel confident that they are not misinforming the visitors.

Most supervisors do informally make suggestions to interpreters about what to tell visitors. For example, Ashland's director of tour operations explained that "I advise [them] to say that it's not haunted" especially since "I define haunted as being visited by spirits that are troubled" although "I don't feel alone when I'm here," so "I kind of let them tell the story however they want."[64] At White Hall the curator acknowledged that they also do not have any official guidance about the ghost stories, but that "I don't have a problem with the tour guides

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[63] Former Director, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, October 3, 2011.
[64] Director of Tour Operations, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.

telling people ghost stories if it is asked of them…and if it's not all they talk about on tour."[65] At

Shaker Village, supervisors encourage interpreters to handle the visitor's questions "discreetly

and with reserve [because we] don't want to emphasize this when there is a much larger story to

tell,"[66] although they are still free to explain their personal beliefs. A supervisor explained, "We

encourage them to say 'I have had some experiences that I could not explain'" if that particular

person believes they have had supernatural experiences.[67] This flexibility allows interpreters

freedom to express their personal beliefs if they so choose. Interpreters, when asked how

supervisors recommend they handle the questions, gave a range of answers such as "we're

mostly asked not to emphasize the ghost stories," "they have never told us to handle it any

certain way," or to "be honest."[68] These interpreters from the same site received different

impressions from their supervisors about how to handle visitor's questions.

Official, written guidance will help clarify supervisor's expectations for interpreters.

Some might say that if they do not have employees who believe the place is haunted, then there

is no need for guidance. Some might also say they do not want official guidance because they do

not script the tours for the interpreters, since interpretation is an art form where interpreters

should be allowed some freedom.[69] Guidance, however, can provide clarification and help

maintain consistency for any historical ghost stories. Liberty Hall's guidance achieved this. Staff

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[65] Curator, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.

[66] Manager of Museum & Special Programs, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey , Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.

[67] Historic Farm Manager, Shaker Village, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 18, 2011.

[68] Historical Interpreter 1, 2, and 3, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.

[69] For more information on interpretation as an art form, see Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2008). Also, Tami Christopher notes that many house museums' tour guide manuals contain factual information and docents are encouraged to give tours based on their own interests and the visitor's questions. Christopher identifies this as a "problem" that "leads to inconsistencies in the format and content of the tours," while others might argue that instead it allows for variety in the tours and interpretive freedom among the docents, as many will research themselves. Tami Christopher, "House of the Seven Gables" in *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America's Changing Communities*, ed. Amy K. Levin (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2007), 72. Chronis observed that National Park Service guides at Gettysburg are "highly diverse" despite the same licensing that all NPS guides must obtain. Athinodoros Chronis, "Coconstructing Heritage at the Gettysburg Storyscape," *Annals of Tourism Research* 32, no. 2 (April 2005): 390.

at Ashland, on the other hand, did not tell their ghost story consistently and would benefit from clarifying mistakes. Guidance can still allow interpreters to be honest about their personal beliefs at sites where employees believe the place is haunted. In this case the guidance might suggest, then, that the interpreter makes sure the visitor is aware that these stories and beliefs are personal, and is not an official interpretation endorsed by the museum. Additionally, modeling a sensitive approach to other's beliefs will help when providing guidance to interpreters to be sensitive when handling visitor's questions about the paranormal. Since visitor's questions about ghosts can be so common, official guidance can also help mitigate problems such as interpreters offering inappropriate or inaccurate answers. Official guidance, however, does not mean ghost stories should be included in the daily tour. Including suggestions for appropriate answers, or suggestions of what to say or not say in a "frequently asked questions" section in a tour manual is one solution for incorporating written guidance without officially incorporating it into the tour. This way, interpreters will feel confident when handling visitors' questions that they understand their supervisor's expectations, serve as an official representative of the site while remaining honest about their personal beliefs, and accurately relay official versions of historical ghost stories.

As illustrated in the story of the cedar maze, ghost stories have been around for a long time. There is historical evidence that people have believed in ghosts since ancient times, and this belief persists today. Even at historical sites, there are employees with different educational backgrounds and religious beliefs who believe in ghosts. Especially at sites considered haunted, managers should be aware that their employees may hold a variety of beliefs regarding the supernatural. Also, visitors confront interpreters with inquiries into the supernatural with surprising frequency. Despite this frequency, few sites had any official, written guidance to

assist their interpreters in handling these questions. Overall, this research demonstrates that

visitors' interests in the paranormal and employees' beliefs about the place where they work

affects haunted historic sites.   These sites choose to handle this differently and for multiple

reasons. Some allow paranormal investigators, hold different types of ghost programming, or

choose not to do anything at all. The next chapters will discuss these policies.

Chapter Two: "That Night I Decided No More!" Risks of Using Ghost Stories, Programs, and Investigators at Haunted Historic Sites

> In the early 1900's, James "Slag" Wormwood, was foreman of the 'Graveyard Shift,' the period between sunset and sunrise, where a skeleton crew of nearly 150 workers toiled to keep the furnace fed….To impress his supervisors, Wormwood would make his workers take dangerous risks, forcing them to speed up production…. In October of 1906, James 'Slag' Wormwood, lost his footing at the top of the highest blast furnace (known as Big Alice), and plummeted into a pool of melted iron ore. His body melted instantly. ... Many thought that the workers had finally had enough of Wormwood's slave driving, and fed him into the furnace--but no workers were ever brought to trial. …The legend of 'Slag' grew each year after his disappearance. Workers complained of an 'unnatural presence' they increasingly encountered throughout the work site. A night watchman in 1926 sustained injuries after being 'pushed from behind' and told angrily by a deep voice 'to get back to work.' The man, upon searching the grounds, could find no sign of any other living person. In 1947, three supervisors turned up missing. Found unconscious and locked in the small boiler room in the southeastern part of the plant, none of the three could explain exactly what happened to them. All agreed they were approached by a man whose skin appeared badly burned and who angrily shouted at them 'to push some steel.' Probably the most horrifying tale occurred in 1971, when the night before the plant closed, Samuel Blumenthal, the Sloss Night Watchman, who was nostalgically taking a last look about, found himself face to face with 'the most frightening thing he had ever seen.' He described it simply as 'evil,' a 'half man/half demon' who tried to push him up the stairs. When Blumenthal refused, the monster began to beat on him with his fists. Upon examination by Dr. Jack Barlo, Blumenthal was found covered with intense burns. He died before ever returning to Sloss.[1]

This story is made up. There was never a foreman at Sloss Furnaces named Slag Wormwood who fell to his death. The only truth to the story is Yarbrough Companies made it up about six or seven years ago for a Halloween event, *Fright Furnace,* held at Sloss Furnaces National Historic Site.[2] *Fright Furnace* is an event in the same genre of the haunted house, field, and corn maze events whose sole purpose is to entertain its audience by eliciting fear. *Fright*

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[1] "Sloss Fright Furnace," http://www.frightfurnace.com/hauntings/history.asp (accessed September 1, 2011).
[2] Director, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Birmingham, AL, October 28, 2011.

Furnace has two trails, one on the furnace site itself and the other on a field that is part of the property. The event draws approximately 30,000 people per year from across the southeastern United States.

Especially during the current economic crisis, many cultural institutions try to find creative ways to draw bigger crowds and raise money. But, like the fictional Slag Wormwood who cared more about the bottom line than his workers, staff at historic sites may agree to practices without considering risks that may in some way endanger people, collections, or even the values and mission of their site. Of course, every program has advantages and disadvantages that must always be weighed by management at historic sites. Sometimes, the risks may outweigh the potential advantages. Participants in this study revealed several common disadvantages and risks for haunted historic sites. For the most part, because the majority of the sites that participated in this study engage in some sort of ghost programming, participants may have defended the positive benefits of their ghost programming and deemphasized any negative aspects in order to justify their decisions. Participants at sites with no ghost programming were forthcoming with reasons why they do not host such programs. Still, participants raised some of their concerns. Although there is overlap within the categories, participants identified four general risks: financial loss, damage to reputation, circulation of historical inaccuracies, and compromising the values of the organization. Additionally, sacred historic sites saw ghost programming as particularly risky, or more often outright inappropriate. Last, this chapter examines the risks associated with paranormal investigators at historic sites.

One of the most easily measured risks is loss of revenue. Some participants mentioned that their site previously hosted a ghost program but terminated the event due to reduced budgets or high costs including money and labor. Ashland held a program called *Voices of Ashland* close

to Halloween where people acted out tragic events of the family and the ghost story. One staff member, who did not work at Ashland at the time, speculated the reason they cancelled the event was because "there was a lot of energy and effort put into it because there was so many volunteers and staff involved with writing the scripts [and] making costumes…that they may have been dissatisfied with the return on their investment."[3] Thus, Ashland shows that if a ghost program is a fundraiser and does not raise sufficient funds beyond the cost of the event, then staff should consider changing or canceling the event.

A previously held nighttime candlelight cemetery tour at Andersonville also raised the issue of cost. This was not a fundraising event, but due to budget cuts they decided to stop the event. As an evening event, park staff had to be paid time and a half for overtime, in addition to extra operating costs associated with keeping the park open beyond normal hours. The chief of interpretation and education also pointed out they can only accommodate two hundred visitors at a time for the event, so the costs did not outweigh the benefits. The staff at Andersonville did say they would still do a similar type of tour during a different daytime event, however.[4] Even if an event is not a fundraiser, managers must still consider costs such as staff overtime and operating expenses. Andersonville and Ashland provide reminders that cost matters when hosting an event. Of course, managers must measure the costs and benefits to any event and evaluate this after the event itself.

Unfortunately, many risks cannot be measured as easily as money. Another possible risk participants voiced concern about was a site's reputation. Many participants expressed frustration over garnering a haunted reputation because they felt it distracted from a site's educational aims and distracted from the historical lessons they hoped visitors would take away.

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[3] Director of Tour Operations, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.
[4] Chief of Interpretation and Education, Andersonville National Historic Site, interview by author, October 29, 2011.

Additionally, they expressed concerns that, out of fear, some people would not visit the site if it is considered haunted. Lastly, a tarnished reputation could result from a site being perceived as acting distastefully through over-exploitation and commercialization of their ghost programming.

As discussed in chapter one, being declared haunted, usually on the internet or other media, means that visitors ask about the site's ghost stories. Many interpreters indicated frustration when visitors ask because it impinged on their ability to convey other important historical information on regular tours. "There's so much history with Mr. Clay, with this house, with the family…there's just not enough time," one interpreter complained.[5] Sometimes, participants reported feeling frustrated because it seemed like the visitors were not as interested in the historical information they try to communicate. "The history of this home and the home itself are so phenomenal in terms of the importance to not only Kentucky history but American history, I would frequently get offended," confessed one tour guide.[6] Another stated that "when I started here I did not want to talk about the ghost stories. I would almost get angry – not at the tourists, but inside…because I felt like that's not the history of that spot."[7]

Participants feared being branded in the public's mind as a haunted site rather than with the history associated with the site. The director from Gaineswood admitted, "We are not terribly fond of the ghost story….because we, we want people to know about Gaineswood because of its architectural significance and to know the stories of the family, all the family history."[8] Therefore, interpreters may feel annoyed because they think the visitors are more excited about the ghosts than what they are talking about. At Liberty Hall, participants expressed occasional

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[5] Tour Guide 1, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[6] Tour Guide 2, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[7] Curator, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[8] Director, Gaineswood National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Demopolis, AL, November 5, 2011.

frustration when school groups are overly excited about where the Gray Lady appeared.[9] One tour administrator explained that in such cases "we feel like the historic story of the family, the actual story, their contributions, is sometimes overshadowed by the ghost story."[10]

Participants also expressed concern that the public would think their site is scary; a haunted reputation could alienate potential visitors. At Shaker Village, staff did not want to officially include ghost stories or programming for fear of scaring people, especially since the site is also a hotel where guests stay overnight. In contrast to Liberty Hall where school children were overly excited and distracted by the ghost story, Gaineswood's director observed that many local elementary school students do not want to go into the basement during the tour, some "practically at the point of tears" because they have heard the story. She argued, "They have heard the house is haunted and they do not want to go in there. Why should we perpetuate that?...Why should we in catering to the ghost story ruin a historic home experience for kids?"[11] Andersonville's nighttime candlelight tour was not marketed as a haunted event or ghost tour, but many visitors asked if the tour was scary. The chief of interpretation and education explained that he gave a tour for a charter bus group a week before Halloween, made up of a senior demographic. Before the event started, "I was asked multiple times, 'Is this going to be a scary tour?'"[12]

Also, the public could perceive some types of ghost programming as distasteful, discrediting a site. Dydia DeLyser shows that non-commercialization at ghost towns is an important factor for visitors perceiving a site as authentic: "Commercialization, according to staff and visitors, detracts from the ghost-town experience because it interferes with their ability

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[9] Tour Administrator, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, March 29, 2012.

[10] Tour Administrator, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, March 29, 2012.

[11] Director, Gaineswood National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Demopolis, AL, November 5, 2011.

[12] Chief of Interpretation and Education, Andersonville National Historic Site, interview by author, October 29, 2011.

to imagine life in another time."[13] DeLyser's article suggests that a place like Old Cahawba,

"Alabama's Most Famous Ghost Town" should probably avoid hosting a commercialized ghost

program like Sloss Furnace's *Fright Furnace.* Similarly, one participant observed that "a

situation where the supernatural overwhelms the historical…I would not want to see that happen

at any site I worked at." He added, "I think any of these sites, historic house museums…are

looked at as sources of authority…and I think we have a responsibility to maintain that

impression, to maintain that reality - that we are authoritative in what we do."[14] Indeed,

Rosenzweig and Thelen conducted a survey confirming that "Americans put more trust in history

museums and historic sites than in any other sources for exploring the past."[15] If ghost

programming compromised the public's perception of a site's authenticity, then it may

undermine the site's reputation as an authoritative source for historical education and

preservation.

Many staff members understand and take pride in the authority the public places in their

historic sites, and thus strive to present historically accurate information to their visitors. Another

possible risk is having to combat visitor misperceptions based on historical inaccuracies found in

ghost stories associated with their site. For example, the Slag story, "got people convinced that

he actually existed." The director of Sloss Furnaces added, "The biggest disadvantage [of the

event] is you don't control the message."[16] The story of Slag is found on the *Fright Furnace*

website and is the storyline used for one of the two trails. The story is found on the website

under the "Hauntings" tab under "Haunted History."[17] Sloss Furnace has a link to the *Fright*

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[13] Dydia DeLyser, "Authenticity on the Ground: Engaging the Past in a California Ghost Town," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89, no. 4 (December 1, 1999): 617.

[14] Curator, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.

[15] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 105.

[16] Director, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Birmingham, AL, October 28, 2011.

[17] "Sloss Fright Furnace," http://www.frightfurnace.com/hauntings/ (accessed September 1, 2011).

Furnace website from their online event calendar.[18]   Despite a separate event website, neither

Sloss's website nor the *Fright Furnace* website clearly show that a company independent of

Sloss Furnaces plans the event. Neither website offers a disclaimer that the company runs and

receives the majority of the profits from the event, or that Slag's story is not based on historical

events or people. Visitors to the website, then, might assume that Sloss Furnaces is completely

responsible for the event. If so, visitors may trust the story because it is, in their minds, from an

authoritative source. Additionally, given the way Yarbrough Companies wrote the story,

complete with names, dates, and references to larger historical contexts such as immigration and

labor (particularly working conditions), visitors have no reason to suspect that the story is not

based on real historical events or people. Indeed, it is in the company's best interest to lead

people to believe that the story is historically accurate in order to make the story more

convincing and scary. Furthermore, visitors may be less likely to question the story especially

since the event is held at a National Historic Landmark. Thus, Sloss leaves visitors to assume

that the history recounted in the story is accurate. Interpreters, if event-goers return for a tour,

are the only means for rectifying any misconceptions. So despite the fact that the director

admitted that the inaccuracies are problematic, little is done to combat the problem. Possibly as

a way to deflect responsibility for these misconceptions, the director blamed the visitors,

"There's no critical thinking…I would have sat back just going you know, it's a haunted furnace.

Come on, it's not all real. But people don't. They just come to get scared. They don't care, [they

just] drink beer and have a good time."[19] However, through guilt by omission and supporting a

company that profits off their historic site, Sloss itself knowingly endorses pure fiction as fact.

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[18] "Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark," http://www.slossfurnaces.com/ (accessed September 1, 2011).
[19] Director, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Birmingham, AL, October 28, 2011.

The ghost story associated with Gaineswood, published in a book by Kathryn Tucker Windham, is somewhat based on historical events but is mostly inaccurate. Unlike Sloss Furnaces, however, Gaineswood staff aim to rectify the historical inaccuracies found in the story. For instance, they created a Power Point presentation that dissects the story during an annual harvest festival event. According to the story, for example, the family placed Evelyn Carter in a coffin and kept it under the staircase in the cellar until they could take the body north for burial at her home. They point out that people would not have kept a body in the house during this time period, and that there was no person named Evelyn Carter that lived at Gaineswood. George Whitfield's second wife's sister was named Evelyn and the Carter family lived in the house sometime between 1925-1930. They use the presentation to discuss how folklore can be based on "kernels of truth" but change throughout the years as it is retold.[20] So despite any frustrations with historically inaccurate information spread from the story, Gaineswood staff embrace the story as an educational tool to talk about the history of the family and the nature of folklore.

Education is usually a highly valued principle of historic sites and many sites include education as part of their core mission. Generally, one of the main purposes of historic sites is to educate the public. Historic sites often value entertainment as a means to attract visitors and keep their audience engaged in hopes that they will learn while also having fun. Sometimes pure entertainment programs are used as fundraisers in order to support preservation and education goals. Ghost programming can fall into these categories. Nonetheless, museums' struggle to strike a balance between entertainment and education has a long history. Charles Wilson Peale in the early nineteenth century was one of the first to incorporate education and entertainment in a museum. Unfortunately, his sons lost Peale's original focus on education and turned to

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[20] "Facts Behind the Fiction: Myths and Truths of the Gaineswood Ghost Story," Power Point presentation and notes, Gaineswood National Historic Landmark.

entertainment to raise money, ultimately leading to the failure of Peale's museum. Gary Kulik

argues that "Peale's educational vision was lost….By 1850 the building and collections had

become the property of Moses Kimball and P.T. Barnum…[who] blurred the boundaries between

museums and carnival sideshows, between the theatre and the circus, between the real and the

contrived."[21] In the early twentieth century, John Cotton Dana "demanded" that museums once

again focus on education, influencing modern museums and historic sites to value education

while still entertaining their audiences.[22]

    Another risk of ghost programming is compromising the values of a site. Mostly, this

involves using entertainment at the expense of education. For example, Yarbrough Company

begins setting up for their *Fright Furnace* event at Sloss Furnaces in September and the event

lasts until the end of October. The director stated, "It takes up the entire site for most of

September and October, which are the two best months as far as doing other events - school

groups and things." He continued, "Our biggest complaint is it really takes a month for them to

set this thing up and that means we cannot get to parts of the site that we need for interpretive

purposes. So we have to scale back our educational programs and that is disturbing."[23] Thus,

especially for such a major event that requires such a large amount of space, the director admits

that the biggest disadvantage is the competition it creates with the site's space used for

interpretation and educational activities. If education is valued as a core purpose of a historic

site, then events such as *Fright Furnace* can jeopardize this value. When asked how much

revenue the event raises each year, the director answered, "Percentage wise it's not that much. It

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[21] Gary Kulik, "Designing the Past: History Museum Exhibitions from Peale to the Present," in *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment,* eds. Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 5.
[22] Kulik, "Designing the Past," 17.
[23] Director, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Birmingham, AL, October 28, 2011.

made about $4,700 last year."[24] If the event was one of the major revenue generators for operating the site and its educational programs for the other ten months of the year, then losing two months of space for education and interpretation may be justified. If, in fact, the event raises such a small amount of money for Sloss Furnaces, then entertainment is achieved at the expense of education and the boundaries between museum and circus are blurred. Any kind of programming should support the values and mission of its institution, whether it is ghost programming or not.

Thus, some of the risks of ghost programming include compromising values, spreading historical inaccuracies, damaging a site's reputation, and losing money. However, some historic sites have certain characteristics that would make some or all types of ghost programming unsuitable. In general, historic sites are in some way sacred just because a community decides it is important to preserve.[25] Still, the public might consider some historic sites, based on their history or purpose, more sacred than others. These might include burial grounds, sites of tragedy, and actual religious sites. Moundville, Andersonville, and Shaker Village are three such sites.

Moundville Archaeological Park was the site of a living city of an ancient Native American culture and then became a necropolis, a final resting place for hundreds whose names are lost to history. For many Native Americans, Moundville is a sacred site because it is a burial ground.[26] During the annual Native American Festival at Moundville, Matt Cole interviewed

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[24] Director, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Birmingham, AL, October 28, 2011.

[25] Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 12, 58-60

[26] Similarly, Colleen E. Boyd describes how a site became sacred for the Lower Elwha Klallam tribe in Washington State when developers unearthed ancient human remains and controversy began between those who wished to develop and those who wanted to preserve the site. Colleen E. Boyd, "'You See Your Culture Coming Out of the Ground Like a Power': Uncanny Narratives in Time and Space on the Northwest Coast," *Ethnohistory* 56, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 714.

Jimmy Yellowhorse, a Cherokee who stated, "this place is very, very sacred to me."[27] Native

Americans are not the only people who feel the site is sacred. One staff member emphasized that

"many of our visitors as soon as they arrive here [say] that this is a spiritual place." Especially

because it is considered a sacred site, Moundville does not host any sort of ghost programming.

In fact, according to the director, one time "we did have someone call who was really upset

because they had heard we were having a big Halloween event, and oh it was even so insensitive,

it was… called the 'Trail of Fears' like Trail of Tears! And that's just horrible! And no, we

weren't doing that! But someone else was…but we had to explain that's not us, we would never

do that."[28] The fact that someone was upset about an event that Moundville never did

demonstrates possible backlash if people perceive staff decisions as culturally insensitive at

sacred sites.

As a site of extreme tragedy, Andersonville is also a sacred site. Yet, under the definition

set forth in the introduction, they did host a ghost program, although "that's not what the park

advertises it as."[29] If Andersonville marketed the event similarly to White Hall and Old

Cahawba's ghost programs, *Scandals and Ghost Stories* tour and *Haunted History* tour, people

might think the National Park Service was insensitive to the thousands of people who died

tragically at Andersonville. Certainly, neither Andersonville nor Moundville could appropriately

host a program like Sloss Furnace's *Fright Furnace.* Andersonville's nighttime cemetery tour

shows that certain kinds of ghost programming might be possible at sacred sites without stirring

controversy.

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[27] Matt Cole, "Festival Offers Showcase for Culture, Knowledge," *The Tuscaloosa News,* October 6, 2011.
[28] Director, Moundville Archaeological Site, interview by author, Moundville, AL, November 4, 2011.
[29] Chief of Interpretation and Education, Andersonville National Historic Site, interview by author, October 29, 2011.

As a site of a religious utopian group that set up its communities based on their "religious principle of separation from the world," Shaker Village is literally a sacred historic site.[30] For this reason, staff members expressed concern about ever hosting any kind of ghost programming. The manager of museums and programs admitted that such programming "could be a source of revenue" but might come off as "cheesy." Like Moundville staff's concern for cultural sensitivity, she also worried that the staff did not want to jeopardize approval by being "disrespectful of the living Shakers."[31] Therefore, Moundville, Andersonville, and Shaker Village demonstrate that if a site is sacred, ghost programming may not be appropriate.

Many participants also raised concerns regarding paranormal investigators that shared similarities to those associated with ghost programming. Paranormal investigators highlight the risks associated with ghost programming in general, but also raise concerns separate from programming. A haunted reputation results in paranormal investigators contacting these places, sometimes so incessantly that it annoys staff. Some sites do not use them because of their concerns over cultural sensitivity at sacred-type sites; although, some groups will come anyway despite policies that may not allow paranormal investigators. Managers who allow paranormal investigators may put their collections at risk or make themselves open to safety and liability concerns. Last, some sites that used paranormal investigators seem to use them without first considering why they allow them. Using paranormal investigators to conduct research to prove whether or not a place is haunted does not actually succeed in proving anything. If a site allows paranormal investigators, they should contribute to the values and mission of the institution through financial support or educational value.

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[30] Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 98.

[31] Manager, Museum and Special Programs, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.

Without prompting, some participants discussed paranormal investigator groups contacting them requesting permission to conduct an investigation at their site. One declared, "We get an awful lot of inquiries from people wanting to conduct paranormal investigations."[32] One answered, "Yes! All the time…Seriously, a month or two does not go by that I don't get a local, an Alabama paranormal group sending in a request."[33] Staff at Shaker Village are contacted "every week."[34] Thus, an unintended consequence of a haunted reputation can mean paranormal investigators will incessantly contact staff.

Participants noted several reasons for not using paranormal investigators. Moundville's policy, for instance, does not allow these groups out of cultural sensitivity toward Native Americans. The director emphasized, "We have heard from a number of Native Americans that they really frown upon discussions of paranormal activity and paranormal investigators at a place that is sacred to them. They view it like it would be letting them into a hallowed cathedral, that it's sacrilegious to them."[35] As Boyd explains, paranormal investigators are offensive because "unlike paranormal investigators who use technology in places believed to be haunted in the hopes of 'capturing' the dead on digital recordings, Klallam people are concerned restless ancestors will find and 'capture' them."[36] In other words, ancestral spirits should not be disturbed so that they in turn do not disturb the living. So at Moundville when "we do have requests from paranormal researchers…we explain the reason we don't endorse it."[37] However, Moundville has a publicly accessible campground as a part of its site, and some groups camp there and conduct unofficial investigations. The director added sometimes the groups ask to

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[32] Executive Director, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.
[33] Director, Gaineswood National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Demopolis, AL, November 5, 2011.
[34] Manager, Museum and Special Programs, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, survey, Harrodsburg, KY, November 21, 2011.
[35] Director, Moundville Archaeological Site, interview by author, Tuscaloosa, AL, November 4, 2011.
[36] Boyd, "You See Your Culture," 707.
[37] Director, Moundville Archaeological Site, interview by author, Tuscaloosa, AL, November 4, 2011.

camp and "we tell them 'well, there's nothing we can do to stop you from doing that.' We do reiterate that they have to abide by all of the regular park rules," adding, "they can't do anything to a site that would cause any sort of damage…and they can't do anything that impedes upon the visitor experience for other campers." On occasion some Native American groups called the director to complain. He stated, "we've had to explain to them that we did not endorse it, that they camped out here…and they understood I think after that."[38]

The leading concern regarding paranormal investigators remains the threat of safety for collections and people. Especially at historic houses, paranormal investigators pose a threat to fragile and irreplaceable artifacts. Participants identified that it was particularly problematic that paranormal investigators want to conduct investigations in the dark. At Ashland, "we see investigators coming in as a threat to our collection because of their operations tending to be at night…. We have things that are just out in the open that could be broken!" She joked, "We would be more afraid of groups of people going through the house unescorted at night perhaps bumping into an artifact and destroying an artifact than we would be of meeting Henry himself!"[39] The curator identified other risks: "I really don't want infrared or UV or god knows what else affecting my collections!"[40] The executive director emphasized, "My whole focus is not from the historical perspective – it's from the liability issue."[41]

White Hall allowed paranormal investigators in the past but at the time of the interviews temporarily suspended this policy. The main factor that led to this decision was a bad experience with one particular group. The park manager observed, "On the whole they are really good and more conscientious than I am even!" Although one group, "they were crazy! They will never

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[38] Director, Moundville Archaeological Site, interview by author, Moundville, AL, November 4, 2011.
[39] Director of Tour Operations, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.
[40] Curator, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.
[41] Executive Director, Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 27, 2011.

come again. I mean one came drunk!...You have to decide when it's time to stop, that your collection is at risk, that your reputation is at risk. And that night I decided no more."[42] Particularly at historic house museums, certain expectations exist about how people should behave in order to preserve the artifacts such as walking instead of running, not using flash photography, not going behind barriers, and not touching artifacts. The curator elaborated, "They can be a problem because they don't treat the place like a museum…you have a greater risk of an artifact getting damaged. They take a lot of flash photography and they use video equipment…I think they are just coming to play." She added, "I have yet to see anything [from these groups] that truly makes me believe that anything is going on when they are here."[43] Indeed, the evidence collected by paranormal researchers is not a scientific test and is an invalid justification for using paranormal investigators. The reason they had allowed groups in the first place was because "I do charge them…but I don't get them often enough to make it profitable enough to really take up that much time."[44] So at this time, the staff decided the benefits did not outweigh the risks. In summary, paranormal investigators can pose risks to collections and safety. The experience of the staff from White Hall serve as an example of the risks paranormal investigators can pose to their facility, collections management, and conservation policies.[45]

The story of Slag Wormwood is ultimately a story of revenge for the careless and heartless overseer who had no concern for the safety and wellbeing of his men. The story provides some catharsis when Slag meets an untimely and unfortunate end. His story can serve as a warning, albeit extreme, for historic sites if they too do not consider the risks involved in

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[42] Park Manager, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[43] Curator, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[44] Park Manager, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[45] For more on museum's responsibilities to ensure the safety of their collections, see Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 217-234; See also "American Association of Museums Code of Ethics," http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/coe.cfm (accessed May 4, 2012).

ghost programming. The most common risks associated with ghost programming, as identified

through this study, include financial loss, damage to reputation, circulation of historical

inaccuracies, and compromising the values of the organization. Ghost programming is especially

risky, and usually avoided, at particularly sacred sites. Paranormal investigators could pose some

of the same risks for sites, but also have unique risks associated with them. Historic site

managers should carefully consider all of these potential risks before hosting and after evaluating

ghost programming. If the risks outweigh the benefits then the program is probably not a wise

choice, but a program should not be dismissed if the benefits outweigh the risks. As

demonstrated in the next chapter, some sites found effective solutions to some of these problems

and the advantages outweighed the risks.

Chapter Three: "You're Going to Feel Blessed!" The Benefits of Using Ghost Stories, Programs, or Investigators at Haunted Historic Sites

> A few years ago some paranormal investigators were here doing EVPs [in the cemetery near the Bell family gravemarker]….I was standing a few feet away and they called me... "come here, we got a clear one! It's saying 'donkey.' What does donkey gotta do with the Bell's?"….When they played it for me there was a very clear ghostly voice, but it wasn't saying 'donkey' it was saying "Don' and there was this pause, "key."….It gave me chills because Don is…[one of our employees]….The other word "key" was very interesting because I'd been doing some research in some obscure court records and apparently the reason for the fight between these two families was a key. The other family was contending that the Bell's were putting their slave Plez…they were forcing him basically to go around the town and steal keys out of the store fronts. And then at night they'd all come back, steal out of the store, and then take a match and burn the store down so no one would know it had been burglarized. So I thought how interesting that this ghostly voice, at this location said, "Don" and "key." But why the two together? Well it only took me a day to figure that out….When I showed up the next morning to meet Don…he said,… "I'm so sorry, but I've lost my keys." But that's not the end of the story. I said to Don, "Wouldn't it be creepy if we went up to that cemetery and we looked at the Bell monument and your keys were right there lying next to the Bell monument?"…So we went up here and well, the keys weren't here. But later that day some horseback riders that were here at the park brought Don his keys….They didn't find it in this cemetery, they found it all the way at the other end of town in the slave cemetery lying near the grave of Plez, the Bell's key stealing slave. And that's the truth![1]

One of the employees at Old Cahawba Archaeological Site tells this memorate during its

annual *Haunted History Ghost Tour*. This story is based on a personal employee's experience,

but also draws on historical knowledge about the place. The story would still be interesting if it

only seemed that a ghost was warning them that Don lost his keys, but the story is enriched with

the implied connection of the ghost to an actual person tied to the history of the place. Yet,

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[1] "Old Cahawba" Alabama Ghost Trail, YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haRb4LO2OAA (accessed September 1, 2011). As part of a growing literature on interpreting slavery at historic sites, see James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton , eds., *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

unlike the made up story of Slag Wormwood found in chapter two, this story draws from documented historical evidence and personal experiences. The story of Plez demonstrates the interwoven connections between history and ghosts at historic sites. Using a variety of secondary literature from museum management, historical interpretation, place-making, and folklore studies, participants' perspectives from the interviews, and observations of two ghost programs, this chapter explores potential benefits and examples of ghost programming best practices at historic sites. As seen in chapter two, the risks associated with ghost programming and the sacred nature of some sites may mean ghost programming is an unwise decision for some historic site managers. However, the examples of programming in this chapter serve as models for managers to use at their site. As seen with Andersonville, for instance, some types of ghost programming can be possible even for sacred sites. Other sites in this chapter provide creative examples of programming that require little overhead costs, draw new audiences, and incorporate historical pedagogy. Even if a site does not use ghost programming, it is still important for managers to understand how the advantages and disadvantages of ghost programming reflect many of the same issues found in historic site development, interpretation, and management. Indeed, ghost programming can achieve many of the same benefits as other types of interpretation and programming at historic sites. Although not always discrete and mostly fluid in category, the benefits include fundraising and public relations opportunities; collaborating with the community, sharing authority, and incorporating multiple disciplines; combining entertainment and education; building community and creating a connection to place; and creating an emotional connection to the past for visitors. After investigating these possibilities, the chapter analyzes how some managers at historic sites use paranormal investigator groups for advantageous purposes that reflect many of the same advantages of ghost programming. By

exploring the benefits of ghost programming, recommendations will be made for managers of historic sites, allowing them to articulate the advantages ghost programming may have for their sites. While many of these advantages are the same as other types of programming, ghost programming can provide unique opportunities to appeal to popular interests in the supernatural, to draw personal connections to the past, and to inspire people to consider the universal question of what happens when we die.

First, while some sites had ghost programs that were too costly or did not raise enough money, staff at other sites claimed that one benefit of ghost programming was its ability to creatively market their site to new audiences and successfully fundraise. Ghost programs from Liberty Hall, White Hall, Old Cahawba, and Sloss Furnaces highlight these benefits. For example, staff from all four sites claimed that their events sell out most of the time. Some events require less overhead costs and staff time than others, which allows for more revenue from ticket sales. At Old Cahawba, "we have very little overhead" for the event because "we don't need to reinvent Cahawba, we just need to take advantage of its natural resources, which are the ghost stories…[and] the natural ambiance. You go down there after dark and it's a spooky place, you don't have to recreate anything."[2] In contrast, Liberty Hall's event and White Hall's Ghost Walk require costumes. The assistant director at Cahawba admitted the biggest expense is the cotton wagon, which they use for other purposes year round. The event requires very few volunteers and minimal preparation because it is essentially the same event every year. In its twentieth year, White Hall's *Ghost Walk* event continues to raise money. Staff continually evaluate the event and "every year we question whether it's profitable to do, but it brings in too much money not to continue."[3]

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[2] Assistant Site Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[3] Park Manager, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.

As these sites demonstrate, some events can be successful fundraisers. Events, however, tend to generate little income for the effort required and are better used for marketing and generating public support.[4] All four sites stressed that their ghost programming attracted new and different visitors to their site. One interpreter declared, "I think you're a fool if you don't include it [ghost stories] into the programming in some way. In these types of economic times anybody you get through the door is one more person…So I think it's a great marketing tool."[5] The audiences include "people who normally aren't attracted to historic sites."[6] One person observed that the visitors "are different people. We get more people who have never been here before…which is really exciting to me. So we're opening it up and it gives them an opportunity to see that we also have [other events]."[7] She noted, "We get a lot of people that want to come back for a daytime tour so they get all of the history instead of just a smattering of it, it piques their interest."[8] One curator stated their event gets "a younger group," referring to adolescents and young adults, "in to a place like this because historic sites are so competing with movies and video games and theme parks nowadays." She added, "I also think anything that's going to get them in and get them interested is worth it. Because if you interest them enough by telling them some ghost stories they may go tell their families and may come back." Thus, ghost programming may appeal to certain age demographics, but have the added benefit of bringing in others who hear about the site secondarily. She continued, "They may be coming for the ghost stories, but you throw in some real history and that gets them interested too. So if it's gonna

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[4] Judy P. Hohmann, "Money Talk: An Introduction to Private Sector Fund Raising for Archives," in *Advocating Archives: An Introduction to Public Relations for Archivists,* ed. Elise Freeman Finch (Metuchen, NJ: Society of American Archivists and The Scarecrow Press, 1994): 24.
[5] Tour Guide 2, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[6] Assistant Site Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[7] Park Manager, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[8] Park Manager, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.

bring the bodies in, I'm all for it."[9] The director of Sloss Furnaces claimed that *Fright Furnace's*

popularity is one of the best assets for the site because it "brings a lot of people who would not

come otherwise, about 30,000, which is great." The director discussed how he wanted to

develop plans with Yarbrough company to acquire the contact information of event attendees in

order to "follow up with other things that we are doing" and encourage them to come back to

visit.[10]

     As noted in chapter two, many participants complained that they sometimes felt annoyed

when, because of their haunted reputation, visitors asked about the ghost stories. They felt this

competed with the information they tried to communicate to the visitors during regular tours.

White Hall addressed this problem by creating a separate, entertaining ghost program. During the

Ghost Stories and Scandals tour, interpreters can satisfy visitor's curiosity to hear ghost stories

and create separation from routine tours. When visitors ask about ghost stories on a regular tour,

they may tell them a quick story, but then suggest the guest attend the annual event.[11] Thus,

separate programs not only draw new audiences but also draw regular visitors back for special

events.

     A second benefit of ghost programming includes opportunities to share authority and

collaborate with the community. Michael Frisch explains sharing authority means "to redefine

and redistribute intellectual authority, so that this might be shared more broadly…rather than

continuing to serve as an instrument of power and hierarchy."[12] Sharing authority at historic

sites creates opportunities for multiple perspectives beyond the site's official interpretations.

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[9] Curator, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.

[10] Director, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Birmingham, AL, October 28, 2011.

[11] Tour Guide 2, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.

[12] Michael Frisch, ed., *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), xx. See also Robert R. Archibald, *The New Town Square: Museums and Communities in Transition* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2004), 61-75.

Additionally, community collaborations help build positive relationships with other museums and historic sites, local government agencies, and other community groups. Often, these collaborations prove to be mutually beneficial. For instance, David Coles and Deborah Welch discuss public history projects at their school, Longwood College, where public history students participate in ghost programming hosted by the Chesterfield Historical Society and Saylor's Creek Battlefield. Students dressed up in costumes and "made very convincing 'ghosts.'" [13] Coles and Welch offers this as an example "to emphasize the ways in which public history can be used to reach out to the community…and bring all those interested in history together."[14] Managers at historic sites can use ghost programming to partner with and foster an interest in history and their site in particular for a variety of community members.

Liberty Hall partners with another local historic site and the city of Frankfort to host the event, *Ghosts of Frankfort*. Liberty Hall is one main stop along the tour. This partnership turns what would be a small event into a larger event that the city then advertises. Similarly, Old Cahawba partners with Selma, Alabama's Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Department to host the *Haunted History Tour*. Old Cahawba's event is held on a Friday night. They also have a daytime walking tour the next morning called *Hear the Dead Speak*, where a tour guide points out evidence on the landscape, such as non-native plant species, to decipher "messages left behind by the long dead inhabitants" of Old Cahawba.[15] That Saturday night, Selma hosts a candlelight tour in its historic cemetery. The Chamber of Commerce collects ticket money for all three events and offers weekend package deals that include staying at a local haunted hotel. This cooperation succeeds in drawing more tourists to the Selma area for the weekend, which in

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[13] David Coles and Deborah Welch, "Bringing Campus and Community Together: Doing Public History at Longwood College," *The History Teacher* (February, 2002). http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ht/35.2/coles.html (accessed August 12, 2011), 8.
[14] Coles and Welch, "Bringing Campus and Community Together," 1.
[15] "Old Cahawba's Hear the Dead Speak Daylight Walking Tour," 2011, flyer.

turn draws more visitors to Old Cahawba's event. Old Cahawba's partnership with Selma allows the event to be more widely advertised than if it hosted the event exclusively. Cooperation extends beyond these parties as the Dallas County Sheriff officers help with parking and a county commissioner tells ghost stories around a bonfire. Before Old Cahawba started the event, it built community support by reaching out to "the main minister in town, the tourism department, the chamber of commerce, [and] economic development people." Some of this was in response to concerns on the part of their parent organization, the Alabama Historical Commission, that "some fundamentalist Christian types" would denounce the event. Collaboration seemed to succeed in mitigating any religious controversy. The director explained that gathering community support "allowed us to go forward with it [the event] and not feel so exposed" and so far, "no one's complained."[16] Partnerships with multiple government agencies and community groups help Liberty Hall and Old Cahawba advertise their events and develop community support.

Old Cahawba also partners with a local paranormal investigator group who, as a major part of the event, conducts a ghost hunt with visitors during the *Haunted History* tour. For the second half of the event, staff drive visitors to an old slaves' quarters where the paranormal investigators take over. Allowing this group to lead this part of the tour is an example of professional staff sharing authority with a local community group, which also allows the site to present multiple perspectives about the supernatural. Handing over this part of the tour to a different group implies to the visitors that the staff does not necessarily endorse everything the group may say.

White Hall partners with the Eastern Kentucky University theatre department for the *Ghost Walk* event. Trained theatre students provide help at White Hall by giving a professional

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[16] Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.

performance. The students, in turn, benefit from an additional acting opportunity. Moreover, half of the proceeds for the event go toward a scholarship fund for Eastern Kentucky University theatre students. This also appeals to visitors' altruistic sensibilities as they can feel satisfaction in supporting both White Hall and a local University's arts program.

White Hall's partnership with a theatre department also shows how historic sites incorporate multiple disciplines into their ghost programming for educational and entertainment purposes. Many historic sites also incorporate folk studies for similar purposes. This allows historians to take interdisciplinary approaches to their interpretation and programming. As the sites show, ghost programming is especially conducive for incorporating theatre and folklore that provide enriching experiences for their visitors. However, some people elevate historical methods above others and resist incorporating other disciplines. In some ways this is to be expected, as historic sites interpret history. As Scott Magelssen found, historical interpreters and curators often perceive theatre as having the "stereotypical connotations…[as] big, emotive, nonrealistic, and something that 'rings false' with visitors."[17] To them, theatre is meant for purely entertainment purposes. On the contrary, he maintains that theatre can contribute to pedagogical goals, and that historians should "embrace the possibilities allowed by this admission."[18]

As with theatre, historic sites can also use folklore to achieve pedagogical goals. At Gaineswood, one staff member claimed, "Folklore has kernels of truth….but historians deal with fact, and authenticity makes a historic site significant."[19] The staff at Gaineswood admitted that they "are not terribly fond of the ghost story." As discussed in the previous chapter, this lack of

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[17] Scott Magelssen, *Living History Museums: Undoing History through Performance* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 118.
[18] Magelssen, *Living History Museums*, 124.
[19] Curator, Gaineswood National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Demopolis, AL, November 5, 2011.

fondness is mostly due to their frustration about having a haunted reputation. However, the

director declared, "We don't see the ghost story of Gaineswood as being one of our educational

aims at all."[20] Yet, as seen in chapter two, Gaineswood uses their folklore for educational

purposes. Robert Archibald argues that "the role of the public historian is not as authority, but

rather as a facilitator of useful storymaking based on fact."[21] William Lynwood Montell

maintains, "Folklore is not the falsehood of history."[22] Of course, some stories are false, such as

the story of Slag Wormwood at Sloss Furnaces. However, most of the stories at historic sites,

like the story of Plez, contain historical elements. Arden Bucholz recommends that historians

revisit storytelling as a tool for education. He laments, "Much of history is no longer a good

story but an attempt at scientific fact, an analytical, arid, tedious step-by-step proof, or more

likely refutation, of something, smothered in mental care."[23] This kind of history, for the general

public, is generally boring. For historians, storytelling "has become a forgotten art" whereas

"narrative history [is] the main pillar of the history of all previous cultures."[24] Using folklore

does not have to be dismissed as undermining historical methods and can be used as a legitimate

pedagogical tool. Therefore, the staff of Gaineswood should appreciate the educational

opportunities their story presents. Managers at historic sites should remain open to the different

ways folklore and theatre can be used to engage with history more deeply. Liberty Hall, Old

Cahawba, White Hall, and Gaineswood prove that ghost programming can provide creative

opportunities for collaborating with different people, agencies, and organizations in a community

that foster positive relationships, allow for shared authority, provide mutual benefit to both

parties, and incorporate multiple disciplines.

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[20] Director, Gaineswood National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Demopolis, AL, November 5, 2011.
[21] Archibald, *The New Town Square,* 13.
[22] William Lynwood Montell, *Ghosts Across Kentucky (*Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), xx.
[23] Arden Bucholz, "History, Stories and Children," *The History Teacher* 4, no. 3 (March 1971): 39.
[24] Bucholz, "History, Stories and Children," 35.

Of course, a major purpose in theatre and folklore is to tell an entertaining story. Thus, another possible advantage of ghost programming is the ability to combine entertainment and education. Freeman Tilden explains that entertainment is part of historical interpretation: "We cannot forget that people are with us mainly seeking enjoyment, not instruction."[25] He asserts, "While entertainment is not a proper end of the art…the opposite of presenting his material in an entertaining manner is – simply being dull."[26] Robert Janes argues that museums are "institution[s] of learning in that ambiguous realm which straddles education and entertainment, and is in a position to provide knowledge and meaning as a so-called leisure activity in a manner far more accessible than universities."[27] Neil Kotler and Philip Kotler suggest combining entertainment and education as a marketing strategy for museums. They suggest embracing "edutainment," the idea that entertainment can coexist with education.[28] Kotler and Kotler maintain that the "manager's role is to…demonstrate that opening up the museum to new and broader audiences will not jeopardize integrity and standards."[29] Stephen Weil indicates that most museum visitors seek entertainment at museums as "a form of diversion competitive with film, theater, dance, and other modes of entertainment." Weil does not interpret this negatively, but instead argues that museums should provide "entertainment, education, and experience" for their visitors.[30] Thus, entertainment does not have to exclude pedagogical goals at historic sites. Indeed, entertaining ghost programs can also be educational.

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[25] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2008), 55.
[26] Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage,* 163.
[27] Robert Janes, "Persistent Paradoxes," in *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, ed. Gail Anderson (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2004), 388.
[28] Neil Kotler and Philip Kotler, "Can Museums be All Things to All People?" in *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, ed. Gail Anderson (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2004), 180.
[29] Kotler and Kotler, 183.
[30] Stephen E. Weil, *Making Museums Matter* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 66.

As seen in chapter two, some sites sacrifice education for entertainment in their ghost programming. However, many other sites demonstrate that ghost programming can incorporate both. One person insisted, "We tell authentic ghost stories, which to us means we don't make up anything. It's all folklore that's been passed down or [involves] some personal experiences."[31] Drawing from the folklore and history associated with their site helps places combine entertainment and education. Liberty Hall, for instance, uses the story of the Gray Lady directly in their tour. Tour guides use the story to talk about other historical issues associated with the family and the nineteenth century. Since the ghost story is about Margaretta Brown's grief for her dead children, the tour administrator explained that the story offers a way to discuss historically relevant issues such as mortality, grief and mourning practices, hygiene, and medicine.[32] The story of Plez from Old Cahawba told at the beginning of this chapter is an example of a site using memorates to connect to historical events and people. White Hall's interpreters expertly used this technique as well. Using many memorates from staff over the years, interpreters connected modern personal experiences to the history of the Clay family during their *Scandals and Ghost Stories* tour. For example, in describing strange noises employees have heard over the years, the tour guide told the following story:

> Several guides have heard music boxes in the house. The thing with music boxes is, is that we have never, ever had a music box in the home. And in quite a fact, Mr. Clay refused to have a music box in his house. In his memoirs he equates a music box with an organ grinder and his monkey. So he had a real thing against music boxes! But we understand that his second wife, fifteen year old Dora Richardson, married to Mr. Clay when he was 83, had a music box and that he took the music box away and threw it out the front door. Is it possible that the music box that we're hearing is Dora's spirit rebelling against her old husband?[33]

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[31] Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[32] Tour Administrator, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, March 29, 2012.
[33] *Scandals and Ghost Stories Tour*, White Hall State Historic Site, July 16, 2011 at 8:00 PM.

Tour attendees learned Cassius Clay, as an elderly man, married a fifteen year old girl. The visitors also learned that there must have been some tension in the marriage since Clay destroyed his wife's music box. In closing the story, the interpreter connected an employee's modern experiences with an historical person associated with the house by speculating that the sounds employees hear are the ghost of Dora. This is just one of many examples where folklore is used to both entertain and educate by using a mysterious ghost story to teach the audience about the historical events and people interpreted by the site. Also, the tour guide's last sentence was an open-ended question. This technique allowed the guide to speculate about the presence of a spirit without actually claiming whether or not employee's experiences are due to supernatural or natural causes.

Although these sites succeed in connecting the history of their site with folklore or use theatrical techniques to depict their historical characters, these sites often fall short in using the stories to draw on larger historical themes and engage visitors in a "meaningful and critical history."[34] As Motz argues, folklore "serves to link individual sensory perception and experience with group norms and interpretive frameworks."[35] In other words, interpreters can interpret the historical themes found in ghost stories. The story above from White Hall about Dora, for instance, could be used to draw conclusions about the nature of marriage during this time, since the seventy-year gap in age between bride and groom shocks modern audiences. The story of Plez could be used as an opening to interpret historical themes of power relationships between masters and slaves and slave resistance. As an illustration, an interpreter could observe for the audience how interesting it is that the other family accusing the Bells did not accuse Plez, and speculate that maybe Plez resisted his masters by telling the other family what was

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[34] Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 27.

[35] Marilyn Motz, "The Practice of Belief," *The Journal of American Folklore* 111, no. 441 (Summer 1998): 350.

happening. Regardless of any specific interpretive speculations or conclusions that may be drawn from the stories, the point remains that many of these ghost stories, when connected to historical events and people, provide opportunities for provoking an audience to think more critically about a subject beyond giving them an interesting story that introduces them to some of the people or events of the site. Magelssen agrees that theatre and storytelling allow for opportunities to explore themes from perspectives that may be absent from documented sources. He argues, "Because the just-the-facts approach and reality effect disallow treatment of stories repressed, silenced, and relegated to the margins of historical discourse, performative practices may be used to make new histories that more appropriately give voice to the marginal than the one currently available in the extant records."[36] Indeed, White Hall's *Ghost Stories and Scandals* tour is used to talk about the more scandalous history associated with the family not normally covered during a regular tour.

Education and entertainment are important purposes for museums and historic sites, but there are other purposes as well. Weil stresses that good museums should "make a positive difference in the quality of people's lives." Education is, most would agree, an important means for making a positive difference in people's lives. Embedded in an educational and entertainment framework, ghost programming also has the potential to help build community and develop a connection to place. Weil argues, "Because of its relative informality, museum going…is almost unique among cultural activities in providing the opportunity for valuable social interactions." Museums can "enrich already existing relationships" between people and "contribute to the creation of important new relationships." This development of relationships allows for "a distinctive public space, in which diverse elements of the community might

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[36] Magelssen, *Living History Museums*, 35.

intermingle in ways not readily available elsewhere."[37] People's connection to place is strengthened when intergenerational storytelling and learning occurs.[38]

Most ghost programs required visitors to remain passive spectators. However, the *Haunted History Tour* at Old Cahawba shows that ghost programming has the potential to create opportunities for meaningful social interactions. The director observed that they often have a variety of age groups at the event, as well as a mix of people from the local area and out of town. For example, the story of the wampus cat was a popular story in the 1960s when community teenagers parked their cars at Cahawba and heard a blood-curdling scream they attributed to a supernatural cat creature. When the staff tell this story during the *Haunted History* tour, it has sometimes started "this wonderful interplay of all these older people going 'yeah, let me tell you my wampus cat experience here at Cahawba!'"[39] The assistant director also noticed that the event attracts many different age groups: "When we relate that story [of the wampus cat] during the Halloween event, usually there's a few of those old timers who will raise their hand and say 'yeah, that's exactly how it happened, that's the way I heard [the cat scream].'"[40] Also, staff transport visitors on a cotton wagon to the different places along the tour. The assistant director rides on the wagon to tell stories while the visitors are transported between the sites. However, he also allows time for everyone to chat with each other. He observed, "I see them looking at their cameras and checking out the photos and passing them around."[41] On the wagon, people strike up conversations with strangers sitting next to them and also talk about their reactions to the stories they had just heard. At the end of the tour, visitors can gather around a bonfire and tell ghost stories with each other. One of the county commissioners facilitates storytelling at the

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[37] Weil, 60, 67, 68.
[38] Archibald, 56.
[39] Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[40] Assistant Site Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[41] Assistant Site Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.

bonfire for the visitors and shares his own stories. Here visitors can also share their personal beliefs about ghosts and the afterlife. [42] Thus, Old Cahawba's *Haunted History* tour provides an example of how ghost programming can create meaningful social interactions where people share their experiences and beliefs with each other.

Ghost programs, and telling ghost stories, present an additional benefit for historic sites by enhancing a sense of connection to place. David Glassberg defines sense of place as "the role of the physical environment in the formation of individual identity."[43] Sense of place is "shaped by our personal experiences and memories but also by the products of our larger culture, its art and literature, its commemorative ceremonies and historical markers." Historic sites in and of themselves create a sense of place simply because they are designated as special spaces preserved on the landscape.[44] Robert Archibald introduces the idea of "storied places."[45] This is the idea that stories associated with a place give that place significance. Both historical objects and places "stimulate memory, make the stories tangible, make the past palpable, but without the stories they are devoid of meaning."[46]

For instance, many participants emphasized how ghost stories are intimately connected to their sites. This folklore, therefore, helps create a sense of place among people of the community for their site and adds to people's desires to preserve the place. The Gray Lady of Liberty Hall, for instance, has become a symbol for the town as evidenced when she was featured in the local paper's editorial cartoon as a wispy figure wearing a derby hat. The caption reads, "Frankfort's downtown ghost – 'the Gray Lady' arrives for Derby Fest."[47] The tour administrator

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[42] *Haunted History Tour*, Old Cahawba, Selma, AL, October 21, 2011 at 9:00 PM.
[43] David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 113.
[44] Glassberg, 116, 124.
[45] Archibald, 25.
[46] Archibald, 79.
[47] Linda Boileau, "Frankfort's Downtown Ghost Cartoon," *The State Journal* (May 6, 2011).

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acknowledged that "people in Frankfort are interested and kind of grow up knowing this story." She once had an elderly lady who grew up on the same street as Liberty Hall tell her that as a little girl "she spent hours sitting on the fence outside of Liberty Hall staring at the windows" trying to catch a glimpse of the Gray Lady.[48]

Conjuring ghosts through storytelling at historic sites can also help visitors feel a sense of place. Colleen E. Boyd argues that spirits of the dead help us in "articulating our intangible relationships to specific places."[49] Michael Mayerfeld Bell defines ghosts more broadly than simply the spirits of the dead, but instead uses the terms to refer to "a felt presence…that possesses and gives a sense of social aliveness to a place."[50] These ghosts can be spirits of the dead, but can also be ghosts of the living or ghosts of the future. He uses himself as an example, explaining that he can see "my own ghosts as a child" playing at his grandmother's cottage.[51] He distinguishes that these ghosts are not "mere memories" on a landscape, but emphasizes the sense of felt presence one feels in experiencing these ghosts.[52] Using his definition, historic sites conjure ghosts simply by talking about the people who occupied the site in the past. He concludes that "places are, in a word, personed – even when there is no one there." Still, he talks about spirits of the dead when providing an example of college students feeling uneasy about the ghost of a student who committed suicide in a college dorm. He states, "The ancient belief in the release of the soul upon death, and its tendency to lurk about…is one continuing dimension of the social experience of place." He argues, "We often experience spirits in particular spaces. In so doing, we give a space social meaning and thereby make it a place."[53] At White Hall, staff

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[48] Tour Administrator, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, March 29, 2012.
[49] Colleen E. Boyd, "'You See Your Culture Coming Out of the Ground Like a Power': Uncanny Narratives in Time and Space on the Northwest Coast," *Ethnohistory* 56, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 720.
[50] Michael M. Bell, "The Ghosts of Place," *Theory and Society* 26, no. 6 (December 1997): 815.
[51] Bell, "The Ghosts of Place," 823.
[52] Bell, 816.
[53] Bell, 813, 826, 820.

confirmed that the ghost stories add to the specialness of the place: "You've got statewide people [who] are always curious about White Hall because its stories are pretty much legendary and have been going on forever. I mean we go back to tenant farmers telling stories!"[54] The curator admitted, "I do think that the legends about this place still are a part of the history and part of what makes it a cool place to be."[55]

Glassberg also suggests that public programs that help, through history, create a sense of place will inspire people to care for and value those places.[56] Bell agrees that "when we, through ghosts, make space place, we treat that spirited space with ritual care." He elaborates, "We approach particular spaces with the ritual distance of a shrine because we treat them as we do persons. We sense in both spirits- ghosts, within. The experience of place is the experience of people, and for us, nothing could be more holy."[57] Freeman Tilden agrees that "adequate interpretation…leads directly toward the very preservation of the treasure itself."[58] Interpreters at historic sites can use stories of the people who lived there to create this feeling of presence. Ghost stories also tell the stories of the individuals who lived and worked there. We can imagine Dora's resentment of her elder husband when he destroyed her music box, and we can feel empathy for Margaretta in her grief when she lost both her daughter and her aunt. The fact that many ghost stories at historic sites draw connections between the individuals who lived there and modern experience suggest that they may create an even more direct connection for visitors to past inhabitants, thus fostering a deeper sense of place for visitors.

Participants also hoped that allowing visitors to develop an appreciation of place would contribute to a site's preservation. Old Cahawba's director revealed that during the *Haunted*

[54] Park Manager, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[55] Curator, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[56] Glassberg, *Sense of Place,* 159.
[57] Bell, 820, 821.
[58] Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage,* 65.

History tour they try to "get people to connect, to have some emotional, intellectual connection with the place to want to help us save it. So that's what kind of led us into this *Haunted History* event." Ghost programming, especially around Halloween, created an added benefit for some sites that struggled with vandalism problems. At Old Cahawba "since we have started this event…we have had no vandalism."[59] Additionally the event has reduced the number of people trespassing on the site at night. According to the night watchman, "I have noticed in the past couple of years that the night traffic is slowed down."[60] Therefore, ghost programming has the potential to increase appreciation of place and desire for preservation among visitors.

In the article "The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?" Cary Carson discusses how many museums and historic sites resort to unrelated events to raise money and preserve their sites. Carson argues that "these sideshows aren't history" and that "attendance figures…are a false indicator of museum healthiness." Instead, Carson argues, public historians "must never forget that fundamentally we are history teachers."[61] While some of the ghost programming from the sites in this study make no connection to history, sites like White Hall, as one example, use programming to both raise money and incorporate history education. Carson sees storytelling as a solution to this problem. He argues that public historians "must embrace the reality that storytelling is the powerful medium in which modern learning takes place" because it allows visitors to connect to the stories of real people like themselves.[62] At historic sites, these stories easily allow the visitor to connect to the stories of people in the very place where those people lived. The benefits of using ghost stories often overlap. Like the opening story of Plez, ghost stories can be a valuable tool for educating the public in an engaging manner and fostering

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[59] Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[60] Night Watchman, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[61] Cary Carson, "The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?" *The Public Historian* 30, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 15.
[62] Carson, "The End of History Museums," 19.

connections to place. However, using stories of "real people," like Plez, is the key for another

benefit to ghost programming: creating emotional connections to the past.

Carson and several more authors recognize the importance of creating emotional

connections at historic sites. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen in *The Presence of the Past*

found that people enjoy history that is more personal. Furthermore, people conceptualize

historical knowledge in relationship to their own past experiences and the past experiences of

those they know, such as a grandparent. People also feel most connected to the past when

visiting historic sites and museums because they "believe they uncover 'real' or 'true' history at

museums and historic sites" and because history sites "evoked immediate personal and familial

connections."[63] Despite Americans preference for their personal past, many "wanted to reach

toward people who had lived at other times and places."[64] Visiting historic sites, Rosenzweig and

Thelen explain, was a way for people to accomplish this. Overall, history interests people

because it "helped them grapple with the same set of questions about identity, relationships,

morality, immortality, and agency."[65]

In *Interpreting Our Heritage*, Tilden declares that historical interpretation "should

capitalize mere curiosity for the enrichment of the human mind and spirit." In ghost

programming, enrichment of the mind can come in the form of historical connections that are

educational. Enrichment of the spirit, however, comes from an interpreter's ability to draw an

emotional connection. Tilden also agrees with Rosenzweig and Thelen, arguing that "the

visitor's chief interest is in whatever touches his personality, his experiences, and his ideals."

Additionally, interpreters should "appeal to the emotions, to the hunger for deeper

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[63] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 32.
[64] Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 30.
[65] Rosenzweig and Thelen, 134.

understanding, to the religious spirit of the individual." This can be accomplished by telling the stories of people. For example, the interpreter at a "prehistoric ruin must somehow manage to convey the notion…that the ancients who lived there might come back this very night and renew possession."[66] Ghost programming can achieve this aim in a more literal sense, by allowing people to imagine that the actual spirits of the place could be lingering about us. Ghost programming using theatre to dramatize events in the lives of their historical characters, such as White Hall's *Ghost Walk*, achieves this objective. For this event "the premise is, is that once a year the spirits of the Clay family come to White Hall to tell their stories." The staff base the scenes on primary sources such as letters so "that way the public is getting the actual words of these people which aren't readily available" so that they "get a deeper insight into their character."[67] The audience, of course, realizes that the "spirits" are live actors, but by using first-person theatre "it makes it a lot more personal in terms of 'oh gosh, these people are just like people today, but they did incredible things.'" The interpreter added, "To see their words and actions in motion I think makes that part of the history come even more so alive."[68] Tilden concludes that the "objective of interpretation" is "to bring to the eye and understanding of the visitor not just a house, a ruin, or a battlefield, but a house of living people, a prehistoric ruin of real folks, a battlefield where men were only incidentally – even if importantly – in uniform."[69]

Emotional connections to the past help people understand history's relevancy to their own lives and our society. David Glassberg agrees that people care about history because "it addresses fundamental, emotionally compelling questions about their past that…[is] essential for understanding who they are and where they live." Historians by "not dismissing the personal,

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[66] Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 33, 36, 54, 102.
[67] Tour Guide 2, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[68] Tour Guide 2, White Hall State Historic Site, interview by author, Richmond, KY, September 28, 2011.
[69] Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage,* 102.

emotional power of the past…can connect with the public in more profound ways."[70] Robert Archibald declares that by studying the past "we discover that it was inhabited by people more like us than different from us." With this realization, people reflect how common human experiences are shared with people who lived in the past. Archibald stresses, "History is ultimately…the stories that give meanings to people's lives, those heartfelt stories woven around individual lives and places."[71] The director at Old Cahawba recognized that one benefit to their *Haunted History* tour was "to get people to connect and some of it's more emotional, but really the emotional connections are more powerful sometimes than the intellectual ones."[72]

Catherine M. Cameron and John B. Gatewood in "Excursion into the Un-Remembered Past: What People Want from Visits to Historical Sites" use the term "numen" to describe a type of experience visitors seek at historic sites. They define numen as "a transcendental experience…that conjure[s] in visitors a visceral or emotional response to an earlier event or time."[73] Some people "explicitly desire to experience history in highly personal ways" and the result of their survey showed that people sought these types of experiences at historic sites. The authors recommend to curators and other historic site managers to be aware of this desire in visitors and to design their exhibits and interpretation with this in mind. Doing this, they argue, "can increase visitor excitement and enthusiasm" which may also increase their desire to learn.[74] Thus, if ghost programs can increase enthusiasm in some visitors by providing emotional experiences, then ghost programs can also create conditions that inspire visitors to learn more about the history of the site. Although cliché, part of enhancing an emotional experience for

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[70] Glassberg, *Sense of Place*, 209-210.
[71] Archibald, *The New Town Square,* 10, 19.
[72] Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[73] Cameron, Catherine M. and John B. Gatewood. "Excursions Into the Un-Remembered Past: What People Want from Visits to Historical Sites." *The Public Historian* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2000), 110.
[74] Cameron and Gatewood, 110 & 125, 127.

visitors is making the past come alive in the present. David Chandler, in discussing battlefield

tourism, observes that visitors with no personal connections to the site can still be affected

emotionally.[75] Simply hearing the stories of and imagining the people while being at the same

space allows people to feel personally connected to the past despite their separation in time with

past inhabitants of the space. Ghosts "disrupt linear time," making the past part of the present.[76]

Therefore, telling ghost stories at historic sites can elicit emotions that help people feel

connected to the past. At Liberty Hall, for example, the Gray Lady story offers a more personal

means to discuss the family in a way that "show[s] their struggles even though it's a very grand

house" where visitors "might think they had this wonderful life, but…they did have issues that

they had to overcome" such as illness and grief.[77]

Athinodoros Chronis eloquently summarizes these points by drawing on Gettysburg and

the ghost tours people attend while visiting the battlefield. He observes the importance of

emotional connections: "Human connection at Gettysburg supersedes family and regional

definitions by acquiring an emotional element," through "stories of human suffering [that]

abound in museum presentations, ghost and battlefield tours."[78] He also notes that "the symbolic

presence of the dead is also strengthened during ghost tours" because "participation in a ghost

tour is tantamount to visiting the world of the dead which is not located in the remote past.

Rather, ghosts and their world overlap with the present reality as it is manifested by the high

degree of believability of ghost stories, and their emotional impact on tourists."[79] At White Hall,

ghost programming also creates emotional impacts for visitors. For example, during the *Ghost*

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[75] David Chandler, "Haunted Acres," *History Today* 26, no. 11 (November 1976): 746.
[76] Boyd, "You See Your Culture," 700.
[77] Tour Administrator, Liberty Hall, interview by author, Frankfort, KY, March 29, 2012.
[78] Athinodoros Chronis, "Coconstructing Heritage at the Gettysburg Storyscape," *Annals of Tourism Research* 32, no. 2 (April 2005): 396.
[79] Chronis, "Coconstructing Heritage," 398.

Stories and Scandals tour, the interpreter told a story of one volunteer working a Christmas event who saw an infant in a white gown, "much like a christening gown," crawling underneath the piano in the drawing room who then disappeared. The interpreter speculated that the baby may have been the spirit of Greene Clay's daughter, Sophia, who died in infancy. The interpreter then drew on people's feelings of sympathy for the baby, saying, "Perhaps she wanted another shot at a happy Christmas."[80]

Interpreters at historic sites should try to elicit emotions from visitors, and one way to do this is to use ghost stories. Ghost stories about real people from the past can help make the past come alive because we imagine their spirits lingering around us in the present. Stories of spirits create intuitive reminders that despite the person's existence in a different time, we share common human experiences with them. Ghosts force us to reflect on our own mortality and they raise the possibility of immortality. Ghost stories, whether historic site visitors believe in ghosts or not, allow us to wonder about these questions, and feel emotionally connected to the individuals whose presence can become more palpable through storytelling. This is not to suggest that traditional modes of historical interpretation lack the power to draw emotional connections. As Bell shows, historic sites themselves allow visitors to imagine the people once there. However, interpreters can use ghost stories as an additional means of creating emotional connections to the past for their visitors.

Ghost programming at historic sites, therefore, has many possible benefits including fundraising and public relations opportunities; collaborating with the community, sharing

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[80] *Scandals and Ghost Stories Tour*, White Hall State Historic Site, July 16, 2011at 8:00 PM. For more on eliciting sympathy in interpretation to elicit emotional responses, see Wei-Li Jasmine Chen, "The Craft and Concepts of Interpretation: A Look at How National Park Service Interpreters Reveal and Facilitate Opportunities for Connections" (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2003). http://wvuscholar.wvu.edu:8881/exlibris/dtl/d3_1/apache_media/L2V4bGlicmlzL2R0bC9kM18xL2FwYWNoZV9t ZWRpYS82NjE2.pdf (accessed August 12, 2011), 64-66.

authority, and incorporating multiple disciplines; combining entertainment and education; building community and creating a connection to place; and creating an emotional connection to the past for visitors. Many participants also discussed how the benefits of using paranormal investigators paralleled those of ghost programming. In some cases, ghost programming and paranormal investigators overlap when paranormal investigators are made a part of an event. Charging money for groups to investigate at a site can generate income. Being on a ghost hunting television program can serve as a marketing tool that exposes a site to a national audience. Some sites create partnerships with local paranormal investigators in order to use them in ghost programming, which adds to the entertainment value of the program. These paranormal investigators are also interested in history and draw emotional connections to the past and understand the importance of place, advocating the site's preservation. Furthermore, sites use paranormal investigators in their programs to allow visitors to become active participants.

Perryville Battlefield and Sloss Furnaces both allow paranormal investigator groups to investigate their sites. Perryville charges $100 per group and Sloss charges $500 per group. Several paranormal investigator shows televised investigations at Sloss Furnaces, which increased interest in other groups for investigating the site; this allows Sloss to charge such a large amount of money. Despite having to pay overtime for a staff person to be present with the group, charging for paranormal investigations has "become one of our biggest money makers." Sloss also found that permitting groups reduced vandalism. The director explained, "Until we really set this up on a regular basis they'd break in!" Unlike historic homes, Perryville and Sloss do not have to worry about artifacts being damaged. They still, however, have liability and safety concerns, which they mitigate by making groups sign liability waivers and other forms

where they agree on established rules. As the director of Sloss warned, "It's an industrial site. There are a lot of places where you can fall and trip or what have you. So I have to be comfortable that you are aware that you are taking that risk and have absolved us of that liability."[81]

Like ghost programming, paranormal investigators may help attract new audiences to historic sites. Perryville's historic preservation and program coordinator explained that allowing paranormal investigators "helps introduce the Civil War to people who otherwise would have no interest."[82] The staff at Gaineswood, whose general policy is not to allow any paranormal investigator groups, recognized the potential impact a television show could have: "A national thing could probably be used to our advantage."[83] Some groups may unwittingly advertise a site when they write books or post videos online.[84]

Old Cahawba's partnership with paranormal investigators addresses the concerns that paranormal investigators may bring unwanted attention or an undesired reputation, not allow the site a say in the messages they tell the public, or not follow specific rules established by the site. Old Cahawba contracts with only one local group called the Central Alabama Paranormal Investigators (CAPI). The director observed that many groups exploit historic sites in order to make money, "so many of these people want to get on TV, they want to run around [and] tell everybody a story." This group is allowed to investigate the grounds, with prior permission. They know and follow the rules established by the staff, and because of their established relationship the staff does not accompany the group during their investigations. This saves them

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[81] Director, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Birmingham, AL, October 28, 2011.
[82] Historic Preservation and Program Coordinator, Perryville Battlefield, e-mail message to author, September 26, 2011.
[83] Director, Gaineswood National Historic Landmark, interview by author, Demopolis, AL, November 5, 2011.
[84] For example White Hall is featured in Patti Starr, *Ghosthunting Kentucky* (Cincinnati, OH: Clerisy Press, 2010), 192-199.

from paying overtime, and the director emphasized, "They're kind of us, they're volunteers."

The members of CAPI do not publish, online or elsewhere, any recordings, photographs, or other findings, unless they have specific permission to do so from the staff. The director insisted, "I trust these people. They're very honest, very ethical. They won't tell anybody anything if you don't want [them to.]"[85] In return, the group volunteers their time once a year, for free, at the *Haunted History* program. For thirty minutes at a time, the group hosts an investigation in what used to be a home to four families of enslaved people. The lead investigator introduces this to the visitors. The lead investigator explained, "We are on the site of the Kirpatrick house…which burnt in 1935" and also noted that the structure they are about to enter was the slave's quarters. The group demonstrated and permitted visitors to use ghost hunting equipment, allowing them to participate in an actual investigation. The lead investigator allows time for questions about ghost hunting techniques and he shares his beliefs about the paranormal. They also present what is referred to as an electronic voice phenomena (EVP) recorded in the same room that they attribute to the 1935 fire. Thus, they teach about the history of the place and also make emotional connections. For instance, before entering the slave quarters, the lead investigators stated, "You're going to feel blessed. It would have been crowded!...It will give you an idea of the living conditions those families had to live in."[86] The collaboration with this group has had the added benefit that "they've developed a love for Cahawba…so they want to help us raise money for Cahawba."[87] Indeed, during the presentation the group's leader encouraged the audience to help preserve Cahawba:

> Just the history that is here, is just, it's like Christmas to a five year old! It's just
> the most awesome thing in the world to me. And I believe in preserving
> it…please, continue to do these events and help Cahawba out by [also] giving

[85]Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.
[86] *Haunted History Tour*, Old Cahawba, Selma, AL, October 21, 2011 at 9:00 PM.
[87] Director, Old Cahawba, interview by author, Selma, AL, October 14, 2011.

> your checks….If you don't live close to here and you want to support history somewhere else please do. If we lose our history, our future means absolutely nothing. Everybody agree with that?[88]

Here the lead investigator, who is neither a professional historian nor a member of Cahawba's staff, advocates for Cahawba's preservation and reminds the audience of the importance of history to us in the present. Creating a trusting and mutually beneficial relationship with a paranormal investigator group may take too much time and effort for many staff at historic sites. However, for Old Cahawba, the relationship proves to be helpful for collaborating with a community group who volunteers for them, advocates for their site, and shares their passion for history with others.

Like CAPI, there are paranormal investigators that value history and historic sites. Most ghost hunting television shows start with a short introduction to the history of the site. Mikel J. Koven also recognizes the relationship paranormal investigators have with history. Koven, a folklorist, analyzes a British television show, *Most Haunted*, and observes that through their investigations paranormal investigators "are also exploring their local history" and sharing that experience of history to their viewers.[89] The park manager at White Hall observed that the groups she worked with "always want [the] history" of the place in order to make connections to the experiences they have.

Old Cahawba tells the story of Plez because paranormal investigators captured some mysterious sounds that the staff connected to historical events. Historic sites like Old Cahawba demonstrate that using paranormal investigators, ghost storytelling, and ghost programming has potential benefits for creating emotional connections to the past, developing a deeper sense of place, providing education and entertainment to visitors, collaborating with and building

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[88] *Haunted History Tour*, Old Cahawba, Selma, AL, October 21, 2011 at 9:00 PM.
[89] Mikel J. Koven, "Most Haunted and the Convergence of Traditional Belief and Popular Television," *Folklore* 188, no. 2 (August 2007), 186.

community, attracting new and different audiences, and raising money. Some sites used creative solutions to lessen some of the risks discussed in chapter two. In considering ghost programming, historic site managers should evaluate the potential risks this may involve and determine if the risks may outweigh potential benefits. However, they should also openly explore potential benefits ghost programming may provide, as modeled by some of the sites in this study. Some of these benefits are easily measured and thus easy to evaluate after a program. Other benefits are less tangible but nonetheless important if they further the mission of the institution and align with the institution's values. Raising money and attracting new visitors and advocates is often crucial for most historic sites. Innovative and entertaining means for educating the public and inspiring a more deeply felt emotional connection to the past are just as crucial for historic sites to remain relevant in their communities. Other interpretation and programming can and do achieve the same benefits, although ghost programming is a tool that managers can use in addition to more traditional programs at historic sites. Ghost stories and programming create the potential to discuss relevant and interesting historical themes through a unique mode, exploring universal questions about life and death, mortality and immortality.

Conclusion

At Liberty Hall, the Gray Lady did not seem to bother any of the employees. "I like to think it was because she thought we were doing a good job and she wasn't upset with us," the former director joked. Managers at historic sites have the responsibility to respect the beliefs of their employees and visitors and to consider the disadvantages and advantages before using ghost stories, programming, and paranormal investigators at their historic site. Whether or not this keeps the ghosts happy is a different question. What matters is that managers make decisions based on the institution's mission, values, and history.

Liberty Hall's Gray Lady is a historic ghost story found in primary sources written by a family member who lived at Liberty Hall. The Gray Lady is based on an actual person, the aunt of Margaretta Brown. Pegue's Ghost does not represent an individual, but is a glowing ball of light. Similar to the Gray Lady story, this story found in primary sources is part of the folklore at Old Cahawba. Conversely, Slag Wormwood is a made up ghost, created by a company as a marketing scheme to generate profit for their event held at Sloss Furnaces. Plez, on the other hand, is based on a historical person. The story itself does not originate in primary sources, but instead came from a modern personal experience that someone connected to this historical person. Ghost stories and folklore associated with historic sites are quite common. Sites in this study all had ghost stories associated with them, designating the site as haunted. However, staff use of ghost stories varied, and the choices involved various risks and benefits.

The staff at the sites in this study did not ignore their ghost stories, although this is a way that some other historic sites may deal with the issue. For the sites in this study, if visitors asked

directly about the topic, managers generally allowed interpreters to answer. For some sites, such as Ashland, answering such questions was the way they used their ghost stories. The sensitive nature of the events or people interpreted limits managers at sacred sites like Moundville from using ghost stories in programming. Conversely, there are several sites, such as White Hall, that embrace their haunted status by allowing paranormal investigators, integrating ghost stories into their regular interpretation, or holding ghost programming.

Despite the prevalence and diversity of issues facing managers at haunted historic sites, research related to these issues is almost nonexistent. Since this affects management, interpretation, and programming, the professional and scholarly community needs to better understand haunted historic sites so managers can determine best practices. This work begins to address these issues to generate professional dialogue based on scholarly research. Further research is needed to better compare regional and international differences, and to study visitor perspectives. While focusing on the issues unique to haunted historic sites, many of the same issues relate to all museums and historic sites such as collections and facilities management, event planning, museum visitor studies, human resources management, development, and public relations. Effective managers at museums and historic sites, for instance, consider preserving their collections, attracting and engaging visitors, training employees, and managing finances. These are the same issues managers at haunted sites must consider.

Unfortunately, many historic sites today struggle to convince their communities that they are not boring and irrelevant, and sometimes struggle to maintain the funds necessary to keep their doors open. Managers at historic sites use creative and innovative exhibitions, programming, and fundraising techniques to combat this problem.[1] Managers can use ghost

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[1] Jessica Foy Donnelly, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002), 1 and Cary Carson, "The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?" *The Public Historian* 30, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 9-14.

programming as a creative means to attract and entertain those people who may think historic sites are boring and maybe generate revenue too.   However, managers at haunted historic sites should evaluate the risks and benefits before, and after, hosting a ghost program or inviting paranormal investigators. The following are questions for managers to begin considering when making or evaluating decisions about ghost programming:

- What is the mission of my institution? What are its values? Will our choice align with our values and help further our mission?
- Will the safety of people or collections be put at risk? Can this risk be limited enough?
- What are the ghost stories associated with our site? Do they have any historical connections to our site?
- Are we a sacred site? Is our choice sensitive and respectful to the people and events our site interprets? Is our choice ethical?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What are our goals? What do we wish to achieve?
    - Raise revenue? Draw new audiences? Entertain? Educate? Build Community? Inspire? Contribute to a sense of place? Create emotional connections to our place and to the past?
- How will this affect our reputation with the public generally and with our community specifically?
- What opportunities are there for an interdisciplinary approach to our programming or collaboration with the community?
- What are the financial costs?

The ten sites in this study provide examples of how some places addressed and readdressed these questions, some more effectively than others. These questions, along with the examples provided by the sites in this study, can help managers anticipate problems and focus on priorities. Ghost programming is like any other programming in that there are always advantages and disadvantages. Some programs, like White Hall's *Scandals and Ghost Stories* tour, might raise revenue, draw new audiences, educate and entertain, or create emotional connections effectively. Some managers, like those at Moundville, might find they are limited in the types of ghost programming available to them, if at all, as the risks are too great or too costly to even

attempt a program. Managers at other sites may find that ghost programming offers advantages

that outweigh any risks. As demonstrated by several sites in this study, ghost programming can

be used just as appropriately and effectively as other types of programming to achieve the goals

and further the mission of an institution. Many types of programs that historic sites might hold

may have nothing whatsoever to do with the history interpreted at the site. This is not

necessarily bad. The program, for instance, might be a successful fundraiser. However, making

up ghost stories that are not connected to any history or folklore, like the story of Slag, deceives

the public and does not further a historic site's mission. Nevertheless, ghost programming can

compliment pedagogical aims and can relate directly to the history of a site, such as the story of

Pegue's ghost at Old Cahawba.

   Neither staff nor visitor belief is a factor in deciding to hold ghost programming or invite

paranormal investigators. Belief is a matter of personal opinion that cannot be proved or

disproved. Allowing paranormal investigators, for example, should not be motivated by a desire

to confirm or disprove supernatural activity. Instead, managers should evaluate how the

programming will impact their site and further their mission. This does not imply that belief is

not important. As this study shows, managers should understand that there are people who work

and visit historic sites that believe, to varying degrees, in ghosts. At haunted sites, effective

managers should be open and sensitive to their employees' beliefs. Likewise, interpreters should

be open and sensitive to the beliefs of their visitors. To assume that belief in ghosts and interest

in history are mutually exclusive is also problematic. As illustrated in chapter three with the

paranormal investigators at Old Cahawba, for many people an interest in ghosts is also an

interest in history. Ghost stories and the results from paranormal investigators should not be

presented as factual, empirical, or historical evidence at historic sites.[2] However, using ghost stories and involving paranormal investigators at a historic site does not have to compromise the integrity of historical scholarship. Instead, ghost stories can be used at historic sites to complement history by drawing connections with the past and inspiring reflections of personal beliefs.

Historic sites, along with cemeteries, are liminal places where the past and present meet, and where the living feels closest to the dead. Ghosts cannot be separated from the past. Conjuring ghosts for visitors through programming and stories at historic sites subconsciously heightens this awareness of non-linear time and our connections with the past beyond the routine programs at historic sites. Whether or not these conjured ghosts are real misses the point. Whether through belief or temporary suspension of disbelief, imagining ghosts can help bring to life the people they represent and can cause refection on both our collective past and our collective fate. Ghost programming can be about more than eliciting a cheap thrill. Instead, ghost programming can be relevant for engaging philosophical and spiritual questions better than dry resuscitations of irrelevant factual information found too often at historic sites. Acknowledging people's interest in the supernatural, and realizing that this interest is oftentimes also an interest in history, allows managers more options for entertaining, teaching, and inspiring visitors through ghost programming.

At historic sites, it shouldn't matter if the dead return in ghostly forms to haunt the living since this is, at least as of now, impossible to prove. What does matter is that some people, the employees who work at historic sites and visitors who come to these sites, do believe in ghosts and they should not be judged for their beliefs. Even more important, what matters is what ghosts represent. Theodore Roosevelt once wrote, "The great historian has vision and

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[2] Unless, of course, the ghost story itself is a part of the historical record.

imagination…the power to embody ghosts, to put flesh and blood on dry bones, to make dead men living before our eyes."[3] As Roosevelt suggests, ghosts, like the Gray Lady and Plez, represent the people of the past and their stories. Ghost stories are one way to tell their stories.

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[3] Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt's History of the United States*, ed. Daniel Ruddy (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), 9.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

General Questions for Any Employee

How long have/did you work at (name of site)?

What is your current position/ title at (name of site) and what are your main responsibilities?

 Have you ever experienced anything here that you think is unexplainable or may be supernatural in nature? If so, can you describe them for me?

How would you describe how you felt about that experience?

Have you ever had similar experiences outside of (name of site)? If so, can you tell me about them?

Do you believe that there are spirits or ghosts?

Do you believe that (name of site) is haunted?

 Do you know if any of your co-workers believe that they have had supernatural experiences here or believe this place is haunted (no names, please)? Can you tell me about their stories? Do you believe them?

 For Those Who Regularly Interact with Visitors:

Do patrons ever ask you if (name of site) is haunted? What do you usually tell them?

How do they usually react?

How has your supervisors recommended you handle these questions?

Questions for Managerial Staff:

Have you ever had any programming that incorporates ghost stories in the museum program? If so, can you describe them for me?

How has doing that helped your museum?

If not, has the staff/board ever considered incorporating something like this? If so what were the reasons for not doing it?

Do you think any of your employees believe that this place is haunted?

What guidance (if any) do you provide your interpreters or employees interacting with the public regarding guest questions about whether or not (name of site) is haunted?

Do you allow paranormal investigators at your site? Why or why not?