

SPIRITS of New England Visits Deane Winthrop House

Story & Photos by Marianne Salza

For two seconds a full-bodied apparition of a Native American appeared before Dawn Mahoney in her Bartlett Road home. Stunned, she discreetly confided in the only friend she knew could help: Ellen MacNeil. The ladies consulted town historian, Dave Hubbard, who revealed that the home's proximity to French Square could explain Dawn's encounter. The location was an old Native American burial ground that's remains had been disturbed and relocated to Harvard University for research.

"We want to help people," said MacNeil, whose interest in the paranormal started at age 17, when she began experiencing peculiar occurrences around her home following the passing of her brother during the Vietnam War. "We want people to trust us and know that we will do anything we can to help."

MacNeil's validation of her first client started the journey with her team of paranormal investigators,

SPIRITS of New England, which includes Sarah Campbell, Beck Gann, Jack Kenna, and Sharon Koogler.

The Winthrop-based team presented, "Hauntings, Ghosts & Demons: It's Not Just Fiction & Folklore," at the Deane Winthrop House on October 20 to raise funds for the historic 17th Century home.



Ellen MacNeil, Founder of SPIRITS of New England, speaking at the Deane Winthrop House on October 20

The team presented video and audio evidence as they shared stories and personal experiences from their most memorable investigations, from private residences and libraries, to the USS Constitution and Merrimac Paper Mill.

"The most important piece of equipment we have as investigators is us," said Kenna. "When we walk into a location we feel it out. You'll get a sense if something doesn't seem right."

During an investigation at the Deane Winthrop House, SPIRITS of New England experienced cold spots, floating mist, disembodied voices responding to questions, apparitions, the smell of pipe tobacco, and the feeling of being watched.

"One of the things that happened was in the master bedroom, where the girl had the captain talk to her. I said, 'Do whatever you have to do to communicate with me.' All of a sudden I start to physically shake," Kenna explained about the 10 second incident. "It was doing partial possession to show me the only way it probably knew how."

Kenna explained the different types of hauntings, such as intelligent hauntings, spirits that try communicating with humans and animals. Demonic hauntings are extremely violent and threatening. Potential signs of a demonic haunting include obsession, depression, low self-esteem, or sudden drastic changes in personality. Elemental hauntings are spirits that are part of the natural world: air, fire, earth,

SPIRITS of New England Visits Deane Winthrop House

and water. Native Americans worshiped them as deities. Elemental spirits want to be recognized and can be threatening.

“It’s energy that’s trapped within the home itself,” Kenna explained about non-interactive, residual hauntings, like footsteps. “That energy gets trapped because many people do that over time throughout the life of the house.”



The SPIRITS of New England Team: Sharon Koogler, Jack Kenna, Ellen MacNeil, Beck Gann, and Sarah Campbell

Potential signs of hauntings may be feelings of being watched, electrical issues -- like quick battery drainage or bursting and flickering lights – sudden strong emotions, disembodied voices, footsteps, shadow figures, partial or full-bodied apparitions, strong odors, objects moving around the room, or in extreme cases, scratches and bruises.

“Experiencing one or more of these signs does not mean you are experiencing a haunting. There could be a natural explanation for it,” said Kenna. “It’s extremely important to know what

you’re looking at. Don’t assume what’s going on is paranormal. That’s what happens in a lot of cases. Do the research. Go the extra mile.”