



# Ghost

## IN THE MACHINE

Chester County Institute of Paranormal Research uses  
real world techniques for other-worldly pursuits


story **Kate Chadwick**  
images courtesy **CCIPR**

Here's a question: if you had to guess how many cemeteries there are in Chester County, what would your answer be? A few dozen on the low end, maybe a couple hundred if you're guessing higher? Carol Starr figured the same thing, until she was seated at a paranormal seminar at which the keynote speaker posed the same question. The answer, according to the speaker, was "approximately 10,000." Throughout the county, according to Carol, developers and builders have covered them up, building right over graveyards rather than pursue the cost-prohibitive and time-consuming option of disintering and relocating them. "There was a lot of Revolutionary War activity in this county, and many Lenape Indian burial grounds here as well," she said. And regardless of how you feel


about the existence of ghosts, reincarnation, heaven, or any and all of the above, you have to admit—that's a lot of souls who've gone before us who may be....well, hanging around.

Carol is the co-founder, along with Bobby Meyers, of the Chester County Institute of Paranormal Research—probably one of those organizations that you don't even know exist unless/until you need it. But if you need it, they're ready. Modern day ghostbusters, the CCIPR is made up of five members with extensive experience with the paranormal. A cursory glance at their website, [ccipr.org](http://ccipr.org), reveals documentation of EVP (electronic voice phenomena), photographic evidence—including videos—of ghostly encounters, and links to television programs in which they and their work have been profiled.

Carol started experiencing paranormal phenomena at the age of seven, when she saw her first full-body apparition at an aunt's house. "I was pretty scared of what I saw, and when I went to my parents and aunt and uncle and told them, they were very matter-of-fact and said 'Well, you just saw the ghost.' They sat with me and explained it and were very level-headed about it and about death" Carol said they explained that sometimes spirits return to a place that they liked or used to inhabit in life, or revisit the scenes of traumatic events. "The best thing about it is that it didn't really instill fear in me—it instilled curiosity in me," she said.



# LIVING THERE GAVE HER A LOT OF EXPOSURE TO SPIRITS



As she grew into adulthood, Carol's curiosity also grew, and she explored the "other side" more actively, even speaking with funeral directors. She says that the Downingtown home she lived in between the ages of 14-24 was also haunted. Living there not only gave her "a lot of exposure to spirits," it also taught her the value of research. "If you feel like something is happening in your house, you should check with your neighbors. They might have known the previous owners, or something about the history of the house that you don't. Go to your local historical society. I even used a ouija board on occasion, which people don't really do as much anymore."

People also didn't really talk about the paranormal as much when she was in her twenties and thirties as they do today, says Carol, who is 61. Her interest in ethereal phenomena never wavered, and she discovered a now-defunct West Chester-based group around 11 years ago and joined. "That's where I cut my teeth" Carol said. "I learned about equipment, what questions to ask, how to conduct an investigation—it was like *Paranormal 101*." She was particularly pleased with how open the exchange of ideas was, and that she was able to discuss paranormal issues

so freely with like-minded individuals. "That was also around the time the various ghost-hunting shows started popping up on television," she said. "Interest in the field was growing."

When that group relocated to Southern Delaware, Carol, an insurance agency account manager, and Bobby Meyers, a high school teacher, cofounded CCIPR. Bobby's background and interest in the paranormal, in contrast to Carol's, sprang from more of a pragmatic, al-

most logical approach to an admittedly ephemeral subject. "I was drawn not by any particular event or experience, but by the numerous anecdotal stories recorded or told by thousands of individuals from all around the world," he said. "I felt that although some stories may be embellished, they couldn't all be fakes or false accounts." Bobby brought his interest in the more technological workings of their pursuits to the table, with a particular focus on EVPs.



CCIPR  
TEAM

"I always try to push the envelope, using both across the board equipment like EMF (electromagnetic field) meters, cameras, and digital audio equipment," he said. Bobby has taken his interest in the "tools of the trade" a step further. "I also make some of my own prototype equipment," he said. "I'm trying to make it easier for spirits to show themselves to us, or communicate with us in some way." A visit to the CCIPR website shows over two dozen pieces of equipment the group currently utilizes in documenting their investigations. "How far we've come in just 11 years as far as equipment is concerned is incredible. Who knows where we'll be 10 years from now?" Carol added.

In some cases, unusual situations that appear to be hauntings can turn out to be more mundane issues. For instance, CCIPR received a call from a new homeowner who was feeling very strange and anxious whenever she spent time in her laundry room. As it turned out, it was a manmade electromagnetic field

## I'M TRYING TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR SPIRITS TO SHOW THEMSELVES

issue, which was easily remedied by having the room rewired.

On the other hand, Carol reports seeing—and feeling—actual encounters with unexplained...well, beings, at least a dozen or so of which stand out in her mind as particularly memorable. One of those took place at Henderson House on Gulph Mills Road, now the site of an apartment complex. It had previously been the office of a major corporation (which she declined to name), that had literally deserted the premises, leaving behind office equipment and personal belongings alike. Carol says she was

setting up a table when she felt and saw the presence of another female arm and hand on her own, and felt a jolt similar to an electric shock. She later discovered that the apparition of a woman had been witnessed frequently by the previous tenants, appearing on a landing of the building and then disappearing into the wall.

Another memorable encounter took place in a field in Gettysburg, during which she and a couple of other colleagues witnessed silhouettes of soldiers walking silently in the night. "Not everything I've encountered over



# ALL OF US HAVE THE ABILITY TO BE AWARE OF THE SPIRIT WORLD



the years has been documented, for several reasons, but that doesn't mean they didn't happen." In fact, Carol has co-authored a book, *Haunted Gettysburg*, and is currently working on a follow-up to it. The historic battlefield site is widely considered in paranormal circles to be one of the most haunted places in the world.

The CCIPR team offer their services at no cost. "We don't do this for the money, we do this to help people," Carol said. "We all work full-time jobs, this is just something that we are very passionate about." In addition to their comprehensive website and social media, the group offers the option of watching an investigation streaming live, as they've done from sites such as Gettysburg.


Most of their work, however, takes place in residential settings. "As a group, we've had between 100-150 investigations over the past 11 years, and about 80% of those are private homes." The goal is to help people who have questions, and in some cases "are scared witless," says Carol. There is an initial phone consultation, which is often where the investigation begins and ends; not every phone call results in an investigation.

But despite the fact that they all have "real jobs," the group's devotion to their endeavor is strong. "My

time spent on the paranormal varies according to each case," said Bobby. "I usually spend at least 6-12 hours on an investigation, and anywhere from 10-20 hours of evidence review on each individual case."

One doesn't necessarily have to be a true believer to experience a ghostly encounter, as Carol has discovered over the years. "Sometimes people start out as skeptics, until something happens to change their minds," she said. "All of us have the ability to be aware of the spirit world, and it might come and go during your lifetime," Carol said. "With me, I've been so immersed in this that I can walk into a room and feel something almost immediately—good or bad." She also says that it's encouraging to the spirits themselves to know when they're in the presence of someone who, while they may not be a firm believer, will at least have an open mind."

Her colleague agrees. "If I could tell people just one thing about ghosts, it would be not to fear them," Bobby Meyers said. "Spirits do and can hurt you, but it's rare in most cases. I always tell folks who are scared of ghosts that they should fear those

who are alive more than those who are dead. And finally, to show respect to the uninvited. Most of the time, they'll relay the same respect back to you." 



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