

Paragenealogy

Studying the identities and *real* histories of ghosts and haunted places

by Fiona Broome, founder of HollowHill.com

Upcoming book: *Paragenealogy: A How-To Guide* Paragenealogy.com

Paragenealogy is the science of using genealogical and historical records to identify and document the history of ghosts and the places they haunt. Generally, this is not for beginners.

1. Identify the ghost.

- Narrow the search to a time period based on clues from the ghost.
 - The apparition's clothing, hairstyle, makeup, jewelry, footwear (visual contact or photos)
 - Behaviors (physical contact or proximity) and speech patterns (EVP)
 - Objects he or she interacts with (doorways that no longer exist, furnishings from the past)
- Use historical records to look for people matching the gender, time and an appropriate history.
 - Property records
 - Census records
 - Obituaries, church records, cemetery records, hospital records
 - Newspaper reports
 - Other records from local historical society or public library references. (Ex: 19th century town biographies)

2. Use standard genealogical records to learn more about the people involved.

- Census records
- Court records
- Church records
- Vital records (state, county, city/town)
- Family Bible (look for funeral cards, obits)
- City directories
- Newspaper reports
- Personal diaries
- Local folklore and history (historical society)

3. Study the site's history: Who built it, owned it, lived there, and visited the location.

- Property records (usually at county office) - do a "title search"
- Census records (by address)
- Newspaper records (where searchable by address)
- City directories (usually include a "reverse" directory section with bio info)
- Building permits (and relevant plans)

4. When all else fails: Ask the neighbors!

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