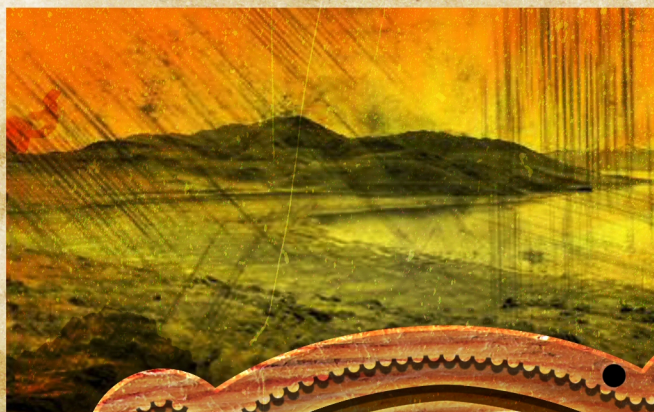




REPORT

ANTELOPE ISLAND

INVESTIGATION



*Antelope
Island*

Utah

UT002

SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION



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1987

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Forward

The word “investigation” is defined as
“a searching inquiry for ascertaining facts; detailed or careful examination.”

The key word here is “facts”. Do ghosts exist? No, it has not been proven.
Therefore are no facts to investigate.

What we do have is the testimony of the witnesses and this is where an investigational process will work. Investigations are often viewed as a skeptical activity because the main goal is trying to determine what the witness actually saw. Is it explainable or not? This is done through critical thinking and an event replication process developed by SGHA. This is an important concept because what defines a haunting or ghost sighting is “Multiple witnesses reporting unusual phenomena over a period of time”. If these phenomena can be explained, the witness reports are no longer validating paranormal activity as a cause and thus there is no ghost or haunting. Additionally historical research may be done in an attempt to validate facts.

It is important to understand that the goal of an investigation is not to find evidence of the paranormal but to attempt to identify any natural or manmade causes of the reported phenomena

Definition of Terms

Investigation Status: Unsolved investigations will have either an open or closed status. An investigation is given an “Open” status if:

The investigators were unable to replicate all of the witness events. Something significant remains that is still unsolved.

It is important to understand that an “open” investigation does not mean that the unsolved facts are paranormal in nature. It simply means that we have exhausted our resources and cannot solve the “open” items/events.

A “Closed” status indicates that there is insufficient data or confounding variables that prevents replication or identifying possible explanations. This often occurs when investigators do not have direct access to witnesses or some other environmental change have occurred that creates confounding variables.

Confidentiality Notice

Many of the witnesses interviewed have wished to remain anonymous in exchange for presenting their accounts of paranormal experiences. We honor that request and thus witnesses will often be identified by aliases. Any coincidence between aliases and actual persons is unintentional.

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Part 1: Location Information

Antelope Island, Utah

Part 2: Location History:

Antelope Island, with an area of 42 square miles (109 km²), is the largest island of 10 islands located within the Great Salt Lake, Utah, United States. The island



lies in the southeastern portion of the lake, near Salt Lake City and Davis County, and becomes a peninsula when the lake is at extremely low levels.

The first known non-natives to visit the island, "we rode on horseback over salt from the thickness of a wafer to twelve inches", were John C. Fremont and Kit Carson during exploration of the Great Salt Lake in 1845, who "were informed by the Indians that there was an abundance of fresh water on it and plenty of

antelope”,. It is said they shot a pronghorn antelope on the island and in gratitude for the meat they named it Antelope Island.

Antelope Island State Park is a Utah State Park and the entire island is included in the park. Early in the 20th Century, because of its wildlife and scenic beauty, some suggested that Antelope Island should become a National Park, but the movement never came to fruition. When the Utah State Parks System was created, proposals were made to turn Antelope Island into Antelope Island State Park and the proposal gradually gathered public support, but Antelope Island was privately owned at the time. Originally, Antelope Island was used as a ranch for cattle and sheep, starting from the earliest days of the arrival of the Mormon pioneers into the Salt Lake Valley. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) controlled the ranch on the island from 1848 until approximately 1870. The island was purchased in 1870 by John Dooly, Sr, and he established the Island Improvement Company which managed the island and ranches from 1884 until 1981. The State of Utah purchased the northern part of the island in 1969, and acquiring the remainder in 1981 when the state purchased the historical Fielding Garr Ranch. Subsequently the cattle and sheep were removed. The Antelope Island State Park was established in 1981 as part of the Utah State Parks System. (Source: Wikipedia)

Part3: Witnesses

This section identifies the witnesses to the reported activity.

Name	Sex	Connection with reported incident	Interviewed
John Smith	M	Witness	18 May 1987
Denise Wilford*	F	Witness	18 May 1987

*Witnesses given aliases are noted by a **

Part 4: Reported Phenomena (General)

John and Denise were camping on the island near Bridger bay when they heard strange cries that they describe as “sounding like a person wailing”. They left their campsite to investigate. When they came over a small hill they noticed a “human shaped” figure in the distance near the edge of the lake. The figure stopped and looked at them for a few moments. It then began to walk in a southerly direction. Within a few seconds they watched the figure disappear. They then fled back to their campsite.

John believes that he saw the ghost of John Baptiste.

John Baptiste was a Salt Lake City gravedigger who was exiled to an island on the lake for his ghoulish crimes. He disappeared on that island without a trace. Although may claim that his ghost still walks today.....

He was one of the first gravediggers ever employed in Salt Lake City. He was also known to be a hard worker and punctual, always carrying out his appointed duties at the city cemetery. John was a quiet fellow though and had few friends, so most people never paid much attention to him as he went about his work. About three years after Baptiste went to work for the city; a man died in Salt Lake City and was, of course, buried by the gravedigger in the local cemetery.

A short time later, the man's brother came to Utah from the east. He was not familiar with the Mormon religion as his brother had been and wished to have his sibling returned to the east to be buried in the family plot. His wish was granted and the grave was uncovered. The casket was pried open and the corpse inside was discovered to be nude and lying in the coffin face down, as though it had been dumped there. Needless to say, the brother was outraged and city official began an immediate investigation. The investigation focused on John Baptiste and several men were assigned to keep him and the cemetery under surveillance. Soon after another burial, Baptiste was seen pushing a wheelbarrow from a nearby storage shed to a freshly opened grave.

Authorities stopped him and found a pile of clothing hidden in the bushes. The corpse had been removed from the grave; his clothing removed, and was now

being moved from the storage shed in the wheelbarrow. Baptiste was arrested and his home was searched. His house was filled with clothing! He had used some of it for drapes and furniture covers and in the cellar, a large vat was placed for boiling the clothing of the dead.

The news spread and local citizens descended on the cemetery to check on their deceased loved ones. Authorities believed that he had stolen clothing from more than 350 corpses! All of the clothing from Baptiste's home was taken to City hall for identification by relatives. They also went to local pawn shops, where they learned the gravedigger had sold large amounts of jewelry for cash.

And what became of Baptiste? He was tried and convicted of grave robbery, was branded with a hot iron and exiled to an island in the Great Salt Lake, northwest of the city. There has been some dispute as to where he was sent... either barren Fremont Island or the larger Antelope Island. Regardless, he was put ashore there, never to return to Salt Lake City again.

But this was not the end.... A few weeks later, lawmen returned to the island to check on the prisoner, only to discover that he had vanished. A search discovered the remains of a fire and a small shelter, but no Baptiste. Some believe that he may have taken his own life and others that he built a raft and escaped, but no matter, he was never heard from again..... Or was he?

The stories claim that he has been seen walking along the water's edge, clutching in his hands a bundle of wet, rotted clothing. He also has a moan that shrieks loudly along the shoreline in anguish.

The ghost is most often seen by tourists visiting the island or locals boating on the lake.

The Great Salt Lake is located just northwest of Salt Lake City. The ghost of John Baptiste is alleged to walk the shore on the southern edge of the lake.

Part 5: Investigation

John and Denise accompanied us back to the area where he had his sighting and showed us where his campsite was and where he saw the figure. Several important pieces of information were revealed during the interview.

- 1. Witness bias is very high (They fled because they thought it was a ghost). Both are firm believers in the paranormal.*
- 2. The moon phase was a waning crescent. The general surroundings would be quite dark.*
- 3. When we asked why he thought the figure was a ghost he replied that things simply do not just disappear. This establishes the criteria for a successful replication of a misperceived phenomenon.*



- 4. The witness could not make out any details of the figure except for one. They described the figure as "wearing a long coat, like a trench coat".*

After the witnesses left, we began to examine the surrounding area. The area around the shoreline was full of rocky outcroppings that extended up the hill.

Many of them could easily conceal a figure or animal that was moving around the area. At night the effect would be amplified as many of the outcroppings are not readily visible. This could explain how the figure disappeared.

The question was now "what exactly did they see?" It is improbable that it was actually a person walking along the shore. John used a large rock as a reference point when describing the figure he saw. His claim of 6 feet in height seemed too excessive when we compared one of our investigators to the height of the rock. The size of the figure they described didn't match up unless this person was a dwarf. Is it possible that they saw an animal and mistook it for a person?

With the abundance of wildlife on the island this seemed to be the most plausible explanation.

Part 6: Hypotheses

Over the next month we experimented with a Christmas reindeer decoration. If the reindeer was facing the observer head on with a small degree of back light, its silhouette slightly resembled a human like figure wearing a long coat. However there was a problem. When the reindeer was moved by a person, we could see their outline as well which ruined the effect. So we abandoned the Christmas prop for a cardboard cutout that concealed person moving it. We chose Ted for this job because he was the smallest investigator on the team.

We then returned back to the island with the antelope cutout to formerly test our hypothesis. After several attempts to mimic the movement correctly, we found a pattern that seemed to replicate the figure as seen by the witnesses.

After practicing the replication, we called John and invited him to go on a ghost hunt with us. The date was set so that the replication would occur on the next waning moon so that the lighting conditions would be identical. Due to the bias of the witness, we decided to do the replication under a blind standard. Ted would preposition himself behind one of the clusters of rocks and wait for a signal to start moving the antelope cutout to imitate the reported phenomena. The signal would be keying our radio three times.

Part 7: Conclusion

On the night of the ghost hunt we led John around for about 30 minutes before giving the signal to replicate. John noticed the movement and quickly pointed it out saying "There it is. Over there"! We asked him if he was certain if that is what he saw. He said it was.

We then revealed what we were doing and told him about the hypothesis that we had been working on. As we were explaining, another shadow appeared to our right. Ted, being the closest investigator to the shadow, shined his flashlight

at it. It was a real antelope that darted off as the light hit it. That brought the point, literally, into the light.

Based on our investigation we believe that many of the sightings of island's specter are actually explained as movement from animals living on the island. The moving shadows are actually quite creepy looking, especially if you jump to the conclusion that it is a ghost.

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