

Sheldon to uncover 'The Devil's Cabinet'

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MIDDLEBURY — The Sheldon Museum presents its next talk on spiritualism, “The Devil’s Cabinet: The Eddy Family of Spirit Mediums,” on Oct. 24, at 7 p.m. Jason Smiley, a graduate of Champlain College and full-time Compliance Coordinator for Dealer.com, has been studying the Eddy family of Chittenden, Vt.

During the mid to late 1800s they became world-renowned as spirit mediums with the alleged ability of generating full-bodied spirit manifestations or “materializations” of the departed. People traveled from all over the world to Chittenden to witness these phenomena for themselves. Some came with the hope of seeing and speaking to their own departed family members. Others came as skeptics, hoping to debunk the family’s alleged powers as “humbug.”

By 1874, the family was so well-known that Chittenden started being referred to as “Spirit Vale.” To this day, there are many who believe that the family had genuine supernatural abilities. The family and the story have ties to P.T. Barnum, Mark Twain, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Harry Houdini, Queen Victoria, and President Lincoln.

Smiley was born and raised in Vermont and has been researching the Eddy family for over a decade. He plans to release a book containing his research in late 2019 or early 2020. The talk is part of a series offered by the Sheldon Museum in conjunction with the museum’s exhibit “Conjuring the Dead: Spirit Art in the Age of Radical Reform.” The talk is free with museum admission. Space is limited, so advance reservations are recommended by calling 802-388-2117. For more information about the exhibit and accompanying programs, call the Sheldon or visit henrysheldonmuseum.org.