

Date	Article/Subject	Source
	① Picture of Morris Pratt	
	② Picture of Morris Pratt	
③ March, 1917	MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE - 3-page typed copy of article	Walworth County Trade Review: a business trade review of towns and villages in Walworth County
	⑦ PROSPECTING WITH THE SPIRITS, Chapter XXIII	From Badger Saints and Sinners
④ June, 1972	Pratt Made Whitewater a Center of Spiritualism	Whitewater Register 6/15/72
⑥ Oct. 1972	History of Spiritualism; Facts Versus Hearsay Article by Katie Kuhn	Royal Purple Oct. 31, 1972
⑦ Nov. 1973	"Childhood Experience Led Miller to Spiritualism	
⑧ Aug. 25, 1972	Seances Are Part of Campus Lore	Whitewater Register 8/25/77
⑨ Dec. 1978	Spiritual College Located in Whitewater	By Debbie Krueger, Royal Purple Dec. 13, 1978
⑩ April, 1979	Spiritualism Not Dead, Just Moved	Letter to Editor, Royal Purple by Everett Refior
⑪ Oct. 1979	Whitewater Students "dig" for Mystery Stories	Walworth County Week, 10/30/79
⑫ May, 1981	Seance College is Memory	David Willie article to The State Journal
⑬ Oct. 1981	City's Past Provides Haunting Tales by Chuck Ramsay	The Royal Purple 10/28/81
⑭ 1989	Haunted History Tales Surround Whitewater During Spook Month	By Beth Zeise of the Royal Purple
⑮ Aug. 1982	Witches, Spirits Exist Only in Imagination	By Elizabeth Bloom, Royal Purple 8/25/82
⑯ Aug. 1990	Whitewater Became Center of Spiritualism With Pratt Inst.	
⑰ March, 1991	Whitewater had "Psychic College"	Walworth County Week, 3/17/91
	⑱ Postcard picture of Morris Pratt Institute in late 1940's when it served as a girls' dorm.	Original postcard in the University Archives

INVENTORY SHEET

Date	Article/Subject	Source
1972	First Spiritualist School Born Here	Second of 2-part series by Katie Kuhn, Royal Purple
1921	Spirit Mysteries Taught in Unique Wisconsin School	Milwaukee Sentinel, 3/6/21
Oct. 1984	Morris Pratt Brought Spiritualist School to Whitewater During Late 19th Century	Whitewater Register, 8/15/68
Oct. 1984	Is Whitewater a Witches' Haven?	The Royal Purple, Vol. 76, No.
March, 1985	Whitewater's History--A Haunting Tale!	Campus Bulletin 3/12/85
NOTE: The following items date back to 1902 and are from various sources.		
Jan. 1997	24 MORRIS PRATT, and Officers and Building of the Morris Pratt Institute	Sunflower Publishing Co. May 1, 1902
Jan. 1997	25 The Morris Pratt Funeral	Whitewater Register 1/1/1903
Jan. 1997	26 Spirit Mysteries Taught in Unique, Wisconsin School	Milwaukee Sentinel, 3/6/21
Dec. 2009	27 Morris Pratt Institute and the Spiritualist Movement	Kayla Pulvermacher 12/2009
Jan. 1997	28 Walworth County (Contains Reference to Morris Pratt Institute)	John Gregory, Southeast Wisconsin! Old Milwaukee County
Jan. 1997	29 A Wisconsin College Founded by "Spirits"	Milwaukee Sentinel, 5/25/24
Jan. 1997	30 "Spook Temple", Ghost of Past to End	The Royal Purple, 5/4/42
Jan. 1997	31 The Old School for Spirits	Nov. 14, 1954 No Source Given
Jan. 1997	32 Site of Old Whitewater Institute Bought for New Telephone Exchange	Janesville Gazette, 9/18/58
N.D.	33 Spook Temple	Weird Wisconsin
Jan. 1997	34 Ghost Hunts End in Frustration	Whitewater Register 8/26/76
1997	35 Picture of Morris Pratt Institute	1837-1987 Whitewater Sesqui-centennial

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te	Article/Subject	Source
June, 1997	30) MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE	Page 47 from Whitewater Homecoming 1837 - 1937
March, 1998	31) Things Go Bump in the Night at Whitewater	Janesville Gazette 10/31/95
Oct. 2003	38) A HAUNTED COUNTY: Local Ghost Stories and lurid Tales by Andrea Hayday	AT THE LAKE, Magazine, Autumn, 1999
Oct. 1991	39) Legends and Myths in Whitewater Abound as Halloween Draws Near	The Royal Purple 10/30/91
Nov. 1994	40) Occult dispels Whitewater myths, folklore	The Royal Purple 11/02/94
Oct. 1995	41) 'Spooks temple' adds uniqueness to campus history	The Royal Purple 10/25/95
N.D.	42) The Morris Pratt Institute presents: An Educational Course of Study on Modern Spiritualism	The Morris Pratt Institute
Oct. 1981	43) The History of the Morris Pratt Institute	Morris Pratt Institute
July 2003	44) In Search of Spirits: Whitewater has 'other world' stories to tell	The Royal Purple 7/31/2003
Feb. 1996	45) Whitewater has history of supernatural occurrences	The Royal Purple 2/21/96
Oct. 1990	46) City's history conjurs scary tales of early links to witchcraft, occult	The Royal Purple 10/31/1990
Oct. 1986	47) Witch myths unearthed	The Royal Purple 10/29/86
Oct. 2009	48) Campus holds haunted past	The Royal Purple 10/28/09
Oct. 2007	49) Legends of paranormal happenings haunt city	The Royal Purple 10/31/07
Apr. 1992	50) Occult activity surfaces at Whitewater lake	The Royal Purple 4/1/1992



MORRIS PRATT

REFERENCE DEPT.  
Harold Andersen Library  
Wisconsin State University  
Whitewater

MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE

Whitewater, Wisconsin

The First Permanent Institution of Learning Ever Established Under the Auspices of Spiritualism.

While it has been truly said that "Education is the Road to Wealth and Position" yet it may also be truthfully stated that educational training in all its various phases points the way to enjoy good health, happiness and long life.

The Morris Pratt Institute owes its origin and present existence to the beneficence of the late Morris Pratt, a citizen of Whitewater, Wisconsin. Guided by the direction which came to him by invisible intelligences, he accumulated a small fortune, and as a memento of his guidance, he erected the Institute building in 1888, which for a number of years he used for seances and services in the interest of spiritualism. These services were conducted for several years by prominent clergymen of the spiritualistic faith.

It was Mr. Pratt's conviction, however, growing out of his experience, that there should be a school under the auspices of spiritualism, which should be free from the religious prejudices and misconceptions that dominate the present institutions of learning. To make this idea a reality he deeded the entire building with land upon which it stands, free from all incumbrances, to seven well known and reliable spiritualists as trustees of the property. Money was donated freely and within ten months upwards of \$3,000 worth of improvements were made, putting the building in condition for immediate use.

The Morris Pratt Institute was founded in 1902 when Rev. Moses Howell, a spiritualist minister, came here and together with Morris Pratt, inauguated the school which was incorporated at that time under the laws of the State of Wisconsin.

The location is one of the best in the city at the corner of Third and Center streets. The building is a large, modern brick structure, three floors and basement, fronting 60 feet and extending over 100 feet in depth.

The third floor and part of second floor are used for dormitories, comprising twenty private rooms, all comfortably furnished.

On the second floor is also the chapel for religious services, having seating capacity for 300 persons, being provided with modern seats in semi-circular rows rising gradually to the rear, giving a full view of platform while instrumental music is furnished by a fine chapel organ, given by Mr. Pratt; also by piano in classroom and congregational singing is the popular method in use. Services are held regularly by the faculty every Sunday evening at 7:30 p.m., and are fairly well attended by students of the school and people from the city and vicinity, the public being cordially invited.

On the first floor in front is the office, reception and reading rooms with main class room in rear and private class rooms adjoining; also cloak rooms, etc.

The dining room for students and faculty is in basement, with seating room for 35 persons, using the "Cafeteria" system, so that one can order what he chooses at very moderate cost--merely to cover cost-- and the kitchen or culinary department is under experienced management. A well equipped laundry in rear of kitchen is free for all students and the faculty. There are also bath and toilet rooms on each floor while the entire building is heated by steam and lighted by electricity, being one of the best equipped institutions of learning in the state and the only one of its kind in the whole United States. Probably no school

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Irvin L. Young Memorial Library  
Whitewater, Wisconsin

Harold Andersen Library  
Wisconsin State University  
Whitewater

Building in the state has more attractive furnishings or is more conveniently arranged.

The branches covered by the full course at the Morris Pratt Institute are divided into two classes which may be designated as new and old. By the old branches are meant such as are popular and taught in all the schools of the country: 1st, grammar; 2d, Rhetoric and composition work; 3d, American and English literature; 4th, general history; 5th, physical geography, including geological formations, the Nebular hypothesis and the growth of planets; 6th, oratory, including voice and physical culture; 7th, psychology; 8th, arithmetic; 9th, logic; 10th, music (extra).

The new branches are those which have lately risen into prominence which meet with much opposition and which therefore, are kept out of the older schools. They comprise: 1st, psychic research (a study of the relation which exists between this world and that beyond the grave); 2d, comparative religion (a study of the great religions of the world--both of the called miracles and manifestations of science with theology—a study of each branch of science, of the war which the Christian church waged against it through centuries; 4th, higher criticism, which is the study of the Bible from the standpoint of science; 5th, evolution; 6th, spiritualism of the Bible, explaining the so-called miracles and manifestations of supernatural power in the Bible on natural grounds.

The school is opened every morning with an address by one of the students; also by the Emerson School of Oratory, including vocal and physical culture. A prominent feature at this institute is the fact that students may receive individual instruction if required and while all are admitted without an educational examination, yet none are allowed under fifteen years of age and must invariably possess a good moral character.

The rates of tuition at the Morris Pratt Institute are very reasonable, being only \$50 a year, while single rooms in the building for one only, are furnished at \$1.50 and \$2.00 per week and double rooms (for two persons), at \$2.00 and \$3.00 per week, rooms at the institute being provided for girls only, while boys can obtain good rooms at city residences at similar rates. Table board in the building is in club on the co-operative plan each one paying for what he orders.

The Morris Pratt Institute is not a university or a college of letters. It does not give degrees nor is it to be classed with the higher institutions of learning. It is more properly an academy and occupies a position between the common school and the college. It was established to give mediums, speakers and others who contemplate work in the broad field of progressive thought the preparation needed. Its work is not only to correct ungrammatical expression but also to enlarge one's knowledge, to train the thinking powers, to develop nobility of character, to elevate the mental and moral taste, and give finish, fullness, beauty and completeness to the work done.

Here mediumship is popular, but this school is not especially for mediums. It is for all who seek self-improvement, whether medium or not, whether spiritualist or not. Its aim is to give as good a general education to all persons in the short time of two years, and at the same time to equip them with special training for public or private work in the wide field of progressive thought.

The teachers at the Morris Pratt Institute are honest, earnest and efficient, most of whom have had experience in public or private school work. The members of the faculty have had long experience, especially Professor A. J. Weaver who has been connected with the institute since 1902, and has had wide experience teaching in public schools, etc.

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Wisconsin State University

Whitewater

March, 1917

Students come here from all parts of the country from all parts of the country from Maine to California, nearly every state in the union havein been represented in different years. The enrollment this past year was 25 pupils, coming largely from the middle and western states and there have been four or five graduates every year who receive the diplomas usually awarded.

A post-graduate course is added to the curriculum for the benefit of all graduates who desire especially to fit themselves for public platform work. For this course, which consists of one year's study, a special diploma will be granted.

The officers and directors of the Morris Pratt Institute are as follows: George B. Warne, president; A. M. Griffin, vice president; C. A. Eurgess, secretary; Andrew J. Weaver, treasurer; also Mattie Smith, Thomas Grimshaw and Minnie G. Warne.

#### FACULTY

George B. Warne, (president) spiritualism of secular and sacred history; Andrew J. Weaver, higher criticism, evolution, phys. geog; psychology, logic, history of warfare of science with theology; Vistoria C. Moore, oratory, voice and physical culture; Adelaide Burleigh, grammar, rhetoric, American and English literature, composition and spelling; Thomas Grimshaw, mediumship; Its laws and their application; Mattie Howell Marvin, assistant in psychic department.

The Morris Pratt Institute association was chartered by the state through the influence of Wm. Rogers, Esq., one of the prominent attorneys of the state, who was a member of the board of directors of the institute.

The constitution provides that any person believing in the principles of this organization shall be eligible for active membership therein.

Section 2. Each application for membership shall accompany his application with five dollars as a membership fee and not less than one dollar per annum in advance thereafter.

Section 3. Any person may obtain a life membership on payment of \$25 in advance.

The institute is absolutely in the hands of the association whose officers are elected annually by ballot at the regular meeting of directors.

The Morris Pratt Institute has an endowment fund of \$65,000 which is largely invested in real estate, drawing good annual interest, in addition to which it has several thousand dollars invested in stocks, bonds, etc.

A fine catalogue is issued by the institute, giving the full courses of study and all information which will be sent to any address upon application, while all communications will be promptly answered and its prospects for a larger attendance the coming season are very bright.

From...

Walworth County Trade Review; a business trade review of towns and villages in Walworth County, Wisconsin.

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Wisconsin State University  
Whitewater

March, 1917

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MORRIS PRATT

## CHAPTER XXIII

### PROSPECTING WITH THE SPIRITS

*Morris Pratt*

THERE HAS JUST closed behind me, after a brief visit, at Whitewater, Wisconsin, the door of a strange educational institution, the only training school of its kind in the world. Officially it is known as the Morris Pratt Institute. It is a Spiritualist college with an international reputation; its founder was an untutored common laborer.

I am perplexed over the anomalous story of its establishment; baffled to explain the mysterious public revelations made by renowned mediums who come there to lecture and read the mind. Believers tell me I do not understand because I am not sensitized to the invisible intelligences that crowd about me.

This school attempts to "radioize" students to catch the spirit messages from the world of ether.

"Here mediumship is popular," announces the novel little catalogue outlining the course of study.

"Its possession is prized as a pearl of great value



and its development is encouraged and assisted by the best methods known to us."

A few years ago the late Clarence Darrow, noted Chicago criminal lawyer, came to Whitewater, a busy Southern Wisconsin city of 4,000 with a cultured New England visage, to speak at an open forum of the State Teachers' College. After the lecture he disappeared for two days. Later it was discovered that he had spent the time on an inspection of the Morris Pratt Institute—and departed unconvinced but mystified. I fully realize his predicament.

"In the hectic days after the Civil War," Mr. Darrow commented, "many people embraced Spiritualism, for the friends of dead soldiers were anxious to receive messages directly from the ones they loved. These they often seemed to get, though it was cryptic and not couched in good English, but after all, as the medium contended, fairly good considering the means that had to be used to let the dead talk to their survivors.

"Often I went to seances and visited mediums, and this I continued to a much later date. In fact, I have visited them in most American cities of any importance, and many in Europe. I really have wanted to believe it all and therefore tried to, but in vain."<sup>208</sup>

There was nothing about the conduct of Morris Pratt that foreboded idealism. He was a New

<sup>208</sup>Darrow, Clarence, *The Story of My Life*, New York, 1932, p. 398.

Yorker, born at Eaton, Madison County, December 13, 1820—a lad with one year's schooling who worked hard for his money and hoarded it with frugality. Riches he coveted; to accumulate wealth became a dream. Early in the fifties he emigrated to Wisconsin and was one of a half dozen neighboring families to gather around Whitewater. Bound together by the common belief in Spiritualism, soon they came to know all the national mediums, entertained them in their homes and communed through them to their departed friends. Lectures and seances conducted by William Stainton Moses, the outstanding leader, gave the Whitewater colony strength and reputation.

During one of the seances at Whitewater, early in the eighties, Mr. Pratt declared that if he could be made wealthy he would devote a large part of his accumulations to the Spiritualist movement. Later he was called upon by Mrs. Mary Hayes, a local seeress.<sup>209</sup> She was in the audience which had heard him make his public vow.

<sup>209</sup>Under date of September 7, 1938, J. O. Hayes, son of Mrs. Mary Hayes, then living at San Jose, California, wrote the author of this book:

"Mrs. Mary Hayes mentioned in the newspaper article is my mother. She died in 1905. Mr. Pratt knew Mrs. Hayes and greatly admired and respected her. Mrs. Hayes was not a medium. In her young womanhood she became very much interested in the question of man's immortality and prayed for two years very earnestly and devotedly that she might know the truth regarding it. As a result of this effort she passed through an experience somewhat similar to that of Jesus in the wilderness as recorded in the Bible. She spoke in tongues unknown to her; she healed the sick by the laying on of her hands; she restored those possessed to a normal condition and did untold miraculous

"Do you intend, if made wealthy, to carry out your promise?" she inquired.

Pratt eagerly pledged his faith to aid the mystic circle.

"How much money have you saved?" she pursued.

"About \$4,000," he responded.

"Then go in with my sons to Northern Wisconsin-Michigan and invest in wild lands," she advised, designating the township and range.

things that could not be explained by the use of any ordinary human methods. From that time until her death a large part of her time was given to healing the sick, and she did this without charge or financial compensation. My mind is full of instances of her miraculous work that covers the period of earliest memory up to the time of her death."

J. O. Hayes married Clara Lyon, daughter of Justice William P. Lyon of the Wisconsin Supreme Court. She died in 1932.

ASHLAND MINE AT IRONWOOD, MICHIGAN, WHERE MORRIS PRATT, SPIRITUALIST, MADE A FORTUNE FROM FOLLOWING THE ADVICE OF A SEERESS



MARY HAYES-CHYNOWETH, FORMERLY OF WATERLOO, WISCONSIN, WHOSE ADVICE LED MORRIS PRATT TO WEALTH

Pratt unquestioningly followed her advice. Spirit prospectors guided him. After he had inspected the region, however, he momentarily hesitated. The acres were barren of timber, scoured by fire and strewn with rocks. The area appeared valueless. Then, putting doubt aside, he purchased stock in a company organized by sons of Mrs. Hayes, which had entered a claim to all the particular desolate tract.

For two years Pratt awaited results. Again he went to the same seeress to complain. Nothing had transpired to hasten his wealth gathering. She advised him to be patient; to hold on. Three more years passed, and then came purchasers.

"The mining company has offered many times

what I have invested," he gleefully told Mrs. Hayes. "What shall I do?"

"Accept!" she responded. "I have so advised my sons." Pratt did not wait for further instructions.

By 1886 the region turned out to be the heart of the Gogebic iron range. The discovery of high grade Bessemer ore led to a speculative craze unparalleled in Wisconsin; mining companies flourished; a money mania swept northern Wisconsin and Michigan; fortune seekers became heroes of the hour. Pratt's dream of riches had been providentially answered.

"When, through the guidance of my mother, my brother and I discovered, opened and operated the Ashland Iron Mine at Ironwood, Michigan, Mr. Pratt, on account of his faith in my mother, bought some stock in our company and realized a large profit from its subsequent sale," declared J. O. Hayes, the son living in San Jose, California.<sup>210</sup> "I assume that a considerable part of the profit derived from this transaction went into the Pratt Institute of Whitewater."

With renewed faith Pratt set about to fulfill his covenant. He did not wait for someone to prod him

<sup>210</sup>Clay, Louisa Johnson, *The Spirit Dominant*, San Jose, California, (n. d.) is a story of the life of Mary Hayes-Chynoweth. It is an unusual volume, replete with singular spiritual prophecies and cures that occurred in Waterloo, Madison, Marshall, Hurley, and Ashland, touching the families of men and women prominent in the history of Wisconsin. The chain of occurrences is astounding; the events mystifying. Mrs. Hayes-Chynoweth became the founder in San Jose of a school of religion known as The New Thought. Copy of *The Spirit Dominant* in Wisconsin Historical Library.

into redeeming his promise. Work on a spirit temple was quickly begun at Whitewater under his direction. When the foundation for the three-story structure had been laid skeptics began to sneer.<sup>211</sup> But the builder was determined.

"I made a vow before I made my investment that I would erect a temple to the spirit world with a share of the profits I was to realize, and I intend to do so," was his inflexible reply to all doubters.

"Pratt's Folly" they called it derisively in those days, and Pratt's Folly appeared an appropriate designation, for even its founder did not know exactly the purpose to which the new structure would be dedicated.

"It will be used in the interests of spiritualism," was his only explanation.

The building was finished in 1888. For years it was a meeting place for public seances. A few months before Pratt's death in 1902, he gave a deed to the estate to seven well known Spiritualists to act as a board of trustees. At last he had decided to transform the property into a Spiritualist educational institution.<sup>212</sup> He lived long enough to see the first class matriculate and begin its studies.

Since then many substantial donations have been made to an endowment fund for the maintenance of the school. The building contains sleeping ac-

<sup>211</sup>*Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 25, 1924.

<sup>212</sup>Morris Pratt died at Whitewater, Wisconsin, December 21, 1902, and is buried in the local cemetery. Obituary notice in *Whitewater Gazette*, December 25, 1902.

commodations for fifty students, a large church auditorium, class rooms, offices, reception rooms, dining room, kitchen and laundry.

The school is based on the idea that while the Spiritualist workers should increase the psychic power which they possess to the highest degree, they should also cultivate their mental and moral powers; should strive to acquire literary tastes and noble aspirations; should become lovers of books, of nature, of truth and progress; should become in mind and heart cultured, in manners and language refined and in aspirations inspired.

Between 1910 and 1915 the student body at times numbered as high as forty-five. The program was extended to include courses in grammar, literature, psychology, history, logic, philosophy of Spiritualism and religion, as well as a department of speech. The regular course was two years, although many of the students returned to take special graduate work.

The institute continued until the spring of 1932, when a falling off in the enrollment and a loss of a large part of the income from endowment funds forced officials to close the school. Correspondence courses in Spiritualism temporarily interfered with a reopening.

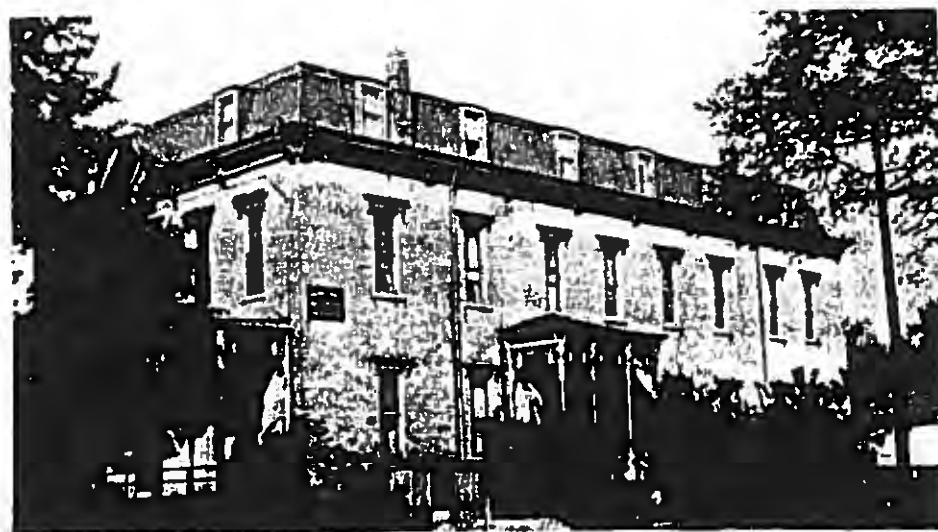
After three seasons of inactivity, funds were raised, instructors engaged, and the building reconditioned. Meantime the number of students had noticeably decreased.

There has always been a strange concern about the institution by the outside world. Students from the nearby State Teachers' College call the rival institution the "Spook House." Many of them, however, find more interest there at a Sunday evening seance than in the gatherings at the other churches. Whitewater residents take real enjoyment in attending the lectures offered by nationally recognized scholars in Spiritualism. Bigotry is unknown.

Curiosity prompted me, as it has hundreds of others, to enter the quiet building set in a group of towering elms.

Most of the classes are taught in rooms on the first floor. In the second story general assembly, with a seating capacity of more than 400, public meetings are held each Sunday evening throughout the school term.

MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE AT WHITEWATER, WISCONSIN, ONLY  
SPIRITUALIST COLLEGE IN THE WORLD



On the wall there is a painting of a beautiful woman, who, according to the medium, returned from the spirit world to speak for a moment to earthly loved ones and tarry long enough to be sketched. On another wall is a framed memorial recalling the history of the community at Hydesville, New York, where in 1848 modern Spiritualism first made definite claim to direct communication with the spirits of the dead.

But my thoughts were all the time on the third floor of this building. I had heard much about the spotless seance room—white shades, white chairs, white wallpaper—nothing but white—but I evidenced little interest until reminded that we must now ascend the long stairs to the sacred chamber.

"Twenty-five years ago, when I first visited this institution," Robert K. Coe, the editor of the *Whitewater Register*, told me as we climbed the passageway together, "I was denied admission to this room. The guide then told me that no one but a member of the Spiritualist church, fully dressed in white, would be allowed to enter. This was a hallowed precinct not to be profaned by a non-believer. Since then the harsh regulation has been rescinded."

The walls of the chamber are adorned with pictures and emblems of Spiritualism. While the tapestry has become faded with age, the chairs chipped of paint, to the venerable room there still cling stories of the wraith-like aura of a spectral

atmosphere. The sanctuary of the spirit has lost its immaculate allurements. I was disappointed.

"Thousands of men and women are having psychic experiences every day," volunteered our guide. "Thousands upon thousands. Many of them are dismayed at the revelation of their hidden powers, for they do not know how to use or guide this marvelous gift of sensitiveness which has been imparted to them. What we want to teach them is that mediumship and psychic sensitiveness are natural—compatible both with spiritual and natural laws."

After we had returned to the office of the principal of the school we sat down to listen to an explanation of the spirit phenomena. As outlined by the speaker, all life is motion and vibration, but the vibrations of the spiritual realm are not only more rapid, but also higher and finer, than those of the physical. The medium, then, is a person who can hold himself to the higher level and achieve such harmony with the spirit world that he catches the higher vibrations.

Sharply, like the snapping of a taut wire, I discerned the noise of the world outside. As I hurried down the street I paused at stores and offices to visit with people whose names had been given me as possible sources of information. Not a single one would concede a belief in Spiritualism. But in conversation all recalled mystifying revelations that baffled their understanding. Their only ad-

missions were that from the seance platform of the school they have heard strange voices—and they knew not whence they came.

( The Morris Pratt Institute, singular of birth, unusual of purpose, sheds a weird intellectual light in a world of great darkness.



# Temple Stood On Center St.

## Pratt Made Whitewater A Center Of Spiritualism

It has now been 11 years since a three story, white brick home was torn down at 300 Center Street, but the memory of "Pratt's folly" is still very much alive in Whitewater.

It was in 1889 that 39-year-old Morris Pratt, a wealthy Whitewater citizen, built what was then the most expensive home in the city. The large building was assessed at a value of \$30,000, and was some 18 feet wide, 85 feet long, and contained two large auditorium halls, one of which seated nearly four hundred people. Pratt designed the building as a temple and a school for Spiritualism, and it was dedicated in 1889.

### World's first

In 1902 the building became the Pratt Institute, the first spiritualist school in the world. At that time, Pratt deeded the building and land to seven known and reliable Spiritualists, who were to act as trustees of the property. It was not until about 1938 that the Institute failed financially and was forced to close its doors for the last time.

Pratt, one of the early pioneers in Whitewater, amassed a great deal of wealth and credited his success to "invisible intelligences." And his fortune in making wise investments was indeed, nothing short of amazing.

Pratt was born in Madison County, New York, and migrated to Whitewater with his two brothers in 1840. The three Pratts immediately began to clear land for farming in Lima Township. By 1856, the frugal and hardworking Pratt was paying tax on more than \$12,000 worth of property, and was one of the most successful of the early Whitewater area pioneers.

### Pratt converted

Pratt visited the Lake Mills spiritualist center in 1851 and was soon converted to the unorthodox religion of spiritualism. Pratt was fairly well-educated and frequently argued during church services with ministers who criticized spiritualism, and on several occasions was evicted from the church. Pratt was even fined once for his controversial actions.

In 1884 Pratt met another New York native, Mrs. Mary Hayes, and began to attend spiritualist meetings with the self-proclaimed faith healer and prophet. She advised Pratt to invest in a company which eventually became the highly profitable Ashland Mine of Ironwood, Michigan. From this venture Pratt gathered a fabulous amount of money, and shortly thereafter the Pratt Institute became a reality. Pratt had earlier said that "If I am made rich, I will give part of it for Spiritualism." In 1889 he fulfilled his promise.

Pratt wished to give his temple-home to the Spiritualists who developed a national organization by 1893, and eventually deeded the property that was originally called "Science Hall."

### Psychic powers

The school was based on the idea that persons who possessed an inborn ability to

communicate with the Spiritual world should be given an opportunity to develop that ability. The Institute, according to Pratt, would provide a place where the students could improve their psychic powers, and at the same time, cultivate their mental and moral powers.

Pratt's unorthodox views drew a negative reaction in the Whitewater community, and Pratt found himself paying exorbitant taxes on his building during its early years of existence. Eventually the residents of the area modified their views, and services at the three story building were soon listed under "church notices." On Sunday evenings citizens flocked to the Institute to witness special seances and lectures by nationally famous Spiritualists.



Morris Pratt

(Whitewater Historical Society Photo)

The visitors were barred for many years, however, from a room on the third floor that was furnished in white and had pictures and emblems of Spiritualism on the walls. When the public was finally permitted to enter they found "mediums" (persons who communicated with the Spiritual world) and examples of Spiritual art.

### New York origin

The belief in communication with spirits, according to a 1964 speech by Paul Schmunk here in Whitewater, to a meeting of the State Historical Society, began in Hydesville, New York, in 1848. It was there that two girls, less than 10 years old, developed a code for mysterious raps that had occurred in their farm home. New York, during that period, had been the scene of numerous religious revivals, Utopian societies, and reform movements. Soon thousands of Spiritualist circles developed, with an estimated one million believers.

The establishment of the Spiritualist school in Whitewater was also closely connected with New York.

The former governor of the Wisconsin territory, N. P. Tallmadge, was a prominent defender of Spiritualism, and in 1854 headed a list of 15,000 signers of a Congressional petition which requested a scientific investigation of Spiritualism. Pratt was also one of the territory's early Spiritualists.

### Institute begins

In 1902 Pratt persuaded nationally known Moses Hull and Andrew Jackson Weaver to come to Whitewater, the year that the Morris Pratt Institute was initiated. He gave Hull a separate house and donated the big white brick building to Spiritualism, but still retained an apartment in the Institute for himself and his wife. Hull dedicated himself to the continuation of Spiritualism, crossing the country in an attempt to raise enough money to keep the Whitewater school from closing. Hull constantly spoke of making Whitewater the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism."

Pratt died shortly after deeding his home to the Pratt Association, and at the time of his death, the Institute was carrying a \$2200 mortgage.

After the retirement of the 90-year-old Andrew Jackson Weaver, in 1921, the materialism, the general religious indifference, and the exciting motion pictures, not to mention the speak-easies, began to take their toll, according to Schmunk.

### School suffers

During the depression years of the 1930's the school suffered from endowment losses, and students from the Institute were unable to find jobs in Whitewater.

The school closed for three years, reopened in 1935, and finally died a short time later. By 1946 the Temple was sold, and a new Morris Pratt Institute was built in Milwaukee.

After the building was sold in 1946 it was used for a rest home for aged Spiritualists, and later became a girls dormitory for the old Wisconsin State Teacher's College.

In 1961 the great temple of Spiritualism was razed and the land was purchased by the Wisconsin Telephone Company. The Telephone Company building that serves the Whitewater area now stands at 300 Center Street.

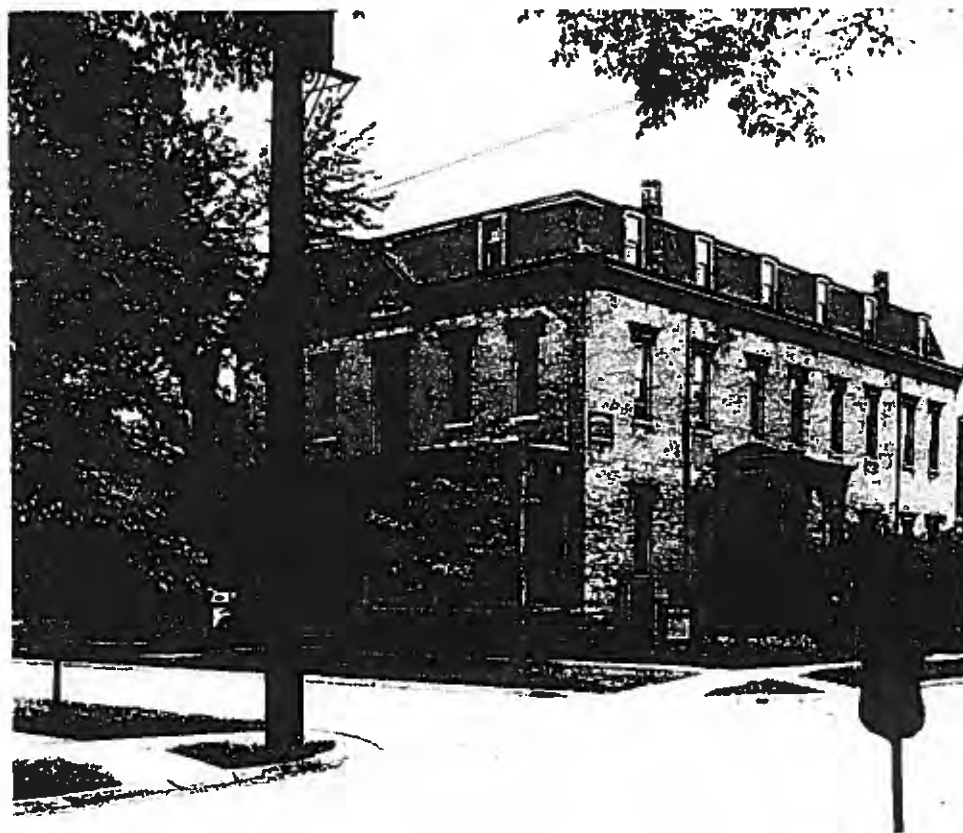
How much communication, if any, the students managed to experience between the Spiritual world and themselves is unknown. We can be certain however, that legends surrounding the Pratt Institute will be alive in Whitewater for many years to come

## UW-W Prof. Outstanding Educator

Dr. Jack L. Knusel, Associate Professor of Economics, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, was recently among those honored with a letter of certificate and an award for Outstanding Educators of America for 1972.

The nominations are made by the officials of the university on the basis of the educator's talents in the classroom, contributions to research, administrative ability, civic service, and professional recognition. The members will be listed in the national award volume of Outstanding Educators of America.

WANT A BARGAIN?  
THE PEACH HAS THEM



The Pratt Institute, photographed around 1930. (Compliments of the Whitewater Historical Society)

## Aspin Announces UW-W Grant

First District Congressman Les Aspin (D-Wis) has announced that the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater has received a grant of \$25,000 for laboratory and other instructional equipment and materials from the Office of Education of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

### HOMEMAKERS WARNED, CHECK ON SALESMEN

Homemakers are being warned by the state Attorney General to be wary of door-to-door salesmen selling expensive household products and equipment.

"Although there are many honest salesmen selling for legitimate companies, the actions of a few make it imperative that consumers exercise caution in this area," says Robert Warren, Wisconsin's Attorney General.

Warren indicated that his Office of Consumer Protection has received a series of complaints concerning both the quality of merchandise, and the service of the manufacturers.

Complaints generally fall into the following areas:

- Late delivery;
- Salesmen hard to find after delivery;
- Company doesn't answer letters of complaint;
- Surface of cookery becomes pitted and scratched after normal use;
- Food burns easily and sticks to the cookware.

Warren encouraged consumers to be cautious when approached by a door-to-door salesman selling kitchenware.

"Chick up on the product as much as possible. Don't be pressured to sign a contract before you are confident you are signing for quality merchandise," Warren advises.

"If you feel you have been defrauded in the marketplace, contact my office of Consumer Protection, State Capitol, Madison, 53702," he adds.

Aspin explained that the money is to be used for the purchase of educational aides that will be used directly by the students.

He indicated that such things as audio visual equipment, microscopes and copy machines are the kinds of items that can be purchased with funds under this grant.

"I am very pleased that the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater has received this money to improve the tools that students will have at their disposal to pursue their studies.

"I will continue to support federal education programs such as this," the First District Congressman said in a statement released today.

## ADVANCE

TUESDAY

Wal

A mem  
will call at y  
sale drive.

PROCEEDS FOR

## A New Home Investment

Move up to a better life!



DESIGN A—Brick Veneer de

- Four bedrooms
- Half-bath in master bedroom
- Step-saving L-shape kitchen
- Convenient dining areas
- Choice of brick veneer or frame exterior

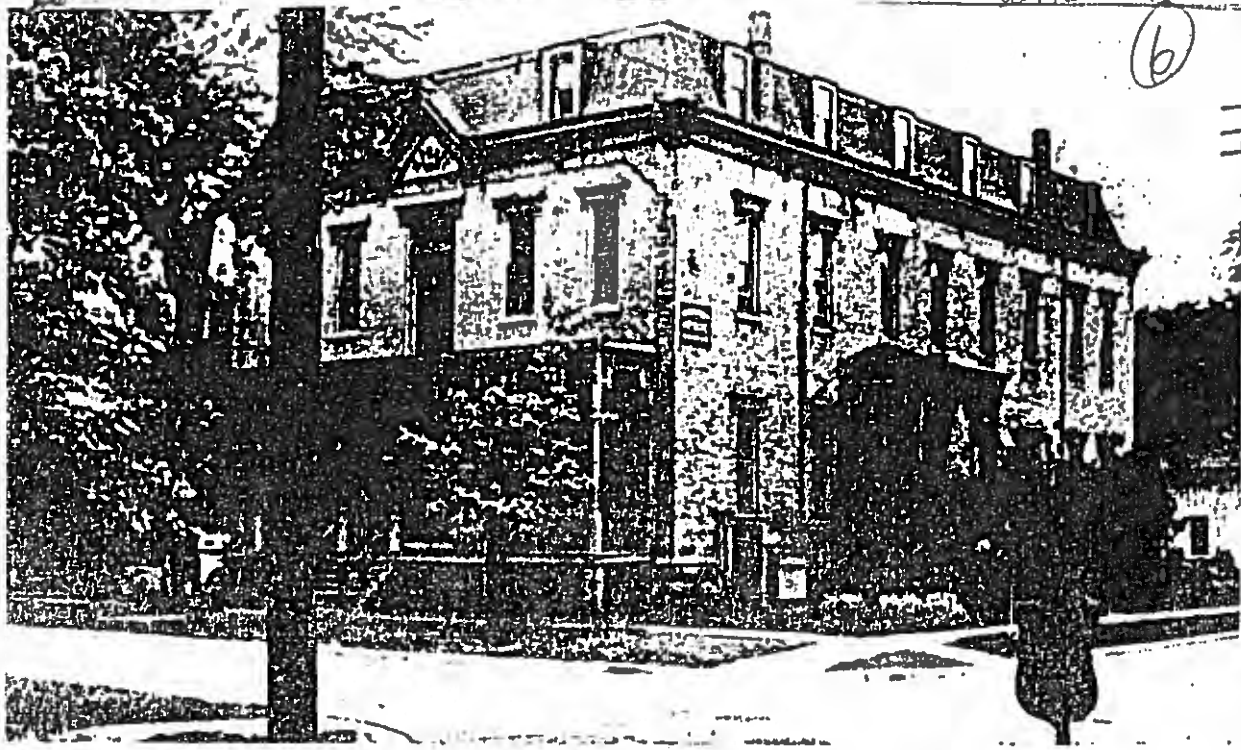
Living Area  
DESIGN A  
Plan 1 or 2—1,292 sq. ft.

## Foster Parent Banquet June 19

June is celebrated nationally as Foster Parent month, and in recognition of the services provided by foster parents in our

ages from infancy through adolescence, who, for one reason or another, cannot remain in their own homes. Also included

(6)



THE MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE - Guided by direction which came to Morris Pratt "from invisible intelligences," he accumulated a small fortune. As a memento of his gratitude, he dedicated the building (as shown above) to the study of spiritualism.

# History of spiritualism; facts versus hearsay

Oct 31 1972  
KATIE KUHN  
Feature Editor

"In doing research on my project, I have traced the origin of Mary Worth back to Whitewater, Wisconsin. Any information you could give me on this and witchcraft in general would be quite helpful."

The above excerpt was taken from a letter recently sent to the ROYAL PURPLE office by a student at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

According to certain professors at the UWW, just about every freshman class has its share of those seeking similar information. The trouble is that the only thing ever arrived at is a dead end. There are many versions of Mary Worth, and even more on the witchcraft of Whitewater. The difference between fact and rumor seems quite definite, but there are many imaginations unwilling to accept this.

On the front page of the Nov. 6, 1970 issue of the ROYAL PURPLE was a small story about the basket of an infant appearing in the mall in broad daylight. No witness to the event was available, nor was there any explanation. The issue was left a mystery.

from the Thorpean vault

According to the Whitewater police, the event was attributed to anonymous pranksters. Over the years there have been similar occurrences, though none quite as apparent. Most happenings of this sort take place about this time of the year and, on Thursday nights. Some may view this as quite mysterious and some attribute it to the fact that Thursday night is traditional drinking night (the most probable eve for pranks to occur), and Halloween stirs the imagination anyway.

Something left unsaid about the Nov. 1970 disturbance, however, is that relatives of the dead infant are still alive and were quite aghast at the thought of the body being removed from the crypt. It is no wonder that authorities in Whitewater were notified to weld shut the certain crypt.

Students of the University hear many rumors regarding the goings on of Hillside Cemetery. Many students have started research on the subject and stopped unsatisfied. Some claim they were too "spooked" to continue, and some could not find enough factual information. One such rumor is that of a male student leaving the cemetery and ending up in the men's room of

a local gas station with his wrists slashed. According to the Whitewater police, there was never any report of this.

There are, however, pertinent FACTS regarding spiritualism and the Morris Pratt Institute (now the site of the telephone company) which was the first spiritualist college in the U.S. and was located in Whitewater. Such things are viewed as beautiful (contrary to the black magic and occult as is viewed today) by the senior members of the Whitewater community.

The following information was compiled from various back issues of the WHITEWATER REGISTER and the ROYAL PURPLE; research taken from the "History of Spiritualism, 1845-1855" the Master's Thesis of E. J. Isaacs, 1957, and excerpts of a speech presented by Paul Schmunk to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in June, 1964.

Spiritualism in America began in New York around the mid 1840's. Among followers there was a basic set of beliefs, though each had his own variations to the theme. The shared set of beliefs were "There was for everyone life after death in spheres beyond and the denizens of those spheres desired to and were capable of communicating within habitants of the land."

The followers began to appear shortly after the mysterious rappings occurred in the presence of Kate and Margaret Fox in 1848

kaprelun copy photo

"One night in the spring of 1848 two teen-age daughters of a western New York farmer screamed to their parents that they heard raps coming from their bedstead, the floor and the walls of their room. Soon their neighbors and the people in the surrounding countryside would refer to these raps as Mysterious Noises, Startling Manifestations, Spirit Rappings. Within four years people all over the world would be listening for them. The girls would be the center of a social and religious phenomena they would never understand nor care to understand.

"...On the night of March 28, Mrs. Fox got up, lit a candle, and walked from the room where they all slept to investigate knockings on the floor of the east bedroom. Mrs. Fox could not discover the cause of the knockings that night, nor on succeeding nights as they grew louder. On the night of March 31, the family went to bed early, determined not to let the noise disturb them. Fifteen-year old Margaret and her twelve-year-old sister, Kate, decided to sleep in the east bedroom. As usual, the noises commenced. Kate began to imitate them by snapping her fingers. As fast as she snapped, the sounds followed in various parts of the dark room, making the same number of raps as the girl did. Then Margaret joined the game, saying, "Now do as I do. Count one, two, three, four..."

"When the raps did, the girls called their mother. Mrs. Fox ran in, listened, and asked the raps to count to ten, and then to give the ages of her children. When the raps complied, she continued."

She asked, "Are you an injured spirit?" Distinct rap! In answer to further questions, the injured spirit rapped out the story that he had been a peddler, and had been murdered and buried in the house they were in. He had been thirty-one years old when he died, and had left a family of a wife, two sons and three daughters.

This has been recorded as the first set of rappings in America, in the dwellings known as Hydesville, town of Arcadia, Wayne County, New York.

Continuing on with the story, Mrs. Fox called her neighbors, who at first regarded the rappings as "a big joke", but later became believers. Hundreds of people from all over the countryside began visiting the Fox home and experiencing the rappings. Two weeks after the noises began, John Fox, father of Kate and Margaret, wrote: "Hundreds have visited the house, so that it is impossible to attend to our daily occupations, and I hope, whether it be natural or supernatural, the means will be found out soon."

The girls were sent away to live with relatives, but the spirits followed. People began to follow Kate and Margaret - the curious, the hopeful, those with a will to believe.

"No longer were they simply testing the raps to see if they were really audible and spiritual. If the raps were real, they could satisfy a basic human craving - communication with the dead and with it, proof of life after death... Perhaps the rappings were, at last, the key to heaven on earth."

Early in 1850, believers began to bring out histories of the rappings in newspaper articles and pamphlets. This "trend" soon swept over the country, gathering ardent believers.

According to Isaacs, Warren Chase was the one responsible for beginning the movement in Wisconsin. Chase was a dedicated and devoted evangelist, a New Englander of bastard birth. His early life had been one of rejection, degradation and suffering.

In June of 1853, Chase reported that for over a year he had been spending all his time to spreading spiritualism in Wisconsin and Illinois and that there were "thousands of firm believers and hundreds who are





Morris Pratt, one of the early pioneers in Whitewater, founded a school for Spiritualists in 1888. Scientific - Spiritualist koprelian copy photo

in constant intercourse with the spirit spheres." The circle of progress met regularly at Lake Mills, Wisconsin.

The Spiritualist movement began in Wisconsin soon after the "trend" developed in this country during the 1840's.

Morris Pratt, an early Wisconsin emigrant, was instrumental in establishing Spiritualism as a significant movement in Whitewater.

Pratt was born in Madison County, New York, in 1820 and emigrated to Wisconsin early in the 1840's with his two brothers. He was one of the first to settle around the Whitewater area and soon became one of the most successful pioneers in the area.

Pratt denounced many orthodox religious beliefs and was a dedicated follower of Spiritualism. The early settlers of Whitewater were bound together by the common belief in Spiritualism and soon came to know the national mediums. They would invite these mediums into their homes and communicate through them with their departed relatives and friends.

According to Fred L. Holmes, author of "Badger Saints and Sinners" (1939), "Lectures and seances conducted by William Stainton Moses, the outstanding leader, gave the Whitewater colony strength and reputation."

It was during one of these seances that Morris Pratt declared, "If I am made rich, I will give part of it for Spiritualism."

Mary Hayes, also a New Yorker, had migrated to Madison and was also extremely interested in the Spiritualist movement. Some accounts depict her as a relative to Pratt, and others just a friend.

She was, however, the one responsible for Pratt's investment which eventually made the Morris Pratt Institute become a reality.

Hayes had been attending the seances in Whitewater and also those in Lake Mills under the direction of Warren Chase. By this time Chase was publishing a small weekly newspaper, the SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH, and had expressed a desire to begin a school in the area.

When Hayes heard the vow of Pratt's, she asked him, "Do you intend, if made wealthy, to carry out your promise?"

He answered in the affirmative and when she asked him how much money he had saved, he declared that his father had left him \$4,000. She then urged him to invest the money into the wild lands in northern Wisconsin and Michigan. He did, and also purchased stock in a company organized by the sons

of Hayes and awaited results. The region turned out to be the heart of the Gogebic iron range, which is now the Ashland Iron Mine at Ironwood, Michigan. Pratt eventually disposed of his interest to Hayes for a total of \$125,000.

In 1888 a white three story building was erected at 300 Center St. The building was originally called "Science Hall" and was dedicated to the study of the world which exists beyond the grave.

Morris Pratt had kept his promise.

In 1902, "Science Hall" became the Morris Pratt Institute, under the direction of Moses Hull. Pratt kept a room in the Institute in which he and his wife resided. Hull spent much time traveling all over the country trying to raise money to keep the Institute in operation. The Morris Pratt Institute was the first Spiritualist college in the United States. Its principles were as follows:

1. Perfect freedom of thought and expression, so long as unkind personalities are avoided. (Eventually rewritten Freedom of thought and liberty of expression, but in no case shall unkind personalities be indulged in, nor other systems of religion or philosophy be misrepresented, nor immortality taught, nor encouragement of disobedience towards the government and its laws be permitted.)

2 Reason and experience the highest authority. No discrimination because of one's ideas.

3. All narrow and sectarian prejudices carefully avoided

4 To aim to make all students original thinkers.

The students at the Institute were adults from all over the country. In the catalog it is stated, "...This school rejects nothing because it is new and unpopular; it accepts nothing because it is old and popular. It seeks only truth."

In addition to offering courses that nearly all schools did, the Morris Pratt Institute also had courses in "Psychic Research" (a study of the relation which exists between the world and that beyond the grave) "Comparative Religion"; "The Struggle of Science with Theology"; "Higher Criticism, Evolution and Spiritualism."

The class in "Psychic Research" was held in a special room of pure white. Students and teachers alike were not allowed to enter unless garbed in a colorless robe

Pratt died shortly after he had decided his home to the Pratt Institute, at which time it carried a \$2,200 mortgage. The school suffered during the depression years and had to close in 1932. (It was reopened in 1935, but only for a short time.) The school was sold in 1946 and used for a rest home for aged spiritualists, later becoming a girl's dorm for the old Wisconsin State Teacher's College. A new Morris Pratt Institute was opened in Milwaukee.

In 1961, the property at 300 Center St. was sold to the Wisconsin Telephone Company.

As for the Spiritualist movement itself, the 1880's brought much controversy as to the genuineness of the Fox sisters' reports of rappings.

There was an admission of trickery made in 1888, but the following year, a retraction. Taken from "Notable American Women, 1607-1950" is the following information:

"By 1866 the alcoholism that was to haunt both Kate and Margaret throughout the rest of their lives - the result, perhaps, of the stress of the public life they could neither comprehend nor control - was well established."

Kate searched for a cure, was put in a sanatorium and eventually sailed to England at the expense of a friend.

"English Spiritualists" gave Kate a warm welcome and she began holding private seances immediately. In England, as in America, highly respected men of letters and sciences defended Kate's honesty and insisted on the spiritual nature of the phenomena produced in her presence. Her sister Margaret, who had been waging her own losing battle with the demon, joined her in England in 1876 and for a time remained there. But in the spring of 1885 Kate went back to America, and her drinking problem soon became more acute. In August 1886 she was arrested in Rochester for drunkenness; in May 1888 she was again arrested. Margaret, in England, wrote letters to American newspapers blaming Spiritualism for her sister's misfortunes.

"Thus began the expose of 40 years of mediumship. By this time Spiritualism in America had gone through a series of triumphs and defeats, exposes and new proofs, dilution as a reform movement and constantly increasing fragmentation as a sect of sects."

"Earlier exposes had been damaging, but this one, coming from Margaret herself, threatened to be the crushing blow. Margaret explained to reporters who met her on her arrival in New York that she and Kate had originally begun the rappings to fool their mother and had made them by throwing their big toes out of joint. On Oct. 21, 1888, she demonstrated the technique to a large audience at the Music Hall. She charged that their sister Leah had forced her and Kate to keep up the spirit-rapping fraud, and denounced her for exploiting and tyrannizing them. Kate sat in the audience, giving full assent to Margaret's explanation; Leah refused to make any public comment.

"Spiritualists denounce Margaret's expose as the ravine of a poor besotted woman who would do anything for money. Opponents of Spiritualism claimed that Margaret had given the death blow to a dishonest and immoral farce."

"A year later she recanted, swearing that she had been tricked into making a false confession by unscrupulous men. A new lecture tour, during which she reaffirmed her beliefs in spirits, also failed. Both she and Kate sank deeper into poverty, humiliation and drink.

The girls died shortly after this and were mourned by Spiritualists throughout the world.

The rappings are still a puzzle, though there have been reports of other mediums besides the Fox sisters. Those that have done research on the subject are still quite divided.

Some authors believe that some do not. This is evident that some editions of the history mention Margaret's retraction and some omit it.

The results? A puzzle left to the reader to decide. Those with a will to believe will continue to believe.

Those having denounced Spiritualism in the past will continue to disbelieve.

Many are baffled and may not phased.

Such incidents, however, continue to keep the interest alive in the world of the unknown.

As it was stated by the spirit messages, "You may expect a variety of things from this society."

# Childhood Experience Led Miller To Spiritualism



The Reverend Lester Miller, president of the Pratt Institute, spoke to a class at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater on Friday, July 6. The Pratt Institute was formerly located in Whitewater, and later moved to Milwaukee after closing here in 1932.

The Reverend Lester Miller, Madison, who now heads the Morris Pratt Institute in Milwaukee (formerly located in Whitewater), said last Friday that his own experience is a testimonial to the reality of spiritualism.

Reverend Miller was on the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater campus to speak to a class taught by Professor Gordon Long entitled "Literature of Terror and the Grotesque."

Miller told his audience that he once witnessed a spirit coming from the body of a man who was lying unconscious. Someone asked Miller if he touched the spirit, and he said "No, no one has ever touched one."

Miller said that he was first interested in spiritualism when he was 13 years old. At that time, Miller explained, he was afflicted with boils, much as Job was afflicted in the Bible. He made contact with a woman healer who cured all but two of the boils. She held seances which he later attended, creating his interest in spiritualism.

In 1929 Miller attended a church in Milwaukee that practiced spiritualism. He said he had several questions, and in 1931, he undertook a six-month study of spiritualism, "to learn all I could about it," he said.

Miller says that spiritualism believes in man as a triune being — that is, body, soul, and spirit. He says that he has been in contact with spirits on many occasions, and they have helped him with his work.

What is a spirit like? Miller says that spirits are like living people, with individual personalities. They have to be told what you would like them to do. Sometimes they cooperate, sometimes they do not.

Although the Pratt Institute is now located in Milwaukee, it was born in the City of Whitewater before the turn of the century. The site of the Pratt Institute was the corner of Fremont and Center where the Wisconsin Telephone Company is now located.

Miller told his audience that there were no "underground" meetings held among the followers of spiritualism in Whitewater. He said the underground railroad, which utilized earthen tunnels to move runaway slaves, went out of existence about 30 years before the birth of the Pratt Institute.

All records prior to 1934 were lost, Miller explained, but

careful research from prior publications has "come up with a fairly accurate history of the Pratt Institute."

The Pratt Institute began after a Mrs. Hayes in Waterloo had a "vision" and told Morris Pratt to buy some land up north, which he did. The land eventually bloomed into a rich mining area, and Pratt became a wealthy man. He had promised that a portion of his wealth would go toward the study of spiritualism, and in 1889 the Institute was born. It operated in Whitewater until 1932 when it suffered from financial problems.

(A history of the Pratt Institute in Whitewater was printed in the June 15, 1972, issue of the Whitewater Register.)

More information on the Morris Pratt Institute Association reveals that citizen Pratt, guided by direction which came to him from invisible intelligence, as he believed, accumulated a small fortune, and as a memento of his gratitude he erected the institute building. He deeded the building to seven well-known spiritualists as trustees of the property.

The constitution of the institute states if the institute is ever used for private ends or if the trustees act for the glory and honor of any individual instead of for the highest welfare of the school, they will deserve and will receive the censure of the arisen founder as well as every true man or woman. A list of rules includes the following: No student, nor person in the employ of the Association who habitually visits saloons, gambling places, or houses of ill repute, or is guilty otherwise of disorderly conduct, shall not be allowed to remain in the school nor the school building.

Tuition per year was \$50. Rooms per week were from \$1.25 to \$2 with table board in the building per week an additional \$2.25.

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#8

August 25, 1977 - Whitewater Register, Whitewater, Wisconsin - 17

# Seances Are Part Of Campus Lore

Every semester the UW-Whitewater campus awakens to tales of witches, ghosts and the life beyond.

There is talk of seances and communication with those who have died. There are inevitably plans formed to search the local cemeteries after dark for that elusive folk hero, Mary Worth.

While new students become wide-eyed over the prospect of uncovering something from "the beyond," local residents become amused. They've seen and heard the something for years.

But not everything connected with the semiannual phenomenon is fiction. There were, indeed, seances in Whitewater. People tried with all they had to communicate with the dead. And the seances weren't done in jest. They were based on the most extensive scientific research available at the time. Summoning someone from the next life was serious, very serious.

The tale of the seances begins back in 1889 when a wealthy 69-year-old man by the name of Morris Pratt erected a majestic building in Whitewater.

Pratt, a spiritualist, became wealthy after supposedly being told by another spiritualist where to invest his money. Pratt designed his building as a temple and a school for spiritualism, and it became known as the Pratt Institute.

The building was razed in 1961. It stood on the corner of Fremont and Center where the phone company is now located.

The Institute was a community fascination for many years until it was forced to close during the Depression. Its "services" were actually listed in the Whitewater Register under "church notices." On Sunday evenings people would flock to the temple (often called "Spook's Temple") to witness special seances and lectures by famous spiritualists.

The belief that people could communicate with the dead apparently started with a mysterious incident in the state of New York in 1848. Two young girls heard mysterious raps in their room, and eventually developed a code of communication.

During the Depression years

the Pratt Institute suffered from endowment losses, and students from the school were unable to find jobs in Whitewater.

The school closed for three years and reopened in 1935. It finally died a short time later. By 1946 the temple was sold and a new Morris Pratt Institute was built in Milwaukee.

Seances no longer take place in Whitewater. Still, students search high and low for some clue to mysterious happenings, only to create more frustration for themselves and those who will come to Whitewater after them.

The "Ghost of Mary Worth"

is another example of a rumor that can't be traced to its beginning. To the best of anyone's knowledge today no such person ever existed in Whitewater.

The other subject which draws a lot of attention every semester is the "underground tunnel." Students believe that there is a network of tunnels running throughout the city where strange people and happenings can be uncovered.

Actually, the word underground has been greatly confused. The term "underground tunnel" and

"slave tunnel" refer to the system of helping slaves to escape from their Southern owners during the Civil War. One house in the city, for example, actually harbored slaves in its basement. They didn't get through a tunnel, however. They hid in wagons and slept there during the night on their way to Canada.

The famous Hamilton House on Main Street reportedly has tunnels, but the existence of those tunnels is questionable. Someone who lived in there in previous years said the "tunnels" were actually fruit cellars.



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WHITEWATER, WISCONSIN

A look into the past

Royal Purple  
Vol. 78, No. 14  
Dec 13, 1978

Whitewater, Wis. - History - Build  
(Morris Pratt Institute)

# Spiritual college located in Whitewater

By DEBBIE KRUNGER

Whitewater was once referred to as the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism" and it held the world's only spiritual college.

It all started in 1888, when Morris Pratt built a \$50,000 house at 300 Center St. This was the most expensive building in the city at that time. It was 48 feet wide, 85 feet long and contained two large auditoriums, one of which could hold a capacity of 400 people.

Skeptics of spiritualism referred to the building as "Pratt's Folly" while it was being built.

Pratt was born in Madison County, NY, and migrated to Whitewater with two brothers in 1840. They began farming in Lima township. By 1856, they were the most successful pioneers in early Whitewater, paying \$12,000 in property taxes.

## INTEREST SHOWN

Pratt first became interested in spiritualism when he visited a Lake Mills spiritual center. There in 1884 he met Mary Hayes. Hayes was a self-proclaimed faith healer and Pratt was soon found attending regular meetings with her.

Under Hayes' advice Pratt invested \$4,000 into land, and later sold it for a profit. The he invested in stock for the Ashland Mine in Iron-

wood, Mich. He became very rich with the discovery of a high grade ore and soon became known as a smart businessman.

Pratt built the spiritual college in Whitewater with his new-found wealth. He developed it on the basis that persons who possessed psychic powers should be given the opportunity to improve these powers, while cultivating mental and moral powers.

The college was popular as a medium center. Students worked on their ability to communicate with the spirit world, and seances were held regularly.

## OTHER STUDIES

Besides spiritual studies, the program included grammar, literature, psychology, history, logic, philosophy, speech and religion.

Between 1910 and 1915 the enrollment of the student body was as high as 45. Tuition was \$50 a year. The building could accommodate 50 people and rent was only \$1.50-\$2 a week for a single room to \$2-\$3 a week for a double room.

The community acted negatively toward this type of education and taxed the college heavily in the beginning. But as years went on, tensions died down and curiosity seemed to arise. People went to see the seances and lectures on Sunday and services were printed in the Whitewater Register under "church notices."

The third floor of the building was used mainly for the seances. For years curious people and reporters were not allowed up there. It was later known that everything on that floor was white.

In 1902, Moses Hull, a famous spiritualist, came to see "Pratt's Folly." He took residence in another house in town and traveled about making money for the school.

It was Hull who inaugurated the building as the Pratt Institute - the first spiritualism college in the world. He dubbed Whitewater the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism."

Pratt died in December 1902. He left the institute to seven spiritualists who carried on his work for 32 more years.

The institute suffered endowment losses in 1930 and the depression left students jobless. It was forced to close for three years, and re-opened in 1935 only to die a short time later.

The building was sold in 1946 and used sparingly as a rest home for retired spiritualists. Later it was used as a dorm for the old Wisconsin State Teachers College.

In 1961 the building was torn down and the Wisconsin Telephone Company replaced it.

It is not known how much communication with the spirit world was done there, but the legend still lives and Morris Pratt, the founder, is buried in a local cemetery to prove his existence.

## Senators voice opposing view

To the Editor:

You seem to feel that requiring organizations which receive segregated fee money to play an active role in Student Government Association is a poor idea.

SGA has the "primary responsibility for the formulation and review of policies concerning student life, services and interests" according to Wisconsin statutes 36.09 section 5, commonly referred to as merger implementation. This statute goes on to state students "have the responsibility for the disposition of those student fees which constitute substantial support for campus activities."

It would appear that SGA is responsible for student activities and for distributing money for student activities. It is only rational that student activities, especially those receiving segregated fees, should play an active part in SGA.

You obviously didn't do your homework or you would realize that the Assembly has the same power as the senate, except in the area of segregated fees. The Assembly, for reasons which should be clear to everyone, doesn't have any respon-

sibility in the area of segregated fees.

Many SGA administrations have attempted to revitalize the Assembly, which hasn't been large since the early 1970's. It has finally been decided that mandatory representation is the answer. You claim it isn't, but give no alternative. You don't even send a representative.

Mary S. Anderson  
Student Senator

Dave Curtin  
SGA Vice President

## X Spiritualism not dead, just moved

To the Editor:

The Royal Purple recently carried an excellent story by Debbie Krueger entitled "Spiritual College Located in Whitewater." It traced the history of the Morris Pratt Institute at the site of the present telephone office building, but then unfortunately implied that it had gone out of existence. It is only fair that this impression should be corrected.

From Whitewater the Morris Pratt Institute moved to the Milwaukee area and erected its present headquarters at 11811

Watertown Plank Road in Wauwatosa. It is the Educational Bureau of the National Association of Spiritualist Churches, and its correspondence courses are used nationwide for the training of spiritualist ministers. It also offers residence courses during the summer.

I'll be glad to provide additional information on current Spiritualist activities in Wisconsin to anyone who is interested.

Everett L. Refior  
Professor of Economics

## Holzem urges Assembly attendance

To the Editor:

I do not feel that Student Government's bill requiring the attendance at Assembly meetings of all groups wishing to receive Segregated Fees will bring uninterested people into the Assembly.

Every student organization on this campus must have at least one member interested in the affairs of SGA. If an organization has no one interested in this university's affairs, then why should they receive money from the university?

I'm sure that most of students on this campus do not want their money paid to organizations that do not care enough about the university to spend just one hour a week at a Student Government meeting.

Yours truly,  
Warren Holzem  
Drumlin Complex Senator

## Reader urges students to have open minds

To the Editor:

I witnessed a remarkable occurrence last Thursday during the coffeehouse. I've actually never seen anything like it in years at this humane and enlightened haven of higher education. During Barry Drake's show I glanced out toward the hall and saw two people of similar sex relaxing in a rather casual embrace just beyond the glass doors. Two women with their arms around each other—I felt like jumping up and cheering them for their guts—for showing their affection, right in the Union. In public

Unfortunately, several people in the audience seemed not only shocked, but mesmerized by the sight of this couple straying beyond the usual close confines. A table of semi-jocks near me were sent into absolute hysterics by the "strange" sight.

One of my first reactions was hoping the women got out of the building fast and safely. This incident was a shock to me too—I realized—from watching the reactions of people around me—how large and immediate the threat is to people who choose to love someone whose body is more like their own than not. In Whitewater it's ok to go down to the bars to get laid or picked up—as long as it's "heterosexual" as the saying goes. If, on the other hand, I am a woman who wants to walk around on campus with my arm around my girlfriend, freaked-out students would be having fits or at least falling all over themselves to get a good look. Come on people, crack your minds open while you're here "getting educated."

Name withheld upon request.

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Whitewater, Wis. - History - Buildings  
(Morris Pratt Institute)

## Can't be reinstated?

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The voluntary recruitment procedure has pressured the four branches to offer increased wages and fringe benefits, along with an increased quality and diversity of education. All of this is being done so as to attract the maximum number of enlistees. However, as it is now, there are lower educated males within all four branches, but this is no fault of theirs; instead, it is that of a society which offers little room for them outside the armed forces. With the quality of life within the services increasing, there will be a closer cross-sectional approximation of the population as a whole.

Member of the  
ASSOCIATED

THE April 23, 1979  
Vol 78, No 26, p. 2.

*insert in the Tuesday Jonesville Gazette*

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# Whitewater students 'dig' for mystery stories

WHITEWATER—If you stand in Oak Grove Cemetery on Halloween, you might be able to catch a glimpse of them

They trek softly among the cold gray markers, while the chilly October wind rustles the fallen leaves and the branches of the giant oak trees creak ominously overhead.

They're shadowy creatures, stealthy and mysterious. It seems fitting that they would appear on Halloween.

Are they ghosts? No, they're students from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, out looking for the remnants of this city's elusive and fascinating past.

Each year, particularly around Halloween, dozens of Whitewater students turn into ghost hunters and investigative reporters, taking to the streets and alleyways in search of something to substantiate the mysterious rumors that have come their way. They look high and low, interviewing anyone who might have a clue. They literally leave no stone unturned.

(It should be noted that visits to any Whitewater

cemetery on Halloween are generally considered "prowling" by the local police, subject to an appropriate fine.)

What are these ambitious students looking for? Specifically, they wonder whether or not Whitewater was ever the site of a devil-worshipping cult, or if secret meetings are ever held by groups of shadowy beings, living or dead. They also want to know if some secret power is lurking about, ready to deal out punishment to those who get too close to the "secret."

Rumors bring the campus alive each year, and no one seems to know where they begin. Some rumors are far-fetched, but fascinating nevertheless. They're not the kind of stories you like to hear about when you're sitting in an upstairs bedroom with a tree branch knocking against your window.

One says that the ghost of a person named "Mary Worth" lurks about at night. Some say she carries an ax.

Another says a mysterious cult meets regularly in Whitewater, usually underground, and usually when the moon is full.

Still another says that stu-

dents who seek information on the city's mysterious history risk life and limb to get their information. Some students, it is said, have been forced to leave school or have gone insane after getting "too close" to whatever it is they were seeking.

Proof of these strange happenings has been in extremely short supply. But with juicy rumors like these to investigate, who cares about facts.

In all fairness, Whitewater does have a history that is unusual, if not mysterious. At one time the city was called the "Center of Spiritualism," when people at the Morris Pratt Institute were trying their hardest to communicate with the dead. "Spooks Temple," as it was unaffectionately called, existed from 1889 until 1961, when it was torn down to make way for the telephone company.

Whitewater also had a bit of the famous underground railroad during the anti-slave days a century ago. Slaves stopped here during the day to hide from the authorities, and continued their journey toward Canada after dark.

That's hardly mysterious, but a lot of students appar-

ently have taken the word "underground" too literally. They envision tunnel running underground from house to house, the perfect setup for a secret cult.

Witches and devil worship are also a part of the continuing rumors, but finding a way to explain them is even more difficult. Local historians say they know of no evidence or records which indicate the existence of either witches or a cult in Whitewater. The only thing close to evidence, they say

are the rumors that come from the campus each year. The students who delve into the city's "mysterious past" often run into roadblocks. City residents say the problem is a lack of material. The students, however, claim in many instances that the city is "covering up" its dark past. They suspect that somewhere, perhaps in a dusty old closet in the library, the most wicked story sits untouched. Librarians, in particular, deny those claims. They also get tired of answering the same question every year.

But the questions will probably continue as long as there's a rumor, students in Whitewater will assume there's also a mystery to be solved.



DRACULA RETURNS—This Dracula, hovering over Whitewater cemetery, is really Sam Siciliano, former University of Wisconsin-Whitewater graduate student now living in Madison. Siciliano has written a Dracula novel and is looking for a publisher, says Dale Reich of JW-Whitewater. Reich took this photo and wrote the accompanying news story.

# Seance College Is Memory

By DAVID WILLIE  
Special to The State Journal

WHITEWATER—An interesting chapter in Wisconsin history is the story of Whitewater's old Pratt Institute, where for three decades spiritualism and more conventional learning existed side by side.

Founded in 1902 by Morris Pratt, an untutored laborer, the institution closed down in 1932 because of a shortage of both students and funds.

MIGRATING to Whitewater from New York state in the 1850's, Pratt became a member of a colony of spiritualists here that soon refined the art of the supernatural.

The reputation of the Whitewater colony was enhanced by lectures and frequent seances, and during one of the sessions, Pratt vowed he would devote a large portion of his wealth to spiritualism if he should become rich.

Lured by his offer, a local

seeress—so the story goes—told Pratt to invest his money in wilderness lands of Northern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.

PRATT'S \$4,000 investment paid off about five years later when the rich Gogebic iron range was discovered.

Not going back on his word, Pratt built an imposing three-story structure in 1888 to serve as headquarters for seances and spiritualistic services.

Later, just before his death, Pratt founded the institute and moved traditional disciplines like history, composition, and math into the house along with spiritualistic subjects such as psychic research and spiritualism of the Bible.

The academy's financial support came from a \$65,000 endowment fund, and students paid \$50 per year tuition and small room rentals.

NO ENTRANCE examination was required, but students had to be at least 15 years old and

of "sound moral character."

The school's faculty was respected in educational circles of the time as an educated, honest, and dedicated group of professionals, and the students represented every part of the country, even though total enrollment was never large. In 1916, for example, there were only 26 students, with just four graduating.

Like something straight out of a Poe short story, the school building was set back from the street in a grove of elms.

Inside, a painting of a woman, who was said to have come back from the dead just to sit for the artist, hung on one wall, and on another was a memorial to Hydesville, N.Y., where in 1848 spiritualists claimed to have made direct contact with the dead.

BUT THE MOST impressive room in the house was the seance chamber, where everything—carpet, furniture, and decorations—was white.

One of the more interesting

tales about the academy was the disappearance for two days of Clarence Darrow, the great trial lawyer, who had spoken at Whitewater Teachers' College (now UW-Whitewater).

Official bewilderment was cleared up some time later when it was learned that Darrow had spent the time inspecting the institute. He announced he was "unconvinced, but mystified."

WHITEWATER residents called the institute "Pratt's Folly" and students at the teachers college called it the "spook house," but both town and gown were intrigued by the seances and lectures by leading scholars of spiritualism.

After the academy closed in 1932, the land and buildings were sold. And the property that once used to communicate with the dead is now used for communication with the living.

The Whitewater office of the Wisconsin Telephone Co. now occupies the site.

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# City's past provides haunting tales

By Chuck Ramsay  
*Special to the RP*

Whitewater is known for its university, its churches, its taverns and its lakes yet there once was more than just student spirits effervescing about the town, as a darker side lies in its past.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the city was also known as a mecca of modern spiritualism and, according to some stories, it was the biggest center for witchcraft in the country after Salem.

As with any tales concerning the supernatural, separating legend from fact and story from rumor is needed before looking at Whitewater's past. Stories passed down two generations or heard thirdhand take on as nebulous a form as their eerie subjects.

Belief in spiritual afterlife, including supernatural forces, can only be taken on faith. Scientific examination has debunked many spurious ghosts, fake mediums and supposed magical powers. There are few recorded interviews with spirits candidly talking about the afterlife.

Yet, a gut feeling persists that there is another life and dimension beyond that can't

be explained. A person's aura — his energy-force — can be seen in dim light. And stories abound about drowned swimmers who, when revived, recalled hovering over their rescuers.

One thing seems certain — Whitewater, for whatever reasons, became known in spiritualist circles from its earliest years.

Indian legends always told of tribes dwelling as one in the land of their spiritual ancestors, inseparable in life and death. Early white settlers to the area noted the close proximity between the ruins of an old Indian village at the site of today's modern cemeteries, and ancient burial mounds west of the new village, with skeletons atop one another. Little remains there today.

They may still be walking the land. Recently, in an area several miles outside the city where many Indian artifacts have been found, a couple had a new house built. Strange disturbances in the kitchen, including opened cupboards, displaced kitchenware, muttered voices, and late night footsteps, occurred for a year afterwards, then ended.

Early settlers to Whitewater seemed interested in spiritual matters as well. Spiritualism, a semi-religious movement

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Whitewater, Wis. - History - Buildings  
(Morris Pratt Institute)



believing in gifted mediums communicating with the dead, spread nationwide and reached the area along with settlers from New York in the 1850's.

Morris Pratt, one such pioneer, converted to spiritualist after a seance in Lake Mills in 1851. He thought that a scientific approach to the spirits would enhance mental and moral powers, as well as profit him.

Financial advice from a medium supposedly resulted in windfall profits for Pratt from an Ironwood, Mich., iron mine. In gratitude, he endowed the Pratt Institute in 1889 towards spiritualist studies, it being the only such preparatory school and church of its kind in the country.

According to Elizabeth Wright, past president of Whitewater's historical society, Underground Railroad "tunnels" and Ku Klux Klan doings here in the twenties weren't half as mysterious as the seances held each Sunday night in the third floor chamber where "everything was white. Curtains, wallpaper, even people had to wear white. No outsiders were admitted."

At its zenith, the Institute had 45 students and six teachers boarding at the Institute, with lectures and more standard church ser-

vices filling the large hall on the second floor. The Depression forced the Institute to close down for awhile, and it later moved to Milwaukee.

Dorothy Schroedl, a longtime resident, attended seances there as a child and recalled how the room would be darkened, the medium would go into a trance, and spirits would begin speaking in normal voices telling of life beyond and foretelling the future.

Many townspeople came to the sessions, either to watch the show, or to communicate with relatives, Schroedl said.

Her grandfather returned from a seance one night and told how a spirit had warned of a large fire near their house. Several days later, a grass fire burned up to their property line, Schroedl recalled.

In its final days here, the Institute was forced by its financial situation to open up its seances to the public, passing the hat for donations. Some stories remain, about rigged sessions conducted with a person under a table doing table rapping, and other props being used. Both Wright and Schroedl do not believe that the Institute's sessions were real.

Regardless of the truth about the Institute,  
Continued on page 7

## Haunts from page 1

it was held responsible by many townspeople for strange happenings within the somber Victorian mansions.

Rumors of witchcraft, demonic possession, madness afflicting city residents and of the dead somehow having influence over the living, have been a part of the city's past that residents are reluctant to talk about, said UW-Whitewater Information Services Director Dale Reich. "It's been a source of embarrassment."

Reich discounted local legends of supposed hauntings in town as thin air. "I've seen zero evidence for it myself," he said.

These include a tale of the ghost of Albert Salisbury wandering Salisbury Hall late at night, looking for unwary journalism professors and one about a hanged grad student haunting the old chancellor's house now being moved from Main St. to Tratt St.

However, one tale of the unexplained happened recently at the Alpha Sigma Sorority House, 614 W. Main St., as members sat down to supper. Members heard noises coming out of the basement and found bricks from a walled-up tunnel entrance lying on the floor. No one had been seen entering or leaving, said member Karen Camplain.

Other incidents include tales of suicides in the town's early annals, and the body of a local Ku Klux Klan leader found on a church lawn one night in 1925.

Perhaps the strangest story that's provable happened on Halloween Night in 1970. Lights were seen bobbing near several crypts in a cemetery by two fishermen on one of the lakes. A coffin of a little girl, removed by persons unknown, was found on the university mall the next morning.

Several anonymous sources related how Whitewater, in association with the spiritual happenings in the last century, supposedly

became the second biggest center of witchcraft in the country at the time.

"Older people here are terrified," said one person adding that most people are reluctant to talk about the subject. That, plus the natural tendency to create or add to stories about the supernatural make it hard to believe just what is fact or fiction.

Several legends of the past tell of large witches' covens held in the field where Wells Hall now stands, of "believers" buried upright in a circle around an altar in Oak Cemetery, and of witchcraft books kept locked in the public library, supposedly responsible for three suicides from borrowers.

Whether there is any truth to these legends remains questionable. However, another source believes that a witchcraft cult group remains active in the area today. Three sightings of groups in recent years add some credibility to this story. A ceremony in a house, with candles and robes, was observed by several persons, while a rite was seen on a farm outside the city.

Last Halloween, a dorm resident looked out and saw a group in white and black robes holding a ceremony in Starin Park Cemetery, a site which is sacred to them, said the source. Two or three other sites, the most important being Oak Cemetery, are also used.

The witness ruled out the possibility of the scene as a student prank. "That's not the first time it's been there."

Whether such a group exists, and whether local legends can be believed, remains to be proven to the skeptic. Also, in a university town, said Reich, "it doesn't take much for students to exaggerate for fun," or to try to spook newer students. Halloween always brings forth such tales each year, he said.

Whatever the case may be, it's interesting to note that the site of the old Pratt Institute, at Center and Fremont, saw the razing of "Pratt's Folly" in 1961, and the construction of the now defunct phone company offices. Long-distance communication with the dead had been replaced by long-distance calls to the living.

# Haunted history tales surround Whitewater during spook month

By Beth Zelse  
of the *Royal Purple*

"It's close to midnight and something evil's lurking in the dark/ Under the moonlight you see a sight that almost stops your heart/ You try to scream but terror takes the sound before you make it/ You try to freeze as horror looks you right between the eyes, you're paralyzed..."--from "Thriller," written by Rod Temperton, performed by Michael Jackson.

Sorry, Michael, but even "Thriller" is no match for the frightening rumors that circulate around Whitewater in October. To some overly imaginative persons, Whitewater's history may very well have given rise to the careers of Edgar Allan Poe, Rod Serling and Stephen King. Although a great deal of the stories are nothing more than folklore, there are actually some truths to the "Haunted History" of Whitewater.

Unfortunately, the more unbelievable the story, the more likely it will persist. Two popular tales maintain that the ghost of Albert Salisbury haunts Salisbury Hall and that the axe-toting ghost of Mary Worth lurks about local cemeteries on Halloween in search of new victims.

Tribal legends tell of the sacred Indian grounds that supposedly provide a channel between the living and the dead. Whether this channel does exist has yet to be proved, however, an elaborate display of Indian mounds can be found on Whitewater's far west side.

Many myths involve the "Triangle of Cemeteries." Whitewater's three cemeteries, Calvary, Oak Grove, and Hillside happen to be arranged in the shape of an isosceles triangle that allegedly has some connection to witchcraft or satanism. Due

to the its proximity to the triangle, the field upon which Wells Hall now stands is rumored to have once been the gathering place of the various cults and covens. "Believers" are supposedly buried vertically surrounding a secret altar within Oak Grove Cemetery.

Virtually everything within or adjoining the triangle has the potential to become a new link in the growing chain of local folklore. The old, fenced-in watertower in Starin Park is no exception. The barbed wire atop the fence is tilted inward, towards the tower, with hopes that it will keep evil spirits in and mortals out. Thinking logically, why would spirits flock to a watertower, and could barbed wire conceivably prevent a spirit from leaving?

Every year the Whitewater Public Library is flooded by amateur detectives in search of the elusive cache of books that reveal the ghostly, unedited truths of Whitewater's past. However, librarians insist that no such collection exists and refer the curious to a box of clippings, mostly from *Royal Purple* articles, that tend to blow the past out of proportion.

Many of the spooky legends were most likely sparked by the establishment of the world's first school of spiritualism in Whitewater, at one time located where the accounting office of Gerald Murray now stands. In 1889, Morris Pratt completed the Pratt Institute with hopes of spreading the practice and understanding of communication with the spirit world. Although drawing sizable crowds to its lectures and Sunday night seances, the school closed its doors for good in 1961 and founded new headquarters in Milwaukee.

In more recent times, Whitewater has still been plagued with sometimes unexplainable occurrences. For a period of about

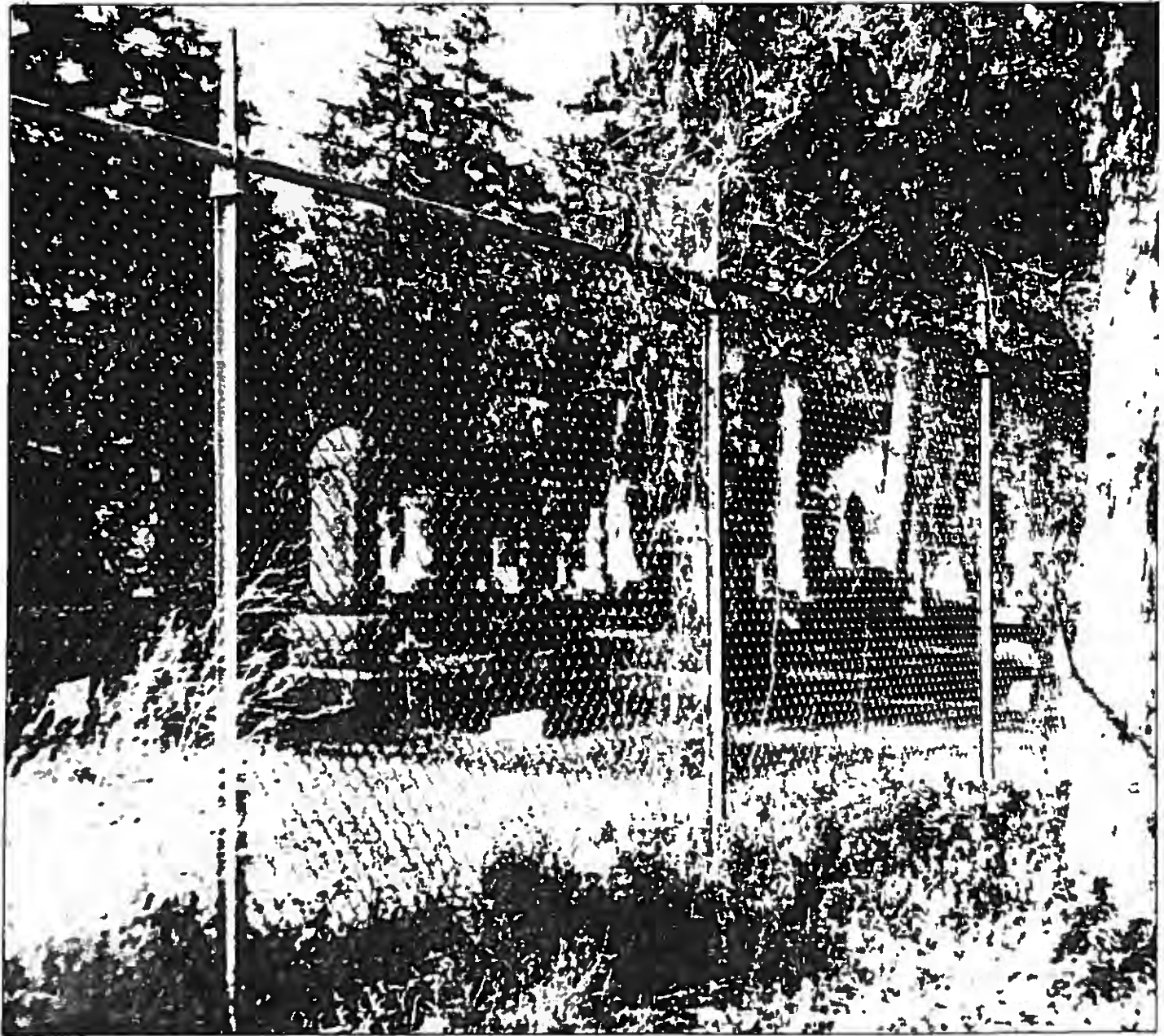
a year, the Ku Klux Klan was quite active in Whitewater. However, the Klan disbanded in April 1925 when a high ranking member, A.J. Gilbertson, was found dead on the lawn of the Methodist Church. His cause of death was greatly disputed--some believing he was murdered, others believing in natural, or supernatural causes.

On November 1, 1970, a coffin of a little girl was exhumed from Hillside Cemetery, opened and placed on the campus mall. Believed to have been a sick Halloween prank, lights had been spotted near several grave sites the night before by fishermen, however, there were no witnesses to the incident and no suspects were ever apprehended.

Perhaps the strangest of recent mysterious events occurred in 1981 at the Alpha Sigma House. Just as members of the sorority had sat down for supper, noises could be heard coming from the basement. Upon inspection, bricks were found strewn across the floor, revealing a previously unknown tunnel entrance. The discovery of that tunnel reinforces the belief that an elaborate system of passageways connect many of Whitewater's older homes. The system's purpose is controversial. Some claim the tunnels were a part of the underground railroad, while others believe the tunnels were nothing more than root cellars.

Much of Whitewater's past is either undocumented or extremely vague. Hopefully next year with the release of a video entitled "The Mysteries of Whitewater," being put together by Planets owner Janet Gray, the masses will finally know whether the history of Whitewater merits inclusion into Time/Life books "Mystic Places" or into the National Enquirer. Happy Halloween.

ROYAL PURPLE OCT 25, 1989



**TRIANGLE OF CEMETERIES**—Many myths involve Whitewater's three cemeteries, Calvary, Oak Grove, and Hillside, which happen to be arranged in an isosceles triangle that allegedly has some connection to witchcraft or satanism.

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# Witches, spirits exist only in imagination

By Elizabeth Bloom  
of the Royal Purple

The rumors persist. Despite regular explanations and evidence to the contrary, rumors of ghosts and witches in Whitewater still remain.

Tales of dark ceremonies, haunted buildings and vast underground systems are passed down to students from one year to the next. A natural fascination with the unknown makes such stories difficult to resist.

Unfortunately, when examined for facts these rumors often become as insubstantial as the spirits and powers they describe.

The tales of tunnels connecting houses around the town, for example, don't stand up well under closer examination.

True, Whitewater was an important stop on the Underground Railroad, an escape route slaves followed when fleeing north. But the Railroad was "underground" only in the sense that it was illegal and therefore kept secret.

Also true is that some of the older houses in Whitewater had tunnels connecting them to neighboring houses. Worries of Indian attack — this was rough country once — early residents probably built these tunnels as a way to flee in the event of such an attack.

The tunnels, however, connected closely neighboring houses only and were far from the extensive network described.

Other "tunnels" were probably root cellars, common in houses before refrigeration was available for storing food.

In any case, stories of secret meetings using these tunnels as passageway just don't seem possible.

Other popular campus rumors are those of ghosts which haunt the town. One rumor claims the ghost of Albert Salisbury prowls Salisbury Hall. Maybe to catch student journalists napping?

Another tells of the ghost of Mary Worth, a relatively famous spirit who has been traced back to Whitewater time and time again. Mary can be a rather vicious character, sometimes described as carrying an ax.

One of the more curious notions offered is the barbed wire surrounding the watertower in Starin Park turns inward to keep spirits in, rather than people out. The obvious question is: How is barbed wire supposed to keep a spirit in?

Though these rumors are eagerly related, none who describe the ghosts, either in print or speech, seem to have seen the ghosts themselves. Facts remain as hard to grasp as the subject they tell of.

Perhaps the most common and persistent rumors are of the Witches of Whitewater. Descriptions of eerie ceremonies held under full-moon have led some

to compare Whitewater to the legendary Salem. The currents are right for witchcraft here, they say.

The truth of this is hard for anyone but a witch to say, but rumors of witches in Whitewater do have a grain of fact to them. There was once an institution for the study of Spiritualism here, the only one of its kind in the country.

In the early 1880's a pioneer, Morris Pratt, purchased sections of seemingly worthless land in Upper Michigan on the advice of a local medium. In return for the insight, Pratt vowed to donate a large part of any potential wealth to the Spiritualist movement. Three years later high-grade iron ore was found on the property. Pratt's fortune was made and the Morris Pratt Institute was born.

Dubbed "Pratt's Folly" and "The Spook's House" by the town, the institute evoked contrasting responses. Viewed with a mixture of suspicion and curiosity, the school drew good crowds at their lectures and weekly Sunday night seances.

One popular rumor was of a room on the third floor of the building which was supposedly used for seances. The room was said to have been done entirely in white.

Mediums clothed in white were the only persons allowed to enter, so the sanctity of the room was preserved.

The Institute operated in Whitewater for almost 45 years. At the height of its operation the school boasted 45 students and six teachers, housed in the building itself. In 1932 the Depression forced the school to close. It later re-opened in Milwaukee, and still exists there today.

This, however, is the only tangible evidence of any type of witch in Whitewater. Another possible source is the Ku Klux Klan, which had an extensive operation in Whitewater during the 1920's. The Klan's white robes and night ceremonies could easily have provided a misinterpreted witches' council.

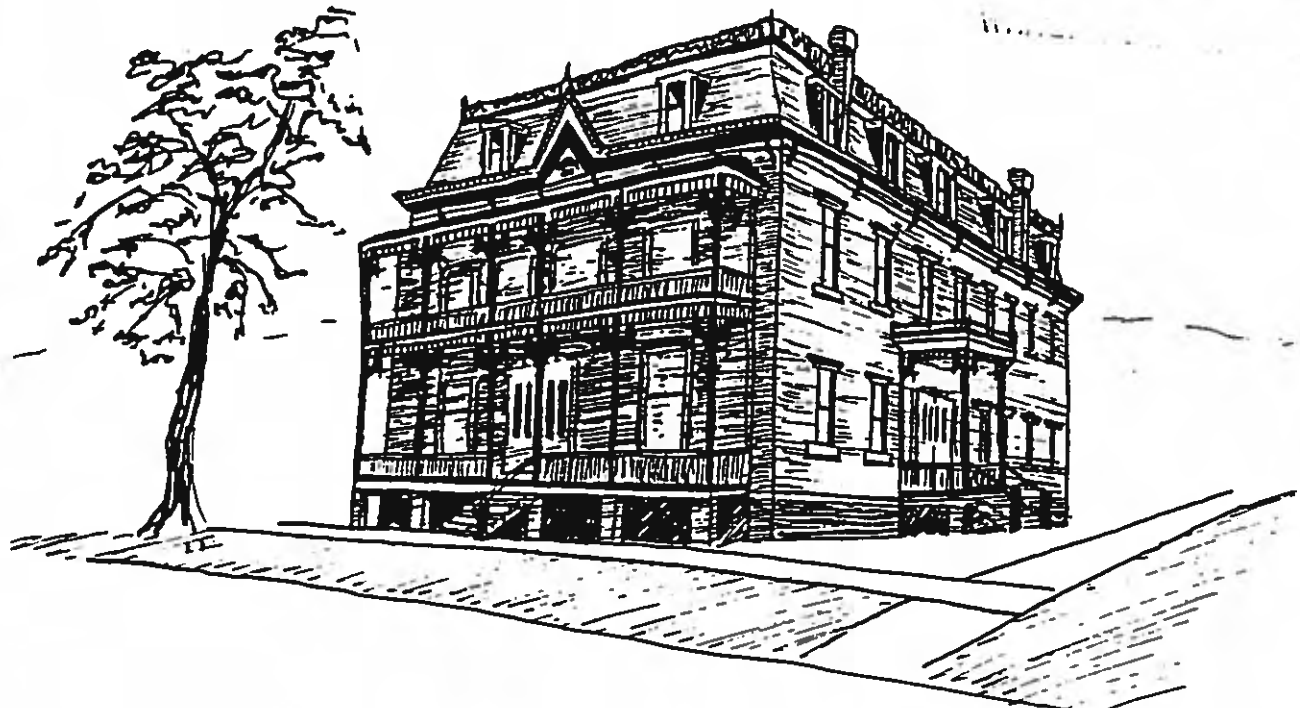
The rumors of ghosts and witches in Whitewater will probably continue in spite of scepticism and contrary evidence. The unknown tempts speculation, and it is easy to be caught up in tales of spirits and spooks.

So, if nothing else, you can say you heard it here first.



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# WHITEWATER BECAME CENTER OF SPIRITUALISM WITH PRATT INSTITUTE

Known during its years as the "spooks' temple," the Pratt Institute soon earned the respect of local citizens and eventually gained national fame after it was constructed by Morris Pratt in 1889. For those interested in spiritualism all over America Whitewater became known as the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism." The temple was located on the land now occupied by the Telephone Company in Whitewater. It was razed in 1961.

**I**t was in 1961 that a three story, white brick home was torn down at 300 Center Street, but the memory of "Pratt's folly" is still very much alive in Whitewater.

It was in 1889 that 69-year-old Morris Pratt, a wealthy Whitewater citizen, built what was then the most expensive home in the city. The large building was assessed at a value of \$30,000, and was some 48 feet wide, 85 feet long, and contained two large auditorium halls, one of which seated nearly 400 people. Pratt designed the building as a temple and a school for Spiritualism, and it was dedicated in 1889.

In 1902 the building became the Pratt Institute, the first Spiritualist school in the world. At that time, Pratt deeded the building and land to seven known and reliable Spiritualists, who were to act as trustees of the property. It was not until about 1938 that the Institute failed financially and was forced to close its doors for the last time.

Pratt, one of the early pioneers in Whitewater, amassed a great deal of wealth and credited his success to "invisible intelligences." And his fortune in making wise investments was indeed nothing short of amazing.

Pratt was born in Madison County, New York, and migrated to Whitewater with his two brothers in 1840. The three Pratts immediately began to clear land for farming in Lima Township. By 1856, the frugal and hardworking Pratt was paying tax on more than \$12,000 worth of property, and was one of the most successful of the early Whitewater area pioneers.

*"His fortune in making wise investments was indeed nothing short of amazing."*

Pratt visited the Lake Mills spiritualist center in 1851 and was soon converted to the unorthodox religion of Spiritualism. Pratt was fairly well educated and frequently argued during church services with ministers who criticized Spiritualism, and on several occasions was evicted from the church. Pratt was even fined once for his controversial actions.

In 1884 Pratt met another New York native, Mrs. Mary Hayes, and began to attend Spiritualist meetings with the self-proclaimed faith healer and prophet. She advised Pratt to invest in a company which eventually became the highly profitable Ashland Mine of Ironwood, Michigan. From this venture Pratt gathered a fabulous amount of money, and shortly thereafter the Pratt Institute became a reality. Pratt had earlier said that "If I am made rich, I will give part of it for Spiritualism." In 1889 he fulfilled his promise.

Pratt wished to give his temple-home to the Spiritualists who developed a national organization by 1893, and eventually deeded the property that was originally called "Science Hall."

The school was based on the idea that persons who possessed an inborn ability to communicate with the Spiritual world should be given an opportunity to develop that ability. The Institute, according to Pratt, would provide a place where the students could improve their psychic powers, and at the same time, cultivate their mental and moral powers.

*"Pratt's unorthodox views drew a negative reaction in the Whitewater community."*

Pratt's unorthodox views drew a negative reaction in the Whitewater community, and Pratt found himself paying exorbitant taxes on his building during its early years of existence. Eventually the residents of the area modified their views, and services at the three story building were soon listed under "church notices." On Sunday evenings citizens flocked to the Institute to witness special seances and lectures by nationally famous Spiritualists.

The visitors were barred for many years, however, from a room on the third floor that was furnished in white and had pictures and emblems of Spiritualism on the walls. When the public was finally permitted to enter they found "mediums" (persons who communicated with the Spiritual world) and examples of Spiritual art.

The belief in communication with spirits, according to a

1964 speech by Paul Schmunk here in Whitewater, to a meeting of the State Historical Society, began in Hydesville, New York, in 1848. It was there that two girls, less than 10 years old, developed a code for mysterious raps that had occurred in their farm home. New York, during that period, had been the scene of numerous religious revivals, Utopian societies, and reform movements. Soon thousands of Spiritualist circles developed, with an estimated one million believers.

The establishment of the Spiritualist school in Whitewater was also closely connected with New York.

The former governor of the Wisconsin territory, N. P. Tallmadge, was a prominent defender of Spiritualism, and in 1854 headed a list of 15,000 signers of a Congressional petition which requested a scientific investigation of Spiritualism. Pratt was also one of the territory's early Spiritualists.

In 1902, the year that the Morris Pratt Institute was initiated, Pratt persuaded nationally known Moses Hull and Andrew Jackson Weaver to come to Whitewater. He gave Hull a separate house and donated the big white brick building to Spiritualism, but still retained an apartment in the Institute for himself and his wife. Hull dedicated himself to the continuation of Spiritualism, crossing the country in an attempt to raise enough money to keep the Whitewater school from closing. Hull constantly spoke of making Whitewater the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism."

Pratt died shortly after deeding his home to the Pratt Association, and at the time of his death, the Institute was carrying a \$2,200 mortgage.

After the retirement of the 90-year-old Andrew Jackson Weaver, in 1921, the materialism, the general religious indifference, and the exciting motion pictures, not to mention the speakeasies, began to take their toll, according to Schmunk.

During the Depression years of the 1930's the school suffered from endowment losses, and students from the Institute were unable to find jobs in Whitewater.

The school closed for three years, reopened in 1935, and finally died a short time later. By 1946 the temple was sold, and a new Morris Pratt Institute was built in Milwaukee.

After the building was sold in 1946 it was used for a rest home for aged Spiritualists, and later became a girls' dormitory for the old Wisconsin State Teacher's College.

In 1961 the great temple of Spiritualism was razed and the land was purchased by the Wisconsin Telephone Company. The Telephone Company building that serves the Whitewater area now stands at 300 Center Street.

How much communication, if any, the students managed to experience between the Spiritual world and themselves is unknown. We can be certain, however, that legends surrounding the Pratt Institute will be alive in Whitewater for many years to come.

# Whitewater had 'psychic college'

Rumors of ghostly happenings still float through the town

By Sandra Halpin

**W**HITTEWATER—In the year 1921, on March 6, the Milwaukee Sentinel ran an unusual cover story with headlines that read: "Spirit mysteries taught in unique Wisconsin school. Only psychic college in world, founded by man led to riches in trance."

Again in 1924, the Milwaukee Sentinel ran a feature story in their Sunday magazine with the headline: "The strange story of 'Pratt's Folly' at Whitewater, the only spiritualist school in the country, and how it was established by a grateful man who found great wealth at the direction of unseen hands from the world beyond."

Headlines in those days didn't need to be quite so provable, evidently.

But the once-existence of the Pratt Institute in Whitewater is fact, not legend.

Standing on the property now occupied by the Wisconsin Telephone Co. at 300 Center, the infamous Pratt Institute brought national and even international attention to the modest town of Whitewater.

Built in 1898 by Morris Pratt, a 69-year-old Whitewater citizen who discovered Spiritualism in his later years, the Pratt Institute was a testament to architectural grandiosity for the times.

Costing over \$30,000 in those days to build, the school was deemed to "seven mysterious Spiritualists" (their names have never been accounted for in any written documentation) for use as a school for spiritually sensitive (psychic) students.

According to the newspaper clippings from that era, Pratt believed in education.

And even more telling, he believed that those with psychic abilities had a strong responsibility to society and should be well versed in philosophy, ethics, as well as literature and history. Pratt believed that true education should lead to making students original thinkers.

The five pillars of his philosophy and the founding principals of the school were: maintenance of the individuality of each student; freedom of thought and expression; reason and experience the highest authority; no discrimination caused by one's ideas; avoidance of all sectarian ruts.

There exist no known photographs of the interior of the Pratt Institute. However, written accounts describe the mansion's strange and extravagant rooms in detail.

The entire third floor, it is written, was decorated entirely in white. The Spiritualists believed that white produced a higher energy frequency which the spirit world needed in order to make connection with this world.

The stories say that no one was admitted into the white room unless they were dressed in white themselves, and only the "true believers" were given access. Reporters and skeptics were left outside the door.

The second floor of the massive structure contained an auditorium with seating for up to 400 people, all constructed of magnificent woodwork. Seances were reported to be held in this auditorium, along with lectures and other education events.

Evidently, to the dismay of the town's clergy in those days, attendance was high at the weekly seances held at the Pratt Institute on Sunday nights. These "shows" were a favorite date spot for UW-Whitewater students in those days.

The structure also included dining rooms, reception hall, classrooms and dormitory facilities for 30 students and was furnished with the latest modern conveniences: steam heat, electricity and the



Photograph courtesy of Whitewater Library, from the Fran Achen Collection.

improved Belgian lamps, hot and cold water and baths.

Pratt himself claimed to have made his financial fortune with the help of a woman Spiritualist who recommended that Pratt buy land in northern Michigan. The land had no apparent value at the time and

was quite inexpensive to buy.

Pratt sunk his savings into this land and waited. The historical accounts vary here. But the most conservative story line holds that eventually, rich deposits of iron ore were discovered on Pratt's seemingly worthless property, bringing him wealth beyond expectations.

In return for the "tip," Pratt kept a vow he had made and built the expensive Pratt Institute for Spiritualism. The school failed during the 1930s in response to the Depression, and the building was sold in 1946 for use as a rest home for aging Spiritualists. Later it was converted to a girls dormitory at the old Wisconsin State Teachers College.

In 1961, the old mansion was finally razed and the land sold to the telephone company.

Though little tangible evidence of the Pratt Institute remains, its brief part in the history of Whitewater has yet to be diminished as rumors of ghostly happenings still float through the town.

*The entire third floor, it is written, was decorated entirely in white. The Spiritualists believed that white produced a higher energy frequency which the spirit world needed in order to make connection with this world.*

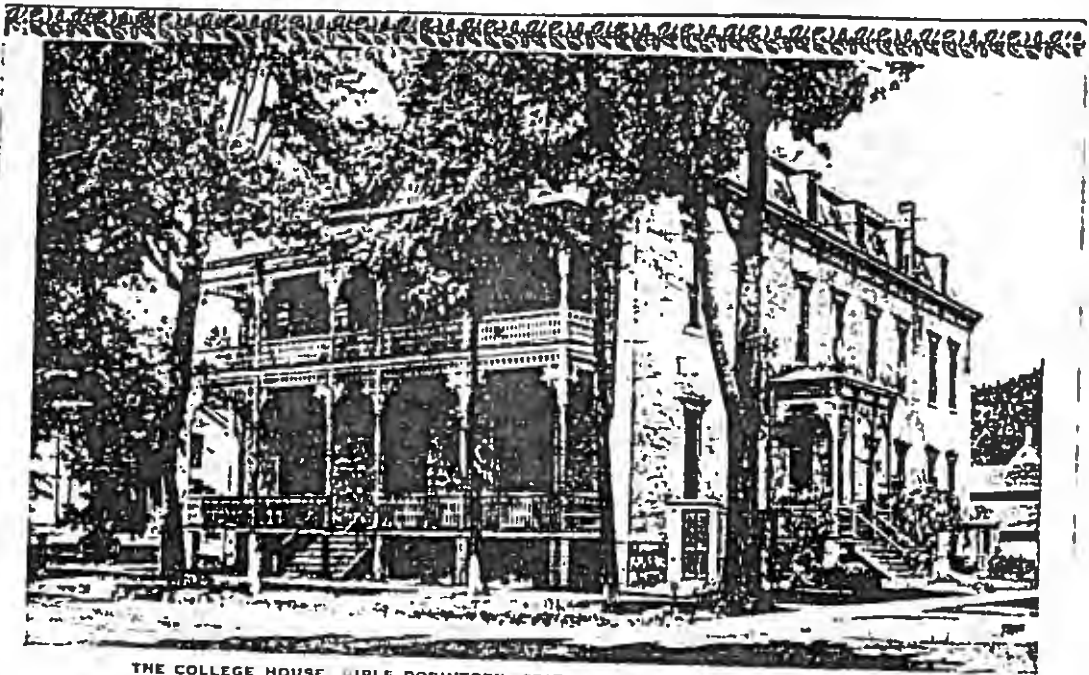


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Whitewater, Wis - History - Buildings  
(Morris Pratt Institute)

Morris Pratt Institute 10/84



THE COLLEGE HOUSE GIRLS DORMITORY, STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE, WHITEWATER, WIS.

The Morris Pratt Institute in the late 1940's when it served as a girls dormitory.  
(on the corner of Center and Remont streets)

(original postcard in the University Archives)

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WHITEWATER, WISCONSIN

# First Spiritualist school born here

(second of a two-part series)  
KATIE KUHN  
Feature Editor

The Spiritualist movement began in Wisconsin soon after the "trend" developed in this country during the 1840's.

Morris Pratt, an early Wisconsin emigrant, was instrumental in establishing Spiritualism as a significant movement in Whitewater.

Pratt was born in Madison County, New York, in 1820 and emigrated to Wisconsin early in the 1840's with his two brothers. He was one of the first to settle around the Whitewater area and soon became one of the most successful pioneers in the area.

Pratt denounced many orthodox religious beliefs and was a dedicated follower of Spiritualism. The early settlers of Whitewater were bound together by the common belief in Spiritualism and soon came to know the national mediums. They would invite these mediums into their homes and communicate through them with their departed relatives and friends.

According to Fred L. Holmes, author of "Badger Saints and Sinners" (1939), "Lectures and seances conducted by William Stainton Moses, the outstanding leader, gave the Whitewater colony strength and reputation."

It was during one of these seances that Morris Pratt

declared, "If I am made rich, I will give part of it for Spiritualism."

Mary Hayes, also a New Yorker, had migrated to Madison and was also extremely interested in the Spiritualist movement. Some accounts depict her as a relative to Pratt, and others just a friend.

She was, however, the one responsible for Pratt's investment which eventually made the Morris Pratt Institute become a reality.

Hayes had been attending the seances in Whitewater and also those in Lake Mills under the direction of Warren Chase. By this time Chase was publishing a small weekly newspaper, the

SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH, and had expressed a desire to begin a school in the area.

When Hayes heard the vow of Pratt's, she asked him, "Do you intend, if made wealthy, to carry out your promise?"

He answered in the affirmative and when she asked him how much money he had saved, he declared that his father had left him \$4,000. She then urged him to invest the money into the wild lands in northern Wisconsin and Michigan. He did, and also purchased stock in a company organized by the sons of Hayes and awaited results. The region turned out to be the heart of the Gogebic iron range, which is now the Ashland Iron Mine at Ironwood, Michigan. Pratt eventually disposed of his interest to Hayes for a total of \$125,000.

In 1888 a white three-story building was erected at 300 Center St. The building was originally called "Science Hall" and was dedicated to the study of the world which exists beyond the grave.

Morris Pratt had kept his promise.

In 1902, "Science Hall" became the Morris Pratt Institute, under the direction of Moses Hull. Pratt kept a room in the Institute in which he and his wife resided. Hull spent much time traveling all over the country trying to raise money to keep the Institute in operation. The Morris Pratt Institute was the first Spiritualist college in the United States. Its principles were as follows:

1. Perfect freedom of thought and expression, so long as unkind personalities are avoided. (Eventually rewritten: Freedom of thought and liberty of expression, but in no case shall unkind personalities be indulged in, nor other systems of religion or philosophy be misrepresented, nor immortality taught, nor encouragement of disobedience towards the government and its laws be permitted.)

2. Reason and experience the highest authority. No discrimination because of one's ideas.

3. All narrow and sectarian ruts carefully avoided.

4. To aim to make all students original thinkers.

The students at the Institute were adults from all over the country. In the catalog it is stated, "...This school rejects nothing because it is new and unpopular; it accepts nothing because it is old and popular. It seeks only truth."

In addition to offering courses that nearly all schools did, the Morris Pratt Institute also had courses in "Psychic Research" (a study of the relation which exists between the world and that beyond the grave); "Comparative Religion"; "The Struggle of Science with Theology"; "Higher Criticism, Evolution and Spiritualism."

The class in "Psychic Research" was held in a special room of pure white. Students and teachers alike were not allowed to enter unless garbed in a colorless robe.

Pratt died shortly after he had deeded his home to the Pratt Institute, at which time it carried a \$2,200 mortgage. The school suffered during the depression years and had to close in 1932. It was reopened in 1935, but only for a short time. The school was sold in 1946 and used for a rest home for aged spiritualists, later becoming a girl's dorm for the old Wisconsin State Teacher's College. A new Morris Pratt Institute was opened in Milwaukee.

In 1961, the property at 300 Center St. was sold to the Wisconsin Telephone Company.

As for the Spiritualist movement itself, the 1880's brought much controversy as to the genuineness of the Fox sisters' reports of rappings.

There was an admission of trickery made in 1858, but the following year, a retraction. Taken from "Notable American Women, 1607-1950" is the following information:

"By 1866 the alcoholism that was to haunt both Kate and Margaret throughout the rest of their lives - the result, perhaps, of the stress of the public life they could neither comprehend nor control - was well established."

Kate searched for a cure, was put in a sanatorium and eventually sailed to England at the expense of a friend.

"English Spiritists gave Kate a warm welcome and began holding private seances."

Whitewater, Wis - History - Buildings - (Morris Pratt Institute) Ref. Dept Historical Pam. Collection (Do not file in V.F.)

#20

MUSIC DRAMA NEWS

THE SUN

MILWAUKEE

SPIRIT MYSTERIES TAUGHT IN UNIQUE WISCONSIN SCHOOL

Only Psycho College in World Founded by Man Led to Riches in Trance.

By DONALD C. ROLLE

Special Correspondent of The Sentinel. WHITEWATER—Housed in a spacious brick building, which has dormitories, class rooms, and a seance assembly room is the Morris Pratt Institute, the only spiritualistic school in the world. Since 1911 when Morris Pratt was placed in a trance and led to the sphere of mediumship, the psychic studies of spiritualism, the mysteries of the seance and magnetism.

The school is located near the business district of Whitewater. There is a faculty and course of study outlined and at the present time the school has fifteen students.

The account of the spiritualist school was best told by Mrs. Hattie Marvin Hull, 52 years old, a woman who was until her death at Whitewater on Friday, Feb. 25, a nationally known medium. Up to the time of her death she took an active part in the administration of the school, which was founded by her husband in 1912.

LABORER FOUNDED SCHOOL.

Morris Pratt is the real founder of the school. He was a laborer in Whitewater in the early '80's and by thrift and fortune accumulated a little farm property, and in some way became interested in spiritualism. During one seance it is declared that Pratt, then a poor man, declared that if the spirits would show him where to make a fortune, he would devote a part of it to spiritualism.

It is reported that the wife of a wealthy man, who at the time had been a resident of California, was very ill and having been pronounced in vain by doctors, she inquired if his statements could be of any value to the cause of spiritualism. Pratt then declared his faith and led to the sphere of spirits.

GUIDED TO RICHES IN TRANCE.

In a hypnosis trance it is alleged that the medium told Morris Pratt to buy a piece of land in a section in northern Wisconsin. She named the township and range. Pratt took her at her word and bought. It was then barren timber wilderness, scorned by Mrs. Hull, the ground looked valueless but he bought, guided by the spirits.

The land turned out to be one of the most valuable tracts in the Wisconsin woods. Pratt, from the proceeds, sold the land for a price around \$100,000. He was rich. He then sought to make good his promise. He built the big brick house in Whitewater. He was asked what the building was going to be and the only answer he ever gave was:

"I don't know, but it is for spiritualism."

As the headquarters of the institute continued it became known as "Pratt's Folly." It was completed in 1911 and dedicated in November of that

CRIME WAVES PREVENTABLE IS OF GREEN BAY REFORM SCHOOL

Plug Up Loopholes Which Lead to Disregard of Law Experimental Instincts Not Hereditary.

By a Special Correspondent.

GREEN BAY—Plug up the loopholes that lead to disregard of law in order to eliminate crime waves, is the advice of R. M. Coles, superintendent of the state reformatory here.

Supt. Coles' work has brought him into contact with youthful criminals of every species. The remedy for crime which he proposes is a simple one. It is based on the ancient proverb, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

"Crime may very well be compared to physical disease," he says, "and the mode of proceeding for the cure of the one is in principle the same as for the other."

The most effective mode is to remove the cause, which often has its origin in our social conditions owing to a weakness of ordinary restraints, by means of which society is kept together. According to principles which have long been accepted, the method for reformation must be found in a combination of penal and reformatory elements applied in their proper circumstances and their due proportion.

IMPRISONMENT ACTS AS DETERRENT TO OTHERS

The object of the state penitentiary is as much to deter others from committing crime as it is to punish the individual. The fact of certain prisoners being repeatedly convicted is not proof that the prison system is defective. My idea on this matter is, that if by convicting those who have an incurable desire for crime we can halt fresh recruits from joining the ranks of the criminal class, the object of the punishment is effected. If all convictions were successful, and none of them were first convictions, we would soon put an end to crime.

In stating the delinquent boy for society the courts furnish us with very poor material. The larger part of the young men who enter penal institutions have been one-time failures up to that time, and are received at such places branded as criminals. In his early career the parents lose control of him, knowingly or otherwise; the schools failed in their opportunity; religious influences were of no avail; and the police, after having arrested him for two or three escapades, deemed that he be sentenced to a training school, reformatory, or prison. The courts, with a view of saving the delinquent, suspend sentence. But later on through the boy's disregard of the conditions of his suspended sentence, and it is necessary to place him on probation. He finally violates the terms of the probation and is sentenced to a penal institution.

"Upon arriving at the institution he is usually mentally and intellectually bright, physically healthy, tall, although possibly somewhat

what under weight; teeth usually need attention, also tonsils and adenoids in a large number of cases. This young fellow is usually calloused, or what might be termed "hard bodied." He is slouchy in attitude, slovenly in dress, rude in manner, and very reluctant and evasive in his statements as to how he got into trouble. He easily excuses himself by blame by giving some trivial excuse, which is usually to the effect, that he did not receive a square deal.

"We will presume that this young man has a good home, and that his surroundings are good. But this description will also fit the boy whose home is broken up by the death of either one or both parents, or of one who leaves home early in youth owing to the fact that he can get along with his stepmother or stepfather. This young fellow is a delinquent. The small bit that his mother gave him is of no consequence. He has borrowed from all his friends, and only goes home to get a drink of man, as he terms his children, or to work or at his plant in the neighborhood. Up to this time this young fellow has had no particular inhi-

MRS. LENROOT HEADS CONGRESSIONAL CLUB



MRS. IRVING L. LENROOT. SUPERVISOR—Mrs. Irving L. Lenroot, wife of United States Senator Lenroot of this city, has been elected president of the Congressional club of Washington for the coming year. The annual election was held recently and Mrs. Lenroot was by a large majority. She is one of the capital's most charming matrons.

OSHKOSH STRIVES TO "BEAUTY SPOT" TA200

PUBLIC LIBRARY WHITEWATER, WISCONSIN

(Morris Pratt Institute)

(do not file in V.F.)

swer he ever gave was:

"I don't know, but it is for spirit-

ualism." As the construction of the building continued it became known as "Pratt's Folly." It was completed in 1911 and was dedicated in November of that year. Spiritualists from all over Canada and the United States attended the ceremony. It was just dedicated to the cause, the idea of having a spiritualist school not being considered at that time.

#### FLEECED OUT OF MONEY.

Pratt was wealthy. He had made one rich strike on the advice of the medium. Shortly after that he began to be fleeced now and then. Once he threatened to sue a Whitewater bank because the bankers refused to allow him to draw out \$30,000 to buy a "gold brick." When he died Pratt left a trunkful of mine stock, shares in corporations and other "securities" which were not worth the ink used in printing.

While he lived attempts were made to start the school, but the national organization, which the spiritualists have refused to take the initiative and Pratt almost despaired of realizing his hopes of the school. His wife objected to the giving over of the property, but in 1902 Hull and his wife took charge.

Funds were received from spiritualists from all over the states for the support of the institution. A Chicago blacksmith was the first to contribute. With a few students and a small faculty the science of mediumship was being taught.

#### INSTITUTION IS WEALTHY.

Later a man named Fuller, living in Pennsylvania, died and willed a fortune amounting to \$100,000 to the Whitewater school. Litigation followed, but the heirs were unable to break the will, settlement being finally made so that the spiritualist school received \$50,000. Endowments have made the school comparatively wealthy.

In the curriculum there is a list of general subjects, together with public speaking. But the main purpose of the school is psychic studies, mediumship, the laws and applications of sciences as a "science."

Diplomas are issued. Entrance examination is not required. Mediumship is regarded as being sacred. In the alleged science of mediumship, the students make a "study of the operation of the human mind and laws governing the manifestations between the material and spiritual planes of life."

### GREEN BAY IS ASSURED NEW K. C. CLUBHOUSE

GREEN BAY—Reports of campaign committees raising funds for a new clubhouse indicate that Green Bay is assured a modern home for the Knights of Columbus. At Tuesday night's meeting it was found that a large part of the stock in the holding company had been subscribed. It is expected to begin operations about May 1. The building will be across the street from the Brown county courthouse. It will be three stories and the lower two floors will be largely open to the public. A bowling club with ten alleys and swimming tank are to be featured. It is also planned to have an auditorium with a seating capacity of 2,000 persons.

### MAPLE SIRUP HARVEST BEGINS IN WISCONSIN

MERRILL—Maple sirup season is hard.

The income of the citizens of maple will soon be rising in the woods near here.

While the season is looked upon with some misgiving by the forest conservationists, some claim that the present cold nights and warm days will mean a large harvest.

he is usually mentally and intellectually bright, physical condition is fair, although, possibly, some-

Mrs. Lenroot won by a large majority. She is one of the capital's most charming matrons.

crime, provided received and had a part

## OSHKOSH STRIVES TO BECOME AERO CENTER

### Movement Underway to Bring Commercial and Mail Plane Services to City

OSHKOSH—A movement is under way here to put Oshkosh on the United States air mail routes and to have commercial airplane companies make this city a point on their main lines.

City officials in co-operation with the Association of Commerce and a number of interested citizens are working to make this project a reality. Options have been secured on land that would provide a suitable landing field, and Richard Luis and Florian Manor, two local aviators, have agreed to build a hangar large enough for three airplanes and to provide necessary equipment for service and supplies. The project has gained headway here in business circles and it is understood that if such a field is provided it will be possible to have the Chicago-Twin Cities mail service routed by way of the Fox river valley.

A bill has been presented before the state legislature providing that a city may lease, rent, purchase or secure by condemnation, suitable landing fields. Until that bill becomes a law Oshkosh is not permitted to expend money for such a purpose, city officials say. In the meantime, it is possible that Oshkosh business men will guarantee to supply the money for renting the landing field for at least one year to see how the proposition comes out.

#### COLLECT HISTORY DATA.

Green Bay—Fourth degree councils, Knights of Columbus, in the principal cities of the Fox river valley are planning to organize and collect historical data with a view to erecting tablets to mark certain spots of historical significance. The cities interested are Oshkosh, Neenah, Menasha, Appleton, Kaukauna, De Pere, Fond du Lac and Green Bay.

### "BEAUTY SPOT" TABOO IN LA CROSSE SCHOOLS

LA CROSSE—The "beauty spot" has been ordered off the rosy cheeks of the La Crosse High school girls. The first edict came from Miss Anna Collins, shorthand teacher, who ordered five girls to wash off the decoration. Other high school teachers decided to take similar action.

### CHEW TOBACCO DEMAND HERALDS PROSPERITY ERA

GREEN BAY, Wis.—An increased demand for chewing tobacco, noted by all Green Bay cigar dealers, is considered an infallible sign that business is getting back on its feet. When men are loafing at home they neglect the plug, according to Ray Fleming, but once they get back to the job and they would as soon forget their dinner pail as their "chew." The explanation is that in practically all factories smoking is prohibited during working hours but there is no objection to smoking while in the restaurant, which far from being a hindrance, in the mouth of some superior smokers on the extinguisher class. Mr. Fleming declares there is also an increased demand for short stemmed pipes. The short stemmed pipe can be smoked more steadily without firing the jaws, he says.

### MADISON MAN FIRST IN OUTLOOK CONTEST

MADISON—A letter written by Howard Murray Jones, a Madison farmer, was awarded first prize in a contest conducted by the Outlook Magazine for the best criticism of that publication. It has just been announced. More than 400 contributors from forty-two states including university professors, clergymen, newspapermen and men and women representing every walk in life entered articles. Second honors went to the president of Findlay college.

## DIVORCE SCORE

Curiosity S Patrons o

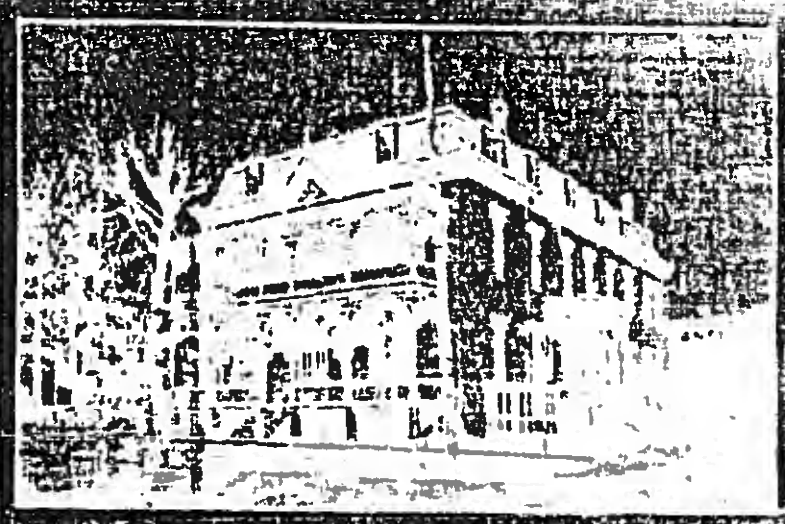
GREEN BAY—In fact of which drives divorce trials in O. Kenneth M. daily attend marital difficulties. Green Bay pastor mentioning on had had undoubted minister said in the interest in the interest. "I make it i speak when MacInnes. I gather mat The old us dress crops that Hook to factuated with the manes of the person as the one man or from during a trial leg contended and may su port but to other inter should be con ch at is sor forb one's As a with legitimate for a trial of a

### "VETS" MEET

the American style to the Chair in Ju

### FIVE TO

## "SPIRIT" COLLEGE



Merrill Trust Building, 11 Wisconsin, San Francisco, Calif.

# Morris Pratt Brought Spiritualist School To Whitewater During Late 19th Century

#2/

By Clarice Moon

The story of Morris Pratt, who founded the Spiritualist's Institute of Whitewater reads like a Horatio Alger story peopled with Mystics. Morris Pratt who was a common laborer with very little education, founded a school of Spiritualism that was the only one of its kind in the country.

He was born in Eaton, Madison Co., New York, Dec. 13, 1820. Early in the 1850's, he emigrated with some families who believed in spiritualism and they settled near Whitewater. Lectures and seances were conducted by William Stainton Moses.

During a seance at Whitewater in the 80's, Pratt had a vision that he was to devote himself to the spiritualist movement and if he ever had enough money he would establish a school. He was very poor, but he worked and saved his money.

Mrs. Mary Hayes of Waterloo, was a local seeress. During her life she had practiced spiritualism. She spoke in tongues unknown to her. She healed the sick by laying on her hands. She restored those who possessed to a normal condition and did untold miraculous things that could not be explained.

She advised Morris Pratt to use the four thousand dollars he had saved to invest in land on the border of Northern Wisconsin and Michigan with Mrs. Hayes' sons. So he did this. After five years had gone by, he decided he had made a bad investment. Then he had a chance to sell his property for many times his investment. Mrs. Hayes advised him to sell—which he did.

By 1886, the region turned out to be the heart of the Gogebic Iron range. A discovery of high grade Bessemer ore led to a speculative craze unparalleled in Wisconsin. Mining companies flourished. A money mania swept northern Wisconsin and Michigan. Fortune seekers became heroes of the hour. Pratt's dream of riches had been answered.

Mrs. Hayes and her sons opened and operated the Ashland Iron Mine at Ironwood, Mich. Pratt bought stock in the company and realized a large profit from its sale.

With the money, he bought land in Whitewater and built the Pratt Institute. While the three story brick building was being built, skeptics called it "Pratt's Folly".

The building was finished in 1888. For years it was used as the

meeting place for public seances. A few months before Pratt's death, he decided to transform the property into a Spiritualists educational institute and lived long enough to see the first class begin its studies.

Morris Pratt died at Whitewater, December 21, 1902 and is buried in the local cemetery.

A deed to the Institute was left to seven Spiritualists to act as a board of trustees.

Between 1910 and 1915, the student body was as high as 45. The program was extended to include courses in grammar, literature, psychology, history, logic, philosophy of Spiritualism, and religion as well as a department of speech. The regular course was two years, although many students returned to take special graduate work.

The building contained sleeping accommodations for 50 students, a large church auditorium, classrooms, offices, reception rooms, dining rooms, kitchen and laundry.

The school was based on the idea that while spiritualists workers should increase the psychic power which they possess to the highest degree, they should also cultivate their mental and moral powers. They should strive to acquire literary taste and should become cultured and refined.

A Spiritual Church organization had been formed and public services which teachers and students were expected to attend, were held weekly in the Institute under supervision of the principal. Second year students who were preparing for a public career assist in conducting services.

The Institute continued until 1932 when a falling off of enrollments and a loss of a large part of the income from endowment funds forced the school to close.

There had been strange concern about the Institute by other people. The students of the nearby State Teacher's College called it the "Spook House". But even so, many of them went to Sunday evening seances mostly out of curiosity.

The seance room was located on the third floor. It was spotless with white shades, white chairs, white wallpaper. The walls were adorned with pictures and emblems of Spiritualism. For a time only those deserving and dressed in white were admitted. But later others were allowed to attend.

many local persons who were present admitted that nothing happened at the seances. Others admitted that from the seance platform of the school, they heard strange voices and they didn't know where they came from.

After the Institute was closed, it remained vacant for a number of years. Then a Chicago woman opened a rest home for elderly people in the building. It was run for eight or nine years when the building became vacant again.

In 1961, the site was bought by the Wisconsin Telephone Company and the building torn down and a new Telephone Office built on the site of the only Spiritualist School in Wisconsin.

Whitewater Register  
Aug. 15, 1968

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#92

# Is Whitewater A Witches' Haven?

By NANCY BARTHEL

For years rumors have circulated through Whitewater that it once was and possibly still is a witches' haven. Some have even called it a second Salem, Mass. There are those who hunt the local cemeteries for the spirit of the legendary Mary Worth. Some are even convinced there exists a complex system of underground tunnels that was once used by witches to move about the town secretly.

No proof can be found that Whitewater ever was or for that matter is anything but a quiet little Midwestern town, but some local people believe they know how all the rumors got started.

The source, they say, is a spiritualist school and temple called the Pratt Institute that existed in Whitewater for about 40 years beginning in the 1890's.

Spiritualism is a sect of Christianity that believes that spirits of the dead survive as personalities and can communicate with the living through persons called mediums. Spiritualists believe that the spirits can give counsel on personal and practical affairs, as

well as tell of past and future events.

The institute was founded by Morris Pratt, a prominent Whitewater citizen. He converted to spiritualism after a Lake Mills spiritualist gave him financial advice in 1851 that caused him to make a small fortune. From that time on he credited his financial success to the "invisible intelligences."

In 1889 he decided to build the institute because he felt it was important that those with the inborn ability to communicate with the dead develop it. The institute also stressed the cultural development of its students.

Dedicated in 1902, it was the first spiritualist school in the world. It was located where the telephone company stands today at 300 Center St. It was three stories high and could house about 50 students at a time. The students came from all over the world to attend. Among those involved in the spiritualist movement Whitewater became known as the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism."

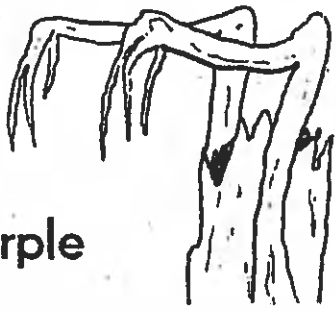
The townspeople called it the "Spook's Temple" and regarded it as something of a curiosity. At first they were very much against it, pressuring it with high taxes. Eventually though they realized they had

nothing to fear and accepted it. The students, who were generally well regarded, basically kept to themselves.

Each Sunday evening the institute held special seances, services or lectures that the local people were welcome to and attended in great number. Curiously, they were listed in the newspaper along with the church announcements. According to a local man who was a boy when the school was open, the spiritualists amazed the community with the accuracy of statements concerning persons' pasts and futures.

In 1938 the school was closed because of financial problems caused by the Great Depression. What was left of the school moved to Milwaukee and established a new Pratt Institute. For a time the school was used as a girl's dorm for the teacher's college. In 1961 the building was torn down.

It appears that all the talk and rumors about witches and spirits in Whitewater are the result of some people who believed there was more to the "Spook's Temple" than it was admitted. But then again, one must not forget a famous old saying - "Things are not always what they appear to be."



UW-Whitewater's

Alma Mater -

The Royal Purple



# The Royal Purple

# CAMPUS BULLETIN

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Published by Good Morning Advertising Service, Inc.  
136 W. Main, Whitewater, WI 53190 473-2711

Volume 2, No. 22

Tuesday, March 12, 1985

## Whitewater's History - A Haunting Tale!

by Craig Dresang

For many years, legends have saturated the city of Whitewater, causing people to believe that it was and is a witches' haven.

Whitewater has been called a "Second Salem, Mass." with haunting tales of the legendary Mary Worth who once lived here. Some local residents are convinced that a complex system of underground tunnels exists beneath the city. Many contend that these tunnels were once used by witches to move secretly about the town. Others believe their only purpose was to serve

as passages for the underground railroad.

With a natural tendency to create or add stories about the supernatural, it becomes difficult to discern fact from fiction. One begins to wonder just where these stories came from in the first place.

It seems very probable that many rumors were started after the Morris Pratt Institute was established in Whitewater. The school was established to give mediums, speakers and others who contemplate work in the broad field of progressive

thought the preparation needed.

In 1902, the building became the first spiritualist school in the world. It originated from Morris Pratt, a citizen of Whitewater. He accumulated a small fortune, and as a moment of his guidance, he erected the building in 1888. Pratt originally built it as a house, which was the most expensive house in the city, valued at \$30,000 in 1889.

The school was based on the idea that, "persons who possessed an inborn ability to communicate with the spiritual world should be given the opportunity to develop that ability." It also had a claimed purpose to, "enlarge one's knowledge, to train the thinking powers, to develop nobility of character, to elevate the mental and moral taste, and give finish and completeness to the work done."

### THE BUILDING

The institute was found in 1902 when Rev. Howell, a spiritualist minister, came to Whitewater and together with Pratt, dedicated the school.

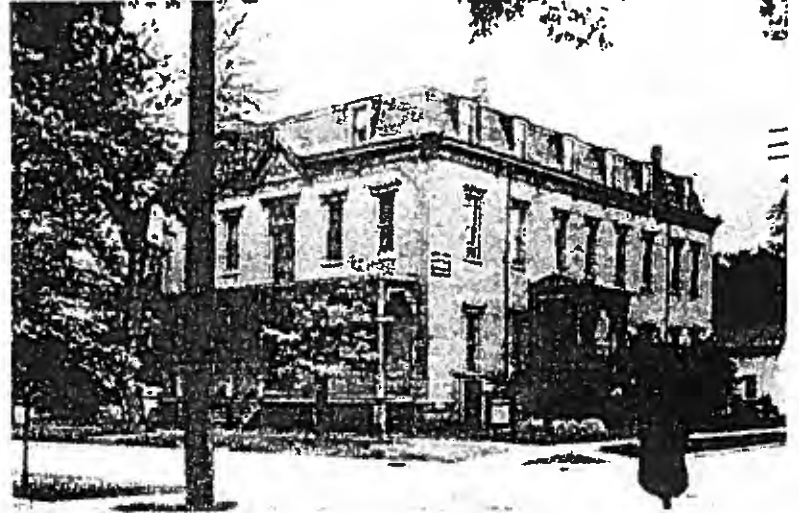
The location was one of the best in the city. It was located at the corner of Third and Center Streets. Papers described the school as, "a large, modern brick structure, three floors and basement, fronting 60 feet and extending over 100 feet in depth."

The third and part of the second floor were used for dormitories, comprising 20 private rooms. The second floor also contained a chapel for religious services which seated 300 persons.

Offices, classrooms, and reception and reading rooms comprised the first floor of the building. The dining area was located in the basement.

It has been said that no building in the state of Wisconsin had more attractive furnishings or was more conveniently arranged. It cost \$50 a year for tuition, and rooms went from \$1.50-\$3.00 per week, depending on the size and requirements of the room.

Entrance requirements were not strict. There were only two; one had to be at least 15 years of age and possess a good moral character. At times, enrollment was as high as 45.



THE MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE

### KNOWN AS SPOOK'S TEMPLE

Townpeople called the institute "Spook's Temple," because of its spiritualism practices. Most people define spiritualism as a demonic sect that believes spirits of the dead survive as personalities and communicate with the living through other people called mediums.

For many years visitors were barred from a room on the third floor that was completely furnished in white and contained pictures, emblems and signs of spiritualism on the walls. When an "outsider" finally did get into the room, he found "mediums" (persons who communicate with the demonic spiritual world.)

People came from all around the area to attend Sunday evening services. There, they witnessed seances and lectures by nationally famous spiritualists.

Amazingly, in 1902, Pratt persuaded world known Moses Hull and Andrew Jackson Weaver to speak in Whitewater. Hull continuously spoke of making "Whitewater the Mecca of Modern Spiritualism."

Because Pratt was well-

educated, he appeared to be a credible source of information to many people. He frequently argued during church services with ministers who criticized spiritualism. On several occasions he was evicted from the church.

During the 1930's, the school suffered financially, because of the depression. In 1938, the institute was forced to close its doors. After it was finally sold in 1946, it was used as a rest home for aged spiritualists and eventually became a girls dormitory for the Wisconsin State Teachers College.

The temple was destroyed in 1961 after being purchased by the Wisconsin Telephone Company. Though the building no longer stands, the legends live on.

### IS SPIRITUALISM STILL ALIVE IN WHITEWATER?

According to Elizabeth Wright, past president of Whitewater's historical society, underground railroad "tunnels" and Ku Klux Klan doings in

Con't on Page 2...

## SGA Presidential Elections Set

by Craig Dresang

The time is set, the men are ready and the race is on! On March 13 and 14 students will be able to vote for next year's Student Government President and Vice President.

Ole Otto and Jim Daily will be running against Keith Murphy and Tracy Zavarello. Currently, Otto is the president of the Student Government Association and Murphy is the vice president.

Under Otto's leadership, the University Police Nonemergency Transport system has been established. He has also attained approval for the University to install bus-stop shelters - one by the library, one by Drumlin Hall and another one near Esker Hall. Assembly membership has grown by 25 percent and it has been decided that the library will be open 24 hours during exams.

Otto has been Student Government president and vice president. He has been on the board of directors for the University Center for the past two years. In 1983, Otto was the United States Student Association Summer Congress-Wisconsin Delegate, a UW-W Housing-Resident Assistant and a camp conference assistant.

If elected, what will Otto and Daily be shooting for? First of all, they will implement a typing service for students that would cost 50 cents per page. The next idea is to provide students with a long-distance phone service discount. They would like to enhance representation to the administration and develop stronger relations with R.H.F. If students would be interested in an off-campus shuttle, it would also be implemented.

They would like to provide students with a microwave rental service and a personal property insurance program.

### MURPHY & ZAVARELLO

Keith Murphy, a sophomore, was the student senator for the Fall of 1983 and the Legislative Affairs Director during the Spring of 1984.

Murphy and Zavarello would also like to see a student insurance program put into action, and provide free legal services for students on a regular basis. They believe that access to a General Studies syllabus file would enable students to acquire a better understanding of instructor and course expectations before class registration. Murphy also feels that more attention should be paid to those groups that do not practice sound fiscal policies, and consideration should be given to more fair distribution of funds.

Another item that Murphy would like to see is the installation of election polls at the university. He says the Armory is inaccessible for handicapped students and inconvenient for people living on or near the campus.

### HIGHLIGHTS

India, Surprising Facts  
... see page 4

Male Ego  
... see page 6

Spring Break Ritual  
... see page 2



## A Haunting Tale!

... From Page 1

Whitewater are not half as mysterious as the seances that were held every Sunday night.

Wright said, "The strangest story that is provable happened on Halloween night in 1970. Lights were bobbing up and down near several crypts in a cemetery witnessed by two fishermen on one of the lakes. A coffin of a little girl, removed by persons unknown, was found on the university mall the next morning."

There are still practicing spiritualists in Whitewater. Marie Refior, who is the minister of the Church of Spiritual Light in the Milwaukee area, teaches classes out of her home here in Whitewater. Refior claims to be a medium and practices astro-projection (when a person's spirit leaves their physical body and can travel around). Refior said, "I have went to Venus and I have also gone to Mars by means of astro-projection." She said, "there is life on other planets, and I know there is, because I have seen it."

Refior believes spiritualism is fading out, not only in Whitewater, but on a national scale.

# MORRIS PRATT.

## And Officers and Building of The Morris Pratt Institute.

Morris Pratt was born in the town of Eaton, Madison county, New York, on the 13th day of December, 1820; that makes him 81 his last birthday. He was the youngest of the boys; two girls were older and two younger than he. They were the children of Joseph and Clarissa Morris Pratt.

Of these eight, the oldest girl, Mrs. Caroline Spring, 91 years old last July, and Morris, still continue on this side of life. Mrs. Spring still lives in Eaton, not



MORRIS PRATT.

far from the old homestead. Morris' parents moved west, as it was then called, when he was about 11 years old. The west at that time was in Chautauqua county, N. Y. Here his father took a piece of wild land, in order to make a new farm, five miles from Mayville, the county seat, and the nearest town. To reach this town they had to cut their way through the underbrush and smaller timber.

Here, young Morris took his position with the older boys and men of the family, working every day to clear up logs and brush, plowing, planting and hoeing, chopping, burning the wild roots and weeds until the farm was in condition for crops.

Up to the age of nine years, Morris at-



MRS. MATTIE B. HULL.

tended summer school, walking two and a half miles every day to the nearest school house. After that age all the schooling he got was about two months in mid-winter, after the corn was husked and shelled, the chopping and other fall and early winter work was done. This was kept up the most of the winter until he was eighteen years old.

In the autumn of 1840 he migrated from the State of New York to Whitewater, Wis. Here for two years he worked by the day, week or month. When with his three brothers, Asaph, Corydon and Benjamin, he went to Lima, and they three formed a co-partnership. They took up new land, clearing and subduing it; making desirable farms and opening the way for others to



WM. H. ROGERS. Vice President and Counsel.

raise crops and live in comparative comfort and ease. It was said of Morris Pratt that he could do more work in a given length of time, and could work more hours in a day than any of his neighbors could do. Now, though he is nearing 82 years of age, he steps off as briskly, and endures as much hard work as many of twenty.

After a few years two of the brothers drew out of this partnership arrangement, and Morris and the other brother, Asaph, continued as partners for about

ten years, after which they settled on separate farms each for himself. At the age of thirty Mr. Pratt married Miss Mary Jane Austin, a generous and good woman, beloved by all who knew her, and known as one of the pioneers of Southern Wisconsin. They lived at Lima and Milton Junction until the year 1888, when they moved to Whitewater, where Mr. Pratt built what has been known as the "Pratt Temple," and where he has since resided.

In the early years of Spiritualism, Mr. Pratt, after having investigated its phe-



MRS. ALPARATA JAHNKE.

nomena and philosophy, became convinced of the reality of the one and the truth of the other. Meetings were held in his own house, and he, as opportunity offered, assisted in carrying the truths which had made his heart glad, to his neighbors; especially to those who were bound by creeds to the superstitions of the past.

Mr. Pratt always believed his brains were made for his individual use, and he never allowed an opportunity to escape unimproved, to use them. He became acquainted with a girl medium, who afterward became Mrs. Hayes. Through her mediumship he received many startling and beautiful manifestation of spirit power and wisdom. Mr. Pratt was not the man to place his light under a bushel; he never was either afraid nor ashamed to tell the world what he believed; nor to stand up and defend that belief under any and all circumstances. In those early days of Spiritualism the church attacked it much more vehemently, and with less knowledge, and, if possible, with more vituperation than it does today. Mr. Pratt regarded it as his duty to be present on all such occasions, if possible. Sometimes he regarded it as his duty to correct the misstatements of those Spiritualism killers. He perhaps did not always use the

softest and most suave language. The result was he has been forcibly ejected from churches; and, in one instance, at least, find for disturbing a religious meeting. Indeed this thing went so far that it was considered a disturbance of a religious meeting even for him to be present and talk in their conferences. Mr. Pratt has lived in Whitewater and vicinity so long that he has lived these things down, and it is supposed that the most of his neighbors are heartily ashamed of the attacks they made upon one whom they were incapable of comprehending.

About the year 1884, a spirit control of Mrs. Hayes, calling himself a German, located a mine in the famous Gogebic Range, since known as the Ashland mine. Mr. Pratt was advised to take stock in the mine, which he did. At the same time he made the promise that if this investment proved a success he would build for the use of Spiritualism a Temple. He held the stock about three years, at the end of which time he had realized so handsome a fortune that on the sale of the stock he immediately made preparations for carrying out his promise.

He erected a magnificent and commodious brick building, which he has now dedicated for all time to the propagation of Spiritualism, and to the preparation



J. C. BUMP. Treasurer.

of others to enter into the Spiritualistic work, after our present workers shall have bid farewell to the work and workers on this side of life.

This is surely a fitting monument to the memory of one who has in every sense of the word blazed the way for those who are to come after him.

He has not only cleared up farms, and prepared the soil to raise that upon which we live as mortals, but he has cleared away the rubbish and broken the way for spiritual enlightenment.

her. She is in perfect sympathy with all her husband's wishes, and will gladly co-operate in his benefactions.

On December 13, last, Mr. Pratt celebrated his 81st birthday. He is still a hale and hearty man; there is every reason to hope he will see the college of which he is the founder, and on which he has so long had his mind set, become one of the finest institutions in the land—Clara L. Stewart in *The Psychic Era*.

NOTE—The failure of these cuts to reach us in time for last issue was in no way caused by the *Psychic Era* Publishing Co. They had the cuts delivered to the Adams Express Company April 11. The Adams Express does not come to Lily Dale, and they had no business to accept them, as this is an exclusive American point, and the American has an office in Pittsburg. Even accepting the package would not have been serious.



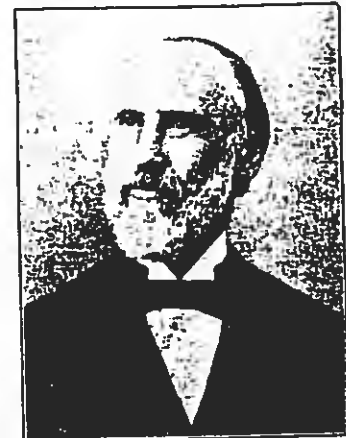
MRS. MOSES HULL. President.

had they not retained it in their office until the morning of the 14th. As THE SUNFLOWER had to be mailed on the 15th, we could not possibly hold our forms for the first sale open later than the morning of the 14th, and had to go to press without them.—Ed.

### WHAT IS RELIGION?

BY H. F. UNDERWOOD.

When people say that they do not believe in religion, they mean that they do not believe in certain doctrines which are taught in the name of religion,



A. J. WEAVER. Superintendent.

for instance, the doctrine of the fall man, the atonement through Christ, resurrection of the body, everlasting punishment, future conscious existence, personal God, etc. They cannot dispute that religion is a fact, a fact of world and of human nature. They cannot dispute that the phenomena of religion are just as real, and, of course just as natural as the phenomena of inorganic world. Whatever may be the opinion in regard to religion, the fact of its existence is indisputable. It prevails in all quarters of the globe, and it has existed in all ages of human history.

Then, "What is religion?" To answer

(Continued on Page 8.)



THE MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE.



CLARA L. STEWART. Secretary.



his return told his son that  
he would go down stairs

historical Pam. Collection  
not file in V.F.)

me down stairs he was called  
Harlie stepped to the door to summon  
m. Getting no response he went into  
the basement and there found his  
father hanging by a small cord tied to  
the top of the door casement. He  
called to his uncle, Lewis Sigwell, who  
as above, and he came immediately  
and cut the body down. Doctors Dunn,  
Miller and Bagley were hastily sum-  
moned, and though they worked over  
the body for an hour it proved too late  
for anything to be done.

It is likely that Sigwell, who had  
been trying for some time to stop drink-  
ing, was discouraged by the fact that he  
had yielded that afternoon to the  
temptation, and that, together with the  
quor he had taken, unbalanced his  
mind temporarily and made it possible  
for him to plan and execute his self-  
destruction. He was 48 years old, a  
native of Norway and is survived, by a  
wife and two sons, Herbert and Harlie.  
He leaves life insurance amounting to  
\$2000, all of which is with the Inde-  
pendent Order of Forresters.

A coroner's jury, consisting of G. W.  
Ferris, L. A. Duffin, John Ward, E. F.  
Donnelly, Lewis Carpenter and A. E.  
Jodfrey were summoned yesterday  
morning by Justice Kiser and after re-  
viewing the remains rendered the fol-  
lowing verdict: "That the deceased  
came to his death at his place of busi-  
ness, Center street, Whitewater, Wis.,  
December 29th at 8:30 o'clock p. m.  
from strangulation caused by hanging  
by deceased own hands with suicide in-  
tent."

The funeral occurs today at 2 p. m.  
from the old Sigwell home on Milwan-  
kee street.

Miss Belle Pollard is the proud pos-  
sessor of one of the finest driving horses  
in the city. It was purchased from  
Eugene Cornell and he is a splendid  
judge of horse flesh.

We heard considerable complaint  
around Christmas time about the un-  
comfortably cold condition of the depot  
during those days of heavy travel. We

marriage to Arthur H. J. Mann.  
The ceremon  
L. C. Ba  
forty r  
contra  
ony an  
and th

train for Wilmot, Wis., where Mr.  
Hahn is teaching and where they will  
henceforth make their home. Both  
young people are well known here and  
were given a very lively farewell as  
their train left the station, old shoes  
and rice being very much in evidence.

#### The Morris Pratt Funeral.

The funeral services of Morris Pratt  
occurred December 25, at o'clock p. m.  
After singing by the students Mrs. Hull  
led the audience in what seemed a soul-  
ful invocation. Rev. Moses Hull deli-  
vered a discourse on Rom. xii. 15  
"Rejoice with them that do rejoice and  
weep with them that weep." In this  
discourse Mr. Hull gave the Spiritual-  
ists' idea of death and the Spiritual  
world. He claimed that death was  
neither to be dreaded nor feared; it is  
as natural as any event in life—in fact,  
it is only a birth out of the physical  
body into the spiritual world. That  
birth is as natural as the birth Father  
Pratt had eighty-two years ago when  
he was born into the world.

Father Pratt, it was argued, is now  
born into the spiritual world, with all  
the education, experience and ability  
he gained in his over four score years of  
experience in life's primary school.

While we involuntarily mourn, and  
say, a man is dead, the angels rejoice  
and say a child is born from earth—  
born with that education and that ex-  
perience which will enable him to make  
the spiritual world better for his pres-  
ence.

Mrs. C. L. Stewart, Secretary of the  
Morris Pratt Institute Association,  
who was better acquainted with Morris  
Pratt, than any other connected with  
the school, following with remarks in  
which she related the circumstances  
connected with Mr. Pratt's magnificent  
benefactors to the school. She re-  
gretted that all did not know Morris  
Pratt as she did.

Prof. A. J. Weaver followed with ap-  
propriate remarks which closed that  
part of the service. Mr. Pratt's re-  
mains were interred in Hillside ceme-

Mr. Bieder and I have recently taken

Whitewater, Wis. - History - Buildings -  
(Morris Pratt Institute)

MADRID.

ED. WALKER.

#### Caution.

This is not a gentle word—but when you  
think how liable you are not to purchase the  
only remedy universally known and a remedy  
that has had the largest sale of any medicine  
in the world since 1848 for the cure and treat-  
ment of Consumption and Throat and Lung  
troubles without losing its great popularity all  
these years, you will be thankful we called  
your attention to Boschee's German Syrup.  
There are so many ordinary cough remedies  
made by druggists and others that are cheap  
and good for light colds perhaps, but for severe  
Coughs, Bronchitis, Croup—and especially for  
Consumption, where there is difficult expecto-  
ration and coughing during the nights and  
mornings, there is nothing like German Syrup.  
The 25-cent size has just been introduced this  
year. Regular size 75 cents. At all druggists.

On January 6th and 20th, February 3d  
and 17th, March 8d and 17th and April  
7th and 22d, homeseeker's excursion  
tickets to western, northwestern and  
southwestern points will be on sale at  
one fare plus \$2 for the round trip.

J. H. CALVERT, Agent.

Whitewater, Wis., Dec. 29, 1902.

For about ten years I have been  
troubled with chronic catarrh, weaken-  
ing my system. After a few months'  
treatment with Professor Strassman,  
the specialist, I have been completely  
cured of my catarrh and have gained  
fifteen pounds in flesh, and now I am  
feeling as if life is worth living. I am  
very gratefully yours,

85-6

EMERY FERRO.

Forget His Bottle. A relapse which terminates  
fatally is often caused by missing one dose of  
medicine. Dr. Gosson's Oxygen Tonic Tablets  
are convenient to take, may be carried in the  
pocket, and taken according to directions they  
cure lack of energy, nervousness, sick head-  
ache and general debility. They have cured  
many of your neighbors. You can get a free  
ample booklet at L. A. Duffin & Co.'s.

On account of the inauguration cere-  
monies of Governor-elect LaFollette at  
Madison, excursion tickets will be on  
sale January 5th, good to return Janu-  
ary 7th at one fare for the round trip.

J. H. CALVERT, Agt.

Whitewater, Wis., Dec. 30, 1902.

My youngest daughter's eyes, which

SPIRIT MYSTERIES TAUGHT IN UNIQUE WISCONSIN SCHOOL

Only Psycho College in World Founded by Man Led to Riches in Trance.

By DONALD C. BOLLES.

Special Correspondent of The Sentinel. WHITEWATER—Housed in a spacious brick building, which has dormitories, class rooms, and a science assembly room in the Morris Pratt Institute here, the only spiritualistic school in the world.

The school is located near the business district of Whitewater. There is a faculty and course of study outlined and at the present time the school has fifteen students.

The account of the spiritualist school was best told by Mrs. Mattie Marvin Hull, 32 years old, a woman who was killed by death at Whitewater on Friday, Feb. 25, a nationally known medium. Up to the time of her death she took an active part in the administration of the school, which was founded by her husband in 1902.

LABORER FOUNDED SCHOOL. Morris Pratt is the real founder of the school. He was a laborer in Whitewater in the early '30's and by thrift and fortune accumulated a little farm property, and in some ways became interested in spiritualism. During one session it is declared that Pratt, then a poor man, declared that if the spirits would show him where to make fortune, he would devote a part of it to spiritualism.

He was later called by a more or less famous medium who was the wife of a Supreme court judge at the time and now a resident of California, wealthy and having some prominence in western politics. She inquired if his statement that he would give to the cause of spiritualism was true and Pratt pledged his faith and aid to the mystic circle of seers.

GUIDED TO RICHES IN TRANCE. In a mystic trance, it is alleged that the medium told Morris Pratt to buy a piece of land in a section in northern Wisconsin. She named the township and range. Pratt took her at her word and bought it. It was then barren timber wilderness, but he bought, guided by the spirit.

The land turned out to be one of the most valuable iron mines of the Quebec range. Pratt, true to his pledge, sold the land for a price around \$200,000. He was rich. He then sought to make good his promise. He built the big brick house in Whitewater. He was asked what the building was going to be and the only answer he ever gave was:

"I don't know, but it is for spiritualism." As the construction of the building continued, it became known as "Pratt's Folly." It was completed in 1911 and was dedicated in November of that year. Spiritualists from all over Canada and the United States attended the ceremony. It was just dedicated to the cause, the idea of having a spiritualist school not being considered at that time.

FLEEKED OUT OF MONEY. Pratt was wealthy. He had made one rich strike on the advice of the medium. Shortly after that he began to be fleeced and then once he threatened to sue a Whitewater bank because the bankers refused to allow him to draw out \$20,000 to buy a "gold mine." When he died Pratt left a trustful of mine stock, shares in real estate and other "securities" which were not worth the ink used in printing.

While he lived attempts were made to start the school, but the national organization, which the spiritualists have refused to take the initiative and Pratt almost despaired of realizing his dream of the school. His wife objected to the giving over of the property, but in 1902 Hull and his wife took charge. Funds were received from spiritualists from all over the states for the support of the institution. A Chicago blacksmith was the first to contribute. With a few students and a small faculty the school of spiritualism was being taught.

INSTITUTION IS WEALTHY. Later a man named Fuller, living in Pennsylvania, died and willed a fortune amounting to \$100,000 to the Whitewater school. Litigation followed, but the heirs were unable to break the will, settlement being finally made so that the spiritualist school received \$50,000. Endowments have made the school comparatively wealthy.

In the curriculum there is a lot of general subjects, together with public speaking. But the main purpose of the school is psychic studies, mediumship, the laws and applications of science as a "science." Diplomas are issued. Entrance examination is not required. Mediumship is regarded as being earned. In the alleged science of mediumship, the students make a study of the operation of the human mind and laws governing the manifestations between the material and spiritual planes of life.

GREEN BAY IS ASSURED NEW K. C. CLUBHOUSE

GREEN BAY—Reports of campaign committees raising funds for a new clubhouse indicate that Green Bay is assured a modern home for the Knights of Columbus. At Tuesday night's meeting it was found that a large part of the amount in the holding company had been subscribed. It is expected to begin operations about May 1. The building will be across the street from the Brown county courthouse. It will be three stories and the lower two floors will be largely open to the public. A bowling club with ten alleys and swimming tank are to be features. It is also planned to have an auditorium with a seating capacity of 2,500 persons.

MAPLE SIRUP HARVEST BEGINS IN WISCONSIN

MERRILL—Maple sirup season is here. The income of the callfrons of maple will soon be rising in the woods near here. While the season is looked upon with some misgiving by the forest conservationists, some claim that the present cold nights and warm days will

CRIME WAVES PREVENTABLE IN VIEW OF GREEN BAY REFORM SCHOOL HEAD

Plug Up Loopholes Which Lead to Disregard of Law Expert Urges; Says Criminal Instincts Not Hereditary.

By a Special Correspondent. GREEN BAY—Plug up the loopholes that lead to disregard of law in order to eliminate crime waves, is the advice of R. M. Cole, superintendent of the state reformatory here. Supt. Cole's work has brought him into contact with youthful criminals of every species. The remedy for crime which he proposes is a simple one. It is based on the ancient proverb, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

"Crime may very well be compared to physical disease," he says, "and the mode of proceeding for the cure of the one is in principle the same as for the other."

"The most effective mode is to remove the cause, which often has its origin in our social conditions owing to a weakness of ordinary restraints, by means of which society is kept together. According to principles which have long been accepted, the method for reformation must be found in a combination of penal and reformatory elements applied in their proper circumstances and their due proportion."

IMPRISONMENT ACTS AS DETERRENT TO OTHERS

"The object of the state penitentiary is so much to deter others from committing crime as it is to punish the individual. The fact of certain prisoners being steadily convicted is not proof that the prison system is defective. My idea on this matter is, that if by convicting those who have an incurable desire for crime we can halt fresh recruits from joining the ranks of the criminal class, our object of the punishment is effected. If all convictions were reconstructions, and none of them were first convictions we would soon put an end to crime."

"A fitting the delinquent boy for society the courts furnish us with very good material. The larger part of the young men who enter penal institutions have been complete failures up to that time, and are received at such places branded as criminals in his early career. The parents lose control of him, knowingly or otherwise, the schools failed in their opportunity, religious influences were of no avail, and the pulpit after having aroused him for two or three sermons, demand that he be committed to a training school, reformatory, or prison. The courts, with a view of saving the delinquent, suspend sentence. But later on through the boy's disregard of the conditions of his suspended sentence, find it necessary to place him on probation. He finally violates the terms of the probation and is sentenced to a penal institution."

"Upon leaving the institution, he is usually mentally and intellectually bright, physical conditions in fair, although, possibly, some-

what under weight; teeth usually need attention, also tonsils and adenoids in a large number of cases. This young fellow is usually called, or what might be termed "hard boiled." He is slovenly in attitude, slovenly in dress, rude in manner, and very reluctant and evasive in his statements as to how he got into trouble. He easily accuses himself of blame by giving some trivial excuse, which is usually to the effect that he did not receive a square deal."

"We will presume that this young man has a good home, and that his surroundings are good. But this description will also fit the boy whose home is broken up by the death of either one or both parents, or of one who leaves home early in youth owing to the fact that he can not get along with his stepmother or stepfather. This young fellow leads a life of small bit that his mother can give him is of no consequence. He has borrowed from all his friends, and only goes home when the "old man," as he terms his father, is off to work or at his place of business. Up to this time the young fellow has had no particular in-

clination to follow a life of crime, although in all probability the police have his number, and he possibly has been arrested one or more times for trivial offenses. Some particular event is coming off and he wants to take his part, and show her a good time; but, as usual, he is broke and in debt. One of the bunch suggests that he cop a car, kick in the corner store, stick up the junk man, or shove over some party; or, if he is working, that he swipe something from the store of his employer."

CAUSE IS SAME IN 75 PER CENT OF CASES.

"He goes by with two or three tricks of this kind, until one of the bunch is picked up on some minor charge. The police sweat him and make him come through. He equals, implicates the gang in a number of burglaries, stickups, etc., and all are brought into court, put on probation, promise faithfully to live up to the conditions of their probation, violate the probation by not working, hanging around dance halls, joy riding, etc., when he is again picked up and sentenced to prison."

"This is the general history of about 75 per cent of first offenders that I have examined."

"Does not the fact that out of a population of about 100 young men, we have not a mechanic of any kind lead one somewhat to believe that mechanics as a class do not get into serious trouble, and that those who do might be classed as accidentals? Does not the fact that a very small percentage of delinquents account for any period of time when they have applied themselves diligently at any line of work, or with a view of learning a vocation, lead one to believe that lack of application is a serious defect in the makeup of the young delinquent? It is a fact that the plucker, the fellow that applies himself, the fellow that overcomes the small difficulties and obstacles which one meets with in acquiring a vocation and in all lines of employment, does not get into trouble."

LOOHPHOLES FOR CRIMINALS BREED DANGER FOR LAW.

"Personally I do not believe that crime is hereditary, or that there is a criminal class crime is individual. I believe that a child of an instinctive criminal, if taken from the improper influences that he is surrounded by, properly educated, and raised in an environment that is uplifting, that, in all probability, he will be a credit to society also a proper enforcement of our laws."

"At present there are too many loopholes whereby a criminal can evade being punished on a technicality. Make punishment for crime a certainty without assuaging delays. "Education, religion, labor, clean recreation and physical development in the youth will retard crime, provided this training is received under good influences and is part of it."

MRS. LENROOT HEADS CONGRESSIONAL CLUB



MRS. IRVINE L. LENROOT. SUPERIOR—Mrs. Irvine L. Lenroot, wife of United States Senator Lenroot of this city, has been elected president of the Congressional club of Washington for the coming year. The annual election was held recently and Mrs. Lenroot was by a large majority. She is one of the capital's most charming matrons.

OSHKOSH STRIVES TO BECOME AERO CENTER

Movement Underway to Bring Commercial and Mail Plane Services to City

OSHKOSH—A movement is under way here to put Oshkosh on the United States air mail routes and to have commercial airplane companies make this city a point on their main lines.

City officials in co-operation with the Association of Commerce and a number of interested citizens are working to make this project a reality. Options have been secured on land that would provide a suitable airfield, and Richard Lutz and Florian Masner, two local aviators, have agreed to build a hangar large enough for three airplanes and to provide necessary equipment for service and supplies. The project has gained headway here in business circles and it is understood that if such a field is provided it will be possible to have the Chicago-Twin Cities mail service routed by way of the Fox river valley. A bill has been presented before the state legislature providing that a city may lease, rent, purchase or secure by condemnation, suitable landing fields. Until that bill becomes a law Oshkosh is not permitted to expend money for such a purpose, city officials say. In the meantime, it is possible that Oshkosh business men will guarantee to supply the money for renting the landing field for at least one year to see how the proposition comes out.

COLLECT HISTORY DATA.

GREEN BAY—Fourth degree knights, Knights of Columbus, in the principal cities of the Fox river valley are planning to organize and collect historical data with a view to erecting tablets to mark certain spots of historical significance. The cities interested are Oshkosh, Neenah, Menasha, Appleton, Kaukauna, Deppra, Fond du Lac and Green Bay.

"BEAUTY SPOT" TABOO IN LA CROSSE SCHOOLS

LA CROSSE—The "beauty spot" has been ordered off the rosy cheeks of the La Crosse High school girls. The first order came from Miss Anna Collins, shorthand teacher, who ordered five girls to wash the decoration. Other high school teachers decided to take similar action.

CHEW TOBACCO DEMAND HERALDS PROSPERITY ERA

GREEN BAY, Wis.—An increased demand for chewing tobacco, noted by all Green Bay cigar dealers, is considered an infallible sign that business is getting back on its feet. When men are looking at home they neglect the plug, according to Ray Fleming, but once they get back to the job and they would, an man forget their dinner pail as their "chew" tobacco. The explanation is that in practically all factories smoking is prohibited during working hours, but there is no objection to smoking outside in the air-circulating plug, which far from being a fire hazard, in the mouth of some experts, burns on the extinguisher class. Mr. Fleming declares there is also an increased demand for short stemmed pipes. The short stemmed pipe can be smoked more steadily without tiring the lips, he says.

MADISON MAN FIRST IN OUTLOOK CONTEST

MADISON—A letter written by Howard Murray Jones, a Madison farmer, was awarded first prize in a contest conducted by the Outlook Magazine for the best criticism of that publication. It has just been announced. More than 400 contributors from forty-two states including university professors, clergymen, newspapermen and men in various professions every walk in life entered articles. Howard Jones went to the president of Findlay college.

"SPIRIT" COLLEGE



DIVORCE COURT FANS SCORED BY MINISTER

Curiosity Seekers Likened to Patrons of Ancient Roman Arenas.

GREEN BAY, Wis.—The "cave man" instinct of the morbidly curious which drives the public to attend divorce trials is deplored by the Rev. G. Kenneth MacInnes, who has been a daily attendant at the recital of the marital difficulties of a former Green Bay pastor in circuit court. Commenting on the fact that his presence had undoubtedly been noticed, the minister said he attended such trials in the interest of his work.

"I make it a point to know whereof I speak when in the pulpit," said Mr. MacInnes. "That is one way in which I gather material for my sermons." "The old time cruelty of the Roman arena crops out today in the crowds that flock to hear trials of those unfortunate who have been caught in the meshes of the law. Sympathy for the person on trial may be contrived as the one legitimate reason for a man or woman being in a court room during a trial. When a divorce is being contested, friends, by their presence, may supply a needed moral support, but to listen to the troubles of others, merely to gratify idle curiosity should be considered criminal in itself, and it is something one must answer for to one's conscience."

"VETS" ATTEND LEGION MEET IN CARLOAD LOTS

REFERENCE—Superior members of the American Legion will go French style to the state convention at Eau Claire in June, the railroad permitting. The post has named a committee to ask the railroad for permission to ship the entire membership in carload lots to Eau Claire. Side door Pullmans, "40 hogs, eight elephants," are asked. The uniform will be fatigue dress—blue denim. As the legion men traveled in France in bus cars, so they would take the eight hour ride to Eau Claire herded in buscars. "The railroad ought to give us carload rates on livestock," said Newell Williams, post commander.

FIVE RISK FIRMS SUED AS ARSON CASE SEQUEL

JANESVILLE, Wis.—Founded on an interesting point of law, a suit against five insurance companies has been started by E. L. Hellman, Janesville garage proprietor, to collect losses suffered when his garage was burned down last May by his partner, J. R. Williams, who is now serving a ten year sentence in Waupun, having pleaded guilty to arson. As the policies are made out under the partnership, Judge George Grimm will have to decide whether Hellman is responsible for the act of his partner. Hellman denies all knowledge of the crime and was out of the city at the time.

Irvin L. Young Memorial Library 431 West Capitol Street Whitewater, WI 53190

WHITWATER - Morris Pratt Institute 12/96

#27

U.S. HISTORY

# Morris Pratt Institute and the Spiritualist Movement:

First spiritual school in U.S history reflects societal patterns of  
desire to communicate with the dead

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History 499, Dr. Gulig

December, 2009

As female students hustle out of rooms and crowd the hallways waiting impatiently for the lavatory, teachers and instructors quickly glance over the lessons prepared for the day. Meanwhile a flock of students, dressed in plain white smocks, head from the third floor of the mansion to the basement to grab breakfast before lessons are to begin. In the cafeteria, both female students who live in the mansion and male students who live off-campus, congregate and enjoy small conversation over hurried bites of food. They scatter off to their classrooms where first--years will study more elementary courses of grammar, rhetoric, literature, geography and so forth.<sup>1</sup> These demanding subjects are required across institutions of learning in order to provide a good, solid, foundation for higher cognitive development. In this particular case, second--year students with a foundation already under their belt, are hurried off to cognitively challenging classes studying the subjects of Psychic Research and Comparative Religions.<sup>2</sup> Students in these classes will be learning about levitation, independent voices and writings, and general mediumship to help develop and expand their personal spiritual gifts or perspectives.<sup>3</sup> Later in the evening, a small crowd might gather in the temple to listen to a lecture from a famous spiritualist, or perhaps a small group of elite spiritualists, dressed in complete white, will gather in séance in a small room on the third floor of the building in attempts to connect with the dead. Mansions, first and second--year students, school subjects of levitation and so forth may seem quite familiar to the 21<sup>st</sup> century youth. However, this is

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<sup>1</sup> Walworth County Trade Review; a business trade review of towns and villages in Walworth County, Wisconsin, (March, 1917), pg 2.

<sup>2</sup> Walworth County Trade Review; a business trade review of towns and villages in Walworth County, Wisconsin, (March, 1917), pg 2.

<sup>3</sup> Morris Pratt Institute Lesson 15: Mediumship. Transcript in the hand of Melvina Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

not a chapter from JK Rowling's famous *Harry Potter* series-- this is a chapter out of history from a small, former pioneer village, Whitewater, Wisconsin, during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The immediate response of readers is to probably jump to hurried conclusions about the uniqueness and mystery that must have inhibited this school. Witchcraft, wizardry, and black magic are all too common assumptions about the institution and all of the above continued to be rumored throughout the town today. However, the school, the Morris Pratt Institute, was a reflection of societal patterns throughout the United States during its existence in Whitewater. Major events and issues usually had indirect effects on the school itself and how society perceived it. This paper will examine how it was a reflection of society and how societal trends and attitudes shaped both the formation and eventual closure of the Morris Pratt Institute in Whitewater. In order to remove the initial bias of the reader from assumptions of witchcraft, wizardry, and black magic, the purpose of this school and its place in history must be first discussed. This particular learning institute was based off of the religious movement of Modern Spiritualism during the 1800's and it was not so indifferent of the time. In fact, the Spiritualist trend in the United States started and reached its peak during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The movement was based on the belief that life after death existed, and that it could be scientifically proven through communication with the dead. It strayed from Orthodox religions; especially in beliefs of evolution (versus Orthodox creationism theories). But it did not, however, totally divide itself. For example, the school did not discourage Christian Spiritualists; on the contrary many claimed that their messages were sent to them through God or his will. It must not be forgotten that although this school exercised many new and intellectual ideas,

society was still fairly conservative during this period. Victorian ideals were not outdated and many people were conscious of their sins and fearful of the afterlife. Therefore it is not surprising that students studied Religion as a main subject of their course work. Many believed in, and relied on the Christian Bible in order to support their argument that Spiritualist work had been around for thousands of years and that it had been used and associated with a variety of religions. Directly in their principles it states:

We believe in Infinite Intelligence—other word for God because men have confused God, the word, with the concept of impersonal, infinite power and so many varying ideas of the meaning of the word, God has arisen.<sup>4</sup>

The school claimed that many of the messages and stories in the bible relating to Moses, Jesus and other great prophets revealed interactions between humans on a physical plane with people on a spiritual plane.<sup>5</sup> In one of the lessons discussing the Bible it is stated:

The Bible was given to man thru mediumship of the prophets and seers and the standard of their mediumship was governed by their background, their advantage of the education available at that time, and as there was not common knowledge of the sciences and some of them were entirely unheard of, these writers did the best they

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<sup>4</sup> Morris Pratt Institute Lesson 24: Our Principles. Transcript in the hand of Melvina Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

<sup>5</sup> Morris Pratt Institute Lesson 24: Our Principles. Transcript in the hand of Melvina Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

knew to account for natural phenomena, such as creation, the presence of evil in the world, and the problems that enter into life.<sup>6</sup>

This lesson explains that the prophets and writers of the Bible were engaged in Spiritual communication, but that they did not have the scientific education to make such inferences. In other words, it can be further best explained that some Spiritualists did not denounce the Bible, but understood that its meanings had to stay within a certain historical context and that it should not be forever interpreted within that context. Although some Orthodox leaders claimed that Spiritual communication could likely be fraud or linked to the work of the Devil, some leaders contended that some Spiritualists may have made real connections with the dead or had truth in their beliefs.<sup>7</sup>

It was during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that this form of communication captivated many citizens of the era. Widespread immigration, westward expansion, urban growth and industrial booms triggered overcrowding, poor sanitation, and appalling working conditions; all of which would pilot the path for poor health conditions. Diseases would spread abruptly and thousands were affected by cholera, whooping cough, influenza, and diphtheria.<sup>8</sup> With the rapid spread of these diseases, combined with high birth rates and threatening health conditions, the mortality rate sky rocketed. During the latter half of the century, the Civil War added another heavy death toll on families. Death was a factor that most American families had to contend with during this period and they sought some form of relief that their loved one(s) had passed on to

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<sup>6</sup> Morris Pratt Institute Lesson 1: Biblical Spiritualism. Transcript in the hand of Melvina Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

<sup>7</sup> "Spiritualism in Wisconsin in the Nineteenth Century." *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 59, no 1 (Autumn, 1975): pg. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Nancy R. Stuart, "The Raps Heard Around the World," *American History* (August, 2005): pg. 46.

a better existence.<sup>9</sup> Conflicts and issues with Orthodox religious institutions were not helping ease family grief. Problems in religious institutions included the demands to follow strict laws that no longer contended with the progressing society, and the inability to convince the people, especially the growing intelligent, of the belief of creationism and in life after death. With the wealth of scientific knowledge and the availability of books in general increasing, including Charles Darwin's findings on the Galapagos Islands and his theory of evolution, people were starting to question the lack of credibility in religion; weighing their religious beliefs against evidence in science.<sup>10</sup> The rapid progress of the age and the personal desire for connections to their deceased loved ones created an environment that was rich for the Spiritualist movement.

Luckily for these yearning people, two young girls in New York were about to become famous for their leadership in the early beginnings of Spiritualism; giving some members of society hope and belief again. In the winter of 1847 the sisters, Katy and Maggie Fox, started to make claims of interacting with the dead through a series of rappings that seemed to be coming from the inside of their family's small cottage in Hydesdale, New York. The girls believed the rappings were produced by spirits trying to contact the living. The girls began to ask the spirits questions that were answerable by a specific number of raps. These questions started off basic; attempting to discover what or who the mysterious noises were and what their purpose in communication with the living was. With their mother astonished by her daughter's interactions, word was leaked to the rural neighbors and the girls were drawing small crowds to

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<sup>9</sup> Mary F., Bednardowski, "Spiritualism in Wisconsin in the Nineteenth Century." *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 59, no.1 (Autumn, 1975): pg. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Mary F., Bednardowski, "Spiritualism in Wisconsin in the Nineteenth Century." *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 59, no.1 (Autumn, 1975): pg. 1.



witness the spirit communication inside the cottage. Soon, hundreds of people out of curiosity would come to the small house to either witness the miracles performed or to blame the rappings and sisters on fraud.<sup>11</sup> Fraud or not, these two young girls would become the starting leaders of the modern religious movement of spiritualism.

From this point onward, the movement spread throughout the United States and Spiritualist circles and groups were emerging throughout major cities. The total number of followers numbered around one million during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> Larger cities would dedicate small churches to integrate people. So how did the movement make such an impact on the small pioneer town of Whitewater, Wisconsin? Historian Mary Farrell Bednarowski stated that Wisconsin proved to be “fertile breeding grounds” for the movement and that many Spiritualist groups and organizations became common in the state. The Northwestern Wisconsin Spiritualist Association held a variety of conventions in places such as River Falls and Oshkosh; she also noted that the newspaper the *Spiritualist* was published for almost a year in Appleton and Janesville.<sup>13</sup> The various organizations and media present in the state resulted in the birth of many important Spiritualists and mediums. Ex-governor P. Tallmadge was a believer and defender, famous trance speaker Cora L. V. Richmond began her healing career in Janesville and Mary Hayes Chynoweth, an important spiritualist leader in the Lake Mills-Whitewater-Madison region, actually had very important ties to the institute in Whitewater.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> “They Spoke With the Dead.” *American Heritage* 50, no.5 (1999): pg. 86.

<sup>12</sup> “Judge Edmonds on Spiritualism.” *Whitewater Register* (WI). 16 April, 1859.

<sup>13</sup> Mary F., Bednardowski, “Spiritualism in Wisconsin in the Nineteenth Century.” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 59, no.1 (Autumn, 1975): pg. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Mary F., Bednardowski, “Spiritualism in Wisconsin in the Nineteenth Century.” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 59, no.1 (Autumn, 1975): pg. 6 &15.

The first pioneers of Whitewater started to settle the territory around 1837.<sup>15</sup> Population rates remained fairly low until the addition of the railroad in 1852 which resulted in a population rise from 2,000 in 1852 to 4,285 in 1858 (the same year Whitewater received a village charter).<sup>16</sup> Implying that by the time the Spiritualist movement was making a nationwide impact, Whitewater was still a new community. However, due to its proximity to the major cities of Janesville, Madison, and Milwaukee it proved to be a fruitful place for exchange of ideas. With the advent of the railroad, travel to big cities and other towns to meet with friends and family or to do business became easy and ordinary. During this period, other transportation methods within the town were slow. Within the town, people relied on the use of horse and wagons by dirt roads, or by foot on the wooden sidewalks downtown.<sup>17</sup> Through the quick transportation method of railroads, people became acquainted with Spiritualist ideas. All of these cities had Spiritualists or groups present and it was common for some settlers in Whitewater to be engaged with these people or particular mediums. Newspapers ads for séances or Spiritualist gatherings were commonly found in newspapers circulating these cities during the period.<sup>18</sup> However, newspaper ads indicating the fraud of Spiritualism and the corruptions that it led to were also common. One particular ad in the *Janesville Morning Gazette* read: "Leo Miller...and there earnestly denounces the claims of Modern Spiritualism which threatens to overthrow both reason and religion."<sup>19</sup> Obviously, some men like Miller felt Spiritualism was a direct attack on the church and biblical theories. Other articles that were

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<sup>15</sup> Cravath, Prosper. *Early Annals of Whitewater: 1837-1867*. Edited by Albert Salisbury. Whitewater: The Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs, 1906. (Reprint, Ohio: Bell and Howell Company, 1964)

<sup>16</sup> *A Study of Whitewater*. Whitewater: A League of Women Voters, (1967): 1.

<sup>17</sup> Fred G. Kraege. *Images of America: Whitewater* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2006),37.

<sup>18</sup> "Local Matters", *Whitewater Register (WI)*, 5, March, 1859.

<sup>19</sup> "Commercial Ads", *Janesville Morning Gazette*, 12, October, 1857.

printed in the *Whitewater Register* discussed how Spiritualism could have been a factor in the disruption of social values and standards; especially the “free love infatuation.” This article read:

“...he has recently become interested in Spiritualism, and has been led by the discussion of free love, affinities, and such nonsense, to the conclusion that his wife, with whom he has lived happily for twenty years, and who has made him the father of an interesting family, is not his, ‘affinity.’ He made a mistake and married the young women, because he was not spiritually enlightened.”<sup>20</sup>

Separation and divorce was a new, and fairly opposed concept during this conservative period of time and some people felt that the some of the beliefs supported by Spiritualism were corrupting family and religious societal values. Opinions were diverse and divided, but they didn’t stop some community members of the Whitewater area from holding small gatherings and séances of their own. According to Prosper Cravath, an important pioneer of Whitewater who documented the village’s history briefly mentioned in an entry the force that Spiritualism had taken in some parts of the community around 1861.<sup>21</sup> One man in particular who was interested in the movement was Morris Pratt of the Whitewater area.

Morris Pratt was an early pioneer of the Whitewater area originally from New York. He moved west along with his brothers and began to clear land in the Lima Township area in

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<sup>20</sup> Melancholy Infatuation. *Whitewater Register*. 24, April, 1858.

<sup>21</sup> Cravath, Prosper. *Early Annals of Whitewater: 1837-1867*. Edited by Albert Salisbury. Whitewater: The Whitewater Federation of Women’s Clubs, 1906. (Reprint, Ohio: Bell and Howell Company, 1964):133.

1840.<sup>22</sup> Due his upbringing and his constant laboring, Pratt never received much of a formal education; needless to say, he was a very wise man due to self teaching.<sup>23</sup> He worked all of his life and understood common sense and the importance in investment and labor to protect his hard earned assets. He eventually worked hard enough to own his own farm and by 1956 he was paying tax on more than \$12,000 worth of property, making him a very prosperous member of the community.<sup>24</sup> Pratt belonged to small number of Spiritual converts in the Whitewater area around the 1850's. His actual conversion was in 1851 when he visited the Lake Mills Spiritualist Center.<sup>25</sup> It was there, that lectures and séances were being conducted by the well known Spiritualist William Stainton Moses, that Pratt became convinced that the religion had a profound scientific backing that had the potential to change religion as it was known.<sup>26</sup> This affected Pratt's beliefs about life after death and from that point forward, Pratt firmly backed his beliefs and became more involved in Spiritualism. He was involved in many discussions, debates, and arguments with Orthodox ministers and was even removed from a Church and fined for his controversial behavior.<sup>27</sup> It an article published about Pratt in 1902 read:

Sometimes he regarded it as his duty to correct the statements of those Spiritualism killers. He perhaps did not always use the softest and most suave language. The result was he has been forcibly ejected from churches; and, in one instance, at least, for

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<sup>22</sup> Dale Reich, *A History of Whitewater*. April, 1974, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Clara L. Stewert, "Morris Pratt: and officers and building of the Morris Pratt Institute," *The Sunflower* (Lily Dale, NY), 1 May, 1902.

<sup>24</sup> Dale Reich, *A History of Whitewater*, (April, 1974): 14.

<sup>25</sup> Morris Pratt Institute, "History of Morris Pratt Institute," <http://www.morrispratt.org/> (accessed September 20, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Fred L. Holmes. *Badger Saints and Sinners*. (E.M. Hale and Co., 1939), 369.

<sup>27</sup> Dale Reich, *A History of Whitewater*, (April, 1974): 14

disturbing a religious meeting. Indeed this thing went so far that it was considered a disturbance of religious meeting even for him to be present and talk in their conferences.<sup>28</sup>

Making the obvious point that although there were one million Spiritualists throughout the nation, there still remained five to six million Christians whose views sometimes conflicted.<sup>29</sup>

Pratt, a strong believer of Spiritualism, refused to back down to people whom he believed had no understanding of the religion due to intolerance. His strong convictions would lead him to an investment that would impact not only the Spiritualist Movement in the United States, but also the small town of Whitewater.

In 1883 Morris Pratt was presumably sitting in a dimly lit room of candlelight, with a small group of people gathered around a table who were all involved in a séance led by the popular Medium of the area, Mary Hayes Chynoweth. It was during this interaction with the Spiritual world, that Pratt vowed that if Mrs. Hayes (as she was commonly referred to) would help lead him to financial success, he would donate a substantial amount of money to the Spiritualist cause. Speaking to a long-dead German Professor, Hayes felt confident in telling Pratt to invest his money along the upper Wisconsin-Michigan border.<sup>30</sup> Following her advice from beyond the grave, he invested the \$4,000 he had saved into the barren and desolate region. A region that to the eye, held little to no value and only blind faith alone, or in Pratt's case, words from the dead, could persuade a man to invest in it. Pratt waited patiently for two

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<sup>28</sup> Clara L. Stewart, "Morris Pratt: and officers and building of the Morris Pratt Institute," *The Sunflower* (Lily Dale, NY). 1 May, 1902.

<sup>29</sup> "Judge Edmonds on Spiritualism." *Whitewater Register* (WI). 16 April, 1859.

<sup>30</sup> Clara L. Stewart, "Morris Pratt: and officers and building of the Morris Pratt Institute," *The Sunflower* (Lily Dale, NY). 1 May, 1902.

years on his bonds with no action or growth. Imagine his disparity—the 69 year old man had invested what money he had saved into land that could have proven to be worthless. His waste perhaps could have tainted his Spiritualist views and quite possibly have framed fraud on Mrs. Hayes. However, this alternative would seem out of line with Pratt's normal behavior and character, and on the contrary he probably would have counted his loss in a more respectful manner. But the spiritual advice turned out to be very prosperous; for his investment turned out to be at the heart, of the then undiscovered, Gogebic iron range.<sup>31</sup> Mining companies swarmed to the Wisconsin-Michigan area and greatly profited not only the state, but also the Spiritualist cause. Pratt sold his bonds for \$125,000—a very large sum of money at the time that rendered him extremely wealthy.<sup>32</sup> On his word, Pratt used a large sum of his money to build a large, brick, three story house that was to be used for Spiritualist purposes. In 1889 Pratt and his first wife moved from their farmhouse in the country, into their newly built, thirty thousand dollar house of Spiritualism, in the center of Whitewater.<sup>33</sup>

The house was one of the nicest in the city during the time and its size and location would not be easily un-noticed by passersby. Hence, the community was bound to talk behind closed and open doors about the new addition to the downtown area. When the \$30,000 mansion was built, some community members naturally thought Pratt was going a little crazy building such a large structure for purposes yet unknown. Pratt himself was quoted saying: "It will be used in the interests of Spiritualism," but his exact purposes were still undeclared.<sup>34</sup> For

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<sup>31</sup> Fred L. Holmes. *Badger Saints and Sinners*. (E.M. Hale and Co., 1939), 372.

<sup>32</sup> "The Remarkable Story of the Morris Pratt Institute." *Whitewater Register* (WI) 10 October, 1918: pg 2.

<sup>33</sup> Clara L. Stewert, "Morris Pratt: and officers and building of the Morris Pratt Institute," *The Sunflower* (Lily Dale, NY). 1 May, 1902.

<sup>34</sup> Fred L. Holmes. *Badger Saints and Sinners*. (E.M. Hale and Co., 1939), 373.

a period of time, the building was originally referred to as “Science Hall” and it was used as a place for Spiritualist lectures and séances.<sup>35</sup> Although it was named “Science Hall” the community often, jokingly, referred to the building as “Pratt’s Folly”; a nickname that would continue throughout its existence. While unknown during its immediate construction that it was to eventually become a school, Pratt’s desired intentions would be to formally facilitate Spiritual education.

Pratt did receive a significant amount of criticism from the community surrounding the construction of the building. Most of the original ridicule, and the nick-naming of “Pratt’s Folly” evolved from the fact that a hardworking farmer had ironically struck it rich and had hastily spent his earnings on a ridiculously large house—claiming he was following advice from the spirit world. This, coupled with the fact that Pratt had lofty intentions, to say the least, as to what the actual purpose of the building was for, only added fuel to the fire of mockery. The immediate building of large house for “Spiritualist” purposes and the large amount of money that was cast into the project may have had people thinking that Pratt had gone senile in his old age. Even the bank was weary of Pratt. In a newspaper article it was stated that the “bankers refused to allow him to draw out \$30,000 to buy a “gold brick.”<sup>36</sup> Obviously, the bankers couldn’t refuse to hand Pratt his money forever, and had no choice but to supply him with it. But even after the construction of the house, Pratt continued to be hassled. An article written in the *History of Whitewater*, by Dale Reich reads that “...Pratt found himself paying large taxes on his building during its early years of existence.”<sup>37</sup> However, the financial discrimination on

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<sup>35</sup> Katie Kuhn. First Spiritualist School Born Here.” *Royal Purple* (UWW). 7 November, 1972: pg 1.

<sup>36</sup> Donald C. Bolles, “Spirit Mysteries Taught in Unique Wisconsin School.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* (WI). 6 March, 1921.

<sup>37</sup> Dale Reich, *A History of Whitewater*. (April, 1974): 14.

the Pratt's home did not last long, and eventually with donations and endowments, the school was able to run steadily and with little threat of monetary issues until the mid 1920's.

Initial ridicule died down from the community, largely impart to Pratt's respectable standing and good nature. Although Pratt did find himself in debates with clergy men and non-believers who openly objected to his faith, his neighbors often regarded him as a kind hearted man. In an historical article about Walworth and Jefferson Counties Morris Pratt and his wife were cited as being:

...kind, charitable, and benevolent people, devoted to the best interests of humanity. The honesty of purpose and strict integrity of Mr. Pratt are above question, and a well-spent life has won for him the confidence and respect of all. He is numbered among the valued citizens of Walworth County, and from an early days has not only witnessed the growth and development of this region, but in all possible ways has aided in its advancement and up building, doing all in his power for the promotion of its best interests.<sup>38</sup>

The community may have laughed at Pratt's original intentions of building a Spiritualist science hall, but due his humanitarian behavior and outlook on life, his lived things down with his neighbors. So much that it was recorded that most of his neighbors were ashamed of the

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<sup>38</sup> *Portrait and Biographical Record of Walworth and Jefferson Counties, Wisconsin. Lake City Publishing Co. Chicago. 1894.*



attacks that they made on "one whom they were incapable of comprehending."<sup>39</sup> The major basis of belief that the religion preached was a tolerance of all people and beliefs.

After the location served for a number of years as a Spiritualist temple and gathering place, Pratt decided to dedicate the structure to the National Spiritualist Association of the United States for them to use as an education center. The N.S.A was, however, hesitant and felt as if they were not financially prepared to jump on such a daunting task-- since the organization was only eight years old at the time.<sup>40</sup> Pratt, unwilling to let his dream falter, contacted an important Spiritual leader, Moses Hull, who agreed to help Pratt's mission. Hull traveled the country in attempts to raise enough money to fund the project. He continually referred to making Whitewater the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism."<sup>41</sup> And within ten months, three thousand dollars worth of improvements were made to the building-- putting it in immediate condition for use.<sup>42</sup>

The final reconstructions, including dormitories, had the building prepared for a boarding school. With the third floor and part of the second used for dormitories, twenty private rooms were furnished and supposedly had enough housing for fifty students.<sup>43</sup> Rooms could be rented as singles or doubles, depending on preference. The second floor also housed the chapel for religious service that had enough seating for 300 people arranged in stadium

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<sup>39</sup> Clara L. Stewert, "Morris Pratt: and officers and building of the Morris Pratt Institute," *The Sunflower* (Lily Dale, NY). 1 May, 1902.

<sup>40</sup> Morris Pratt Institute, "History of Morris Pratt Institute," <http://www.morrispratt.org/> (accessed September 20, 2009).

<sup>41</sup> "Temple Stood on Center St.: Pratt made Whitewater a center of Spiritualism." *Whitewater Register* (WI). 15 June, 1972: pg. 9.

<sup>42</sup> *Walworth County Trade Review*; a business trade review of towns and villages in Walworth County, Wisconsin, (March, 1917), pg 1.

<sup>43</sup> "Site of Old Whitewater Institute Bought for New Telephone Exchange." *Janesville Daily Gazette* (WI). 18 September, 1958, pg 4.

style: a semi-circle that ascended upwards towards the back of the room.<sup>44</sup> The third floor also housed a special, all white room, with emblems on the wall that was used for private séances and communication with spirits. In the early years, only dedicated Spiritualists were allowed to enter the room.<sup>45</sup> The first floor housed the front office, reception, and reading rooms, cloak rooms, along with main and private classrooms. The basement housed the cafeteria type kitchen along with the laundry equipment for student use.<sup>46</sup> An article in the *Walworth Country Trade* noted: "...bring one of the best equipped institutions of learning in the state and the only one of its kind in the whole United States. Probably no school building in the state has more attractive furnishings or is more conveniently arranged."<sup>47</sup> Whitewater housed supposedly the only school for Spiritualism in the entire world. Not only did this make Whitewater a special location, but the fact that when it was first built, it was also, allegedly, one of the nicest schools in the state.

The Morris Pratt Institute was officially recognized by the state in 1901 when Pratt filed a petition for incorporation.<sup>48</sup> Shortly before his death in 1902, he deeded the school to seven well known Spiritualists, one being Moses Hull himself who was to be the first President of the institute. The others were as follows: A.J Weaver, Wm. H. Rogers, John C. Bump, Clara Stewart,

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<sup>44</sup> *Walworth County Trade Review*; a business trade review of towns and villages in Walworth County, Wisconsin, (March, 1917), pg 2.

<sup>45</sup> Dale Reich, *A History of Whitewater*. April, 1974, pg 14.

<sup>46</sup> *Walworth County Trade Review*; a business trade review of towns and villages in Walworth County, Wisconsin, (March, 1917), pg 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Walworth County Trade Review*; a business trade review of towns and villages in Walworth County, Wisconsin, (March, 1917), pg 2.

<sup>48</sup> Morris Pratt Institute, "History of Morris Pratt Institute," <http://www.morrispratt.org/> (accessed September 20, 2009).

Theodore Mayer, and Alonzo Thompson.<sup>49</sup> Pratt did not survive long enough to see the opening day of the school; however he lived long enough to know that his dream would prevail. The school officially opened on September 29, 1903.<sup>50</sup>

The school was open for enrollment to anyone seeking spiritual guidance or to develop their spiritual gifts. However, one did not even have to be a Spiritualist to attend. The only actual requirements of the school were that all students had to be at least fifteen and “must invariably possess a good moral character.”<sup>51</sup> The school believed that in order to reach people on the spiritual plane, one must be finely tuned within themselves to do so. They also believed that human beings controlled their own happiness—no one else, or other spiritual being, such as God, could be at fault.<sup>52</sup> In order to guide students the prohibition of alcohol, tobacco, vulgarity, profanity, opium, or other drugs was enforced.<sup>53</sup> The school tended to follow and support the social issues of the time. In fact, around the nation, many people who declared themselves devote Spiritualists, also happened to be involved in many social movements. The Morris Pratt Institute itself had open lectures for these movements in its temple; one particularly noted was a newspaper ad in *Whitewater Register* for a public lecture on the need for temperance.<sup>54</sup> The irony of this incident is the fact that during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century many people blamed Spiritualism for encouraging progressive and radical ideas that some saw as detrimental to traditional values. However, with regards to temperance,

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<sup>49</sup> Morris Pratt Institute. *Centennial Book of Modern Spiritualism in America*. Chicago: The Association, 1948, 127.

<sup>50</sup> Morris Pratt Institute, “History of Morris Pratt Institute,” <http://www.morrispratt.org/> (accessed September 20, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> *Walworth County Trade Review*; a business trade review of towns and villages in Walworth County, Wisconsin, (March, 1917), pg 2.

<sup>52</sup> Morris Pratt Institute Lesson 24: *Our Principles*. Transcript in the hand of Melvina Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

<sup>53</sup> Mary Lou Niesen, “‘Spooks Temple’, Ghost of Past to End.” *Royal Purple* (UWW). 4 May, 1942.

<sup>54</sup> “Whitewater News.” *Janesville Daily Gazette* (WI). 7 December, 1917.

Spiritualists took a conservative stance. The educators, students, and staff of the institution were concerned with the health of humanity and the need for students to be clear in mind in order to have "...perfect coordination of the faculties of body, mind, and soul; and a deep accurate knowledge of true religion—Spiritualism."<sup>55</sup>

Community members, even if they rejected Spiritual beliefs, appreciated the kindness and open-mindedness of the institution's leaders and the high integrity they held of their students. Community members were known to frequently attend lectures and services held by famous Spiritualists of the times every Sunday nights at 7:30.<sup>56</sup> The services were listed under "Church notices" of the *Whitewater Register*.<sup>57</sup> Thus, confirming that the community eventually accepted the institution as a part of their culture and recognized the school as a formal religious institution.

Also located in Whitewater during the lifetime of the school, was another popular learning facility that had its own influence on the school. The State Teachers College, formerly known as the Normal School, was in the area prior to the twentieth century (1868); therefore prior to the construction of the Morris Pratt Institute. Although not much is documented, it has been written in newspapers that students would frequent the Sunday night services or séances as a form of entertainment and it was even noted as a favorite date spot.<sup>58</sup> Students would walk downtown with groups of friends to attend séances if for nothing more, to experience the unique culture and new ideas that the school offered. Many students of that time discarded

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<sup>55</sup> Morris Pratt Institute. *Centennial Book of Modern Spiritualism in America*. (Chicago: The Association, 1948) 127.

<sup>56</sup> Fred L. Holmes. *Badger Saints and Sinners*. (E. M. Hale and Co., 1939), 375.

<sup>57</sup> Dale Reich, *A History of Whitewater*. April, 1974, 14.

<sup>58</sup> Sandra Halpin, "Whitewater had 'psychic college.'" *Walworth County Week (WI)*. 17 March, 1991.

calling the institute "Pratt's Folly", and replaced it with the "Spook House." However, it is noted that more students probably attended these Sunday evening séances compared to gatherings in other local churches.<sup>59</sup> The school added an element of culture to the city that many community members, even if they were non-believers, appreciated. It was probably out of pure curiosity that many of the community members and students of the State College attended the Sunday night gatherings, but they non-the-less continued to endorse their support of the institution by their visitations. Not only was the institute a local interest, but the establishment drew students from all over the United States and even a select handful from abroad. The institute was presumably known "from Australia to London."<sup>60</sup> The popular attention which was given to it suggests that the Morris Pratt Institute greatly benefited the community and downtown businesses by drawing crowds and students from all over the state, nation, and world.

Enrollment numbers were small to begin with, but grew momentarily between 1915 and 1920. It is estimated that enrollment reached its peak during this period with a total of forty-five students attending.<sup>61</sup> Enrollments fluctuated with the advent of World War I but the institute was hopeful moving into the 20's. The 1920's was a prosperous time for the nation and the advances in technology, entertainment, speak easies and night life excited the youth of the age.<sup>62</sup> This environment fostered an energetic and rebellious decade of youth and their exposure to Spiritualism revolved around fraudulent entertainment of fortune tellers and

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<sup>59</sup> Fred L. Holmes. *Badger Saints and Sinners*. (E.M. Hale and Co., 1939), 375.

<sup>60</sup> Constance Burnham, "Wisconsin college founded by spirits." *The Sentinel Magazine*. 25, May, 1924.

<sup>61</sup> Fred L. Holmes. *Badger Saints and Sinners*. (E.M. Hale and Co., 1939), 374.

<sup>62</sup> "Temple Stood on Center St.: Pratt made Whitewater a center of Spiritualism." *Whitewater Register* (WI). 15 June, 1972: pg 9.

magicians.<sup>63</sup> By popularity, it was directed towards an abundance of entertainment purposes—acts that true Spiritualists continuously denied as part of their beliefs. Never the less, the school received a lot of public recognition during this period.<sup>64</sup> Many of students during this era who were requesting information on the Morris Pratt institute were adults throughout the United States; they wanted to become more in-tune with their spiritual gifts that they had claimed to have experienced since young ages. And a large amount of requests were from people who heard of the school through an ad in the popular magazine, “The National Spiritualist.”<sup>65</sup>

Many prospecting students believed that they had high potential to make connections with the spiritual world, but looked for more clarification and guidance within the school to help define their abilities. One wrote “I always believed spiritual work could be done but also believed in the worlds of Satan. Now as I am older and read everything I get, it appears to me.—I wonder—I long for truth, wisdom & how to use it.”<sup>66</sup> Other interested students proclaimed to have psychic tendencies or healing powers. For example, one wrote: “My hands were placed on the sick, and instantly they were made whole, no matter if the doctors were just ready to operate. “Fire” was taken out in a moment of time and the skin made to be in normal condition.”<sup>67</sup> These few examples are evidence of the dedication and inspiration that

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<sup>63</sup> “Spiritualism in Wisconsin in the Nineteenth Century.” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 59, no.1 (Autumn, 1975): pg. 12.

<sup>64</sup> Secretary of Morris Pratt Institute, to Miss. Lucy T. Merle, 18 February 1930. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

<sup>65</sup> Mrs. Mary Brown, to Morris Pratt Institute, 1930. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

<sup>66</sup> Mrs. H. Potter, to Morris Pratt Institute, 19 April 1930. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

<sup>67</sup> Mrs. Margaret Mac Donald, to Morris Pratt Institute, 4 October 1929. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

students had to finding the truth of Spiritualism. The school even warned that the purpose of the institution was not to “make mediums; it only seeks to provide the most favorable conditions for developing natural psychic gifts.”<sup>68</sup> The Spiritualists of the institution believed that everyone already possessed the natural talent of psychic gifts, but it was in learning how to attune oneself to the vibrations of life that gives them the ability to become a medium. They believed that all life is motion and vibration, and that the vibrations of the spiritual realm are higher, finer, and more rapid than those of the physical world. A medium is born when he/she can attune oneself to the highest level to achieve harmony with the spiritual world in order to hear the vibrations.<sup>69</sup>

This being said, it gives a moment to discuss enrollment numbers in comparison to regular college educations. Although the school fare was relatively cheap-- only fifty dollars per year, five dollars per week for board, and rooms ranging from a dollar fifty to three and half dollars per week in 1930, students had to show a great dedication to the cause.<sup>70</sup> Students at the Morris Pratt Institute had to be dedicated cognitively, timely, and financially to the Spiritualist cause. Although diplomas were given, the original diplomas were not recognized by other learning institutions. However, the administration recognized this problem and in a few Presidential reports it was hinted that more effort needs to be put forth to make diplomas and grades transferable. Another report suggested that the education received be transferable to other fields of work or else a graduate’s performance would reflect poorly upon the institution:

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<sup>68</sup> John G. Gregory, *Southeast Wisconsin: Old Milwaukee County vol. II.* (Chicago: S.J Clarke Publishing Co., 1932), 776.

<sup>69</sup> Fred L. Holmes. *Badger Saints and Sinners.* (E.M. Hale and Co., 1939), 377.

<sup>70</sup> Secretary of Morris Pratt Institute, to Mr. Herman, 15 February 1930. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

The result of these principles applied are the success or failure of the student graduating from the institution. If the student is apt and has a background of moderate qualities making him a success with his additional qualities then the institution is reflected in that success. If a failure, it is likewise reflected...<sup>71</sup>

The administration was worried that if diplomas would not be recognized for any other purposes than Spiritualism, what would prompt students make such a large investment in the college? Especially in the Whitewater area, a lot more attention would draw students towards the State College with more promises of a dependable degree. This argument could account for the fact that many of the letters requesting information during the late 20's were from middle aged people. However in the 1930's, a measure was finally taken so that credits could be transferable<sup>72</sup>. Sadly, it was a bit too late, since the school was officially forced to close a few years later.

Another problem that the school faced that led to low enrollment numbers was the limited amount of work provided in the area. As already stated, tuition and other costs were fairly cheap, but students still needed an income to supplement these costs. Sadly, since the school was located in a small town, jobs were scarce to come by. Many of the letters that were addressed to the Morris Pratt Institute from interested students, directly asked about the working possibilities in the area. Whitewater, however, was a small city in relation to its surrounding areas of Madison and Milwaukee. A large portion of the population was due to the

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<sup>71</sup> Charles R. Smith, to The Officers and Members of the Morris Pratt Institute Association, 21 May, 1931. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

<sup>72</sup> "Spiritualist School Opens." *Altoona Mirror* (PA). 4 October, 1935.



State Teachers College and those students proved to be at the heart of competition for work.

In a letter to a student inquiring about the working possibilities in the area, the secretary of the Morris Pratt Institute, Marvinna Hostak, replied:

...but I regret sincerely that Whitewater is a small school town and the State College is located there and most of the few places that are open for students are quickly "grabbed" by the college boys and girls. Each year we are hoping some new industries might come there so that our students may have a chance.<sup>73</sup>

The lack of industry in Whitewater proved to be a hindrance to prospecting students. Also worth mentioning is the competition for work between the State College students and those from the Morris Pratt Institute that is shown through the statement above. It would be plausible evidence to suggest prejudice in the community towards the institute when it came to hiring opportunities. However, the institution did its best to try to allow the most desirable students entrance-- even if that meant that they would have to work off their board and room. In another letter from the secretary of the institute to a prospecting student was written,

We have not much work to offer students to offer complete expenses but we have to have someone wash dishes and wait on tables, for which board is given and occasionally room rent if other minor duties are thrown in. We also have to have someone to clear the halls and stairs but this would not meet your entire expense.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Secretary of Morris Pratt Institute, to Mrs. Jane Baker, 19 August 1930. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

<sup>74</sup> Secretary of Morris Pratt Institute, to Mr. Heath, 6 August 1931. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

However, by the time this letter was written in 1931, the institute was barely keeping itself afloat. The Great Depression had hit the nation hard, and the school felt the effects. Economically, students were not able to afford schooling, board, and rent costs without dependable incomes or jobs. The institute itself was facing financial troubles due to past investments that had to be charged as losses.<sup>75</sup> Other financial losses included the foreclosure of property mortgages elsewhere that "...will no doubt bring but half or less than half the appraised value."<sup>76</sup> The school had been financially hit hard and the inability of access to student jobs created a tremendous problem-- one that the school could no longer afford. It was even mentioned in the Presidents annual report of 1930 that the school was "depleting its finances rapidly and that the cost per student is out of reason with the receipts." The report also mentioned stricter policies in general, including setting standards for the admission of students depending on age, education level, and importantly to "interest prospecting student to attend especially the student who is self supporting."<sup>77</sup> Costs to upkeep the building and the general standard of living increase meant that tuition prices needed to have been raised during the institute's lifetime to balance its wallet. However, since its opening in 1903, costs of tuition and board barely changed at all. The Great Depression was a hard hit for the country, and couldn't have come at a worse time for the institution. Therefore, with a lack of enrollment

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<sup>75</sup> Mr. Smith President of Morris Pratt Institute, to The Officers and Members of the Morris Pratt Institute Association, 1929. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

<sup>76</sup> Secretary of Morris Pratt Institute, to Mr. Heath, 6 August 1931. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

<sup>77</sup> Charles R. Smith, to The Officers and Members of the Morris Pratt Institute Association, 21 May, 1931. Transcript in the hand of Melvina E. Hostak, special collections, HAL Library, University of Wisconsin Whitewater, Wisconsin.

and funds, the school was forced to shut down in 1932<sup>78</sup>. The school reopened for a short period after that in 1935 and had enrollment "operating on a modest scale."<sup>79</sup> However, the years of prosperity were long gone for the institute, and due to the small size of the community and lack of jobs for students, the school building in Whitewater was closed in 1938 and sold in 1947.<sup>80</sup> However, it wasn't the official end of the Morris Pratt Institute; the school bought a tract of land in Milwaukee during the same year, and a more modern learning facility was built that still exists today.<sup>81</sup>

After the closure of the school, the old mansion was sold frequently, but sadly not much was made of it. The building was not in prime condition by the time the school closed, as described in the annual Presidential meetings in the 1930's that upkeeps and repairs were often noted in need. The selling of Pratt's dream probably had him shaking in his boots in the spiritual world, because through his will he forbade to ever have it sold. However, through loopholes, it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Bigus of Chicago who transformed the building into a healing home for aged spiritualists. After about 14 years, the building was sold again to George Fowler and he converted it to be used as girl dormitories for students at the State College.<sup>82</sup> For reasons unknown, the dormitory did not last long and Leo Perry was the last purchaser of the building; in attempts to remodel the old house into offices, he tore off the third floor. According to a local newspaper, the building became an idle "eye soar" for the community, and

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<sup>78</sup> "Site of Old Whitewater Institute Bought for New Telephone Exchange." *Janesville Daily Gazette* (WI). 18 September, 1958.

<sup>79</sup> "Fortune Made on Ore in U.P. Helps Spiritualists." *Daily Globe* (Ironwood, MI). 28 October, 1935.

<sup>80</sup> "Temple Stood on Center St.: Pratt made Whitewater a center of Spiritualism." *Whitewater Register* (WI). 15 June, 1972: pg 9.

<sup>81</sup> Morris Pratt Institute. *Centennial Book of Modern Spiritualism in America*. Chicago: The Association, 1948, 127.

<sup>82</sup> "Site of Old Whitewater Institute Bought for New Telephone Exchange." *Janesville Daily Gazette* (WI). 18 September, 1958: pg 4.

neighbors approved of its complete destruction.<sup>83</sup> Perry sold the lot to the local telephone building and in 1961 the mansion was leveled and the telephone company which replaced the school still exists there today.

Society and the community had played a role to shape the institutes life in Whitewater and the Morris Pratt Institute played a similar role in shaping the community. The school's principles of tolerance and acceptance slowly rubbed off on the community. Especially with the growth of the Normal School, Whitewater flourished as a place of higher learning where important values were nourished. As mentioned, community members and State college students embraced the Morris Pratt Institute by attending weekly services and the community seemed to accept the institute and its culture—even if they didn't take the beliefs seriously. The institute's location brought a lot of new culture and business to the core of the town. However, many factors within the community also led to its fall. The most important being that jobs were scarce, and they were first offered to the State College students. This bias could contend with many hypotheses, but an important one being that although the community welcomed the school and its business, they were not complete believers in actual Spiritual work. Many of the original Spiritualists in the area were very old when the school was constructed, and therefore did not live long enough to see the school's end. The movement was slowing down, and in a small town that did not have a large group of believers to begin with, its close support network was practically non-existent. The location in such a small town

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<sup>83</sup> "Site of Old Whitewater Institute Bought for New Telephone Exchange." *Janesville Daily Gazette* (WI). 18 September, 1958: pg 4.

made it difficult for the institute to flourish economically and therefore it moved to the much larger city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The once prestigious and beautiful learning institute surrounded by the elegance of elm trees, is not remembered by many. The belief in Spiritualism, as learned, was not completely ironic of the time and the movement itself was shaped by important political, economic, and social events during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a unique addition to the small, farming town of Whitewater. Due to the nationwide popularity of Spiritualism, it came to be of existence. Wars, financial highs and lows, and social issues such as temperance and equality had different impacts on the movement which were reflected in the school through its criticism, enrollment, community involvement, and its eventual closure. The State School, now the University of Whitewater Wisconsin, continues to pass on witch and ghost stories that have evolved over time. However, most of the evidence used is wrong and they would be surprised to find out that séances bringing back the dead were happening through a prestigious learning institute based on science and the strong desire for religious reassurance during the time period. In fact, this may be a ghost story, but a ghost story that Morris Pratt so firmly believed in that he started the first Spiritualist College in the United States, and possibly the world in 1903, in the little town of Whitewater, Wisconsin.

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WALWORTH COUNTY

775

buildings were replaced, and have since been much enlarged, while many additions have been completed. The group now includes an administration building, a schoolhouse, a chapel, a dining hall, a dormitory and a shop. The average attendance is between two and three hundred.

The Northwestern Military Academy was moved from Highland Park, Illinois, to Lake Geneva, in 1911. The managers of the school purchased forty acres on the south shore, formerly owned by the Kaye family, and for many years a popular amusement park. Major R. Davidson and one hundred of his pupils held Memorial Day services there in May of that year. All of the soldier organizations of the county were invited to be present and the program included speeches by the commandant and parade drill by the boys. Buildings were erected in 1912, and the school has been maintained on a high plane of efficiency since that time, ranking with the leading military training schools of the country.

No history of education in Walworth County would be complete without an account of the Morris Pratt Institute at Whitewater. In view of the fact that no former history contains any mention of it, it seems fitting that the circumstances leading to its establishment, and its aims and accomplishments be given a place in this record.

About 1885 there lived in Whitewater a young man by the name of Morris Pratt. Though of more than average intelligence, he was entirely without education and followed the humble calling of a ditch digger. He was of a very religious character and a firm believer in the teachings of spiritualism, which had many adherents in the city at that time. One of the mediums who came to hold seances with this group was Mrs. Mary Hayes, of Madison, a daughter of Chief Justice Lyon. During one of her visits, she came, so it was averred, under the control of an old German professor, who had lived and died in northern Wisconsin thirty years before. Morris Pratt asked the professor for help in bettering himself financially. The answer was a question, "Do you want money for yourself, or for the good of humanity?" He replied that if he had money he would use it to help the world to know more about spiritualism. The control told him that if he would follow his directions, he would gain a fortune. Pratt was directed to a certain location in the Gogebic range, in northern Wisconsin, where rich deposits of mineral were to be found.

GREGORY, JOHN G. SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN, OLD MILWAUKEE COUNTY, Vol. II

He located the spot in an unsettled region, filed a claim and began to dig. In a short time a rich vein of iron was uncovered, and as the news of the find spread, prospectors flocked to the region. Mr. Pratt was offered \$50,000 for his claim, but on the advice of Mrs. Hayes, refused. A second offer of \$100,000, she told him to accept. He returned to Whitewater, and put half of his fortune into a building for the use of the Spiritualist Society. The building was of three stories, built of brick, and was called by scoffing neighbors, "Pratt's Folly."

Mr. Pratt believed that a school should be provided where religious prejudices and misconceptions of spiritualism could be banished. To this end he deeded the building and land to seven well-known spiritualists, as trustees, to establish a school. Money was provided to equip the building and the Institute was dedicated in 1902.

The first president was Moses Hull; the present one is Charles R. Smith. Vice President Thomas Grimshaw is the resident director. The school is under the authority of the national body, the Spiritualists of America, and is the only school of its kind in the world.

The growth was slow, because of the prevalent idea that mediums needed no knowledge or training. The unseen intelligences which control them, being all-knowing and all-powerful, it was argued, preparation for the work of a medium was unnecessary. That idea has been overcome, and the last ten years have seen a marked increase in interest and attendance.

From time to time, bequests have been made to the institute, which have provided an ample endowment, and the future of the school is assured. While special attention is given to developing mediumship, students are warned that the school does not make mediums, it only seeks to provide the most favorable conditions for developing natural psychic gifts.

The group of people connected with this school have the respect of the community. They are known as exemplary citizens, broad-minded and tolerant, while their honesty and sincerity is unquestioned.

Mr. Beckwith, in his earlier record of the county, observes that "neither son nor daughter of these seventeen towns has gained great distinction in literature or other form of art," which is true in a literal sense, but if the word "great," were omitted it would be far too sweeping.

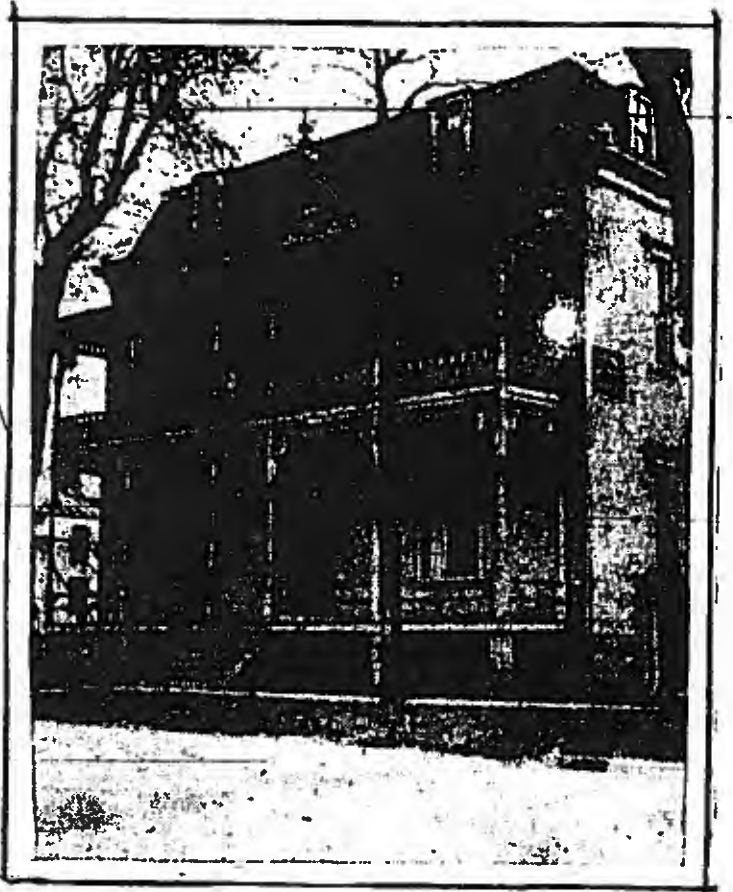
The early writers of the county may not have been artists

# A Wisconsin College Founded by "Spirits"



THE MEDIUM SAID "GREAT WEALTH AWAITS YOU IN THE GOGEBIC RANGE"

HE TAKES HER  
ADVICE AND STRIKES  
IRON DEPOSITS OF  
UNTOLD WEALTH



### The Strange Story of "Pratt's Folly" at Whitewater, the Only Spiritualist School in the Country, and How It Was Established by a Grateful Man Who Found Great Wealth at the Direction of Unseen Hands From the World Beyond.

By CONSTANCE BURNHAM

**D**OES the human mind, in rare flashes of more than ordinary vision, peer down the misty avenues of the future and sight truths which are not to be revealed in their entirety for hundreds of years?

Have there been persons in every age who, like Joan of Arc, have heard voices unheard by men and been led by a vision which was invisible to the rest of the world?

Nearly half a century before Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Conan Doyle electrified the scientific world by asserting the reality of spiritism, a Wisconsin man, sitting in a spiritualist seance, made a vow which led to the establishment in Wisconsin of the first permanent institution for spiritualism in the world.

The older residents of the state will recall the excitement that swept through theological circles when it became known that Morris Pratt of Whitewater had "taken up" spiritualism, that he had received a message in a seance, and that he was going to erect a building for the cause. "For the cause?" sneered one orthodox divine to another. "More likely for the devil himself."

Nor were the sneers confined to the ranks of an enraged clergy who viewed spiritualism as the favorite stamping ground of the horned fiend. For the white haired citizens of Whitewater will tell you today that there was hardly a person in that town who did not rebuke Mr. Pratt when he laid the foundation for the large three story structure that now houses a school which has become known from Australia to London.

"PRATT'S FOLLY," they called it in those days and Pratt's Folly it seemed likely to remain, for Mr. Pratt admitted that he himself did not know exactly what use the spirit control would designate for the building. But he built it large and spacious, and despite the jeers of his fellow townsmen, declared serenely that good use would be found for his gift. It was not until years later, in 1902, that he gave the deed of the property to seven well known spiritualists to act as a board of trustees for a spiritualist school.

Today, if curiosity prompts you to enter



Upper right—The gray facade of Morris Pratt Institute, Whitewater. Lower left—A photograph of Morris Pratt taken some years before his death. Lower right—Prof. A. J. Weaver, now 93 years of age, principal emeritus of the institute.

the quiet building placed in a setting of tall elms, a soft voiced woman with wide blue eyes will tell you that the leading psychologists and scientists of the world admit the validity of spirit communication, and that the time is coming when the whole world may beat a footpath to the door of all such schools as the Morris Pratt Institute. Later you learn that she is Miss Alice Hughes, who has spent years in studying the laws of clairvoyance, mediumship and psychic phenomena.

She pauses for a moment, while her blue eyes seem lost in distances beyond human ken. Then she shakes off her mood of absorption, explains that she is herself a medium and that her work at the institute consists in interpreting the underlying laws of mediumship to the students who come there. In the next breath she hurries on to assure you that when Morris Pratt provided for a school of spiritualism he was laying the foundations for a movement that will grow and develop until it opens up new spiritual vistas for the entire race.

And you wonder, as the shadows of late afternoon creep through the long corridor, whether or not she is right in proclaiming spiritualism as the religion which will give wings to the human soul. As for Morris Pratt, was he a fanatic deluded by the tricks of a clever medium, or a being guided by superior spirit knowledge?

But a word about the incident that led Morris Pratt to found the school, for it is as full of mystery and romance as a tale of the orient. Imagine the scene for yourself—a group of eager men and women



HE SELLS HIS MINE FOR A FABULOUS SUM

gathered about a medium in a dimly lighted room. Morris Pratt, perhaps more eager than the others, declared that if he prospered financially he would give liberally to the cause. Immediately, so the story goes, the control spoke through the medium and advised him to buy a certain tract of land in the Gogebic mountains where he was certain to find iron ore.

**W**ITH all possible haste he purchased the land, but found no ore. So he returned to the medium in despair, complaining that he had been misguided. Once more the control spoke through the medium and told him that if he went a second time and followed directions he would find the coveted wealth. And on his second trip Morris Pratt found rich deposits of iron, sold his land for a fabulous sum and retired in wealth.

It is an unique tale which has become more deeply shrouded in mystery with the passing of time. But as you talk with the principal, H. F. Record, you discover that the institute is still dominated by the same singleness of purpose and the same intensity of faith which must have characterized its founder. Like a presiding genius, Prof. A. J. Weaver, the principal emeritus of the school, moves through the rooms from time to time. Although he is 93 years of age, he maintains an active interest in the institute and gives counsel in the interpretation of psychic laws.

There are two departments, one covering the academic curriculum of the public schools, and the other devoted to psychic research, under the direction of Miss Hughes.

"THOUSANDS of men and women are having psychic experiences every day," she observed thoughtfully. "Thousands upon thousands. Many of them are dismayed at the revelation of their hidden powers for they do not know how to use or guide this marvelous gift of sensitiveness which has been imparted to them. What we want to teach them is that mediumship and psychic sensitiveness are natural—compatible both with spiritual and natural laws."

Miss Hughes explains that all life is motion and vibration, and that the vibrations of the spiritual realm are not only more rapid, but also higher and finer, than those of the physical. The medium, then, is a person who can hold himself to the higher level and achieve such harmony with the spirit world that he catches the higher vibrations. In the case of trance control which is in reality a form of inspiration, the spirit stands back of the medium and speaks through him.

Although mediumship necessitates an understanding of the almost inscrutable manifestations of soul and spirit, the subject is approached from a scientific point of view, according to Miss Hughes. The study of

Continued on Page Eighteen.

## A Wisconsin College Founded By "Spirits"

Continued From Page Three.

psychology and an understanding of the nervous system and the operation of the human mind form the basis of the course, for it is her theory that the mind is the common means of communication between departed spirits and their friends on earth.

Should you ask her if she believes as firmly in the spirit world as in the material world about her, she will explain with restrained fervor that phenomena of the spirit world are as convincing as the demonstrated facts of science. The secret lies in developing sensitiveness to spirit vibrations.

QUITE suddenly you are conscious that darkness has descended and that you have lingered too long to probe the mysteries of the spirit world. And as you hurry out upon the drowsy street, you realize that you have come away as you entered—with an unanswered question upon your lips, illusion or reality? Time alone holds the answer.

# "Spook Temple", Ghost of Past to End Morris Pratt Institute, Local Landmark, to be Replaced By Tentatively Planned Hospital

By Mary Lou Niesen

In the annals of the past, Whitewater has possessed the only school of its kind in the whole world . . . the Morris Pratt Institute, the first fully equipped institution of learning established under the auspices of Spiritualism. Since the formation of tentative plans to establish a city hospital in the familiar old building, W.S.T.C. wonders . . . will this be the passing of the unique local landmark?

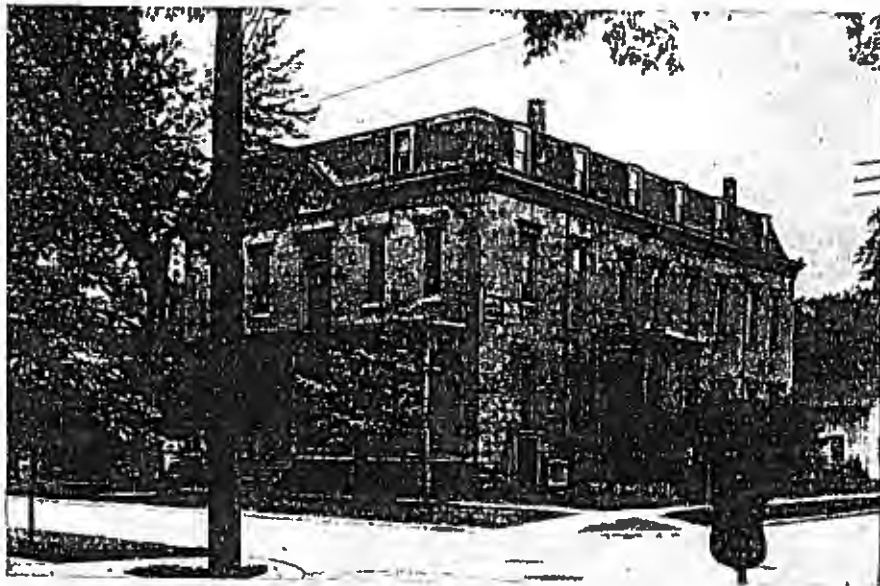
As a memento of his gratitude for direction which he believed came from invisible intelligences, Morris Pratt, a resident of Whitewater, erected the building at Center and Third streets in 1888. The entire \$65,000 structure contained the latest mod-

authority.

4. No discrimination caused by one's ideas.

5. Avoidance of all sectarian ruts.

Basically, the idea of the school was that while spiritualist workers increase the psychic power they possess to the highest degree, they also cultivate their mental and moral powers by acquiring literary tastes and noble aspiration expressed in love of books, nature, truth, and progress. The specialty of the "Spook Temple" was instruction in religion pertaining to Spiritualism. It claims that a sensitive could exercise his psychic powers openly and unexposed to sneers, slight, and injury to his social standing. Mediumship was



MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE

ern conveniences; steam heat, electricity and the improved Belgian lamps, closets, hot and cold water, and baths. The Institute consisted of accommodations for thirty students, a kitchen, dining room, reception room, laundry, classrooms, a church auditorium, and the Psychic room. The latter, placed in a remote corner of the third floor, was never occupied or used for anything except seances. Its care was provided by a spirit band which cleansed the whole room from psychic matter and injurious magnetisms to keep it sweet, pure, and desirable for sittings.

### Spiritual Principles

According to Mr. Pratt's convictions, there should be a school, under the auspices of Spiritualism, which should be free from religious prejudices and misconceptions. To him, the principles in true education should lead to making students original thinkers. Accordingly, the principles of the school were:

1. Maintenance of the individuality of each student.
2. Freedom of thought and expression.
3. Reason and experience the highest

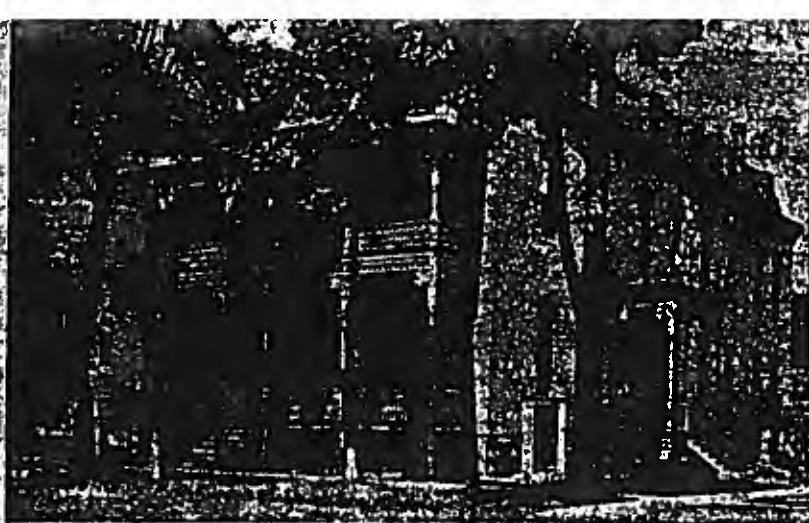
popular here; prized as "a pearl of great value" its development was encouraged and assisted.

Surprisingly so, the school was not exclusively for mediums or Spiritualists. Open to all who desired self improvement and as good an education as could be given in two years, the Institute offered to equip its students with training in progressive thought. All people entering were obliged to "cast off" any enslaving habits of "vulgarity, profanity, strong drink, tobacco, opium, or other injurious drugs."

### Active Three Years Ago

Among the cultural recreational opportunities offered were physical and voice culture, oratory, music and Saturday evening gatherings, where dancing, laughter, marching, frolic and fun "drove away all the weariness from the hard week's work, and all the despondency and inharmony which may exist in the mind."

Until three years ago, the Institute was active, but lack of students necessitated its closing. Although for the duration, the new hospital may not be an actual reality, the future passing of the old Institute is inevitable.



"The College house is a building of many names. November 14, 1954

## The Old School for 'Spirits'

At Whitewater, Wis., the Morris Pratt Institute, Built in Gratitude for a Medium's Advice, Now Faces Dark Future

AS the years roll past, the old brick house has not accepted her age gracefully but stands gaunt and splinterish, with a bleak air of dejection settling about her shoulders. Once she was known throughout the United States. Twice she has had her sagging face muscles lifted and made a brief comeback, and if one observes her closely, there is still an air of expectancy in her attitude, as if, like an elderly actress, she is awaiting a bit part before complete oblivion is her fate.

In recent years she has been known as the College house in Whitewater, Wis., but her nearest neighbors would not recog-

nize her original name. The building was put up in 1886. It was the home of the Morris Pratt Institute, a training school for spiritualism, the first and only educational institution of its kind.

The basement and first and second floors were equipped with dining rooms, reception hall, classrooms, dormitories and an auditorium, which would accommodate 400. But the third floor was the one which gave the place its name of "Spook House." Here was a large room—not open to the public—with everything white—walls, furniture and drapes. Everyone who entered had to be clothed in spotless white.

After the Civil war, families who had lost a member were anxious to discover a means of communicating with their dead. Southern Wisconsin had an outstanding medium in this field, William Moses, who lectured and conducted seances at homes in Whitewater. At one of these meetings was Morris Pratt, a young man who had come from New York state to make his fortune in Wisconsin. Working as a day laborer, he had finally accumulated \$4,000.

At the seance, when lights were out, Pratt was one of the persons called upon by the medium to give testimony. "If ever I should acquire a fortune," he said, "I would give a large share to spiritualism."

After the session a widely known seeress, who had attended, asked Pratt how much money he had. When he told her, she said,

which I shall describe to you, in northern Wisconsin."

The land was barren, rocky and desolate, but Pratt had faith in the woman's advice. However, after worrying for five long years over his investment, he sought her out and reminded her: "I have invested every cent that I have in this world."

### Tornado Uncovered Rich Iron Ore

"You will be rewarded," she assured him.

He waited and continued to worry. Then, in 1886, a tornado swept over his property and left a great gaping hole which exposed beneath a high grade iron ore

state as news of the new discovery spread.

Pratt had so many opportunities to sell out at a price undreamed of prices that he did not know what to do. The seeress counseled him: "Sell now and buy in the Ashland iron mines."

This he did, and his stock soared fantastically. Again he sold on advice of the seeress, before the bubble burst.

While Morris Pratt, the uneducated laborer, had amassed riches far beyond his greatest anticipation, he did not forget his promise. He purchased land, next to the house where Moses conducted his seances and erected the three-story brick building in Whitewater at W. Center and 3rd sts. Wooden lace adorned the roofs of

the two porches. The recessed third story gave it an air of elegance. From the beginning, it was dubbed "Pratt's Folly" for the builder was vague as to its purpose. Asked why he was building it, he admitted that he had no idea, but that it "was for the spirits."

At first it was a meeting place for spiritualists attracted from over the country. Then it was converted into a training school for spiritualism, where speech, psychology, logic and philosophy were taught. The college course required two years of study. A postgraduate course was offered later, along with correspondence courses.

It became a center for those interested in that subject. International lecturers in the auditorium and missionaries were sent throughout the world to spread this mystifying doctrine.

### Building Called 'Nut House'

Fifty students could be accommodated. When the school was well established, neighborhood skeptics began to call it the "Nut House." When students of spiritualism who were studying speech paced on the high wooden porch, declaiming to themselves, passers-by avoided that side of the street. Only the wooden steps separated them from those "odd creatures."

The meetings were open to the public on Sunday evenings. Local ministers complained that the attendance was greater at "the

feel welcome. At first elderly visitors were invited to a bountiful supper served in the basement dining room. Scoffers said that there was a reason for this hospitality—that while the visitors were enjoying a free dinner—members of the cult were secretly checking lists of names collected previously from monuments in the cemeteries so that guests at the seance would be mystified at the medium's ability to refer to deceased relatives.

Beginning about 1910, it became a fad for Whitewater Normal school boys to take their dates to these Sunday night meetings. There was no admission charge, and more shivers were promised than at the movies. The medium, dressed in white, stood on a raised platform and seemed to disappear in a trance before one's eyes. She spoke in a sepulchral voice, with a dramatic wave of the hand.

"You," she would say slowly, and point her finger directly at someone.

### Medium Went Into a Trance

The medium invariably passed up the students and designated an elderly person. The probability that the older guest had someone waiting in the Beyond was infinitely greater. The message was partly acted out in pantomime. The medium might have "contacted" a spirit who wished to send a message and whose face in life was bearded with "mountain chops," so popular in the late eighties. In order to communicate the whicker idea, the medium would ring the lower part of her face with her fingers. Other personal characteristics of the deceased were illustrated with exaggerated poses. The lame, the halt and the blind were carefully portrayed.

But the highlight of the entertainment came on those occasions when someone failed to recognize the spirit, which the medium had contacted, and refused to accept the message from the other world. The medium, invariably much out

in and out of a trance and often lose her temper as she insisted that the person designated had such a deceased relative.

Once the famous barrister, Clarence Darrow, was invited to address students at the Whitewater Normal school. Social hostesses, eager to capture Darrow for a dinner party, commanded husbands and professors alike not to let him escape. But after his lecture, Darrow vanished. Inquiry at the railway station showed that he had not departed by train, nor had he hired a horse and buggy at the two local livery stables. The mystery was cleared two days later when Darrow emerged from the Morris Pratt Institute. Asked if he believed in that doctrine, he said that he was mystified but was not wholly convinced.

The Institute continued until 1939. Later, the building was sold and converted into a home for elderly persons, but this project was abandoned.

For a few years the structure stood idle. Then, just as it was about to assume the forlorn appearance which all unused buildings take on, the Morris Pratt Institute sign was replaced by a much larger one—the "College House." For the place began functioning as a dormitory for girls attending Wisconsin State college.

However, with the completion of a new girls' dormitory near the campus, the College house was vacated. The future of the building is still in doubt. It stands, now without a name to designate it. And yet who knows what name awaits it—this building which has been called by so many names since 1887.



32

For several weeks it has been obvious that Whitewater's "Spooks Temple," a name given the building by several generations of local citizens, was about to pass from existence. Early in the summer Leo Perry, its present owner, hired workmen to tear it down to its present first floor level. He planned to convert it into an apartment house.

According to information given the city officials by Stiglitz, the phone company's proposed building will be 72½ by 42½ feet. It will be designed to fit its surroundings and its business office will face Center and 3rd streets while the equipment area will be situated facing the Eberle and Dunn properties. It will be a one-story building and while sufficient acreage must be obtained to provide for two possible future expansions, the only section which would ever be enlarged would be the portion of the building housing the equipment.

Miss Lilah Eberle, one of the two property owners whose land abuts the site, was present to voice her approval of the phone company's plan.

Stiglitz said after the meeting that his company would sell its present building at the corner of Center and 2nd streets. He added that in the changeover to the dial system none of the present permanent employees would lose their jobs and that should any new help be hired between now and the time the building is completed, it will be on a temporary basis.

Though in recent years the empty and unused Morris Pratt building has been considered somewhat of an "eyesore" within the city, this was not always the case. It was built in 1888 by Pratt, a believer in spiritualism who struck it rich after being directed at a seance held here to invest in rich mining land around Ironwood, Mich. His institute, at one time, had the distinction of being the only training school for spiritualists in the country. It attracted notables from throughout the land. Clarence Darrow, the famous criminal lawyer, once spent several days inspecting the school.

When Pratt's plans for the building itself were announced, the people, according to old records at the local library, laughed at the idea of a three-story building and called it "Pratt's Folly."

A few months before his death in 1902, Pratt gave a deed to the building to seven well-known spiritualists, naming them as a board of trustees to operate a "Spiritualist Educational Institution." Containing accommodations for 50 students and including a large auditorium, classrooms, offices, reception rooms, dining room, kitchen and laundry, the years between 1910-15 found the student body numbering as many as 45 in a term. A regular course of study lasted two years and special



—Walt Peterson photo

**WHITEWATER LANDMARK GOING DOWN**—The Wisconsin Telephone Co. will build a new exchange at the site of the old Morris Pratt Institute in Whitewater. At one time the institute was the only training school for spiritualists in the country. Famed criminal lawyer Clarence Darrow once spent several days inspecting the school. It has been owned by Leo Perry for the past three years.

## Site of Old Whitewater Institute Bought for New Telephone Exchange

*column 1*  
WHITEWATER—H J Stiglitz, manager of the Fort Atkinson, Jefferson and Whitewater exchanges of the Wisconsin Telephone Co., said Wednesday his company would exercise its option to buy the corner lot at Center and N. Third streets which, since 1888, has been the site of the Morris Pratt Institute building. The company plans to build a modern exchange there preliminary to converting local service to the dial system.

Stiglitz' announcement followed a meeting of the city's board of zoning appeals at which a motion was unanimously adopted granting "variances" in a city ordinance which states that a building there should be set back 8 feet from the road. Stiglitz and a building engineer from the company's Milwaukee office, had asked that the setback be 10 feet.

Other members of the planning board present were Mrs. Gerald Coxe, Lyle Enright, Dr. Leonard Winn and City Manager C. F. Trinkle. *See column 2*

*column 3*  
courses were offered for graduate work

In the spring of 1932 the school was closed by a drop in enrollment. However, it was reopened in the mid-30's

Though Pratt's will forbade selling the building, the board of trustees found a loophole and in the early 1940s sold it to a Mr. and Mrs. Bigus, Chicago, who

operated a faith healing school here for about 14 years. Upon the death of Mr. Bigus, his wife rented the building to George Fowler, 1182 W. Walworth Ave., who converted it into a dormitory for coeds from the local State College.

Three years ago Leo Perry purchased the property from the Bigus estate.

WAL-SP-WTHI-143

From "Weird Wisconsin."

Godfrey, Linda S. and Richard D. Hendricks

#33

# Spook Temple

Legends of creepy goings-on in Whitewater have been passed down seemingly forever to incoming freshmen at the University of Wisconsin branch there.

It probably all started in 1889 with the Morris Pratt Institute, the nation's only Spiritualist college. The college near downtown Whitewater was funded by an elderly gentleman by the name of Morris Pratt following the discovery of iron ore in Wisconsin after a Madison psychic, Mrs. Mary Hayes, had advised him where to dig. The institute featured regular Sunday lectures on such topics as "Mediumship Explained," and its third floor boasted an all-white room specially designed for séances. The townspeople called the building, located on the corner of Third and Center, the Spook Temple. The "temple" was eventually torn down, but the Pratt Institute still maintains offices in Wauwatosa.

Even before the establishment of the Pratt Institute, however, rumors of witches in Whitewater ran rampant, to the point that the town, according to one newspaper article, was "the second biggest center of witchcraft in the country" The tales vary, but supposedly there existed an active coven in the late nineteenth century that held rituals in tunnels and maintained a sacrificial altar located either in the field behind what is now the university's Wells Hall dormitory or in Oak Grove Cemetery. The sacrificial altar, along with several dead coven members, is said to be buried at the location where the altar once stood. And, it should be added, Wells Hall allegedly has experienced multiple hauntings since it was built in the late 1960s. The ghosts are usually young adults who had died in tragic accidents.

One of the most enduring town legends concerns Whitewater's three cemeteries which, when connected with lines on a map, form a near-perfect isosceles triangle with the ominous nickname Witch's Triangle. All buildings

and the land along the triangle's sides are said to be haunted. Calvary Cemetery, high on a hill above the campus, is rumored to be particularly dangerous, with gates that close on unwitting freshmen dumb enough to have sneaked in at night. According to campus wisdom, an axe murderer, Mary Worth, is buried there, and every Halloween she sallies forth from her grave to vent her rage on new victims.

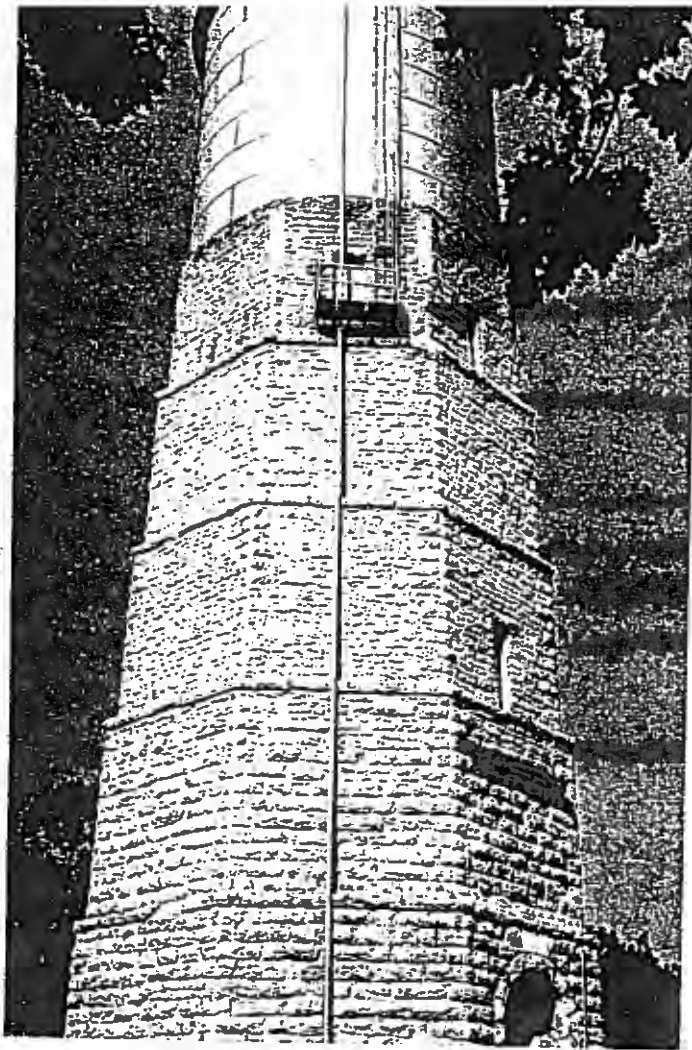
More recently, in the fall of 2003, while hiking on trails in the same general vicinity as Calvary Cemetery, a university professor and several others witnessed a strange flying object. Thoroughly convinced they had seen a UFO, they posted flyers around town asking people who had also glimpsed the UFO to come forward.

A more grisly piece of cemetery lore dates from Halloween night in 1970, when unknown persons exhumed the coffin of a baby girl from one of the graves and left the sad little corpse on the steps of the university's student center where it was discovered the next morning. Some linked the deed to antiwar protestors, some to drunken Halloween pranksters.

Not far from Wells Hall and Calvary Cemetery is the old stone water tower in Starin Park, Wisconsin's second-oldest municipal tower still in operation. It has been whispered that various groups had held rituals in the park around the tower attracting or creating malignant entities in the process. Supporting this allegation was the fact that until 2004, the park was surrounded by an iron fence with pointed spikes that tilted inward, as if to keep things in rather than out.

As for the witches' tunnels, there is something of a tunnel system between a few of the city's oldest mansion-size homes. These tunnels may have served as Underground Railroad hideaways for escaping slaves at one time, but one of them is connected with a truly spooky story. One night in 1981, members of the Alpha Sigma

sorority West Ma basemer The basemer popped to them haunter Sor from th and Cr



sorority were sitting down to dinner at their house at 614 West Main when they heard strange noises in the basement.

The young women rushed downstairs to find the basement floor covered with bricks and debris that had popped out from a boarded-up tunnel that was unknown to them. The house is now widely regarded as being haunted.

Some like to say that Whitewater's disturbances stem from the fact that development of the city, built near Tripp and Cravath lakes, destroyed many sacred Native Ameri-

can burial grounds. The small Indian Mounds Park still exists on the west side of town.

Whitewater Lake, another former home of the area's tribes, has its share of weirdness too. In 1909, large ice floes were found floating on the lake—in June! And in 1923, several fishermen claimed that when their boat capsized, they were pulled underwater by something with long tentacles. The men came back to the surface with great difficulty and with small bite marks covering their bodies. And in 1992, three people renting a house on Whitewater Lake noticed a gathering of black-clad people chanting and dancing on the beach until they "heard a loud gurgling noise and saw something start to come out of the lake." The trio left in a hurry, but the next morning, police found small bones and pebbles arranged in symbolic patterns on the shore where the odd event had occurred.

With this strange blend of fact and fiction to keep the scariness circulating, it's a safe bet that for many years to come, impressionable new Whitewater students will continue to sleep with their lava lamps on.

### *The Second Salem*

I live in Whitewater, and according to legends, the whole town is haunted.

The university that is in town was originally built as a school for mediums and research into the paranormal. I have been told that all possible ways to leave town require going over running water and that the cemeteries form a five-pointed star when looked at from above. There is a hill behind the student dorms that is supposed to be where a coven of witches (evil ones, of course) meet. Also an apartment building was once the residence of a guy who fancied himself a master of the black arts and is haunted.

Whitewater has been referred to as the "Second Salem." I can attest that some areas of town just really give me the creeps. The problem is this: There is reputed to be documentation telling about the weird things in town. However, the town council has made sure that none of that exists in town anymore.—Jeff Woosley

# Ghost Hunts End In Frustration

Every semester the UW-Whitewater campus awakens to tales of witches, ghosts, and the life beyond.

There is talk of seances and communication with those who have died. There are inevitably plans formed to search the local cemeteries after dark for that elusive folk hero, Mary Worth.

While new students become wide-eyed over the prospect of uncovering something from "the beyond," local residents become amused. They've seen and heard the same thing for years.

## Not All Fiction

But not everything connected with the semiannual phenomenon is fiction. There were, indeed, seances in Whitewater. People tried with all they had to communicate with the dead. And the seances weren't done in jest. They were based on the most extensive scientific research available at the time. Summoning someone from the next life was serious, very serious.

The tale of the seances begins back in 1889 when a wealthy 69-year-old man by the name of Morris Pratt erects a majestic building in Whitewater.

Pratt, a spiritualist, became wealthy after supposedly being told by another spiritualist where to invest his money. Pratt designed his building as a temple and a school for spiritualism,

and it became known as the Pratt Institute.

The building was razed in 1961. It stood on the corner of Fremont and Center where the phone company is now located.

## Church Notices

The Institute was a community fascination for many years until it was forced to close during the Depression. Its "services" were actually listed in the Whitewater Register under "church notices." On Sunday evenings people would flock to the temple (often called "Spook's Temple") to witness special seances and lectures by famous spiritualists.

The belief that people could communicate with the dead apparently started with a mysterious incident in the state of New York in 1848. Two young girls heard mysterious raps in their room, and eventually developed a code of communication.

During the Depression years of the 1930's the Pratt Institute suffered from endowment losses, and students from the school were unable to find jobs in Whitewater.

## Closes 3 Years

The school closed for three years and reopened in 1935. It finally died a short time later. By

1946 the temple was sold, and a new Morris Pratt Institute was built in Milwaukee.

Seances no longer take place in Whitewater. Still, students search high and low for some clue to mysterious happenings, only to create more frustration for themselves and those who will come to Whitewater after them.

The "Ghost of Mary Worth" is another example of a rumor that can't be traced to its beginning. To the best of anyone's knowledge today no such person ever existed in Whitewater.

## Tunnels Here?

The other subject which draws a lot of attention every semester is the "underground tunnel." Students believe that there is a network of tunnels running throughout the city where strange people and happenings can be uncovered.

Actually, the word underground has been greatly confused. The term "underground tunnel" and "slave tunnel" refer the system of helping slaves to escape from their Southern owners during the Civil War. One house in the city, for example, actually harbored slaves in its basement. They didn't get there through a tunnel, however. They hid in wagons and slept there during

the night on their way to Canada.

The famous Hamilton House on Main Street reportedly has tunnels, but the existence of

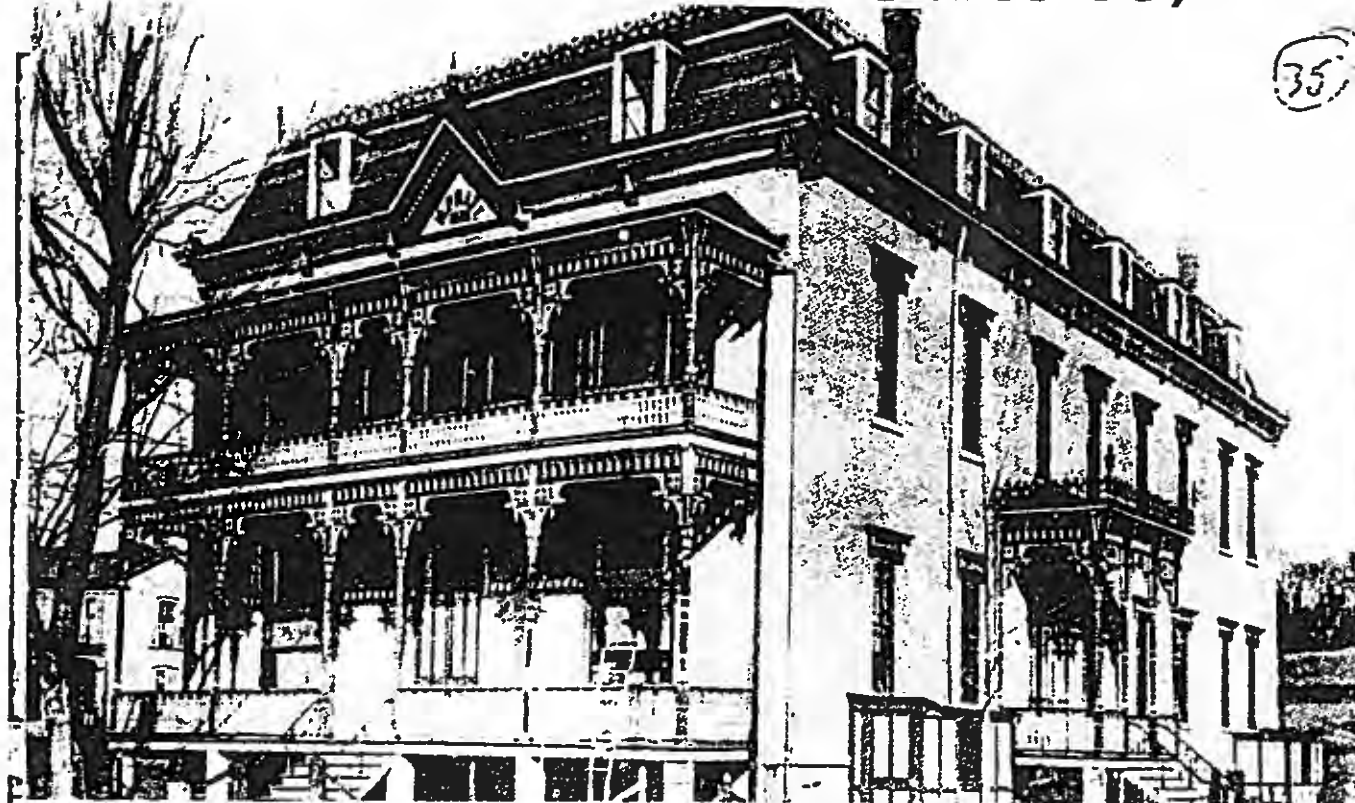
those tunnels is questionable. Someone who lived there in previous years said the "tunnels" were actually fruit cellars.

THE WHITEWATER REGISTER, Whitewater, Wis.  
August 26, 1976. page 7.

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Irvin L. Young Memorial Library  
431 West Center Street  
Whitewater, WI 53190

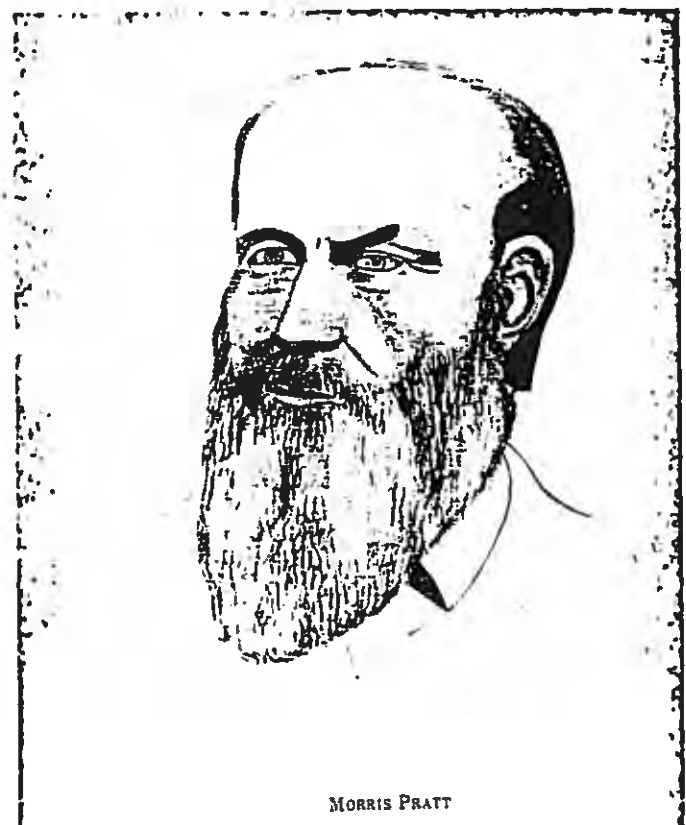
# Morris Pratt Institute; First of its kind



(35)

(continued from page 1)

1837-1987 CITY OF WHITEWATER'S SESQUICENTENNIAL  
 PICTURED IS THE MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE CONSTRUCTED IN 1889  
**THE MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE** - Guided by direction which came to Morris Pratt "from invisible intelligences," he accumulated a small fortune. As a memento of his gratitude, he dedicated the building (as shown above) to the study of spiritualism.



MORRIS PRATT

Immediately. In England, as in America, highly respected men of letters and sciences defended Kate's honesty and insisted on the spiritual nature of the phenomena produced in her presence. Her sister Margaret, who had been waging her own losing battle with the demon, drink, joined her in England in 1876 and for a time remained there. But in the spring of 1885 Kate went back to America, and her drinking problem soon became more acute. In August 1886 she was arrested in Rochester for drunkenness; in May 1888 she was, again, arrested. Margaret, in England, wrote letters to American newspapers blaming Spiritualism for her sister's misfortunes.

"Spiritualists denounced Margaret's expose as the ravings of a poor besotted woman who would do anything for money. Opponents of Spiritualism claimed that Margaret had given the death blow to a dishonest and immoral farce."

"A year later she recanted, swearing that she had been tricked into making a false confession by unscrupulous men. A new lecture tour, during which she reaffirmed her belief in spirits, also failed. Both she and Kate sank deeper into poverty, humiliation and drink."

The girls died shortly after this and were mourned by Spiritualists throughout the world.

The rappings are still a puzzle, though there have been reports of other mediums besides the Fox sisters. Those that have done research on the subject are still quite divided.

Some authors believe and some do not. This is evident in that some editions of the history mention Margaret's retraction and some omit it.

The results? A puzzle left for the reader to decide. Those with a will to believe will continue to believe.

Those having denounced Spiritualism in the past will continue to disbelieve.

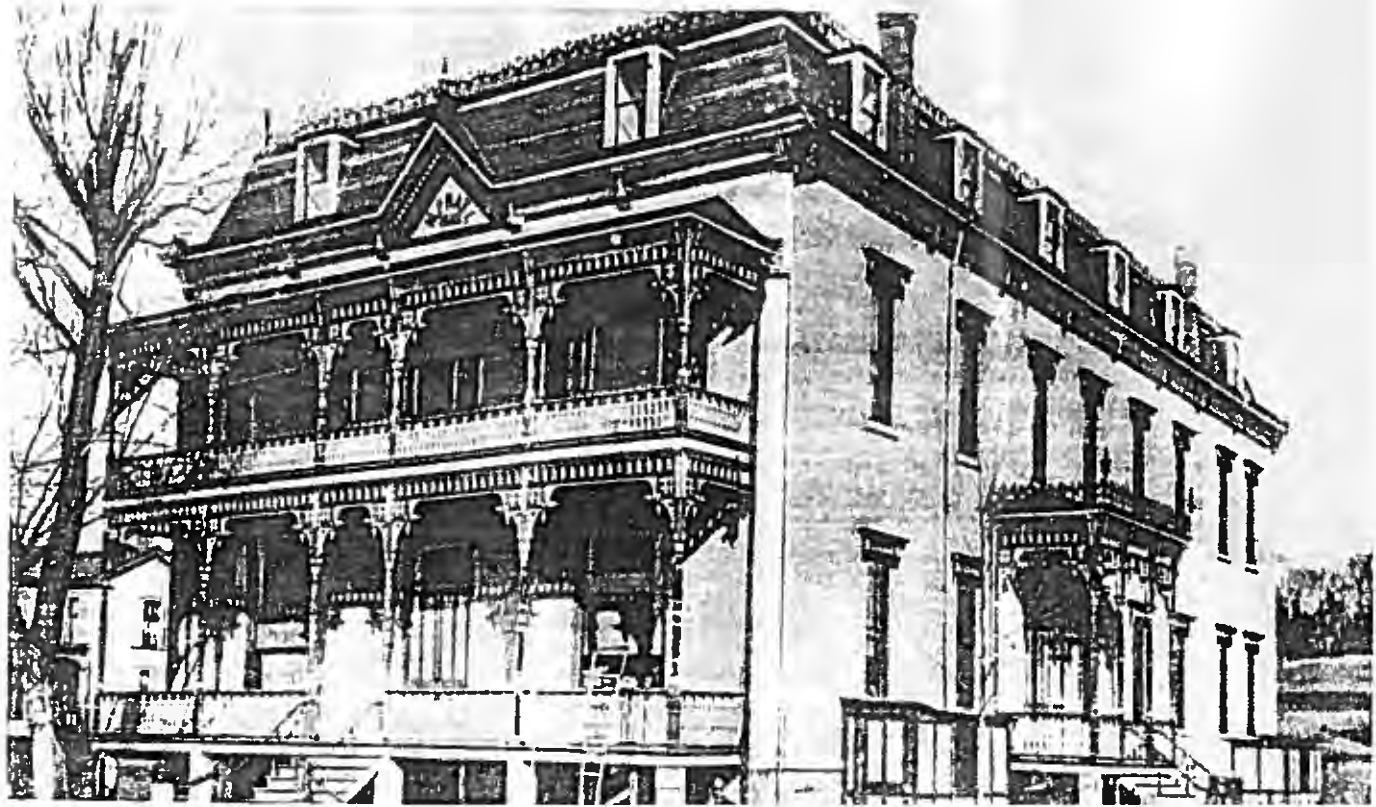
Many are baffled and many not phased.

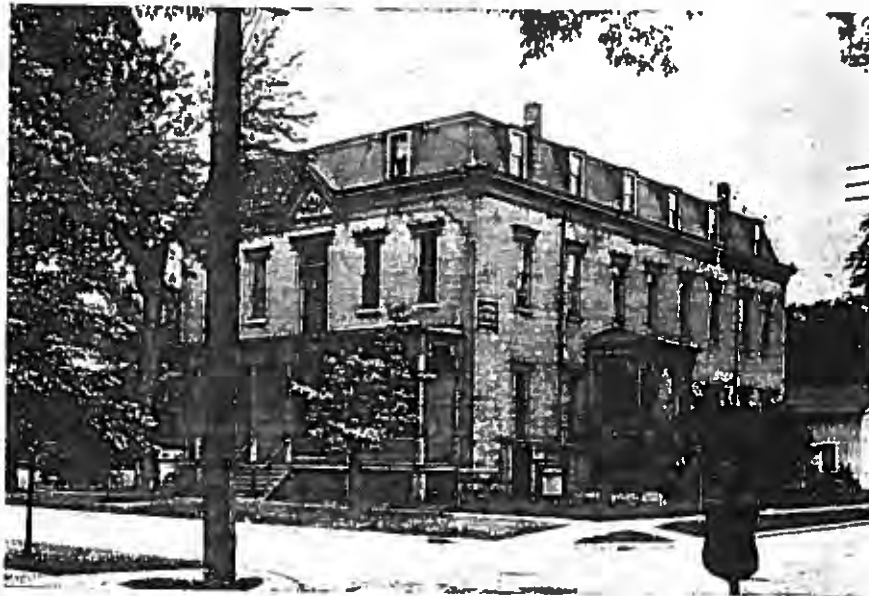
Such incidents, however continue to keep the interest alive in the world of the unknown.

As it was stated by the spirit messages, "You may expect variety of things from our society."

"Thus began the expose of 40 years of mediumship. By this time Spiritualism in America had gone through a series of triumphs and defeats, exposes and new proofs, dilution as a reform movement and constantly increasing fragmentation as a sect of sects."

"Earlier exposes had been damaging, but this one, coming from Margaret herself, threatened to be the crushing blow. Margaret explained to reporters who met her on her arrival in New York that she and Kate had originally begun the rappings to fool their mother and had made them by throwing their big toes out of joint; on Oct. 21, 1888, she demonstrated the technique to a large audience at the Music Hall. She charged that their sister Leah had forced her and Kate to keep up the spirit-rapping fraud, and denounced her for exploiting and tyrannizing them. Kate sat in the audience, giving full assent to Margaret's explanation; Leah refused to make any public comment





### Morris Pratt Institute

Morris Pratt Institute owes its origin and present existence to the munificence of the late Morris Pratt, a citizen of Whitewater. Guided by direction which came to him from invisible intelligences, as he believed, he accumulated a small fortune. As a memento of his gratitude, he erected the Institute building which, for a number of years, he used for seances and services in the interest of Spiritualism.

It was Mr. Pratt's conviction, growing out of his experience, that there should be a school under the auspices of Spiritualism, which would be free from the religious prejudices and misconceptions that dominate some of the present institutions of learning. To make this idea a practical reality, he deeded the building with the land upon which it stands, free from all encumbrances, to seven well known and reliable Spiritualists who were to act as trustees of the property. The building contains sleeping accommodations for fifty students, a large church auditorium, classrooms, offices, reception rooms, dining room, kitchen and laundry.

The school is based on the idea that while the Spiritualist workers should increase the psychic power which they possess to the highest degree, they should also cultivate their mental and moral powers; they should strive to acquire literary taste and noble aspirations; they should become lovers of books, of nature, of truth and progress—or in other words, should become in mind and heart cultured, and in manners and language refined.

A Spiritualist church organization has been formed, and public services, which teachers and students are expected to attend, are held weekly in the Institute, under the supervision of the principal. Second year students who have complied with all the school requirements, and are preparing for a public career, assist the faculty in conducting the services.

Beginning in the month of June, 1936, a six week summer school session was added to its regular nine month term. The summer school term opens this year on May 31st, and closes July 16th.

#### Faculty

Rev. Aldrick E. Hanson, Principal—Graduate with class of 1908  
Mildred Kull Chenoweth B. E.—Graduate Northwestern University School of Speech and State Teachers College, Whitewater, Wis.

#### Officers

Mr. Charles R. Smith ..... President  
Rev. Thomas Grimshaw ..... Vice-President  
Mrs. Jeannette Knepprath ..... Secretary-Treasurer

Tue 31-Oct-1995 Category:are Author:ANN

Things go bump in the night at Whitewater

By Ann Borgmann Gazette Staff

WHITTEWATER--The tales are told in whispers every Halloween, when the moon is high and darkness cloaks the city like a shroud.

They say that Whitewater has a secret, haunted past.

They say ax-murderess Mary Worth is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery, way up the hill overlooking Washington School. Mary keeps to herself until Halloween, when she rises from the dead to seek new victims.

They say covens of witches once met in the field where UW-Whitewater's Wells Hall now stands. Rituals were held in underground tunnels. "Believers" were buried upright around an altar beneath Wells or at one of three cemeteries in the city: Oak Grove, Hillside or Calvary.

They say there's something strange about those cemeteries. If you line them up on a map, they supposedly form an isosceles triangle--a shape that has a direct connection to satanism. Anything within or near the triangle is subject to its dark powers.

None of these stories have ever been proved beyond a reasonable doubt. But that hasn't stopped students from telling them.

"All the freshmen here are just fascinated by it," says Noel Doerfler, a UW-Whitewater sophomore who lives in Wells Hall. "I think a lot of people believe in ghosts."

Believing in ghosts isn't necessarily a half-baked idea. History shows that spiritualism did play an important role in Whitewater's development.

In the early 1900s, Whitewater was the home of the Morris Pratt Institute, the world's first school of spiritualism.

The school was founded by Morris Pratt, an early pioneer who had amassed a small fortune thanks to a medium who urged him to invest his money in a profitable iron mine.

Pratt had promised the medium that if he became rich, he would donate money to the spiritualist cause.

Residents called the building "Spook Temple." People could enroll in classes at the school, but for many years, they were barred from a room on the third floor that was furnished in white and used to conduct seances.

The school sat at Third and Contor streets until it was razed in 1961. It is now headquartered in Milwaukee.

Other mysterious incidents have occurred in Whitewater.

On Halloween night in 1970, someone exhumed the coffin of an infant girl and left it on the UW-W campus mall. No one ever came forward to claim



responsibility, and police figured it was a Halloween prank.

In April 1925, A.J. Gilbertson, a high-ranking member of the Ku Klux Klan, was found dead on the lawn of the Methodist Church. Some say he died of natural causes. Others insist that he was murdered--perhaps by something otherworldly.

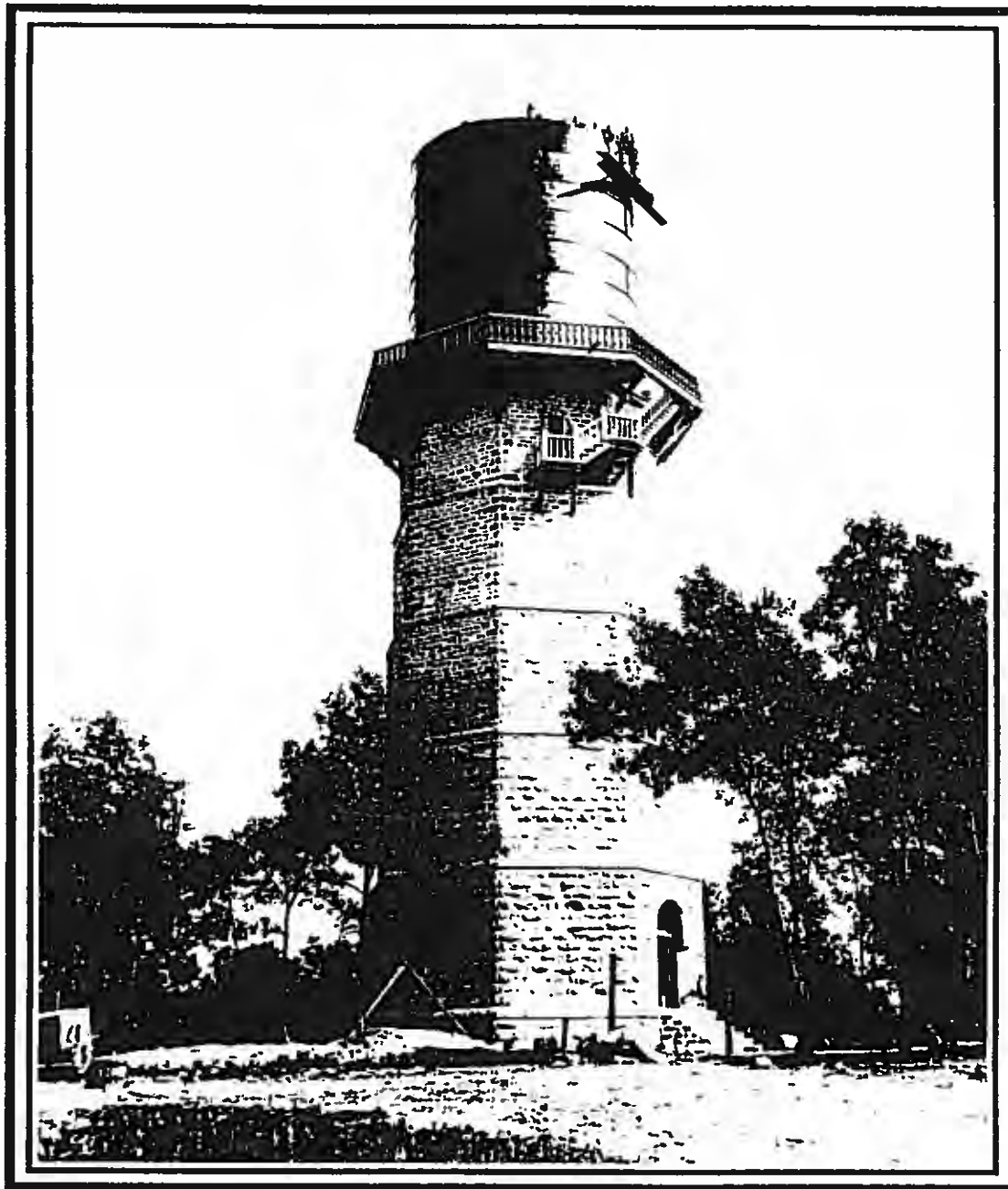
Wells Hall allegedly is filled with spirits, Doerfler says. Most of them seem to be children or young adults who died tragically.

"Ben" is the spirit who lives in Doerfler's room. He died in a car accident. Doerfler found out about him last year when she and other students used a Ouija board to talk to him. They were told that every room in Wells has a ghost.

Doerfler isn't sure if she really believes in ghosts. But she admits that she shivers every time she looks out her window at the old **water tower in Starin Park**.

You see, the **water tower** stands near the triangle formed by the three cemeteries. Legend has it that the barbed wire on the fence tilts inward to keep mortals out and evil spirits in.

"When I look at it, I still get goose bumps," Doerfler said, "because it's supposed to be a **witches' tower**. It's spooky."



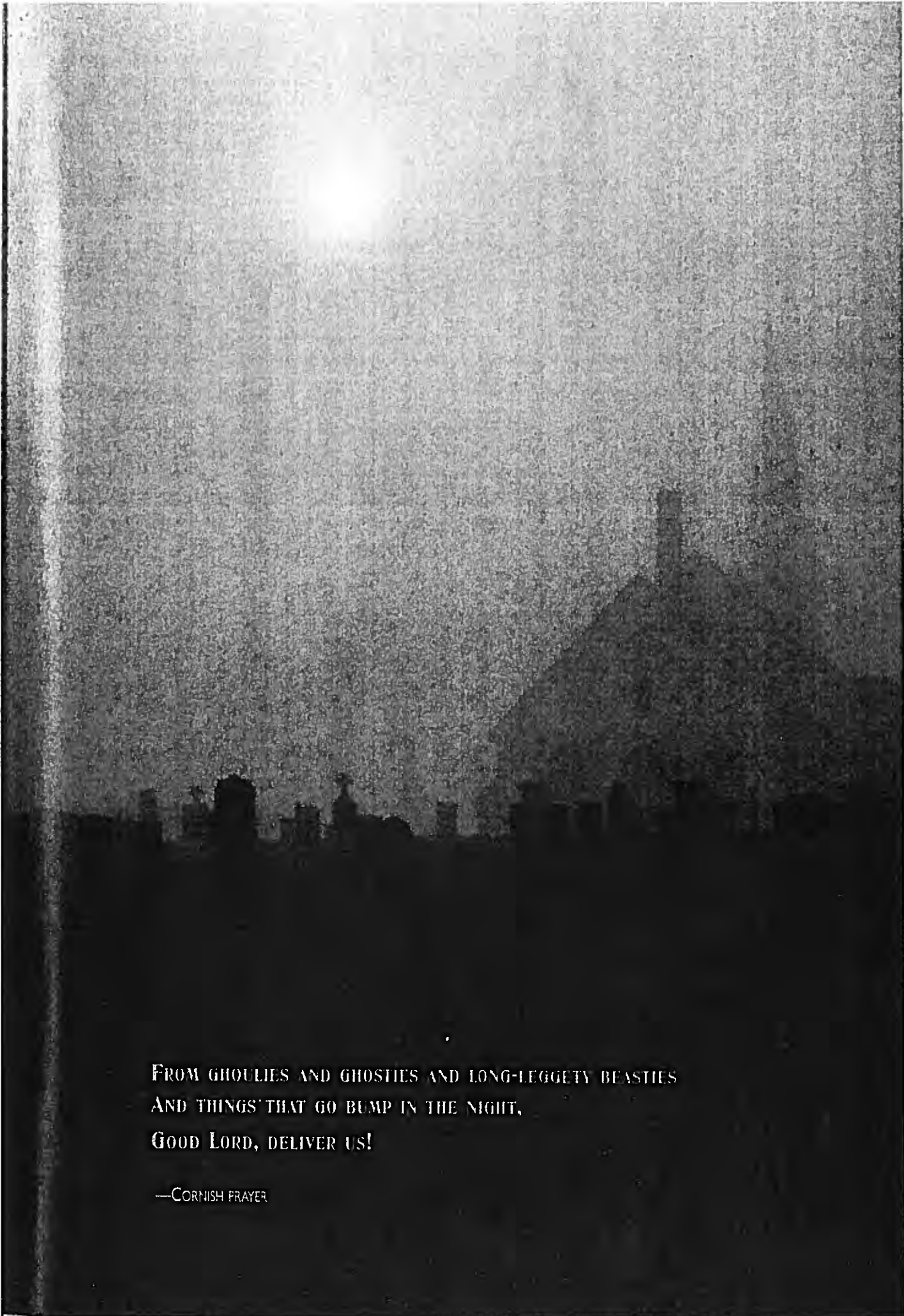
Starin Park Watertower, constructed and owned by Whitewater Water Works Company in 1889. Ownership was transferred to the City of Whitewater in 1912. The steel tank has water capacity of 175,000 gallons. It is Wisconsin's second oldest Municipal Watertower still in operation today.

5

# A Haunted County

LOCAL GHOST STORIES AND LURID TALES

BY ANDRIA HAYDAY

A dark, grainy, high-contrast image of a city skyline at night. The sky is dark with a bright, glowing light source in the upper left corner, possibly the moon or a star. The city skyline is silhouetted against the dark sky, with several buildings of varying heights and shapes. The overall texture is very grainy and noisy, giving it a vintage or horror-movie aesthetic.

FROM GHOULIES AND GHOSTIES AND LONG-LEGGETY BEASTIES  
AND THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT,  
GOOD LORD, DELIVER US!

—CORNISH PRAYER

ONCE a year, on All Hallows' Eve, creatures of the invisible world hold sway. Witches mount their brooms and cavort across an inky sky, while spirits of the dead and the damned walk the earth, seeking the warm embrace of the living.

Silly Halloween legends? Perhaps. But along the dark, lonely roads of Walworth County and amid the streets of its quiet towns, many a witness has laid claim to a close encounter of the "weird" kind—and not just on Halloween night.

To amuse and entertain you, we've arranged a special tour of the county's supernatural hot spots. Just settle into bed on some chill autumn eve, when black clouds blanket the moon and a sighing wind stirs the fallen leaves. Listen closely for the gentle tap-tap-tapping of a withered branch upon your window, for that will be our secret signal, calling you into the dark.

### THE BEAST OF BRAY ROAD

The trail of terror begins in 1936. A night watchman at a rural care institution near Jefferson (just north of Walworth County) was making his rounds. As he passed an old Indian burial mound, he spied something alarming: a dark, hairy beast that seemed part man, part ape, and part wolf, digging at the soil with his long claws. The watchman froze, uttering a prayer. When the sharp-toothed creature turned and let out a peculiar three-syllable growl, the man fled into the night, telling no one of his encounter but his wife and son. In 1993, the son recounted the tale in a Kenosha weekly called *The Labor*, not long after several Walworth County residents had come forth with similar stories.

A few years earlier, writer Linda Godfrey had begun to track down rumors of a werewolf lurking in the Geneva Lakes area. She spoke with the county humane officer, who did have a thick file of odd rural sightings—reports of a hairy creature that walked on hind legs. He attributed these sightings to a coyote, which can rise on its hind legs to pounce. But many others Godfrey spoke with disagreed, including two local women. On separate occasions, both had encountered a bizarre beast on Bray Road, a rural route outside Elkhorn. In 1992 Godfrey published the women's accounts in *The Walworth County Week*. She kept their names anonymous, but soon TV news teams from Milwaukee were interviewing both witnesses about the "Beast of Bray Road."

The first woman, a working mother in her twenties, said

she was heading home late one night when she saw "this thing" on the side of the road—a hairy creature almost 6 feet tall. "It was kneeling," she said, "like a human would do." As she grew nearer, she could see that the thing was crouched over something dead, grasping a piece of roadkill in its long claws. Oddly, its palms faced up. The creature turned its head, eyes aglow in her headlights, and though she was now close enough to see its "big teeth and fangs" and its pointed ears, it did not flinch. White-knuckled and shaken, she drove slowly past. All the while, it continued to eye her. "It just looked at me!" she later exclaimed.

That was 1989. The woman let the story rest until she heard about another encounter. In 1991, on a foggy Halloween night, a local teenage girl was driving the same road when she thought she hit something. "My wheel lifted," she recounted to Godfrey. She drove another 50 or 60 feet before she stopped and climbed out of the car, fearing she'd killed or maimed an animal. To her terror, she spied a hairy man-sized beast springing toward her on two legs. As she scrambled back into her car and sped away, her pursuer left claw marks on the trunk. Later, she drove the same road after picking up the daughter of a family friend. The 11-year-old girl glimpsed the creature too, still lurking by the roadside.

There were not the only stories. In the summer of 1964, a rural Delavan man was driving home from a night shift. To his astonishment, he saw a large, hairy beast leap a 4-foot barbed wire fence and cross the road—on its hind legs—before taking cover in the high corn. The man

"IT WAS KNEELING," SHE SAID,  
"LIKE A HUMAN WOULD DO."

reported his sighting to a Canadian Bigfoot researcher, John Green. In 1985, the *Milwaukee Journal* ran a story about this encounter titled "More Yeti to Come." About ten years earlier, the same paper had described a separate sighting of a large, apelike monster that attacked a horse near Fort Atkinson in Jefferson County—just north of the Walworth county line. Both counties have several things in common: lonely rural farms, a long stretch of densely wooded hills called the Kettle Moraine Forest, and a lot of strange encounters with big, hairy creatures.

For the past few years, the country roads around here have seemed relatively quiet. If anyone has come across the Beast on a dark and lonely night, they've kept the story to themselves.

## THE GHOST OF LAURA SMITH

Among those whose spirits cannot rest, two reasons are common: death at one's own hand, and death at the hand of another. But which is the story of Laura Smith? Perhaps she told us from the grave. . . .



At 4 A.M. November 26, 1916, the body of Laura Smith was found hanging from the ceiling of her Delavan kitchen, her neck bound to a light-hook by a rope. A jury of local men quickly ruled her death a suicide. She was buried in Clinton, leaving behind two young children, ages ten and one, and her husband, Louis H. Smith, a well-established Delavanite who worked for the Bradley Knitting Mill.

Within days of the funeral, grisly facts began to surface. The undertakers let it be known that Laura's body had been covered with bruises and lacerations. The coroner confirmed their statement, adding that she had probably died the previous afternoon—and not just after her husband and children had gone to bed, as Louis himself had claimed. An inquest and an arrest quickly followed. As Louis Smith languished in a local jail, his ten-year-old son was called to testify at a preliminary hearing. The day before his mother's body was discovered, said the boy, his father had handed him pieces of her hair and sent him out to sell them (the locks fetched 50 cents, which his father collected). Louis's own sister, Linna Smith, produced a letter in which Laura had confided

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Courtesy of Geneva Lake Area Museum of History

Big Foot Beach State Park was once the site of the Idaho Lodge, where ghostly riders and sailing spirits were reportedly at home at the turn of the century.

verdict of "not guilty." Louis Smith moved to Milwaukee, leaving his two children to be adopted by different families

Many Delavanites were not content with the jury's verdict, and neither, it would seem, was Laura Smith. Those who moved into the Smith's Fifth Street residence after her death spoke of strange sounds in the house, and some even

claimed to have seen an apparition in the basement. The phenomena continued until 1925, when they stopped completely.

In that year, at the age of 57, Louis H. Smith quietly passed away.

(Drawn from a story appearing in the *Delavan Enterprise*, 1991, by historian Gordon Yadon.)

she was leaving her husband. Apparently she never got the chance

The evidence of murder was mounting. A hematologist who had visited the Smith house discovered blood stains scattered about the entire first floor. It appeared someone had tried to wipe them away, but failed. Perhaps the most damning testimony came from a private investigator who'd been planted in a cell next to Louis Smith. The accused, believing he was confiding in a gangster, allegedly confessed his guilt.

A formal trial ensued in March, but the private investigator—the prosecution's star witness—failed to appear. After four brief hours, the jury (several of whom had known Smith through a fraternal organization) returned a

## THE GHOST OF PHANTOM LAKE

Long ago, before white settlers came to this area, three Indian lovers met beside the waters of Phantom Lake near Mukwonago. Their haunting story gave the lake its name

Students enrolled at White-water's Pratt Institute studied culture, religion, and the finer points of conversing with spirits. The institute operated here from 1888 to 1932, when it moved to Milwaukee. The building was later razed to make way for a more conventional communication business—the phone company.



Two rival tribes had camped at the lake that fateful summer, the first beside the water, the other high on a hill on the opposite shore. Every day, a beautiful maiden from the lakeside tribe would slip her canoe into the waters and paddle round. She was so lovely that her people's strongest brave had begun to court her. But she had another, secret love: the leading brave from the tribe on the hill.

Late one August night, the maiden guided her canoe to the middle of the lake, and the brave from the hill paddled out to meet her. His rival watched their tryst from the shore. Filled with jealous rage, he seized his weapons and set out after the pair, and as his canoe neared theirs, he shot an arrow at his enemy. Sadly, it did not find its mark. The maiden placed her body before her lover's, and the shaft pierced her heart. Legend has it that she stood for a moment, spreading her arms wide as if to fly. Then she plunged into the lake. The two braves drew their tomahawks and battled to the death, joining the maiden in her watery grave.

At midnight, the braves' families discovered the canoes and spied a great stain upon the water, and though no bodies were ever found, each tribe vowed vengeance upon the other. Still more blood would have flowed were

it not for the strange event that followed. The misty ghost of the maiden arose from the water and drifted across the lake. As her spirit passed over the living, the hatred between the two tribes melted away.

One might have thought that the maiden could rest then. Instead, it is said, she returns every year, rising from the waters at midnight on a sultry night near summer's end—the sad and beautiful ghost of Phantom Lake.

(Drawn from a story appearing in a local newspaper, *The Republican*, September 18, 1924.)

### THE WHITEWATER TRIANGLE

Some stories refuse to die. Every October, a haunting rumor drifts across the campus of UW-Whitewater. The city was built on a supernatural nexus, a place where the link between the living and the dead is strong, and the barriers against the forces of evil are all too weak.

The legend centers around three cemeteries: Oak Grove, Calvary, and Hillside. Each graveyard forms a point in a nearly perfect isosceles triangle, a curious arrangement that heightens their occult significance. Years ago, its

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Above right: Uninterrupted lake views are seen from this outstanding 4000+sq. ft. lake access home located on 6.7 acres. Three bedrooms, gourmet kitchen, sunroom & formal dining room, are just a few of the many quality amenities. Private nearby boat slip. Available for: \$699,000.



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said, a coven of black witches crept into the city, meeting in underground tunnels and in the triangle itself at night, conducting secret rituals to tap the powers of darkness.

Perhaps they still come. Some students claim to have spied robed figures gathering in nearby Starin Park, where the water tower is supposedly haunted. Others say the witches gather at the graves of old believers, who were buried upright in a circle around a subterranean altar in the Whitewater Triangle.

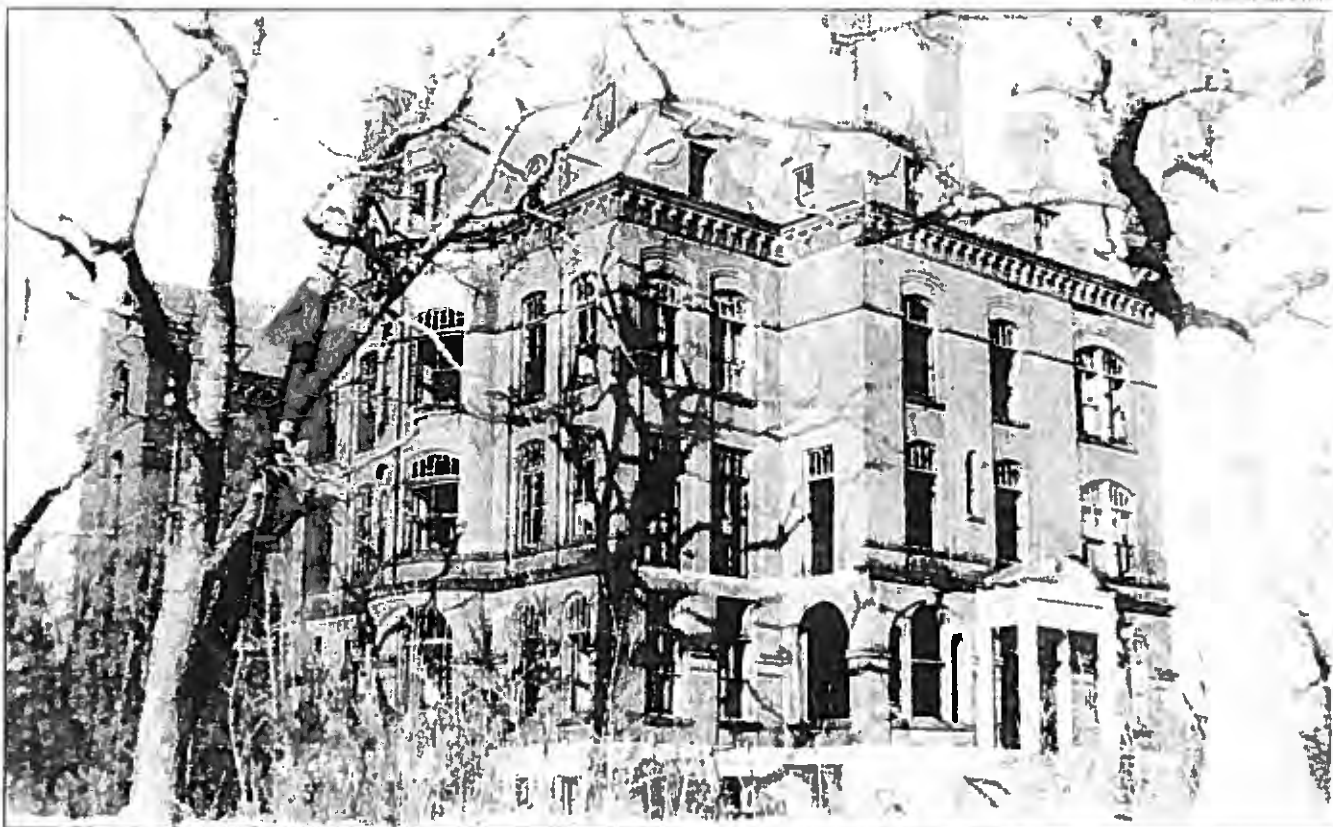
Every fall, intrepid freshmen descend on the public library seeking evidence of the city's dark and secret past. They leave empty-handed—except, perhaps, for a few unusual news items. According to an article by the *Janesville Gazette*, in 1925, a high-ranking member of the Ku Klux Klan was found dead on a Whitewater church lawn, cause unknown. Some suggested natural causes; others said unnatural. In 1970, someone exhumed the coffin of an infant girl and left it on the campus on Halloween night. Police called it a grisly prank, but no witnesses or suspects ever surfaced.

Eleven years later, a writer for the university newspaper described a peculiar incident at a Whitewater sorority

house. As they sat down to dinner, members heard noises in the basement, and when they investigated, they found the bricks from a walled-up tunnel lying on the floor. The "destruction crew" was never identified.

Further evidence of an old tunnel network is hard to dig up. Yet Whitewater does have a link to the spirit world based entirely on fact. In 1888, the spiritualist Morris Pratt built an institute here to teach others how to converse with the dearly departed. Pratt died in 1902, but his institute endured, training live-in students in a two-year course designed to raise their psychic powers and moral consciousness. Instructors considered spiritualism and religion quite compatible, and many townspeople attended Sunday church meetings and public seances here. (Meanwhile, wary neighbors dubbed it "the Spook House.") At one time, Clarence Darrow spent three days at the school; reportedly he was "mystified." The Pratt Institute moved to Milwaukee in 1932 and continued on at least 40 more years.

The preceding accounts represent just a few of the area's strange tales. In her Walworth County guidebooks (available at area libraries), Gummy Hall recommends a drive past yet another haun- raising site.



In 1888, Lake Geneva's Oakwood Sanitarium specialized in "tight confinement" and "the easing of mental distress." The Great Depression led to its closure in 1933, but some claimed the building remained occupied—by ghosts who were hardly at ease. The brooding five-story structure was razed in the 1970s. It stood just west of the Hillmoor Golf Course.

a haunted house in Richmond Township

On Delany Road lies an old brick mansion that predates the Civil War. If only its walls could talk. James Cameron built this place for his family, and soon after, his son began a scandalous affair with a maid. The hapless girl was eventually poisoned, perhaps when an inconvenient pregnancy arose. After her death, servants and family members claimed her ghost was haunting them. The Camerons moved out. Subsequent owners have apparently found the maid less troubling.


If you'd like to actually stay in a haunted setting, consider the lovely French Country Inn on Como Lake. During Prohibition, it was a favorite haunt of several gangsters, including Bugs Moran, Capone's rival. Some say it still is. A former owner has admitted he once called in a priest to cleanse the property. The current proprietor, Tony Navilio, is not concerned, though at least one guest has complained of strange noises in the main house at night. During a 1998 interview with *At the Lake*, Navilio stated that several employees were convinced the inn has ghosts. Not long ago, one of them vowed she'd never again cross the parking lot alone after dark—not after she heard a hoarse whisper in the trees, calling out "Help me . . ." She swore she was the only living soul around.

Navilio reminds us that old buildings naturally creak and moan, and colorful stories fuel a vivid imagination. Still, he thinks it's best "to keep an open mind."

The staff of *At the Lake* invites you to do the same—and we wish you all a HAPPY HALLOWEEN. ▲

Andria Hayday is the editor of *At the Lake*.

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#39

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# PURPLE

WISCONSIN - WHITEWATER

30, 1991

## Legends and myths in Whitewater abound as Halloween draws near

By Patti Hoselton  
of the Royal Purple

Some UW-Whitewater students and residents continue to believe in the legends of Whitewater, while others remain skeptical but intrigued by the historical mysteries.

Over the years, the mysteries of Whitewater have included stories of tunnels, witchcraft, and even the ghost of axe murderer Mary Worth. According to Janet Gray-Freiwald of Planets, "These rumors and legends are fantastic, but that's all they are, rumors and legends."

Gray-Freiwald said that the Morris Pratt Institute may have been one of the reasons the myths about Whitewater began. Morris Pratt was a New Yorker who settled in Wisconsin in the early 1840s. He built the three-story \$30,000 house in 1888. Called the "spooks temple" by the townspeople, the institute specialized in spiritualism or communication with the dead, but also taught grammar, literature,

psychology, speech, and religion. The Pratt Institute was the first spiritual college of its kind in the world and was internationally known.

Spiritualism became popular following the Civil War, because many people wanted to communicate with loved

*"These rumors and legends are fantastic, but that's all they are, rumors and legends."*

ones they had lost in the war. Gray-Freiwald, who has studied Whitewater's history extensively, said that at that time, many people in the city of Whitewater were not believers of spiritualism, so they were not allowed to enter the third floor of the institute, called the "seance chambers." Every Sunday at 7 p.m., services centered around spiritualism were held in an auditorium with enough

seating for four hundred people, and the auditorium was always packed to capacity.

The Pratt Institute closed during the depression due to lack of funds, but reopened in 1935. In 1946, the institute closed for good, relocated in Milwaukee, and the building in Whitewater was torn down in 1961. Gray-Freiwald's theory is that because "the Pratt Institute was torn down in 1961, there was no more tangible evidence to describe why the witches or whatever they had for rumors were here, so they had to start creating stories." She believes the rumors of Whitewater came after the Pratt Institute was gone, because nothing existed for the townspeople and students to remember.

Gray-Freiwald said that Whitewater's mystical history is nationwide because "the students that graduate bring what they remember from Whitewater

Legends and myths

see page 2

Legends and myths

from page 1

history around the world."The existence of tunnels under Whitewater has been talked about and investigated for years and years, but has never actually been proven. "I want to prove it the existence of tunnels I'd love to prove it, but it can't be," said Gray-Freiwald.

The old Plager House on Jefferson St, the Starin mansion, the Hamilton House, and the Little John House have all been said to have tunnels under them, but the claims have never been proven. Gray-Freiwald attended school at UW-Whitewater in the early 80s. She said that the myths spoke of only a few tunnels at that time, but now the myths claim there are tunnels all over the city.

The Plager House on Jefferson St. was noted for being a part of the underground railroad. According to Gray-Freiwald, slaves were transported in Whitewater under hay in a wagon. When the wagon reached the house, the slaves would jump off the wagon and run into a crawl space in the house. A special ventilation system was built so the slaves could hide in the crawl space safely, but Gray-Freiwald said, "There was not an intricate system of tunnels."

In 1980, Gray-Freiwald began studying Whitewater's history and was among one of the first students to live in the Starin mansion on Fremont street a few years later. The mansion contained a dumbwaiter used to pull or deliver objects to the first floor of the four-story home. The dumbwaiter came out of a heating vent, but the vent only went down about seven feet and out seven feet, and was bricked up, according to Gray-Freiwald.

Dave Kachel of DLK Enterprises, who has lived in Whitewater for 60 years, said that tunnels in the city would not be possible, "because there is no packing to the ground."

In 1982, DLK dug around the Little John House, built in 1848, and found no tunnels. The Hamilton House was bought by DLK in 1987, but was only owned by the company for two years. Rumors were circulated that tunnels ran under the house. DLK found a room that was used as a vegetable cellar in previous years, but found no tunnels. "The ground around the buildings is a clay sand. If there were tunnels, there would be sink holes and the tunnels would have collapsed over the years unless they were lined with brick," said Kachel.

Gray-Freiwald said that the tunnels have not been proven as far as going underneath the city and the Whitewater Register gave no mention to the building of the tunnels in early issues. "For an intricate system of tunnels to be made, it would have to be mentioned in the paper, since the paper was there from the beginning," she said, "somebody would have noted that there was some big construction going on."

The rumors and myths of Whitewater still continue, and probably always will as long as students and residents try to prove their existence.

# Royal Purple

November 2, 1994 #40

Estc

## Occult dispels Whitewater myths, folklore

By Kay Wirtz  
Special to the Royal Purple

Ask Walter Five his opinion of the city of Whitewater's link to the occult and you're likely to get a frown along with "Whitewater, Wisconsin? Never heard of it."

And if anyone should have, it's Five. An initiated Witch, fourth degree Brother in a Ceremonial Magic Order and priest in the Gnostic Catholic Church, Five has participated in numerous rituals over the years. However, none of them have ever been in Whitewater.

Every year a new crop of University of Wisconsin-Whitewater freshmen hear the stories that have circulated the

campus for decades and the myth is perpetuated for yet another year.

Any of this sound familiar? UW-Whitewater sophomore Alicia Davis, a Mass Communication major, said she has heard so many wild stories that it is hard to tell just what is truth and what is mere story telling.

"One of my RAs told me that some girls died in Goodhue and their spirits haunt the cemetery because they were buried there," she said.

A friend of Davis' who wished to remain anonymous confided, "I heard that if you walk through the cemetery gates at night they will shut and lock you in. You can get in but you can't get out."

Other students continued with their own accounts of supernatural folklore.

"All I know about the water tower is that all of the barbed wire on top of the fences faces inward and during Halloween a witch cult has rituals up there," said David Kleier, a UW-Whitewater junior and sociology major.

"And I heard that the last hanging in Whitewater was a witch."

Greg Lipscomb, a junior majoring in psychology, believes that the triangle of cemeteries in the city of Whitewater, which includes the Calvary Cemetery located within the UW-Whitewater, draws a coven of witches to the city every year. "All of the cemeteries in the area

are laid out in a Satanic triangle," he said.

Durren Chapman, a graduating senior in public policy administration, agrees. "The triangle tells people that this is the place to conduct occult rituals," he said.

So, what do the people who practice the occult think about all of this?

According to Raven, a Milwaukee area Pagan, "Pagans respect the dead and wish them peaceful rest and joyous rebirth, but except a burial service, I can't think of anything that would require going into a cemetery."

And according to Five, the triangle formed by the cemeteries

See Occult page 5

## Occult/Imaginations cause cemetery scares

continued from page 1

has no meaning. "Frankly, any three points will form a triangle—any three at all. The Trinity is a three, and that's 'holy' and 'Christian.' It doesn't prove a thing," he insisted.

The triangle has many meanings in many different cultures. Five's favorite example is the Free Mason's greeting to "Greetings from all Three Points of the Triangle."

Raven points out that the most common Pagan symbol is not a triangle at all, but a pentagram, a five-pointed interwoven star shape.

The only disturbances in Calvary Cemetery that either the city of Whitewater Police Department or the UW-Whitewater University Police Department have on record involve students drinking in the cemetery and committing acts of vandalism.

"Speaking from my personal experience, we've had no disturbances up there whatsoever, with the exception of a student dressed like the Grim Reaper roaming the cemetery," said officer Steve Camplin of the University Police. "And what better place for the Grim Reaper to appear on Halloween than in a cemetery?"

According to Raven, there are several Pagan theories on haunting, too. Some believe they're by an unhappy dead

person. Others, a psychic residue of previous occupants or an emotional symptom of the person experiencing the hauntings.

Since there is no significance to the triangle formed by the three cemeteries, it is highly unlikely that, even if a haunting was verifiable, there would be a link to the cemeteries.

"Many Pagans subscribe to more metaphysical views, linking such a phenomenon with an emotional psychic energy discharge that somehow attaches itself to a particular site and replays itself periodically like a tape recorder," says Five. "But then too, this could just be another urban myth."

Campus hauntings are questionable, too. According to Camplin, there are no rooms in Goodhue Hall that are sealed up as rumored by students. "We're housed in Goodhue Hall now. There's an old elevator that's no longer used, but I don't think that counts."

So what about witches performing rituals on Halloween?

Practitioners of the Wiccan religion usually call themselves witches and the last day of October is best described as the Pagan New Year's Eve. But according to the Pagan belief system, the new year begins the first day of November.

- Career Cues, page 8
- Horoscopes, page 9
- In My Opinion, page 10

# Feature

"What are you, the elevator police?"

—Saturday Night Live

## 'Spooks temple' adds uniqueness to campus history

By Mary Bielke  
Royal Purple staff writer

Did you know Whitewater had its very own spooks house?

The legend says that a woman came back to the Pratt Institute to let an artist paint her.

It was 1889 when Morris Pratt constructed the most expensive home in the city of Whitewater.

The building had a three story structure and contained two auditorium halls. It was valued at \$30,000 and was approximately 85 ft. long and 48 ft. wide. The building was not planned to be used as an ordinary school it was

the first spiritualism educational institute in the world.

Whitewater used to be referred to as the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism" by people interested in spiritualism.

The Pratt Institute was officially founded in 1902. Pratt founded the school because of the belief that people who had an inborn abilities to communicate with the spiritual world should be given the opportunity to improve their ability. The institute was meant to give students an opportunity to improve their psychic powers and stimulate their mental and moral powers,

according to Pratt.

Pratt deeded the building and land to seven reliable spiritualists, who acted as trustees of the property. The Great Depression hurt the financial success of the Pratt Institute and forced it to close its doors in 1938.

The Whitewater community had a negative reaction to Pratt's strange spiritualist views. Because of this reaction, Pratt wound up paying extremely high taxes on his building during the first few years it existed.

The community changed its view of the Pratt Institute and eventually the services at the

building were listed under "church notices."

Citizens visited the institute to witness special seances and lectures given by famous spiritualists.

The institute had traditional courses like history, math, and composition with some spiritualistic subjects, like spiritualism of the Bible and psychic research. Students paid \$50 per year for tuition and room rentals. There wasn't a required entrance exam, but the students had to be at least 15 years old to attend.

There weren't many students enrolled at the Pratt Institute. For example, in 1916 there were 26 students and only four students graduated.

The institute didn't give degrees because it was established to give mediums, speakers and others the chance to learn about progressive thought.

The building itself resembled something straight out of an Edgar Allen Poe short story, according to David Willie, who researched the institute in 1981. The building was apparently set back from the street in a grove of elms.

The most impressive and unique room in the institute was the seance chamber. This is were the legend begins. The entire room was white, including the carpet, furniture and decorations. Inside the institute, a painting hung on the wall of a woman said to have come back from the dead for the sole reason to sit for the artist.

Pratt migrated to Whitewater from Madison County, NY. Pratt converted to the unorthodox

religion of spiritualism after he visited the Lake Mills spiritualist center in 1851. During church services, Pratt frequently argued with pastors who criticized spiritualism.

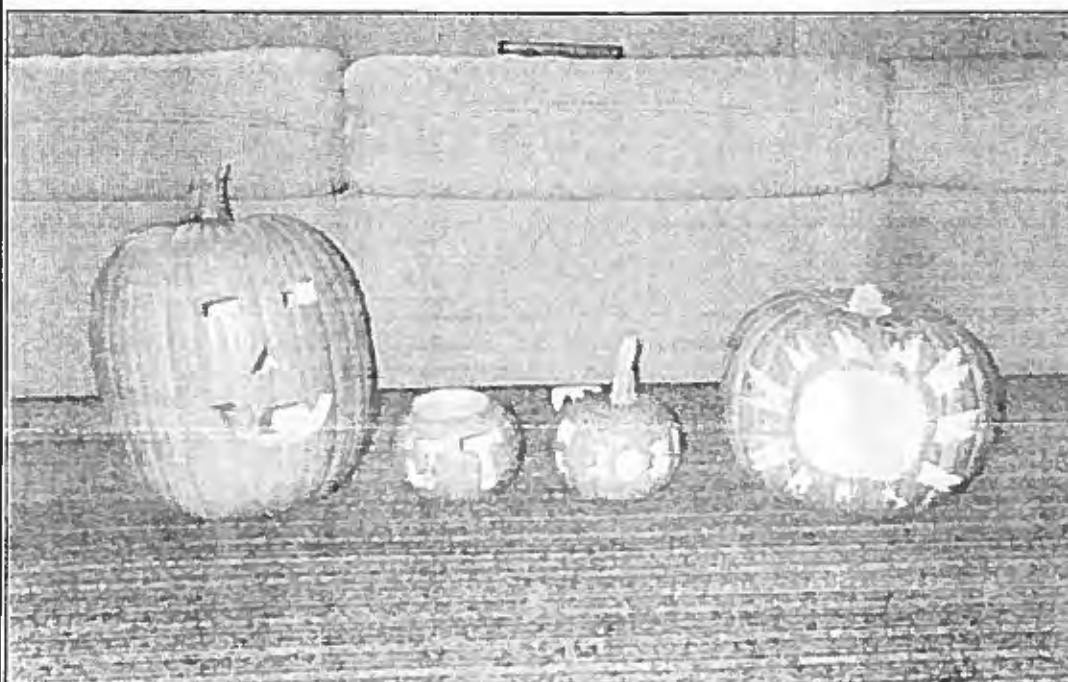
Through many wise investments, Pratt made a fortune. He vowed to dedicate the money to spiritualism. Pratt followed through with his promise by founding the first school for spiritualism in the world.

The school closed in Whitewater in 1935, and a new Morris Pratt Institute was built in Milwaukee.

In 1961 the building was razed and the Wisconsin Telephone Company purchased the property.

There are no records of any communication between the students of the Pratt Institute and the spiritual world. The institute has been closed for many years, but the legends of the "spooks temple" will always remain a unique chapter in the history of the city of Whitewater.

### Happy Halloween!



DEC 01 1995

photo by Laurie Mersch

Carving pumpkins is a true Halloween tradition. Students Nora Moynihan and Laurie Mersch enjoyed the experience. However the best part is yet to come; eating the baked pumpkin seeds is a true delicacy.

### Whitewater Weekend

Don't miss these upcoming events!

October 27

Cyrane

French Film

Roseman Auditorium

7:30 p.m.

Marjorie Anderson Library

Wheelchair Basketball

Tip-Off Tournament

Williams Center Gym 1

8 p.m.

Billiards Special 00 cents

Lesson 17 A Study of Phenomena Part 7  
A. Levitation  
B. Out-of-Body-Experience (OOBE)  
C. Independent Voice

Lesson 18 The Practice & Application of Phenomena Part 1  
A. Awareness & Self-Realization  
B. Introduction to Meditation  
C. The Practice of Meditation  
D. The Application of Meditation

Lesson 19 The Practice & Application of Phenomena Part 2  
A. The Practice of Mediumship  
B. Types of Mediumship  
C. The Application of Mediumship  
D. The Unfoldment of Mediumship  
E. The Psychology of Mediumship

Lesson 20 The Practice & Application of Phenomena Part 3  
A. Mediumship & the Medium  
B. Mediumship & the Sitter  
C. The Benefits of Mediumship  
D. Unsatisfactory Results of Mediumship

UNIT 4 A STUDY OF HEALING

Lesson 21 A History of Healing  
A. Healing & the Ancients  
B. Healing & the Middle Ages  
C. Modern Psychic Healing

Lesson 22 The Theory of Healing  
A. Spiritual Healing & the Spiritualist  
B. Spiritual Healing & the Scientist

Lesson 23 The Avenues of Healing  
A. Spiritual Healing/Contact & Absent  
B. The Spiritualist Healer  
C. Paranormal Healing & Spirit Intervention

Lesson 24 The Practice of Healing  
A. General Considerations  
B. The Practice of Healing  
C. The Healing Experience

UNIT 5 COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Lesson 25 Comparative Religion  
A. An introduction to Religions  
B. Early Religion - What & Why?

Lesson 26 Comparative Religion  
A. Selected Countries-Their Religions

Lesson 27 Comparative Religion  
A. Selected Countries-Their Religions

Lesson 28 Comparative Religion  
A. Philosophers & Philosophies  
B. Selected Scriptures of the Religions of the World  
C. Wisdom of Selected Intellectuals

UNIT 6 REPRESENTING THE RELIGION OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM

Lesson 29 Platform Decorum  
A. The Lecture and Demonstration  
B. Appearance  
C. Manner of Presentation

Lesson 30 Our Role in the Future of Modern Spiritualism  
A. Importance of the Image we Present  
B. Our Image - Our Future  
C. Ways to Make the Future Brighter for Modern Spiritualism

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Additional information in regards to this course of study is available by contacting:

The Morris Pratt Institute  
11811 Watertown Plank Road  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53226

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## INTRODUCTION

For several years, the Morris Pratt Institute has made available for the student of the Religion, Philosophy and Science of Spiritualism a General Course and an Advanced Course.

As with all of life, time marches on. It has become necessary for an updated course for the students of today. Under contract with MPI, SAM, Inc. has researched and prepared the new course.

---

## THE NEW COURSE

The new course is entitled "Educational Course of Study on Modern Spiritualism". It consists of thirty lessons which are divided into six units. Each unit consists of a number of lessons as required by the specific subject.

Each lesson consists of the Study Material, a Bibliography, Required and Recommended Reading, and Questions for submittal to the Review Team.

---

## PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

The purpose of the Morris Pratt Institute is primarily Education. As such, it functions as the National Spiritualist Association's Bureau of Education. Thus, the course provides the student with the background required for preparation for the ministry of Spiritualism as a Spiritualist Teacher, Licentiate, or Ordained Minister, Healer, and Medium.

## UNIT 1 THE HISTORY OF SPIRITUALISM

### Lesson 1 - Psychic Events Prior to Modern Spiritualism

- A. Generalities of Spiritualism
- B. Forerunners of Spiritualism
- C. Commencement of Spiritualism
- D. Miscellany

### Lesson 2 - The Advent of Modern Spiritualism

- A. History of Hydesville and the Fox Family
- B. Pioneers, Early Publications and Camps

## UNIT 2 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RELIGION OF SPIRITUALISM

### Lesson 3 Spiritualism as a Religion

- A. Definitions
- B. Declaration of Principles
- C. Objects
- D. Symbol of Spiritualism
- E. Certifications & Requirements

### Lesson 4 Spiritualism as a Philosophy Part 1

- A. Philosophy defined
- B. Spiritual Natural Law
- C. Man and Spiritualistic Philosophy
- D. The God Idea
- E. Creation/Spiritualistic Philosophy

### Lesson 5 Spiritualism as a Philosophy Part 2

- A. Attitudes toward Death & Dying
- B. Death-Dying/Spiritualist View
- C. Reality of Life, Death & Dying

### Lesson 6 Spiritualism as a Philosophy - Part 3

- A. Info concerning Life after Death
- B. After Death/Spiritualist View
- C. Significance of the Lesson

### Lesson 7 Spiritualism as a Science

- A. Concise picture of science
- B. Relationship of Science and Spiritualism
- C. Study of Selected Scientists and Psychic Experiments
- D. Twentieth Century Parapsychology

### Lesson 8 A Believing Spiritualist

- A. Positive aspects of Spiritualism
- B. A Spiritualist views The Bible, Miracles, Prayer, Reincarnation, Astrology, Palmistry, Crystal Gazing and the Ouija Board
- C. Spiritualism & the Christian Ethics

### Lesson 9 Essays on Spiritualism

- A. Spiritualism explains Tolerance, Compassion, Open-mindedness and Understanding
- B. Spiritualism as it relates to man; his duty to self and his duty to his fellowman
- C. Spiritualism, Life & Its Purpose

## UNIT 3 THE STUDY OF PHENOMENA

### Lesson 10 Classification of Phenomena

- A. Definition of Phenomena
- B. Classification of Phenomena
- Definition of each Category

### Lesson 11 A Study of Phenomena Part 1

- A. Telepathy
- B. Clairvoyance
- C. Clairaudience

### Lesson 12 A Study of Phenomena Part 2

- A. Retrocognition
- B. Precognition
- C. Prophecy

### Lesson 13 A Study of Phenomena Part 3

- A. Inspirational Writing/Speaking
- B. Trance

### Lesson 14 A Study of Phenomena Part 4

- A. Clairsentience
- B. Psychometry
- C. Spirit Photography

### Lesson 15 A Study of Phenomena Part 5

- A. Materialization
- B. Dematerialization
- C. Teleportation-Apparitions

### Lesson 16 A Study of Phenomena Part 6

- A. History of the Human Aura
- B. Kirlian and the Aura
- C. Kirlian Photography & the Aura
- D. The Aura & Spiritualism

to find jobs in Whitewater. The school closed for three years. In 1935, it reopened but was closed a short time thereafter. In 1946, the temple was sold and a new Morris Pratt Institute building constructed in Wauwatosa, a suburb of Milwaukee. On April 24, 1977, after a complete face-lifting both inside and out, the Morris Pratt Institute building was re-dedicated to the Cause of Education in Spiritualism.

\*\*\*\*\*

### MORRIS PRATT FOUNDER

There is little written concerning the life of Morris Pratt. However, it is well known that after his visit to the Lake Mills Spiritualist Center in 1851, he became very interested in psychic phenomena and the Religion of Spiritualism. Being well educated, he frequently argued with ministers who criticized Spiritualism and on several occasions was evicted from their churches. At one time, he was fined for his controversial actions. And in being dedicated to the promotion of Spiritualism, he fully recognized the need for educated workers to present the religion to the intellect of the times.

It is said that one day his Red Indian guide told him of certain mineral deposits unknown to any white man. He made an investment in a company which later became the profitable Ashland Mine of Ironwood, Michigan. Pratt always said that "If I am made rich, I will give part of it to Spiritualism."

Within a few month's time, he made over \$200,000. He did not hesitate in fulfilling his promise by using part of the monies for the benefit of the Cause of Spiritualism. In 1889, The Temple was dedicated. When opened, it consisted of lecture rooms, an office, a chapel and dormitories.

The land and original building at Whitewater, Wisconsin, was deeded to the Morris Pratt Institute.

\*\*\*\*\*

### MOSES HULL THE FIRST PRESIDENT

Moses Hull was born in Waldo, Ohio in 1836. At the age of sixteen, Hull joined the United Brethren Church. They were more than pleased since they saw the potential of a great minister in him; not too long thereafter he became acquainted with an Adventist. This meeting led him into an investigation of the new idea and remembering the Bible "Try all things. . ." led him to becoming a Seventh Day Adventist. But, the questioning of life after death by an Adventist minister at the point of his transition, led Moses into other avenues.

He began attending seances and soon commenced lecturing at Spiritualist societies and churches. Soon thereafter he commenced teaching the Bible from a Spiritualist's view. This was followed later with his publishing two volumes, entitled "The Encyclopedia of Biblical Spiritualism."

Recorded as historical documents are the Jamieson-Hull debate which convinced Hull of the truth of Spiritualism and the Hull-Covert Debate. For the last ten years of his life he held a commission from the N.S.A. making him the official champion debater in behalf of Spiritualism in America.

Moses Hull spent forty-five years of his life promoting the Cause of Spiritualism. Moses Hull passed to the Spirit World January 1906.

\*\*\*\*\*

It is well noted that the Morris Pratt Institute and the National Spiritualist Association were closely affiliated. Therefore, it was natural that the Morris Pratt Institute became the Educational Bureau of the N.S.A.C.

\*\*\*\*\*

At the Eighty-Fifth Annual Convention of the N.S.A.C., appointed members of the Morris Pratt Institute and the National Spiritualist Association of Churches met with Rev. Marilyn J. Awtry, N.S.T. and Paula M. Vogt to discuss preparation of an updated course. The New Educational Course on Modern Spiritualism was presented at the Eighty-Ninth Annual Convention of the N.S.A.C. in Denver, Colorado in October 1981.

\*\*\*\*\*

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# The History of Morris Pratt Institute, Inc.

(N.S.A.C. Bureau of Education)



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## HISTORY OF MORRIS PRATT INSTITUTE



Known during its years as the "spooks' temple," the Pratt Institute soon earned the respect of local citizens and eventually gained national fame after it was constructed by Morris Pratt in 1889. For those interested in spiritualism all over America, Whitewater became known as the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism."

And, at the Ninth Annual Convention of the National Spiritualist Association held in Washington, D. C., Morris and Zulema Pratt presented a letter to the N.S.A. offering them the properties in Whitewater, Wisconsin to be utilized "for educational purposes along the lines of the Moses Hull and A. J. Weaver Training School with such alteration in systems of teaching and curriculum as educator's may think it wise to make." However, the N.S.A. was only eight years in being and felt the financial burden of school would be too much for them at the time.

Morris Pratt's dream did not end there. On November 2, 1901, he filed a petition for incorporation which resulted in the Morris Pratt Institute becoming a corporation on December 11, 1901. The school was to be managed by nine trustees, two of which were to be members of the National Spiritualist Association and one was to be the President of the Wisconsin State Spiritualist Association. It was Morris Pratt's desire that the trustworthy, dedicated Moses Hull be the President.

Just four years after the organizing of modern Spiritualism, it became apparent that the "grand and fearless lecturer's of the day were passing on to the world of spirit." This weighed heavily on the mind of Moses Hull. So, he sought some person who would commence with the establishment of a training school. While serving at Maple Dell Park, Mantua, Ohio, he openly projected his feelings. The officers there were very sympathetic to his idea. Thus, plans were drawn up and an announcement made that "The Training School was to be organized." The instructors engaged were Professor Andrew J. Weaver, Alfaretta Jahnke (Moses' youngest daughter), D. M. King, Moses and Mattie Hull. For several years, the school was successful except in the area of finances. Thus, it was forced to close. But, this humble start was the beginning of what we know today as the Morris Pratt Institute. For, in the background was an elderly gentlemen living in Whitewater, Wisconsin, who had been observing Moses Hull and his struggles. He was much concerned.

In 1888, Morris Pratt bought property and constructed the most expensive home in Whitewater. The building was assessed at \$30,000 and was some 48' wide and 85' long. It contained two large auditorium halls, one of which seated nearly 400 people. Pratt designed the building as a temple and a school for Spiritualism.

The subjects to be taught at the school were Science, Mathematics, and Language. Special courses were Oratory, Voice and Physical Culture, English and Rhetoric, Bible Exegetics, Higher Criticism, Logic and Parliamentary Law, Comparative Theology and Psychic Culture. The principles of the school were:

- a. "Maintenance of the individuality of each student,
- b. perfect freedom of thought and expression so long as unkind personalities were avoided,
- c. reason and experience accepted as the highest authority,
- d. no discrimination because of one's ideas,
- e. all narrow and sectarian ruts carefully avoided, and
- f. the desired aim to make all students thinkers."

However, Morris Pratt passed to spirit on December 2, 1902 before his dream became an operational reality. Thus, Moses Hull followed Pratt's plans and opened the school on September 29, 1903. Professor A. J. Weaver was the first Principal, Moses Hull was the President and teacher of Homelectics; Florence Johnson (previous F. Jahnke), a teacher of Oratory and Mattie Hull in charge of the Psychic Department.

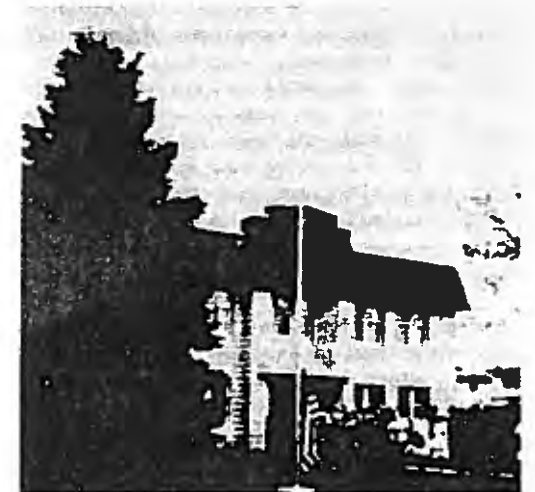
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Along with the Morris Pratt Institute's interest in education, Thomas Grimshaw proposed that a Bureau of Education be established in the NSA. At the Thirtieth Annual Convention such a Bureau was created. Thomas Grimshaw was appointed as Superintendent with the Honorable Mark A. Barwise as his Assistant. Mr. Grimshaw immediately appointed a committee to cooperate with this new Bureau and draft a correspondence course on Spiritualism.

The result was "The General Course," consisting of twenty-six lessons in the "History,

Philosophy and Religion of Modern Spiritualism" and later the "Advanced Course" consisting of thirty lessons dealing with "Spiritualism, Philosophy, Mediumship and Comparative Religion" prepared by Thomas Grimshaw (who became the President of Morris Pratt Institute). The passing of Barwise in 1937, left the task of combining the two courses into one "General Course" to Rev. Grimshaw. A new Advanced Course would now also be needed. Shortly after completing the "General Course," Grimshaw also passed to the spirit world. Thus, the task was left to the new Superintendent of the Bureau of Education, Dr. Victoria Barnes. She immediately took on the task and shortly thereafter announced the completion of "Advanced Course 2."

\*\*\*\*\*



Now, this is the way our home office appears today. Our house is in order! It is difficult to believe that this is the same structure. Much time and effort was devoted to this project. We as Spiritualists can be proud of our educational facility in Milwaukee, Wisc.

During the years of the depression, the school suffered from endowment losses. Many of the students from the Institute were unable

# In search of spirits: Whitewater has 'other world' stories to tell

By Kim McDarison  
REGISTER EDITOR

Everyone, at one time or another, is haunted by days spent in the school yard. Whether it's a happy memory of frolic and friends, or one more solemn of feeling socially misunderstood, we all have our imagery to embrace.

But the educational institutions of which we are about to speak are haunted on a much higher level — by disturbing rumors, and conjured spirits.

Some students are too young to understand and seem oblivious to the folklore of the past, while others indulge their morbid curiosities. Take, for example, the troubling stories that students at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater tell and re-tell.

In October of 1972, Katie Kuhn, then feature editor of the *Royal Purple*, UW-Whitewater's newspaper, published an excerpt from a letter which had been sent to the newsroom by a student at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

It read, "In doing research on my project, I have traced the origin of Mary Worth back to Whitewater, Wis. Any information you could give me on this, and witchcraft in general, would be quite helpful."

The focus of the Miami student's research was left somewhat a mystery, and so is Mary Worth. Legend has it that a person by that name roams the area cemeteries each Halloween with an ax, looking to slay those indiscriminate enough to be lurking in cemeteries on Halloween. Her mortal remains are rumored to rest in Oak Grove Cemetery, located adjacent to

Washington Elementary School.

Local historian Fred Kraege, a resident of Whitewater since 1954, has been documenting the blocks and plots in Whitewater cemeteries for years and he shows no record of such a person ever interred in any of the community's three cemeteries.

Today, Oak Grove Cemetery, founded in 1884 and the oldest of the three, is gated and locked to keep the more destructive among the curious out, and no marker there dates later than the end of the 19th century, said Kraege. A sign located behind the gate tells would-be visitors that the cemetery is no longer in use.

Perhaps this is linked, although not apparently so, to the bizarre circumstance of an infant's casket which had been exhumed, presumably by vandals, and left for police to find on the UW-Whitewater campus mall (a walkway which goes through a central portion of the campus). This occurred on Halloween in 1970, and even though it happened in broad daylight, police could find no witnesses to the crime.

Former Police Chief Bruce Lyons has been retired for 10 years, but he does remember the casket which was discarded on the mall. He was a juvenile officer then.

"I remember that it was real small and it was white. I think it was taken from a crypt in Hillside Cemetery," he said.

For witchcraft believers, this served as evidence that a rumored coven of witches did, and maybe does, exist in Whitewater, drawn there by the triangular pattern that the community's three cemeteries — Oak Grove, Hillside, and Calvary — make around the site of the town's now defunct water tower, which stands in Starin Park.

As further proof of the sinister role played by the tower, students point to the chain-link fence which surrounds it, with its barbed-wire top pointing in — as if to keep something in — rather than out. Is this evidence of witchcraft or just an inexperienced fence-crafter?

Another story, although seemingly based in fiction since Whitewater police have never verified the tale, is about a young man who dared to visit one of the cemeteries on Halloween. His body, so the story goes, was later found at a gas station. His wrists had been slashed. (Those of us more analytically minded are

The old water tower (left) in Whitewater's Starin Park is surrounded by a chain-link fence, some say, to keep witches in. Legend has it that witches are drawn to the tower because it is centrally placed within a triangular pattern formed by the community's three cemeteries.

KIM MCDARISON *Whitewater History*



COURTESY OF OLDE MAIN ANTIQUES *Whitewater History*

The gates of Hillside Cemetery beacon eerily in this circa 1900 postcard photograph.

left to wonder why his hands were not completely chopped off — after all, Mary wheels an ax.)

Still, the story served to help finely spin the web of speculation, and as the years passed, the *Royal Purple* continued to report of brazen college students who dared to brave the night.

Is hope of communication with the spirit world a manifestation of dementia, or is it possible? Contemporary college students were not the first to ask. Back in the days when Whitewater was first forming, an early pioneer and spiritualist named Morris Pratt also wondered if the dead could be brought to earth, or at the very least, have communication with the living.

## The Morris Pratt Project

Born on Dec. 13, 1820, to parents Joseph and Clarissa, Morris Pratt was the sixth of eight children. The family lived in Madison County, New York, and made their mainstay farming. Unfortunately for Pratt, like many 19th-century farm children, education was a commodity that came after chores and as Pratt reached adolescence, his education ended.

In 1840, he moved to Whitewater where he and a handful of pioneer families began to carve out a community in the wilderness. It was there that he met a fellow New Yorker and an already devout spiritualist named Mary Hayes who introduced him to the religion and changed his life.

Pratt is best known for having built the first permanent institution of learning under the auspices of spiritualism, the belief that the dead survive as spirits which can communicate with the living.

He claimed to be guided by "invisible intelligences," which, with the aid of Hayes, led him to his fortune. Hayes, a self-proclaimed faith healer and

prophet, told Pratt to purchase some seemingly useless land which was later discovered to be rich in iron and ultimately became the Ashland Iron Mine in Ironwood Michigan.

Pratt promised the spirits that if he ever became wealthy, he would dedicate himself and his fortune to spiritualism. True to his word, he built the 60-by-100-foot, three-story brick building which was to become the institute in 1888. At the time, he was 69 and the home, which stood at 300 Center Street, was thought to be the most lavish in the city.

After erecting the home, Pratt held seances and spiritualist services for a few years and then deeded the land and the building to a group of seven well-known spiritualists, making them trustees of the property. Shortly afterward, in 1902, the institute was founded.

Spiritualist minister the Rev. Moses Howell and Pratt inaugurated the school which was then incorporated under Wisconsin state law. Pratt died soon after in December of that year. He was buried in the Hillside Cemetery next to his first wife, Mary Jane, who had died just two years earlier in January of 1900. Proud to the end of his unorthodox views, chiseled into his simple gravestone beneath his name are the words "Scientific Spiritualist."

Spiritualism was popular after the Civil War and understandably so — many had lost family members during the conflict and hoped to make a gratifying reconnection.

In Whitewater the strange goings-on served as a form of fascination for townspeople who first levied exorbitant taxes on Pratt's building and then came to accept and even attend Sunday evening services which were open to the public.

Students at the institute were enrolled in two "branches" of study. The first branch consisted

of ordinary curriculum: grammar, English literature, general history, and science. The second branch digressed into more controversial matters such as psychic research, comparative religion, higher criticism (the study of the Bible from a scientific standpoint), evolution, and spiritualism of the Bible.

The school offered a two-year course of study and did award diplomas but not in the usual sense. In an article published in the March 1917 issue of the *Walworth County Trade Review*, the institute was described as an academy that occupied a position between the common school and the college. The publication went on to claim that the teachers there were "honest, earnest and efficient," and had prior experience teaching in public and private schools. The story also suggested that "mediumship" was a popular course of study.

As it did many things, the Great Depression of the 1930s took its toll on the institute which closed its Whitewater location in 1946 and sought out new housing in Milwaukee. During the pinnacle of its success, the institute had 45 students and six teachers living in its dormitory.

After the institute closed, Pratt's former home was used first as a rest home for aging spiritualists, and then as a dormitory for the Wisconsin State Teacher's College. In 1961, the building was demolished and a new one was erected by the Wisconsin Telephone Company. That building stands today and is used by Ameritech as a switching station. (It appears that communication with the living was the site's ultimate destiny.)

Those interested in learning more about spiritualism and psychic phenomenon can contact the Morris Pratt Institute's Web site at [www.morrispratt.org](http://www.morrispratt.org).

- Horoscopes, page 8
- Domestic Violence, page 8

# Feature

*"If I die, you have my permission to eat me."*

— Alive

## Whitewater has history of supernatural occurrences

By Jenny Oechsner  
*Royal Purple staff writer*

Witches, ghosts and other stories of the supernatural things many of you laugh at, but also things many of you hold a very strong belief in.

Most, if not all of you, have heard the story about things that are seen at midnight around the tower behind Wells Hall. It is said to be a witches tower. Did you ever notice that the top of the fence slants inward rather than outward, which suggests that someone or something is being kept in, rather than keeping people out?

For many years, there have been stories of odd occurrences in Whitewater, particularly in and around Whitewater Lake.

One of these odd events took

place in 1992, when three friends rented a small house on the lake. It was late at night and they saw a small group of people gathered on the beach.

They started to go and see who it was, when they realized that something wasn't quite right about the people who were down there. They were dressed oddly and all in black, and they were chanting and swaying back and forth.

After a short period of time, a thick cloud of fog rolled off the lake. When the three friends heard a loud gurgling sound and saw something start to come out of the lake, they took off running.

Early the next morning, a person who witnessed this called the police. When the officers went to investigate, they found some small bones and circles of stones formed in odd patterns.

Because of this evidence, it was believed to be some sort of a cult activity.

Another odd event that occurred at Whitewater Lake was in 1909, when large chunks of ice were found floating on the lake in June. They were discovered when a boat hit one of them and was damaged.

Another of these occurrences was in 1923 when three fishermen were on the lake and their boat overturned. The men reported that they felt a number of long, scaly tentacles slide past them in the water and that they were briefly pulled under. When they reached the shore and got out of the water, they found they had tiny bites all over their bodies.

These are only a few of the many odd and unexplainable things that have happened at



Drawing courtesy of the Whitewater Police Department 1992

mysterious Whitewater Lake. swimming, watch for things that So if you ever decide to visit seem a little bit odd and try to the lake, be careful when you are leave before dark.

RP Oct 31, 1990

"Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood."

—Marie Curie

Wal. Sp. 21-193

# City's history conjurs scary tales of early links to witchcraft, occult

By Beth Zelse  
of the Royal Purple

Each year at Halloween, tales of Whitewater's alleged dark and eerie past are conjured up from the archives of creative minds. Somehow as time wears on the stories manage to become a little more unusual and a little less believable. Although a great deal of the stories are nothing more than local lore, there are actually some truths to the "Haunted History" of Whitewater.

Historically on campus, the more ridiculous the story, the more likely it will persist. Two absurd legends involve local ghostly apparitions. The ghost of Albert Salisbury is said to haunt Salisbury Hall, and Oak Grove Cemetery is rumored to be the final (?) resting place of axe-toting murderess, Mary Worth. On Halloween Eve, tales contend that Mary may be found lurking amid the tombstones.

Among the other myths:

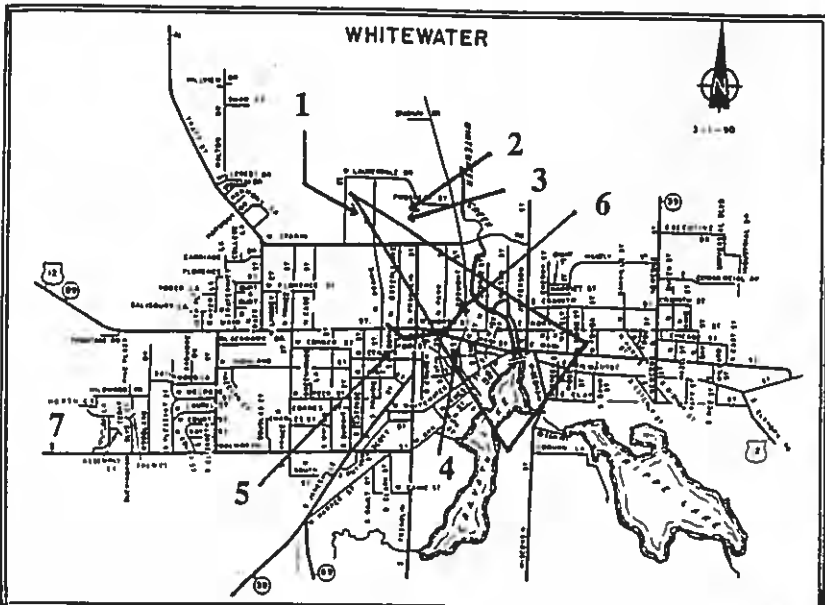
## 1. THE TRIANGLE OF CEMETARIES—

The city of Whitewater is comprised of three cemeteries: Calvary, located on the northern edge of campus; Oak Grove, perched upon a hill next to Washington Elementary School on the city's East side, and Hillside, a sprawling piece of acreage adjacent to Cravath Lake.

Nothing is unusual about the fact that there are three cemeteries in Whitewater, however, with the help of a strategically placed ruler, they can be mapped as an isosceles triangle. The myth maintains that the 'triangle' has a direct connection to witchcraft or satanism, but no proof has ever been established to support the claim.

## 2. WELLS HALL FIELD—

Due to its proximity to the 'triangle,' the field upon which Wells Hall now stands is rumored to have once been the local gathering place of various cults and covens. "Believers" are supposedly buried vertically in a circle



surrounding the secret altar. Conflicting stories contend that the altar can be found beneath Wells Hall or in one of the three cemeteries. Responsibility for deaths in Wells Hall have been said to stem from luring power of the dark currents of the triangle.

## 3. STARIN PARK WATERTOWER—

Virtually everything within or adjoining the "triangle" can potentially become a part of local folklore. The old, fenced-in watertower atop Starin Hill is a Halloween favorite. The barbed wire that tops the fence is said to tilt towards the tower in an attempt to keep mortals out and to keep evil spirits in.

## 4. THE PRATT INSTITUTE—

Much of Whitewater's fabled history stems from real occult-based roots. Although documentation fails to support the rumor that Whitewater is the "second Salem,

Massachusetts," Whitewater was home to the world's first school of spiritualism.

In 1889, Morris Pratt completed construction of the Pratt Institute on the corner of Fremont and Center Streets, where the accounting offices of Gerald Murray now stand. Pratt had hoped to spread the practice and understanding of communication with the spirit world. The institute, often referred to as the "Witch College," attracted a sizeable number of students and drew fair crowds to its lectures and Sunday night seances. In 1961, however, the Pratt Institute closed its doors in Whitewater and relocated to Milwaukee.

See BOO!,  
page 7



WHERE ARE YOU MARY?—Oak Grove Cemetery on Whitewater's East side is said to be the home of axe-toting murderess Mary Worth. Each year at Halloween spooky stories are unearthed about the haunted (?) history of Whitewater.

BOO!, *CP*  
10-31-'90  
from page 6

**5. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL SYSTEM**— Many of Whitewater's older homes are said to be connected by an elaborate system of passageways. The purpose of the system is controversial. Some believe that the tunnels were a part of the underground railroad, while other believe the tunnels were nothing more than root cellars.

Concern with purpose aside, the tunnels do actually exist. In 1981, at the former Alpha Sigma house (at 614 W. Main St.), members of the sorority were startled by noises coming from their basement. Upon inspection, they found bricks strewn across the floor, revealing a previously unknown tunnel entrance.

Another tunnel exists beneath the ornate, vacant home next to the Whitewater Public Library on Main Street, known as the Hamilton House. Other tunnels are said to criss-cross much of center Whitewater from the Green Shutters (on Main St.) to the Sable House (on Fremont St.).

**6. THE KU KLUX KLAN**— For the period of about one year during the mid-1920's, the Ku Klux Klan surfaced in Whitewater. The local Klan disbanded in April 1925, however, when high-ranking member A.J. Gilbertson was found dead on the lawn of the Methodist Church. His

sudden death lead to speculation of murder, natural causes, or supernatural causes.

**7. SACRED INDIAN MOUNDS**— elaborate display of Indian mounds preserved in a park on the west side of city. Tribal lore tells of the channel between the living and the dead via the sacred burial grounds. However, whether or not the channel exists has yet to be proven.

Halloween in Whitewater guarantees many things. Trick-or-treaters. The Rock Horror Picture Show. Road trips to Manson. Vandalized pumpkins. And a plethora of rumors about Whitewater's haunted history. Hopefully fact is easily discernible from fiction. Although a lot of the history is undocumented or vague, the burials do exist--you just have to 'dig' for them. Excuse the pun.

#47

10-29-86

THE ROYAL

# RP Feature

## Witch myths unearthed

by Molly Shepard  
The Royal Purple

For years, juicy stories about witchcraft and many other creepy, evil happenings have circulated the Whitewater campus.

The "currents" are said to be right for witchcraft in Whitewater. It has even been noted, only second to Salem, Mass., as a center for witchcraft and witch cults.

Axe murderer Mary Worth is said to have been from Whitewater. A widely held rumor says that she is still lurking about the nearby graveyards, a ghostly figure, axe still in hand.

Several legends tell of witches' covens held in the field where Wells Hall is now located. One rumor says that students who have gotten too close to finding out the "truth" about Whitewater witchcraft have gone insane, committed suicide and even disappeared or died mysteriously.

For all of the rumors circulated about the subject, there is no proof that any of these haunted tales are true.

Nevertheless, mysterious incidents have occurred in Whitewater, just like any other town.

Halloween night, in 1970, a coffin of an infant girl was removed from a nearby

cemetery. It was found in the campus mall the next day. No witness was available and the mystery went unsolved. The Whitewater police attributed the event to Halloween pranksters.

Other incidents include a Ku Klux Klan leader being found dead on a church lawn in 1925 and a number of suicides in the town's early annals.

Yet these incidents could have been inflicted by man rather than ghost, again leaving no evidence of spooks and witchcraft.

Dale Reich, author of *A History of Whitewater* and director of News and Publications at UW-W, said, "There have been rumors circulating among the student body for years, but there is no concrete evidence that these things exist here. It might be kind of fun if they did, but they don't."

The origins of these ghostly rumors may be attributed to the fact that at one time a spiritual college did exist in Whitewater, the Morris Pratt Institute.

Spiritualism is, in essence, communication with the dead. It became popular in the years immediately following the Civil War because many people had lost loved ones and wanted desperately to communicate with them.

Morris Pratt was a New Yorker who settled in Wisconsin shortly after 1840. Very interested in spiritualism, Pratt claimed, should he ever become wealthy, he would

## Witchcraft

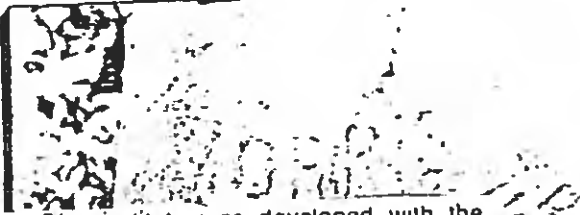
from page 5

dedicate the money in some way to the study of spiritualism.

In 1884, Matt Hayes, a faith leader, advised Pratt to invest in some land in upper Michigan. The land turned out to be rich in iron and thus Pratt had a small fortune with which to build a spiritual college.

In 1888, he built the \$30,000 house at 300 Center Street. At that time it was the most expensive building in town. The three-story building was 48-feet wide and 25-feet long and contained a chapel, two auditoriums, offices, classrooms, a dining room, kitchen and sleeping rooms to accommodate 50 students. The third floor is said to have been used for seances and everything on the floor was white.

The townspeople weren't happy with Pratt's controversial ideas. They called the institute "Pratt's Folly," and forced the school to pay enormous amounts of money in property tax.



The institute was developed with the idea that people who possessed psychic powers should be given the opportunity to improve them. The college was popular as a medium center and was given the title of the "Mecca of Modern Spiritualism." The institute was the first of its kind in the entire world.

Besides spiritualism — grammar, literature, psychology, speech and religion were taught. At its height, 1910-1915, 45 students from all over the country attended the school.

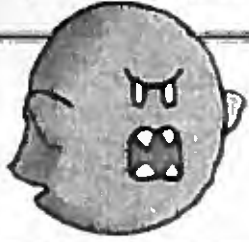
During the Depression, the Morris Pratt Institute closed down for three years due to a lack of funds. It was reopened in 1935 but closed again in 1946. A new Morris Pratt Institute was built in Milwaukee and still exists today.

For a time, the building was used as a rest home for aged spiritualists. The first English Lutheran Church even used the building in 1948 for church services while their church was being remodeled.

Finally, it was used as a women's dormitory for the Wisconsin State Teacher's College.

In 1961 the building was razed and now the telephone company stands in its place.

# ROYAL PURPLE



Level up your Halloween

LIFESTYLE  
- PAGE 8



How to carve the perfect pumpkin

SPOTLIGHT  
- PAGE 12

Warhawks host invitational this weekend after upsetting No. 1 UW-Oshkosh  
SPORTS - PAGE 17



OCTOBER 28, 2009

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ESTABLISHED 1901

## Campus holds haunted past

By Jessica Tuttle

STAFF WRITER

Among the first tales heard by new UW-Whitewater students are of ghosts, witches and a book so horrible it had to be locked up in the basement of Andersen Library.

Karen Weston, the university archivist for 15 years, has had her fair share of hearing the haunted tales. She remains skeptical.

"It's only here on campus that this seems to be an issue," Weston said. "Nobody in town talks about haunted Whitewater."

One rumor Weston has dealt with countless times is that of the locked book in Andersen Library. It is said that those who read its horrid contents commit suicide, while others believe those who read it get cursed.

Many students have gone to the library to ask about the book, but lack the standard information to find it. There is no known title, author or publisher. The only locked-up book in the library is a large Catholic hymn book with closures.

Weston said rumors about the book might have started before the library's renovation in 1989. There was a large room containing archives, government documents and special collections. Since there were valuable books in the collections, they were locked in a cage for security.

A tale that seemingly supports the idea that witches

*They are rumors. There is no validity to any of this stuff. Enjoy it, but don't take any of it as truth.*

Karen Weston,  
university archivist

once inhabited Whitewater involves the alignment of the three cemeteries in town forming an equilateral triangle. While Oak Grove, Hillside and Calvary Cemeteries do line up that way, Weston doesn't think the Catholic groups behind them would've gotten together to make a heathen triangle.

One undeniable incident occurred on Halloween in 1970, when a child's coffin was found on the mall of the University Center. It was dug up and left on the grounds without evidence of who did it, disturbing the community.

The Morris Pratt Institute, established in 1888 as a school for spiritualism, also sparks rumors of the strange.

Morris Pratt was an early settler in the Whitewater area who built the school downtown.

Classes were held until the 1920s. The building was later used as a boarding house, until it was torn down in the 1960s.

While the institute has been gone for years, there have been reports of unusual occurrences in the area where the building once stood.

Most of the stories linked with the spiritualist school have been witch-related, giving Whitewater its nickname of "the second Salem."

Junior Brian Bialobrzewski said he believes the rumors.

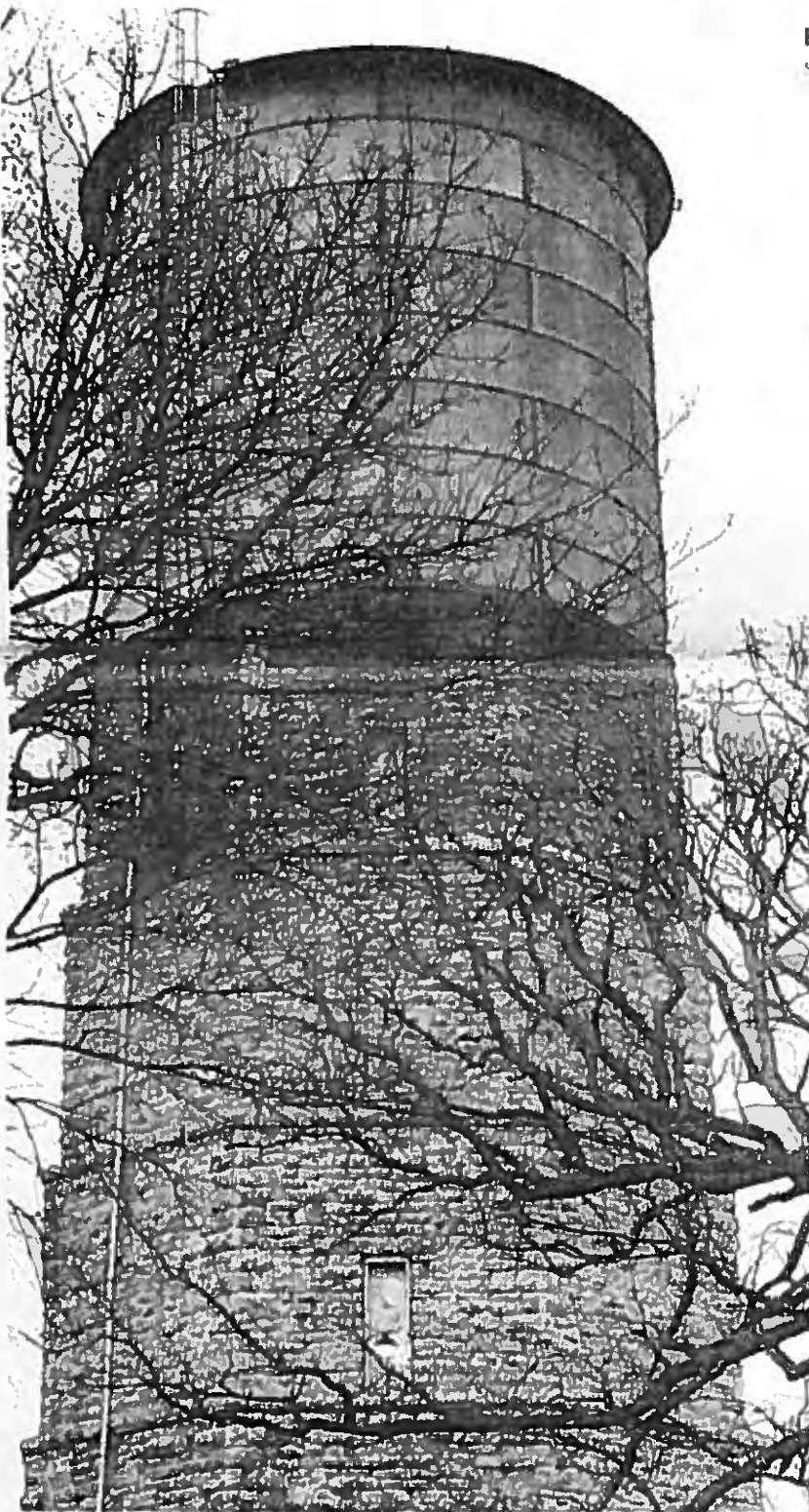
"I especially believe in the three witches who did seances around the water tower in Starin Park," Bialobrzewski said. "We took pictures and learned that white orbs are good and red orbs are bad. When we took a picture of the tower, there were three red orbs near the top for the witches."

Bialobrzewski also participated in a ghost hunt his freshman year. The group went to the Center of the Arts and spoke to the spirit of a little girl who was said to be buried somewhere on the grounds. The girl and her parents were killed for being witches, Bialobrzewski said.

A woman's spirit is said to haunt the Pi Kappa Alpha chapter house. A woman committed suicide in a closet where she hung her crucifix. When the crucifix is removed from the closet, the lights are said to flicker and the television turns off.

Junior Gabrielle Williams said she also believes rumors about houses haunted by spirits.

SEE RUMORS PAGE 5



The water tower in Starin Park near the Wells Hall towers is rumored to have been the location for a group of three witches to hold seances before UW-Whitewater was established in 1868.

## H1N1 vaccinations being given to high-risk students, staff on campus

By Corey Hasler

STAFF WRITER

UW-Whitewater received its first shipment of H1N1 Influenza vaccinations last week. The shipment included 300 doses of the vaccine, authorized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to vaccinate health care employees and persons at high risk free of charge.

The CDC planned to have 40 million doses of the vaccination available by the end of October; however, they have only produced about 16 million as of Friday.

"It has been our hope that we will receive a sufficient amount of vaccinations for campus," Director of University Health and Counseling Services Ruth Swisher said. "Current

### High-risk patients

■ Symptoms of high-risk patients: asthma, diabetes, cardiac disorders.

■ To schedule an appointment follow the H1N1 prompt. The line is open day-Friday, 8 a.m.-noon and 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

Public Health reports indicate that we will advise campus as soon as we are notified.

Swisher said that UHCS has se

Royal Purple Page 5

RUMORS Continued from page 1

"A lot of the houses on Main Street are haunted," Williams said. "The sorority and fraternity houses definitely are."

Williams said the Alpha Sigma house is haunted with a "good ghost" who woke up women in the house during the night when the oven was left on. Some believe, she was preventing the house from burning down.

Although many people have had personal experiences with the apparently haunted past of Whitewater, others do not think the evidence is credible or convincing.

"They are rumors," Weston said. "There is no validity to any of this stuff. Enjoy it, but don't take any of it as truth."

#49

# Legends of paranormal happenings haunt city

By Joy Kowald

SPECIAL TO THE ROYAL PURPLE

By Nick Macaluso

SPECIAL TO THE ROYAL PURPLE

Web sites, news clippings and student whispers thread together a background of occult intrigue that surrounds the Whitewater campus and the town each Halloween.

Rumors include subterranean witch tunnels connecting to UW-Whitewater sorority house basements, ax-murderer Mary Worth toting her weapon around the dormitory halls, and Halloween pranks involving exhumed infant coffins.

Sometimes it's hard figuring

out what and who to believe.

"I heard that little cabin on the hill was haunted on a tour as a freshman but was immediately informed it was not by the guide," Eric Godin said.

Not even the university library was spared blushes. Purportedly, a book exists in a sublevel of the facility that causes everyone who reads it to commit suicide. It apparently has claimed the lives of three students and sent one janitor to the asylum.

"Never mind that none of these [book victims] have ever been given names," UW-Whitewater Assistant Archivist Deronica Goldsmith said. "The same questions come up around this

time every year."

Goldsmith has dealt with these questions since the beginning of her tenure but insists that no such book exists, at least that she's aware of.

Another popular tale being passed around is that of the water tower located in Starin Park.

David School heard that a boy drowned in the tower from his girlfriend Lisa Zimmermann after she read it in a book.

Others say that it's a meeting place for gatherings of a sinister nature. Shayla Kennedy was told that during these gatherings that somebody was hung near or on the tower.

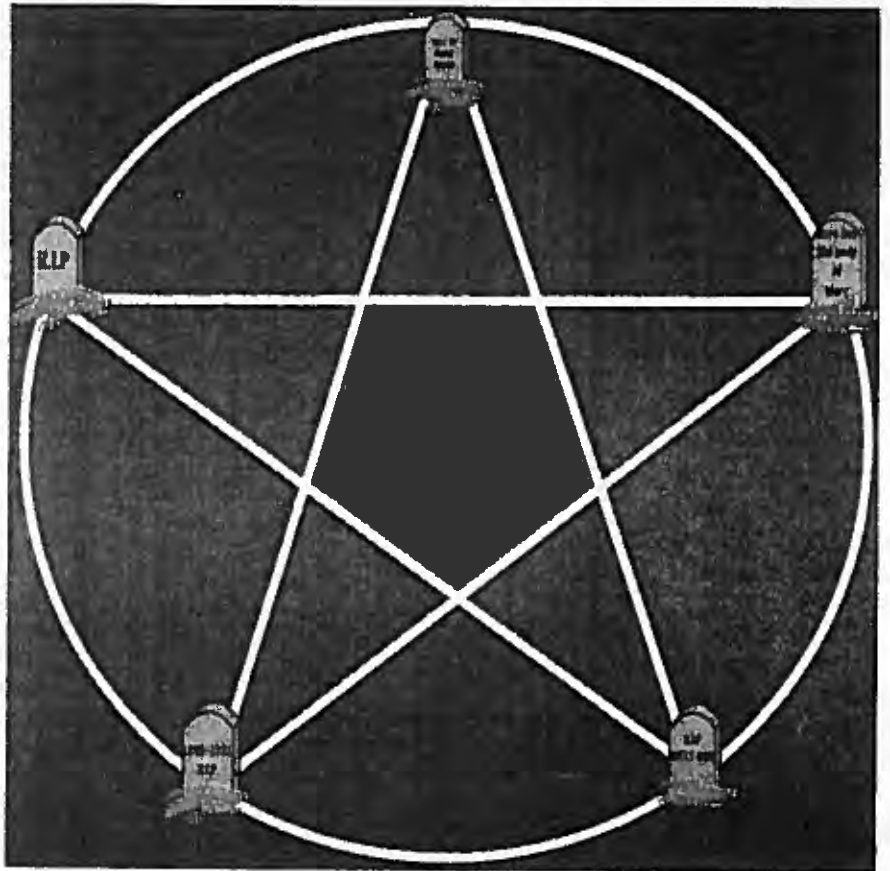
According to Weird Wisconsin, the tower is the state's second oldest municipal tower still in operation. Until 2004, a wrought-iron fence surrounded Starin Park with spears on the top that instead of pointing outwards as to keep trespassers out pointed inwards as if to keep something from getting out.

Another reoccurring theme is of certain things buried under the Wells dormitory building and nearby dorms. Kennedy heard "that there are people buried right-side-up underneath one of the dorms." Weird Wisconsin supports this and adds that there was a sacrificial altar that was also buried in the same location.

Brittany Jenswold claims that Knilians, a dorm next to Wells, is haunted.

"I was in my boyfriend's room when I was awakened by a huge gust of wind," Jenswold said. "Then just a few minutes later, this little kid's meal toy bee that requires someone to manually turn it on started buzzing. I freaked out and woke up everyone in the room."

Rumors allege UW-Whitewater was originally the spot of the first official school for witches back when it first started. On WeirdUS.com, a letter from a Jeff



Rosa Wolf graphic/WolfRE23@uww.edu

A rumor circulating in Whitewater says that the cemeteries create a pentacle, or a five-pointed star. However, there are only three cemeteries in town.



Brad McAllister photo/McAllistBD25@uww.edu

Whitewater legend says that the water tower in Starin Park was once a place for sinister gatherings, and that a body was hung near or on the tower.

Woosley said the university was originally built as a school for mediums and research in the paranormal.

Pratt built the Pratt Institute in 1888, located on 300 Center St. in Whitewater, where the Wisconsin Telephone Co. now operates. Woosley said large crowds would gather on Sunday nights, when wild public séances would be held outside of the Pratt Institute.

Although the school moved out of Whitewater in 1946, the institute is still has its headquarters in Whitewater and is part of the town's folklore.

Another well-known and conflicting rumor is that the city's cemeteries create a pentacle, or a five-pointed star. However, there are only three cemeteries in town. Still, supporting this geographic phenomenon is the fact that the intersection of Center and Third streets, where the Morris Pratt Institute was located, falls practically right on the lines of the triangle.

Weird Wisconsin states "all buildings and the land along the triangle's sides are said to be haunted." The haunting at the water tower, Wells Halls and Knilians are all located well outside the "Witches Triangle." Also located outside the triangle is the Delta Zeta Sorority house. Both

Jenswold and Kennedy are members and have tales of ghostly activity.

Whitewater alumnus Justin Lehman had to research the topic of occult details within the town for a business class.

"We had a janitor come visit the class," Lehman said. "He used to clean the Tri Sig house, and we asked him about the rumor of the tunnel leading from their basement. He said he couldn't talk about it and neither could any of the sorority members."

The real purpose of the tunnels is unclear, but most people connect them to the Underground Railroad. Yet some say it was for a more sinister purpose relating to other witch stories.

Public relations major Kirby Johnson, junior, has lived and worked in the area since her time at the school began and adheres to a more pragmatic tack.

"There's some creepy stuff, like the water tower in Starin Park," Johnson said. "But I've lived in the dorms and have been around, and nothing has ever really happened to me. I think it's just a case of people believing what they want. It's harmless, really."

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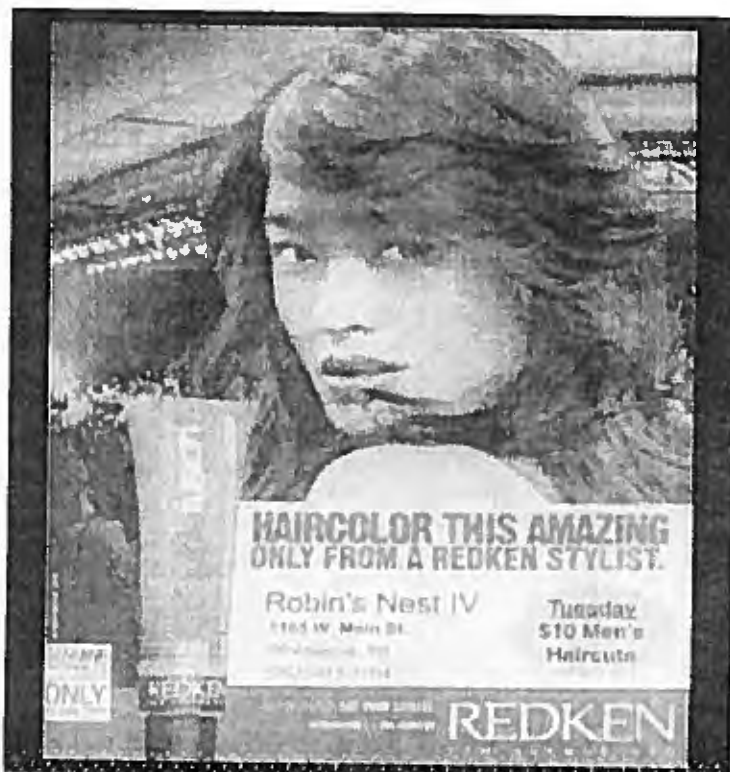
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RP April 1, 1992 front page

'Witches' wal-SP-WH1-143

# Occult activity surfaces at Whitewater Lake

*Whitewater Police unable to reveal source of bizarre occult rituals; discover bones and stones*

By Roland Phant  
*Special to the Royal Purple*

Whitewater Lake lived up to its occult history over Spring Break when three residents of the area reported witnessing a strange gathering on the beach.

The three residents are Whitewater students renting a small house near the lake. For their own safety they wish to remain nameless, so we will call the spokesperson for the group "Sandy."

Sandy and her friends had just said goodbye to the last remaining guest from a small party they were having and were ready to go to bed. "It was about three at night, and we were all really tired. We were just about to go to crash when I saw

some people down the on beach" said Sandy. "We thought it might be someone from the party, so we all went out to get them off the beach."

The three cut through some light woods and were about to call out to the group of four people sitting on the beach. "But, then we saw that they were dressed real weird," Sandy continued, "in like these all black clothes." Sandy decided that they were definitely not from their party and started to leave. "But then they started to chant or something. We thought they were really trashed. They were singing and swaying. We just stood their staring, it was really weird."

Sandy said they stood there for about five minutes watching the people, when a thick wall of fog rolled out from the lake. It quickly moved up the shore and made the people barely visible. "All we could see were these dark shapes. It was getting really spooky and "Kim"(one of the girls, not her real name) wanted to go. But, I wanted to see what they were

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See Whitewater Lake 'witches'  
Page Two

# Whitewater Lake 'witches' / One in list of various related activities

doing, it looked real suspicious. "Kim" didn't want to walk back alone, and I didn't want to stay there alone, so all three of us stayed."

"All of a sudden this dim green light appears. The four guys on the beach are standing there with this weird green light behind them. We heard the water start splashing and this deep gurgling noise. We all just looked at each other, but when we heard this slurping sound and saw

something coming out of the water, we ran like hell.

"We ran back to the house, locked all the doors and windows, got the baseball bat, and sort of hid in the bedroom. We just stayed up all night trying to explain what we saw."

The group of people were reported to the police by another resident of the area who witnessed the event from her kitchen window.

The police, unable to respond to the call immediately, looked over the area early the next morning. Though reluctant to go into detail, they said that they found some peculiar

objects at the site, including some small bones and an odd circle of stones that formed strange patterns.

The police said they would be looking into the event, but said that there really wasn't much for them to investigate.

Whitewater Lake has had a history of odd occurrences over the years. In 1909 strange chunks of ice were found floating about the lake in June. A number of people witnessed the phenomenon and one small boat was damaged when it hit a piece of the ice while out on the lake.

Stranger still, in 1923 three fishermen were out on the lake when their boat capsized. The fishermen reported that they felt a number of long cold scaly tentacles slither past them. The tentacles grabbed hold of the men and pulled them under several times before the men swam ashore. When they got to the beach they discovered small bites all over their bodies.

One resident living near the lake related a story that occurred in 1944. According to the tale, after a series of strange events that summer, a number of men from the area went out to a small

cemetery nearby and dug up all of the coffins there. These coffins, which had been buried vertically into the ground, so

the occupants would be standing up, were taken to the lake, tied down with rock and hurled into the water.

The strange occurrence stopped after that she said.

The last bizzare happening took place in 1971. A number of houses near the lake were found

**"All of a sudden this dim green light appears. The four guys on the beach are standing there with this weird green light behind them. We heard the water start splashing and this deep gurgling noise. We all just looked at each other, but when we heard this slurping sound and saw something coming out of the water, we ran like hell."**

**- "Sandy," occult witness**

with a strange message etched on their windows. The message read, "Another People Reside In Lakes Further Out Occult Learnings Save!"



-drawing courtesy of the Whitewater Police Department

WAL-SP-WHI-143