Ghost Stories of Sweet Briar

Thursday, November 1, 2012
Friday, November 2, 2012
5:30 p.m.

The Sweet Briar Museum
Sweet Briar College

The evenings’ readers, tour guides, & hostesses are SBC student members of The Chung Mungs and Tau Phi.
The Program

“From a Manson Window at Night”  
*Sweet Briar Magazine* vol. 6, no. 1, October 1914, p. 30  
Helen R. Duke, Academy

“From My Window”  
*Sweet Briar Magazine* vol. 9, no. 3, February 1918, p. 134  
Elizabeth C. Eggleston, Class of 1919

“A Poem”  
*Sweet Briar Magazine* vol. 10, no. 2, April 1919, p. 119  
Elizabeth C. Eggleston, Class of 1919

“Daisy’s Harp”  
*Sweet Briar Magazine* vol. 6, no. 4, June 1915, p. 163  
Helen R. Duke, Academy

“In the Light of the Embers”  
*Sweet Briar Magazine* vol. 1, no. 2, February 1910, p. 56  
Eugenia Griffin Burnett, Class of 1910

“The Shadow Child”  
*Sweet Briar Magazine* vol. 1, no. 1, November 1909, p. 9  
Mary Pinkerton Kerr, Class of 1913

“A Mid Summer Night’s Vision of Daisy’s Garden”  
*Sweet Briar Magazine* vol. 6, no. 3, March 1915, p. 110  
Helen R. Duke, Academy

“The Fire”  

“Novel Ghost Flits Far Ahead”  
*The Sweet Briar News*, 18 January 1928, p. 2

“Daisy’s Vision”  
*Sweet Briar Magazine* vol. 8, no. 2, March 1917, p. 144  
Maynette Rozelle Stephenson, Class of 1921

“The Guardian Spirit”  
*Sweet Briar Magazine* vol. 1, no. 3, April 1910, p. 111  
Henrietta Washburn, Class of 1914
**A short highlights tour of the Sweet Briar Museum will follow the readings—**

**“Yellow Gallery”**
- Portrait of Daisy Williams (reproduction of the original pastel, which is displayed in Sweet Briar House). She is flanked by reproduction portraits of her mother and grandfather.
- Érard Harp, 1846
  - This harp was purchased by Indian Fletcher Williams in London when she and her sister Elizabeth and brother Sidney were on their “Grand Tour” in Europe as young adults. It was made by the world’s premier harp manufacturer and this was a professional, concert-quality instrument at the time. Indiana was an accomplished harp player. She won a prize for her harp-playing while at school. She taught her daughter, Daisy, to play this harp. Mother and daughter were both quite fond of harp music and their skill would have been a prime, and quite admirable, accomplishment for well-educated and culturally sophisticated women and girls of the 19th century. This harp features in several of tonight’s stories and poems.
- Gold Spider Brooch, ca. 1880
  - This jewelry belonged to Daisy, a gift from her parents.
- Gold Watch, ca. 1884
  - This watch was given to Daisy by her parents for her 16th birthday—her last. After her death, Indiana gave it to a friend of Daisy’s from her school days in New York, Helena Mallory Mellersh. Mrs. Mellersh donated the watch to the College in 1938.

**“Purple Gallery”**
- A bound volume of the *St. Nicolas Magazine*, charred in the 1927 fire at Sweet Briar House
  - This was a popular children’s magazine in the 19th century and these copies belonged to Daisy. Her mother kept them after her death.
- A portrait of Daisy Williams, ca. 1880-1884, charred in the 1927 fire at Sweet Briar House
  - Indiana kept many mementoes and likenesses of Daisy close to her throughout her life.
- A curl of Daisy’s hair, kept by her grieving mother.
- Eastlake style desk, ca. 1880
  - This elaborate and stylish desk is thought to have been Daisy’s, who was a well-educated and quite literate child. She shows off her desk to a visitor in one of tonight’s stories.

**Outside Terrace**
- The original marker for Daisy’s grave.
  - This was at Daisy’s gravesite on Monument Hill until at least 1951. The College moved it sometime between 1951 and the 1970s to Daisy’s Garden, a section of the Sweet Briar House grounds. It seems to have been moved to its current location in the 1980s or 1990s. This high Victorian style marble marker features a fringed drape on a “pile” of stones, an inscription noting Daisy’s birth and death dates, and at the front center portion a doorway and doorstep—leading to the world beyond—carved in relief. It has been damaged and would have originally featured a pillar or cross on top of the pile of stones.
**Dramatis Personae**

**Maria Georgiana “Daisy” Williams**

Daisy Williams, the only child of Indiana Fletcher and James Henry Williams, was born September 10, 1867. She passed away from an inherited disease, thought to have been antitrypsin deficiency, on January 22, 1884. She is buried with her family on the Sweet Briar College campus, at Monument Hill. Her individual grave marker, its small angle and cross broken by unidentified vandals sometime in the mid 20th century, can be seen at the rear of the Sweet Briar Museum terrace.

**Indiana Fletcher Williams**

Indiana Fletcher Williams (1828-1900) directed in her will that, aside from a few legacies to family and friends, her estate be to be used to establish a school for young women in memory of her beloved daughter, Daisy, who died at age 16. Born and raised in Lynchburg, Indiana (who was named for an uncle who lived in that state) attended the school of Georgetown Visitation Convent in Washington, D.C. She subsequently attended Bishop Doane’s School (now Doane Academy) in Burlington, New Jersey, and later toured Europe with her sister and one of her brothers. An accomplished manager who steered her property safely through the turmoil of the Civil War and a savvy investor during her widowhood, she left an estate worth more $20 million in 2011 dollars and encompassing 8,000 acres. Despite legal challenges from some family members, her bequest launched Sweet Briar College in 1901.

Indiana passed away there on October 29, 1900. Her funeral service was held October 31, 1900, led by Rev. Arthur Gray of Ascension Church in Amherst. Gray Dormitory—now used for offices and classrooms—was named for him.

**Elijah Fletcher**

A Vermont schoolteacher, educated at the University of Vermont, Elijah Fletcher (1789-1858) traveled to New Glasgow (now Clifford), north of Amherst, Virginia, in the early 1800s in order to take a teaching position. He boarded with the family of one of the school’s trustees, the Crawfords of Tusculum, and courted daughter Maria Antoinette. They wed in 1813 and would spend much of their married life in Lynchburg. There, Fletcher developed a number of business interests, served as mayor for two terms in the early 1830s, served on the common council, and published *The Virginian* newspaper. He was a founding member of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Lynchburg. Williams was responsible for remodeling Sweet Briar House in 1851, creating today’s familiar Italianate façade. A firm believer in the lasting value of a good education, Fletcher sent his two daughters as well as his two sons to very good schools (one son attended Yale) and sent three of his children on extensive European travels to “finish” their education.

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* Per the resource www.measuringworth.com, based on figures for “historic standard of living”.

KL 10-12-2012; 10-31-2012