

Finding Aid – Sarah Louisa Linn Collection “The Ghost of Sis Linn”

Title: Sarah Louisa Linn Collection “The Ghost of Sis Linn”
Donor: Collection Assembled by Glenville State College Archives Department
A & M Box #: **GSC070609**
No. of Boxes: 1
Inclusive Dates: 1853-2009
Bulk Dates: 1876-1919
Biographical Note: **Sarah Louisa Linn, (1853-1919)**

Description: This collection contains original newspaper articles regarding the murder of Sarah Louisa Linn, courthouse records associated with Sarah Louisa Linn, ghost stories and other articles about Sarah Louisa Linn, photographs of Sarah Louisa Linn’s home, and Glenville Normal School records. Over the years at Glenville State College, Library and Archives staff gathered any information available about Sarah Louisa Linn. The original Glenville Democrat newspaper article was located in a deteriorated newspaper in the Robert F. Kidd library’s storage area. This front page article has been laminated and is framed in the archives office. It is very likely that this is the only copy of this article left in existence. This specific article is also not a part of any microfilm collection of the Glenville Democrat. These collected items were then assembled into a collection by Glenville State Archives staff in 2009. The information is organized into eleven different file folders by the subject matter it covers.

Source: **GSC Archives**
Dates: 1853-2009
Size: 1 box, 6 in. (.5 linear feet)
A & M Box#: GSC070609

Index Names:

Sarah Louisa Linn, Sis Linn, Sarah L. Chrisman, I. L. Chrisman.

Index Terms:

Glenville Normal School, Glenville State Teacher’s College, Glenville State College, Ghosts, The Ghost of Sis Linn, Murder, Mystery, Robert F. Kidd Library, Verona Mapel Hall, Halloween, Ghost Stories, One-Room Schools, Glenville Presbyterian Church.

Box Contents:

File Folder 1: Original Newspaper Articles regarding the murder of Sarah L. Linn
File Folder 2: Inventory of Sarah Linn’s belongings at the time of her death
File Folder 3: Photographs associated with Sarah Linn
File Folder 4: Reward information and poster
File Folder 5: Ghost Stories and other articles about Sarah Linn
File Folder 6: Glenville Normal School catalogue information pertaining to Sarah Linn
File Folder 7: General Information about the Glenville Normal School during Sarah Linn’s time
File Folder 8: History of Gilmer County, a paper written by Sarah Linn for her school work
File Folder 9: Marriage and divorce info for Sarah Linn
File Folder 10: Linn family history
File Folder 11: Misc. Presbyterian Church information and Glenville’s Ghost paper by Chad Samples

Biographical Note: Sarah Louisa Linn was born at Fairmont, West Virginia in 1853, daughter of Robert Linn and Sophronia (Newcomb) Linn. She was one of the first generation of people to attend the Glenville Normal School and graduated in the spring of 1877. During her last year of studies, she taught at the Sliding one-room

school in the Sand Fork area of Gilmer County. Upon graduation Linn taught again at the Sliding school for the 1877-1878 school year. Over the next 27 years, she taught at several places throughout West Virginia. These places included Gilmer County, Randolph County, Fairmont Graded School, Mingo County, and Marion County.

In June of 1905, Sarah Linn married I.L. Chrisman. She was 52 years old at this time and subsequently retired from teaching. It is believed that married women did not teach at this time. According to court documents, Sarah "Linn" Chrisman claimed that her husband abandoned her in a little less than six months. She indicated that he had no reason, but he had left in December of 1905. In 1909, she filed for divorce, and it was granted. The judge also gave her permission to take her maiden name back.

There is little known about what Sarah Linn did from 1909 to 1919. It is widely believed that she may have run a boarding house for female college students from her home. This may only be an assumption because her house was located so close to the college. Another belief is that she began making and selling wine, but there has been no record discovered which indicates this. Court documents do indicate that she had accumulated a fairly large estate at the time of her death.

In February of 1919, Sarah Linn was found beaten to death in the bedroom of her home at the age of 65. A bloody, seasoned club was found nearby her body. No money or any valuables were noticed to have been missing. A few months later, a reward was offered for information pertaining to the murder. A flyer was circulated and ads were placed in newspapers. The murderer or the murderers were never apprehended. Several different theories have surfaced over the years. The most popular theory is that the person or persons involved in this crime were part of a local, elite family and a cover-up took place. In 2003, Robert F. Kidd Library personnel received information that added to this theory. This information is included within the collection.

Five years after the murder, Sarah Linn's house was bought by the college and torn down to make room for new structures. These new buildings included Verona Mapel Hall and Robert F. Kidd Library. Verona Mapel Hall has been razed, but the original Robert F. Kidd Library was renamed Clark Hall and is still in use, as of 2010.

The murder of Sarah Linn became a popular story in Glenville and the surrounding area. Over the years, several individuals have said that they encountered a ghost throughout the campus which they believe to be Sarah "Sis" Linn. These tales have varied in nature but are still very popular throughout the student body and the surrounding community, especially during Halloween.

Historical Note: Glenville Normal School, Glenville State Teacher's College, and Glenville State College

(Glenville Normal School) Sarah Louisa Linn was one of the first generation to attend Glenville Normal School. The main objective of the school during this time was to prepare teachers for elementary schools, to prepare students for colleges and universities, and to provide a general education for those who had finished the common school course. Linn graduated in the spring of 1877 and immediately began her teaching career. The first school she taught at was the one-room Sliding school near Sand Fork. One-room schools were very active during this time period. She taught school in West Virginia until her marriage in 1905.

Sarah Louisa Linn took permanent residence near the Glenville Normal School around the time of her marriage to I. L. Chrisman in June of 1905 and lived there until she was murdered by an unknown perpetrator in February of 1919. This property was purchased by the school in 1924 and a new women's residence hall was constructed in 1926 called Verona Mapel Hall.

(Glenville State Teachers College) In May of 1930, through the work of President E. G. Rohrbough, West Virginia Legislature changed the name of Glenville Normal School to Glenville State Teachers College. Teacher preparation continued to be the central mission of the school, but changes in curriculum reflected the major reforms that occurred in West Virginia teacher certification. During this time, it is thought that students began telling ghost stories about Sarah Linn and some students revealed to their peers that they had experienced paranormal activities in the newly constructed Verona Mapel Hall.

(Glenville State College) In 1943, legislature changed the name of the college again to Glenville State College. By the end of the decade, GSC was offering both B.A. and B.S. degrees in such academic fields as English, History, Science, and Music. During the years after the war, attention to the ghost of "Sis" Linn became more prevalent. Although no records indicate that Sarah had been known as "Sis," it is highly possible

that this nickname had been passed through the student body since her time in Glenville. Many stories about her death and student's ghostly experiences began to show up in editions of the student newspaper, *The Mercury*. As time passed, more and more individuals have come forward indicating that they have had a run in with the ghost of Sis Linn. As of 2010, there are still staff, faculty, and students at Glenville State College that have indicated they have seen this ghost on campus.