

History of a haunted cemetery

One of the most durable ghosts in Monroe County is that of the woman in black that hangs out at the Stepp Cemetery in the Morgan-Monroe State Forest in the two counties of the same names.

Cemeteries frequently attract teen-agers, who not only want to be scared and have vivid imaginations, but cannot resist exaggerating about the eerie sound of the wind through the trees or the misfortunes of the deceased.

Stepp, like many other cemeteries in the Monroe County area, was named for the family that founded it. Reuben Stepp (age 45 in 1850) had made his way from his birthplace in North Carolina to Indiana, marrying a Virginian and fathering at least one child in Kentucky. By 1850, he had purchased land in Marion Township (later merged with Benton) and was supporting a family of nine



Looking back

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children ranging in age from 21 to 1.

Being a public-spirited man, Stepp deeded a piece of land on Section 9 in Marion Township for the good of himself and his neighbors. His primary objective was a place for a schoolhouse, but he also included a provision that the building could be used, when school was not in session, as a church. Furthermore, Stepp was not picky about the denomination.

A member of the Fulford family, who have lived in the area for

many generations, recalled that the Stepp Cemetery was once in the hands of a religious sect known as the "Crabbites." Among their practices were snake-handling and knowing each other ritualistically speaking in the Biblical sense.

Another long-time resident of the area — McCager Collier — used to tell the story of a well-attended camp meeting on McCager Hill. It seemed that among those who came from afar in buggies and on horseback was a man by the name of Langford (home address unspecified in the story). As the man was riding through the thick forest, his horse was frightened. Langford was thrown from the horse and died when he hit his head on a large beech tree. Collier swore that there were "hants" around the

see Looking back, Back page