



Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly  
and Creative Works for Minnesota  
State University, Mankato

---

All Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone  
Projects

Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone  
Projects

---

2020

## Dark Tourism in the Midwest

Rachel Walden

*Minnesota State University, Mankato*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds>

 Part of the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#), and the [Tourism Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Walden, R. (2020). Dark tourism in the Midwest [Master's thesis, Minnesota State University, Mankato].  
Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato.  
<https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds/1005/>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects at Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Dark Tourism in the Midwest

By

Rachel Walden

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

In

Applied Anthropology

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2020

May 8, 2020

*Dark Tourism in the Midwest*

Rachel Walden

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

Dr. Kathryn Elliott  
Advisor

Dr. Rhonda Dass  
Committee Member

Brian Frink, M.F.A.  
Committee Member

*For Carla Walden, Steven Buschow, and Vernard Walden, whose support was beyond anything I could have asked for. And for Dani Walden, the best traveling companion anyone could have.*

## Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been possible without the help of some wonderful people. First, I would like to thank my mother, Carla Walden. Your continued encouragement over the years was a driving force for me to pursue higher education. My grandfather, the late Vernard Walden, pushed harder than anyone for me to finish my thesis. A special thank you to my partner, Steven Buschow, for allowing me to take the time necessary to travel and pursue my research. Times were tough for a while, but you continued to support us so that I could reach a higher goal and I will be forever grateful for that sacrifice. Driving long hours could not have been done as easily without the companionship of my sister, Dani Walden. I will always cherish our time together. Finally, thank you to my friends for pushing me forward when I wanted to give up, for spending countless hours with me at the campus library, and for going on this journey with me, all the while listening to my ideas, research findings, and complaints. Your ears are tired, I am sure.

I would be nowhere without those gracious enough to have participated in my research. A special thanks to all of those who allowed me to interview them. My thanks to Saloon No. 10, the Villisca Axe Murder House, Oakland Cemetery, Glensheen Mansion, the Ohio State Reformatory, and Stark Parks. This project would not exist without your cooperation and I am grateful for being allowed the opportunity to experience these sites.

Funding was done in part not only through family members but also through the generosity of those who donated to my Go Fund Me campaign. To each person who donated, thank you for your contribution. This project would have been a dead end without you.

A very special thank you to Deanna Almquist, whose knowledge, companionship, and experience carried me through to the end.

Finally, I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Kathryn Elliott, Dr. Rhonda Dass, and Brian Frink for all the hours you put in reading, correcting, commenting, and advising me. Thank you to Dr. Chelsea Mead for helping me narrow my focus to dark tourism.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this possible. I would not be where I am today without your support and I am eternally grateful.

## **Abstract**

### *Dark Tourism in the Midwest*

Rachel Walden  
Master of Science, Applied Anthropology  
Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Mankato, Minnesota  
May 2020

Dark tourism, or the study of the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering, and the seemingly macabre, is becoming increasingly popular. The administrative staff who run these sites carry the responsibility of bridging the gap between tourist and community. Administrative perspectives on a business level as well as a personal level reflect a deeper understanding of dark tourism in the Midwest. Six case studies were conducted via interview: Saloon No. 10; the Villisca Axe Murder House; Oakland Cemetery; the Glensheen Mansion; Ohio State Reformatory; and Molly Stark Park. The administrative structures of these sites and their correlation with the paranormal influence the success of these sites as they fit into dark tourism.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter I: Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter II: Literature Review</b> .....	5
<b>Chapter III: Site History</b> .....	19
Saloon No. 10.....	19
Villisca Axe Murder House.....	20
Oakland Cemetery.....	23
Glensheen Mansion.....	25
Ohio State Reformatory.....	27
Molly Stark Park.....	29
<b>Chapter IV: Methods</b> .....	33
Site Selection.....	33
Interviews.....	37
Participant Observation.....	38
Data Analysis.....	39
<b>Chapter V: Analysis</b> .....	41
Saloon No. 10.....	43
Villisca Axe Murder House.....	47
Oakland Cemetery.....	52
Glensheen Mansion.....	57
Ohio State Reformatory.....	65
Molly Stark Park.....	80

<b>Chapter VI: Discussion and Conclusion</b> .....	87
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	93
<b>Appendices</b> .....	97
Appendix A.....	97
Appendix B.....	98



## Chapter I: Introduction

In recent years, dark tourism, or what Sharpley and Stone (2009) call sites of death, disaster, and destruction, have been increasing in popularity at an accelerating rate. Though the drive to visit sites such as these is nothing new in human history, it is on the rise, showing up more than ever in the television programs we watch and the social media we engage in on a daily basis. These sites can be found in all corners of the world and in great numbers. Much research has been done looking at major sites such as Auschwitz, the 9/11 Memorial, Gettysburg, Waverly Hills Sanatorium, Alcatraz, and so many others. These big fish sites have been featured on popular television shows like *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Lab*. Beneath the fame lies an infrastructure operating under the guise of museum, historical landmark, memorial, and community business. So too are there people behind the scenes, running these sites, doing repairs, keeping them relevant and connected to the community and the world of tourism. Inquiry into the field of dark tourism has largely gone the way of researching why individuals want to tour these sites, but little has been done to examine the personnel behind the upkeep; particularly administrative staff, with regard to what draws them to these sites, keeps them working there, and drives them to care for something with such a sorted past. Behind every tombstone, prison wall, and Edwardian staircase lies a business. This study examines on a broad spectrum what goes into running these facilities from the point of view of those behind the scenes. It examines the thoughts, history,

and general business procedures related to maintaining sites of dark tourism from an administrative perspective.

Within these sites are individuals who care for them, make business decisions on behalf of them, and bring them and the communities in which they reside together. Each person interviewed for this project provided their knowledge surrounding the properties, historical background, and their personal beliefs with regard to the sites' histories. Bringing these findings together will help advance the field of dark tourism and increase understanding of those involved in maintaining these sites day to day, again, focusing on the administrative level.

The study was kept broad in order to gain a fuller picture of the interviewees' experiences. Due to this, there is a wide range of questions. Personal background and what led to taking the position as well as what was needed to prepare for the job make up the first group of questions. From there the questions go into personal perception of dark tourism and paranormal mythology surrounding the sites. Furthering the study, the questions focus on administrative structure, funding, marketing, security, upkeep, curating, and community programming and outreach, as well as future plans to build the site. Due to the unstructured nature of these interviews, questions were added to further explore the unique history of each site.

This study focuses on the Midwestern region of the United States and includes six sites: Saloon No. 10 in Deadwood, South Dakota; the Villisca Axe

Murder House in Villisca, Iowa; Oakland Cemetery in Iowa City, Iowa; Glensheen Mansion in Duluth, Minnesota; the Ohio State Reformatory in Mansfield, Ohio; and Molly Stark Park in Louisville, Ohio. These sites responded to a request for an interview and provide a good range of types of sites. Each site operates as a business in one capacity or another. Saloon No. 10 is a bar and restaurant. The Axe Murder House is a museum and inn. Oakland Cemetery is an active cemetery for the community of Iowa City. Glensheen is a prominent house museum. The Reformatory is a historical prison, and Molly Stark Park is a county park run by parks and recreations. Though they could not be more different in business operational background, these sites share the commonality of dark tourism. The Saloon showcases the death chair of American legend, Wild Bill Hickok, and reenacts the murder twice daily. The Villisca Axe Murder House, formerly the Josiah B. and Sarah Moore House, is the site of the grisly murders of eight people on the eve of June 10, 1917. Oakland Cemetery is the home of the Black Angel, otherwise known as the cursed grave site of Theresa Dolezal Feldewert. Glensheen boasts the grandeur and elegance of the Edwardian era, but it is also home to two murders that took place on June 27, 1977, the killer still at large. The Ohio State Reformatory is acknowledged in the realm of dark tourism for several reasons, the first being as a prison. Prison tourism is a branch of dark tourism. The Reformatory also served as headquarters during the Civil War, battle tourism being yet another subdivision of dark tourism. The site saw a lot of suffering over the years and is reportedly haunted, offering several different ghost tours. Finally, Molly Stark Park

was a sanatorium, hospitals being another subfield of interest due to the potential for suffering.

The cost for the connection to dark tourism is that of vandalism, often performed under the guise of theft. That being said, sites do utilize safety procedures and enlist the help of local law enforcement to help maintain the sites. Some sites are more apt to be vandalized than others, such as the Ohio State Reformatory or Molly Stark Park. Regardless, the incidents in question have not led to anything too serious that has not been managed by the facilities through the use of security cameras and personnel.

It is important to gain a well-rounded perspective in the field and to understand who these caretakers are and how they perform the duties they have. The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of community programming and outreach is the driving force behind these sites, and that programming very often does not take the face of dark tourism; rather, it shows variability to ensure the inclusion of all walks of community members and their interests. Charity work is another commonality in community outreach at these sites. Despite their differences, the success of each location hinges on whether or not they have the adaptability to be more than one thing. The exception to this is the Villisca Axe Murder House, which bases nearly all of its success on dark tourism. Understanding the culture of the administrative structures of these sites will enhance the field of museum anthropology and further develop research areas within the field.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

In recent years, dark tourism has risen in popularity. Studies have primarily focused on the individual's drive to visit such sites with only a handful examining the business end of the field, particularly administrative staff. This study specifically examines the perspectives of dark tourism from their standpoint, and involved interviewing higher ranking staff at six sites, Saloon No. 10 in Deadwood, South Dakota; Villisca Axe Murder House in Villisca, Iowa; Oakland Cemetery in Iowa City; Glensheen Mansion in Duluth, Minnesota; the Ohio State Reformatory in Mansfield, Ohio; and Molly Stark Park in Louisville, Ohio. Dark Tourism has many names such as thanatourism, death tourism, trauma tourism, and grief tourism (Sion 2014, 1). The definition of dark tourism for the purpose of this study comes from Sharpley and Stone: the act of traveling to sites associated with death, suffering, and the seemingly macabre (2009, 10). Dark tourism research can be defined as the social scientific study of tourism and tourists associated with sites of death, disaster, or the seemingly macabre. (Sharpley and Stone 2009, 1). The desire for this sort of entertainment is nothing new to humankind. Sharpley and Stone make the claim that for as long as people could travel, they have sought out dark sites, though dark tourism has becoming increasingly popular in the last two decades (2009, 10). Attending violent acts such as public executions or visiting sites of religious martyrs serve as examples of historical interest. "There are elements of the ancient in dark tourism. In the construction and visitation of sites intended to maintain memory, there is considerable evidence to suggest that pilgrimage and homage motivations to these monuments has prevailed," (Lennon and Foley 2000,

148). Sites such as these have now become places where individuals of the modern world can come to try to get an understanding of the past. Over time, these sites have multiplied to include infamous prisons, graveyards, haunted locations, hospitals, urban decay, and so on.

Why individuals visit these sites has long been in question, with theories ranging from the psychological need to feel closer to death to voyeurism. Biran and Hyde suggest that dark tourism serves to provide individuals not with the opportunity to contemplate death, but to examine life and feel gratitude through significant deaths (2013, 192). Sharpley and Stone examine dark tourism using the concept of play and *communitas* through shared communal consumption of dark tourism sites and/or experiences, going on to assert that despite the death or disaster, people come together to celebrate what was lost. Dark tourism becomes a pilgrimage (2009, 17-18). Funerals are an example of ritual practices associated with death, but so too are larger celebrations like the commemoration of Elvis Presley's death at Graceland, or the journey to the grave of a celebrity important to the individual and shared with many fans (Sharpley and Stone 2009, 17-18). Sharpley and Stone also examine the idea of tourists infiltrating the 'other', allowing for an infinite play of identities rooted in other cultures, places, and events, characterized by the individual as a theater of potential performative differences that may be embraced, ignored or prescribed. Sharpley and Stone see this as having potentially negative and damaging effects on those who are being imitated, though not intentional as players are likely trying to romanticize identity and trying to reach the 'other' through contact, study, and imitation (2009, 18). When examining the context of dark tourism, one can include

the obsession with history. “The historicism of contemporary culture is something which has dominated museums and memorials,” (Lennon and Foley 2000, 146). When analyzing the work of Nordstrom and Robbin, Scheper-Hughes, and Bourgois, Robb asserted that witnessing violence is extremely complex and in need of special attention being paid to the experience in order to avoid turning a voyeuristic eye toward human suffering (2009, 53). Sharpley and Stone believe there are two levels of dark tourism. Consumption and fantasy, where tourists may integrate themselves into the object of consumption, the idea of not being dead but examining the contexts in which death occurs. The second being the darker, more intense version, where tourists go to sites to witness death, such as sites of murder or genocide (2009, 18). There is no one accepted theory over another. There are areas less explored such as *schadenfreude*, recent fame culture and Instagram where individuals place themselves at the sites for photo opportunities (a situation that sites are starting to adjust to and plan for), and the culture of violence’s influence on site attendance. There is no one answer as to why people visit these sites, though the author believes that more sinister motives are worth exploring and likely valid for some individuals. Subcultures such as serial killer culture should also be taken into consideration. It is the opinion of the author that so far the only subcultural connection to be studied in the context of dark tourism is the related urban exploration, or exploration of abandoned sites, not necessarily for any dark association. Although it could be argued that each of these additional categories fits one way or another into the primarily discussed thoughts on why individuals visit dark sites, a deeper understanding of subcategories is beneficial to the field. Seaton asserts that there is a desire for

imagination and connection to these sites that is rooted in history through movements such as Romanticism, wherein poets and artists created worlds outside the norm, sparking imaginative desire for narratives of the 'other'. Tourism is presented as escapism, popularized further by today's entertainment industry (2009, 82-83).

The media plays a key role in promoting sites. Not only does this include popular television shows, but the media focuses on commercializing the sites and advertising them to the public as a good time. Violence is broadcast into our living rooms every day on the news. Events are transmitted as they are happening, in real-time (Sharpley and Stone 2009, Sion 2014). Websites make it easy to access atrocity, going so far as to provide videos of beheadings and torture. People are encouraged to be curious about violence. Such media treatment of these tragedies shifts the content of tourists' narratives about the site or event and prompts the viewer to embark on 'imaginative voyages,' as Robb puts it; "imaginary tourism transcends the visual and includes somatic fantasy about what places of violence might smell or feel like," (Robb 2009, 53). In other words, vacationing on the beach simply is not enough anymore. Lennon and Foley describe the marketing of history to schools and the advancement of alternative narratives as seen with dark tourism, no longer sugar-coating the past but creating a more accurate narrative, as well as examining global connections to the push for accuracy; more than one side is being heard (2000, 162). "In the post-modern condition, reality is a matter for debate. As far as tourism is concerned, the emergence of simulations, replications, and virtual experience as part of the tourism product has been a critical factor in the development of dark tourism," (Lennon and Foley 2000, 32). Globalization creates the



opportunity for multiple interpretations created from multiple angles, including those once unpopular with the majority. “Tourists seek to understand other cultures and histories in ways that transcend the sanitized version of reality that tourism has traditionally offered,” (Robb 2009, 51). This can result in spectacular displays that often serve as an injustice to representation of the pain of others (Robb 2009, 53-54). Sharpley and Stone also suggest the importance of location of murder and violence in addition to real-time broadcasting. They believe there is influence that plays on developing dark tourism locations as well and the effect this has on people being drawn toward dark sites (2009, 16).

The most common type of site is one that is interpretive and historical, often taking shape as a museum presenting narratives and an event-based view of violence (Robb 2009, 54-55). Robb notes the work of Kirschenblatt-Gimblett describing an “in-context” approach, or “a curation approach that is heavily contextualized through labeling and narration, characterizing such displays and works to render violence as explainable and knowable through education and information,” (Robb 2009, 55 ). Separating dark tourism from the standard historical site means taking something like genocide and attempting to explain it, order it, and attempting to make it aesthetically pleasing (Robb 2009, 55). Dark tourism sites located on the site of the original violence often depend on an “in situ” technique, “whereby displays are given context through the re-creation, maintenance, or restoration of the habitat in which they “naturally” occurred” (Robb 2009, 55). “In-situ” dark tourism freezes time. “Temporal stagnation is signaled by the use of antiquated, period-appropriate objects, which while lending an air of realism,

might actually work to distance the tourist from the event” (Robb 2009, 55). The suffering of others is radically “other,” which is what the modern tourist seeks. Understanding dark tourism means getting at the relationship between an educational, recreational leisure practice and violence (Robb 2009, 55). Objects alone are mute without a story to connect to them (Schaming 2014, 158). Schaming gives the example of the 9/11 memorial, stating that the objects were placed into context by the stories told by those who experienced the attack (2009, 159). This is another important challenge for the staff working dark tourism sites. First person accounts of the events from sites and objects connected to them can create tension between morbid curiosity and the opportunity to remember and understand (Schaming 2014, 159).

It is critical for sites to have a good and accurate narrative in order to provide an obligatory service to the public. This is done through employees. Visitors have specific demands of most sites. A visitor wants elements of the scarce and unusual (Mandelartz and Johnston 2016, 52-53). “The manager of an attraction must focus most attention on delivering what is special and innovative in itself and continuously seeks ways to add value to ensure repeat performance, which can only be added by the site’s manager” (Mandelartz and Johnston 2016, 52). Administrative staff for these sites are in charge of the experience and the ethnography of the present study shows ways in which individuals create unique programs not only through dark tourism, but create other programs as well in order to maintain the site and ensure its longevity. The creativity that site administration must demonstrate is tremendous, not only bringing people in but also having the responsibility of maintaining community relationships because not all dark

tourism sites are embraced by locals. In a shared community space, it is important to try to work together rather than remain alienated from the broader community, which may not always be possible since some of the events that occurred at these sites stir up personal memories or make communities feel exploited. The effort needs to be made. As Lennon and Foley have pointed out, satisfying the demand for experience is not always a tangible goal. Sustainability demands that goods and services and locally sourced items contribute to the delivery. “Rituals that capture the selling position of the heritage attraction will permit shared and separate identities to be created, re-formed and reflected at various states of important elements in sustaining credibility at the site and reinforcing shared values for visitors and importantly for staff on site,” (Mandelartz and Johnston 2016, 52-53). Administrative staff must also inspire employees to maintain the integrity of the sites they represent in order to ensure the success of the site. Narratives must remain relevant and important to visitors in order to attract repeat business and it is up to administration to see all sides of how to accomplish this. That being said, there is room for intangible programs such as ghost hunts, which are growing in popularity. The Ohio State Reformatory offers several options for ghost hunts in their programming. Other locations simply thrive off the possibility of hauntings like the Villisca Axe Murder House, offering the place to overnight visitors with no promise of paranormal happenings. The sites do not tend to promise paranormal events and often claim that it depends on the openness of visitors and their ideas about otherworldly happenings. For some of the sites examined for this study, there was a correlation between the success of the site as a spot for dark tourism and whether or not administration believed in the

paranormal. Sites that did not do business as dark tourism often experienced trespassers and/or dark tourism visitors regardless of efforts to steer away from paranormal rumors and dark narratives. “The importance of authenticity and commitment to sustainability can be driven by attachment and creating an environment where the visitor is bonded to aspects of the experience through unfolding stories and issues that are refreshed and ever popular to visitors,” (Mandelartz and Johnston 2016, 53). The quality of authenticity comes from the employees under the direction of administration. Without consistent narratives and enthusiasm, there is a loss of shared experience among visitors which is damaging to the site.

The anthropology of the paranormal plays an important role in recognizing how the beliefs of several of the administrative staff come to be as well as the importance of the success of these locations as dark tourism sites. As noted earlier, the sites that embrace potential hauntings fare well in the industry. Belief in the paranormal is cross-cultural; however, interest in the paranormal is especially popular in the United States. An estimated 53% of Americans believe in the paranormal. Americans are both fascinated and repulsed, intrigued and dismissive about the paranormal and interest in the subject is steadily rising (Bader, Mancken, Baker 2011, 106). People who acknowledge having experienced a paranormal event are a powerful entry point into researching the paranormal. However, outside the walls of academia, believers in the paranormal are considered the ‘other’, engaging in activities that are thought to be weird or deviant (Bader, Mancken, Baker 2011, 129).

Locations like the Mutter Museum in Philadelphia or the multitude of Ripley's Believe it or Not Museums around the country showcase macabre items. These objects take on a different meaning than sharing an experience with those involved in death. They become the 'other' in a way that is seen as a monstrosity. According to Asma, the object becomes monstrous when it cannot be processed by our rationality and also when we cannot readily relate to the emotional state involved (2011, 10). This may also lend itself to sites of murder or serial killings. The possibility of human beings or their activities stretching outside the norm to levels beyond comprehension places them as 'other' in such a way that they become uncanny. Freud defined the uncanny as, "a feeling that is somewhat familiar but also foreign. It is a form of emotional and cognitive dissonance, relating to what is frightening and what arouses dread and horror (Asma 2011, 188). Ghosts and spirits also fall under the uncanny. Asma's interpretation of Freud is that the unconscious holds repressed desire in a state of suspended animation, occasionally awakened in dreams, horror movies, and altered states of consciousness, and given momentary freedom in the realm of conscious awareness (2011, 191). This applies not only to the paranormal, but to sites of dark tourism as well. These sites allow the imagination to play creatively with the idea of paranormal ideology. Sites such as the Ohio State Reformatory or the Villisca Axe Murder House play on the uncanny in such a way that creates programming surrounding this phenomenon, and to much success.

From an anthropological perspective, supernatural entities can be compared to cultural objects across time and space as a result of the human brain's tendency to perceive the 'soul' (Baker and Bader 2014, 1). Spirit concepts are cross-cultural but are

highly flexible, molded into culturally specific expressions (Baker and Bader 2014, 60). American culture places these narratives into the context of haunted locations and legends associated with them. The Black Angel of Oakland Cemetery in Iowa City is shrouded with ideas of a woman's eternal soul doomed to stay on Earth, cursing women who dare to kiss her statue. The sizable statue towers over the grave plot, having oxidized to a blackish-green color. It does look ominous, and it is not very difficult to see why legend sprang from such an object in conjunction with the idea of death and the soul. The reality is, this is simply the grave site of a Bohemian immigrant who had the funds to erect an impressive statue. The legend is born of local people and culture. Though it is only speculation, perhaps along the way someone did kiss the statue and met with unfortunate circumstances, thus an urban legend. Perhaps children found the statue menacing and created the narrative surrounding Teresa Feldevert, the grave's occupant. Ghosts linger in the residual space of the event, the memory that has been imprinted on the community. It is compounded by repeating the story in popular culture, drawing widespread interest and ultimately attracting dark tourism. The event may not be on citizens' minds constantly, but comes up periodically as a reminder that they dwell in a city that has known significant tragedy. (Heidelberg 2015, 75). The understanding of those who have experienced the presence of the statue enhances the understanding of those who experience it in the future. "Consumption of others' personal narratives of spectral experience is the most powerful form of vicarious experience," (Baker and Bader 2014, 583). People trust the testimonies of others and the story lives on. Personal stories of

ghost encounters are the primary evidence believers present for the reality of apparitions (Baker and Bader 2014, 584).

Anthropologist Victor Turner's concept of liminality was initially examined as a distinct phase of ritual but was later metaphorically extended beyond the bounds of ritual (Baker and Bader 2014, 585). The concept of ghosts violates a number of binaries held as central tenets of human, and especially Western, thought. Examples include body/soul, life/death, past/present, presence/absence, human/inhuman, and material/ethereal. This violation of fundamental categories of thought, or the in-between-ness (liminality), lends spirits a potentially powerful cultural position onto which varying cultural manifestations can be projected. (Baker and Bader 2014, 585). "Ghost beliefs are prevalent and highly flexible concepts allowing them to exist, persist, and thrive in ostensibly secular, rationalized cultural concepts," (Baker and Baden 2014, 586). Communities do not have a choice when it comes to being a site of dark tourism. Some residents embrace the site, stories, and legends, and others reject them, worrying that they are exploitative and take away from other valuable elements of the community, such as seen with the Glensheen Mansion in Duluth, Minnesota. The goal of Glensheen is to focus on the many accomplishments of the house's former occupants, the Congdon family, and all they have done for the community. The murders are an event in history, but not the focus of the establishment. Quite the contrary, it is almost completely brushed aside. That being said, those who know about the murders still flock to the mansion to see the stairwell or to possibly get a glance at the room where the murders took place. There is no stopping this from happening, especially since the location is open to the general public. Heidelberg

believes that communities should embrace the role of dark tourism, believing that cities have the opportunity to provide a valuable voice in the ghost enterprise, supplying context, making sure research is up to date, and having control over the actual site whereas there is no control over the legends that surround it (2015, 75).

Much as dark tourism is forced upon us by the media, so too is the paranormal in general. Television shows, film, photography, books, to name a few, are sources that continue to increase interest in the fields of tourism and anthropology, ghost hunting offering a unique cultural experience (Hill 2010, 170). Overnight events at supposedly haunted locations allow individuals to investigate alleged paranormal phenomena. These events combine interests in the paranormal with history, memory, and emotions. Many participants go home with extraordinary experiences (Hill 2010, 171). Officially, of the six sites that were included in this study, only one offers ghost hunts, that being the Ohio State Reformatory, though Villisca does overnight stays where individuals may or may not experience otherworldly events. Groups that stay in the murder house or who go on ghost hunts at the prison share a moment that allows them to experience liminality and to quite possibly come out of it with shared experiences. Thus they are able to perpetuate the oral legends that surround the sites. The experiences are culturally creative.

The importance of the paranormal can be seen at each of the six sites interviewed for this study, though sites like Molly Stark Park and Saloon No. 10 are the lesser known. In the case of Molly Stark Park, there simply is not enough information on what visitors and trespassers are motivated by in their attempts to see the grounds. This is not achievable without interviewing the general public, which was not within the focus of



this study. The person interviewed at this site does not believe in the paranormal, and the site is not going to be moved forward as a site of dark tourism. Saloon No. 10 has personal ghost encounters the staff has experienced, but it is not known whether or not visitors share those experiences or if their dark tourism needs are being met with the exciting reenactments of Wild Bill's death, or by seeing the chair he was shot in. Again, this would require interviewing the general public and is beyond the focus of the present research. In the case of the Black Angel, it is known that individuals come from all over inspired by the legend, though they are not monitored by the Oakland Cemetery other than to make sure they comply with the rules of the grounds. That being said, the cemetery attracts a lot of attention and is also used like a park. The Black Angel plays a role in that. Dark tourism is accepted at the Oakland Cemetery. The individual interviewed at this site does not believe in the paranormal and thinks that the statue is black due to not a curse, but to oxidization. He accepts the site's importance as a place of dark tourism. The Glensheen Mansion does not accept the dark tourism aspect of the site, nor does the director believe in the paranormal. Glensheen is successful as a house museum but does not address the site's role as a location for dark tourism. Members of the general public do come to see the murder site. Tour guides are permitted to answer questions, though it is never brought up by them in the tours due to the need to keep the tours family friendly. The Villisca Axe Murder House and the Ohio State Reformatory both have staff who are believers in the paranormal and who have shared experiences on the subject. These businesses thrive on dark tourism and make enough money to remain secure. The multifaceted nature of this study examined the structure of these

organizations; the beliefs of those who run them; the challenges of maintaining dark tourism sites, and their success with different kinds of programming and community involvement. It explored as many sides to running the sites as possible through an administrative perspective.

### Chapter III: Site History

#### Saloon No. 10

Due to a lack of available materials, the history of Saloon No. 10 will be provided entirely by the interviewee for the site. Charlie's family has been involved in the Saloon for over fifty years. The current Saloon No. 10 was originally Nuttle and Mann's, which is now called the Original Saloon No. 10. There had been a fire in 1879, which burned down most of Deadwood, including the original saloon. As a result of the fire, Main Street was built ten feet up and away from the hillside of the town. The basement of the current Saloon No. 10 still holds pieces of the original Old Main Street as it was before the fire. Stu Donovanitz purchased the location, which was a men's clothing store at the time. It was a friend of Donovanitz's, a comic book artist from Chicago, who convinced him that opening a place replicating the one where Wild Bill Hickok was shot and killed was a profitable idea. The main saloon is a replica of what it originally looked like, the current building having been erected in 1906. It was recreated in 1938 with an addition added in 2006 to support the gift shop. People come from all over the world to watch the twice-daily reenactments of Wild Bill's final poker game.

Will Bill Hickok was shot dead by Jack McCall on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1876 in Deadwood, South Dakota. Considered to be one of the greatest gunslingers of the Old West, Hickok was born in Illinois in 1837. He was born James Butler and first gained notoriety as a gunfighter in 1861 when he shot three men who were out to kill him. According to the History Channel, a sensationalized account of the events was featured in

*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, giving Bill national fame (history.com 2020). Hickok retired from gun battles when he accidentally shot his deputy in 1871 in Abilene, Kansas, Hickok having been the sheriff there at the time. For a while, he served as a guide to wealthy hunters, but as his eyesight failed, he eventually turned to gambling to make a living. Hickok arrived in Deadwood in the spring of 1876. He was a regular at the poker table in Saloon No. 10. He was shot at 4:15 in the afternoon, in the back of the head. McCall was later tried, convicted, and hanged (history.com 2020). The events of that fateful day would forever seal Saloon No. 10's fate as a site of dark tourism. Today, the death chair of Wild Bill sits proudly on display. People's curiosity leads them to ask questions such as whether or not there is any blood on the chair, and they are very interested in the details of Bill's death that day.

### **The Villisca Axe Murder House**

The allure of the Villisca Axe Murder House in the world of dark tourism is more clear cut, being a murder house. The mystery has yet to be solved. On the evening of June 10, 1912, Josiah Moore's entire family, along with two house guests, two adults and six children total, were bludgeoned to death. The murder changed the small town of Villisca, Iowa. Residents locked their doors, carried weapons, and endured a flood of reporters and private detectives. Rumors created unrest and trust was lost. The town was divided. Lena and Ina Stillinger were the two sisters staying with the Moores as guests of the children. There was a church program on the evening of June 9<sup>th</sup> that started at 8:00pm at the Presbyterian Church. It was an annual event on Sunday June 9<sup>th</sup>. The Moore children and

Stillinger girls participated in the events. The program ended at 9:30pm. The family and their guests entered their home between 9:45 and 10:00pm (villisca.iowa.com 2009).

The following morning at approximately 5:00am, a neighbor by the name of Mary Peckham stepped into her yard to hang laundry. By 7:00am, she realized the Moores had not been outside, their chores having not been started. She approached the house and knocked on the door. When there was no response, she attempted to open the door but found it locked from the inside. Peckham called Josiah Moore's brother, Ross Moore to come investigate. There were several details of the crime reported, some of which include an axe having been left at the crime scene belonging to Josiah Moore, found in the room in which the Stillinger girls were sleeping. The faces of the victims had been covered with bed cloths. The curtains were drawn. Time of death was estimated to be shortly after midnight. The ceilings had gouge marks made by the upswing of the axe. It is believed that had the murders been committed today, law enforcement would have been able to solve the crime. Almost one hundred years later, it remains a mystery. The officials at the time treated the scene with gross mismanagement. Though no one was ever convicted of the crime, there was no shortage of suspects. Local residents suspected other members of the community including Reverend George Kelly and Frank F. Jones, Iowa's state senator. Moore worked for Jones for several years. Others believed the murderer was someone completely unrelated to the family. Another theory was that serial killer Henry Lee Moore was the culprit. Cases similar to the one in Villisca occurred in Colorado Springs, Colorado, leading detectives to believe they were connected. Every transient and

hobo was suspected. The list was extensive. Several people confessed to the crime, but nothing fruitful ever came of it (villisca Iowa.com 2009).

In 1994, Darwin and Martha Linn of Corning, Iowa purchased the house and restored it to its former glory. The property is listed on the National Registrar of Historic Places as of 1998. The house has been the subject of many films, books, and paranormal television programs. The house saw several owners over the years, and many remodels. In 1994, a realtor approached Darwin Linn about purchasing the property. The Linns owned and operated the Olson-Linn Museum in downtown Villisca. Knowing that the house was in danger of being torn down, Darwin decided to purchase the property. Initially hiding the purchase from his wife, Linn eventually told her and the two of them set out to obtain the funding necessary to restore the property. The house had been used as a rental property, seeing more changes to the original structure. Using old photographs, the Linns began the renovation in late 1994. Some of the work included removing the vinyl siding and restoring the original wood, removal of the front and back additions, including the addition of an outhouse and chicken coop in the back yard, and the removal of all electrical and plumbing fixtures. The pantry had been converted to a bathroom and was also restored to original condition. The Linns placed furniture of the same era in the house to make it feel authentic. More recent work includes the removal of the garage to make room for a barn, and the renovation of the home's cellar (villisca Iowa.com 2009).

Tours of the home include a narrative of the time period and house, the axe murders and the subsequent controversy the town found itself in. Daylight tours as well as overnight tours are available. The official website claims that paranormal

investigations have provided audio, video, and photographic proof of the paranormal. Some of the examples given include hearing children's voices, falling lamps, moving ladders, and flying objects. Psychics are said to have confirmed the presence of spirits dwelling in the home as well. The site claims that skeptics have left believers after having stayed in the house. Legend has it that one of the detectives investigating the case was able to obtain a photograph of the killer after taking a crime scene photo of one of the Sillinger girls. The portrait appeared in the retina of her eye (villisca Iowa.com 2009). Lauren Ehrler of the Des Moines Register reported a chair being slightly lifted off the ground in a photograph taken by the Register's team (Ehrler 2016). One individual even stabbed himself while touring the house. It certainly remains a hot spot for dark tourism.

### **Oakland Cemetery**

Bohemian immigrant Teresa Feldevert married Dr. Frantizek Dolezal in 1865. They had a son named Eduard who passed away from meningitis in 1891. Eduard was studying to be a doctor when he lost his life. Teresa buried him in Oakland Cemetery, his marker being a tree stump, done in the Bohemian tradition. Teresa moved around after her son's death, landing in Chicago, St. Paul, and Eugene, Oregon. There she met Nicholas Feldevert, a wealthy rancher. Upon Nicholas's death, Teresa inherited a fortune worth \$30,000, or roughly \$800,000 today. She began to make plans to erect a monument for her family in Iowa City. She hired a Chicago sculptor, Mario Korbel, to create the statue. He designed an angel to be cast in bronze. The figure attracted attention at the Art Institute in Chicago and took him three months to complete. When the statue was ready, Teresa planned to travel to Iowa City to see it. She had her husband's remains

shipped from Oregon to Iowa City. Korbel was known to experiment with different patinas, and the eight-and-a-half-foot statue may have already had its dark color upon arriving at its destination in Iowa City. The statue's color is the origin of a lot of the controversy regarding what made it black. It is speculated that Feldevert was unhappy with the statue's appearance, possibly resulting in a lawsuit that Korbel won. However, local papers do not mention any such event. It was said that the black coloration is what Feldevert objected to, but that Korbel thought a shiny hue would be a mistake given the subject matter. Still, others say the statue was bronze upon arrival. Like the stories that surround her, the Black Angel's history is also left for others to ponder. Regardless, people from all over the world seek her out to partake in the legend of the Black Angel (Langton 2017).

The Black Angel attracts all types of people with its mysterious aura. As early as 1965, documented cases of vandalism as were recorded when someone painted the statue silver. It took quite a while for weather to wear the paint away enough so that it could be restored (Langton 2017). There are multiple versions of the legend that surrounds the angel, but the result of all versions is death. Some say only women are in danger of this ominous fate upon touching the statue, others say it applies to anyone who dares touch her. Some versions say you must kiss her. Others, simply touching will do. The statue's blackish hue also lives in mystery. As mentioned earlier, one theory is that the sculptor was experimenting with different patinas and the statue arrived the color it currently is. Another theory is that the statue oxidized over time. Darker theories include Feldevert being a witch and the statue's color taking hold as the curse took effect. Another legend



says that Feldevert vowed to be faithful to her husband, and when she failed to do so, the statue changed colors (Matthews 2016). Some of the stories of being cursed include that of a woman who kissed the feet of the angel and died six months later. Another includes a man who was dared to touch the angel and died on the spot from a heart attack (Matthews 2016). Individuals have also come to the cemetery hoping to end the curse years later. One woman sought relief from years of ailment claiming her problems began when she touched the statue some twenty years prior.

Paranormal investigators have visited the Black Angel. According to Matthews, they have left with audio and visual recordings of something otherworldly, including sounds or auras (2016). The SyFy Channel's *Haunted Highways* did a spot focusing on the Black Angel. They were able to pick up strange temperature fluctuations with thermal cameras, indicating that the statue's temperature changed dramatically during their investigation. The filming took place on a cold winter night (Matthews 2016). People have gotten married near the statue. They come from far and wide to experience any connection with the paranormal even risking a curse from this hauntingly beautiful statue.

### **Glensheen Mansion**

Situated on the shore of Lake Superior, the Glensheen grounds feature twelve acres of gardens, bridges, and the thirty-nine room mansion. The architect was Clarence H. Johnston, the interior designer was William A. French. Together, they created a luxurious house for the Congdons. The home costs \$854,000 to build and covers 27,000 square feet. Chester and Clara Congdon had the home erected between 1905 and 1908.

The Congdons were known for opening up iron mining in the region as well as setting aside land for public use, such as the North Shore Scenic Highway and Congdon Park. The grounds of Glensheen were under the care of a landscape engineer, Charles Wellford Leavitt, Jr., who was encouraged to keep as much of the natural beauty as possible. He was also to make sure the grounds were self-sufficient, which meant the inclusion of a large vegetable garden, a greenhouse, and an orchard, a cow barn, and a water reservoir (glensheen.org 2020). The estate is lovely, though it was tarnished by tragedy in the 1970s.

On June 27, 1977, the heiress to the mining fortune was killed along with her night nurse at Glensheen. The nurse was killed on the grand stairway with a candlestick, bludgeoned to death. Elizabeth Congdon was 83-years-old and smothered with a satin pillow while in her bed. Elizabeth was the last living child of Chester Congdon (Kraker 2017). Investigators turned their attention to one of Elizabeth's adopted daughters, Marjorie Caldwell, and her husband Roger. The couple was in dire need of money and Marjorie was in line to inherit \$8 million. Caldwell was supposedly on a path to speed up her inheritance. Roger Caldwell was given two life sentences, Marjorie was charged with conspiring to kill her mother. Her behavior at the trial was peculiar. She knitted while at the defense table. She brought a birthday cake in for one of the lawyers. Jurors began to doubt her guilt. Roger's fingerprints were placed at the scene of the crime, but a witness recanted testimony about seeing him there. Marjorie was acquitted. The Minnesota Supreme Court threw out Roger Caldwell's conviction based on new evidence at Marjorie's trial. He was granted a new trial. A deal was made, Roger confessed to the

murders, but only served five years in jail. He committed suicide twelve years after the murders. Marjorie later served two prison terms for arson and has been linked to several mysterious deaths. She is alive in Arizona today, a free woman (Kraker 2017).

Glensheen was donated to the University of Minnesota in the late 1960s and opened as a historic house museum in 1979 (Kraker 2017, glensheen.org 2020). Initially, tour guides were instructed not to talk about the murders due to their being so fresh in the minds of the family. It would have been in poor taste. It is the policy of Glensheen today not to focus on the murders. Questions will be answered if asked, but nothing is mentioned up front (Kraker 2017). The collection of possessions in the mansion is intact, which is quite rare. It remains under the care of the University of Minnesota today. Though the estate does not focus on the murders, they did occur and an estimated 30% of people who do tour the mansion are aware of them (Kraker 2017). That low percentage measures the museum's success, as far as its attempt to prevent the murders from being the primary topic of conversation is concerned, but it remains a significant enough percentage to keep the site on the radar of dark tourism. Lights at the estate have said to flick on and off. There are claims of objects moving on their own according to some people (Rathburn 2017). Glensheen is the least explored site of dark tourism in this study due to the site's policy of focusing attention away from the murders.

### **Ohio State Reformatory**

An impressive dwelling, the Ohio State Reformatory was designed by Cleveland architect, Levi Scofield. The building is limestone and intentionally created to be

uplifting, inspiring, and intimidating. Upon first arrival at the grounds, one can immediately say those goals were met. The exterior structure is beautiful beyond words. Originally called the Intermediate Penitentiary, it accepted inmates who were too old for juvenile corrections but had committed offenses less serious than those that sent others to the Ohio State Penitentiary (mrps.org 2020). The first inmates were admitted in 1896 after ten years of construction. The goal was to reform and rehabilitate the inmates. They received three things during their time at the facility: religion, education, and a trade (mrps.org 2020). The inmates were admitted for eighteen months and could be released if they showed progress. If not, another eighteen months would be imposed. There was a high success rate and low recidivism rate (mrps.org 2020). The state withdrew financial support by the early 1960s which resulted in the conversion of the Ohio State Reformatory to a maximum security prison. By the 1980s, the condition of the prison was so poor that inmates sued the State of Ohio. The lawsuit was successful and a new modern facility was being erected nearby. The Reformatory closed in 1990. The location was abandoned for a number of years before it was purchased from the state for \$1.00. Today the Reformatory is run by the Mansfield Reformatory Preservation Society, a non-profit overseen by a volunteer board, and all donations go directly to the maintenance and restoration of the building. It has been the scene for several Hollywood movies, most famously *The Shawshank Redemption* (mrps.org 2020). The Reformatory houses the Ohio State Corrections History Museum and specializes in offering both historical and paranormal tours.

The official website of the Reformatory offers a look at the most haunted sites within the facility. These include the East Wing, first floor, toilet room and East showers. There are claims that shadow people grace this region of the facility. The third floor housed middle administration. Here there are reports of shadow people, audible voices, footsteps, and the feeling of not being alone in the room. The sub-basement is another hot spot, featuring what are listed as “wild experiences and evidence”. It is said that this area of the building was avoided even when the facility was still in operation. The chapel is said to have made skeptics less skeptical, supposedly an area where ghosts grab visitors. The west attic is also listed, and though no names were given, it is said that a famous paranormal investigator had an experience in the attic that resulted in this investigator leaving and refusing to come back inside the room. The administrative basement is another hot spot. Here there is said to be two spirits, one nice and one not so nice. The cell blocks (East and West) are said to have brought grown men to tears. Many murders and suicides took place in these areas over time. Finally, listed as number one on the web page is solitary confinement, otherwise known as ‘the hole’. This was a prison inside a prison and many men took their lives while serving their sentences (mrps.org 2020).

### **Molly Stark Park**

Molly Stark Sanatorium opened its doors on August 23, 1929, providing care to those inflicted with tuberculosis. The building was named after the wife of General John Stark for whom Stark County is named. The treatment ideology of the hospital was consistent with treatment of tuberculosis at the time: plenty of sunshine and fresh air. It was one of twenty-five tuberculosis hospitals in the state of Ohio. Architect Albert Thayer

designed the sanatorium in the Spanish Revival style popular throughout the United States between 1915 and 1930. The building features many windows, vaulted porticoes, recessed balconies, and rooftop verandas, all providing patients with the fresh air believed to help ease their symptoms. In 1952, substantial additions to both the east and west wings of the hospital expanded the facility's patient capacity. The additions were designed by Charles Firestone and they do not exhibit the same architectural style as the rest of the building. By 1956, medical science allowed for great advances in identifying and treating tuberculosis and the need for Molly Stark to operate solely as a tuberculosis facility changed. The sanatorium was renamed Molly Stark Hospital. Over time, Molly Stark Hospital provided care to people in need of physical rehabilitative therapy, those with drug and alcohol abuse issues, and aging adults in need of care. The remaining tuberculosis patients were transferred to J.T. Nist nursing home in 1970. The hospital continued to operate until 1995 when it was closed due to aging infrastructure. The building was abandoned. In April of 2009, the property was purchased by Stark County Commissioners for one dollar. The site was opened publicly. Today, the wildflower covered grasslands provide a short walking trail and several small gardens dedicated to local plants and flowers. There are tours and programming offered at the park such as the Molly Stark Grounds Hike and Tour. Other events are held at the park as well. Stark County continues to research and plan for the future of Molly Stark Park, though plans to reopen the building are not in discussion due to the fact that the building is an environmental hazard and there are safety concerns. That may change in the future if funding becomes available (starkparks.com 2020).

The park has gained the reputation for being haunted and has earned a place in dark tourism due to the level of urban explorers and ghost hunters it attracts. There is undeniably an overall hauntingly beautiful yet creepy vibe to the property, sitting just outside of Lewisville, Ohio. The faded appearance of the building certainly lends itself to ghost stories and legends. The estimated cost of the building in 1929 was one million dollars. Nearly forty beds were dedicated to children in the hospital when it was used to treat tuberculosis. Local journalist Ed Balint of the Canton Rep went on a tour of the grounds and interviewed several participants. Many of them did say they felt an energy on the grounds. Several others agreed there was a good chance the grounds were haunted. Today the building is surrounded by a large fence to deter trespassers. People cut holes in the fence or crawl under it to gain access to this decaying piece of history. Prior to the addition of the fence, more than sixty people were busted for trespassing in one year alone. Since the barrier's erection, roughly twenty people have been busted for trespassing. Word has spread on the internet that Molly Stark is haunted. People come from all over to explore the grounds. Trees have been removed to prevent access to windows; lower windows have been covered with wood. People use tools to gain access regardless (Balint 2017). A simple Google search of selected videos reveals a number of drone accesses and urban explorers trespassing on the property. Once things reach the internet, they go public. Any restoration of the property would include residential housing as well as retail space. If the space becomes too dilapidated to save, its fate will be sealed at the end of a wrecking ball (Balint 2017).

In another article in Canton Rep, Ed Balint interviewed individuals who have had otherworldly experiences at the park. One man claimed to hear a metal bed rake across the floor, the likes of which sent shivers down his spine. Another individual claimed to hear someone calling his name. There have been reports of a brown suited apparition gliding across the corridors. All of these men interviewed were law enforcement officers. There are many requests to enter the property by paranormal investigators, all of which are turned down to the dilapidated state of the building and the asbestos inside. The interior of the building still contains plenty of hospital beds, filing cabinets, and carts. Balint describes it as a scene where everyone abruptly left the 100,000 square foot structure due to some plague or virus. Former county sheriff Swanson was the man who encountered the moving bed frame. He had been in the building with county inmates trying to salvage some furniture to sell at the county auction. He said deputies and inmates could see where the bed had been dragged in the dust. He said the building was vacant and nobody had separated from the group. Balint brings up the widespread stories of hauntings regarding Molly Stark on the internet and says they can often be erroneous and sensational. For those working to preserve the history of the hospital, it is important to remember that Molly Stark was a place for treatment and healing, the nurses were known to be kind. It was not a place of torture and lobotomies as fable suggests. The hospital is often confused with the Massillon State Hospital, with people thinking Molly Stark was an asylum. The legend of Molly Stark Hospital includes sounds of chains, elevators operating on their own, ghostly figures looking out windows, and voices heard. (Balint 2015).



## Chapter IV: Methods

### Site Selection

Dark tourism has become increasingly popular over the last several years. Major media outlets such as National Geographic, the New York Times, the Washington Post, Big Think, the Telegraph, Netflix, and dozens of others have started to cover the phenomenon of dark travel in all manners of context. The stories primarily focus on internationally popular sites like Alcatraz, Auschwitz, Pompeii, Chernobyl, and the Killing Fields outside of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Dark tourism is everywhere because it is defined so broadly: sites, attractions, or events that are linked in one way or another to death, suffering, violence, or disaster (Sharpley, 2009). When I initially began researching criteria for site inclusion, I knew I wanted to focus on multiple locations rather than just one. Site locations needed to be within the United States for monetary reasons. Research coming from major search engines and academic sites primarily focused on “big fish” sites like Gettysburg National Military Park, the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum, the United States Holocaust Museum, and Alcatraz. Not much was being done on sites in the center of the country which led me to decide on shifting my focus to the Midwest. The Midwestern region includes twelve states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. It should be mentioned that aside from lack of coverage of this region, choosing the Midwest also provided a home base (Mankato, Minnesota) that would allow traveling and research to expand over months rather than a shorter period that would have been obligatory at sites that would have required air travel. Ideally, I had hoped to be able to

include at least one site from each of the twelve states in order to demonstrate range; however, site selection was also based on monetary availability and distance, the maximum allotted being no more than a twelve-hour drive.

Once the region had been chosen, research began on finding sites within the Midwest, which proved to be more difficult than initially expected. I used purposive sampling to choose the sites and criteria for the sites, searching for a very specific type of location that would yield results directly related to my field of study; sites of dark tourism under official care of a person, city, county, business, or organization. Based on prior experiences as an academic, my research methodologies were limiting me to professionally written articles, which was not very helpful for site location in this instance. The first research breakthrough came through Facebook groups such as Dark Tourism Photography, Dark Tourism World, Dark Tourism and Place Identity, and dark-tourism.com. Being able to search the group pages for prior posts helped to increase the list of potential sites to some degree, but not enough to provide a satisfactory range of site locations. I had also read through several message boards predominantly focusing on urban exploration, or the subculture of exploring off-limits sites that have fallen into disrepair, often hospitals, buildings of former grandeur that were lost to economic despair, abandoned homes, and former industrial complexes (Mandelartz, 2016). Given the illegal nature of this type of tourism, it was decided that one essential criterion for site selection would mean the site had to be accessed legally in order to qualify for this study. It was, in the end, the most unexpected source that yielded the most results: Pinterest. Given the large number of contributors to the website's content from all over the globe

and being able to narrow searches based on state as well as region meant finding pins posted by locals from the areas in question. The search results went from dozens of site locations to well over a thousand. The new question became how to narrow such a bountiful list for selection. Since resource materials tended to place heavy focus on tourists and subcultures surrounding visitors and sites, I decided to focus on the administrative side of dark sites in hopes of gaining an overarching perspective from a population often uninvolved in the current research. This meant that in order for a site to qualify for this study, it needed to be officially maintained with current access to individuals involved in the care and upkeep of the location. This immediately eliminated hundreds of sites that fell under the earlier mentioned urban decay subcategory of dark tourism; however, there remained hundreds of potential sites given the number of cemetery locations that were actively maintained. Given the very nature of death surrounding cemeteries and the subculture of cemetery tourism, it was decided that for a cemetery to qualify for this study, there needed to be a mythology or lore behind it, including famous shrine sites specific to manner of death or notorious individuals such as Al Capone's grave site in the Mount Carmel Catholic Cemetery in Hillside, Illinois, or Ed Gein's final resting place in the Plainfield Cemetery in Wisconsin. Although it could be argued that many cemeteries have local lore surrounding them, I based my inclusion on what I could find via Pinterest and other research outlets. Sites like Deadwood Mountain, Bachelor's Grove Cemetery near Chicago, and the Oakland Cemetery in Iowa City are examples of such cemeteries that were included in the call to interview during site selection.

A list was made of sites that met all criteria, which included just over one hundred sites. Breaking down this list further meant looking at means of contact. Some sites provided only addresses, phone numbers, or emails. It was decided that in order to present myself with legitimacy, I would choose sites that provided a contact email so that official university documents from the Institutional Review Board could be attached and accessed immediately by the recipients. These documents included the IRB approval case number, questions, and the consent form. The reason for this method was based on several indications that gaining access might be a problem because sites, though under direct care, were still being broken into, vandalized, and experiencing troubles with visitors. As was later confirmed by several informants, the growing popularity of these sites has resulted in an increase of people trying to get inside of the sites, giving false credentials such as posing to be documentary film makers, writers, researchers and the like. Abandoned sites were not entirely eliminated from the potential selection. In the case of Molly Stark Park in Lewiston, Ohio, the park is maintained by the city, and was therefore within the criteria for inclusion despite the building falling into decay, making it a popular site for break-ins and urban exploration. Ultimately, there were several types of sites that were contacted including cemeteries, house museums, battlefields, oddities museums, murder houses, specific locations with dark folklore such as Zombie Road in Wildwood, Missouri, and medical institutions including sanatoriums and psychiatric facilities. Thirty-six emails went out to locations that met the criteria. Seven responses were received, six interested in being interviewed and one having declined after a town council meeting which raised concerns about severe vandalism of the site. Though it was

not possible to gain access to a site from every state in the region, the locations were quite varied, and the geographic range was broad. Saloon No. 10 in Deadwood, South Dakota reached the far western side of the region with the Ohio State Reformatory in Mansfield and Molly Stark Park in Lewiston, Ohio reaching to the far eastern side.

Though no sites responded from Missouri, the Josiah B. and Sara Moore House (Villisca Axe Murder House) reached the far southern region of Iowa. Oakland Cemetery in Iowa City provided a site in the southeastern area of the region and the Glensheen Mansion in Duluth reached to the far north.

### **Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study; however, it should be noted that they leaned more towards unstructured interviews due to the variety of site locations. No two locations operated the same, nor did they share the same story.

Preliminary questions were sent to each site via email with the understanding that follow-up questions could be asked and that anything the interviewee wanted to include certainly would be included. Historical background research was done on each individual site prior to the interview in order to discuss the sites with a deeper understanding of them. The sites were selected after IRB approval, so questions directly related to each individual site came later. Initially, the interviews were intended to be unstructured entirely; however, the IRB needed questions in order to gain a better understanding of the study, which is why the foundational questions were chosen. This ended up working out in the study's favor since the IRB questions provided commonality and accounted for variability among sites. The interviews, as per IRB instructions, were to be recorded on my laptop,

transcribed, and then deleted. This was done. One interview needed to be conducted via telephone rather than in person due to illness and availability issues that the interviewee was experiencing over the course of several months. A telephone recording app, Call Recorder, was used in that instance. Again, the interview was transcribed and the recorded interview was deleted. Transcripts were to be destroyed after the completion of the project as per IRB agreement, and consent forms are to be kept in a locked storage unit at Minnesota State University, Mankato until such a time that they expire; three years past the approval of the project; and will be properly disposed of according to IRB procedures (Minnesota State University, 2019).

The interviews were conducted at a location chosen by the interviewees. Four of the six interviews were done on site locations, one via telephone, and one at a county office. It was my intention to accommodate the interviewees as much as possible. The interviewees had the right to choose a pseudonym in order to maintain anonymity. All but two individuals requested their real names be used; however, it was at the discretion of the researcher to use only first names for this study. Pseudonyms were chosen for those who wanted them at their request.

### **Participant Observation**

In order to get a better understanding of the sites, I participated in on-site activities including tours, historical reenactments, and customs. I did these activities after conducting interviews in order to approach them with the knowledge provided by site administrators and employees and to see how things run at these sites. It is impossible to

shed the role of tourist while participating in these events. Varied perspectives enhanced the research in that one can put to practice the methodologies of running these sites and experience them as the general public does. Regrettably, due to conflicting schedules, there were several offered events that I was unable to participate in such as ghost hunts, charity events, nature walks, and community programs such as yoga and Zumba, all of which would have provided an even deeper perspective into the importance of variety in programming to keep these sites running, profiting, and relevant to the communities they are located in.

### **Data Analysis**

The initial purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how dark tourism sites curate their collections since this is a study in museum anthropology; however, it very quickly became obvious that curation was not a priority for many of the sites. After conducting the interviews, transcribing them, and coding the data, it was clear that there was a heavy focus on community outreach and programming. These sites do deal with tragic events, and though dark tourism is becoming increasingly popular, it is not for everyone. Communities can feel deeply affected by the impact of an event, and sites need to keep in mind the relevance of those who live in the community where the site is located. There was not a single site among the six that did not offer a variety of programming, often not focusing on the event or events that qualified the site as being one of dark tourism. The takeaway from the study is the importance of programming and inclusion; of shedding a respectful light on the past and remembering that there is a future.

Since this was a qualitative study, the focus was on the individual rather than statistics. Each interview provided a unique perspective relevant to the maintenance of the site. In using a relaxed semi-structured interview method, interviewees were able to share personal stories and experiences they have had at their site locations, varying from supernatural experiences to things they have witnessed guests do that surprised them. They were able to share what the location meant to them and where they saw it going. The aim was to gain an understanding from their perspective as to what goes into running these sites, but also of the importance of being a part of maintaining these important places.



## Chapter V: Analysis

The United States could boast of thousands of dark tourism sites, if one were to look at every roadside that features a tragic car accident turned urban legend, every murder house, abandoned hospital, prison, and so on. Focusing on the Midwestern region brought this study into focus, and even then, there were over one thousand potential sites and micro-sites. Once the call to request an interview had been placed, the rest was out of the researcher's hands. Luck happened to bring a fair spread of interview locations from South Dakota to Ohio, Iowa to Minnesota, six sites in all. These sites include Saloon No. 10 in Deadwood, South Dakota; the Glensheen Mansion in Duluth, Minnesota; the Villisca Axe Murder House (formerly the Josiah B. and Sarah Moore House) in Villisca, Iowa; Oakland Cemetery in Iowa City, Iowa; the Ohio State Reformatory in Mansfield, Ohio; and Molly Stark Park in Louisville, Ohio. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the sites' management to discuss a variety of topics they felt important to the interview, which included a broad range of subjects from the paranormal to the importance of community programming and outreach. Of the eight individuals who participated in this study, six of them requested not to use a pseudonym, and two of them requested to be treated as one individual person under one pseudonym.

The initial interview consisted of eight questions with room to build from there based on the unstructured format. These questions included a variety of subject matters including whether or not the individual was from the area and what their personal research background involving the site consisted of. They were also asked to explain the site's history in their own words as well as to comment on the level of community

programming the site has, if any. Initially, this study was to see if a correlation existed between administrative staff's interest in dark tourism and the importance of being able to curate these sites; however, there was only one site with an official curatorial position, that being Glensheen. Community programming and outreach very quickly became the biggest correlation of the study. The interviewees' personal belief in the paranormal was split with four members believing in supernatural elements, three non-believers, and one who did not comment on the question. In proceeding to examine these sites through the eyes of their keepers, the interviews will be examined from the Western region to the Eastern region, North to South. For the purpose of this study, sites will be analyzed as case studies rather than presenting data in the form of themes, shared across the sites. It should be noted that some of the questions were not answered in all of interviews due to conflicting meetings and schedules. The interviewees were in control of how many questions they wanted to answer, and which ones they wanted to elaborate on with further questions and comments. They had total control of how long the interviews lasted, where they took place, and how they would fit into their schedules. This meant that some of the interviews were not able to be completed. This also meant that they ranged in time from twenty minutes to two hours. Regardless of content length, each interview was important to this study and is recognized as such.

Though these sites are built around dark tourism, it is community programming that extends beyond the macabre and brings people together who may otherwise not have an interest in dark tourism. Sites have deep meaning and importance to those who work at them, whether it is through family connections, recognition of communal importance, or

having held a job there years prior to reconnecting with the site. Reaching out to the community in which these sites are located is important not only to the survival of the sites but also in building valued relationships with the people who have long been connected with them. The following narratives are relaxed and open while still remaining professional, due to the unstructured nature of them. The interviewer and interviewee often sat down over lunch or coffee and had a less formal setting for conducting the research. Types of programming vary tremendously due to the multifaceted nature of the sites which consist of a bar, two house museums, a cemetery, a prison, and a city park. The sites could not be more different barring the dark tourism connection. That being said, the principals remain the same: community programming and outreach are essential.

### **Saloon No. 10, Deadwood, South Dakota**

Charlie's family has a deeply ingrained historical connection to Deadwood. Sitting down to lunch with her in the restaurant above the Saloon provided for an afternoon of history, stories, and a deeper understanding of what made the self-proclaimed bar and museum run with such success. Originally the site of Nuttle and Mann's, now the Original Saloon No. 10, which was moved down Main Street, Saloon No. 10 sits atop Old Deadwood. There had been a fire in 1879, which burned much of the town including the original saloon. As a result of the fire, Main Street was built ten feet up and away from the hillside of the town. The basement of the current building still boasts the original Old Main Street as it was before the fire. According to Charlie, a man by the name of Stu Donovitz purchased the location, which was a men's clothing store at the time. A friend of Donovitz's who came from Chicago was a comic book artist who

came up with the idea of buying a location on Main Street in Deadwood and recreating the place where Wild Bill Hickok was shot dead by Jack McCall on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1876. The main saloon is a replica of what it originally looked like, the current building having been erected in 1906. It was recreated in 1938 with an addition added in 2006 to support the gift shop. People come from all over the world to visit the Saloon and watch the reenactments. The Saloon does two daily shows of the infamous poker game Hickok was playing the day he died, as well as keeping a shrine of the chair he was sitting in when he was shot. When asked if the chair was authentic, Charlie responded by telling me the history of its purchase. It was obtained at auction by her family from Stu Donovitz and is insured as authentic. The chair was purportedly taken the day of the shooting by Calamity Jane, who was rumored to be obsessed with Hickok. The chair brings in questions from tourists about Hickok's death like whether the guns are available to see and if there is still any blood on the chair. There is not a problem with vandalism at the saloon. Charlie explained that people leave memorabilia at Hickok's grave on Deadwood Mountain (Mount Moriah Cemetery), but vandalism remains under control.

For Charlie, Saloon No. 10 is where she grew up. Her family has owned the location fifty-three years. She was born and raised in Deadwood and was named by her grandfather for Wild Bill's best friend, Charlie Utter. A Deadwood historian, Charlie's grandfather purchased the saloon. She has been involved in its care and upkeep her entire life, coming on as an official employee twelve years ago. Now, she oversees social media and promotions as well as tending bar four nights a week. The budget for advertising is low so Charlie primarily promotes the Saloon on Facebook, featuring bands and events,

usually not history-relevant. Some of these include a beach party, polyester prom, Mardi Gras, cops v. civilian minnow races, and sex toy bingo followed by an S&M show every Monday for Saloon No. 10's Relay for Life team. Some of these events are fundraisers since the Saloon is heavily involved in charity work. Their biannual lingerie show alone brings in about \$20,000 for Relay for Life. Saloon No. 10 is the number one Relay for Life team in the Midwest, four years running and ranked 29<sup>th</sup> in the nation. There is live music seven nights a week, gaming, and the restaurant to provide a wide range of activities for guests. The Saloon does a lot of adult programming but also does events for children like Christmas programs to get the community involved. Children can come and see Santa, get a gift, and decorate cookies.

Saloon No. 10 is self-funded. It consists of a general manager, part owners, restaurant manager, back of house and front of house managers, theater manager, bar manager, assistant bar manager, gaming manager, poker and blackjack managers, security, and cleaning. The site requires security, though not on behalf of dark tourism. There are bouncers present in the afternoons and evening. Tourism in Deadwood keeps growing and Saloon No. 10 stays busy year-round, November being the slowest month before the snowmobilers arrive for the winter season. Charlie explained that Deadwood's primary focus is on history and maintaining the buildings to preserve integrity and uphold national status as a historical location. Though the Saloon does promote a lot of varied events, it is the reenactments that draw in the biggest crowds in a town built around tourism. They do not have a curator or a particular way to curate the collection. It is

cleaned thoroughly twice a year to maintain the objects, but the primary focus is on the saloon with its reenactments and its community programming.

The reenactments are a form of community outreach. Charlie said the saloon has been doing the reenactments at least as far back as gaming became legal in 1989. Two shows are performed, the first at 1-o'clock in the afternoon, the other at 7pm. The second show is longer and involves the rest of the town. It includes the trial of Jack McCall at the Masonic Temple down the street. The shows pull in volunteers from the audience, mostly children. Sundays give the primary cast a break and use backup actors, which draws less of a crowd. The shows are so well-attended that it is hard to move in the saloon and the crowd spills out into the street. These shows are performed year-round and start with the infamous poker game Hickok was playing the day he died. This is another opportunity for community involvement since the hand he played before death is called the dead man's hand, which consists of black aces, black eights, and the nine of diamonds. Any patron who gets the dead man's hand during a game of Texas hold'em gets \$1000 and a t-shirt. Sitting high above all the action rests Wild Bill's death chair, a reminder to the life that was lost one-hundred and forty years ago.

Though the saloon boasts a wide variety of programs, at the end of the day, it is still a site of dark tourism. Some of the questions Charlie said they get regularly are: about the details of the shooting and where exactly Hickok was shot and whether there is any blood remaining on the chair. Charlie believes the site to be haunted, but not by Wild Bill. According to her, she has had several encounters with the paranormal. "We had apartments up here, and supposedly one of the ladies; Annie, haunts it up here. I've had

encounters and so have other employees. Not as often since the addition was put on in 2006.” Charlie goes on to tell me the story of an experience she had in eighth grade when she closed on a Sunday and came up to deep clean the entire restaurant. “I’d have to sweep the back steps, so after cleaning the dish room I had the mats rolled up to mop. I came back and the mop water was dumped.” Another experience Charlie had was when she would serve in the restaurant. “We’d get tables seated and people would want to know who was knocking on the other side of the wall, and we’d tell them that there was nobody on the other side of the walls. Nobody is knocking at you. Annie is mischievous.”

### **Villisca Axe Murder House, Villisca, Iowa**

After we attempted to make our schedules coordinate, the Villisca Axe Murder House unfortunately became the one site location I could not visit and experience in person. This was the only interview conducted via telephone, and the interview was recorded via a telephone recording app rather than directly on a laptop. This interview was considerably shorter than the others due to conflicting schedules.

Martha was born and raised in Villisca, Iowa. The murder house had always been a known part of the town’s history. The timing of the murders has been narrowed to between the evening of June 10<sup>th</sup> and the early morning of June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1912. The Moore family, consisting of six individuals, as well as two house guests, were killed by an unknown person whose identity remains a mystery to this day. It was when Martha’s husband was retiring that the two of them took an interest in purchasing the old house. It had started with a personal interest in antique collecting done by a family relative. Martha

and Darwin had gotten an antique store in Villisca and eventually turned it into a museum. When the Axe Murder House came up for sale, nobody wanted to buy it due to the gruesome nature of its history. It eventually went to auction. A realtor approached Darwin and told him to place a bid. He had come to Martha with the idea and she said no. Martha described her husband Darwin as having been a stubborn man, and regardless of Martha's input, Darwin placed a bid on the house. On New Year's Eve of 1994. The phone rang and Darwin took a secretive conversation, still not wanting to tell Martha what he had done. It would be another month before he told his wife that they had gotten the house. Martha was glad he did it because it was something that needed to be done. Darwin did not want to see someone buy it and tear it down. It was such a part of Iowa's history.

Restoration would come from Martha and Darwin personally. To this day, Martha runs the site without any grants or state funding. They had a couple of pictures of what the house looked like in 1912 and county court records held the blueprints of the property as it was prior to anyone living in it after the murders. Working with individuals in the community who had lived in the house or had been in the house helped to restore the property to its original state the best that could be done. It needed to be completely restored. The kitchen and the porch had been extended and the bathroom had been moved to the back porch. It had green siding, and that all needed to be changed. The house had been vacant for a couple of years at the time of purchase. It was run down and required a lot of work, but the property was restored to look like it did in 1912. The barn and the shed have been rebuilt and electricity was added to the property to make maintaining it



easier, though the house itself remains free of running water or electrical wiring. The court records were crucial in site restoration. Things mentioned such as the home having a piano, though it is not possible to know what it looked like, have provided a guide as to what objects needed to be included in the space. A wood-burning cook stove, an old ice box, beds that are period-specific, and décor to match the time bring the house back to life. Nothing is original to the property but the recreation was done with painstaking effort. The site is now run by Martha and two part-time commissioned employees since her husband Darwin passed away five years ago. Martha and her two employees do all maintenance and upkeep.

Community embracement of the site has always been slightly divided. According to Martha, she is not sure why but speculates that it is possibly due to jealousy or the lack of belief in the spiritual world. She believes people are upset about her earning money on the backs of dead people, but they forget it is a historical place. A lot of people come purely for the history of the site, not the ghost stories. In order to maintain a community relationship, Martha keeps the site very clean and insists on being a good neighbor. The sign in the front yard, Villisca Axe Murder House, got some finger-pointing when it was put up, but people seem to have calmed down over the nature of the site, according to Martha. There are no community events or outreach programs put into place at this point in time though the site does stand out when there are events such as the Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI). This event brought in over four hundred additional visitors to the site in 2016. The site celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a

troop of actors who came up from Missouri and played characters from the crime. Special events are otherwise limited.

Since its restoration, The Villisca Axe Murder House has been a hot spot for dark tourism. Martha does not pay for advertising. She does not need to since there is such a strong interest through word of mouth alone to the point where business is booming. When asked, Martha said she does not know who committed the murder, nor does she care to speculate. She lets guests do their own investigating and draw their own conclusions about the crime. The site itself has been on the radar of documentary films and the famed paranormal television program, *Ghost Adventures*. At the time of this interview, a feature length film was just finishing production, *The Villisca Axe Murders* (2016). Martha runs tours in the summer months where she sees the number of visitors fluctuate quite a bit. Some weekends see over one hundred people. Usually visitors are on vacation or part of a school group. Aside from the summer tours, the Villisca Axe Murder House is open to overnight guests. The house is booked year-round but not on Halloween so as not to give people the opportunity to do something that might not be appropriate. Guests are given battery operated lanterns after there was a fire with the kerosene lamps. People come from all over the world to experience the house. They are given keys, instructions, and a tour. The sheriff's department keeps an eye on the property since vandalism has been a problem in the past, the worst of it being a gentleman who came to visit with his parents and stabbed himself on the premises. Most incidences occur at night and that is when the sheriff's department makes their rounds. No on-site security is provided at this time.

Martha's personal belief in the paranormal is as follows:

I've had a few experiences in there. We didn't know anything about the spiritual world when we bought this project, we bought it simply for the historical value of it. When the paranormals and those kinds of people wanted to take a look at the house, then Darwin and I sat there with them so we could find out what they were doing and how. Sometimes you saw and experienced things that you had no idea you might have experienced before, but you didn't know what you were feeling. So yes, I feel there's something in there, but I prefer to let people discover that for themselves. I don't want to go around telling people it's haunted and then they come and they don't have experiences and they call me a liar. If they don't have the ability to feel or aren't open then they're not going to experience anything. It's like you're on your own. I have four notebooks of people who have spent the night in the house and have detailed hour by hour what they've experienced.

The most profound thing that happened to Martha was when she and Darwin were first starting the business. A paranormal team was there investigating the property. They had come several weekends during the summer with expensive equipment. There was a television set in the kitchen and a camera in the living room. It was pointing towards the bedroom where the girls were murdered. Martha was sitting in the kitchen watching and thinking, "I'm going to go in that bedroom and I'm going to stand there and talk to these people and see if anything happens to me." She told them how awful it must have been to be that young and not be able to experience the world because life was cut so short. She was standing there and all of a sudden she got this really cold feeling on her arm and her hair raised; she got goose bumps. Martha said someone was out in the kitchen and they said there was a little light orb on her arm. They could see it. Martha could not but she could feel it, "I feel it was one of the spirits letting me know they were there with me and it was okay. I don't spend a lot of time in that house."

The Villisca Axe Murder House is a constant work in progress, according to Martha. It is an old house and the upkeep is constant. When the RAGBRAI came through, a window broke. "In the afternoon one of the windows in the upstairs bedroom blew out. We have no idea why, maybe the pressure of so many people, or whether spirits said that's enough. The bikers got so scared and they called 911 and the sheriff and they went upstairs and there wasn't a sliver of glass in the house, it had all blown to the yard." It is the failing of an old house that keeps Martha constantly on her feet. The property means a lot to her. It is a part of her town's history, and a part of Iowa's. Martha told me her husband Darwin was a farm boy and when he came to Villisca to go to school, he would attend relays in Des Moines once a year. He and the other kids would march in a parade and would all wear their letter jackets. Someone shouted out, "Villisca! Where the axe murders happened!" That is the legend. It is just carried on.

### **Oakland Cemetery, Iowa City, Iowa**

The Oakland Cemetery manager, Russell, grew up forty miles south of Iowa City, and upon taking the job, he was not aware of the legend of the Black Angel. "When you think Black Angel, you think Iowa City," he told me in his office on the cemetery grounds. Russell's background is in education where he was a football coach for nineteen years. He had some lawn care experience that helped get him his current position at the cemetery, which he has now held for three and a half years. Having spent a great deal of time working behind a desk, Russell said the chance to work outdoors was appealing to him. Though Oakland is still an active cemetery, what draws people to tour it is the grave site of Bohemian immigrant, Teresa Feldevert. She was residing in Iowa City when her

son died at a young age. After that, she left and went to Oregon where she remarried. She came back to Iowa City after her husband passed away. The statue was commissioned by Feldevert for the grave site. Eventually, she would move her son's body over to the same plot and would erect a tree stump for his marker. Initially, Feldevert was unhappy with the statue and eventually took the artist to court, but the statue arrived and here it remains, now known as the Black Angel.

The administrative structure of the cemetery falls under Iowa City Parks and Recreation, specifically the cemetery division. Besides Russell, there are two full-time city employees that help with the cemetery. During summer months this number increases by one. The Oakland Cemetery is forty acres with what Russell estimates to be between 22,000 and 25,000 burials. With the current amount of available space, the cemetery has approximately twenty years of life left as is; however, another thirty-eight acres of undeveloped land adjoins on the east side of the cemetery for further expansion. Expansion can be met with resistance. The last time the cemetery expanded was in 2000, involving twenty of the purchased thirty-eight acres. Hickory Hill Park resides near the property. The expansion was initially turned down due to the opinion that the park would be destroyed to make room for the cemetery. The project was later approved due to the family who sold the city the land speaking on behalf of the expansion and assuring those in doubt that the park was in no danger. As for the older section of the cemetery where the Black Angel resides, there are still plots available. Prices vary within Oakland based on their location, those being in the old cemetery and near the angel being higher in cost.

Maintaining the site is a lot like maintaining a city park. It is in the middle of Iowa City and gets a lot of walkers and runners on the paved paths. The trees need to be kept up as well as the lawn. Monuments will sometimes need repair. Winter means snow removal. The cemetery staff opens and closes all burials. They also do genealogy for those interested in ancestors buried in the cemetery. The records go back as far as the 1800s and are digital. Piecing together genealogy is more difficult when a record is lost or a headstone has been too badly damaged. Limestone headstones are repaired if knocked over or broken but they are typically not re-engraved due to the nature of the stone and corrosion over time. There is no specific maintenance to be done to the Black Angel unless she is vandalized. One of the fingers broke off several years ago and needed to be repaired. There is no waxing or polishing. She simply resides as is, watching over Oakland.

Community involvement comes mostly from the University of Iowa. There are several classes that come out multiple times per year to tour the cemetery, which always consists of a stop at the Black Angel. Journalism students doing stories frequently come to investigate the Black Angel and Oakland Cemetery. Russell stated that one of the most positive notes about the Black Angel is that it brings in a lot of local children who do school projects. People will have picnics in the cemetery. There have also been a couple of weddings.

According to Russell, the Black Angel brings in the biggest crowd, without a doubt. He estimates that at least five people per day will visit the cemetery just for the statue, a figure he believes holds true even in winter, seeing many more visitors on

certain days or times of the year. Halloween picks up the most tourism traffic. Russell is aware that the Black Angel is a site of dark tourism. People come from all over to see the statue. Enough people inquired about the Black Angel that Parks and Recreation made a pamphlet to answer questions about the grave site. Russell says the site otherwise markets itself thanks to the Internet and word of mouth. This does bring about the occasional bit of vandalism. It is not uncommon to get beer cans or empty liquor bottles in the cemetery. Russell imagines this is because it acts more like a park than a cemetery, which he believes is because of the Black Angel bringing in so many people. The statue has been vandalized with spray paint and has needed repair. None of the stones in the cemetery have been stolen but they will occasionally get tipped over. People will occasionally want to climb on the Black Angel. Halloween brings about extra security. Employees will stay until 2am to make sure nothing occurs. After that, police patrol the area for security. The police know when cemetery employees leave so they can start rounds throughout the year. The cemetery closes at sunset. Employees will shine flashlights on late night visitors to discourage them. Russell has not seen anything major happen with vandalism since he took the position three and a half years ago. There are also security cameras mounted on the office building to see who is coming in and who is leaving. People have left trinkets at the site out of respect. Money, coins, flowers, and things of that nature are not uncommon. The site is a popular one for geocaching or using GPS to track hidden caches. The cemetery allows for all objects, as long as appropriate, to remain at the site until they begin to look bad, pile up, or decay.

When asked whether or not he believed Oakland Cemetery and/or the Black Angel were haunted, he said no. Russell said that visitors ask about hauntings. Most recently, a woman came seeking information on how to reverse the curse of the Black Angel. There are rumored to be several versions of the curse, the most popular being that any woman who kisses the feet of the Black Angel will die within three to six months. The woman claimed to have kissed the feet of the angel years ago and had recently been diagnosed with an undisclosed disease as well as having recently had a heart attack. Russell said she was the first person to ever approach him about being cursed by the Black Angel. There has also been a woman recently who was very vocal about how evil the Black Angel is and urged for its removal from the cemetery. The interest in dark tourism has also brought around several paranormal investigation groups, one of them being local. Jack Osbourne and Dana Workman's show, *Haunted Highway*, featured the Black Angel in 2013. Phone calls about the site increased significantly after the episode aired. According to Russell, there are calls at least once a year to do filming or a ghost hunt at the site.

As for why the angel is black, Russell has heard many different versions of the legend, anything from infidelity, sins of the family, having been struck by lightning, and oxidization, which is the one he personally believes to be responsible for her coloration. Russell has heard many stories about ghosts and hauntings surrounding the Black Angel, but he does not believe them. He believes that Teresa Feldevert was a reserved woman who would likely disapprove of all the legends that surround the statue she commissioned for her grave and the grave of her son. Russell enjoys working at Oakland. He says it is a



lot of fun and he has not had a bad experience. A lot of people stop by and compliment him about how nicely the cemetery grounds are maintained. The Angel is a benefit to the city and the cemetery as it brings in a lot of extra visitors. There is nothing Russel hopes to see changed in the future.

### **Glensheen Mansion, Duluth, Minnesota**

The Glensheen Mansion is Minnesota's number one historic house museum. It features a full staff, including a curator. This interview was conducted with the museum's director, Dan, and the curator, Milissa, though it should be noted that Milissa was unable to participate for very long. I was able to take a self-guided tour of the grounds after the interview. Neither Dan nor Milissa grew up in Duluth. Dan, a Minnesota native, moved to Duluth for college and became a tour guide for Glensheen, going on to do research on the grounds and eventually gaining his position sometime later; now held for three years. Dan describes it as a great homecoming, especially after falling in love with Duluth. Milissa hails from Texas. She had been with the Minnesota State Historical Society for fifteen years then eventually found employment at Glensheen.

The research that needed to be done in order to work at this site was done using a historical lens. Dan did a fairly extensive study of house museums across the country looking at what was successful and what was not. This study is always ongoing in order to stay current and to help Glensheen maintain its success. House museums across the country are dying and according to Dan, the attitude at Glensheen when he took his position was not to put too much effort into the site since it was going to die. He was told

to breath some existing life into it. He was told not to expect getting past 70,000 visitors. Determined not to let it fail, Dan has been able to push Glensheen into seeing over 100,000 annual visitors. Marketing for house museums has not been what it could or should be, according to Dan. The competition they face is intense. In Duluth, Glensheen competes with other tourism hot spots such as the Great Lakes Aquarium, the William A. Irvin Museum, and the Duluth Depot, to name a few. Milissa did not have to do much research going into the position since she was familiar with the history through working at the Minnesota Historical Society. She researched background on the Congdons; original owners of the property, in order to get a better understanding of the site. Her current research lies in the de-accessioning of objects from the house since the focus is on the 1910s and there are family belongings from decades later, up to the 1970s.

In 1977, there was a double homicide at Glensheen. From 1977 until the early 1980s, the court case was still on television almost every day and from a marketing perspective, it could not have gotten better for Glensheen during that time. Dan estimates that at the time, 90% of Glensheen's visitor base was there because of the murders, and there was a lack of marketing to push the house as a historical site since it could survive off of one event. He feels this was a shame due to the loss of the grandness of the estate. People were coming to see where the murders occurred and then they would leave. The original director of the site decided to move away from the murders for a number of reasons, mostly looking at the site's long-term survival as a house museum. Glensheen is also unique in that the family connected to the murders as well as the suspected killer are still alive. There are procedures in place in the off chance that the woman suspected of

the crime does return to the site. The bigger picture for Glensheen looks past the dark tourism element since it has been sustained via good marketing and an array of community events.

Focusing on how beautiful the property is helps to romanticize it rather than to connect it to the grotesque. The murders are still a story and a piece of Glensheen's history, but it is not everything, and Dan has worked hard to make sure that is the image that Glensheen projects. History is more interesting when it is layered. To tell a fuller story, the tours at Glensheen reflect multiple layers of life at the mansion. In early 2016, a servants tour was launched to tell the history of the staff who worked at Glensheen. Dan said the mission statement of Glensheen has also been changed: To inspire Minnesota pride through Glensheen and the Congdon family's legacy. The reason for the change was to find a brand that was unique for this house museum and to, again, move away from the murders since it overshadows everything else that makes Glensheen what it is. The idea is to look holistically at Glensheen. It was designed by a Minnesota architect, and the interior was designed by Minnesotans. There is a legacy created. There are five houses designed by Clarence H. Johnston. Most of the University of Minnesota campus and the capital building were designed by the same architect as well. Interior designer John Bradstreet went on to national fame. Dan said he was at a conference in Atlanta attended by five thousand people and he was being sought out because Glensheen is one of the last remaining collections of John Bradstreet. The Minnesota connection is the direction in which Dan is currently taking Glensheen. He said they do not hide from the rest of the story or the murders, but the larger story is more useful to the public.

Glensheen is staffed by nearly ninety people, fifty to sixty of them being tour guides. There are fifteen senior staff, including a business manager, office manager, marketing manager, creative manager, and collections manager. University of Minnesota, Duluth students are hired in positions like tour guides since the university owns the property. The property was obtained by them in 1969 after an agreement was made to take over ownership from the family. At the time, they had been considering bulldozing the house and selling the land by parcel. The deal made by the university was to allow the last living member of the family who had lived in the house to pass away before taking over. The university took ownership the day after the murders. Initially, they did not know what to do with the property. It had been proposed to turn the dwelling into student housing. Eventually, it was decided to turn it into the interpretive center it is today to celebrate the Congdon family and their legacy. There is a misconception that Glensheen does not need donations or funding because the university pays for all upkeep and maintenance, which is not the case. Glensheen pays for its entire operation on ticket sales. Money from the university goes toward significant repairs, not for operations. There is a lot to do as far as maintaining the site. Since not much upkeep had been done over the last sixty years, there are major repairs that need to be made to the property. The boathouse and pier will decay if not addressed soon. The garden walls also need to be repaired. There is water damage from thirty years ago, though the roof was just replaced to stop any further damage. Garden staff do the lawn upkeep. Currently, Glensheen is working on climate control and temperature control. There is heat, but no air. Milissa said climate control will improve the state of collections. Once a record of light, temperature,

and humidity has been sufficiently kept, a cost estimate and grant can be put into play to do the upgrades.

Community outreach and programming is extensive at Glensheen. They donate two thousand pounds of food grown in on-site gardens to the local food bank. They are the largest giver of fresh produce in Northeastern Minnesota. Glensheen also hosts a large number of non-profit organizations holding fundraisers on the property, including the Boy Scouts and American Red Cross, a historical piece of interest since Chester Congdon was president of the Duluth chapter of the American Red Cross. Dan firmly believes the community needs to be on the side of house museums, adding that failing house museums come off as stuffy. The goal is to open up and show the world that people lived here and this was a home. One of the popular community programs is Concert by the Pier, an event which sees hundreds of people in attendance, the first concert bringing in eight hundred attendees. It brings in people who may not ever have been to the property, and it reminds them that this is a beautiful space that people do sometimes forget about. Glensheen is also one of the two Blue Star Museums of Minnesota, meaning active service members and up to five family members get in for free. If someone is serving overseas, their entire family can come for free and have something to do.

Experimenting with different programs also enhances success. For a long time, Glensheen was doing annual pumpkin carving at their Spooktacular event. Over one thousand pumpkins were displayed on the lawn, but it was not cost effective and people needed to sign waivers in case of injury. So this will be the first year that it is not done. That is one failed program. Another program that was run in the past is the Valentine's

Day brunch. Dan said that these events need to be considered from a marketing perspective as well. Events should not take away from the overall mission statement and story of Glensheen. Zenith City on Tap and Chester Chats are two programs that have been created to further community involvement. Zenith City Press author Tony Dierckins hosted a presentation every Wednesday in February with local beers and wines available. Chester Chats was modeled after TED Talks and consists of three short presentations with intermissions in between focusing on current affairs and the third one on the history of Glensheen, always connecting the three to each other. The programs vary in attendance, sometimes seeing as low as five attendees and sometimes reaching the maximum capacity of one hundred, depending on the subject matter. The City on Tap history lecture series has had to turn people away. There is alcohol available at both lecture series, which Dan believes contributes to the success since it creates a more relaxed atmosphere for tourists and staff alike. Currently, replacing the canceled Spooktacular with a biannual Glensheen house party is in the works. This event will feature Bent Paddle beer and a contemporary musician. These parties will have a theme such as hats and the museum will pull hats from the collection and create a display around the theme.

Glensheen features a wide variety of tours available at prices ranging anywhere from \$18.00 for general admission to a private director's tour at \$2,500.00 for a group. These varying tours have had great success in making sure there is something for everyone. They include the full mansion tour, the nooks and crannies tour, 21+ flashlight tour, collections manager tour, head gardener tour, summer evening, kayak, director's, and candlelight Christmas. The most successful tour is the nooks and crannies tour, which

Dan attributes to people loving to see the hidden side of Glensheen. They love to see what they could not before. The director's tour is very rarely booked. Dan reiterates that the murder was a one-time gig and the survival of Glensheen hinders on variety. He believes that dark tourism works so well for smaller house museums without much to offer because it is a shock to the system. Dark tourism brings people to the doors of sites that otherwise are so unknown that people do not think of them outside the realm of dark tourism. For Glensheen, he feels they are lucky to have so much that they can offer outside of the murders. People are allowed to ask questions about the murders, though they are typically not answered until the end of the tour. This has been known to upset some people since the murders are not being talked about in the middle of the room where one took place or on the staircase where the other occurred. Dan claims there are two reasons for this, the first being that it creates an awkward narrative without proper flow to the story, jumping from 1910 to 1977. The second reason is that there are a lot of children on the tour and murder is a gruesome subject. There have been complaints in the past about mention of the murders on the tour due to the presence of children. Dan believes that if a site is promoting dark tourism then the crowd who attends is usually aware of what they are getting into whereas Glensheen has a family expectation. That being said, where did the murders take place is still a frequently asked question. Glensheen faces a rare circumstance with the murderer still being alive and free. There is a disaster plan in place in case she shows up to the property.

Wedding rentals are Glensheen's fourth best income stream. A good majority of profits come from weddings, followed by the gift shop; which features local vendors,

donations, and private events. Seasonally, weddings cost more in July. There is a separate staff for weddings and other events. Primary staff is also involved in helping to ensure nothing gets damaged. The gardener's cottage was a \$400,000.00 restoration project this past year and wedding couples are now able to utilize it, so it has become a bridal cottage. The entire estate is part of the wedding rental and comes with a tour. The option for location of the ceremony is open and even offers a bonfire on the lake. Community outreach options such as this fuel Glensheen and provide an opportunity for the property to be shown off for the beauty and grandeur that it encompasses.

Glensheen does a lot of commerce and staffs a marketing manager and graphic designer. Dan is also heavily involved in this process. The site stays extremely active in all social media platforms and has a broad reach on Facebook, which Dan accredits as being by far the most useful due to the bigger audience it reaches. Thanks to social media, Glensheen has been able to get rid of billboards. There are banners that hang on the front gate. As social media helps them expand their audience, fifteen more rooms have been opened to the general public in the last three years. A blog has been created. Dan says that social media is how Glensheen is telling its story. Snapchat was recently added to the social media platforms as well.

Glensheen is unique in that it is a site of dark tourism that does not embrace it as such. Dan's approach to creating more to the narrative than just the murders has created a very successful house museum. The mansion does require heavy security and vandalism does occasionally occur. In the last couple of years some young people broke into the property late at night and broke some balusters on the front of the boat house. As Dan



describes it, security is intense, and he intends to beef it up further. Security cameras are to be installed in the interior of house at some point in time. The current cameras are motion sensor activated. Dan's primary concern is not guests; however, it is staff causing the damage. He says that is the same for any museum and sites need to be careful of that.

The future for Glensheen is to keep growing and developing new ways to stay relevant. The focus is not on dark tourism, nor will it likely be. Dan wants to see some changes made such as the creation of a disaster plan, a collections priority plan, a facilities report. When that is taken care off, the plan is to apply for official museum accreditation. Through immense community programming and outreach, Glensheen has been able to discard the appeal of dark tourism and maintain a site that thrives. In fact, Glensheen regularly turns down the gauntlet of paranormal television shows and documentaries other sites do not. Dan does not know whether or not he thinks Glensheen is haunted. He gets questions from tourists about that, and the idea of doing a haunted tour has crossed his mind, but there is nothing officially in the works at this point in time.

### **The Ohio State Reformatory, Mansfield, Ohio**

It is hard to miss the towering structure that is the Ohio State Reformatory. Its grandeur creates a sense of power, not undesired considering this building was most famously used as a prison and contains the Guinness Book of World Records' spot for tallest stacked prison cells at seven stories. The site sees an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 visitors annually and is entirely self-funded. Penny is the program director for the site, which has a magnificent story to tell, lots of community outreach, and is a well-known

site for dark tourism. Penny was born and raised twenty minutes away from Mansfield, Ohio, the city where the Reformatory is neatly tucked away. Penny always knew it was haunted. Her mother had an annual Halloween tradition where she would drive around and tell ghost stories, which would always include a drive past the Reformatory. After getting her driver's license, Penny found herself on the grounds and was still terrified of the mysteries that lie within the walls. It was January of 2012 when she decided to take the position, which she heard about by chance. It was the right time in her life to be looking and the job opened up, seeking someone with experience in fundraising and nonprofit events. Penny applied the day after hearing about the opening.

There was a lot of research that went into preparing for the job. Penny claims she was one of many people in the community who knew about the Reformatory but not all that much. She was coming from another nonprofit organization and her research was more about the structure of the organization than anything else, who owned it, and what were the programs. A lot of her research also involved the history of the Reformatory as well, which put her skills in action since she holds a degree in art history, focusing on the rituals of public spaces and architecture from the Renaissance era. As the program director, Penny is part of an administrative team that runs the Reformatory. There is a board of trustees, a preservation society, which owns the site as a nonprofit, an executive director who oversees everything like events and program restorations, gift shop coordinator, volunteer coordinator, restoration supervisor, grounds and maintenance crew, superintendent, and an administrator support staff. The creative marketing director goes beyond traditional forms of marketing, but the Reformatory still sticks to the tried and

true methods in advertising such as billboards and radio spots. Penny said that is not going to stop since it is a successful campaign. The guest services coordinator does quite a varied number of things including organizing the donation brick campaign, memberships, and rentals. Anyone who rents will become a member of the Reformatory automatically to create a longer lasting relationship. The archivist and curator is also the board president. Penny noted the archives department is not fully developed but is working on digital assets management since the archives were unorganized. Recently, the Reformatory was sanctioned as the Ohio Corrections Museum. One side of the twenty-thousand square foot space will remain the Reformatory and the other will house various artifacts from around the state, including the original electric chair from the Ohio State Penitentiary. The gift shop opened as a small space but has since been expanding. Initially they were running off of an old punch register with no inventory being kept and in the last few years the space has doubled in size, the same as tours. They are now incorporating modern technology.

The space itself can be a lot to maintain. The building is so large that it has five separate HVAC units that need to be maintained. There is a cleaning crew that sweeps, dusts, and changes trash cans. Penny said that prisons use a lot of energy and that is not something people typically want to talk about. She said the transformers blow three to four times per year. The Internet, electricity, and servers get knocked offline and the facility cannot run the way they want it to. In order to combat this, the registers have been loaded onto iPads. As business continues to grow, fixing these issues will be crucial. The gift shop is going eventually to become a three-room space to accommodate traffic and

product. There will be three main themes, the Reformatory, the Shawshank Redemption as it was filmed here on location, and ghost hunts. The idea is to address that the Reformatory is not located in a metropolitan area. Local residents do not have huge incomes to spend on things. Penny said there is a duty to price things reasonably so that people will make the journey. Alcatraz has state funding and the Eastern State Penitentiary is in the middle of Philadelphia. Staff at the Reformatory have had to get creative to accommodate the local population and region.

Community programming and outreach is trickier for the Reformatory than it is for the other sites in this study. Though there have not been any outright protests, Penny said a lot of organizations do not want to partner with them. They do a huge amount of fundraising for other organizations, recently including the Humane Society. They have raised money for a Zumbathon. They host a Christmas party for low income families and their children, which Penny feels is really important. The Reformatory supports fifteen families every year. They aim to give a lot back to their community. There is an individual who tracks the museum's contributions to the community, such as giving \$50,000.00 in tours, gift shop merchandise, and space to the community. This way the Reformatory and the image it has can be one that says they are here to help everybody as much as possible, though there is still a lot of opposition. People get upset about what they do not understand, Penny mentioned. She travels to conferences for work and has taken note of how people talk about the darker parts of history, which are still relevant and need to be a part of the overall discussion. In trying to seek out darker locations to learn from and experience them, Penny has called other preservation groups and has been

given answers like not wanting to engage in dark tourism because it cheapens the experience. Penny is right in thinking the darker parts of history need to be discussed. This means they are not forgotten. We can learn from them and learn what not to repeat as a collective culture. Paranormal programming at the Reformatory raises a huge amount of restoration funds. It does not cheapen the experience. It benefits the institution as a whole. It is important to approach darker history with sensitivity and understanding and to present that to the general public.

There are a variety of tours available at the Reformatory that vary in cost. There are self-guided or guided tours that come with the option to purchase a headset that will give tour information. Under the guided tours, one has the option of taking the history meets Hollywood tour, the beyond the bars tour, the inmates tour, as well as the Shawshank bus tour. Individuals wanting to take pictures with heavy equipment like tripods or selfie sticks pay an increased price since this can sometimes disrupt others. The rules for such tours include that one never asks guests to stop what they are doing so a picture can be taken. Rules must be strictly abided by. The Reformatory hires former inmates to give tours. Possible future tours include the architecture tour. The behind the scenes tour is the most popular since it takes individuals places they cannot otherwise go. This is the same successful model as at the Glensheen Mansion.

One of the duties of the Reformatory is to debunk myths. As Penny puts it, you cannot not talk to the 100,000 people who come to the site every year just because the mission statement is to talk about prisons or the Reformatory. You have to know your audience. There is a huge international audience that comes through the site each year.

The film, *The Shawshank Redemption*, has been translated into several languages, and that brings in people as well as the history of the site. Ghost hunts are international as well. There is a world map downstairs that tourists can pin according to where they are from. College students are also drawn to the site from all over Ohio since Mansfield is a central location. The aim is to have something for everyone, which is often split into the three categories mentioned earlier, history, ghost hunts, and *The Shawshank Redemption*. Ultimately, the purpose of the preservation society is to preserve the architecture and historical integrity of the site and to educate people about all that entails. The Reformatory seeks programming that is more meaningful and has more of a social impact or addresses issues, which is what got Penny excited about the job in the first place. She has to problem solve and to figure out how to re-appropriate the negative space for the community and bring to life a real discussion on the prison and the history surrounding it. There are three prisons in the area. There is a subculture of life that exists surrounding them outside that of the community that exists in a shared space. There is a conversation about how spaces influence people and the Reformatory is a strong tool to educate. It was a reformatory at its core, not a prison. For Penny, it is working with something so much bigger than herself and the community that continues to draw her into the history of the site. It makes her remember the importance of why this building needs to be saved. The Reformatory is a sizable economic factor to the community. People come for events and it is a part of Shawshank if nothing else. Penny does not believe the community is always aware of just how tied to them the Reformatory is. She said that when she worked for a previous non-profit there was always contention about the Reformatory getting a high

number of visitors and having to fight for appreciation. It was a competition rather than an opportunity for a partnership. It is important to push the boundaries and show the community why this place is so important. People do not think it is right to glamorize the dark elements of society, and for Penny, working in the position that she has, she sees that it is not being glamorized. It is a misconception held by some people. Certain parts of the Reformatory are romanticized like Shawshank. It is an easy window into something a lot harder to deal with and to talk about. There are people in the community who really respond to it and those who do not and that is the platform the Reformatory must work with. It is important to show the community that the site is not just a site of tourism and that it belongs to them as well. In order to show better outreach, the Reformatory is focusing social media on Richland County with the Richland Rocks campaign, which offers a discount to local residents. Hashtags are better strategized to focus on the community as well as general tourism. As Penny put it, "We're not just a tourist site for other people. We're yours too."

Programming is extremely diverse. This year saw the fourteenth annual Zumbathon, which got started when an instructor approached the Reformatory. The Zumbathon happens a few times a year and the profits are given to a nonprofit or to a charity. They felt the Reformatory would be a wonderful outlet for donation and location. Hundreds of people have attended the event. There is a big space available in the Reformatory that gets rented out. It started with weddings but no longer does them since the Reformatory has focused more on public space rather than private. More people can attend the events and experience the space this way. This is especially important with

weekends being the busiest time. The murder mystery dinner theater is a way to fill wintertime and it is on its seventh year of operation. The murder mystery sells out of tickets every year. There are current undertakings to increase educational programming. A board member who is also a sixth grade teacher has developed a curriculum for educators to use in their classrooms and also on visits to the site. An educator also helped to develop Boy Scout and Girl Scout patches involving the Reformatory. Program members can come to the Reformatory, take a tour and do an activity to earn a patch. Currently, a database is being created that lists all of the schools within an hour of the Reformatory in order to help create an educational postcard with historical images of the education that took place at the location. That will be mailed out to five hundred schools in hopes of drawing in new visitors. After attending a conference, the idea to create an education fund that will provide scholarships to underprivileged students and transportation to the Reformatory is currently underway. Tours for these students will also be free. The idea is to focus on children that are high risk for incarceration and to educate them on the Reformatory and what life was like.

Halloween is a popular time at the Reformatory. Staff run a seasonal haunted house that started as a way to make money and used to consist of museum staff renting costumes. Eventually, there was money to hire a company. The Reformatory worked with the same company for fifteen years and as of this year they are making changes, bringing in Hollywood legend Robert Kurtzman who happens to be from Crestline, Ohio, ten minutes away. He moved his production company locally when he had children because he wanted to be near family, allowing the Reformatory the opportunity to work easily



with him. “He’s going to take us up to a whole new level,” said Penny, “a higher level.” This higher level is what Penny describes as being what the Reformatory aims for in everything they do. It is a level of professionalism that Penny asserts is found in world class museums. The goal is never to short anybody on quality and so Halloween needs to be top in the country, and that is what they are striving for. The latest haunted house trends and technology are being brought in, actors can touch audiences and are highly trained. There is also the option for a guided ghost walk that lasts two hours and is aged thirteen and up. There is also an overnight ghost hunt that is eighteen and older.

There are other popular programming opportunities that get the community involved with the Reformatory. The site holds importance related to the Civil War. Reenactors will do a battle even though the Reformatory grounds served as a training camp. In order to do more with that and to stay truer to history, the Reformatory offers vignettes. Though the building is post-Civil War, the feeling of the space matches the time. There is a staged officer’s meeting in the space that shows what it might have looked like to have taken over a plantation and be planning their next move. The tour group watches the performance from the door. From there, the tour moves on to women sewing and making bandages. It is a popular event. The event takes place at night, and the cannons are fired, which people react positively to. Vintage baseball is another popular program that the Reformatory runs. The Mansfield Independents is the hometown team. There is a good turnout for the event and people often take tours. The Shawshank Trail covers fourteen site locations through the Mansfield area, celebrating the film. The Reformatory is on the tour. This is operated through the Visitors Bureau of Richland

County and they work with the Reformatory. The community gets very involved with the Shawshank trailers. A local restaurant offers a Shawshank sandwich; a chocolate shop did scenes from the movie; there is a Reformatory red wine available; and the local brewery offers a redemption IPA and rooftop pale ale. Morgan Freeman and Tim Robbins know about the Mansfield Shawshankers.

*The Shawshank Redemption* is very much accredited for saving the Reformatory and giving it the opportunity to become what it is today. The prison had shut down in 1990 and was in the process of getting ready to be torn down in order to make way for two new prisons. Originally, the location had been chosen because of the natural spring and the railroads. Farming had always been a big part of prison life at the Reformatory. Tearing down the building would have cost a fortune. It was purchased for \$1.00, which saved the state money. The roof was repaired, the windows resealed, and then it was abandoned. The film required a location that had a castle-like structure and was in a geographical region that could pass for Maine. Finding the Reformatory was happenstance. Penny believes that people responded to the metaphor of the prison and that it is a story that encompasses so many genres. There are now church groups who use the site as a trope for breaking free. Kary Oberbrunner, the motivational speaker, wrote some books after a tour of the site. In his book, *Day Job to Dream Job*, he uses the prison as a metaphor for breaking free as well. He brings motivational groups to the Reformatory. Penny said, "Anyone who feels they need to make a change in their life uses Shawshank's don't give up hope. They love it and they want to be a part of it. You can be a part of it. You can touch it and immerse yourself in the set of Shawshank."

Standing where Andy stood and looking through the tunnel and that's what Shawshank does." It has been twenty-two years since the filming and the Reformatory is still a mecca for fans. The film's popularity does a tremendous amount for site. Interest in the film spans every age group and many cultures. It draws people in.

Security at the Reformatory is what Penny calls a very relevant topic and they plan to increase it in the following year. Prior events had security but not so much on a daily basis. However, in the current climate, Penny mentioned how important it is. There will also be future training sessions to teach staff and volunteers how to handle various situations. As far as vandalism is concerned, there has occasionally been some at the Reformatory. People steal hanging signs over the warden's living quarters. They will also takes tiles off the floor. Penny said if people take items the museum does not make a big deal about it as they do often get them mailed back. The idea to have an exhibition displaying returned items was mentioned. The Bible has been stolen out of the vault several times. Penny said staff just picks up vintage Bibles wherever they can find them. The museum is touch-friendly. It does not cost much and someone has left with a fun experience, and that goes a long way. Engagement and interaction cannot occur without touch, and stealing goes along with that. The Reformatory is the first and only site to counter the vandalism with ideas like displaying returned artifacts. This creativity and resourcefulness adds another element to the space. There are rules that need to be followed such as no Ouija boards, deification, or sex in the buildings. You are always going to get your rule-breakers. People have asked to leave things behind like crosses in drawers and sometimes they do not ask. People have written their names on walls or

scratched words into objects. Drones have been a problem, something mentioned by Molly Stark Park as well. The prison behind the Reformatory often has drones dropping drugs and weapons into the yard. Penny mentioned, “Last year, drones weren’t a problem and now they’re everywhere. The problem with drones is the law of free rights. You can film and photograph any structure visible publicly without any repercussions. Sites have a problem addressing drone usage because of the law.”

Penny is aware of the Reformatory’s place as a site of dark tourism and that people come here to experience the paranormal. The most commonly asked questions she gets are: is the site haunted? how many people died here? and how many people were executed here? The answer to the latter question is none as executions were not carried out at the Reformatory. People seeking paranormal experiences is one of two of the highest income generators for the Reformatory. Penny does believe the site is haunted and has many stories to share on the subject despite not being all that invested in the paranormal scene. She had worked at the Reformatory for seven months without experiencing a single phenomenon until one day she was in another office. She was the only one there when the office began to smell like chicken noodle soup. It was very intense. There was a volunteer on the premises and it was time to close. Nobody was cooking. The smell was gone within five minutes but Penny said she can still smell it to this day. Later, she would find out that the room she was in used to be the kitchen for the floor she was on. She has also smelled intense levels of pipe tobacco that will come out of nowhere. She has heard knocking and cannot figure out where it is coming from. Penny decides not to acknowledge it, but the Reformatory is making her believe more.

There are a lot of reports of something following people home with them upon leaving the Reformatory. Penny believes this happened to her once. Her brother was staying with her for the summer and he brought an old television set with him. The buttons were missing and in order to operate the unit, something needed to be shoved into the button area to turn it on. It would turn on in the basement at random. When the television was removed from the space, a radio took its place and turned on randomly. Penny's two-year-old child also saw ghosts and can say the word 'ghost'. Penny claims he will talk and interact with them.

Penny's stories continue with Christmas time her first year. Her husband and stepdaughter were helping her get things ready at the museum. The girl was eight-years-old at the time. The doors to the room they were in were opened and the girl asked who the guy was that just walked by. Penny told her there was nobody here but them and asked her to describe the man. The girl described him as being in inmate clothing and having curly hair. Penny asked others to see if they were indeed the only ones working that night and they were. Another winter story involves Penny and a coworker closing. Nobody else was present and they were walking through the east cell block down the staircase. They heard footsteps that sounded like loud boots walking on the first floor. They were sporadic, three steps here, five steps there, but very audible. It sounded to Penny like a guard walking.

Perhaps the most startling story Penny had to share was that of the first time she had gone on a ghost walk. She and her friends were in the chapel and kept seeing a shadow that was on the wall. The woman leading the tour said they called the shadow

figure Mr. Grumpy, because he was not nice. The shadow kept bouncing up and down. Her friend said her back was hot and stinging. Penny shined a light on it and there was a little red mark that did not really look like anything. She told her friend that she might have scratched it. Penny checked later on the tour and there were now three scratches and one had actually drawn blood. At one point in time, three people, all unrelated, came back to the gift shop and they all had three scratches. A man in his twenties had them on his back, a little boy had them on his arm, and a teen-aged girl had three on her stomach. Penny said people will come for a ghost walk and get disappointed if they do not experience anything. She said it is the building. It either accepts you or it does not. This is true of employees as well. It is not unheard of to have to work around employee schedules to accommodate a fear of closing at night. Penny said the building has a way of drawing you in. If you have been away for a while, you find your way back, giving off the sense of a living space.

The prison operated a long time. There are over two hundred deaths that occurred within the walls of the facility during its operation. Penny speculates that because it was a prison and housed criminals that people feel it generates more paranormal activity. The training site for the Civil War is also speculated as increasing the level of paranormal activity. Penny does not feel she is fluent in paranormal terminology and culture, but she says there are a lot of people who believe that energy attracts energy. So a lot of things come in that were not originally here. A woman who lived nearby, Phoebe Wise, was an eccentric and people believe they see her spirit walking up and down Reformatory Road.

There have been other reports of a woman in an old, tattered wedding dress wandering the grounds, and of inmates who set themselves on fire.

People get involved more because of the paranormal activities. People will bring metal detectors, and although they are not allowed to dig up the yard, they do find all kinds of treasures. People place odd phone calls. Penny said someone once called and asked where they kept the kettle that an inmate was boiled alive in. The chair room is a popular room. It is the only room without windows and what it was used for is undocumented. It is rumored that the chair will move from time to time. People do think the Reformatory is cursed. This goes back to the idea for the exhibit of returned objects. Some of these objects include a goose feather and a brick. There is usually a letter included stating that the object was taken and, ever since it was stolen, the individual responsible has experienced a series of strange events. They do not want the item anymore and they return it in order to break the curse. All of those letters are saved in an archive. There is a designated place on the Reformatory website called Amnesty for Artifacts where stories are included of people who have taken the artifacts as well as a way to return them. When the doors first closed, people took doorknobs, and furniture. The original movie prop: "Brooks was here" was returned a couple of years ago. People do respond to Amnesty for Artifacts. As Penny mentioned, taking these things and the tactile element to the tours allows people to feel more deeply connected to the site. It is not at all that they are promoting theft. They are promoting a sense of belonging and an experience. Perhaps if the returned objects exhibit does go into effect, it will help to

discourage the taking of things, but as Penny mentioned, nobody is really getting hurt by this and it is creating an interesting narrative.

In the future Penny hopes to see more educational programming and the addressing of real issues. The Reformatory does tourism very well and Penny hopes to see them do museum very well too. They do straddle Shawshank, paranormal, and history now and Penny hopes to see that done in the future. She would like to see the Reformatory really push for education, connection to scholars, and to maintain that high level of professionalism. The site has much room for growth, especially after being named Ohio's prison museum and with the future collections coming in. It will be fascinating to watch the space grow as it becomes more curated. It certainly embraces dark tourism and that is an element that does not appear to be going anywhere anytime soon. The staff here embrace the holistic picture of the Reformatory, what it was, what it is, and what it will become.

### **Molly Stark Park, Louisville, Ohio**

Nicholas is originally from the area of Louisville, Ohio. Within the small town rests a beautiful decaying piece of history, the Molly Stark Hospital. Sitting in what has now become Molly Stark Park, the building was originally a sanatorium and used as a hospital until 1994. Nicholas grew up knowing about what he describes as the creepy building. It always struck him as odd that the hospital, still in operation when he was a child, had no emergency services. Now as the community outreach coordinator and



formerly the education manager, it has become his and his department's duty to do something with the old building.

Researching the hospital was primarily done from the park perspective, which came down to utilities and potential risks. The property was purchased from the county for \$1.00. It did not take long to realize that the building's condition was so far gone that it would cost a considerable amount to bring it up to code. That's when the idea to turn it into a park came into play. The property consists of thirty acres and Nicholas said that since the county was going to do lawn upkeep regardless, the park just made sense. He said there were trails that connected to Louisville, but nothing as far as an open space, so acquiring the hospital and the land created an opportunity to establish something just outside of town for the community to use and enjoy.

Nicholas has been with Parks and Recreation for ten years, holding his current position for the last three. He was initially a high school teacher who decided to do an internship with the county and ended up thinking it was an interesting field. The structure of the organization consists of a director and a management team made up of education, public safety, operations, natural resources, administration, project management, finance, community outreach, and human resources. Each section has its own individual structure. The natural resources department is starting to work on a memorial garden that has been developing over the last year.

The park is funded in part through grants, most recently for asbestos removal and environmental studies. Taking advantage of appropriate grants when they arise has been

important. The trajectory of the park has been moving in the direction of demolition. “We have this place, and it could be a money pit, so let’s prepare ourselves to move in one direction or another when the opportunity comes,” Nicholas said, “It’s like a safety platform built on demolition.” The hospital comes up at manager’s meetings every now and again but is at a point where nothing else will be done unless a plan has been developed. The director is in charge of exploring options and the subject is only brought up if there is a new development.

Marketing comes in the form of word of mouth and a newsletter. When the park does a program, it is requested that it be passed along. The newsletter goes out to every person who voted in the last primary election as well as anyone who signs up to receive it, an estimated sixty thousand households in all. The creation of the newsletter was trial and error based on what people were asking for and usability. There are a lot of features on the official website that allow people to sign up independently for programs and to be a part of something. They also have a Facebook page. Nicholas said that they are now bigger than their website allows them to be and there will be a new website opening soon.

Community outreach consists of several things beyond the newsletter. There are historic tours conducted at the park that go through the history of tuberculosis and the sanatorium. The tour is for sixty people but getting seventy-five is not uncommon. Nicholas said there is not really an international audience for the tour. The researcher feels that is because Molly Stark Park is a hidden gem in the world of dark tourism. People do dig into the history of the site enough to know that there is misconstrued history. Community members know facts about the site from the hospital being a part of

the county. There is also a wildflower tour conducted on the grounds. The memorial garden is a way for the community to get involved as well. People have always wanted to do something to memorialize the people from the hospital. Working with law enforcement and the fire department, the idea was born to make a celebration garden, which brings together the celebration of life as well as remembers those who were lost. Donations to the park go toward the celebration garden. It is a beautiful part of something dark. The immediate community thinks it is good to preserve it as a part of their history. It is seen as a local iconic structure.

Though there are no annual festivals or anything held within the park, there are special evenings like the butterfly bonanza, mega messy play for kids, and date night. Events are planned seasonally, researched, and developed. The town has a mascot, Philippe the Frog, and he helps to draw people in. There is a trail that goes from a one hundred-and-seventy-year-old mill to the pioneer canal and ends up at Molly Stark Park. Other events include movie night, a recent bicentennial event, birding hikes, and wildflower walks, which recognize nature taking back over the space. The events are aimed at getting the local community involved in their park space.

The park has had a history of vandalism and it remains a regular problem. Nicholas said there is a fifty/fifty chance that if one comes out to the park at night there is going to be somebody trying to get into the building. The parking lot is blocked off at night but people can get in back behind the neighboring nursing home. Rangers are on a set patrol schedule. Neighbors to the park watch for suspicious activity such as flashlights shining and they call in if need be. Part of bringing people to the site and telling them the

real story was an attempt to cut back on break-ins and neighbors calling more often than the rangers needed to be contacted. Drones are another recent problem, much like they are for the Ohio State Reformatory. The images project an inaccurate picture of the site and its history and there is nothing that can be done to stop drones due to laws set in place that make it legal for them to photograph public spaces. Nicholas describes the dangers of drones as the telephone game on steroids. One person says they saw a spirit orb and then it escalates to people seeing a body hanging by a rope. This is not the direction the park wants to go in.

Nicholas was aware that Molly Stark Hospital is a site for dark tourism. He said it was a new term for local residents when this project came up. There are monthly requests from paranormal teams to get into the building and investigate. The requests need to be gone through in order to determine legitimacy. The offers get declined based on an unwillingness to help the building. There needs to be enough profit from the excursion that something could be done to fix the building or contribute to the property. Integrity is also important in deciding whether or not to allow documentary or television producers to gain access to the property. Telling a haunted story compromises the image and history that Molly Stark Park is being built around, and that is a cost too high, regardless of money.

Nicholas does not believe Molly Stark Hospital is haunted but recognizes that there are people who do believe. He thinks teenagers are largely responsible for telling scary stories and passing on urban legends, and that most of the townsfolk know what is real and what is fiction. From 1970 to 1994, the hospital served as a space for drug and

alcohol rehabilitation as well as a location to house mentally disabled individuals.

Nicholas believes that people's minds often wander to straight jackets and padded rooms when that was never the case at all. The hospital was there to help people.

The future of Molly Stark Park may very well be to demolish the old hospital due to the high cost of restoration. It is Nicholas' preference to see most of the building come down. He said it would be ideal to preserve a component of the architecture and turn it into a community space. Preserving at least some of the building would help to tell the story. "I get it. I get dark tourism. People sell it and it works. If there were true stories that were dark, we'd tell them. It's just not here. We would include that in our story if it were true. We wouldn't embellish it from a paranormal perspective, but we would include the truth," said Nicholas in closing the interview.

The two most significant commonalities in this study were vandalism and a need for security, and the importance of community outreach and programming that stretched beyond the realm of dark tourism. All of the interviewees were aware of their site's place within dark tourism. Half of them believed in the paranormal and half of them did not. There is some hardship to be faced with vandalism and the need for security surrounding these sites, but nothing was over the top on the level that other dark tourism sites see. Theft remains the most common problem, but sites like the Ohio State Reformatory are working around that by embracing it and creating an exhibit focusing on the returned items, which people feel are cursed. Saving the letters into an archive and displaying them once everything is ready for the exhibition will perhaps discourage people from continuing to take items.

Six very different sites are connected by their place in dark tourism with six very different business structures and goals. Historical integrity matters for all of them. At the core, these sites survive off of a diverse amount of community programming and outreach. Whether it is Relay for Life or Zumba, these sites need to diversify and go beyond the roots of dark tourism to make a real long-lasting effort for themselves. Sites like the Glensheen Mansion and Molly Stark Park avoid identifying with dark tourism all together, although they remain attached to the term. Other sites like Saloon No. 10, the Villisca Axe Murder House, and the Ohio State Reformatory embrace the events that occurred and thrive as a result of them, all while maintaining historical integrity. The Oakland Cemetery falls in the middle, operating as an active cemetery and also embracing visitors who come to see the Black Angel. The success in community programming and outreach is important in the dark tourism industry because it allows for the community to feel more a part of something that may not be so pleasant to talk about or to embrace. There is revenue being generated from these events as well as relationships being formed. These extracurricular events allow for some of these sites to be active in charity, further giving back to their communities. There may be six different takes on dark tourism and whether the paranormal should be embraced and a part of the sites or not, but at the end of the day, the interviewees came together with respect to the passion for what they do.

## Chapter VI: Discussion and Conclusion

The focus of this study was on a very broad range of questions trying to determine what goes into running a facility that is built on the foundation of dark tourism. Given the wide variety of location types as well as the questions posed during the interview sessions, there are several directions this study could go in as far as building on the present research including pulling in more staff or tourists themselves, or looking at a changing world built on the foundation of social media and how that affects these sites. Ultimately, the broad exploratory nature of this study prevented the researcher from focusing more sharply on certain factors. This is primarily due to the lack of curators in the settings. Though Glensheen did have an official curator and the Reformatory was working towards getting one, most of the sites did not have a collection to curate or they did not feel the need to look at curation. This swung the focus of the semi-structured interviews in the more general direction of trying to understand how and why these individuals ended up in the positions that they did. The research focus became one of understanding the sites where individuals work, and their personal beliefs about dark tourism and the particular folklore or history at their sites.

The questions were broad and exploratory, yielding valuable and unique information. Each question was essentially complex enough to be its own research project. For example, looking at site security could be taken further to examine the nature of vandalism at these sites, as several types of vandalism were identified. I requested an interview with an undisclosed town in Kansas that deals with the ramifications of vandalism and dark tourism frequently enough to need a twenty-four-hour law

enforcement unit at their cemetery. The Ohio State Reformatory was considering showcasing all of the items that had been stolen over the years and returned due to curses believed to be attached to them. On the lighter side, Saloon No. 10 experiences a different and less harmful version wherein people leave shrine items to Wild Bill Hickok. Including the Mount Moriah Cemetery, also known as Deadwood Mountain, would have been beneficial to this study as well since the memorializing of Hickok continues at his grave site, and the cemetery includes other western legends like Calamity Jane and Potato Creek Johnny. Breaking into sites is another area that could be explored under the question of security and vandalism, especially with the advance in technology in drones. Sites like Molly Stark Park, though abandoned, are public property. Drone operators have no legal limitations to flying their drones into broken windows and exploring the interior of the hospital. Footage discovered on YouTube that was brought up during the interview surprised Nicholas. Social media has an alarming number of videos and pictures taken of illegal entry into these sites, not only via drone, but physical breaking and entering as well. The individuals responsible for this call themselves urban explorers or urbexers, and rurbexer, or rural explorer. Studies have been done surrounding dark tourism and urban exploration. From an anthropological perspective, the subculture itself could be examined more thoroughly. Interviews could be conducted to gain insight into why people are willing to risk trouble with law enforcement to get into these sites.

Community programming and outreach showed the most promise in analyzing the data collected and both are essential to the survival of these sites. Whether it is Molly Stark Park's nature and wildflower walks or the Relay for Life events that Saloon No. 10



holds throughout the year, these sites are more successful being a part of their communities rather than only emphasizing a dark part of history. Much could have been done to create a research project from this, including the valued opinions of community members and how they feel about the sites expanding beyond focusing on death and misfortune. A different schedule could have been organized for the researcher to attend as many of these events as possible not only to gain experience through participant observation, but to increase the number of interviews relevant to the study.

Paranormal anthropology certainly could be a research project in itself, not only because this is a growing field of interest, but also to understand the folklore that grows from these sites and the myths behind the supposed hauntings. Additionally, such a project could contribute to further understanding the perspective of the site employees who claim to have experienced the paranormal. Anthropologically, there are two approaches that could be further explored, one being traditional anthropology, focusing more on cultural aspects and theory. The second approach is to further study museum anthropology and its applications. Much has been done to examine why individual tourists feel the need to explore sites of dark tourism, but little has been done to look at site staff's experiences or beliefs. There may be a correlation with these experiences and how the sites reach out to the general public. Ghost hunts are popular and draw in a lot of revenue. The Villisca Axe Murder House is booked for overnight stays almost every night of its available season. Arguably, the majority of money for these sites still comes in the guise of dark tourism. Glensheen tries to remove itself from this characterization, but

when asked, the director estimated 40% of daily visitors come there because of the murders.

In the social media era, there is a new phenomenon that site staff are starting to catch up with and that is the selfie and the Instagramer. Sites are starting to showcase specific spots that individuals can take pictures at as a highlighted area of interest. Though it is only speculation, it is likely beneficial to clearly designate spots like this in order to prevent damage to other locations, as they will be highly trafficked. That being said, there are issues with Instagram and dark tourism right now. As dark tourism rises in popularity and is featured more prominently in the media and in pop culture there comes with this an element of irresponsibility, of possibly damaging sites or putting individuals themselves in danger with many of these locations having been vacant for years and structurally unsound. Indeed, the social media era has changed the way these sites are operating and how they will need to adapt in the future. This would be a valuable study to conduct not only for the sake of knowledge gained, but because it might actually help set into protocol new safety measures for these sites. It would also be of value because social media is a relatively new cultural phenomenon with its own set of rules and customs. Instagram functions differently from the way Twitter or Facebook function and vice versa. The research would be germane to our modern world.

The final suggestion for further research and discussion is the broad range of sites. Once the call to interview had been placed there was no telling how many sites would respond or what their nature would be. The requirements were that they operated with some model of a business structure, whether via a city council, a non-profit, or a for-

profit structure. There also needed to be management and upkeep. This was necessary due to the immense number of abandoned sites across the Midwest. Cemeteries needed to have a well-known legend attached to them to be considered for the same reason. The result was six approvals and one denial while no other site responded. The denial came from a city council with regard to a request for interviews about a local cemetery. The locations that gave approval consisted of a bar and restaurant, a house museum, a combined house museum and bed and breakfast, a cemetery, a prison, and a city park featuring an abandoned sanatorium. The actual structures of running these sites vary greatly. Aside from that, these sites are unique regardless of business structure and could each be individually featured as an extensive, detailed case study. These sites are so intricately connected to their mythology that such broadly focus research as is described in this thesis barely grazed the surface of each one and its potential contribution not only to the field of dark tourism but to museum anthropology as well. I wish I could have done each one of these sites more justice by taking an even deeper look at them individually.

The present study was superficial but suggests multiple possibilities for future research. These sites are built around dark tourism but thrive on diverse community programming and outreach. They are run by individuals with varying beliefs in the supernatural but who have a deep knowledge of the importance that mythology and history have to the sites they operate. Though the study was broad, it provided insight into what it takes to keep these sites open and generating profit. The future for the study of dark tourism and museum anthropology is wide open and filled with unexplored possibilities for research. This study has shown the importance of talking to the

individuals responsible for managing and keeping up these sites, elements of dark tourism that have otherwise been overlooked. Their opinions and procedures are invaluable to maintaining the livelihood of the dark industry.

### Bibliography

- Asma, Stephen T. *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*. United States: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Bader, Christopher, F. Carson Mencken, and Joseph O. Baker. *Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.
- Baker, Joseph O., and Christopher D. Bader. "A social anthropology of ghosts in twenty-first-century America." *Social Compass* 61, no. 4 (2014): 569-593.
- Balint, Ed. "The allure of Molly Stark: History and ghosts." *Canton Rep.* October 29, 2017.
- Balint, Ed. "Fence posted around Molly Stark to keep out curious." *Inde Online*. October 16, 2015. [Indieonline.com/article/20151016/NEWS/151019476](http://Indieonline.com/article/20151016/NEWS/151019476) (Accessed February 2, 2019).
- Biran, Avital and Kenneth F. Hyde. "New perspectives on dark tourism." *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* 7 (2013): 191-198.
- Bowman, Michael S. and Phaedra C. Pezzullo. "What's so 'dark' about 'dark tourism'?: Death, tours, and performance." *Tourist Studies*. 9, no. 3 (2010): 187-202.
- Buda, Dorina Maria and Alison Jane McIntosh. "Dark tourism and voyeurism: tourist arrested for "spying" in Iran." *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*. 7, no. 3 (2013): 214-226.
- Buda, Dorina Maria. *Affective Tourism: Dark routes in conflict*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Ehrler, Lauren. "This photo from inside the Villisca Axe Murder House is seriously creepy." *Des Moines Register*. June 13, 2016. [Desmoinesregister.com/story/entertainment/2016/06/13/photo-inside-villisca-axe-murder-house-seriously-creepy/85833366/](http://Desmoinesregister.com/story/entertainment/2016/06/13/photo-inside-villisca-axe-murder-house-seriously-creepy/85833366/) (Accessed February 2, 2019).
- Farmaki, Anna. "Dark tourism revisited: a supply/demand conceptualization." *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*. 7, no. 3 (2013): 281-292.

- Glensheen. "About." 2020. Glensheen.org (Accessed February 2, 2019).
- Hartmann, Rudi. "Dark tourism, thanatourism, and dissonance in heritage tourism management: new directions in contemporary tourism research." *Journal of Heritage Tourism*. 9, no 2 (2014): 166-182.
- Heidelberg, Beth. "Managing ghosts: exploring local government involvement in dark tourism." *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 10 (2014): 74-90.
- Hill, Annette. *Paranormal Media: Audiences, Spirits and Magic in Popular Culture*. United States: Routledge, 2011.
- History. "Wild Bill Hickok is murdered." 2020. History.com/this-day-in-history/wild-bill-hickok-is-murdered (Accessed February 2, 2019).
- Hooper, Glenn. *Dark Tourism*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Johnston, Tony. "The geographies of thanatourism." *Geography*. 100, no. 1 (2015): 20-27.
- Kang, Eun-Jung et. al. "Benefits of visiting a 'dark tourism' site: The case of the Jeju April 3<sup>rd</sup> Peace Park, Korea. *Tourism Management*. 33, no. 2 (2012): 257-265.
- Kraker, Dan. "40 years later, Glensheen murders still grip Duluth." *MPR News*. June 23, 2017. Mprnews.org/story/2017/06/23/glensheen-mansion-murders-still-grip-duluth (Accessed February 2, 2019).
- Kripal, Jeffery J. *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Langton, Diane. "Time Machine: Teresa Dolezal Feldevert's Black Angel." *The Gazette*. July 22, 2017. Thegazette.com/subject/life/time-machine-teresa-dolezal-feldeverts-black-angel-20170722 (Accessed February 2, 2019).
- Laycock, Joseph. "Paranormal Belief: A New Frontier?" *The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 15, no. 1 (2011): 92-97.
- Lennon, John and Malcolm Foley. *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster*. London: Continuum, 2000.
- Mandelartz, Pascal and Tony Johnston. *Thanatourism: Case Studies in Travel to the Dark Side*. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers Limited, 2016.

- Matthews, Dana. "Don't Touch the Black Angel! This Cursed Statue Kills Visitors to Iowa City's Haunted Oakland Cemetery." *Weekend in Weird*. October 21, 2016. [Weekendinweird.com/2016/10/31/black-angel-of-iowa-city-oakland-cemetery-cursed-death/](http://Weekendinweird.com/2016/10/31/black-angel-of-iowa-city-oakland-cemetery-cursed-death/) (Accessed February 2, 2019).
- Ohio State Reformatory. "Facts about the Reformatory." 2020. [Mrps.org/about](http://Mrps.org/about).
- Podoshen, Jeffrey S. "Dark tourism motivations: Simulation, emotional contagion and topographic comparison." *Tourism Management*. 35 (2013): 263-271.
- Poole, Scott. *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting*. Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011.
- Rathburn, Betsy. "The Deadly History of this Minnesota is Terrifying but True." *Only in Your State*. January 19, 2017. [Onlyinyourstate.com/Minnesota/deadly-history-glensheen-mn/](http://Onlyinyourstate.com/Minnesota/deadly-history-glensheen-mn/) (Accessed February 2, 2019).
- Robb, Erika M. "Violence and Recreation: Vacationing in the Realm of Dark Tourism." *Anthropology and Humanism* 34, no. 1 (2009): 51-60.
- Schaming, Mark. *Death Tourism: Disaster Sites as Recreational Landscapes*, ed. Brigitte Sion. India: Seagull Books, 2014.
- Seaton, Tony. *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, ed. Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone. Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2009.
- Sharpley, Richard and Philip R. Stone. *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*. Toronto: Channel view Publications, 2009.
- Sion, Brigitte. *Death Tourism: Disaster Sites as Recreational Landscapes*. India: Seagull Books, 2014.
- Turner, Edith B. "The Reality of Spirits: A Tabooed or Permitted Field of Study?" *University of Virginia* (1993): 9-12.
- Stark Parks. "Our History." 2020. [Starkparks.com/ourhistory/](http://Starkparks.com/ourhistory/) (Accessed February 2, 2019).
- Stone, Philip and Richard Sharpley. "Consuming dark tourism: a Thanalogical perspective." *Annals of Tourism Research*. 35, no. 2 (2008): 574-595.

- Stone, Philip. "Dark tourism and significant other death: Towards a Model of Mortality Meditation." *Annals of Tourism Research*. 39, no. 3 (2012): 1565-1587.
- Strange, Carolyn and Michael Kempa. "Shades of dark tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Island." *Annals of Tourism Research*. 30, no. 2 (2003): 386-405.
- Venbrux, Eric. "Cemetery tourism: coming to terms with death?" *La Ricerica Folklorica*. 61 (2010): 41-49.
- Villisca Axe Murder House. "History." 2009. [VilliscaIowa.com/index.php](http://VilliscaIowa.com/index.php).
- Wight, A. Craig. "Philosophical and methodological praxes in dark tourism: Controversy, contention and the evolving paradigm." *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 12, no. 2 (2005): 119-129.
- White, Leanne and Esbeth Frew. *Dark Tourism and Place Identity*. New York, Routledge, 2013.
- Wiltshier, Peter. *Thanatourism: Case Studies in Travel to the Dark Side*, ed. Pascal Mandelartz and Tony Johnston. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers Limited, 2016.
- Wilson, Jacqueline Z. *Prison: Cultural Memory and Dark Tourism*. New York, Peter Lang, 2008.



## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A – Foundational Survey Questions**

#### **Dark Tourism in the Midwest**

The following questions are primary questions for the unstructured/open interviews for the project: Dark Tourism in the Midwest. As a multitude of different sites will be examined in the study, Site X will represent any and all sites in the questions provided below. Given the variation of sites, not all of these questions will be applicable to every interviewee.

1. Tell me about Site X?
2. How long have you been involved with Site X?
3. Are there any specific things that need to be done for care and upkeep to Site X?
4. How many visitors does Site X bring in annually?
5. Do you hold any special events surrounding Site X?
6. Have you had any trouble with visitors at Site X?
7. What do you do to market Site X?
8. What do you wish to see change about Site X?

**Appendix B – Institutional Review Board Approval Letter**

May 9, 2016

Dear Kathryn Elliott, Ph.D:

Re: IRB Proposal entitled "[896905-3] Dark Tourism in the Midwest"  
Review Level: Level [I]

Your IRB Proposal has been approved as of May 9, 2016. On behalf of the Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB, we wish you success with your study. Remember that you must seek approval for any changes in your study, its design, funding source, consent process, or any part of the study that may affect participants in the study. Should any of the participants in your study suffer a research-related injury or other harmful outcome, you are required to report them to the Associate Vice-President of Research and Dean of Graduate Studies immediately.

The approval of your study is for one calendar year less a day from the approval date. When you complete your data collection or should you discontinue your study, you must submit a Closure request (see <http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/continuation.html>). All documents related to this research must be stored for a minimum of three years following the date on your Closure request. Please include your IRBNet ID number with any correspondence with the IRB.

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for maintaining signed consent forms in a secure location at MSU for 3 years following the submission of a Closure request. If the PI leaves MSU before the end of the 3-year timeline, he/she is responsible for following "Consent Form Maintenance" procedures posted online (see <http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/storingconsentforms.pdf>).

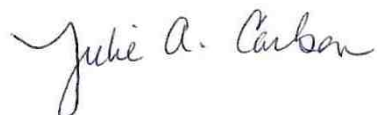
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Hadley".

Mary Hadley, Ph.D.  
IRB Coordinator

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Sifers".

Sarah Sifers, Ph.D. LP  
IRB Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie A. Carlson".

Julie Carlson, Ed.D.  
IRB Co-Chair

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB's records.