



Scott's Mansion

F. Mead (c. 1900)



Scott's Mansion Pine

M. N. Taylor (1981)

The Haunted Mansion and Pines

Merrill

Trees typically heighten and enhance their surroundings, and if their surroundings are sinister, they tend to take on a mysterious, spooky quality themselves. Such, at least, seems to be the case with the foreboding white pine by the front porch of the Scott mansion in Merrill, in Lincoln County, as well as the dark, thickly spaced pines planted around it.

The land the "Haunted House" now occupies once belonged to Native Americans. An early name for the area was Jenny Bull Falls, or, later, Jenny, after a beautiful maiden. It seems that well over a hundred years ago, when white lumbermen came north along the river, they were welcomed by a stately chief of the French-named Squiteo-eau-Sippi tribe. The beauty of Jenny, the chief's daughter, charmed the men. One version of the tale holds that Jenny became pregnant by one of the white men and felt it necessary to kill herself in the river. Another version relates that Jenny caught the flu when an epidemic swept the white lumbering community. In either case, her father blamed the white men for her death. He buried Jenny on the hill (on which the mansion was later to stand), and cursed any white man who would, in the future, dare to violate her grave.

The curse soon had a chance to work. Merrill was incorporated in 1883 and the first mayor, T. B. Scott, decided the next year to build a home on the top of the hill where Jenny's grave was. Even before the house was finished, he died suddenly. The next year his wife, who had continued the construction work, died, and in the same year the Scotts' son was killed by the home's architect, after an argument about whether or not the hill was cursed. In 1893 a Chicago millionaire bought the home. Six years later, he lost the home to a mortgage forecloser, went insane and died in an asylum. That same year, the man who now held the mortgage was stabbed to death. A land speculator who next bought the house disappeared soon after, never to be seen or heard from again. A woman was the next owner and she died within a year. From the time of her death until 1911, a caretaker managed the premises. Then he visited England, and returned on the *Titanic*, becoming one of the hundreds who perished. The next caretaker died of alcoholism. Finally, in 1919, the widowed husband of the woman who had last owned the property gave it to the City of Merrill.

In 1923 the city gave the land and the house to the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, apparently ending the curse.

Source: M. N. Taylor, Merrill