



REPORT

WHITE ROCK LAKE

INVESTIGATION



*Dallas
Texas*

TX005

SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION



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The word “investigation” is defined as
“a searching inquiry for ascertaining facts; detailed or careful examination.”

The key word here is “facts”. Do ghosts exist? No, it has not been proven.
Therefore are no facts to investigate.

What we do have is the testimony of the witnesses and this is where an investigational process will work. Investigations are often viewed as a skeptical activity because the main goal is trying to determine what the witness actually saw. Is it explainable or not? This is done through critical thinking and an event replication process developed by SGHA. This is an important concept because what defines a haunting or ghost sighting is “Multiple witnesses reporting unusual phenomena over a period of time”. If these phenomena can be explained, the witness reports are no longer validating paranormal activity as a cause and thus there is no ghost or haunting. Additionally historical research may be done in an attempt to validate facts.

It is important to understand that the goal of an investigation is not to find evidence of the paranormal but to attempt to identify any natural or manmade causes of the reported phenomena

Definition of Terms

Investigation Status: Unsolved investigations will have either an open or closed status. An investigation is given an “Open” status if:

The investigators were unable to replicate all of the witness events. Something significant remains that is still unsolved.

It is important to understand that an “open” investigation does not mean that the unsolved facts are paranormal in nature. It simply means that we have exhausted our resources and cannot solve the “open” items/events.

A “Closed” status indicates that there is insufficient data or confounding variables that prevents replication or identifying possible explanations. This often occurs when investigators do not have direct access to witnesses or some other environmental change have occurred that creates confounding variables.

Confidentiality Notice

Many of the witnesses interviewed have wished to remain anonymous in exchange for presenting their accounts of paranormal experiences. We honor that request and thus witnesses will often be identified by aliases. Any coincidence between aliases and actual persons is unintentional.

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Part 1: Location Information

White Rock Lake

Dallas, Texas

Part 2: Location History

Following the Civil War, Freedmen and their families established a community named Egypt on what is now the northeastern shore of White Rock Lake. There, in addition to their homes, they had a church, a school, and a cemetery. They all no longer exist.

Another nearby community was Calhoun, later named Fisher, on the northwestern side of the present-day lake. It too is gone but its name survives in Fisher Road, which still runs down to the edge of White Rock Lake.

The community of Reinhardt sprang up alongside railroad tracks near the present-day Casa Linda Shopping Center. Like the town of Fisher, Reinhardt was eventually absorbed by the growing city of Dallas. Its name survives only in an elementary school that stands near the former center of the town. As Dallas began to grow in population during the late 1890s and early 1900s water started to become a problem.

In 1907, city officials began to acquire land in the White Rock Valley for a future reservoir that would be larger than Bachman's Lake, the former major source of water for the area. In 1913, the first water from the reservoir was pumped into the Dallas mains and the following year, the lake was formally declared to be full.

Although it was not built with recreation in mind, the locals quickly discovered that the new reservoir and the land surrounding it was an ideal place for outdoor sports. Anticipating the popularity of the newly-proposed park, an anonymous newspaper reporter predicted it would quickly become "The People's Playground." The first permanent lakeside amenities were constructed by the City of Dallas in 1930: A Bath House and Bathing Beach on the eastern shore and a municipal boathouse with berths for 36 speedboats on the western shore.

In 1933, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), two other "New Deal" federal agencies, also made contributions to the infrastructure of White Rock Lake Park. It appears that the men employed by the short-lived CWA were used primarily for the purpose of picking up trash around the park or landscaping projects. The WPA's contributions were more visible and lasting. Two bridges funded by the federal agency between 1935 and 1937, one on either side of the lake, are still in use today. After World War Two began, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was turned over the Army Air Corps' Fifth Ferrying Command, which used the site as an induction center and "boot camp" for nearly two years. In 1944, the CCC camp got a new lease on life as a Prisoner-of-War camp for German non-combatants captured in the North Africa campaign. During their incarceration at White Rock, they worked nights at Fair Park repairing army equipment. At war's end, they were repatriated to their "fatherland."

During the 1930s, 1940s, and into the 1950s, White Rock Lake Park lived up to its designation as "The People's Playground." Dallas was smaller then (in both land size and population) and White Rock was literally a day's outing in the countryside. For a brief period of time in the 1930s, there was a dance pavilion beside the bathhouse, where couples could take to the dance floor and enjoy the music of Babe Lowry and her all-female band, the "Rhythm Sweethearts." Monday, September 1, 1952 was the last day the bathing beach was open. The following year, during a drought, White Rock Lake was put back in service (temporarily) as a water supply and swimming was banned. In the meantime, fueled in part by fears of potential racial conflict, the City of Dallas embarked on a program of building smaller, neighborhood pools. The beach at White Rock was never re-opened and the ban on swimming is still in force to this day.

The above material and information was taken from An Unofficial Guide to Scenic White Rock Lake, courtesy Steven Butler.

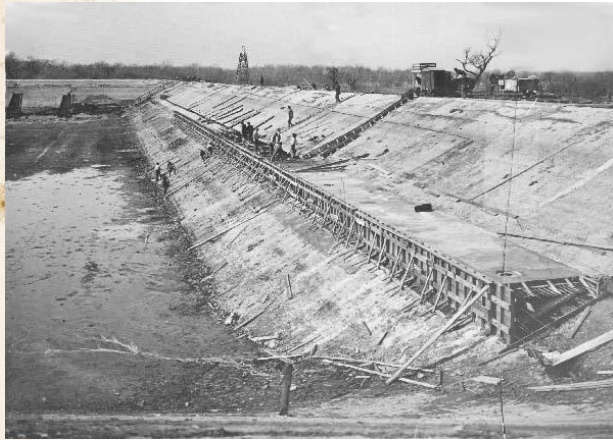
Part 3: Witnesses

Unfortunately there are not any real solid witnesses that we were able to find. The stories are all second and third hand accounts. However all of the accounts are typical of one of the many variants discussed below.

Part 4: Reported Phenomenon

The ghost of a woman in a white evening gown dripping with water has terrorized residents here for many years.

During the 1920's, White Rock Lake was a popular recreation spot. A Dallas man, some say a bootlegger, and his lady had been enjoying an evening on his boat and on this occasion, the party was formal so they were both in evening dress. During that evening they had a severe argument and when the boat docked, the lady ran from the deck, jumped into the man's car and drove off. The roads around the lake were quite poor at the time and the lady was probably intoxicated.



As she approached the area where Lawther drive now joins Garland road, she lost control of the car and it plunged into the lake. The lady died in the accident. Her ghost is said to have two ways of manifesting itself.

The most common is to appear as a hitch-hiker along Garland road where it passes the lake. The spirit

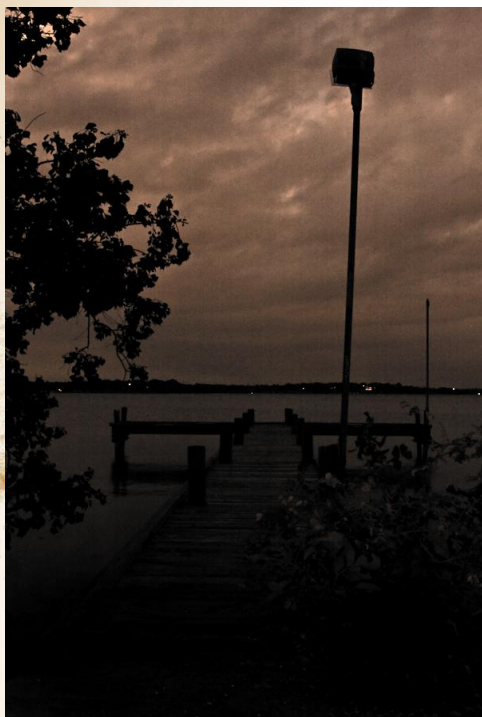
materializes as a pretty girl in an evening dress, drenched to the skin. She gives a certain address, quite fashionable in the twenties, then disappears, leaving a wet seat. The lady has been known to leave her wrap in the car and this is said to bear a 1920's style "Neiman Marcus Label".

The other reported manifestations are in the form of an emergency phone call, always delivered on the front porch of homes along Garland road, facing the lake. In September 1962, Dale Berry answered the doorbell twice to find no one there. On the third ring, he opened the door to see the screaming apparition, who disappeared, leaving behind only a puddle of water. The ghost also often appears to young couples parked in cars along deserted roads.

A woman named Anne Clark wrote what may be the earliest published account of the legend. Titled "The Ghost of White Rock," Clark's brief story

was included in the Texas Folklore Society's 1943 publication, *Backwoods to Border*. It read:

"One hot July night a young city couple, having driven out and parked on the shore of White Rock Lake, switched on the headlights of the car and saw a white figure approaching. As the figure came straight to the driver's window, they saw it was a young girl dressed in a sheer white dress that was dripping wet. She spoke in a somewhat faltering voice.



I'm sorry to intrude, and I would not under any other circumstances, but I must find a way home immediately. I was in a boat that overturned. The others are safe. But I must get home.

She climbed into the rumble seat, saying that she did not wish to get the young lady wet, and gave them an address in Oak Cliff, on the opposite side of Dallas. The young couple felt an uneasiness concerning their strange passenger, and as they neared the

destination the girl, to avoid hunting the address, turned to the rumble seat to ask directions. The rumble seat was empty, but still wet.

After a brief, futile search for the girl in white, the couple went to the address she had given and were met at the door by a man whose face showed lines of worry. When he had heard the couple's story, the man replied in a troubled voice. "This is a very strange thing. You are the third couple who has come to me with this story. Three weeks ago, while sailing on White Rock Lake, my daughter was drowned."

In 1953 a similar but much more detailed account was included in Dallas author Frank X. Tolbert's book, *Neiman-Marcus, Texas: The Story of the Proud Dallas Store*:

"One night about ten years ago a beautiful blonde girl ghost appeared on a road near Dallas' White Rock Lake.

Mr. and Mrs. Guy Malloy, directors for display for the world-famous specialty store, Neiman-Marcus, saw the girl. Only they didn't recognize her, right off, for a ghost. She had walked up from the beach. And she stood there in the headlights of the slow-moving Malloy car. Mrs. Malloy said, "Stop, Guy. That girl seems in trouble. She must have fallen in the lake. Her dress is wet. Yet you can tell that it is a very fine dress. She certainly got it at the Store.

By "the Store," Mrs. Malloy meant the Neiman-Marcus Company of Dallas. The girl spoke in a friendly, cultured contralto to the couple after the car had stopped. She said she'd like to be taken to an address on Gaston Avenue in the nearby Lakewood section. It was an emergency she said. She didn't explain what had happened to her, and the Malloy's were too polite to ask. She had long hair, which was beginning to dry in the night breeze. And Mrs. Malloy was now sure that this girl was wearing a Neiman-Marcus dress. She was very gracious as she slipped by Mrs. Malloy and got in the back seat of the two-door sedan.

When the car started, Mrs. Malloy turned to converse with the passenger in the Neiman-Marcus gown. The girl had vanished. There was a damp spot on the back seat.

The Malloys went to the address on Gaston Avenue. A middle-aged man answered the door. Yes, he had a daughter with long blonde hair who wore nothing but Neiman-Marcus clothes. She had been drowned about two years before when she fell off a pier at White Rock Lake.

Another version of the story comes from the 1930s. Dr. Eckersall, a local physician, was driving home from a country-club dance late on Saturday night when he saw a young girl by the lake, who he suspected was in trouble. He quickly stopped his car, and motioned her to climb into the back seat of his vehicle.

"Please, please take me home," she begged. The doctor drove quickly to her destination, and as he pulled up before the shuttered house, he said: "Here we are." Then he turned around. Yep, you guessed it: The back seat was empty, except for a small puddle of lake water dripping down onto the floorboard. He thought for a moment then rang insistently on the house bell. Finally the door was opened by a gray-haired man.

"I can't tell you what an amazing thing has happened," began the doctor, breathlessly. "A young girl gave me this address. I drove her here and..." "Yes, yes, I know," the man wearily interrupted. "This has happened several other Saturday evenings in the past month. That young girl, sir, was my daughter. She was killed in a boating accident on White Rock Lake almost two years ago."

There is one final variant.

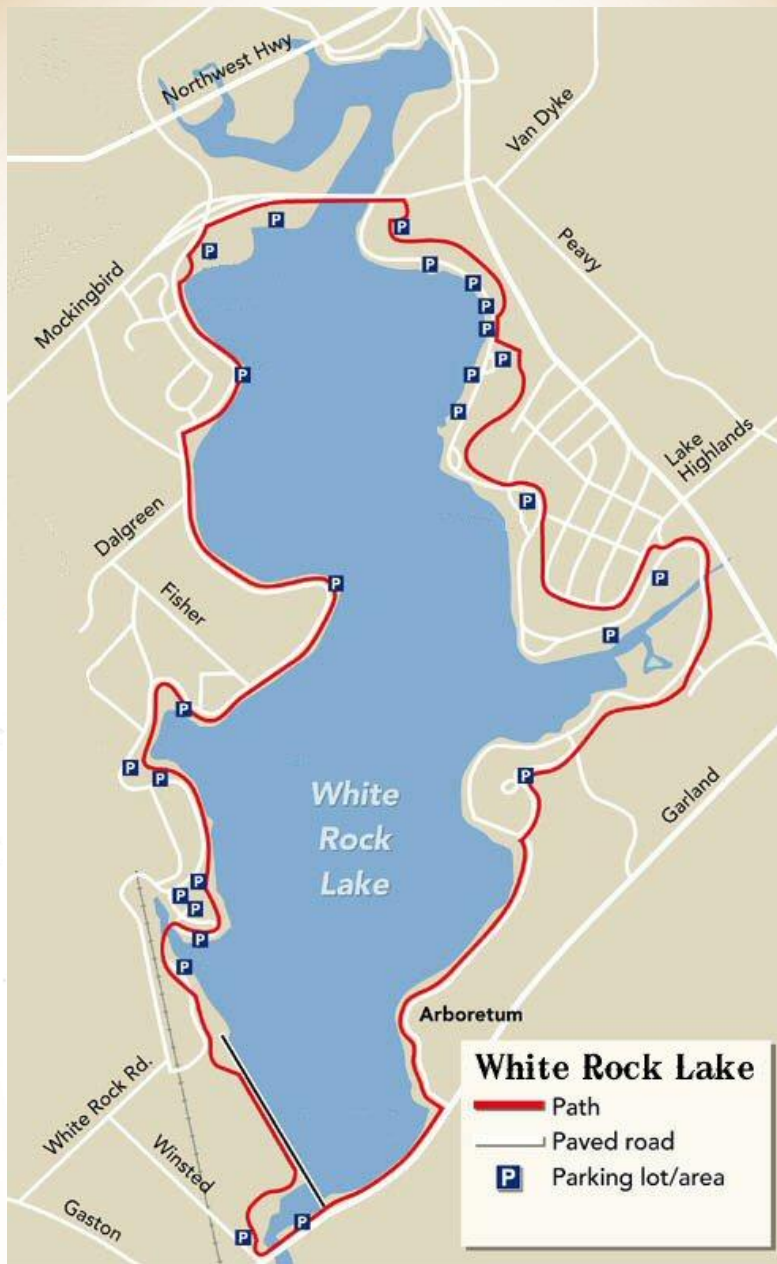


Back in the 1950s on West Lawther Drive at White Rock Lake, a young girl and her boyfriend were traveling home from the prom. While driving on the road, he went off the road and landed in White Rock Lake. He managed to swim to safety while she drowned. People claim to see her wet, dressed in a prom dress along this road. She hitchhikes and will get in your car. She gives an address. When the drivers arrive at this address all that is left of the woman is a puddle of water. If you go to the door at this address it is claimed her family still resides there and they will tell you the story. In addition, there is said to be an old abandoned cemetery right near, where it is said that she is buried. Many claim her blood is splattered on the head stone; however, it has been pointed out to me that this is merely paint.

Part 5: Investigation

An investigation of this area is difficult because it is quite a large area. Observation teams were placed at the Botanical garden and the bath house to search for anything that may offer an explanation for the accounts. The only note worthy things they noticed was that there are giant cranes or egrets everywhere. Many of them are pure white and make these mournful cries. They wondered if they might ever get mistaken for the Lady of the Lake at night.

The area has several trails, thus more people that could be misinterpreted as a ghost in the later hours. One of the most popular trails in Dallas, it hugs White Rock Lake. Runners, walkers, cyclists, in-line skaters, everybody uses the asphalt trail.



With no real witnesses to question, we decided to investigate the legend academically.

Part 6: Historical Research

The first task was to research the newspapers and other media to identify any women that have actually drown in the lake. The details from these accounts could then be compared against the details of the legends to see if there was any validity to the back story of the ghost stories coming from

the lake. If it could be isolated to the earliest ghost stories, the origin of the legend could be discovered.

Many sources list the following two women as the most likely suspects for the "ghost".

Louise Ford Davis

Birth: 1883

Death: July 5th, 1935

On Friday July 5, 1935 Mrs. Frank Doyle found a suicide note left by her sister, Louise Ford Davis, who resided at the Melrose Court Hotel. Mrs. Doyle immediately alerted the police, who sent seven squad cars racing to White Rock Lake in hopes of preventing a tragedy. But they were too late. Detective Bryan who was driving along the Garland road, turned on to the lake road at East Lawther Drive and shortly afterward saw Mrs. Davis' head bobbing in the water.

It was estimated that she had been in the lake five minutes when detective Bryan dragged her to shore. Although artificial respiration was attempted to revive Mrs. Davis, it was in vain and police remarked that if they had been called only two or three minutes sooner they might have saved her.

The woman's car was parked nearby, where they found a sheet and a pair of white gloves on the car seat. However there was no mention of what she was wearing and the contents of the suicide note were not revealed. After a Saturday funeral service in Dallas, Mrs. Davis' body was taken to Albany, Texas for burial.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=16957688>

Rose Stone

Birth: 1907

Death: Nov. 24, 1942

On November 24, 1942 a distraught woman, 35-year-old Rose Stone of Mansfield, Texas, committed suicide by drowning herself in White Rock Lake. Her body dressed in sweater and skirt was discovered in eight feet of water near the municipal boathouse by Johnnie Williams who assisted the

park superintendent and city fireman in the search. A note was pinned to her sweater asking that relatives in Fort Worth be notified of her death. Mrs. Stone's coat and hat were found on the shore.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=30095137>

The problem with both of these suggestions is that the dates of their deaths are after the 1930's (the ghost story is already being told before either of their deaths) and their ages do not correspond with the age of the lady's ghost. The ghost's age is described as "being in her twenties". Louise was 52 years old when she died, Rose was 35.

However, the earliest record death in the lake that we could locate does have a young woman that drowned in the lake at the age of 20.

Hallie Enid Gaston

Birth: Jul. 5, 1907

Death: May 26, 1927

Daughter of JG Gaston and Lillis King Gaston. Passed away at the age of 19 due to drowning. She is the older sister of Vesta Gaston who passed away in 1936.

This death also occurs before the ghost stories are being told and may be a catalyst for the legend.

The Dallas morning news interviewed White Rock Lake historian Steve Butler. He said the details of the tale are as difficult to pin down as the ghost herself:

- Sometimes she appears in an evening dress, and other times she arrives in a nightgown.
- Sometimes she lives in Lakewood, and other times in Oak Cliff.
- She's been picked up by couples and single men.
- She's committed suicide and drowned in boating accidents, car accidents and lovers' disputes.

"The only thing that's consistent is that she's a girl and she's drowned," Mr. Butler said.

And the story's origins are just as hazy. Mr. Butler has heard of East Dallas teenagers giving one another chills with the tale as early as the 1930s.

Part 7: Myth Building

Information discovered during the historical research indicated that there was definitely some serious myth building going on here. Additional research was done to examine the extent of the myth building.

7.1 Books and Radio

1943

The earliest published account of the legend. Titled "The Ghost of White Rock," Clark's brief story was included in the Texas Folklore Society's 1943 publication, *Backwoods to Border*.

1953

In 1953 a similar but much more detailed account was included in Dallas author Frank X. Tolbert's book, *Neiman-Marcus, Texas: The Story of the Proud Dallas Store*:

1967

On October 18th, 1967 Dallas talk-radio personality Chuck Boyles invited his listeners to help him find one of Dallas' most elusive phantoms. During a broadcast Boyles asked the local community to help find the Lady of the Lake, to hunt her down and solve the mystery forever. He invited everyone to join him at White Rock Park in the early morning hours.

however, his invitation to search for the ghost brought more responses than he bargained for. An estimated 1,000 youths ranging in ages from 13 to 25 swarmed over the area in hundreds of cars. What was probably a harmless enough at first soon became, at least to the police, a potential riot.

The police called in 47 officers to restrain the crowd and prevent them from overrunning the Cox Cemetery in search of the Lady of the Lake. although the search was harmless enough, the tenseness of the situation seemed to feed upon itself making it bigger than it was.

The police made few arrests and the incident passed without any damage to the area. Boyles was publicly chastised by city officials to the point where he made an official apology on the air two days later. He created the biggest public stir over any single ghost in Texas history.

7.2 Inconstancies in the stories and witness accounts

There are serious inconstancies in the stories and witness accounts. The details of the various accounts change over time.

Year	Dress description	Address given to witnesses	Hair color	Death by Drowning when
1935	White Dress	Address on Garland Road	Brunette	Car crash, drove into lake
1943	Sheer white Dress	Oak Cliff, opposite side of Dallas	Blonde	Fell off boat while sailing on the lake
1953	Neiman Marcus gown, white	Gaston Ave in the nearby Lakewood section	Blonde	Fell of a pier into the lake
1966	White night gown, lingerie	Forest Hills	Blonde	Suicide
1970	1920's-era evening gown	Gaston Ave	Brunette	Car accident, car drove off bridge and she drowned
1982	White Wedding Dress	Garland Road	Blonde	Fell off boat into the lake and drowned

Another reason why the accounts may be faulty is due to an eye witness's memory being influenced by things that they might hear or see after the incident occurred. This distortion is known as the post-event misinformation effect (Loftus and Palmer, 1974). Bias creeps into memory without our knowledge, without our awareness. While confidence and accuracy are generally correlated, when misleading information is given, witness confidence is often higher for the incorrect information than for the correct information. This leads many to question the competence of the average person to determine credibility issues.

If this was actually the ghost of a person who had drowned in the lake, people should be seeing and reporting the same details. They are not which makes myth building the main culprit of the mystery.

7.3 Alternative explanations in historical accounts

In her book "Dallas Too" (1998 by Eakin Press) author Rose-Mary Rumbley, suggests a possible origin of the myth.

"My good friend Barbara Rookstool," Dr. Rumbley writes, "vows that her daddy, Guy H. Malloy, was the one who created the Lady of the Lake legend." One Friday night, she continues, he worked late on a window display at the Neiman-Marcus store in downtown Dallas. It was after 2 a.m. on Saturday morning when Mr. Malloy, driving home to East Dallas, "first spotted the Lady of the Lake rise from White Rock." Afterward, reports Rumbley, "he told the story of the sighting" and it "has been told ever since."

"As time passed," Rumbley remarks further, "the story grew," adding, "Malloy just saw her. He never took her home."

This does contradict with Tolbert's account in every detail. Rumbley has it taking place in the 1930s, while Tolbert's version took place in 1943. Another important detail is how could Malloy identify the dress the "ghost" was wearing in the dark if he never stopped to pick her up. He simply drove past her.

In the late 1970s, the story of a woman who was claiming to be the "real" Lady of the Lake surfaced briefly in an article written by Dallas Morning

News columnist John Anders. According to Anders, the woman had written to the newspaper describing how, on one night back in the 1930s she and her lover were parked by the lake, watching a full moon. While they sat together, however, the man's car suddenly rolled into the lake, its parking brake presumably having failed. Dripping wet, she hitched a ride to her parents' house on Gaston Avenue. And sure enough, the legend of the mysterious drowned lady started soon afterward. The woman cryptically signed her note "Jam Net Jaid," taunting Anders to figure out her real identity.



Although we suspected pranks and hoaxes as being the cause of many of the ghost sightings, additional information was located during the updating of this report that confirms it was commonplace around the lake. The following is an excerpt from lakewood.advocatemag.com;

The old cemetery at White Rock Lake dates to the mid-1840s. Among Woodrow Wilson High School alumni, it is known as a haunted cemetery and the site of many pranks on other students. Abandoning one's friends in the cemetery to scare the wits out of them was common among high school students in the '70s. To initiate freshman band members, upperclassmen would blindfold them, take them to Cox Cemetery, and then leave them there at night.

"That was kind of a rite of passage," says Woodrow alumnus Kyle Rains.

Lisa Cavanaugh, a 1979 Woodrow graduate who is now a teacher at J.L. Long Middle School, recalls such a story "back in the late '70s, when cell phones were not around."

After a football game one night, she and her friend went driving around with some guy friends. They had filled up on Cokes at a pizza place, and before long, the girls were feeling the effects. Finally, the guys stopped and let them out to relieve themselves in the dark near White Rock Lake.

“Unbeknown to us, the guys chose Cox Cemetery to drop us off, and boy did they drop us — they drove off,” she says. “Screaming didn’t do any good. It just scared us all the more.”

After about 30 minutes in the pitch-black cemetery, the guys reappeared.

Cavanaugh ran into one of those guys recently, and she reminded him of the prank, admonishing him with, “How would you like it if someone did that to your daughter now?”

He gave her a woeful apology, she says.

Rains says Woodrow/Bryan Adams high school rivalries played out at the cemetery too.

“They used to come over to our side of the lake to explore, and we didn’t like that, so we used to hide behind the tombstones and wait for them,” he says.

“Once, my friend Ricky Rodriguez and I scared a B.A. guy so much, he hurdled the fence.”



Part 8: Conclusion

We believe that the ghost of White Rock Lake is an urban legend. The legend has its catalyst with the death of Hallie Enid Gaston in 1927. The story evolved through pranks and stories told by teenagers.

The stories were passed down to the next generation and were eventually incorporated into the folklore of the area. Fueled by entries in written works such as books and newspapers the myth continued to grow.

The popularity of the myth has induced some bias and normal and quasi-normal events are often claimed to be paranormal in nature with little or no evidence to support it.



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Part 9: References:

<http://lakewood.advocatemag.com/2011/09/22/haunting-season/#sthash.bLRKkdcZ.dpuf>

Dallas Herald News

Dallas Morning News