

## Spirit House

by Jason Kampe



In the small town of Georgetown, there lies an unusual piece of architecture. This building, known as the Spirit House, was skillfully crafted by a young man named Timothy Brown.

Tim Brown was born in Rygate, Vermont in 1815. In 1855, he and his family came to the prospering town of Georgetown, which was named after the famous war general George Washington. They “settled about a mile south of the village and he built a home with a double cornice and two rows of hand-made balls all around the house. In the upstairs rooms under the

eaves, he built secret dark closets where he claimed the spirits were kept”<sup>1</sup>. Keep in mind the description of the family house.

After building his house, Timothy Brown was lured into the realm of spiritualism. He believed that people could communicate with the other world. After all, “spirit communication can be a two-way experience”<sup>2</sup>. Mr. Brown claimed that these spirits guided him in building the second house. From the available photos and new age technology, this house can be seen and appreciated without the cost of taking a field trip.



This building (also referred to as Brown’s Temple, Brown’s Free Hall, Ghost House, and the Mystery House) was “used as a meeting hall, dance hall, and seance center for the spiritualists of the area”<sup>3</sup>. Spiritualists were welcome to stay and speak at the Spirit House, and to attract as many people as possible. This also encouraged many townspeople to use this hall for many different purposes. Plays and dances were held, especially during holidays.

The actual architecture of the house is quite extraordinary. It can be described as a giant wedding cake. As mentioned above, spirits guided Mr. Brown on how to build the peculiar house. On the outside, there are

three overhangs, each decorated like his family house. Four very large columns were scalloped, and placed on the front of the establishment. These scallops were recommended by the spirits so it would keep away the bad spirits. The roof was slanted inwards, resembling a funnel, where a six-inch drain carried the water to the basement. From there, it exits through the wall, possibly into an empty well. The

present-day kitchen is where the dark room was, or where the summoning of the spirits occurred. It was believed that the corners of the house were where the spirits hid. So he built closets “where no human may enter because they belong to the spirits exclusively as their place of rest and meditation”<sup>4</sup>. The so-called spirits that guided him were good ones. If he “tried to drive a nail in the wrong spot, Brown said that the spirits grabbed his arm and stopped him swinging the hammer”<sup>5</sup>. Obviously, the spirits didn’t overwork Mr. Brown, because it took many years to build. “Different sources give fourteen, ten, and five years as the time required to build the house”<sup>6</sup>. Insufficient records contributed to the unknown time period. He started in the 1860’s at some point, before 1868, because an ad for a Thanksgiving dance is dated at this time period.

Sometime after completion, the spiritualist era died down, and one of the mediums, a person who taught spiritualism, left a notebook on one of the beds. A maid found it and discovered that the contents were actually information from the graves of the town cemetery. Many people then believed that it was a hoax and so ended the meetings. The town actively used the house for dances and town meetings.

As the turn of the century rolled around, renovations were made to the house. A driveway and several sheds were erected. Mr. Brown died in 1885, so ownership was turned over to the Mrs. She died in 1908 at the Old Ladies Home in Oneida, at 93 years of age.



#### Works Cited

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- 2) <http://www.fst.org/spirit5.htm> page 2
- 3) **Spirit House in Georgetown: An Historical and Architectural Research Paper of an Unusual House** Jan 1965 Mr. Milton Chapin
- 4 & 5) **Courier Magazine** Marian W. Ramsey March 1954

#### Other References

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Special Thanks

Special thanks to Mr. Chapin for helping coordinate and research the project.

