

SNU TODAY

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A JOURNEY THROUGH A JOURNEY

Spiritualism & Ireland

At the 2018 World Congress of Spiritualists Miriam Fitzgerald gave an inspiring keynote speech about her work for spirit in Ireland.

NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCES

Near-death experiences are more than just compatible with Spiritualism, they are part and parcel of it. Who better to ask about the afterlife than those who have had a brief encounter with it?

GRAZIE MR PRESIDENT!

Minister David Bruton recently visited Italy and 'Spiritus Italia'.

MY WAY OF LIFE

SNU TODAY speaks to Roy Simpson CSNU of Telford Spiritualist Church about his contribution to the Dementia Friends cause.

CHURCH FOCUS

We talk with Preston Ethical Spiritualist Church and Rhyl Spiritualist Centre about how they keep their Churches thriving, keeping Spirit in Action for 2018.

WHAT IS GDPR?

Chief Administrative Officer Jane Barton talks you through what to expect with the new GDPR rules and how they may impact on your Church.



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Your regular Union update

News, reviews and comments from around the Union, keeping you informed of the what, where and how of your SNU – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

THE MYSTERIOUS MARIA HAYDEN

This year has seen the World Congress of Spiritualists come to the UK, where it was hosted by the Arthur Findlay College. It's a reminder of Spiritualism's international roots, after it was brought to our shores by Maria Hayden, herself of diverse heritage.

Sharon DeBartolo Carmack looks into her life, raising the question, would we have Spiritualism in the UK without her?

Maria B. Hayden was the pioneer who brought American Spiritualism to the U.K. in 1852-53. Through her séances in England Maria convinced many of the elite and upper classes that there is life after death. One such person was the already well-known Welsh social reformer and agnostic, Robert Owen. After he converted to Spiritualism in his eighties, he was instrumental in endorsing and promoting Spiritualism and Maria's mediumship in the British press.

Maria was never a public or trance speaker; she preferred to offer séances and private sittings. These private circles were the mainstay of the early Spiritualist movement, with mediums often enduring test after test from skeptics. Yet many skilled and

in-demand mediums like Maria have received little critical attention. My A1 thesis, "Spirit Rapping, Spiritoscope, and Psychometry: The Mediumship of Maria B. Hayden, M.D.", argued the importance of Maria's involvement in Spiritualism, demonstrating that her role as a Spiritualist pioneer is more significant than is generally acknowledged and deserves closer examination, so Maria does not slip any further between the cracks of our history.

Maria B. Hayden, née Trenholm, was born 16 November 1826 in Nova Scotia, Canada. Her paternal grandfather, Matthew Trenholm (1757-1828?), hailed from Welbury, Yorkshire, England, and had immigrated to Canada, probably in 1772. Maria married Massachusetts-native William R. Hayden on 27 October 1850 in Boston, and she became a U.S. citizen by virtue of her marriage.

Based on a memoir William wrote and serialized in *The Banner of Light* in 1857, the spirits chose Maria as the medium during a séance in the spring of 1851. This communication transpired through raps. When asked who at the table was the medium, the spirits rapped when Maria's name was called out. From there, Maria used a piece of cardboard printed with the letters of the alphabet, as well as numbers 1-0. The sitter pointed to each letter on the alphabet, then waited for a rap. No sound meant no, a rap meant yes.

The sitter or a designated scribe put the letters together on paper to form words and sentences. Often Maria's eyes were shielded from seeing the letters the sitter pointed to, so she was not influencing the message. Her reputation as a medium spread in her area. Encouraged by William Hayden's friend, George W. Stone, a popular English lecturer on electrobiology touring in America who found Maria's mediumship impressive, he offered to sponsor the couple's travel abroad. He felt sure his countrymen would be equally interested in her gifts. Thus the Haydens embarked for England in September 1852. While in England, reviews of her mediumship were mixed. Some people did all they could to trick and discredit her publicly in the press, but she also had a significant following.

Along with Robert Owen, a few of the respected members of society who publicly endorsed the accuracy of her mediumship were Dr. John Ashburner, Sir Charles E. Isham, publisher Robert Chambers, and Augustus and Sophia De Morgan. William and Maria concluded their time in England at the end of October 1853. Although her adversaries wanted to believe they had driven Maria back to America with their "venomous stings", the more likely reason they left was that Maria was pregnant again. Maria had already buried one child in America before embarking to England, and she was pregnant again when she had sailed to England a year prior. That pregnancy resulted in a miscarriage either en route or once she arrived. So it's not surprising that she would want to head home before she was too far along in her third pregnancy. She gave birth in Boston on America's Independence Day, 4 July 1854.

After Maria's return to America she continued to practise as a medium. She served as a test medium for Dr. Robert Hare, who invented an instrument known as the Spiritoscope to aid in communication.

Maria was unable to see the scope that contained the letters of the alphabet and numbers 1 through 10. She rested her hands on the table, and the spirit vibrations operated through her hands to trigger the device, indicating the letters, which spelled out words and sentences. Sometimes these communications happened so quickly it was difficult for the scribe to keep up. Hare lectured and wrote about Maria and other mediums he tested in "Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestations, Demonstrating the Existence of Spirits and Their Communion with Mortals" (1855). As

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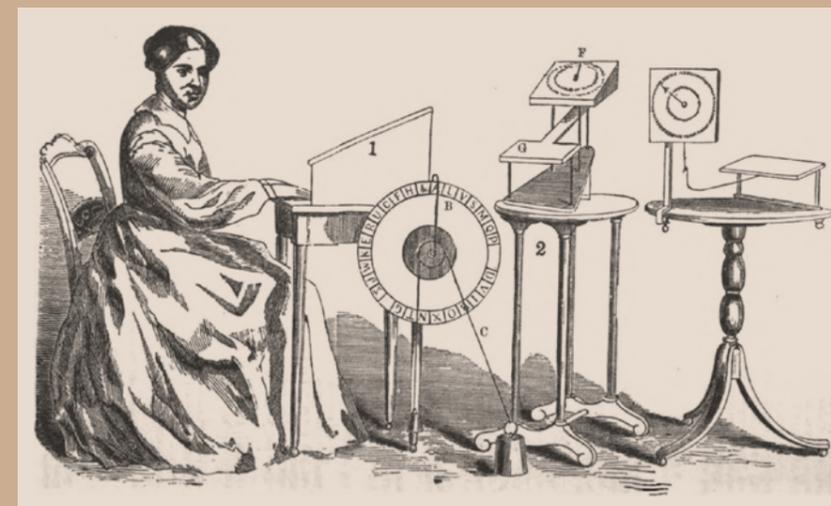
in England, Maria's reputation in America spread for the accuracy of her mediumship. Maria's abilities also leaned toward healing, and she began advertising her services as a "clairvoyant physician". She attended medical school in New York City and graduated with an M.D. degree at the age of 40 in 1867. Maria's accomplishments did not end there. In 1877 Maria studied with Joseph Rodes Buchanan, M.D., the father of psychometry, who had coined the term in 1842 from the Greek *psyche* (soul) and *metron* (measure).

Maria became an expert psychometrist, using it in her medical practice for diagnostic purposes. She gained a reputation for being a "psychometric genius". Dr. Robert A. Gunn wrote in *The Medical Tribune: A Monthly Magazine* that Maria was "one of the most remarkable women that has ever graced the profession of medicine. Her analysis of morbid conditions of the human body were simply extraordinary for their lucidity." Maria passed into spirit at age 57 on 11 February 1883 in Manhattan.

Unfortunately, we still do not have a photograph or accurate image of Maria. I contacted Paul J. Gaunt, the archivist for the SNU, as well as dozens of repositories and archives in the U.S. and the U.K. without success in locating a likeness. Newspapers of the day did not carry photographs or sketches, so I traced and contacted all of Maria's known living descendants. One descendant wrote, "We have many photos and stories about the Haydens, but it will take a week or so to dig everything out. We're happy to share with you." But as the weeks went by, no photographs were forthcoming.

Part of the problem was that, despite good intentions, this lady was in her eighties and wheelchair-bound, and her husband (the descendant), also in his eighties, had Parkinson's Disease. Sadly, this lady passed into spirit on 4 October 2017.

Clearly, Maria's contribution to Spiritualism far exceeds her time in England. I'm presently at work on a biography of Maria's life; there is still so much more to tell of this pioneer's story, and I am ever hopeful a photograph of her might surface.



Medium using a "spiritoscope". Robert Hare, *Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestations* (New York: Partridge and Brittan, 1855), Plate I.